



Reformation and Missions

Issue 52

Spring 2003

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The Founders Journal

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The Founders Journal is a quarterly publication which takes as its theological framework the first recognized confession of faith that Southern Baptists produced, [*The Abstract of Principles*](#).

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Journal**
Issue 52

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Reformation and Missions

Tom Ascol

This article is taken from the new Founders Press book, *Reclaiming the Gospel and Reforming Churches*, edited by the author. It is a compilation of sermons and papers presented over the first twenty years of the annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference. For ordering information see announcement in the "News Items."

Romans 2:17-24

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, an English Baptist pastor wrote a pamphlet in which he surveyed the state of Christianity in various countries. Although Europe was the obvious stronghold of the Christian faith at that time, this pastor said it was a "melancholy fact that the vices of Europeans have been communicated wherever they themselves have been; so that the religious state of even heathens has been rendered worse by intercourse with them" (64). He went on to observe in his pamphlet:

Of those who bear the Christian name, a very great degree of ignorance and immorality abounds amongst them. There are Christians, so called, of the Greek and Armenian churches in all the Mahometan [i.e., Muslim] countries; but they are, if possible, more ignorant and vicious than the Mahometans themselves. The Georgian Christians, who are near the Caspian Sea, maintain themselves by selling their neighbors, relations, and children, for slaves to the Turks and Persians.... It is well known that most of the members of the Greek church are very ignorant. Papists also are in general ignorance of divine things and very vicious. Nor do the bulk of the church of England much exceed them, either in knowledge or holiness; and many errors, and much looseness of conduct, are to be found among dissenters of all denominations. The Lutherans of Denmark, are much on par with the ecclesiastics in England; and the face of most Christian countries presents a dreadful scene of ignorance, hypocrisy, and profligacy. Various baneful, and pernicious errors appear to gain ground, in almost every part of Christendom; the truths of the gospel, and even the gospel itself, are attacked, and every method that the enemy can invent is employed to undermine the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (64-65).

This writer viewed the Christianity of his day as weak and ineffective. In fact, it was worse than ineffective because it worked at counter-purposes with the cause of Christ. In countries that were known as Christian the gospel had been forgotten and even attacked in the name of Christianity itself. Ignorance and immorality were rampant among those who called themselves followers of Christ. In their efforts to evangelize, Christians often left the unconverted people in a worse condition than they knew.

Who was this voice crying in the wilderness? Why was he so pessimistic? On what grounds was he compelled to put his thoughts in print?

The words belong to William Carey, and they come from the third chapter of his epic-making book published in 1792, entitled, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. That book has been called the "charter of the Protestant missionary movement" and Carey wrote it to motivate the Christians of his day to preach the gospel to all nations.

What Carey observed was a bleak spiritual picture--not only among the unevangelized nations of the world, but also in those lands with a long and significant Christian witness. Churches were weak. Christians were untaught and unholy. The truths of the gospel were being undermined by the very churches that professed to know and preach the gospel. Listen to the conclusion that Carey drew after assessing this distressing condition in his day:

All these things are loud calls to Christians, and especially to ministers, to exert themselves to the utmost in their several spheres of action, and to try to enlarge them as much as possible.

Superficiality, ignorance, and immorality among the people of God, Carey says, are loud calls to Christians, especially to pastors, to exert themselves to the utmost in their churches and beyond. But for what purpose? To what end were they to give exertion? Carey knew the answer: For the reclamation of the gospel and the expansion of its work.

What William Carey recognized is something we need to see clearly in our day. The recovery of the gospel is reformation! The expansion of its work is missions! There is no incompatibility between the work of reformation at home and the work of missions abroad. In fact, there is a vital connection between the two. *Passion for missions demands a commitment to reformation.*

How much the gospel makes an impact abroad depends significantly upon the health of churches at home. Churches need to exemplify that which they would commend to others. This principle is established both positively and negatively throughout the Bible, especially in the New Testament.

In the positive sense, Jesus taught us that, as His followers, we are the light of the world. Collectively we are to regard ourselves as a city which is set upon a hill that cannot be hidden. Our light is to give light to the nations.

That certainly happened in the first century. A church was planted in Ephesus. We read in the book of Acts how Ephesus became a strategic foothold for the gospel through the work of that church. Through its members the message rapidly spread throughout all Asia (Acts 19). Also the church planted in Thessalonica was commended by Paul because of its spiritual health and vitality which spilled over into other regions of that land. He wrote in 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10:

For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

This church, which Paul earlier had characterized as being filled with faith, hope and love, sounded forth the gospel, by their reputation of how they lived and by their actions. Their living of the Word became the foundation of their proclamation of the Word throughout the world. The Thessalonian church was a healthy church and it had a broad impact. Its members followed a key principle: When spiritual vitality characterizes the home base, the gospel witness which goes out is strengthened.

But this principle also works in the other direction. Where there is a lack of spiritual health at home there will be a hindrance to the work of the gospel abroad. It is this negative aspect of the principle that I want to call to our attention by specifically looking to Paul's letter to the church at Rome.

Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You say, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' as it is written (Romans 2:17-24).

Verses 17 through 20 could be constructed as rhetorical questions, or, as the New King James Version seems to suggest, they could be statements--not completely accusatory ones, but somewhat critical in tone. Either way, the point is the same. Paul writes these words in the midst of building an argument for the doctrine of justification by faith alone. He is showing both Jews and Gentiles that they are all sinners before God, condemned by God's law, and in need of a salvation that comes only through grace and that will bring them into a right relationship with Jesus Christ, God's Son. Paul's argument in verses 17-24 demonstrates in a negative way the relationship between the advance of God's kingdom abroad and the spiritual health of God's people at home. Paul takes the Jews to task for failing to live up to the responsibilities and privileges which had been afforded them.

In verses 17-20 we see the great privileges of divine blessing that are set forth by the Apostle (albeit in an edgy way), but they are genuine privileges of God's blessing. We see first of all, in the first part of verse 17, that they are the people who bear the name of God. They have the distinction of being known as God's people, the Jews. This was a self-designation which, in the Jewish mind, encapsulated all of the prerogatives and all of the privileges which went with being God's chosen people.

Paul went on to speak of them "resting on the law." They took comfort in having God's law. They derived a sense of security from the fact that they were the ones to whom the law had been given. After all, doesn't Psalm 147 say that God "declares His Word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation."

Paul then reminded them that they regarded their relationship with God as so wonderful that it was something to "boast about" at the very end of verse 17. I like the way the New International Version renders it "you brag about your relationship with God," as if they thought they themselves were responsible for it.

In verse 18, he showed how they claimed to have divine insight and knowledge which others did not have, thus making them rather self-assured regarding their calling in the world to be guides to the spiritually blind; light to those in spiritual darkness; teachers of the spiritually foolish and immature.

In other words, Paul described the Jews of his day in language which they themselves would have used, but there is what one writer calls a "latent irony" in the way that Paul addressed them. The Jews were indeed, called to be God's people. As such they were certainly blessed with many spiritual blessings. They enjoyed a special relationship with God. They had God's law. They possessed the covenant. To them the promises had been entrusted. They had a mission to the rest of the world. It was to the Jews that God gave the commandment to "proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day, to declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all people." They were the ones that were to "say to the nations, 'The Lord reigns'" (Psalm 96).

The Jews acknowledged all this, at least to some degree. In fact, the way that Paul addressed them in verses 17-20 suggests that they had a measure of pride and self-importance about this responsibility. They knew the true God. They possessed the only law of God. They were able to discern God's will, so naturally it rested upon them to be the teachers, the instructors, of others.

But what Paul said to the Jews in verses 17-20 was designed to set them up for the scathing indictment that followed. Beginning in verse 21 he laid out the devastating consequences of their spiritual hypocrisy. In verses 21-23 he exposed that hypocrisy by turning to a more accusatory tone and quizzing the Jews about their spiritual and moral conduct. It is as if he was saying to them in these verses, "You who have been so favored of God and who are so self-consciously in the position of being the stewards of His Word, declaring His Word to the world, how do you measure up to the things that you teach? Do you practice what you preach to others?"

In verses 21 and 22 he said, "You therefore, who teach another, do you teach yourself? You who preach the demands about stealing, do you steal? You who say you do not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?"

The Apostle Paul used these four rhetorical questions to expose the specific hypocrisy among the Jews of his day. There is clear evidence that each one of these sins was being committed. He shows the

inconsistency between that which they understood about themselves and proclaimed to others, and the reality of how they conducted themselves.

Then in verse 23 he turned to a sweeping accusation that categorically condemned the hypocrisy he had exposed in the immediately prior verses--that the Jews boasted of their possession and commitment to the law of God. They prided themselves in their unhesitating affirmation of the law being the very Word of God. They didn't wince at affirming the full authority of the Word of God. No doubt they would have affirmed its inerrancy and infallibility. They conscientiously embraced their own responsibility to make this Word known to the nations. Yet Paul castigated them in verse 23, "You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?" The very God whose law they extolled with their lips was dishonored by their lives.

