

The Founders Journal



Committed to historic Baptist principles

Issue 78

Fall 2009



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Cover photo taken at the Calossa Nature Center in Fort Myers, FL by Ken Puls.

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 which Southern Baptists produced, *The Abstract of Principles*.

Subscription Price (one year): \$20.00 (\$25.00 outside the USA)

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New Days Need Old Paths

Tom Ascol

The people of God in every generation come to crossroads that force them to make crucial decisions. This is true of individual believers as well as of churches and larger associations and Christian organizations. At such times the Lord instructs us to give careful attention to where we have been and where we are going.

This was precisely the situation facing God's Old Covenant people in Judah during the life and ministry of the prophet Jeremiah. In chapter 6 of that prophet's book the Lord calls them to decision. Judah had gone through generations of spiritual and moral degeneration. They had given themselves over to every form of idolatry and immorality imaginable. Though they still claimed to be God's people, they had turned their back on God's ways. Under King Josiah, they had reformed some of their outward expressions of degeneration—they had torn down many of the altars to false gods and started going through the motions of worship again, but for the most part, their hearts had not really changed. They were still far, far away from the Lord.

So what does the Lord call them to do in such a situation? He calls them to stop and consider the life that is absolutely best for them—and then to choose to pursue that kind of life.

Jeremiah 6:16 says, "Thus says the LORD: 'Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.' But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'" Basically the Lord calls His people to stop, look and listen.

They need to take time to stop and consider where they are in life and where they want to go. Ill-defined goals and misplaced priorities are often the result of a failure to stop and look seriously at life. If you do not know where you are going then any path will do. But if you have a destination clearly in mind, then you need to travel the right road to get there.

For the spiritual welfare of His people the Lord calls them to make an inquiry, to ask for the ancient paths in which is found "the good way." A path is not good just because it is old, but an old path that has faithfully taken those who have traveled it to their desired destination is certainly worthy of consideration and respect.

For their own spiritual health the Lord instructs His people to return to the old paths. Yet, they refused. The cult of the contemporary breeds historical myopia that cannot see the value in learning from those who have gone before us.

Wisdom, however, dictates that we learn from the past and be willing to travel the same roads of biblical fidelity that guided those who have gone before us to days of spiritual health and vitality. ☺

From Wesley to Whitefield

A Pastor's Journey to Reformed Theology

Winfield Bevins

In 2002, I had a plane ticket to fly to England to begin a PhD program in Wesleyan Studies at the University of Manchester, England. I was a Wesleyan-Arminian theologian in the making. I spoke at conferences on John Wesley and wrote several academic publications that were published in the top Wesleyan academic journals including *The Wesleyan Theological Journal* and the *Asbury Theological Journal*.¹ I even wrote a book entitled *Rediscovering John Wesley*, about the life, ministry and theology of John Wesley.² I lived, breathed, believed, wrote and preached Wesleyan-Arminian theology.

However, my Wesleyan world began to radically change in 2003, when my wife Kay and I began to feel the call of God to plant a church. After serving as a pastor and college instructor in Tennessee for several years, I knew God was preparing me to plant a church. We began to dream of planting a church that would be highly innovative, gospel-centered and culturally relevant. During that time, some close friends began telling us about the need for a contemporary church in the Outer Banks of North Carolina. After much prayer, I resigned as lead pastor of our church in Tennessee and made plans to move to North Carolina's beautiful Outer Banks. Everyone thought we were crazy because we were moving to a place that we had never been before. With only faith and a few possessions, we moved to the Outer Banks in May 2005.

Toward a Reformed Theology

As I wrestled with the call to be a church planter, the seeds of Reformed theology began to take form. The implications of planting a church actually shaped and influenced my turn to Reformed theology. I began to ask some sobering questions. Where did the call come from? Why was God calling me to a specific group of people in a place I had never been before? Why was God calling me to do something so radically different from anything I had ever done before? Was it all up to me? How would I know that God would provide for my family if I moved in faith? What would happen if we failed?

I began to realize that the Lord was at the center of it all. The theological implications were nothing more than astounding. I saw that God was already at work in the Outer Banks preparing the hearts of hundreds of people to receive the gospel before I ever visited. I thought I was going there to do a work for the Lord; rather, I was actually going there to share in the work that He was already doing in the hearts and lives of the people. Many ministers wrongly say "my ministry" or "my church." In actuality, the church belongs to Christ and ministry is an exten-

sion of God's work in and through the church. It is Christ's work from beginning to end! This does not remove our responsibility; rather, it frees us to rely on Christ and His cross for ministry. This opened wonderful new possibilities!

I laid aside my Wesleyan lenses and began to see Scripture in a new light. I never really meditated on the meaning of such passages as Ephesians 1:3–14 and Romans.8:28–30. The Scriptures came alive with new meaning and depth. As an Arminian, I had always skipped over these passages and never fully read them. I began reading the works of great historical Reformed thinkers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards and Charles Spurgeon. Then I began to read the contemporary writings of men like John Piper, D.A. Carson, C.J. Mahaney, Wayne Grudem and Albert Mohler. I also became involved with a Reformed church planting group called the Acts 29 Network, which helped me work through the practical and cultural implications of Reformed theology as a church planter.

I began to see that God was the Sovereign Creator of all things. He upholds, directs and governs all creation from the greatest even to the least by His sovereign will and holy providence. In His foreknowledge, He also governs and directs the affairs of the nations. He rules over all and is the only Sovereign God. John Piper describes the sovereignty of God in the following way, "He is the only 'Sovereign,' and therefore He is the happy Sovereign, because there is none that can frustrate what He aims to do according to His good pleasure."³ Contrary to Open Theism, God's plans and purposes cannot be thwarted or overturned.⁴ He works all things together for good to those who love Him according to His will.

