



A Cloud on the Horizon

Hopeful Signs of Renewal

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The Founders Journal



Contributors:

Dr. Thomas K. Ascol is Pastor of the Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida.

Dr. George Martin is Visiting Professor of Religion at North Greenville College in Tigerville, SC. He is on leave of absence from the Foreign Mission Board, having served four years in Indonesia.

Dr. Tom Nettles is Professor of Church History at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.

Mr. Ernest Reisinger is an author and retired pastor living in Cape Coral, Florida.

Book Reviewer:

Dr. Terry Christo is Associate Professor of History and Bible at Missouri College.

Editor:

Thomas K. Ascol, PhD

Associate Editor:

Ernest C. Reisinger

Contributing Editors:

Bill Ascol, MDiv

Timothy George, PhD

Fred A. Malone, PhD

Joe Nesom, PhD

Tom Nettles, PhD

Roger Nicole, ThD, PhD, DD

Hal Wynn, BD

Graphic Design Editor:

William D. Lollar

Webmaster:

Stan Reeves, PhD

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A Cloud on the Horizon

Thomas Ascol

In the midst of a severe drought throughout Israel, the prophet Elijah received God's promise that rain would once again fall on the parched land. After displaying the power of God on Mt. Carmel and routing the prophets of Baal, Elijah encouraged the king to take heart because he heard "the sound of the abundance of rain."

The thunder sounded long before the clouds appeared. Seven times the prophet's servant scanned the skies in vain for a sign that the rumblings were a precursor to refreshing showers. Finally, a small cloud appeared over the Mediterranean Sea. It was barely visible--only as "small as a man's hand"--yet that small cloud signaled the coming deluge of rain which brought the drought to an end. In a similar way, hopeful signs of renewal are beginning to appear on the spiritual horizon of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Reports of Revival

One such sign, the reported outbreak of divine visitations on various college and seminary campuses, is most encouraging. Though some of the reports document emotional excesses and doctrinal imprecisions, the evidence of changed lives, strengthened churches, and growth in holiness among God's people all indicate that God's Spirit has done His usual work in an unusual way. Is this not what constitutes genuine revival? The salvation and sanctification that result from the reviving work of God are not different in kind from that which God is always doing through His Word and His Spirit. Rather, in revival, God does His usual work in an intensive, fast way. What otherwise may take years (in terms of numerous conversions and spiritual growth) is accomplished in days or weeks or months.

While it is still too early to tell what will be the outcome of these early, largely local stirrings, all who have been praying for a widespread revival should be encouraged to cry out to God with even greater fervor for a great outpouring of His Spirit on our churches.

Experiencing God

In addition to these revival flickers other developments also suggest that our Lord may be doing something unusual among us. The overwhelming response to Henry Blackaby's *Experiencing God* studies has astounded all observers. Several months ago the Sunday School Board recorded the one millionth copy of this material being sold. This "program" (if it can be called that) has greatly challenged countless numbers of God's people to take their faith seriously by refocusing on the greatness of God. Granted, the teaching seems oriented in a Keswick direction and the emphasis on personal experience pushes doctrinal clarity far into the background. Nevertheless, the experience that is being emphasized is that which comes through a fresh awareness of the greatness and grandeur of the living God. For this reason, I would argue that the widespread excitement about *Experiencing God* is reason to be encouraged. It is far better to have people talking and thinking about God than about the latest sure-fire method which has been borrowed from some marketing guru or sociological study.

Renaissance of Doctrine

By far the most hopeful sign is the renaissance of doctrine which is beginning to take place throughout our

convention. The decline in doctrinal understanding over the last two generations has left many Southern Baptists lost in a desert of moral relativism and spiritual apathy. The effects have become increasingly noticeable as more and more worldliness infiltrates our churches. Unfortunately, the cause seems to have escaped the attention of many. The Bible is clear, however, that neither virtue nor holiness can live where doctrinal truth has been eviscerated. If we hope to see a deep and lasting revival of lively Christian living, we must pray and work for reformation in our doctrinal understanding. Hope that such a reformation is beginning to take place seems warranted in light of several recent events.

The Inerrancy Controversy

Recognition of theology's importance is one of the positive side-effects of the inerrancy controversy. Since 1979 Southern Baptists have been forced to consider the doctrinal issues surrounding the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Conservative leaders constantly reminded us (and rightly so) that the heart of the controversy was doctrinal because our understanding of the nature of the Bible itself was at stake. Consequently, along with the recovery of our belief in Scripture's inerrancy, Southern Baptists have been resensitized to the critical importance of doctrine itself. Furthermore, doctrinal discourse is once again beginning to find a place in our churches.

Changes at Southern Seminary

The difficulties which Southern Seminary has endured the last two years should be viewed in this light. When the trustees went on record with their determination to call a new president who believed the *Abstract of Principles* like James Boyce and John Broadus believed it, a new day dawned on the seminary and, in many ways, on the whole Southern Baptist Convention. Al Mohler was elected to that office with just such a commitment. The course which he has followed is nothing less than a faithful discharge of his fiduciary obligations as president of the seminary.

The recent events that have taken place at Southern Seminary are forcing Southern Baptists to come to terms with two realities. First, there has been a serious doctrinal downgrade in our ranks over the last generation. This has been clearly demonstrated by the bitter complaints of current and former professors at the renewed emphasis on the seminary's confessional statement, the *Abstract of Principles*, as the doctrinal standard for all faculty members. Charges of "creedalism," "discrimination," and "authoritarianism" have been leveled at President Mohler simply because he now expects every professor to adhere to the *Abstract*.

This is even more amazing when one realizes that the "Fundamental Laws of the Seminary" which were written into its charter on April 30, 1858 unequivocally state that "all persons accepting Professorships in this Seminary, shall be considered by such acceptance, as engaging to teach in accordance with, and not contrary to, the *Abstract of Principles* hereinafter laid down." What this means is that every professor--past and present--has accepted this requirement as a condition of employment at the seminary. President Mohler is only insisting that the "Fundamental Laws of the Seminary" be followed and that the professors keep their word.

One would think that such insistence would hardly be necessary, much less that it would provoke the ire of so many people. The recent revelation of a former Southern professor, however, sheds much light on why these things are so. Frank Stagg, in an article which appeared in the January 5 issue of the *Baptist Record*, admits that, even when they signed it, he and many of his colleagues never really believed the *Abstract* in the way in which Boyce intended! He states, "Through most of Southern Seminary's years, professors were permitted to sign the *Abstract of Principles* as they interpreted it, contrary to Boyce's demand." Stagg's new-found candor not only indicts previous administrations and trustees who allowed (or perhaps even encouraged) such actions, it also betrays the depths to which we have sunk spiritually and theologically over the previous generation.

What kind of day is it when professors can sign a statement which they do not believe and then teach contrary to views which they have agreed to support, all the while thinking themselves to have done nothing wrong? What kind of day is it when contemporary theologians and scholars react so strongly against the summary statement of faith on which the founders of our mother seminary insisted? If Boyce, Broadus, Manly and others were correct in their understanding of God's truth in 1858, and if God's truth does not change, then who can deny that these recent events at Southern Seminary have exposed a serious doctrinal downgrade in our convention?

The second issue which Southern Baptists are being forced to consider is the cost of theological renewal. It is one thing to talk about the importance of truth. It is another to act on the basis of truth and to take positive steps to see it recovered. Truth has been marginalized in modern evangelicalism. It must be restored to its rightful place at the center of ecclesiastical life if we would see a return of vital Christianity. The cost of such restoration is high. The reason for this stems from the fact that many activities, programs, and institutions emerge during a season of doctrinal downgrade which are incompatible with the primacy and centrality of truth. Confessional fidelity (which in President Mohler and the trustees' case means fidelity to the *Abstract of Principles*) inevitably leads to a clash with those entities, relationships and structures which have usurped truth's priority of place.

Thus, unity may appear to suffer for awhile where truth is being recovered. Peace may disappear for a season. Fellowship may seem to be forgotten, when relationships are severed for the sake of truth. Those who insist on the priority of truth may superficially appear to be lacking in love as they deal decisively with those who are bent on maintaining the anemic status quo. A careful analysis, however, reveals that such appearances do not accord with reality.

When Josiah worked to recover the truth of God's Word in Judah, the cost was incredibly high. For a season his reign was characterized by demolition work. High places, Asherah poles, idols, and various instruments which had been dedicated to the service of pagan worship all had to be destroyed. False priests were removed. Why? Because Josiah was unwilling merely to pay lip service to God's truth which had been rediscovered. He was determined to discharge his duties as king by faithfully ordering the kingdom on the basis of that truth--even though the cost was great.

What was the outcome of Josiah's efforts? They resulted in the reformation and restoration of proper worship in Judah. God's commentary on his life and ministry is one to which every true minister ought to aspire: "Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him" (2 Kings 23:25).

None of this is to suggest that unity, peace, fellowship and love are unimportant or that they can be set aside by zeal for God's truth. Rather, we must recognize the true nature of such blessings as well as the basis on which they exist. Christian unity is one of the choicest fruits that grow on the vine of grace, yet, unity at the expense of truth is nothing more than conspiracy. What Christian does not esteem peace? Yet, peace without truth is a charade. Likewise with fellowship; Christians are designed to share life with one another, yet, to deny truth in the name of fellowship is hypocrisy. As for love, it rejoices in the truth. Where truth is dismissed love degenerates into sentimentalism.