They were scrupulous in their devotion to His Word, zealous in their efforts to spread the Word of God to others, but grievously neglectful of applying that Word to themselves. In this instance Paul is following in the footsteps of the Old Testament prophet Nathan who stood before a slumbering, spiritually sick King David and said, "You are the man." That which you would do to others and have others do to you, you yourself are unwilling to do. The Jews, entrusted with God's Word, called to spread that Word, were living in ongoing disobedience to the Word.

Finally, in verse 24 Paul came to the conclusion of the point and described the consequences of their hypocrisy as devastating. "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. You who boast of God, who take pride in your favored position as the people of God, who affirm the Word of God entrusted to you, do you not see that the *ethnesin*--the nations--blaspheme the name of your God because of the way you conduct yourselves!" In this verse Paul alludes to Isaiah 52:5, and also several passages in Ezekiel where God accused His Old Testament people of conducting themselves in a way that brought reproach upon His name that He had placed upon His people. The Jews were responsible for leading the nations to blaspheme God. The nations of the world were judging God on the basis of what they saw in the Jews. You can't blame them. The Jews claimed to be God's own people, the very children of God, the representatives of God, on the earth. They were His messengers and His family. The Gentiles judged God by their conduct and no doubt must have reasoned that if the family members, the children, are like this, the head of the family must also be like this. They tell us not to steal. They say we must not commit adultery. Yet they rob our temples and steal themselves and commit adultery. The God they worship must not be much of a God. They tell us that we must look to this law that they profess to honor, yet look at the consequences of this law in their own lives. There must not be much in this law that God has given to them.

John Murray comments on this verse: "The tragic irony is apparent. The Jews who claimed to be the leaders of the nation for the worship of the true God had become the instruments of provoking the nations to blasphemy." That wasn't their intention. Indeed, I think it's not too much to conclude that their intention was the exact opposite. They wanted, worked for and desired to have the nations come to know their God. They even went to some effort to convert the Gentiles. They accepted the responsibility to be the stewards of God's Word, the instructors of it, even missionaries, to go out and make it known. Yet the work of spreading God's Word abroad was seriously hindered. Paul even suggests that it was overturned

by the neglecting of spiritual lives at home. Instead of the nations being soundly converted, they were provoked into blasphemous thoughts of God.

Paul doesn't speak against their zeal. In later chapters he commends their zeal, but zeal to declare God's Word is never enough. Zeal must be based upon knowledge, truth, and a proper understanding of that Word. It must be matched with an ongoing application of that Word to our own lives.

Doesn't Jesus make the same point when He castigates the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23? He says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." It is an immeasurable tragedy when our evangelistic and missionary efforts leave the very people that we go to in a spiritually worse condition than we found them! That's precisely what happened in Jesus' day. It's what happened in Paul's day. It happened in William Carey's day. Brothers and sisters, it's happening in our day! The name of God is being blasphemed today among the nations because of the Christian church in America. Our great God of wonders, our Lord Jesus Christ, who bled for us, who came and revealed God's incredible love and grace for rebels, is being blasphemed among the nations.

A few years ago a missionary who works with Muslims told me about a conversation he had with an Afghani Mullah. When the Mullah discovered that the missionary was a Christian pastor, he asked him this question, "Is it true that you can have as many women as you want--like other Christians?" This Muslim leader's vision of moral decadence in "Christian America" and his awareness of immorality by American ministers (who expressed sorrow only after they were caught) led him to believe that this Christian pastor must be able to be as immoral as he would want and with as many women as he would want.

If Christians are like a city set upon a hill, could it be that we who are part of the church of Jesus Christ in America should see ourselves as the highest peak in the range of modern nations? Whether we like it or not, we are highly visible to the world. A large percentage of the rest of the world, for good and for evil, judges Christianity and the Christian God by what it sees in America. Who is responsible for the moral degradation in America? We can all say "Amen" to criticism of the education system and how rotten it has become. We can all decry the politics of our land and how degenerate it is. But at least a very large, significant portion of the responsibility must be laid at the feet of the churches in America. We decry the immorality in our society, yet we wink at the same immorality within our churches. We declaim the loss of truth in our world, yet we do not guard the truth that has been entrusted to us in our churches.

If this is true, that the church in America bears incredible responsibility to the rest of the world because in God's providence we have a high profile before that world, then our concern for the work of the gospel among the nations must make us concerned for the reformation of the gospel here in America.

In a book entitled *The Call of the South* written in 1920 on the work of the gospel in the southern portion of the United States, the author, Victor Masters, records an incident that I find chilling. He says that in

the year 1900 the Mikado, emperor of Japan, publicly stated his willingness to issue a decree which would make Christianity the state religion of his kingdom. He observed the work of Christian missionaries and he told his council that in observing the missionaries he had seen that their religion had been more helpful than any of the other religions that were being propagated in Japan. Some of his councilors suggested that before the decree was issued a deputation should be sent to the United States and Great Britain to measure how Christianity worked itself out within the borders of these sending countries. So the deputation traveled to Canada, the United States and Great Britain. They made notes of observations in the courts of law where they found justice often defeated. They noted that in the markets of trade and industry often reputed Christians were destroying each other in competitive business. They said they noticed something of a stench in American municipal government. They returned to Japan and wrote this report, "That while it may be true that the lives of the Christian missionaries among us is the purest of any of the advocates of religion in Japan, and the principles of Christianity taught by them are right and most helpful to our citizens, the people of the United States and Great Britain do not believe and practice the doctrines taught us by their Christian missionaries." Victor Masters, who recorded this incident, says, "Their deliberate refusal to adopt Christianity, after inspecting American and English life, is a severe arraignment on the effectiveness of our Christian teachings in our own land" (Victor I. Masters, *The Call of the South*, p. 213-214).

What if there had been more vital godliness in America and Great Britain at the turn of the century? While the Mikado's decree would not have made Japan a Christian nation, it would have opened up doors of opportunity for thousands of Christian teachers and missionaries to go in and to influence millions of Japanese.

John Stott has said, "No church can spread the gospel with any degree of integrity, let alone credibility, unless it has been visibly changed by the gospel it preaches. We need to look like what we are talking about. It is not enough to receive the gospel and pass it on; we must embody it in our common life of faith, love, joy, peace, righteousness and hope" (John Stott, *The Gospel and the End of Time*, p. 44).

Brothers and sisters, do our churches look like what we are preaching about? Does the state of our own congregations commend the message of God's grace and love? Can we honestly stand before the world and declare the holiness of our God in light of the character in our own lives?

How can we expect the world to believe that our trinitarian God is Himself love when we can't even get along with one another? How can we call upon people to believe that God is holy if we are not holy? What makes us think that we can convince people that the God we know in Jesus Christ is blessed forever if our lives are not marked by genuine joy? Why should anyone believe that our Lord spiritually and morally transforms people if we who make that claim are no different from the world?

What must we do? Should we cool our hearts for the work of missions around the world and turn all of our efforts to the work of reformation at home? No! Never! What we must do is increase our passion to see the gospel carried to all peoples of the earth, and out of that passion--as an integral part of that passion--we must fully embrace the call of reformation here at home! Passion for missions demands a

commitment to reformation.

There are many areas of reformation that are desperately needed among American evangelicals in general and Southern Baptist churches in particular. Much could be said about the sufficiency of Scripture; worship; or the doctrine of the church, its polity, its practices, its order and discipline. All of these and many others are worthy subjects for us to zero in on to refine our thoughts about the need of reformation, but in the interest of time and order of priority, let me limit myself to simply one area.

Where do we desperately need a reformation as evangelicals in America and as Southern Baptists? We need it in our understanding of conversion; what it means to be a Christian; how one becomes a Christian. We can no longer assume that all evangelicals agree on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ or how a person becomes one. The Scripture is not ambiguous on this point. The Scripture says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old is passed away, all things become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). John says, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

We might have various nuances and differences of opinion in precisely what conversion means, but can we not all agree that being a Christian means something? Is there a difference between one who is a child of God and one who is simply of the world? It is a significant event when a person becomes a disciple of Christ. There is a difference between a converted man or woman and an unconverted person. They have different loves. They have different orientations of life. They have different objects of devotion. The notion that a person can be genuinely converted and yet have no discernible difference in inner or outer life has no biblical warrant. Yet there are countless millions of people on the rolls of our Baptist churches who have no discernible difference in their lives from the world. They are counted as converted though they don't have enough spiritual impulse to even show up among the people of God in worship once a year. Our understanding of what it means to be a Christian needs to be biblically re-formed. We need a reformation of how a person becomes a Christian.

Related to that is our practice of evangelism. Walking an aisle, raising a hand, praying a prayer, taking a dip in a baptism, does not effect conversion. We need to rediscover the doctrine of the new birth and look again to the Word of God to see what is meant by repentance and faith. If we are wrong regarding what it means to be right with God, and what is required for a person to get right with God, then we are poised not only to propagate spiritual confusion and disease at home, but also abroad as we send out confused people from our churches. And indeed, it is happening now.