Solus Christus

It followed then, that I began to understand salvation from a Reformed theological perspective. Men like Martin Luther and John Calvin fought to bring a reformation to the church that would put faith back into the hands of the people. Arising out of the period of the Protestant Reformation were five foundations which summarized in part what the Reformers were trying to do. These banners were known as the "Five Solas" (Latin for *only* or *alone*) of the Reformation: the authority of Scripture alone, salvation in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, and to God alone be glory. These five *solas* of the faith are as important now as they were then.⁵

The Reformed view of salvation is completely Christocentric. Christianity begins and ends with Jesus Christ. The word *Christian* literally means "Christ-like." Therefore, a proper Christology is the place to start if we are really going to talk about salvation. Reformed theology distinguishes between man-centered and God-centered views of salvation. Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is freely offered to all who repent of their sins and trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. By His blood, Jesus has obtained eternal redemption for every believer. We are "saved by grace through faith, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9). Therefore, salvation is the work of God from beginning

to end. Salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, thereby justifying them in His sight.

I began to understand that God works in various ways to bring people into full salvation in Jesus Christ. It all begins when God calls us. This is commonly referred to as the effectual call. The effectual call is when the Holy Spirit effectually calls a person by working to awaken the heart, mind and soul of a person to a personal need of salvation. Bruce Demarest helps distinguish between the general call to the unsaved that comes through the preaching of the gospel and the special call that is effected by the Holy Spirit's secret work on the heart.⁶ The universal call goes out to all through the general proclamation of the gospel. All should hear the gospel message; however, only the elect will hear the inward or special call of the Holy Spirit. We do our part in preaching the gospel and God does His part in calling the elect unto Himself by His Spirit.

The *Westminster Confession* describes the effectual call as, "God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it." This does not diminish the human responsibility in any way. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are both in the Scriptures. J.I. Packer says that, "God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are taught us side by side in the same Bible: sometimes, indeed, in the same text."⁷

We are also justified by Christ alone, not by any works. Justification is a judicial act, in which God forgives a person's sins and declares him to be in a position of righteousness before God. It is what God does for us. It is by the merits of Christ's redemptive work on the cross that we receive justification, which is the forgiveness of sins. Paul makes it clear that this justification comes by grace through faith in God alone not of works (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8-9). Justification is the work of God's grace, not ours. For that reason, it is a foundational teaching in the Christian faith, especially in the Protestant tradition.⁸ The redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross brings justification into the life of the believer. Christ's work of reconciliation transforms our hostility toward God into fellowship with Him. Let us then never lose sight of the cross and the doctrine of justification. This is why Charles Spurgeon encourages us to, "abide hard at the cross and search the mystery of his wounds."⁹ The Father sent His Son to die for us on the cross to apply the fruit of His death to our lives in justification and salvation. D.A. Carson warns, "I fear that the cross, without ever being disowned, is constantly in danger of being dismissed from the central place it must enjoy, by relatively peripheral insights that take on far too much weight."¹⁰

The Centrality of the Gospel

Reformed theology helped me rediscover the centrality of the gospel for the Christian life. Many Christians have a watered down, man-centered version of

the gospel. The result of not having a solid grasp on the gospel is a dysfunctional and fragmented faith. C.J. Mahaney warns that three things result when we move away from the gospel: legalism, condemnation and subjectivism.¹¹ Therefore, the gospel message must always remain central. Jerry Bridges says, “The gospel is not the most important message in history; it is the only essential message in all of history. Yet we allow thousands of professing Christians to live their entire lives without clearly understanding it and experience the joy of living their lives by it.”¹²

What is the gospel? The gospel is the declaration of the good news that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died for our sins on the cross of Cavalry. Simply put, there is no gospel without the sinless life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Tim Keller beautifully describes the gospel: “Through the person and work of Jesus Christ, God fully accomplishes salvation for us, rescuing us from judgment for sin into fellowship with him, and then restores the creation in which we can enjoy our new life together with him forever.”¹³

The gospel has far-reaching implications for every Christian believer beyond salvation. Not only are we saved by the gospel, but we are also called to live by the gospel. Not only should every Christian have a clear understanding of the gospel but they should also apply it to every area of the Christian life. The gospel is to be applied to every area of thinking, feeling, relating, working and behaving.¹⁴ We must never move beyond the gospel. We should memorize the gospel, pray the gospel, sing the gospel, review how the gospel has changed our lives, and finally we should continually study the gospel.¹⁵ The gospel is for all of life. This is the reason why the gospel is the foundation for Christian life. Only a gospel-centered approach to all of life will produce healthy Christ followers. It is easy to use church growth principles to add people to your church; however, only the gospel can grow people into disciples of Jesus Christ.

Gospel-Centered Ministry

Because of my shift in thinking to a Reformed view of salvation through the gospel, my thoughts of ministry and evangelism also began to change. I began to realize the important connection between the Bible, theology and ministry. Our theology has a direct effect on our ministry. In many ways, our ministry is the fruit of our theology. As an Arminian, I thought it was all up to me to save people. Arminian theology can result in man-centered approaches to evangelism and ministry. I began to see that Christ was already at work in people’s lives. I realized that ministry is only effective when the Holy Spirit is already present and at work. Ministry is sharing in the mission of God. Christians have been sent as missionaries to share the gospel in our present culture and to fulfill the Great Commission. Gospel-centered ministry is rooted in the concept of the *Missio Dei* (“Mission of God”) which recognizes that there is one mission and it is God’s mission. The church is not an end in itself; the church points beyond itself to fulfill the mission of God.

To understand what it means to be a part of the mission of God, one must begin by understanding that God is a missionary God. The very being of God is the basis for the missionary enterprise. God is a sending God, with a desire to see humankind and creation reconciled, redeemed and healed.¹⁶ God's mission can be seen throughout the pages of the Bible and history. Nowhere is the mission of God better understood than in the person and work of Jesus Christ. John 3:16 tells us that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Being a missional Christian is simply following the way of Jesus. Jesus Christ was and is the first and greatest missionary. The Bible tells us that He came from heaven to earth to die for a lost and dying world.