Before such graces can flourish, their counterfeits must be exposed. Nothing reveals them more quickly than the truth of God's Word. The process can be painful. Often we would prefer simply to let sleeping dogs lie. But those who are valiant for the truth cannot afford to take the easy path when our Lord's honor and Word are at stake.

These are the lessons we are learning from the president and trustees at Southern Seminary. They are to be commended for providing such a faithful testimony. The course which they have charted and are following is a hopeful sign of future spiritual blessing.

Mission 150

Three years ago we began to anticipate the sesquicentennial year of the Southern Baptist Convention. In a desire to capitalize on this historic occasion, plans were made to send a special issue of the *Founders Journal* to every pastor, professor, and denominational leader in the convention. To date over 56,000 copies of that issue have been distributed. The response has been tremendous. Several hundred new subscribers have signed up for the journal. Numerous encouraging letters and phone calls have confirmed what was long suspected; namely, that there are scores of Southern Baptist pastors and church leaders who are deeply aware of the need of spiritual and doctrinal renewal within our SBC borders. The great majority of the pastors are under the age of 45.

In many respects Mission 150 is the culmination of more than a decade of various reformation efforts beginning with the Boyce Project. In the late 1970s Ernest Reisinger began giving away copies of James Boyce's *Abstract of Systematic Theology* to graduating Southern Baptist seminary students. After several years this project was curtailed. Since its inception, however, nearly 20,000 copies of Boyce's book have been distributed.

Another ambitious effort is that which Pastor Bob Selph and the Miller Valley Baptist Church undertook in the mid 1980s. They began to distribute, free of charge, Selph's book, *Southern Baptists and the Doctrine of Election* to every pastor in the convention. Slowly but surely, this book has been mailed to over 35,000 churches with plans to reach the remaining churches in the next 2 years.

Thirteen years ago the Southern Baptist Founders Conference began meeting for the purpose of encouraging pastors and church leaders in the study and application of the doctrines of grace. Well over one thousand people have attended at least one of these conferences.

Regional conferences have emerged during this time, with the Founders Conference Southwest (which meets in Lubbock each October) continuing in its fifth year. Inquiries have been made into starting as many as four other regional meetings in the next few years.

Nine years ago the first Southern Baptist Founders YOUTH Conference was held. Since that time over fifteen hundred young people have been challenged to follow Jesus Christ through God-centered preaching and teaching.

In 1989 the *Founders Journal* was launched with some uncertainty of the kind of reception it would receive. Now, twenty-one issues later, nearly 90,000 copies of the journal have been circulated. It is presently being mailed to 46 states and 21 foreign countries.

Interest in our Southern Baptist doctrinal heritage continues to grow at a rapid rate. More and more pastors and churches are coming to see that those doctrines of grace which our denominational forefathers believed are nothing less than biblical truth. Southern Baptists have been and continue to be a people of the Book. When they become convinced that the Book teaches something, they are willing to reform their thinking accordingly. Such reformation in the area of God's sovereignty in salvation continues to spread.

What does all of this mean? Perhaps it is too early to tell with any degree of certainty. But, with repeated looks, the discerning eye surely can detect a small cloud on the horizon. It may go unnoticed by those who have no interest in looking for it. But for those whose hearts and lives are bent on genuine spiritual and theological renewal, this small cloud holds the hope and promise of refreshing showers from heaven.

With fresh encouragements all around us, and the prospect of even greater encouragements before us, may God grant us strength and resolve to persevere in the glorious work of reformation.



The Challenge and Call of World Missions

George Martin

One of the best-known passages in all the Bible is the sixth chapter of Isaiah, which recounts the prophet's call to the prophetic ministry. Time and again God's people have been instructed from this passage concerning the glory and holiness of God. Often in sermons and Bible lessons the repentance of Isaiah and his willingness to do the Lord's bidding have been stressed.

Much less frequently, however, have we been reminded of the nature of Isaiah's ministry. That is, his work largely was to be one of weaning and sifting. He was to preach until the people of Judah turned away from the Lord with calloused hearts and until the cities lay ruined and without inhabitant. Ultimately, declared the God who commissioned Isaiah, only a tenth of the population would remain. And although that remnant would suffer, like a fallen tree leaves a stump, so would the remnant of God's people remain and eventually flourish.

Among several evident points here is the fact that this entire affair is orchestrated by the sovereign Lord. He calls the prophet. He gives him a message to proclaim. And the result of the preaching is known and declared beforehand. In other words, the divine purpose is made known and accomplished by a God who is both willing and able to do all that He wishes.

That the God of Isaiah is a sovereign is discovered by any cursory reading of the prophet's book. Text after text from Isaiah's prophecies reflect the truth stated in 46:10: "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."[\[1\]](#)

The prophecies of Isaiah direct us not only to ponder God's sovereign dealings with Israel, but also to declare His purposes with regard to the nations of the world. Consider the following text from Isaiah 49:6 --"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

The prophet who makes us see the absolute sovereignty of God in all things is not hesitant to declare that the purpose of that God includes the salvation of men from all nations on earth. As one thinks about this divine purpose in light of our text, two issues surface. First, a challenge exists, i.e., the challenge not to focus too strictly on one part of the divine plan, but to strive for the accomplishment of the whole. Second, a call goes forth, which results in the sending of laborers into the world to accomplish the Lord's desires. Thus, we find ourselves reflecting on the challenge and the call of world missions.

The Challenge of World Missions

The challenge is to look beyond our immediate surroundings and acquaintances and to see the whole world as our field of labor. It is a tremendous challenge because such an undertaking requires great resources and lays upon the Christian enormous responsibilities from which the flesh naturally recoils. Turning to a personal note, I remember the days of my pastoral ministry in Louisville, Kentucky. How much I enjoyed the work to which the Lord had called me! How deep was my love for the people to whom I ministered! But the work of the ministry was challenging, and occasionally the challenge became so great that I shrank back from it. Yes, there were days that I wanted to do nothing else but close my study door, return to Florida and grow oranges. The challenge of the pastoral

ministry at times was that overwhelming.

Likewise, the challenge in missions is great. Jacob, or Israel, was precious to the Lord. This is a central motif of Scripture. The Lord declared through the prophet Amos: "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth" (3:2). One cannot read the middle chapters of Paul's epistle to the Romans without being deeply convicted that Israel holds a special place in the heart of God.

Yet the view and purpose of God is wider still. It extends beyond Israel to the nations of the world. It has been so from the beginning, when Yahweh declared to Abram that he and his descendants would be a blessing to all peoples on the earth. From the beginning the challenge before God's people has been to make God known to others.

The challenge for American Christians begins in America. One after another, various organizations have polled the American people. Consistently those polls show the United States to be one of the most, if not the most, religious country in the world. In reality the masses in America possess a form of godliness while denying its power (2 Tim. 3:5). They claim to know God but by their actions they deny Him (Titus 1:16).

In America are heightened racial tensions, riots, crime and all sorts of wickedness. Our leaders call for peace among men and among nations, not realizing that no peace exists apart from Jesus Christ.

If we turn our attention to world demographics the challenge is greater still. Missiologists group the world's population into broad categories: the Christian world, which comprises approximately 33% of the earth's population (World C); the 42% of the world's population who have had some acquaintance with the gospel, but are not classified as Christian (World B); and World A, or the approximately 25% of the world's population (about 1.2 billion people) who have never had any exposure to the gospel. Furthermore, researchers tell us that the Christian world spends approximately 99.9% of their money on themselves and only about .09 per cent ministering to World B. Only .01 per cent is spent on reaching the unreached peoples of World A.[\[2\]](#)

Moreover, World A, while containing one fourth of the world's population, has only one per cent of the world's Christian missionaries assigned to it. In contrast, the "Christian world" has 33 per cent of the earth's population and 91 per cent of the missionaries.

In light of such a challenge, how can Southern Baptists be no more moved and motivated than we are?

The Call of World Missions

The second matter arising from our text is that of the call of world missions. The forty ninth chapter of Isaiah is filled with references to God's sovereignty. With authority He is able to command: "Listen to me, you islands; hear this you distant nations" (vs. 1). The servant declared that even before he was born the Lord knew him and called him (vs. 1). The Lord formed and shaped the servant's mouth to accomplish the divine purposes (vs. 2). The servant owes his very existence to the Lord (vs. 5). The Lord proclaimed: "I will make you a light for the Gentiles" (vs. 6) and then performed the deed. The Lord is the faithful one who chooses His servants and sends them forth to do His bidding (vs. 7).

All these are the works of One who declares His purposes and then causes them to come to pass. This is not one of the pagan idols, who have mouths but cannot speak. This is the Lord who speaks, and men listen. This is the Lord who commands, and men obey. This is the Lord who calls, and men follow.