Three years ago a well-known American Baptist preacher traveled to one of Russia's larger cities and conducted a two-week long crusade. He came home reporting that two thousand people had been converted at his campaign. Two people, a husband and a wife, who heard the reports were so overwhelmed with a sense of what God had done in this city that they took leave of absence from their jobs, got contact information for these two thousand converts, and traveled there intending to spend several months in the city following up with these converts and helping them get organized into

churches. They were devastated by what they found, or rather, what they did not find. After weeks of searching, they could not locate even one of the supposed converts.

Five years ago a summer-long evangelistic emphasis in Albania was sponsored by American evangelical organizations. It was recorded back in the United States that two thousand three hundred converts were made. The missionaries whose job it was to follow up on those converts in the northern region of Albania said that they could find only six people of the hundreds whose names they had been given who had even a slight interest in spiritual things. They heard of only a few more from the southern region of the country.

When severe doctrinal error regarding conversion is wedded to practical zeal in evangelistic and missionary emphasis the results are disastrous. Isn't this precisely the folly of the scribes and Pharisees? With zeal they traveled over their land and over their seas to make converts, yet Jesus said that when they did make a convert, they made him twice the child of hell as they themselves were. Why? Weren't the Pharisees sincere? Weren't they devoted to the cause. Absolutely! But at the same time they were dangerously wrong about the crucial issue of what makes a person right with God and how a person gets that way.

Recently the North American Mission Board's "specialist in evangelistic follow-up" stated that, based upon his observations, less than 1 in 10 people who make decisions as a result of Southern Baptist evangelism are active in Bible study one year later. He cited this observation as a part of his argument that we need to do a better job at "follow up." I appreciate his concern. I genuinely do. But might it be possible that follow up is not the issue but that we need to do a better job at evangelism?

If General Motors discovered that ninety percent of all of their automobiles that were manufactured weren't running a year later, what do you think they would do? Would they claim we must build better repair shops? Let us increase production so that we have more automobiles this year than we had last year? Let's open up plants in Africa and South America and China? Now all of these efforts are okay in their place, but none of them can justify ignoring the fundamental problem of needing to retool the manufacturing plant. Call out the engineers! Re-examine the schematics. Something's gone wrong. If we genuinely want to expand overseas, if we are genuinely concerned to see that productions increase, then we must retool at home.

In 1792, William Carey preached his deathless sermon before a group of pastors as he called upon them to move forward in the missionary work. He said, "Expect great things and attempt great things." His text for that sermon was Isaiah 54:2-3. In that passage God says to His people:

Enlarge the place of your tent, And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, And strengthen your stakes. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, And your descendants will inherit the nations, And make the desolate cities inhabited.

Lengthen your cords *and* strengthen your stakes! Expand *and* deepen. Missions *and* reformation. Both are essential and neglect of either will result in unbalanced, unhealthy Christianity.

Some people charge us with the accusation that our concern for reformation is merely academic. You've heard the charges: "All these guys who like to engage in theological debate just like we did in seminary around the tables. They're just concerned in seeing if they can figure out precisely all the knotty, weighty theological questions that have plagued mankind throughout history. It's merely theological debate." They say that these kinds of discussions can be a distraction from the more important work of missions and evangelism. This kind of accusation betrays a false dichotomy. God Himself has joined together missions and reformation. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. Passion for missions and commitment to reformation are not competing interests. Genuine passion for missions demands commitment to reformation.

In the last century Austin Phelps of Andover Seminary said, "If I were a missionary in Canton, China, my first prayer every morning would be for the success of American Home Missions, for the sake of Canton, China" (*Call of the South*, p. 217).

Reformation and missions go hand-in-hand. If we do not strengthen our churches at home, we will ultimately undermine the efforts of the gospel abroad. Do not shrink back from the hard work of reformation. Do not let others around you ignore its importance. Don't let anyone intimidate you into thinking that if you are concerned to order your life and see churches ordered by the Word of God, that somehow undermines the evangelistic missionary impulse that the gospel is to have in the world. Don't be so selfish with your time, Pastors. There are other pastors who need to think about the things you're thinking about. If you simply order your own life and your own church and you're not winsomely trying to come along your brother pastors to challenge them and encourage them to start thinking about these things, then you are not engaged enough in the work of reformation.

We must commit ourselves to a reordering of our personal lives by God's Word. Encourage this reordering in your church and in other churches among other brothers and sisters of the faith. We must work for reformation.

Can you imagine the accusation that God will make against those Jews on that great Day of Judgment, "My Name was blasphemed among the nations because of you"? The Name we love, the Name that God Himself is jealous of--it is for the sake of the Name that we send out our loved ones to the outer edges to live and die for Christ. It is for the sake of the Name that we have given our energies and our efforts to make Christ known. What a tragedy, what a travesty, it would be if it is said of us that because of our unwillingness to do the hard work of reformation, the nations blasphemed the Name of God.

Work for reformation. Do it for your own soul's sake. Do it for your children's sake. Do it for your children's children's sake. Do it for the people of China and South America and Africa and Asia, all of the peoples of the world. But do it first and foremost for the honor and glory of our God and of His Son Jesus Christ who bled for us to redeem us to God. It is His glory which unifies the great works of

reformation and missions.

Lengthen your cords as never before! Go and call upon others to go. Send your best overseas. But don't forget to strengthen your stakes--that through you the name of God might be revered and not blasphemed among the nations.



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A Look at Our Doctrine

The Abstract of Principles: Article 1

Ernest C. Reisinger

The Abstract of Principles is the oldest official confession of faith produced by Southern Baptists. Written in 1858, they became part of the charter of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. To this day professors at that institution as well as those who teach at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary sign a pledge that they will teach in accordance with and not contrary to this Abstract of Principles. This is the first in a series of articles on this document.

Article 1. The Scriptures

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.

The first article of faith in the Abstract of Principles has to do with the Scriptures. It is very appropriate for it to be first because *all* that we are meant to believe about God and how we are meant to act toward God and each other is either expressly set down in Scripture or, by good and necessary consequence, may be deduced from Scripture.

Why is our belief in the Scripture placed first in the Articles of Faith? Because what we believe about the Scripture determines what we believe about other matters in religion.

The light of nature, creation and the works of providence declare the goodness, wisdom and power of God, and, this revelation of God will leave man without excuse. Paul makes this abundantly clear in Romans:

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them (Romans 2:14-15).

Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20).

However, creation and the works of providence are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary for salvation. It pleased the Lord in times past and in different ways to reveal Himself and to declare His will unto His people. He revealed His will unto His people by dreams, visions, prophets, etc. But later, for better preserving and propagating His truth, He spoke by the Holy Spirit and moved Holy men of old to commit His will to writing.

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Since we now have a full and final revelation of His will in the Bible, the former ways of God revealing Himself are now ceased. There are no more prophets or apostles, and we are not to add to or subtract anything from the Bible.

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

Therefore, beware of those who get special messages and additional revelation apart from what God has revealed in His Holy Word.

Not All Scripture Is Clear

We must be swift to agree that not all Scripture is equally clear and plain to all; yet those things necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are very clearly set forth that not only the learned but the unlearned, by proper use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

How Do We Know the Scriptures Are The Word of God?

This is a very vital question and therefore the answer is very important. There are many things that tell us the Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God, such as, their origination. Some forty authors, over a period of 1500 years (many of whom never saw each other) are telling one story. There is also the remarkable circulation and preservation (in spite of men trying to destroy the Scriptures), their majesty, their purity, their light and power to convince and convict sinners, and the way they comfort and build up believers. All these are good evidences that the Scriptures are the Word of God.

But, in spite of this evidence and all these good reasons that teach us the Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God, we must always remember that it is the Spirit of God only, bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in our hearts, that is able fully to persuade us that the Bible is the Word of God.[\[1\]](#)

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you (John 16:13-14).

However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him"(1 Corinthians 2:6-9).

What Two Things Do The Scriptures Principally Teach?

The Scriptures principally teach (1) What we are to believe concerning God; (2) What duty God requires of man.

The Important Things In This Study Are:

1. What we believe about the Scriptures will determine what we believe about other matters in religion.
2. The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Scriptures and the holy men who wrote were moved by Him to write.
3. We are not to add to or subtract from God's final revelation as we have it in the Scriptures.
4. Though some things may not be clear and plain to all, the way of salvation is clearly set forth in the Scriptures.
5. There are many ways and evidences that the Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God, but only by the Holy Spirit, convincing our hearts, will anyone be fully persuaded that the Scriptures are the infallible Word of God.

Consider how James Boyce addressed this subject in his catechism:

Q.7 Does the Scripture teach everything about God?

It does not. No language could teach us the full glory of God, nor could we ever comprehend it.[\[2\]](#)

Q.8 How much does the Scripture teach us?

It teaches us all that is necessary to know about God, our duty to Him, our condition as

sinners, and the way of salvation.[\[3\]](#)

Notes:

¹ Benjamin Keach's Catechism. This catechism was originally published to clarify the theology of the Second London Baptist Confessions that was written in 1677 and published in 1689.

² James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Hanford, CA: den Dulk Foundation, reprint edition) i.