Ed Stetzer says, "Being *Missional* means actually *doing mission* right where you are. *Missional* means adopting the *posture of a missionary*, learning and adapting to the culture around you while remaining biblically sound."¹⁷ As the Father sent Jesus, He also sends us into our time and culture. Mark Driscoll says, "It is imperative that Christians be like Jesus, by living freely within the culture as missionaries who are as faithful to the Father and his gospel as Jesus was in his own time and place."¹⁸ We have been chosen by God to live in this time and place in order to fulfill the mission of God. Acts 17:26–27 tells us that God has determined the exact place and time where we should live so that that men may find Him. It is truly awesome to realize that you have been chosen by God to be His representative to this world. It is both a great privilege and great responsibility. In 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul describes our calling in the following way, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

Conclusion: My Journey Home

I simply wrote this article to share my theological pilgrimage from Arminian theology to Reformed theology. Ironically, my journey has been the exact opposite of Clark Pinnock's theological pilgrimage in which he moved from Reformed to Arminian theology.¹⁹ I have not attempted to try to articulate anything new, but to affirm the importance and relevance of Reformed theology in the 21st century. In many ways, my journey seems to parallel a larger resurgence of interest in Reformed theology within Evangelicalism. Collin Hansen captured the resurgence in an article he wrote for *Christianity Today* called "Young, Restless, Reformed."²⁰

Reformed theologian John Franke said, "Reformed theology is always reforming according to the Word of God in order to bear witness to the eternal truth of the gospel in the context of an ever-changing world characterized by a variety of cultural settings: *theologia reformata et semper reformata*."²¹ In the spirit of the Reformation, my theology has been reformed and is being reformed. God has taken me on a theological journey from Wesley to Whitfield from Arminianism to Calvinism.

My theological journey has come full circle. Although I strayed off the road for a while, I have returned home to the roots of my Baptist heritage. My great-grandfather Rev. William H. Bevins was a Baptist preacher in the late eighteenth century in the mountains of Southwest Virginia. He was an adherent to the New Hampshire Baptist Confession, which is a thoroughly Reformed Baptist statement of faith. My great-grandfather Phillip Wheeler Bevins built the second sanctuary for First Baptist Church in Concord, Tennessee in 1928. My grandmother Loretta Bevins was the first person baptized in the church. Decades later, when I became a Christian I was also baptized at the First Baptist Church of Concord. Now, I am currently finishing a doctoral degree at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. ☺

Notes:

¹ In fact, by the time many of these were published my theology had begun to shift to Reformed theology. “Historical Development of Wesley’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Fall 2006). “Pneumatology in John Wesley’s Theological Method.” *The Asbury Theological Journal*, Volume 58, Number 2 (Fall 2003).

² Dr. Larry Wood at Asbury Seminary graciously wrote the foreword to the book. Winfield Bevins, *Rediscovering John Wesley* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2004).

³ John Piper, *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God’s Delight in Being God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2000), 54.

⁴ The Openness view concludes that God does not know the future because it has not happened yet. This unbiblical view of God is a heretical doctrine that is a radical form of Arminian teaching and dangerous to the church on various levels. Classical Arminian theology affirms divine sovereignty in general, and many Arminian theologians are rightly suspicious of Openness theology.

⁵ Micheal Horton, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace: Who Does What in Salvation?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994). See especially the introduction to the book.

⁶ Bruce Demarest and John S. Feinberg, *The Cross and Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006) 214.

⁷ J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 22.

⁸ Demerast and Feinberg, *The Cross and Salvation*, 346.

⁹ Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 8.

¹⁰ Don Carson, *Cross & Christian Ministry: An Exposition of Passages from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993). 26.

¹¹ C.J. Mahaney, *The Cross Centered Life: Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2002), 23.

¹² Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav Press, 1994), 46.

¹³ Tim Keller, "The Gospel in All Its Forms" *Leadership Journal* (Spring, 2008).

¹⁴ Tim Keller, "The Centrality of the Gospel." <http://www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/centrality.pdf>

¹⁵ C.J. Mahaney, *The Cross Centered Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2006), 53–71.

¹⁶ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 2003), 18.

¹⁷ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic Press, 2006), 19.

¹⁸ Mark Driscoll, *The Radical Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 40.

¹⁹ See Clark Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology." http://www.revivaltheology.net/1_cal_arm/pilgrim.html

²⁰ Collin Hansen, "Young, Restless, Reformed." *Christianity Today* (September 2006).

²¹ John Franke, "Reforming Theology: Toward a Postmodern Reformed Dogmatics." *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003), 1–26.

I Blot Out a Day

James Petigru Boyce
The Southern Baptist
December 20, 1848

While driving my busy pen, I at times pause and lift my eyes, from my work, and linger for a moment, for a little rest. Directly before me, in a niche of my writing desk, is a little printed card, containing the months of the year, and also the day of the week, in columns of figures. That I may keep accurately the day of the month, I draw my pen, each day, over the figure of the day that is gone. So I blot out a day.

I have just done it. But I am arrested in the very act, and a train of most serious reflection is started in my mind.

My crossing out that day signifies, that it has gone. I have no power over it. It was mine; but it is not mine now; I think of it, but cannot lay my hands upon it, or any part of it, any more. That day was with me, a precious gift of God—a friend, a most precious friend of my best welfare. It came on an errand of kindness to me. It came to offer me the momentary advantages of a longer probation, an opportunity to do something more for my own eternal welfare, something more for the eternal good of others. I cross out the day because it is gone. And every thing belonging

to it, is gone with it. The little black mark I make, most strikingly signifies to me, that the day is gone. I must not make that mark hastily, and forget what it implies. A day gone! Then an opportunity for improvement is gone. How was it improved? An opportunity of usefulness too. Did I take advantage of it or not? A day gone! That is a link of the chain of life.