Who can flee from one such as this? At the command of the Lord, Moses complained and excused himself only to find himself standing eye to eye with Pharaoh. Jeremiah vowed never again to declare the word of the Lord, only to feel that word as a burning in his bones that must be let out. Jonah attempted to escape the Lord's will for his life, only to find himself in the belly of a fish pledging to do God's bidding. Let Peter deny his Lord, let Saul attempt to stamp out the fledgling church and they become the greatest of all preachers, declaring the Gospel first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.

With absolute certainty we can declare the sovereignty of God in all things. He stirs up the thunderstorm and sends it across the earth wherever He pleases. He establishes one kingdom and tears down another. Through His prophets He speaks of events hundreds of years in advance and brings them to pass. He raises up preachers and missionaries and sends them out.

The biblical writers, while affirming divine sovereignty, also press the responsibility of men. Thus, while the title of this article is "The Challenge and Call of World Missions," a preferable designation might be "The Challenge and Command of World Missions." The Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are full of commands to God's people to be ambassadors to the world. From the covenant with Abram, when Yahweh promised to make Abram's family a blessing to the world, to the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, when He spoke the Great Commission to His disciples, we are commanded to make God known in all the earth.

Reflecting on another personal matter, I have heard wonderful testimonies about how God has tugged at the hearts of individuals and directed them to foreign countries as missionaries. To be honest, I had supposed that such calls must be supernatural, extraordinary, and maybe even miraculous in nature.

That was not my experience. As my wife and I looked at the Word of God, we could not get away from the biblical notion that God's purpose is for His people to preach the gospel to every tribe and nation and language group. That is because He has an elect people in every tribe and nation and language group (Rev. 5:9; Mark 13:27). And it is through the preaching of the gospel that God has always called men to himself. Our experience was nothing that might be classified as unusual. Simply put, through the realization growing on us that the Lord's purpose to save extends into all the world, my wife and I arrived at the point of saying, "Lord, we are willing to go." Nothing special. Nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing mystical. Simply a willingness to go. In light of such clear scriptural injunctions, how can any Southern Baptist refuse the great responsibility the Lord lays on His people?

To hear some contemporary preachers, one would think that God is in heaven wringing His hands out of frustration because He is having difficulty convincing people to believe in Him and to live for him. Such a poor and pitiful god!

That, however, is not the picture of God discovered in His self-revelation, i.e., the Bible. He sovereignly reaches down and makes a mighty nation from the descendants of one man. He has set aside for himself elect people from every land. He will pursue the lost sheep until it is found and brought into the fold.

Upon reflection, the fact of God's absolute sovereignty, even in the matter of calling and saving sinners, is not a hindrance to world missions but is an encouragement. Because God has set a people aside for himself, and because His Son has shed His precious blood for the elect, the harvest is assured. The Lord has His elect people in every nation and cannot be satisfied with anything less than the redemption of them all.



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¹All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version of the Bible.

²*"World A: A World Apart"* published by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.



The Doctrines of Grace and Passion for the Souls of Men

John A. Broadus

*"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren."
Romans 9:3*

Concern for the salvation of others is not prevented by a belief in what we call the doctrines of grace; is not prevented by believing in divine sovereignty, and predestination and election. Many persons intensely dislike the ideas which are expressed by these phrases. Many persons shrink away from ever accepting them, because those ideas are in their minds associated with the notion of stolid indifference. They say if predestination be true, then it follows that a man cannot do anything for his own salvation; that if he is to be saved he will be saved, and he has nothing to do with it, and need not care, nor need any one else care.

Now, this does not at all follow, and I will prove that it does not follow, by the fact that Paul himself, the great oracle of this doctrine in the Scripture, has uttered these words of burning passionate concern for the salvation of others, so close by the passages in which he has taught the doctrines in question. Look back from the text, run back a few sentences and you will find the very passage upon which many stumble: "Moreover, whom he did predestinate" -- there are people who shudder at the very words -- "them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Just a little while after he uttered those words from which men want to infer that the man who believes it need not feel concerned for his salvation or the salvation of others, just a little after, came the passionate words of the text. Nor is that all, for you will find just following the text, where he speaks of Esau and Jacob, that God made a difference between them before they were born, and where he says of Pharaoh that God raised him up that he might show his power in him, and that God's name might be declared through out all the earth. "Therefore he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth." Some good people fairly shiver at the inference, which seems to them to be inevitable from such language as that. But I say the inference must be wrong, for the inspired man who uttered this language, only a few moments before had uttered these words of the text.

And whenever you find your heart or the heart of your friend inclined to shrink away from these great teachings of divine Scripture concerning sovereignty and predestination, then I pray you make no argument about it, but turn to this language of concern for the salvation of others, so intensely passionate that men wonder and think surely it cannot mean what it says. The trouble is in this and many cases that we draw unwarranted inferences from the teachings of the Bible, and then cast all the odium of those inferences upon the truths from which we draw them. Now, I say that whatever be true, for or against the apostle's doctrines of predestination and divine sovereignty in salvation, it is not true that they will make a man careless as to his own salvation or that of others; seeing that they had no such effect on Paul himself, but right in between these two great passages come the wonderful words of the text.

[an excerpt from his sermon entitled, "Intense Concern for the Salvation of Others" in *Sermons and Addresses* (Hodder & Stoughton: New York, 1886)]



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Basil Manly: Fire From Light

The Transforming Power of Theological Preaching --Part 1--

Tom J. Nettles

[This article is adapted from a paper delivered as the Founders Day Address at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, January 30, 1995]

Introduction

Magnifying glasses fascinated me in the days of my pre-adolescent rascality. The concentration of light which enters a three-inch diameter magnifying glass into a circle one-sixteenth of an inch in diameter could set ablaze a pile of small twigs. Light is heat is fire.

Scripture employs the figure of light as

- a summary of the attributes of God: "God is light" (1 John 1:5);
- a picture of purity and holiness: "Walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8); "If we walk in the light as he is in the light" (1 John 1:7);
- knowledge of and love for the distinguishing truths of the gospel: "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6);
- Christ's embodiment of all the essential attributes of deity: "The brightness of his glory" (Hebrews 1:3); "He was the true Light" (John 1:9);
- the infinite perfection of his work as Savior: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12; cf. Rev. 21:23);
- and of the ministry of one whose life is consumed in pointing to these truths of God and the person of the savior: "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. . . . He was a burning and shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (John 5:33, 35).

When the excellence and majesty of God's revealed glory, the truth of His revealed word, the beauty of holiness, and the perfection of Christ as Savior capture and purify the mind and heart of a preacher, the result will be a fire in his bones and fire in the pulpit. Concentrated light makes fire.

The great early Southern Baptist leader, Basil Manly, Sr, is a shining example of this truth. He was a man of heroic proportions, a Sir Galahad in whose hands the holy grail of the gospel maintained an effulgence of power and glory, a demonstration that the "meta-narrative" we know as the gospel is true, coherent, and worthy of faithfulness unto death, and whose life would be a chastisement to our post-modern sewer of intellectual cynicism, philosophical suicide, and sensual numbness. Manly would not be ashamed to be a voice through whom God might speak to a generation of darkened understanding the creative word, "Let light shine in darkness" (2 Cor 4:6).

His presence would also present a purifying challenge to contemporary Southern Baptists, irrespective of polemical affiliation. At a time when our Easter pageants and dramas, our singing and our interpretive dance are better than our

preaching; when we are masters of manipulation and decision-getting but clueless on biblical persuasion; when we are clever at creating personal ministries of canonical proportions out of doctrinal idiosyncrasies but unconnected to the historic doctrines of the church; when we interpret freedom of conscience as a license to teach unhindered by historic Christian confession; when we can preach in thunderous tones about biblical authority but have greater tenacity in political criticism than we do in biblical exposition; when we have incredibly slick PR promoting evangelistic and missionary enterprises and at the same time are struggling concerning the unassailable distinctives of the gospel; when we have unprecedented opportunity for evangelism and theological education in dark lands; and when we see a burgeoning pool of talent and zeal awaiting training and direction; for this kind of time we should covet the mantle of Basil Manly, Sr.

Manly was a pastor, a political commentator, a family man, an administrator, an amateur naturalist, an educator as well as an educational theorist; but pre-eminently he was a preacher. J. P. Boyce remarked that in Manly's latter years his position as general missionary and evangelist in Alabama gave him "abundant opportunity for preaching, which after all was his great gift."[\[1\]](#)

Much could be said about Manly's comprehensive gifts and contributions to his generation of Southern Baptists. Additionally, his weaknesses and idiosyncrasies could be easily criticized. The focus of these articles, however, will be on Basil Manly, Sr. as a public purveyor of theological truth, primarily through preaching. I will also make suggestions on the connection of this role to his passion for the establishing of a theological center for Baptists in the South.