³ *ibid.*, ii



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"Open Theism" is Incompatible with Inerrancy

[Roger Nicole](#)

The present paper is not intended to provide a full criticism of "Open Theism," nor even of that feature of it whereby God's advance knowledge of future decisions of free agents is denied. This would obviously be lengthy and superfluous since it has been done very ably in book form by members of ETS (Evangelical Theological Society) and others.[\[1\]](#)

What I intend to do here is to point out to one feature invariably advanced by "Open Theists," which by itself alone is sufficient to disqualify any of them from membership in ETS, because it is in flagrant contradiction of our confession of the inerrancy of Scripture.

I hereby address this paper to my fellow members of ETS and I proceed to warn them of a grievous conflict between ETS basis of faith and the so-called "Open" view. I am at this point not addressing any "Open" theistic friends, and I am therefore not observing the principles that I have set forth for myself in dealing with those who differ. I am dealing here with those who agree with me that the Bible is inerrant because it is the Word of the inerrant God.

- I. "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and is therefore inerrant in the autographs." This is the statement of faith established in the first meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in December 1949. It has remained in force ever since with annual subscription by all the members of ETS.

There are at least three notable advantages to this statement that I wish to underline here.

1. The statement represents a consensus of the ETS founders and affirms the divine authority of the Scripture as a watershed of evangelical faith (John10:45). This was later notably expanded in the "Chicago statement of Biblical inerrancy" (1978).
2. Although some have objected to this statement as making the divine authorship of the Bible hostage to the discovery of even a single mistake in the autographic text (James Orr, et al.), this has not prevented the founders of ETS from adopting this formulation. Similarly, the demonstration of a single sin in the whole life of Jesus Christ would inevitably cancel the propriety of affirming His deity.

By virtue of its extreme sensitivity this statement may serve as a test of evangelical legitimacy, even as a fuse tests excessive amperage in an electric line, when the current is higher than acceptable it interrupts the circuit and prevents serious damage. Similarly, the

denial of inerrancy may be the signal that some unevangelical factor has been immixed in the conception.

3. The statement rightly indicates that it is not based on an exhaustive treatment of all possible mistakes in the autographs. Rather it emphasizes that it is a necessary implicate of the proposition that the Bible is the Word of God: "and is therefore inerrant." Thus it articulates a fundamental unity between the inerrancy of Scripture and the radical truthfulness of God. It is a statement of faith, not the induction from an all-embracing scientific investigation.

II. God is Truth. One of the most important perfections of God, abundantly asserted in His Word, both positively and negatively, is Truth.

A. Positively.

In the Old Testament, the true God is called the God of truth, the God of Amen; His truth is repeatedly emphasized^[2] His words, His judgments, His counsels, His witness are true.^[3] Truth is often enjoined to God's servants and the words of truth are used almost as frequently as the word *chesed*, lovingkindness.^[4]

In the New Testament God is called "the true God" and is recognized as truthful.^[5] Jesus said, "I am the truth" and came to testify to the truth, full of grace and truth. He is true, and could always say *I tell you the truth*.^[6] The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who guides the disciples into all truth and sanctification by the truth.^[7]

The word or words of God is truth. The gospel is the truth of God and of Christ. God's judgments, law, commandments and ways are true.^[8] Truth is to be known, acknowledged, believed, obeyed, walked in, established in and rejoiced in.^[9] Truthfulness is to be expected of the disciples at all times and their message is the truth.^[10]

The word "Amen" occurs 150 times in the New Testament, most often on the lips of Jesus, who said "Amen, amen" not "Possibly, possibly" even with respect to future events and decisions.

Aletheia occurs 111 times in the N.T., nearly as often as *agape* (116 times).

B. Negatively

In the Old Testament God identifies any prophecy that does not come to pass as an outrageous claim of divine authority, the word of a false prophet who deserves to be executed as an idolater or a blasphemer. Elijah is commended for putting to death the 450

prophets of Baal.[\[11\]](#)

The ninth commandment forbids false witness. 60 passages condemn falsehood, described by 6 different Hebrew words. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.[\[12\]](#) There are at least 66 texts relating to falsehood and 120 dealing with lies and lying.

In the New Testament, Jesus made especially clear that Satan is at the root of all lies: "he was a murderer from the beginning, not holding the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44). No lie comes from the truth and those who reject the truth are in peril of damnation.[\[13\]](#) More than 70 times God warns us against falsehood, false prophets, false apostles, false doctors and false brothers.[\[14\]](#)

III. Now the two cases on which the whole matter of the propriety of an "open" theist's membership in ETS may by themselves be resolved is the account of the miraculous healing of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1-11) and the prophecy of Jonah concerning the destruction of Nineveh (Jonah 3:1-4:3).

The "open" theist invariably points to these two incidents as a proof that the future is not hermetically sealed in God's mind, but that there are occasions when God actually changes His mind in order to take account of a human prayer or a drastic change in the disposition of those He addresses.

Their interpretation runs basically as follows: In the case of Hezekiah, God expressed His intention in the words reported by Isaiah: "Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover" (2 Kings 20:1). Hezekiah then pleaded with God for a more extended life and God forthwith sent Isaiah back with the message that God had now decided to grant him an extension of 15 years.[\[15\]](#) There is a manifest conflict between "being at the point of death" (v. 1) and "having 15 more years to live" (v. 6). It is therefore manifest that God here "changed His mind." He cancelled the original prediction and substituted a new arrangement. Therefore the event shows that God does not have a fixed, invariable plan for the whole future, but that He does take account of prayers and tears to the point of changing His own decisions.

In the case of Jonah, God had given a deadline in time for the fulfillment of His prophecy of Nineveh's destruction. "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned" (Jonah 3:4). "The Ninevites believed God" in that they acknowledged their own predicament, but they did not believe that God was immovable, and therefore they proceeded immediately to a period of national repentance and reformation which led God to change His mind and to cancel the threatened destruction. This case also proves that God does not function with immutable designs, but that He reacts to human attitudes when they occur and not by virtue of a foresight of what they will do.

These two cases are pivotal for the open theists because they think that they document a change in

God from a purpose that was attested in Holy Writ and from which God did in fact depart.

I say this interpretation is false^[16] and cannot be anything but false since it runs counter to the express statements of Scripture (for instance Ps. 33:11; Prov. 19:21; Isaiah 14:34; 31:2; 46:9, 10; Mal. 3:6; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:17; James 1:17) and since it puts God at loggerheads with His own statements. If God truly "changed His mind," this would of necessity mean that an earlier statement of His mind would be displaced by the later statement, which would inevitably mean that the earlier statement had been false:

"You will not recover" (2 Kings 20:1)

"Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned" (Jonah 3:4)

In fact, Hezekiah did recover, and 40 days elapsed and Nineveh was spared for another 150 years! Obviously, then Isaiah and Jonah could be liable to the death penalty for claiming as God's Word something that did not come to pass (Deut. 18:20,22). Even more grievous is the inevitable implication that something that God had said turned out to be false. This is the very opposite of inerrancy. By ruining the inerrancy of God, this position also destroys the inerrancy of Scripture, since some statements of which God was asserted to be the author turned out to be erroneous.

I say therefore that this position is incompatible with inerrancy. Anyone who holds it has forfeited the legitimacy of membership in the ETS. If one does not perceive it by himself or herself, discipline is mandatory if our membership is to remain what the constitution requires.

This is not my opinion alone, but I have in my possession the signatures of all the founders and charter members of ETS who are still with us to the statement "the denial of God's foreknowledge of the decisions of free agents is incompatible with the inerrancy of Scripture." As one of our most distinguished deceased members said in his presidential address in 1965:

Let goods and kindred go
Some memberships also.

Appendix 1

Interpretation of 2 Kings 20:1-11 and Jonah 3 - 4/2

The case of Hezekiah's sickness in 2 Kings 20 is supplemented by the parallel passages in 2 Chronicles 32:24-26 and Isaiah 38:1-22. These passages reveal that by the 14th year of his reign, Hezekiah yielded to pride in spite of God's goodness to him and to Judah, protecting them from the disaster that befell Samaria through the Assyrian conquest. To deal with this defect, God announced to Hezekiah that if he

continued in his self-sufficiency, his life was at an end, for no human power could overcome his deadly terminal disease. Only by a miracle could his life be continued. So Hezekiah "repented of the pride of his heart" (2 Chron. 32:26) and God graciously extended his life by 15 years: "I will heal you" (2 Kings 20:5) He said and the rest of the passage deals with the confirmation of God's miraculous power that would apply both to Hezekiah's personal life and to the protection of Judah from Assyrian attacks (2 Kings 20:6; Isaiah 38:6). This is articulated very clearly in Hezekiah's song recorded for us in Isaiah 38:10-20. That this whole process does not reflect a change of mind on God's part is manifest from the fact that in that same fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, God had promised him at least three more years of life (2 Kings 9:29) and that the birth of his son Manasseh, necessary for the fulfillment of God's promise to David (2 Sam. 1:12-16), also took place 3 years later in the seventeenth year of his reign (2 Kings 21:1).