I blot out a day! I am startled at the thought? What can I do with a day. Can I destroy it? Will the stroke of my pen send it into non-existence? That stroke may say to me, it is gone; but as for blotting it out, who am I that can have such a thought?

That day had its history. It was a part of the active, busy, responsible existence of my soul. It was filled up with emotion and action. And having been filled up and finished—all its hours having run out, it has, indeed, gone; but what can I do with its history? I can take back no emotion. I can throw back into non-existence no action. I can alter nothing. Its facts all stand, whatever I may wish or attempt to do about them.

That day had its influence. Each affects its successor. “Day unto day uttereth speech”—gives its own hue, imparts its own character. A well-spent day augments the moral power of spending another day as well or better. A mis-spent day weakens the power of principle, and increases the probability of another one being misspent. The sins of one day reach forward to throw their baneful influence on the one that approaches, and make the bands of iniquity stronger; while the active holiness of one day prepares the golden thread of that girdle by which the saint binds his soul to more devoted and eminent consecration to God. My pen can cross out the figure representing a day, and proclaim the day as gone; but can I blot out the influences of a day? Can I break the chain of that influence by which a day and its successors are bound together? Can I say, that the wrong of yesterday shall do no harm to-day? The day is gone, yet it is not gone; its moral power remains.

Since I began this article, I have drawn my pen over another day. But I did it more seriously and thoughtfully than before the train of thought was indulged which I have been exhibiting. I shall not stop the process. I shall yet mark the days as they fly. Mark them—not with ink only, but with solemn thought. My little card grows blacker, as I go through the month; but by this very process, perhaps I may be made wiser.

I pause to say, I have just read a prayer that a day might perish. I think that a dreadful prayer, if so good a man as Job did utter it. In the pressure of his sorrows, he must have lost his balance just at that moment. I will venture so great a variance with him as to say, “Let the day live.” I will try so to improve it, that it shall live—shall live in my happy recollections—shall live in the life and power it shall give my spiritual being in its appropriate work—shall live, and come and meet me at the judgment, and give a joyful account of the manner in which it was improved. 🐦

—Excerpt from *Stray Recollections, Short Articles and Public Orations of James P. Boyce*, edited by Tom Nettles (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2009), 32–33.

Baptist Theology with James Leo Garrett, Jr.

An Interview and Review

Wyman Lewis Richardson

The following interview and review were occasioned by the January 2009 publication of James Leo Garrett, Jr.'s *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Mercer University Press). The interview was originally conducted on Monday, March 2, 2009 and posted April 28, 2009 on Founders Ministries Podcast (www.recoveringthegospel.net). I would like to thank Scott Kerlin of First Baptist Church, Dawson, GA, for his technical assistance in the conducting of this interview. In the review that follows, I have tried not to address issues that are sufficiently covered in the interview so as to avoid repetition.

Interview

Dr. James Leo Garrett, Jr. has been a Baptist theological educator for over fifty years. He has taught primarily in three Baptist institutions: Southwestern Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Baylor University. He was at Southwestern Seminary from 1949 to 1959 and from 1979 to 1997 with post-retirement teaching until 2003. We really do appreciate you taking the time to speak with us today, Dr. Garrett.

Thank you, sir.

Dr. Garrett, I hope you will indulge me for just a moment. I wanted to share just a brief word of appreciation for you as a former student, if that is ok. I thought I might do so by sharing just a small paragraph from Paul Basden's chapter on you in the 2001 edition of *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* (Broadman & Holman). Paul Basden wrote this:

"For five decades now James Leo Garrett, Jr. has taught and written about Baptist theology. Given the size of the schools which he has served, one can only begin to estimate the number of students whom he has influenced to think biblically, historically, and theologically about the Christian faith. Who knows how many young seminarians had their minds broadened in his introductory theology courses or received flashes of inspiration in his famous 'after-lecture' discussions, or first encountered the mystery of the Trinity in his beloved patristics elective, or

learned to grapple with Luther or Augustine in one of his doctoral seminars? Who knows how many times he invited classes into his home for a meal or recommended former students for church positions or faculty appointments or counseled confused young ministers about their calling or career? He has had an enormous influence on Southern Baptists during the past half century. Beloved by students and fellow professors alike, Garrett is recognized by many of his peers as the most knowledgeable Baptist theologian living today.” (p.298)

Dr. Garrett, I just wanted to say here at the beginning that I share in those words of Paul Basden and just want to thank you here at the outset for your life, your ministry, and your work. As a former student, I owe you a great debt of gratitude as do so many others. So, thank you very much.

Well, Pastor Wyman, those words, I am sure, are vastly exaggerated, but I am grateful to have had you as one of my students. Thank you very much.

The occasion of this interview is the publication in January of this year, two months ago, of Dr. Garrett’s new book, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study*, which was published by Mercer University Press. I have only recently finished reading the book and it is a kind of education in and of itself. So let me begin, Dr. Garrett, by asking this question: “Why this book?”

Well, Pastor Wyman, I will answer it in two ways. First of all, I will give a more personal answer. In 1950, when I was a very young instructor at Southwestern Seminary, the faculty allowed me to introduce a new elective course in the curriculum called “The History of Baptist Theology.” I taught that course at Southwestern during the 50’s and again, later, in the 80’s and 90’s and at Southern Seminary during the 60’s and early 1970’s. That course involved having students write papers on many subjects. Then, after my 2nd retirement from teaching in 2003, I began an intensive reading of all of these sources and a research project which eventuated in this book.

Now, why this book? No book of this kind, of this nature and scope, on this subject, had ever been written in the history of the Baptists so far as I knew. I did not know when I started that William Brackney would write *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* and that it would be published in 2004. I did not know that when I began my book and I’m sure he did not know, when he was writing his, that I would be writing mine.