Biography

Manly was born on January 29, 1798, near Pittsboro, NC. He was baptized by Robert Daniel of the Rocky Spring Baptist Church, August 26, 1816, and was licensed by the same church April 25, 1818, to "exercise his ministerial gifts wherever his lot may be cast." After preparatory study under Dr. William T. Brantley in Beaufort, SC., he entered the junior class in South Carolina College in December 1819, then under the presidency of Jonathan Maxcy who died in June, 1820. He served as pastor at Edgefield Court House from 1822 till 1826 going there under "a call in providence amounting to an imperious duty." His observations convinced him of the desperate need for a competent Baptist ministry "to build them up and rescue the sinking Baptist name" since many Baptist gatherings listened regularly to Presbyterian and Methodist preachers. Preachers were needed to "keep that wealthy and populous district" from falling into "other and meddling hands."[\[2\]](#)

After a severe struggle and under a striking providence he became pastor of First Baptist Church, Charleston, SC, in 1826, following the justly and widely celebrated Richard Furman. From 1838 to 1855 he was president of the University of Alabama, giving it strong academic and moral leadership. He returned to Charleston, South Carolina, in 1855 to serve the Wentworth Baptist Church till 1859. He returned that year to Alabama to serve as a general missionary and evangelist for the convention and interim pastor at First Baptist Montgomery before retiring in 1864. He continued to preach and teach when able and finally moved to Greenville, SC, in 1867 to live with his son Basil, Jr., after the latter's wife died. He died on December 21, 1868.

Manly was highly influential in calling for the establishment of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 by authoring the famous Alabama Resolution. When the Confederate government was organized, he attended the meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, and led in prayer at the opening session. He rode in the carriage with Jefferson Davis to the inaugural ceremonies and led the prayer on that historic occasion. He also served as first president of the board of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and delivered the first commencement address in May, 1860.

Preachers and Education

Basil Manly was an educator. Throughout his ministry, he pressed for the education of Southerners in general and Baptist preachers in particular. Education for every profession was necessary for a stable, economically viable and advancing culture in the South, but a clergy astutely educated in biblical and theological disciplines was especially necessary for the glory and dignity of the gospel ministry.

Manly's persevering desire for the establishment of theological education in this form came from his own deep sense of the graciousness of the call to the ministry and the infinite excellence and importance of the task. As early as March, 1819, Manly had a burning desire for ministry but knew the necessity of education. "Indeed I know of no employment that would be more delightful to me," he wrote to his friend Iveson Brookes, "than administering consolation and encouragement to the lambs of Christ and helping them on their way to heavenly glory." This was not appropriate, however, until "the Lord is pleased to bestow more of his graces, more spiritual knowledge and understanding." Manly considered it his "duty to sit at the feet" of those who could instruct him and "receive with joy those crumbs of comfort and instruction" which God may "kindly direct his servants to administer."^[3]

Manly actively sought time for study. In 1825, while at his first pastorate in Edgefield Village, SC, he entered into a "friendly understanding" with the church concerning the duties of pastoral visitation. "It is unreasonable in a congregation," he urged, "to expect that a minister can spend his time in their houses, (and to visit a whole congregation often will consume all his time) and still carry on a course of mental cultivation, and present sound and well-digested discourses on the Sabbath." He would visit if requested in cases of sickness and distress. Otherwise he would make his calls "subservient to the great end of [his] ministry, the spiritual welfare of the People." For this purpose also, his home would always be open to calls.^[4]

In March, 1835, Manly wrote that theological education must not be mixed with a general course of study but must be carried on as a separate exercise. Any attempt to combine the theological school with the general college is bound to fail. For the variety of subjects that need to be taught, the specific attention each kind of student demands, and the urgency of their calling Manly called for "an institution suitably furnished and endowed for the *exclusive benefit* of those who are entering upon the ministry of the word."^[5] Attempts of individual states to provide theological education were better than nothing but far inferior to what could be done if the states were to unite their personnel and funds.

In the absence of widely available opportunities for formal theological training, Manly, in 1843, urged churches to "loose the hands of their ministers" that they might be enabled "by study and attention, to direct the minds of their congregations into profitable channels for meditation."^[6] Those who felt a call to ministry but had no education Manly encouraged with the reminder that many in their situation had made substantial and valuable acquisitions of scriptural knowledge. But this could only be done by "study, hard persevering study." Such study required time and this time "cannot be secured but by that relief from ordinary cares which the churches ought to supply."^[7]

In 1844, he renewed his call for a united venture of theological education contending "there is no object so important, so worthy to be cherished & sought by the Baptists at the South, as some great literary and theological centre, some rallying point embodying force enough to make us felt wherever we choose to lay out our arm."

In planning to send Basil, Jr., whose "mind is worth cultivating with the amplest means in our power," to Furman Theological Institute and Newton, Manly lamented the inability of the Baptists of several states to combine resources. Should they do so, they would "have at once three or four well-sustained professors, and an institution of

sufficient force and completeness to attract all our first rate young men." [8] Eleven years later Manly again lamented, "It's a lamentation (is it not a reproach?) that there is not one theological school among the Baptists to which a Southern man may send a well educated son." [9]

The very next year, concrete action was taken. Beginning in 1856, Manly was president of each of three educational conventions which secured the establishment of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In 1856, the preliminary steps were taken and Manly wrote a circular indicating the difficulties involved but affirming the "attainment of the general object as paramount." [10] The committee was instructed and authorized to present a report concerning the procurement and management of funds and the availability of favorable sites. In 1857 the committee determined to establish the institution, selected the site at Greenville, and adopted a financial plan for its initiation and continued support. In addition, a committee on Plan of Organization was appointed by Manly. Somewhat apologetically he announced that the five appointed members of the committee were all relatively young men, but such was necessary in the devising of a new and bold plan for theological education. Accordingly he appointed J. P. Boyce (who, following the 1856 educational convention had delivered the justly famous address "Three Changes in Theological Institutions" before the trustees of Furman University), John A. Broadus, E. T. Winkler, William Williams, and Basil Manly, Jr. Four of these served as the first faculty at the seminary. [11] In 1858 the plan of organization was adopted, the professors were selected, and the institution's interests were committed to a board of trustees.

J. P. Boyce recalls the scene at the close of the 1857 convention when the brethren from several states agreed to establish a common institution at Greenville.

The proposition was made, that Dr. Manly should lead in a prayer of thanksgiving for the unanimity which had been attained. Bowing himself upon the platform of the pulpit, he led the hosts of his brethren in acknowledgment of the Divine hand in all that had been done, and in thanks for the attainment of what he had hardly hoped his eyes would see. The great desire of his life time was secured. He saw that God was with His people, and he lost all apprehension as to the future result. The whole assembly was moved to tears. The gushings of his own heart stopped the utterances of his lips, and for a time the supplication of the Spirit was indeed made with tears and groans that could not be uttered. [12]

The Goal of Theological Education

What kind of preacher did Manly envision as the goal of theological education? His hopes may be summarized in two traits. First, the minister must be sound in the truths of God's word. His direction of worship, his preaching, his counseling, and his evangelism must arise from confidence in the power of Spirit-blessed truth. He must believe that spiritual progress is never made without a corresponding advance in scriptural understanding.

Second, the minister must have true affections. He must manifest an earnestness built on a personal sense of sin, indebtedness to grace, love of the tri-une God, and faithfulness to his truth. He must deal closely with his own conscience so that he might do the same with those of his hearers. His scriptural understanding must at the same time be a spiritual understanding; he must have tasted that the Lord is good and have a relish for the things of heaven.

Years of ministry plus opportunities to hear a large number of preachers provided him with a rich understanding of the importance of these elemental qualifications. In an 1843 "Circular Letter" he wrote:

In addition to this, the pastors of the churches ought to take pains to explain, as fully and carefully as possible, the doctrines and duties of the christian religion. Whence arises the lamentable ignorance of doctrine, and the heresies and contentions which so frequently spring up in the churches, but from this neglect of indoctrinating new members? We preach too much merely to make men *feel*, and do not sufficiently aim to make them *think* and *consider* and "search the scriptures to see if these things be so." An appeal to the feelings is often desirable, and is often attended with happiest effects; but it should not be *all feeling*.

The appeal to feeling apart from the inculcation of truth creates the possibility that a "bold and impassioned orator" could appeal to large numbers of undiscerning people and "inculcate heretical sentiments."[\[13\]](#)

On the other hand, if these words be true and believed, they will evoke the deepest movement of holy passion, a reality which will affect even one's preaching style. He wrote his friend J. L Reynolds that he felt concerned "lest you should be infected with the style and manner of preaching common at the north." This was Reynolds natural tendency in some degree, that is "to glide into a stiff and rather formal delivery." He lacked "ease;" to look at home in the pulpit was needed, and "an inward spring of animation and engagedness in the great work." Manly recommended a "college of firebrands, that the measured pace which is characteristic of you might be quickened -- that they might burn some points on your smooth and polished surface."[\[14\]](#)

In 1846, Manly, described with clear agitation the consistent failure of a preacher to "feel" the power of the truth and the necessity of plowing deeply into the affections of his hearers. This lack of feeling led not only to dullness in style but virtual irrelevance of subject matter. The minister seemed "moved and interested himself," Manly observed, and in some there may have been a "pleasing intellectual glow" but the church was "wholly unmoved."

His failure is to be attributed, I think, to a want of experimental & close dealing with the conscience. He pinches nobody; he makes no one feel either afraid or ashamed or sick of sin. He does not give the nature, necessity, & evidences of repentance, of faith, of regeneration. He does not keep it constantly before the mind that his hearers are *lost*, and need to be *saved*; that this is *his* business with them, to save them from *sin*, and *eternal damnation*; the damnation of *hell fire*. ...Alas what is to become of the souls of his poor hearers.[\[15\]](#)

Manly as a Preacher

These two principles (doctrinal soundness and earnest affections) served not only as a standard by which Manly evaluated the tendencies in the preaching of those he observed, they were the conscious guidelines of his personal ministry. He was keen to follow the Pauline command, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim 4:16). He maintained, therefore, a close biblical analysis of his personal weaknesses and graces.