The case of Jonah's prophecy is even clearer for the Ninevites understood well that Jonah's announcement did not mean "whatever you do, I have determined to obliterate you within forty days" but rather "forty more days of your rebellious conduct and I will "let you have it!" The Ninevites, led by their king, responded in due repentance and abandonment of "their evil ways and violence" (Jonah 3:8). They rightly used the 40 days' reprieve as a time of humiliation and renewal. Thus they gained another reprieve of some 150 years!! It is noteworthy that Jonah himself had anticipated this development (Jonah 4:2) and that is why he wanted to flee to Tarshish, being eager to see the discomfiture of Israel's enemy rather than their continued existence. From beginning to the end God's purpose was the same, to wit a moral renewal in Nineveh!

When such a sounder interpretation of the texts is acknowledged, the validity of claiming these cases as documenting a change of mind on God's part has vanished. If this is acknowledged, not only is their proof against God's fixity of purpose lost, but in the process their construction of the word *Nicham* as implying such a change is jeopardized. (Found 100 times in the Hebrew, it is translated as repent only 45 times in KJV. The translation "change one's mind" found 16 times with reference to God in NAB and NRSV is probably wrong, although 7 of these state that God "does not change his mind" Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29 (twice), Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:28; 20:16; Ezek. 24:14).

Appendix 2

Prophecy

The term prophecy in the widest sense encompasses the whole range of speaking in God's name. This is the meaning in 2 Peter 1:20: "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own initiative. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Spirit." The prefix "pro" in this sense is the equivalent of "forth" and "prophecy" indicates "speaking forth" in God's name.

One special form of prophecy relates to an announcement concerning the future. This may refer to individual human forecasting, which is affected by human frailty due to the fact that the human eye does

not truly penetrate the future, although it is true that human past experience does give us some insight into probable developments in view of present observation as in weather forecasting, or as in the work of pollsters, or as the effect of cocaine on a physical organism, etc. Much of human science is dedicated to observing in order to anticipate good or harmful likely developments.

At the divine level prophecy relates to an announcement on divine authority either of the implications for the future of present conduct, which may be called conditional prophecy, or simply of what is going to happen in the future by virtue of God's exhaustive knowledge of the future. It is this particular sphere of prophecy that is the exclusive prerogative of God Himself, and may be called unconditional prophecy.

Examples of conditional prophecy abound in the Holy Writ, as for instance in the second, third and sixth commandments, (Exodus 20:5, 6, 7, 12) or again in Deuteronomy 4:1-40 or again in Matthew 20:29.

Unconditional prophecy also abounds as in the dreams of Joseph (Gen. 37:7, 9) and of others around him (Gen. 40:9-22; 41:17-32), or in God's promises to Abraham (Gen. 13:14-17; 15:5, 12-16; 17:4-8, 16, 19-21; 18:10, 14; 22:16-18), or again in the coming of Christ (Isaiah 7:14, Matt. 1:21, 23), in the prophecies of the end of time (Matt. 24; 2 Peter 3:7, 10; Rev. 21).

It is unconditional prophecy that is jeopardized by the open theistic affirmation that God does not know in advance the decisions of free agents. In that view, His decisions must await the prior decisions of his free creatures and are on that account conditioned rather than unconditioned. An effort is made to safeguard the propriety of some unconditional prophecy, but this appears to be illusive or to interfere with the vaunted principle of the free will of the creatures! For instance, how could God prophesy anything about Isaac in advance of his conception, since Abraham and Sara had to remain free to have or not have intercourse?

In any case the mastery of God over the future is clearly asserted in such passages as Isaiah 44:7, 8, 26-28; 46:10, 11; Acts 2:23.

By contrast with God's unconditional prophecies which always come true, the claims of false prophets are sometimes revealed as fraudulent by the fact that what they announced does not come to pass (Deut. 18:22; Isaiah 44:25). This false claim is so grievous a sin that the false prophet had to be put to death (Deut. 18:20). Now if all prophecy were conditioned by the decisions of free agents so that prophecy should really declare only "what might be" rather than "what will be," there would never arise a situation where the false prophets would be unmasked! If someone claims to prophesy the winning numbers in a lottery, it is never enough for him to list 6 numbers that might come out--any school child might well do that--but it is requisite that he announce in advance what numbers will be winning.

The principle of open theism really ruins the Biblical outlook on unconditional prophecy. In its terms, James' warning to people who rashly anticipate the future (4:13-15) could apply to God Himself: "Don't say I will do this or that at such a time." Instead you ought to say "If human free will allows, I might do this or that!" In many cases they reduce the actual divine prophecies to this level!!

Notes:

¹ Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000
John M. Frame, *No Other God*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001
R. K. McGregor Wright, *No Place for Sovereignty*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996.
Robert A. Morey, *Battle of the Gods*, Southbridge, MA, 1989.
Norman L. Geisler, *Creating Man in the Image of Man*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 1997.
I may also mention my own book review of *The Openness of God* and *God of the Possible* reprinted in my collected essays *Standing Forth*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2002.

² The true God: 2 Chron. 15:3; Jer. 10:10
God of truth: Deut. 32:4; Ps. 31:5
God of Amen: Isaiah 65:16
The truth of the Lord: Ps. 117:3
His truth: Ps. 91:4; 96:13; 100:5
Your truth: Ps. 25:5 and 10 more times in the Psalms; Isaiah 38:18, 19; Dan. 9:13.

³ His Word is true: 1 Kings 17:20; Ps. 119:43, 120; Prov. 20:21
His words are true: 2 Sam. 7:28
His laws are true: Neh. 9:13; Ps. 119:142
His judgments are true: Ps. 19:9
His counsels are true: Ps. 119:151
His witness is true: Jer. 42:5
The Book of truth: Dan. 10:21

⁴ "Buy no truth and sell it not." Prov. 23:23

⁵ The true God: John 17:3; 1 John 5:20
God is truthful: John 3:33; 7:28; 8:26; Rom. 3:4; Rev. 6:10.

⁶ I am the truth: John 14:6; 16:7
I came to testify of the truth: John 18:37
Full of grace and truth: John 1:16, 17
He is true: Rev. 3:7, 14; 19:11
The true teacher: Matt. 22:16; Mark 12:32
I tell you the truth: Luke 4:25; 9:27; 12:44; John 8:40, 45, 46

⁷ The Spirit of truth: John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6
He guides into all truth: John 16:13
He sanctifies by the truth: John 17:19

He is the truth: 1 John 5:6

⁸ The word[s] of God is truth: John 17:17; Acts 26:25; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 1:2; Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18; Rev. 19:9; 21:5; 22:6.

The Gospel of truth: Gal. 2:5, 14

The truth of God: Rom. 1:25; 3:7; 1 Th. 2:13

The truth of Christ: 2 Cor. 11:10; Eph. 4:21

God's judgments are true: Rom. 2:2; Rev. 16:7, 16; 19:2

God's laws are true: Rom. 2:20

God's commandments are true: 1 John 2:8

God's ways are true: Rev. 15:13

⁹ Truth is to be known: John 8:32; acts 2:20; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 3:7; Hebrew 10:26; 1 John 2:21; 3 John 1

Truth is to be acknowledged: 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 1:1

Truth is to be believed: 2 Thes 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:3

Truth is to be obeyed: Rom. 2:8; Gal. 5:7; 1 Peter 1:23

One should walk in the truth: 2 Peter 2:2; 3 John 3

One should be established in the truth: 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Peter 1:12; 3 John 2

One should rejoiced in the truth: 1 Cor. 13:16; Matt. 5:33-37

¹⁰ Christians should tell the truth: Matt. 5:33-37; Eph. 4:25; 5:9; 6:14; James 3:14

Their message is the truth: Rom. 9:1; 15:8; 2 Cor. 4:2; 7:14; 11:10, 31; 12:6; 13:8; Gal. 1:20; 1 Tim. 2:7

¹¹ False prophets to be executed: Deut. 18:20, 22; 1 Kings 18:40

¹² "Thou shalt not bear false witness": Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20

"Lying lips are abomination to the Lord": Prov. 12:22

"I hate and abhor lying": Ps. 119:163

¹³ "No lie comes from the truth": 1 John 2:21

Those who reject the truth are in peril of damnation: Rom. 2:8; Gal. 2:14; 2 Th. 2:10, 12; 1 Tim. 4:3; 6:5; 2 Tim. 2:18; 3:8; 4:4; Titus 1:14; James 5:19; 1 Peter 1:6, 8; 2:4; Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:15

¹⁴ Warning against false prophets: Matt. 7:15; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1; Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10

Warning against false apostles: 2 Cor. 11:13

Warning against false doctors: 1 Tim. 4:2; 2 Peter 2:1

Warning against false brothers: 2 Cor. 11:26; Gal 2:4

¹⁵ It is not clear how on "Open Theism's" premises God could make such an announcement 15 years in

advance since the continuation of Hezekiah's life surely depended on many decisions of free agents, including himself.

¹⁶ I have ventured to provide in Appendix 1 an interpretation of those two passages, which is conformable to divine inerrancy and clearly related to the context. It is not necessary to accept that interpretation, or even to present another alternative in order to declare false the "open" theistic explanation. One is not obliged to have a plausible explanation of the baptism for the dead (1 Cor. 15:29) in order to perceive that the Mormon understanding of this passage is false.