So these are the only two books that have attempted to cover comprehensively Baptist confessions of faith, Baptist theologians, and theological movements and controversies. There have been books on each of those three areas, many books, but only these two on the whole field.

It is a massive book, well over 720 pages of text, not including the index of names, and I imagine when you sit down to begin to write a Baptist theology covering four hundred years that you have really got to think through your methodology and your approach. What was your methodology in writing this book?

As I just said, it sought to cover in an integrated, not a segregated, interpretation, the major confessions of faith adopted by Baptists, the major theologians among the Baptists, and the major theological movements and controversies that have affected Baptist life.

Now, I tried to do this by using both what we call “primary sources” and “secondary sources,” that is, the original writings of the people we are discussing and then what’s been written about them. Take two examples: one is John Gill, back in the 17th century, the other, E.Y. Mullins, at the beginning of the 20th century. Both of those were very influential Baptist theologians and it’s important to read, study, and interpret their own writings. But because of their importance, there have been many things written about them, both favorable and unfavorable, both positive and negative. So it is important to look at those assessments as well as what I would say in interpreting these.

Then we tried to let the authors speak for themselves before I attempted to make any assessment of their work. Then, too, I operated on the basis of a five-continent or a six-continent view of Baptist history. It depends on whether you include Australia and New Zealand in Asia as to whether you have five or six continents. When I was a very young seminary student, I bought Latourette’s seven-volume History of the Expansion of Christianity, which was the first comprehensive missionary history of the world from a Christian viewpoint. It greatly influenced my life. Then, working with the Baptist World Alliance, as I have since 1965, I was intent on having a book that would include more than Britain and North America. Dr. Brackney confines his work to Britain and North America, and Dr. McBeth, in his history of the Baptist movement, included North America, Britain, and continental Europe, but not the other continents of the world.

So that’s what I would say about methodology.

It is an interesting look at Baptist theology over the last four hundred years, and I am just curious to know why the world would need such a book on Baptists appearing in January of 2009? Why Baptists in 2009?

We need the book, first of all, because we haven’t had this kind of thing before. Dr. Brackney and I have, in that sense, been breaking new ground. We needed an overview. We need to rise above the particulars. Some people would understand the 17th century and some might understand the 19th century, but we need a view of Baptist theology that is comprehensive. That is why the effort was made.

Now, Baptists need that for their own self-understanding. This is a great need today in our churches: that people understand what the Baptist identity is. What

are the distinctives and what are the beliefs that Baptists share with other Christians? So there was a need for the book for Baptists and, then, for others to know what theology Baptists have had.

At one time there were people saying we did not have any Baptist theology. Theology was only written by Roman Catholics or Lutherans or Anglicans or Presbyterians or somebody else. But this book is, I think, quite clear evidence that that is not true. So, the Baptist movement with its distinctives—its religious freedom, separation of church and state, the supremacy of Scripture over tradition without rejecting all tradition, the tendency to want to go back to the New Testament to recover apostolic or primitive Christianity, the baptism of believers only by immersion and, with that, the goal of a regenerate church membership, the priesthood of all believers, congregational polity, and a strong emphasis on evangelism and missions; these are some of the things that are important for Baptists. Sometimes these distinctives have been taken by other groups. They are not altogether distinctive of Baptists today, but the mix of these distinctives is what has made the Baptist movement distinctive.

You mentioned regenerate church membership, and you have written on regenerate church membership. I know of at least one article you have written specifically devoted to the issue of regenerate church membership and, of course, you have published on the issue of church discipline as well. Let me just ask you about your thoughts concerning the recent discussions that have taken place in the Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings concerning an effort to see a resolution passed, that was ultimately passed last year, to call churches back to a regenerate church membership. Do you think this is a favorable development?

Yes, I do. I think that the Convention cannot mandate that, of course, because that is a decision that the local churches have to make, but to advise and counsel and encourage is certainly in order. I am very grateful for the good work that you have done in the field of church discipline. I think what you have written is the most practical set of helps that we have out there, available today, to help existing churches recover some sense of church discipline and positive discipleship.

So, yes, I think the regenerate church membership goal is a worthy one and it means, of course, that in the last century or so, many Baptist churches have been very loose in terms of their membership rolls and this is what they are trying to address today. It is at the front end, in terms of members being received, and then it is a continual problem of authentic membership in the years that follow.

Let me ask you to generalize just a little bit. You are a historical theologian, and you cover, obviously, a very long period of time, four hundred years, in your study of Baptist theology and much longer, of course, in your two-volume *Systematic Theology*. But I am curious to know, as you look at four hundred years of Baptist history, who you would see as the top three or four Baptist figures, from

any time period, whose work, in your opinion, ought to be carefully studied by Baptist pastors and laypeople today?

Well, Pastor Wyman, I have a hard time limiting my answer to your requested three or four. I tend to want to identify more. Initially, in responding to you, I might be prone to say, "Oh, we have so many of the older works of Baptist theologians that are not in print." But then I have to reckon what the electronic revolution has done. I have been told, on good authority, that almost all the works of Baptist theologians that are more than seventy-five years old are now available electronically. And through Google search, most of them are free, and there are other places where you have to pay for the text to be produced. So the availability will not be a big issue in my answer.

I would say, if we're going back to the 17th century, that John Bunyan is the one who, above all, should be read. Not because he is necessarily right on all points, but here was a man who, with limited formal education, but with a passion for God and for the Bible, was able in rather remarkable literary form to write on many theological themes, not only in his famous *Pilgrim's Progress*. We have today a wonderful thirteen-volume edition from Oxford if you want to buy the whole thing, but I believe you can get it free electronically. So I would say, from that early century, John Bunyan.

From the next century, I would take John Gill and Andrew Fuller, especially Andrew Fuller. His works have been republished in recent years. He was a very practical theologian, a pastor.