A simple but sufficient illustration of this power of personal knowledge comes from his struggle with the call to the First Baptist Church in Charleston, SC. Manly pled his inadequacies and the great possibility that the church would chafe under his inability to meet the high standard to which they had become accustomed in Richard Furman. He countered, however, that he did not mean to "undervalue the grace of God which hath been bestowed on me. I am indeed a great wonder, a miracle of grace!" He knew in fact that "The grace of God has been exceeding great, that I should ever be counted faithful and put into the ministry." He was also aware with "adoring thankfulness" that he had been the "instrument of calling some from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God" but he did not want to presume on the "wonderful and sovereign goodness of God" by moving from his "own proper sphere" to

intrude into another man's, thus incurring not God's blessing, but his frown.[\[16\]](#)

The knowledge of sin and grace which informed Manly's experience of the gospel, his view of the ministry, and the quest for the procurement of theological education for Baptists in the South is opened clearly in his preaching.

John A. Broadus characterized Manly's preaching as "always marked by deep thought and strong argument, expressed in a very clear style, and by extraordinary earnestness and tender pathos, curiously combined with positiveness of opinion and a masterful nature. People were borne down by his passion, convinced by his arguments, melted by his tenderness, swayed by his force of will."[\[17\]](#)

Manly's "deep thought and strong argument" were expressive of his doctrinal passion. He was trained in the use of the original languages and consulted regularly the commentaries he considered most reliable. He added to these functions of sermon preparation, careful personal examination, deep reflection on the meaning of the text for his hearers, and the text's doctrinal and experiential significance within the entire scope of biblical truth. In all it made for compelling instruction and heart-rending application.

Calvinistic

Basil Manly shared the theological position of his Southern Baptist contemporaries. In the words of J. P. Boyce, "In his doctrinal sentiments, Dr. Manly was a decided Calvinist."[\[18\]](#) Samuel Henderson, president of the Alabama Baptist Convention when Manly died, remarked in his memorial address in 1869, "In his doctrinal sentiments he was what Andrew Fuller would call a strict Calvinist."[\[19\]](#)

Primarily, the Bible taught him his creed. Henderson remarks that Manly adhered to Calvinist doctrines "not because Calvin taught them, but because they appeared to him to be taught in the Bible." These doctrines should be forced into the nomenclature of "Calvinism" only in the sense that the doctrine of justification by faith should be called "Lutheran," that is, because it is a doctrine to which Luther gave distinctive exposition, not to imply in the least that it is an unbiblical idiosyncrasy. If the "five points," to use the language of Henderson, are true at all, "they were just as true before Calvin's day as they are now." It is useless, therefore, says Henderson, to seek to stigmatize these doctrines (which he is defending as those which Manly held) by calling them "Calvinism."

Manly, in fact, felt that the truths of the doctrines of grace were taught so clearly in Scripture that were minds not biased by pride and self-dependence, inferential argumentation would be superfluous. Naked Scripture quotation would suffice. In his circular letter on "Election" he explained:

If the human mind were not unreconciled to God, nothing more than the bare citation of the appropriate portions of scripture would be requisite to the universal reception of the doctrine they contain. The deep derangement of our nature is such that we are opposed to God, and chiefly in those attributes and measures which imply our guilt and ruin. Election is of this nature; and as it is more obviously *of grace, purely and exclusively*, than any other blessing, it is more violently disliked and opposed than any other, by whatever is unrenewed and unsanctified in the human breast. In regard of this perverseness, therefore, it is allowable to assist our conceptions and belief by reasonings and illustrations.[\[20\]](#)

This "Circular Letter" sought to address and correct the "unsound views and seductive arts" of the North River United Baptist Association. The Tuscaloosa Baptists concluded that the North River churches, since they would not

affirm unconditional election and effectual calling, were a "different denomination from ourselves, holding principles adverse to ours, in fundamental and vital particulars."[\[21\]](#) The doctrinal imprecision of the North River "immersionists" as we might call them (since the Tuscaloosa Association forbids our calling them Baptists) had promoted "error, discord, and schism."

After publication of the article, he wrote Basil Manly, Jr., at Princeton that it had been read "avidly, both by the friends and foes of the doctrine of election." The Methodists, he said were "Badly troubled with it" and did not know how to answer it or what to say. His experience showed him, however, that rather than deal with the biblical and theological context of election itself, its opposers would normally classify it as "worse than . . . universalism," or express regrets that this cause of separation has been thrown in between the denominations. Another tactic in waiving the question of election was to "get off upon Reprobation or some other question." Manly was sure it would exert influence because he had written it and that it was sure to prompt a counter attack.[\[22\]](#)

Manly was not a closet Calvinist. The truths of God's sovereign, gracious wisdom should be discussed and preached openly and frequently because such disquisition brings God honor, will encourage the people of God, and will bring the unregenerate under conviction. The doctrines of grace are the foundation for all of his sermons, briefly cited in some, conspicuously present in many, and purposefully expounded in others. None of the distinguishing elements were omitted: unconditional election; the distinctiveness of Christ's atoning work for the salvation of his people; the thorough sinfulness, damnability, corruption and bondage of fallen creatures; the necessity and efficacy of saving grace; and the certainty of perseverance for all those the Father chose, for whom Christ died and intercedes, and in whom the effectual work of the Spirit has begun.

Manly's definition of election, punctuated by a large number of scripture proofs, includes all the doctrines of grace and implies all the obligations of Christian ministry and discipleship.

It relates to a purpose of God, in eternity, respecting individual human beings who are the subjects of it; who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world,-elect according to the foreknowledge of God. Yet this election did not proceed on the ground of either faith or works foreseen in them; it is an election of grace and not caused by the moral character of the subjects. It is distinguishing, choosing some and not others; it fixes on persons, not on states nor conditions; the number of the elect is, to the mind of God, necessarily definite and certain; but within the gracious purpose, are inseparably included both the means and the end. Jesus Christ was chosen to be the Head of the Church, and all his people were chosen in him; and this choice of them in him, a fact transpiring in eternity, is the source of all the spiritual gifts and graces exercised by them in time.[\[23\]](#)

Though always ready and able to discuss the doctrines and the intricate netting of multitudinous issues raised by their exposition, his attitude toward the subject was one of great reverence, never flippancy or a sense of superior familiarity. Having the task of speaking publicly on such a subject he considered a "great responsibility." Election, he wrote, is "a doctrine of the Scriptures to be firmly believed, to be plainly declared, and to be reverently approached. It is holy ground; not to be invaded and profaned by light and familiar disquisition."[\[24\]](#) He believed it to be taught by none more frequently than the Lord Jesus himself and in none of his discourses more fully than in the prayer of John 17.

In 1831 Manly had preached a long series of messages on John 17 to his Charleston congregation. Titles of some of the sermons are: "The Knowledge of God;" "To Know God is Eternal Life;" "Prayer for the People and not for the World;" "Christ Asking to Be Glorified;" "Christ Pleading the Completion of His Work;" "Prayer That the Saints be

Kept." This series overflows with images of God's sovereign design in election proportioned beautifully to complementary aspects of biblical and systematic theology. The propositional truths are then colored in the crimson pathos of the historical outworking of God's eternal purpose.

In the sermon "Christ Asking to be Glorified," Manly unpacks the "reason urged for its fulfilment," that is for the fulfilment of Christ's prayer to be glorified. Manly's notes read:

God's own design with regard to the ends of Xt's Death -- Our Blessed Lord speaks of this most familiarly, as being in his counsels, and intimately knowing all -- (And it is appropriate for *him* to speak *thus to his Father*)... He speaks of his Father's having given him *some specially*, to be saved -- of having given him all power for this end -- &c -- that none might be lost. That this was spoken in the hearing of his Apostles & recorded was designed to convince us of the certainty of salvation -- & to make us bow in admiration crying "O the depths &c"[\[25\]](#)

A bit later in discussion of the same point Manly mingles the theology of certainty with the emotional rigors of Christ in achieving redemption.

A consideration which wd. be likely to prevail -- God's own previous well understood design -- and there is something tender in it as much to say -- in pursuance of this design I have come seeking thy chosen, and am now in extremity -- Glorify thy Son[\[26\]](#)

In the sermon "Prayer for Christ's People, and not for the World" (John 17:9, 10), Manly speaks first of the "sense in which Christ prays for his own people and not for the world." The subjects of his prayer are those "given him in the counsels of Eternity, and brought to him by faith and efficacious grace, or *to be so brought*."