Prophecy

One of the worst mistakes one can commit with reference to finding and promoting truth is to confuse fact with surmise. Fact is unassailable, but surmise is always open to discussion and to change. It is intolerable that with respect to prophecy we should now be told that some of God's prophecies are merely his surmises and do not have the firmness of facts announced in advance. The effort of the open theists to assert that some prophecies are unshakeable but that others may or may not occur casts a veil on the whole prophetic enterprise, since there is no way by which we can distinguish in advance which is which. Consequently, there is no way by which in retrospect we could identify a false prophet.



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Book Reviews

Geoffrey Thomas. *Ernest C. Reisinger: A Biography*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002. Hardcover, 262 pages, \$29.99

Reviewed by [Fred A. Malone](#)

Geoff Thomas, a Baptist pastor in Wales, is one of the delightful gifts of God to the church of Jesus Christ. He humbly states that he owes most of this volume to other's efforts before him. Ernie Reisinger supplied much of the data himself, together with interviews conducted by Geoff Thomas with Ernie. It is obviously a labor of love.

I am glad to recommend this biography as a must read for Baptists interested in the last fifty years of reformation in Baptist life. Having benefited myself from serving with Pastor Reisinger in a church setting for several years, I will ever be grateful to God for the things I have learned from him, especially the books he made me read. His lengthy life and experience in different settings will be a benefit to established pastors as well as to ministerial students.

I have divided this review into four areas which make this biography a worthy read: personal, historical, theological, and practical.

Personal

First, Ernie's account of his unconverted life and subsequent conversion to Christ is a great encouragement and example of God's redeeming grace. Most of Ernie's childhood and business life occurred in and around Carlisle, Pennsylvania. From a profligate carpenter, Ernie was transformed into a faithful Christian witness affecting the lives of many. His account of the major witness to him, Elmer Albright, is a classic example in how to witness to a worldly man. Elmer, a co-worker with Ernie, witnessed to and prayed for Ernie over many years, never giving up on God's grace. I believe that Elmer's witness has followed Ernie in his concern for persevering witness to individuals one at a time. Ernie's time in the Navy following his conversion is an example of how to be a witness in a worldly environment. His successes and mistakes as a witness encourages men in the world never to give up.

Second, Ernie's tireless efforts to learn God's Word and the truths of the Bible is an example to all laymen to study God's Word for themselves. He did not attend seminary, but the blessing of good books on his life, especially the Puritans, filled in the blanks very well. His love of good books has been multiplied by the prolific use of giving them to others. Many pastors and laymen have been introduced to the world of John Bunyan, Charles Spurgeon, Matthew Henry, and the great Puritan classics by Ernie. His model for using literature in evangelism and edification should be followed by all.

Third, the joys and sorrows Ernie experienced as a successful businessman could serve as an encouragement to laymen to serve God in the business world. Some of his nuggets of wisdom in management are worthy to remember. Even the later sorrows of seeing his business enter difficulty after retirement are lessons for Christian laymen to consider. Although he "retired" from business, he never retired from spreading the gospel.

Fourth, the inclusion of correspondence between Ernie and his friends, enemies, children, and grandchildren are an encouragement for all of us to keep up the sacred example of letter writing as a Christian ministry. These letters are full of good counsel for young and old and will give good direction for those who wish to speak the truth in love.

Fifth, the waywardness of his son, Don, as well as Don's return to Christ, serves to add a note of reality to the personal history of Ernie Reisinger. In the narration of this time of trial, both the virtues and the struggles of Ernie's character are revealed. He would be the first to claim "earthen vessel" status to his life and work. Yet God's grace continues to gain the glory and victory through all.

Historical

One of the great values of this biography, especially to younger pastors and students, is that it is a good survey of the growth of the reformed faith among Baptists in the last fifty years. Involved from the beginning in the establishment and growth of Grace Baptist Church in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, one becomes familiar with the leaders of the young reformed Baptist movement in the United States. Names like Walter Chantry, Al Martin, Errol Hulse, R. T. Kendall, Tom Nettles, Tom Ascol, and others, cross the pages. Also, Ernie's friendship with Presbyterians such as Iain Murray, John Murray, and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones attest to the reformed ecumenism which has marked Ernie's life. His services to Westminster Seminary and to the Banner of Truth Trust are further attestations.

After retirement from business, Ernie and Jane retired to Islamorada, Florida. By God's providence, Ernie served as pastor of First Baptist Church in that community for several years. After that, he was called to North Pompano Baptist Church in Pompano Beach, Florida, in 1977. It was there that the hard lessons of reformation in Southern Baptist life were experienced successfully. This is helpful to any young pastor entering a Southern Baptist church. It was also there that the "Boyce Project" was established by Ernie as a project by the church. This theology of the founder of Southern Seminary was given to thousands of Southern Baptist seminary graduates and pastors, laying the foundation work for the first "Southern Baptist Conference on the Faith of the Founders" in 1983. This conference has continued to grow healthily as a boon to resurgent Calvinism in the SBC. It has expanded into Founders Ministries.

After Ernie's move to Cape Coral, Florida, he served as interim pastor of Grace Baptist Church there. Through his influence, Dr. Tom Ascol was called to serve as pastor, where he serves faithfully to this day. It was here that Ernie's writing ministry expanded and continues. The many materials, books, and quotes he has gathered over the years have been passed on to a new generation of pastors and laymen

through his writings.

Theological

Another of the virtues of this biography is the historical narration of Ernie's theological journey. He details his early acceptance of the Scofield Reference Bible theology and his move to a reformed and Calvinistic theology. His search for the victorious Christian life as he dabbled in Higher Life views ends with a gratifying discovery of historical and biblical sanctification. One of Ernie's passions has been a right understanding of the reformed view of the Law and the Gospel and its application to evangelism, holiness, and church life. His books on *Today's Evangelism*, *What Shall We Think of the Carnal Christian*, *The Law and the Gospel*, and *The Quiet Revolution* are just as relevant to new movements and errors today as when he wrote them. These works are good guides to students and pastors, often referring to the great classics of the reformed faith for further reading.

Practical

There are many practical lessons to be learned from this biography. Many lessons can be gleaned for pastoral wisdom in reformation. Lessons are there for the use of literature in personal witnessing and church reformation. There are lessons concerning the now fading use of correspondence with family, friends, and even enemies of reformation.

One major lesson abides in this biography: perseverance in the search for biblical truth and in the cause of biblical reformation in the churches. It would be easy to fold up the tent and steal away into the night in the latter years of one's life. However, God has put a determination in Ernie's character that abides still and is an encouragement never to give up on reforming the churches of Jesus Christ. This is a challenge to younger men to make the most of their time for truth and to suffer willingly in that grand endeavor.

In conclusion, I highly recommend this biography for the curious who want to more about the resurgent Calvinism in Baptist life. It might clear up many erroneous notions. But I also recommend it to those who have been in the battle for many years. There are lessons to be learned from one life that has been used by God to affect many others. Geoff Thomas has done us a service by revealing a life touched by God's sovereign grace.

Edna Gerstner. *Conduct for the Crayon Crowd*. Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997. Hardcover, 183 pp., \$18.95.

Reviewed by [Ray Van Neste](#)

This is indeed a very interesting book. It is a collection of stories written by the wife of John Gerstner for

their daughter Rachel (collected before she turned six) explaining and discussing biblical truths. Apparently the manuscript lay in a shoebox "undiscovered" for sometime before someone convinced Mrs. Gerstner to allow it to go to print.

The book contains 36 stories covering love, marriage, death, the Ten Commandments, election, the will of man and many other theological concepts. These are not primarily stories which Mrs. Gerstner tells to Rachel, but accounts of interactions between the two in various situations around the home. Perhaps the most endearing element of the book is the intimate glance provided into the home of such a respected couple. One finds an honest portrayal of a mother busy with a home and three children who is nonetheless always watching to capture any moment to teach biblical truth. There is a clear and strong respect and love for the husband and father who clearly functioned as the pastor of his family.

The stories are presented as real conversations with numerous "rabbit trails" being chased along the way. This gives a real and immediate feel to the stories but made for less pleasant reading for this reader. Some stories were more compelling than others. The one entitled "How to Get to Heaven" was excellent with a great object lesson about our inability to earn salvation and our need of grace. In summary, this book will make interesting reading for children and for parents learning to be intentional about seizing teaching moments.

John B. Leuzarder. *The Gospel for Children*, 2d ed. Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press 2002; first ed. published by Calvary Press, 1996. Hardcover, 40 pp., \$15.50.

Reviewed by [Ray Van Neste](#)

I was pleased to discover that Shepherd Press has republished this fine book. I first encountered a few years ago and bought a copy for the children's ministry of the church I pastored, vowing to buy my own copy when I had children. In recent years, I had been unable to find the book and found that Calvary Press no longer carried it. Working from memory, I found only minor changes in this second edition.

The book is in essence a large and colorful gospel tract intended for children ages five years and up. The author acknowledges J. I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* as helping to form the basic outline of the book. As one might expect with the identification with Packer and Calvary Press, this is a God-centered gospel presentation.