From the 19th century, I might want to mention John L. Dagg, whose work is in print. He was a Southern theologian. Then the sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon are still filled with theological content and can be read widely because they were preached from a pulpit in Spurgeon's day.

In the 20th century, I would speak of people like Carl Henry, Bernard Ramm and Millard Erickson. Most of these works are still in print.

And then, of course, in my book I have a group of baby boom theologians that certainly have works in print. So I've given you a broader answer, but these are some of the ones that I think would be worthy of attention. Now, that is not to say there are not others.

This may overlap a little bit, but let me ask you more personally, for yourself, who the Baptist figures are who have had the greatest impact on your own thinking and work? Let me put it another way: do you have favorite Baptist authors that you return to time and time again?

Pastor Wyman, as you may know, I was a student of W.T. Conner, the theologian at Southwestern for thirty-nine years, and my own teacher during the last days of his teaching career. When I began as a young teacher, of course, he had shaped my own thinking. I had read his works. I wrote my dissertation on his

theology. So it would be important for me to list him as the number one influence in the early formation of my own theology.

In the 1950's we did not have many evangelical theologians writing at that time. Non-Baptists like Emil Brunner, for example, were greatly helpful to me as I struggled with the teaching of theology. But then we had to deal with Landmarkism, which was alive and well at that time in Baptist life, still exerting quite an influence. So I had to read J.R. Graves even though I didn't always agree with Graves. I had to interact with him.

And later on, as I began to be more mature in my theology, I had to rely on people like A.H. Strong as well. Then I was colleague to Dale Moody at Southern Seminary, and nobody who lives with Dale Moody could be unaffected by Dale Moody. And then, of course, Carl Henry was very active. When I came to write my own theology, beginning at the age of 63, I had to deal with Millard Erickson, who had already written his *Christian Theology*.

So these were some of the people who were very formative. Now, I read others. I read P.T. Forsyth. I read E. Y. Mullins. I read Luther. I read Augustine. I read Calvin. I read Schleiermacher. I taught Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, in seminars. But for Baptist theologians, these would be the first. And then I would say, as far as biblical theologians, I think I was more greatly influenced by H.H. Rowley, as an Old Testament theologian. In the New Testament field, Ray Summers, my teacher, was very influential on my views of last things, or the doctrine of eschatology.

This is likewise a bit of a personal question, along the same lines, but I am just curious about your own reading habits. Do you read daily, every day?

I usually read something, yes, every day. There will be days I do not because of schedule. Right now I am reading the *festschrift* honoring my colleague Leon McBeth, which was published late last year, called *Turning Points in Baptist History*. I am reading that and will be finishing that shortly. That is a book that has theological as well as historical significance.

I know you are retired, but do you have any other writing projects in the wings?

I cannot answer that with a clear affirmative. For some years, Dr. Malcolm Yarnell and I have contemplated co-editing a history of the doctrine of the priesthood of all Christians. I do not know if we will ever get that done. He has done considerable writing on the Reformation period, and I have done some writing on the patristic period. If we can ever get the medieval and modern sections done, we may be able to have a book. There is no comprehensive, good, reliable history of that doctrine. But Yarnell has other priorities, and I am not as well as I used to

be; so we do not promise anything in that area. There might be some things I wish I had done in the past.

Well, that raises another question: are there any books that you have not been able to write that you wish you would have written?

There are two others I will mention. When I was at Southern Seminary, I gave an inaugural address on the methodology for the history of Christian doctrine, or historical theology, in which address I proposed that the best way to do this today would be to have an international, interdenominational team of scholars to do a comprehensive history of Christian doctrine. No sooner had I given that address and it was published in the journal *Review & Expositor* that I received a letter from Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan at Yale University telling me that he was launching a big five-volume history of Christian doctrine and, by implication, he was saying that my project was not needed. My later move to Baylor with different duties meant that I was not teaching the history of Christian doctrine for a while. After coming back to Southwestern and resuming that teaching in 1980, although I gave some serious consideration to doing something myself, I gave up the project because there is so little market out there since most seminaries require systematic theology but not historical theology. So I did not attempt that big project which I originally had proposed as a massive cooperative effort.

As for the other, for many years I taught a course at Southwestern on the theology of the American cults. We treated Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, the Unification Church, the Ba'hai World Faith, and various other movements that have been deviations from either Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. I, at one time, contemplated a textbook in that area. But, you know, each one of those religious movements is a field of specialization itself. You can be very good on the Mormons and you may be much less competent on Jehovah's Witnesses at the same time. One needs to be competent on all of these in order to write a first-rate text, I felt that I never got to the point where I could do that like I wanted to do it. So I retired, after many years of teaching, without producing a book in that area. We still do not have a very good textbook in that field after all of these years.

Let me go back for just a minute to this letter you received from Jaroslav Pelikan. I know he passed away just a couple of years ago. Is that customary scholarly habit to receive a letter saying that your proposed writings are not necessary because it is being done?

I do not think the letter was quite that specific. I think it was more of an indirect statement. I must say, of course, I have never received another letter like that. I did not feel any resentment about it at the time. My wife seems to remember the incident more than I do. I do not know how common that is, because I never

experienced it in any other setting. But evidently he was wanting to be a little protective of his own interests. He produced a very important five-volume set, which is very topical rather than chronological. Therefore, it was not the method that I used in teaching. Mine was more chronological than topical. So I never did use his book in my classes, but certainly I have used the volumes. They are a very important contribution to the literature. There was never any ill-will between Dr. Pelikan and me.

Dr. Garrett, I really do appreciate, and I know that readers of this interview will appreciate, your taking the time to answer some questions and, God willing, if you will allow it, when the next book comes out, we will talk again.