The circumstance under which Christ was placed had a character exclusively its own. He had, as Mediator, "received a commission with respect to the salvation of sinners. The Father had committed his saints into his hands -- they had been brought, (some of them) unto Him -- received his word -- rested on him -- He was now about to leave them. Might he not be permitted to indulge in the expression of desire suited only to them?" Manly granted several aspects of universal application and benefit in the mediation of Christ; he closed, however, by expanding again the premise that Christ prays for his people in a sense in which he does not pray for the world, "And it is the mercy of God to sinners that he does so." Manly answered objections to this particularity and closed with a doubled-edged admonition: the saints should be encouraged with the certainty of God's purpose ("But what shall we think concerning that protection which will be given to objects for whom he sacrificed his Son!") and sinners must not be allowed any refuge to excuse themselves in their sin on the basis of the particularity of God's grace ("Let none think to excuse himself from the guilt of neglecting the present case of his soul, on the ground that he may not be embraced in the special prayer of Christ").

[\[Go to Part 2\]](#)



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¹J. P. Boyce, *Life and Death the Christian's Portion* (New York: Sheldon & Co.; Richmond: Starke and Ryland; Tuscaloosa: Manly & Co., 1869), p. 60.

²Basil Manly, Letters to Iveson Brookes, July 24, 1821 and September 25, 1821.

³Basil Manly, Letter to Iveson Brooks, March 25, 1819.

⁴Basil Manly, Sr. A letter recorded in his diary November 1, 1825.

⁵Basil Manly, "Theological Education in the Southern States," in *The Southern Baptist and General Intelligencer* (March 13, 1835) p. 171.

⁶Basil Manly, "Circular Letter" of the Tuscaloosa Baptist Association on discipline printed in the *Christian Index*, (March 24, 1843, pp. 179-181, 188) p. 180.

⁷*Ibid.* 181.

⁸Basil Manly, letter to Reynolds, Jan 10, 1844, from Tuscaloosa.

⁹Basil Manly, Letter to W.B. Johnson, October 24, 1855.

¹⁰John. A. Broadus, *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce*, pp. 118, 119.

¹¹It is worth noting that two of these were there directly as a result of the influence of Basil Manly. His son, Basil, Jr., for whom he prayed in 1831: "O may the Lord smile upon the child -- early lead to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and employ him in thy service. My one desire is that he may early become a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ and may live to the glory of Him who loved us and gave himself for us." J. P. Boyce came under the ministry of Basil Manly as a result of the conversion of his mother, who was moved to seek God after the death of the Manly's son, John Waldo, at less than a year of age. Manly wrote in his diary, "the will of the Lord is done and I have not a word to say in opposition to it." Later Mrs. Ker Boyce requested a visit and told Manly that her mind was first "seriously awakened" by the sermon he preached on the occasion of that death. See Manly's *Diary*. pp. 147, 148, 172.

¹²J. P. Boyce, *Life and Death*, p. 52.

¹³Basil Manly, "Circular Letter" from the Tuscaloosa Baptist Association printed in the *Christian Index* (March 24, 1843) p. 180. The subject matter of this letter is "Discipline" and will be referred to hereinafter as "Discipline."

¹⁴Basil Manly, Sr., to J. L Reynolds, [date ?], folder 26.

¹⁵Basil Manly, Letter to Basil Manly, Jr., March 15, 1846.

¹⁶Basil Manly, Letter to Mr. David Adams of Charleston, Jan 26, 1826.

¹⁷John A. Broadus, *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce* (New York: Armstrong and Son, 1893), p. 16.

¹⁸James P. Boyce, *Life and Death the Christian's Portion: A Discourse occasioned by the Funeral Services of the Rev. Basil Manly, D. D.* (New York: Sheldon & Co.; Richmond: Starke and Ryland; Tuscaloosa: Manly & Co., 1869), p. 68.

¹⁹Samuel Henderson, *Christianity Exemplified: A Memorial Sermon of Rev. Basil Manly, Sr., D. D.* (Atlanta: Franklin Steam Printing House, 1870), p. 34.

²⁰"Minutes of the Twelfth Annual Session of the Tuskaloosa Baptist Association," (Tuskaloosa: Printed by M. D. J. Slade, 1844), p. 9. These minutes include the transcript of Basil Manly's circular letter on "Election" and will be referred to hereinafter as "Election."

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 4.

²²Letter to Basil Manly, Jr. October 15, 1844.

²³Basil Manly, Sr., "Election," pp. 7, 8.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁵Basil Manly, Sr., Sermon "Christ Asking to Be Glorified" from microfilm of Manly collection, folder #

²⁶*Ibid.*



A Prayer for My Son

Basil Manly, Sr. (1831)

The following is taken from the journal of Basil Manly, Sr., whose son grew up to be one of the leading denominational statesmen of the 19th century among Southern Baptists. Among his many other duties, he served as a charter member of the faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Saturday, Sept. 17. My little son (Basil) came to me this morning of his own accord and asked me to write him a prayer which he might say every night, in which he might pray for his Father and Mother and everybody that is anything to him.

From some conversations I have had with him lately (now between five and six years old) I am surprised and pleased at his knowledge of the nature of the gospel and think he certainly is occasionally impressed to some degree with their force.

O may the Lord smile upon the child -- early lead to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and employ him in thy service. My own desire is that he may early become a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and may live to the glory of Him who loved us and gave himself for us.

The following is a copy of the little prayer which I wrote for him (in printed letters) according to his request.

O Almighty God, who art a Spirit, grant me thy Holy Spirit that I may worship thee in Spirit and in truth.

Forgive all my sins through the merits of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, who is my only Saviour. For his sake, grant me a new heart, make me Thy child, and keep me from all evil:

And do thou so guide my mind and ways, that I may serve and please thee all the days of my life.--

Have mercy, O Lord, on my Father, my Mother, and all my dear relations -- my teachers, and all my friends:

Keep them in life, in health, and in thy fear continually;

And when our mortal lives are ended, May we all meet in thy Kingdom above, to love and praise thee forever. --

These blessings with all other good things which thou seest I need, I humbly ask for the sake of Jesus Christ, who is worthy, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to receive all the praise and glory, both now and forever. -- Amen.



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On Coming to Christ

--Part 1--

Ernest Reisinger

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55:1-3).

Coming Is Eating--Believing is Drinking

"And Jesus said unto them, `I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst'" (John 6:35).

A commentary on John 6:35: "Then Jesus said unto them, `Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man; and drink his blood ye have no life in you'" (John 6:53).

"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, `If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink'" (John 7:37).

Our Lord's first invitation is found in Mt. 11:28-30: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

His last invitation is found in Rev. 22:17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, `Come!' And let him who hears say, `Come!' And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."

The expression, "come to Christ," is a good one, but it is surrounded by much ignorance and confusion when it is made a part of wrong methods of evangelism. What does that expression mean to its hearers? Surely it is necessary for sinners to come to Christ in order to be saved. But when a preacher calls sinners to the front of a church, while the congregation sets the mood by means of an "invitational hymn," it is likely that most hearers will equate coming to Christ with "coming forward" or "walking the aisle."

If questioned about the matter, the preacher might say "walking an aisle" does not save. Yet, at the same time, by his very language and methods, he is equating coming forward with "coming to Christ," and thus, many poor souls are deceived.

Coming to Christ is a good, biblical expression. It is used to express the act of the soul. Coming to Christ includes leaving all self-righteousness and sin, and receiving His righteousness to be our righteousness and His blood to be our covering--our atonement. Coming to Christ embraces repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus

Christ. Coming to Christ is the first effect of regeneration.

When the preacher says, "Come to Christ" at the end of the service, to many it means coming to the front of the church, or "going forward." What do our children think it means when the preacher says, "Come to Christ" and at the same time he invites them to the front of the church? Every true preacher and evangelist knows that coming forward in a church is not the same as coming to Christ. Some may even say "walking an aisle will not save you," but then proceed with the "altar call" as though they think it is coming to Christ.

Many preachers are not judicious in their so-called invitation, and as a result many of our people, possibly most of our people, equate the physical act of coming forward with coming to Christ. Again I say, every true preacher knows that there is not a case in the Bible, or one line of Scripture, to support this misconception (equating coming to Christ, and coming forward at the end of the service). Not only is it not in the Bible, but it was never practiced by our Lord or the apostles. In fact, it was never practiced in the church until about 150-200 years ago. The famous revivalist Charles G. Finney introduced and popularized the use of the inquiry room and the anxious bench. But Finney did not equate coming to the inquiry room as coming to Christ.

The Invitation System

Why am I so concerned about this subject? Because many people are deceived, and to be deceived about one's own salvation is the worst deception that can come upon any human being. Many Baptists are deceived on this very point.

Two Scriptures most often used to support the invitation system are Mark 1:17 and Mt. 10:32, 33. Please note I did not say invitation--but invitation *system*.

Mark 1:17: "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." The disciples left their nets and followed Jesus. He was there physically and they did follow Him physically.

Suppose that today I went to the docks of a marina and said, "Follow Jesus, and He will make you fishers of men." Would I mean that my hearers should leave their nets physically? Or, follow Jesus physically? No, that would be impossible, because Jesus is no longer here physically.

What does it mean to follow Jesus today? Following Jesus means learning His teachings--living under the influence of those teachings, and applying His them to our every day practice.

In the days of His flesh a physical response may have been possible. The fishermen literally followed Him. Zacchaeus literally and physically came out of the tree and followed Him. But even in the days of His visible presence a spiritual identification of repentance and faith was clearly the fundamental sense of the words, "Follow Me" and "Come unto Me." Therefore, Mark 1:17 is not a valid text to support any physical act or *invitation system*.