The book opens with a preface explaining the intent of the book and a page ('How to Use This Book') describing the book's layout and ways to use it in teaching. The actual content is arranged in six chapters: God, The Bible, Sin, Jesus, Repentance and Faith, and Counting the Costs. In each chapter main points are given in bold type and are accompanied with a color picture which serves as a memory help. Under the main points are bullet statements further expounding the main point. Endnotes are used to list scripture passages for each main point and for many of the other points. The author suggests children

memorize the main points of each chapter. The book concludes with a one page summary of the gospel and a 'What Next?' page discussing how to handle a child's profession of faith.

This is a fine book for use with children. It is essentially a mini-catechism. The gospel presentation is faithful and clear. I heartily recommend it.

Robert E. Picirilli. *Grace, Faith, Free Will - Contrasting Views of Salvation: Calvinism & Arminianism*. Nashville, TN: Random House, 2002. Paperback, 245 pp. \$19.95.

Reviewed by [Roger Nicole](#)

In this volume Dr. Picirilli, for almost half a century professor of theology and dean of the Free-Will Baptist College in Nashville, TN, has produced a fresh delineation of the contrasting views of Calvinism and Arminianism.

He represents what he calls "Reformation Arminianism" that is the position of Arminius himself and of some later disciples often called "Evangelical Arminians." He deplores the slippage from biblical moorings that he observes in the Remonstrant movement in the Netherlands and in many people known as Arminians in the English-speaking world, notably in the rise of "Open Theism" on this side of the Atlantic. Specifically he holds, as indicated in his Foreword (i) to "total depravity, the sovereignty of God who possesses complete foreknowledge of all future events, the penal satisfaction view of the atonement, salvation by grace through faith and the irremediable nature of apostasy."

In a rare display of fairness to those with whom he disagrees he offers in each major part of his presentation an exposition of Calvinism as expressed by some of its recent supporters (Shedd, Berkhof, Nicole, Jewett, Hoeksema, et al.) with a discussion of some of the biblical evidence invoked for it. Approximately one quarter of the book is devoted to this purpose (49 pages).

To be sure that his representation of Calvinism was satisfactory, Dr. Picirilli submitted it to the inspection of Dr. Robert Reymond, certainly a competent arbiter, who apparently did not insist on any major correction. That Dr. Picirilli should proceed in this manner shows his manifest desire to be accurate and fair.

Then he presents the "Reformed Arminian" view with frequent reference to Arminius' works and quotations from C. Bangs, J. Cottrell, D. Lake, G. Osborne and himself (83 pages).

A third section is devoted to an investigation of the New Testament evidence that he views as supporting the "Reformed Arminian" position (73 pages).

After a brief historical introduction in which the very text of the "Remonstrance" is quoted (13-15), the

material is divided in four parts corresponding to the issues represented by ULIP in the well-known TULIP acrostic. The absence of the "T" in this discussion is due to the fact that Article 3 of the Remonstrance is in agreement with the Reformed view of the radical and pervasive depravity of sinful mankind that no attempt to refute it needed to be undertaken. And indeed in the canons of the Synod of Dort the third and fourth heads of doctrine are considered jointly, presumably on that account.

It is evident that Dr. Picirilli has made a special effort to state fairly the Calvinistic view, even to the point of including certain common answers to Arminian objections. Here we must note some areas in which, in our judgment, he has not quite succeeded.

1. He consistently discusses the points in terms of the language of TULIP, which is in every case not sufficiently accurate to be a strict expression of biblical Calvinism.

Specifically "unconditional predestination" may in the minds of many imply that God is not concerned about the condition of the elect. What is meant, however, is that there are no conditions prior in thought to the choice of God, that would make those chosen more worthy of that choice than the rest of mankind. Not even foreseen faith is in view here, as Dr. Picirilli would posit, since prevenient grace that is indispensable to produce it is not spread evenly in the totality of humankind. It is better to speak of "sovereign election" which, in view of the wisdom of God, posits that God has good reasons for His choice, although not perceivable at our end. Furthermore God is concerned about the condition of the elect as the result of "predestination to be holy" (Ephesians 1:4).

The word "necessity" that Dr. Picirilli dislikes does not really imply more than "certainty," which his endorsement of God's foreknowledge accredits. What needs to be avoided is "coercion" that implies that "violence is offered to the will of the creature," which is expressly denied in the Westminster Confession (III/I). "Nor is the liberty contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established" as stated in the same context, contrary to what the good doctor thinks (39, 40).

How these are compatible transcends our finite logic, as does the coexistence of foreknowledge with the reality of human decision that Dr. Picirilli asserts. In either case we have here a mystery which demands gentleness and humility on the part of all concerned. The view that "foreknowledge" is the basis for predestination, appears to make the human decision logically prior to the divine choice, that is what the Westminster Confession expressly rejects (III/II).

It is encouraging to observe that Dr. Picirilli strongly opposes the denial of divine foreknowledge advocated by "Open Theism" in order to safeguard the freedom of human decision (59-63).

2. With reference to "limited atonement" Dr. Picirilli alludes once to the preferable expressions "definite atonement" or "particular redemption" (87), but otherwise consistently uses the adjective "limited." The issue, however, is not one of limits, since every non-universalist, including the good doctor, will acknowledge that not all human beings will in the end be saved, but that some will perish under the divine condemnation. Therefore every thinker will have to choose between "universal" and "effectual."

Here it would appear that Dr. Picirilli has chosen "universal" and has in fact denied that the atonement is "effectual," since it is actually the work of the Holy Spirit that saves by applying the benefits of Christ's work to the individual. In this connection he quotes Shedd (93, 94) in statements that could be misconstrued in that direction. But indeed salvation is the work of the Triune God, which is coextensive in its three aspects, election by the Father, redemption by the Son, and application by the Spirit. All those whom the Father elects are those whom the Son redeems and those to whom the Spirit gives repentance and faith. To assert a disjunction here is to split asunder the will of the Triune God.

Incidentally, this approach would seem to preclude the salvation of those dying in infancy, since they cannot be brought in this life to express repentance and/or saving faith.

Meanwhile Dr. Picirilli concentrates his attention on the extent of the atonement by examining and rejecting the Calvinistic arguments. He follows step by step my procedure in "The Case for Definite Atonement" (BETS 10:4 [1967]) and answers 8 of the 11 arguments I presented, including, I believe, the strongest ones. He then proceeds to present nine Arminian arguments with the Calvinistic response and his Arminian rejoinder. While he has not convinced me, I shall gladly acknowledge that he has given this matter very close attention. He has discounted the governmental theory of the atonement, although promoted as early as 1617 by Hugo Grotius, an early Arminian leader and a great legal scholar, contrary to what is stated on page 105.

Dr. Picirilli raises the following question: "If Christ's atonement is indeed effectual, how could the elect who lived after Christ be viewed as "dead in sin" (Ephesians 2:3) prior to their regeneration?" This issue is faced in John Murray's statement "we do not become actual partakers of Christ until redemption is effectually applied."[\[1\]](#)

The language of redemption may help us to understand what is envisioned here. Some one may put some money in the bank to be used for scholarship when I am ready to enter college. This is not actually deposited in *my* bank account until that time has arrived. The provision is effectual but the appropriation is delayed. Another illustration could be found in an electric cord that does not deliver power unless it is plugged.

3. On the issue of grace in the application of salvation, it is desirable to note that the adjective "irresistible" often used here by Calvinists, is not felicitous because it conveys to many that ultimate resistance is offered until coercion is exercised to vanquish it. What does occur in fact is that one's opposition to God is graciously overcome by "subduing" or "smoothing down" the natural resistance of a sinful heart. That God may employ drastic methods to persuade is apparent in the case of Jonah or of the Apostle Paul, but God never ultimately forces an unwilling person to enter "kicking and screaming" into fellowship with Him. "Violence is not offered to the will of the creature" (Westminster Confession III/I).

In analyzing the order of benefits in the application of salvation Dr. Picirilli prefixes prevenient grace before repentance, faith and regeneration. By this he acknowledges that repentance and faith, as appropriation of salvation, could not be flowers growing on the dunghill of our depravity, but that

prevenient grace is indispensable. Under this term he includes "conviction, persuasion and enabling" (155). These are precisely the blessings included in regeneration or effectual calling of those who are in age to respond, according to the Calvinist. The difference is that for the Arminian, resistance may thwart the divine approach, while the Calvinist avers that God's grace in the effectual call is always successful in the case of the elect. Dr. Picirilli's strong emphasis on prevenient grace enables him to assert that saving faith, while distinguishing the saved from the lost, is not a meritorious performance. It is like the hose that brings water to a plant: the hose is not itself water, but its mediation is necessary for the beneficial effects of the water. This the Calvinist would also acknowledge in the case of those who have reached the age of reason.

4. The last section on perseverance is shorter than the other parts. Here again the common language of "perseverance of the saints" is sometimes misleading as suggesting that the saints, being renewed by the Holy Spirit, can certainly be trusted to persevere. What the Scripture has in view, however, is God's perseverance with His saints. God, having started His work in regeneration, will surely bring it to a successful completion (Philippians 1:6). This is also the meaning of 1 Peter 1:5 "Kept by the power of God," although Dr. I. H. Marshall, under this title, strangely promoted an opposite view.