Well, let me say in closing, Pastor Wyman, that I appreciate talking with you and having these questions from you. I would like to say to you as pastor of your congregation there in Dawson, GA, and other church people who should read or ponder these words, what I think is one of our greatest challenges today in the local Baptist church is to recover a sense of Baptist identity, to teach our heritage, to share with our people our stories, our heroes, our heroines, our triumphs and our tragedies, and to make being a Baptist Christian a much clearer and more responsible thing in today's world. I believe every local Baptist church has that challenge today, and I know if anybody can meet that challenge, you can do it there in Dawson, GA.

I appreciate that so much. Thank you so much. Let me just encourage, in closing, readers of this interview to consider purchasing *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study*. It is a great resource and would be a great help in the teaching of our distinctives and our identity and heritage in the local church, wherever you are. I encourage all of you to get this book.

Review

The appearance of *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* is a welcome occasion not only because it presents us with the seasoned offerings of arguably the greatest living Baptist historical theologian, but also because it appears at a time in Baptist history when myopic tangents and agendas seem increasingly to dominate our particular ecclesial landscape from various idiosyncratic corners. That is to say, voices like Dr. Garrett's are needed in our day of confusion and denominational flux in which the very question of "What is a Baptist?" seems to be more *unresolved* than resolved.

This is not to suggest that Garrett has presented an *argument* in this work, or that he is pushing a point. Rather, he is telling a story, and he is wearing the cloak of the objective historical theologian in doing so. But he tells the story in such a balanced way, and with such painstaking documentation, that it cannot help but

shed light on the various and sundry conversations and skirmishes one encounters here and there about what it means to be a Baptist Christian.

We need to hear the story again, particularly the story of the theological convictions of the people called “Baptists.” We need, in other words, this book.

It is, perhaps, an odd thing to say about a work of historical theology, but let me simply say that for this reader, this book was, strangely enough, an occasion for deep introspection about what it means to be Baptist Christian. The story that Dr. Garrett tells creates context and context brings perspective. In this sense, the almost overwhelming amount of data presented in the book is fascinating not only for the events that it chronicles, but also for how these events might help us to see our own place in the Baptist story more clearly today.

It is not a perfect book. Readers will invariably find some sections more interesting than others, but I daresay that Dr. Garrett has achieved a measure of objectivity and clarity in this work that render none of the sections unprofitable for the reader.

To be sure, there are quibbles. Dr. Garrett is famously fond of footnotes (e.g., Paul F.M. Zahl rather fascinatingly chided Dr. Garrett with, “There are just too many footnotes,” in his response to Garrett’s essay in *Perspectives on Church Government* [Broadman & Holman, 2004, p.207]). Of course, a work like this is necessarily going to be well-documented, but there were sentences in which it seemed almost overly so. At the risk of self-contradiction, let me add that the footnotes were simultaneously one of the more fascinating aspects of this work. The reader will find here a massive bibliography of Baptist sources that will inevitably aid him in his own study.

And I do so wish that the book contained a “Subject Index” and not only an “Index of Persons.” I found myself time and again wanting to trace the Baptist approaches to this or that particular issue, and, in this respect, such an index would have been very helpful. I do suspect the “Subject Index” would have made this already pricey book even more expensive and this already heavy volume even more physically ponderous, but it would have been helpful nonetheless. But these are trifles, really, and the latter may have more to do with Mercer University Press than Dr. Garrett.

In truth, what Dr. Garrett has given us here is a treasure trove of well-documented, carefully structured, and clearly presented snapshots of Baptist life which, when put together, made this reader thankful, once again, to be a Baptist. Simultaneously, I was challenged to avoid the unfortunately all-too-prevalent pitfalls into which too many in our story have fallen over the years.

I daresay every pastor should own this book and read it. Furthermore, interested laypeople, and those who are not but should be, ought to be encouraged to consider immersing themselves in the four hundred year old story of Baptist theology that is capably told by Dr. James Leo Garrett, Jr. in ways that will challenge and inspire any who take up this profound work. ☺

What Baptists Can Learn from Calvin

Why the Genevan Reformer's Words Are Still Worth Hearing Today

Timothy George

The year 2009 marks two important anniversaries in the history of the Christian church: the birth of John Calvin at Noyon in France in 1509, and the birth of the modern Baptist movement at Amsterdam one hundred years later in 1609. Both events are being celebrated with numerous symposia, publications, and conferences, but few are asking what these two events, separated by the century of the Reformation, have in common. Baptists are fiercely independent and refuse to recognize any human figure as a standard of faith. Today's Baptists would agree with what the nonconformist Samuel Hieron said in the seventeenth century:

We do not hang on Calvin's sleeve
Nor yet on Zwingli's we believe:
And Puritans we do defy,
If right the name you do apply.

Are Baptists Calvinists? If a Calvinist is a person who follows strictly the teachings of John Calvin, then in three important respects Baptists are not, and have never been, Calvinists. Calvin was a pedobaptist; Baptists are credobaptists; Calvin believed in a presbyterial form of church government; Baptists are congregationalists. Calvin believed that the civil magistrate should enforce both tables of the law, suppressing heresy and blasphemy by force if necessary. Baptists believe in religious liberty for all persons.

For all that, Calvin remains the most formative theological influence in the development of the Baptist tradition. Unfortunately, many Baptists today know only the ungenerous stereotype of Calvin that depicts him as "the dictator of Geneva wielding the whip of logic and driving a chariot named the sovereignty of God harnessed to mean-spirited steeds called predestination and total depravity" (Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 14). It is said that on occasion so-called liberal Christians stand before the famous statue of Calvin in Geneva and hurl eggs at the dour likeness looking down at them!

Two thousand nine is a good time to look again at Calvin's theology and its relationship to the Baptist movement. Here are five theological principles Baptists can learn from Calvin.