The second Scripture often used to support this system is Mt. 10:32, 33: "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

Let us take a careful look at what our Lord is saying. Is He teaching that by the *act* of confession, or by some physical act, we become Christians? Or, is He teaching that the one indispensable mark of those who are Christians is that they *will* confess and *live* a life that openly acknowledges Him? There should be no question about the

answer. To confess Christ is a spiritual duty of Christians. Confessing Him is not how to become a Christian.

In this passage Jesus is not telling sinners how to make a decision, or the way that the new birth takes place. He is teaching that confessing Him is a spiritual duty of the Christian. Confessing Christ is a Christian duty. On this point the New Testament is crystal clear. But, I ask, how was it done? What was the public confession?

In the Book of Acts (the sacred manual of evangelism) we have apostolic examples of evangelism at its purest. Ask the question, as you read the book of Acts, "How was confession made?" The clear and simple answer is baptism.

What Coming to Christ Does Not Mean

Let us return to our question--What does it mean to come to Christ? The best I can do with that question is, first, to tell you what it is not and secondly, to tell you what is involved in coming to Christ.

First, What it is not. Coming to Christ is not an overt physical act. Christ is not here physically and, therefore, one cannot come to Him physically. He is not at the front of the church, floating around like a phantom. You cannot come to Christ with your feet.

Let us to look at a very startling verse, a verse that is obnoxious to the natural mind, and confusing to many true Christians.

"No man can come to Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).

Some describe coming to Christ as the easiest thing in the world, and in one sense it is true--if you will come, you are welcome. But this verse indicates to us that coming to Christ is impossible. Though this text may be offensive to carnal minds, we must remember that offending the natural mind is often the first step in a soul coming to Christ in a saving relationship. They must see their lost condition before they ever desire to be saved.

Let us review a little grammar lesson. My old lawyer friend used to teach his children to say "May I?" If the children would say, "Can I go out and play?" He would answer, "I don't know--are you able?" He was, of course teaching them to say, "May I go out and play?"

Please note--our verse says, "no man *can*"; that means he does not have the ability. He may, but he can't. This text clearly teaches man's inability; but, just as clearly, it teaches the Father's gracious drawing. There is, in the text, sweet consolation--hope in the Father.

Where does man's inability lie?

1. It does not lie in any physical defect. It cannot mean man is not able to move his body, or walk with his feet. The sinner can do that--he can walk to the front of the church--he has legs. If it is saying words in prayer--he can do that. Many unregenerate persons pray. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ.

2. The inability does not lie in his mind, or intellect. The unconverted can learn the Bible intellectually just as he can learn math, history, physics, music, etc. Yes, he can believe the Bible is true. There are many true books which have

been written by unconverted people. One can believe every statement that Christ makes, just as he is able to believe any other person. We should not tell men they cannot believe. It is not true--they can believe every word of the Bible and be as "lost as a goose." The inability is not in the faculty of the intellect (mind), or the body.

Where then, does this inability lie? It lies deep in man's nature. Through the fall and our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the powerful work of God the Holy Spirit.

We see it in the animal world. Animals act according to their nature. Sheep will not eat garbage, and a hog will not eat grass. There is no physical problem--they both have mouths, teeth, ears, and legs. The reason sheep will not eat garbage is because of their nature. Man's nature keeps him from coming to Christ.

Give a mother a knife and tell her to plunge it into her baby. If she is a normal mother she will say, "I can't!" "I can't!" "I cannot!" Does she mean that she does not have the strength or the ability to do this? No! No! The mother's nature makes it impossible.

Again, where does the inability to come to Christ lie? It lies in the obstinacy of the human will. Oh, yes, men can be saved if they will. I believe every sinner outside of hell can be saved if he will. That is the root of the matter--*if they will*.

B.B. Warfield said, "What is the use of arguing about *whosoever will* in a world of *whosoever wont's*?" We are preaching and witnessing to a world of "whosoever will nots."

The most pessimistic verse in all the Bible is John 5:40: "And you *will not* come to me, that you might have life." That is why John 6:44 is the most optimistic verse in the Bible. Do you know that this is one of the sweetest verses in all the Bible? If it were not for that little word *except* every person would go to hell. No one would be saved. Oh! "Blessed Except!" "Except the Father"--thank God for what the Father does. What I am saying is that sinners need a new "willer." Where the new will is given the desire and power will follow.

The Father Draws. How does the Father draw sinners? All would agree that the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men. But preaching alone will draw no one. Our Lord's preaching alone did not draw one sinner.

3. Coming to Christ is not some mystical experience unfounded on truth, apart from the truth of the Scriptures.

4. Coming to Christ is not merely a volitional act, that is, an act of willing, or an act of choosing. It most certainly involves an exercise of the will, but is not like voting for some one, ie. "I vote for Jesus," "I decide for Christ"; you may make a different decision tomorrow.

Coming to Christ is not physical; coming to Christ is not purely mental; coming to Christ is not mystical unfounded on truth and coming to Christ is not merely volitional.

"Well, preacher, you did very well at telling us what it is not--but, what then *does* it mean to come to Christ?" That question will be [taken up in the next issue](#).



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News

Death of Dr. Ward Walker

All who love the truth of God will be sorry to learn of the death of Ward Walker March 24. He served as Vice-President of East Texas Baptist University in Marshall. He was a great supporter of the Founders Journal and conference. His loss will be keenly felt by all who knew him. Ward is survived by his wife, Dianne, his daughter, Mrs. Philip (Cari) Johnson, and 3 sons--Timothy and his wife, Rebecca, and their sons, Matthew & Justin; Joshua, who is in the Marine Corps; and James, a pre-teen who lives with his mother. At his memorial service one of the hymns which Ward composed, "Waiting on the Lord," was sung by the congregation. The first verse expresses the hope and confidence by which he lived and in which he died:

"He's the God of time and timing. He's the Lord of circumstance.
He's my Father, and I'm waiting on His sovereign providence.
'Wait, I say, just wait upon Me. Trust Me now with all your cares.
I will guide and guard and give you My best answer to your prayers."

Please pray for Dianne and the children as they grieve the loss of a faithful husband and father.

Moderate Editor Says the CBF is "Lying"

Jack Harwell, editor of *Baptists Today*, has stated that, despite claims to the contrary, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is already a *de facto* denomination. "My position has been that we're being deceptive. We're lying to people when we say we're not [a denomination]," he said. "We should just go ahead and turn our backs on the Southern Baptist Convention and forget about it."

"Authenticus Baptistus" or Jellyfish?

"*Authenticus Baptistus*" is an endangered species, Russell Dilday recently told a group of American Baptists in Syracuse, NY. The primary reason "authentic Baptists" are dying off, he said, is because they have given up their freedom. While Baptists share a number of "convictional genes," the dominant Baptist gene, Dilday claimed, is freedom. Freedom is "so deeply ingrained within our life essence that it becomes an identifier, the primary description of who we are." The most serious threat to authentic Baptists "is from within, from pseudo-Baptists, rogues inside the family who either never knew or have forgotten what our true identity is," the former Southwestern Seminary president said. His proposals for resisting this threat include rejecting the use of creeds. Baptists may be nudged toward creeds by the "aimless uncertainty" of post-modern culture and the "bland absence of conviction," he said, "But authentic Baptists will always resist that temptation and maintain our historic aversion to any man-made creeds."

One wonders how Dr. Dilday would classify his predecessor, the principal founder and first president of Southwestern, B. H. Carroll, who wrote, "The modern cry: 'Less creed and more liberty,' is a degeneration from the vertebrate to the jellyfish, and means more heresy. Definitive truth does not create heresy--it only exposes and corrects. Shut off the creed and the Christian world would fill up with heresy unsuspected and uncorrected, but none the less deadly" (comments on Eph. 4:1-16 taken from *An Interpretation of the English Bible*). Part of the information in this story was taken from an Associated Baptist Press release.

Literature ministry in Eastern Europe

Stichting Kom Over En Help is an organization in the Netherlands which is committed to translating and distributing God-centered literature to Eastern Europe countries. Presently they are finishing the translation of a concise version of Matthew Henry's Commentary in Bulgarian. If you would like to assist in this work or want more information you may contact them at P. O. Box 138, 386 AC NIJKERK, The Netherlands.



Book Reviews & Notices

Reviews

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: Letters 1919-1981, Selected with notes by Iain Murray, Banner of Truth, 1994, 248 pages, \$25.95

Reviewed by [Thomas Ascol](#)

Iain Murray has done it again. In his classic two-volume biography of Lloyd-Jones he introduced and documented the amazing work of God in the life and ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Those volumes have encouraged numerous pastors to remain faithful to their calling and they receive my vote for the greatest Christian biography in the twentieth century.

This new book, a compilation of selected letters from "the Doctor" makes a perfect companion to the earlier work. Murray arranges the letters both chronologically and thematically. In addition, the table of contents includes a brief, topical annotation with each letter listed. Thus, the reader can quickly scan the contents to search for letters which address particular issues of interest. For example, in section 6 ("A Younger Generation and New Agencies") the following entries are included: "To Mr Raymond Johnston, *Counsel for Young Writers*," and "To Mr Peter Golding, *Better Times are Coming*."