Dr. Picirilli devotes a special appendix to Hebrews 6:4-6 and 2 Peter 2:18-22. Here he concludes that the reference is to people who experienced true regeneration and whose apostasy is irremediable. This has to be distinguished from backsliding that does not cancel the possibility of recovery, as evident in the cases of David and of Peter. According to that view the only ones whose salvation would be definitively cancelled would be those who have committed the "sin against the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 12:31, 32; 1 John 5:16, 17). Now in almost eighty years of Christian life, I have never met a person who had manifestly committed that sin. Professing Christians who appear to walk in disobedience would not be treated differently by Dr. Picirilli than by upholders of Calvinistic security! The reality of their initial experience of conversion could also be open to question, which I believe is the case in Hebrews 6 and 2 Peter.

Fortunately the Arminian, who has quoted these passages as evidence of the possibility of apostasy, does not ordinarily give up any effort to bring back those who have sinned, but encourages them to return to God, as it were in a new conversion, in sharp conflict with the irremediable nature of the cases envisioned in those passages. The fact that many do return to God shows that they had been backsliders, yet not apostates!

Altogether we have in *Grace, Faith, Free Will* a thoughtful expression of a restrained Arminianism, that acknowledges God's sovereignty and unlimited foreknowledge, human radical depravity, the penal satisfaction in the atonement, the importance but non-meritorious capacity of saving faith, and the ordinary preservation by God of the salvation of those who are born again.

This is a very lucid volume in which the author's position is articulated and argued very clearly. It is enhanced by indices of Scriptures quoted, subjects considered, and of authors quoted. (Arminius himself apparently at least 100 times). There are fourteen bibliographies, spread through the book in relation to

individual sections. The tone of the discussion is always courteous. Although a convinced Arminian, Dr. Picirilli is aware of deviations that have occurred in those circles. He has provided some fences that should prevent such slippage and is very emphatic in opposing "Open Theism" (iii. 35, 39, 40, 60-62).

Even when aware of important differences we may not feel handicapped in expressing our position without actually proceeding to head-bashing. If we are convinced that our understanding is correct, this should give us the serenity we need in discussion without indulging *rabies theologica*.

¹ John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1961), 165.

William Philip, ed. *The Practical Preacher: Practical Wisdom for the Pastor-Teacher*. Geanies House, Fern, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2002. Paperback, 119 pp. £5.99/\$8.99

Reviewed by [Ray Van Neste](#)

This is an excellent little book for pastors and pastors in training. William Philip has brought together addresses by Melvin Tinker, David Jackman, Martin Allen, Jonathan Prime and Sinclair Ferguson from recent conferences of the Proclamation Trust (United Kingdom). Proclamation Trust (www.proctrust.org.uk) is at the forefront of encouraging expositional preaching in the UK, and this book presents a fine opportunity to glean from its work.

These essays seek to encourage pastors to preach expositionally and give hints for how to actually get it done. The first two essays are preparatory: "Preparing a Congregation for Expository Preaching" and "Planning a Preaching Programme." There is a good bit of wisdom here, first in confronting the fact that many congregations will not be accustomed to expository preaching and then thinking strategically about what, when and how to preach so as to preach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). The third essay, "From Text to Sermon," is an excellent summary of how to prepare and preach--excellent as a reminder for those with formal training or as an introduction for those without it. This essay alone is worth the book. Jackman makes many excellent points through the entire process of sermon preparation including some incisive observation on applications. Though so much could be said, two quotes will illustrate the viewpoint of the author:

This is what preaching is all about; it is not just simply laying out the truth of the message, but it is the invasion of the living God through his word into the mind, heart and will of the hearer. It is very unsettling, very challenging, and very demanding (56).

Journalistic preaching says: "I have got to do something with the Bible. I have got to construct a sermon, I have got to do something with the Bible so there is something to give on Sunday." Expository preaching says: "The Bible has got to do something with me." The Bible is setting the agenda in

expository preaching, whereas I am setting the agenda in journalistic preaching (57).

The next two essays focus our thoughts on those who will hear us and whom we are to shepherd: "Preaching to Real People" and "Pastoring Real People." In some contexts the phrase "real people" would connote a downplaying of spiritual needs and truths, but such is not the case here. These essays are excellent in helping us to focus on applying biblical truths on the lives of our people realizing this is the most helpful thing we can give them. The "Pastoring" essay is essentially an investigation of the pastoral concerns and methods seen in 1 Thessalonians and is very well done. The book closes with Sinclair Ferguson's appraisal of "The Preacher as Theologian." Ferguson opens with an old quote about John Calvin, that he "became a theologian in order to be a better pastor" and closes by stating, "You cannot be a preacher without being a theologian, just as--in the truest sense--you cannot be much of a theologian unless you are, at heart, a pastor."

This book is essentially a preaching workshop in printed form. Though its roots in the British setting are at times apparent, the differences in the American setting are in this issue not great. I whole-heartedly recommend this book. It would make a great gift for young men who are training to be pastors.



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News

Launch of Founders Study Center

Founders Ministries is pleased to announce the launch of the Founders Study Center--an online academy for ministerial training. The primary purpose of the Study Center is to provide resources for men in the field who are serving in the gospel ministry or pursuing the gospel ministry. We recognize that there are many who are not able to leave their places of ministry in order to pursue or continue ministerial training. Through mentoring relationships and the internet, we hope to bring biblically-sound, in-depth courses of study to those serving God faithfully in the local church and on the mission field. To learn more, go to the Founders Study Center web site at <http://study.founders.org>. If you would like to receive announcements about the Study Center, please subscribe to our announcement list by sending a blank message to bulletin-subscribe@study.founders.org or by submitting the form at <http://study.founders.org/mailman/listinfo.cgi/bulletin>.

Monthly Founders eNewsletter

While the *Founders Journal* is published only quarterly, we would like to keep in touch with you on a more regular basis. If you would like to subscribe to our new monthly Founders eNewsletter, send a blank message to newsletter-subscribe@founders.org or submit the form at <http://www.founders.org/mailman/listinfo.cgi/newsletter>.

Founders Fellowship Breakfast

Due to a scheduling conflict, Dr. James White is now unable to speak at the Founders Fellowship Breakfast to be held June 17, 7:00 AM in Phoenix, Arizona. Pastor and Author, Roger Ellsworth of Benton, Illinois, will be the guest speaker. Registration deadline is May 31. Register online at www.founders.org or by mail to: Founders Ministries, P.O. Box 150931, Cape Coral, FL 33915. The cost is \$12.00 per person and includes a sit-down breakfast.

Southern Baptist Founders YOUTH Conferences

This year's theme is "The Whole Gospel for the Whole World--A Missionary Call on Behalf of the Unreached Peoples of the World" with keynote speaker, David Sitton, Founder of To Every Tribe Ministries. David teaches cross-cultural missions by taking groups into Mexico and Papua New Guinea. The first conference will be held July 7-11 at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri. The second conference will be held July 28-August 1 at Laguna Beach Christian Retreat in Panama City Beach, Florida. The cost is \$240.00 per person (a deposit of \$80.00 is due with initial registration). If you

are looking for a place to take your young people grades 7-12 where they will experience God-centered preaching and teaching, God-saturated worship, and some great clean fun, then you will want to join us this summer at one of our YOUTH Conferences. For more information, contact Conference Registration Secretary, Karen Ascol c/o:

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457 Mohican Lane
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318-798-7088
318-798-7086 FAX
email: klascol@bellsouth.net

NOTE: Because the Founders Ministries web site experienced difficulties earlier this year, we have extended the registration deadline. Call for details. But hurry, because time is running out!

Founders Website

We are pleased to announce that the Founders website (www.founders.org) is back up and running to full capacity. Your patience, prayers and financial gifts during the time of our site crash have been deeply appreciated. We are especially grateful to Stan Reeves for the countless hours spent restoring the site and for his commitment to the work of Founders Ministries.

Announcing New Founders Press Titles

[Reclaiming the Gospel and Reforming Churches](#), edited by Dr. Tom Ascol, marks a significant milestone in the history of the Southern Baptist Founders Conference. This book is a compilation of papers presented over the first twenty years of the Conference. It is a hardcover book with 34 chapters (675 pages). The book is available on our website for \$24.95 each.

[The Baptism of Disciples Alone](#) by Dr. Fred Malone, sets out to prove that the Bible authorizes only credobaptism, the baptism of disciples alone. It will be of great help to those who desire a better understanding of the Baptist position for credobaptism versus paedobaptism. The book is published with the help of the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America. The book is hardcover and will retail for \$27.95 each. It will be available in June on our website for an introductory price of \$16.95 each.

[Founders Study Guide Commentary on James](#) is a reprint of Dr. Curtis Vaughan's brief exposition of James and is his third volume to be released by Founders Press. It was originally published in 1969 by Zondervan Press. The book will retail for \$8.99 each. It will be available soon on our website for an introductory price of \$5.99 each.



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