Section 3 has letters "To Friends and Fellow Ministers" in which can be found Lloyd-Jones' counsel on "*Waiting on Divine Guidance*," and "*On Breakdowns in the Ministry*." The wisdom and tenderness which characterize his correspondence are especially demonstrated in the latter where a middle-aged minister who has suffered a breakdown is encouraged with four pieces of advice: "(1) Do not analyse your symptoms." "(2) Don't be in too much of a hurry." "(3) Do not think at all about the work [back home]. It is God's, not yours and He will care for it." "(4) You will find that this experience will be most rewarding spiritually" (76-77).

Did the Doctor ever speak in tongues? What did he consider to be the most important sermon he ever preached? How did he view the Baptist Union in England? These and other questions are answered in the letters contained in this book.

Banner of Truth has enriched the evangelical world by putting these letters into a book. The thorough index adds to the value. I highly recommend it.

Baptist Successionism: A Crucial Question in Baptist History, American Theological Library Association Monograph Series, by James Edward McGoldrick, Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1994, 181 pp., \$27.50

Reviewed by [Terry Chrisope](#)

For anyone who has felt the attraction of Baptist successionism ("Landmarkism" in popular terminology), James McGoldrick has provided half the antidote. In *Baptist Successionism* he demonstrates that this peculiar but popular interpretation of ecclesiastical history is historically untenable. It may be said at the outset that he does so in absolutely convincing fashion.

McGoldrick acknowledges (p. 2) that he once held the successionist theory, which claims that there has been an unbroken line or succession of Baptist (or at least baptistic) churches from New Testament times down to the present era. This understanding of church history was popularized in the United States by J. R. Graves in the mid-nineteenth century and especially by J. M. Carroll's booklet, *The Trail of Blood*, published in 1931. Baptist successionism, or Landmarkism, also typically incorporates a denial of any concept of the church as the universal body of Christ made up of all Christian believers, and a rejection of all other (nonbaptist) church bodies as genuine churches.

McGoldrick's method is first to define in terms of theology and practice what it means to be Baptist, then to examine the historical groups down through the centuries that have been claimed by Baptist successionists. He gives particular attention to those sects which are mentioned as Baptist forebears in *The Trail of Blood*. McGoldrick is to be commended for not contenting himself with the pronouncements of later historians but instead has sought out the primary sources which describe the beliefs and practices of the groups he examines. He carefully subjects these documentary sources to critical evaluation regarding their reliability.

To cite McGoldrick's conclusions is to call the roll of the heroes of Baptist successionism, but in each case the claims made for them by successionists are found to be unsubstantiated: the evidence shows that the Montanists and Novatians were schismatic Catholics, not Baptists; St. Patrick operated under the auspices of the bishop of Rome and did not adhere to the Baptist conception of church, sacraments, or ministry; the Paulicians were not Baptists but separatists from Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy, they were anti-Trinitarian, and held an adoptionist Christology; the Bogomils were an extension of a dualistic strain of Paulicianism whose theology was not even Christian, much less Baptist; there is no positive evidence that Peter de Bruys, Henry of Lausanne, or Arnold of Brescia or their followers were Baptists; the Albigenses inherited the extreme dualism of the Bogomils and "held almost nothing in common with modern Baptists" (p. 67); and the medieval Waldenses were similar to the Roman Catholic order of Franciscans, while the later Waldenses were more akin to Presbyterians and Methodists than Baptists. Although the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century might seem on superficial consideration to be genuine ancestors of the Baptists, McGoldrick demonstrates that they held different views than Baptists on the doctrines of revelation, Christology, soteriology, and ecclesiology, and that there are no real genetic links between the Anabaptists of the continent and the Baptists of England.

Whence the Baptist, then? McGoldrick argues that the main stream of Baptist life was an outgrowth of the Calvinistic Puritan movement in England, where churches of recognizably Baptist persuasion and practice (gathered church, believer's baptism, and baptism by immersion) emerged in the 1630's and 1640's. He shows that these churches were one with their Presbyterian and Congregational brethren in the Calvinistic theology which they shared, even calling themselves Protestant and disavowing any connection with the Anabaptists. If this is the true origin of Baptists, then there is no possibility of a succession of Baptist churches from apostolic times. The Landmark doctrine is, in McGoldrick's words, "a phenomenon of relatively recent origin" (p. 145), having emerged in the nineteenth century and been popularized by J. R. Graves and J. M. Pendelton.

In view of the paucity of scholarly works by competent historians arguing against Baptist successionism, McGoldrick's book must be regarded as an important contribution. His conclusions are sound, his handling of the evidence sure, and his tone irenic but firm.

The other half of the case against Baptist successionism would be a theological argument based on careful exegesis

of relevant New Testament passages--such as 1 Corinthians 12:13 and the Epistle to the Ephesians--but that would be the subject of a different book. As for this book, it is difficult to see how the historical argument could be any better presented than has been done by James McGoldrick.

Notices

The Church Member's Handbook of Theology by Norvelle Robertson was published in 1874 by the Southern Baptist Publication Society for the purpose of instructing Southern Baptist church members in biblical doctrine. It contains clear expositions of the doctrines of grace and provides further evidence that these doctrines were widespread and commonly held by early Southern Baptists. Lloyd Sprinkle of Sprinkle Publications has recently republished this excellent work. It retails for \$17.00. You may obtain a copy by contacting him at (703) 434-8840, FAX (703) 434-4136; P. O. Box 1094, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 22801.

The Life and Times of the Reverend George Whitefield by Rev. Luke Tyerman (2 vols.) was one of the two original biographies on the great revival leader. The 1877 edition of this massive work (1200 pages) has been republished by *Revival: The Need of the Times*, P. O. Box 458, Azle, Texas, 76098; phone (817) 444-3752, FAX (813) 237-3313. It is available at a cost of \$79.00 plus shipping.



Letters

I can't tell you of my appreciation of you and your work. It wasn't until January of 1995 that I learned of your existence as one of the "remnant." Thanks to our Merciful God.

I felt like a "man without a country." As God began revealing His Doctrine of Grace to me, I began to realize how inconsistent was the "Christianity" I had been taught, in particular, in the Southern Baptist Convention. It wasn't until I laid aside all of man's writings for a period of time and read the Bible straight through in chronological order that I began to see the consistency of God and the inconsistency of what I "believed."

Since that time, I have diligently sought the true faith and realize that I have not uncovered something new, but something we have lost. We've lost it in America (no fear of God), and we have lost it in the SBC (man rules).

I found myself looking for like-minded believers. Most obviously to me, truth was found in Presbyterian circles and I determined I might belong there-until now. Thank you again! I am so excited to help make others aware so that they too may be encouraged....

Sincerely,
T. S., A Christian Bookstore Owner
Anniston, AL

I have been a Christian for three years now. I have been a Southern Baptist for a little over a year. Through study of the Bible and a pamphlet published by Banner of Truth Trust entitled "What is the Reformed Faith?" by John R. deWitt, I have come to believe and accept the "doctrines of grace" (Calvinism). It thrilled by heart to hear that there is a group that is advocating a return to more Orthodox theology.

I understand that Baptists (including Southern Baptists) were grounded in the doctrinal foundation of Calvinism. So, with that in mind I am glad to see a group like the Southern Baptist Founders Conference. I am interested in subscribing to the *Founders Journal*. Enclosed is my check for the amount of \$12.00. I would ask that you please send me some additional information about the Founders Conference.

Yours in Christ,
M. R.
Las Cruces, NM

I write to you because I recently ran across a copy of the Winter/Spring issue of the *Founders Journal* and was elated to read the articles about returning to the old paths. God's timing is perfect as usual. I was saved on February 19, 1995, after spending most of my life in a Southern Baptist church serving as a deacon. I am 59 years old and excited about what happened to me and when I read the journal. I praised God for my heart goes out to those trapped in the

church, lost as I was because the truth is not being proclaimed....

Yours in Christ,
D.O.
Arlington, TN

Here at Southeastern Seminary, myself and many friends *thank you* for your work in promoting our Lord as a God of grace. We applaud your efforts towards correct theology. Let me know how I may be of any help to you. Is it still possible to get a free copy of the sesquicentennial issue? Also send information on how to join your organization as well as the *Forgotten Spurgeon* information.

Thank-you!
B. P., student
Wake Forest, NC

There is no organization which can be joined. The Founders Conference is a loose fellowship of pastors, church leaders, and other interested parties. We have no membership. The work is overseen by a planning committee. The only things which one may "sign up" for are the annual conference and a subscription to the Founders Journal.

I received my copies of the *Founders Journal* and wanted to let you know how pleased I was. I will be praying for you as you prepare to answer the many questions and requests you will surely receive as a result of this excellent publication. I gave one copy to a friend who serves here with CBF. Pray that this issue will bring about a profound change in the theology of many of our missionaries, both in Indonesia and around the world. Please let me know if there is anyway I can help in addition to my prayers for you and your efforts with the journal.

Yours in Christ,
B. M., SBC missionary
Indonesia