1. *Holy Scripture and the Living Christ.* Unlike the Augsburg Confession which began with an article on the doctrine of God, Reformed statements of faith usually begin by affirming the authority and sufficiency of Holy Scripture. Baptist confessions of faith do the same. Calvin was a biblical theologian. He believed that God had revealed His will to human beings through His mighty acts of salvation recorded in the words of the Bible. Calvin's official title in the Church at Geneva was "Minster of the Divine Word." Calvin's famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is a masterful summary of Protestant theology, but it must be supplemented by his Old and New Testament commentaries. Yet he did not understand the Bible as a mere depository of information about sacred things. Rather, Scripture conveyed, through the witness of the Holy Spirit, the reality of the living Christ. In their recent "battles" over the Bible, Baptists have much to learn from Calvin's engagement with Scripture. He would agree without hesitation that the Bible is totally truthful in all that it affirms, but he also recognized that this insight, as well as the Christological meaning of Scripture, was not achieved by systematic logic or empirical investigation. Inspiration and illumination are both the work of God's Spirit, the Spirit of truth who invariably draws us to Christ who is the Truth, as well as the Way and the Life (John 14:6).
2. *God-centered worship.* Baptists, like many other evangelicals, have been caught up in the worship wars of the past decade. Baptists can learn a great deal from the way Calvin negotiated the worship wars of the sixteenth century. Calvin was an innovator in worship both in terms of what he took out of the service (organs and images) and what he added (psalm singing). Today one can hear a beautiful organ concert at Calvin's church in Geneva, and it's a good thing too! One need not be a slavish follower of Calvin to recognize what motivated the changes he made: the desire to glorify God through the praises of His people. This could best be done, Calvin believed, in a service where Pulpit and Table were both given proper place. Preaching has long been recognized as a key moment in Baptist worship, but many Baptists often neglect the Lord's Supper and its transforming power in the life of faith. For many Baptists, the influence of Zwingli rather than Calvin leads to a minimalist theology that results in infrequent communion often poorly administered. On both the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper, Baptists need a "back to Calvin" movement.
3. *The sovereignty of God in salvation.* Like Augustine and Aquinas before him, Calvin held to a high doctrine of predestination. He did so not because he was a mean man with a harsh view of God, but because he believed he found this teaching clearly taught in Holy Scripture. Many great Baptists

through the centuries have agreed with him including John Bunyan, Benjamin Keach, Andrew Fuller, William Carey, Roger Williams, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Throughout their history Baptists have argued about God's election and extreme positions have sometimes been taken: a kind of hyper-Calvinism bordering on fatalism at one extreme, and a radical Arminianism morphing into Pelagianism on the other. Evangelical Calvinists have affirmed both God's sovereignty in salvation and human responsibility in keeping with the accents of the Bible itself. Throughout the history of the church some of the most effective evangelists and missionaries, including the great Baptist William Carey, have been staunch defenders of a Reformed doctrine of predestination. Baptists today can find in this teaching a stronghold in times of temptation and trials and a confession of praise to God's grace and glory. The doctrine of election requires one to be still before the majesty and mystery of God, and to confess with Calvin: "We should not investigate what the Lord has left hidden in secret... nor neglect what he has brought out into the open so that we may not be convicted of excessive curiosity on the one hand, or of excessive ingratitude on the other" (*Institutes* 3.21.4).

4. *The world as theater of God's glory.* One of the greatest differences between the Baptists of the seventeenth century and the earlier Anabaptists during the time of Luther and Calvin was their attitude toward the world. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that while Lutherans accepted the world as a necessary evil, and Anabaptists withdrew from the world as the domain of sin and corruption, Calvinists engaged the world as "the theater of God's glory," seeking to re-form and transform it in keeping with the purposes and will of God. In their history, Baptists have sometimes wavered among these three models of engagement. But at their best, Baptists have been in the vanguard of those seeking religious freedom, human rights, and democratic forms of government. John Wesley once claimed that he came within "a hair's breadth of Calvinism," and nowhere was this more true than in his statement, "The world is my parish!" Baptists, too, have gone into every corner of the world proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ to persons of every race, nation, and language group. They have worked for the abolition of the slave trade, the political emancipation of women, the protection of unborn human life, prison reform, and many other movements for social justice.
5. *Christian unity.* Calvin is well known for his attacks against the Roman Catholic Church of his day which he believed was filled with abuses that needed to be reformed on the basis of the Word of God. But Calvin was not a separatist. He did not seek to start a brand new church, but to call

the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church back to its biblical foundations and evangelical faith. He regarded schism as one of the greatest sins one could commit against the church, and he had a burning passion for Christian unity. Calvin met with Catholic theologians and discussed the doctrine of justification in an effort to find a greater unity on this important teaching. He was also in touch with Protestant church leaders all over Europe exhorting them to work together and stand united for the sake of the Gospel. Baptists have much to learn from John Calvin about the quest for Christian unity today. Disunity damages the witness of the church. Jesus prayed to the heavenly Father that His disciples would be one, as He and the Father were one, “so that the world might believe” (John 17:21). Calvin did not seek unity at the expense of truth, but rather unity-in-truth. Today Baptists constitute one of the largest fellowships of believers in the world. The integrity of their witness and their effectiveness in evangelism and mission are directly related to the prayer Jesus prayed and to the way of reform John Calvin pioneered. 🐦

Testing a Call to the Ministry

Basil Manly, Jr.

What are the qualifications requisite for a minister of the gospel?

It need scarcely be said that *piety* is essential. No amount of talent, no extent of education, no apparent brilliancy of fervor, should ever be allowed to gain admission into the ministry for one whose piety there is a reason to doubt, or who has not a more than ordinary active and consistent holiness. A Christless minister is as horribly out of place as a ghastly skeleton in the pulpit, bearing a torch in his hand.

Good intellect, some *facility in acquiring knowledge*, and some capacity to speak, are obviously indispensable. If a man has not these, in some degree, at the outset, it is not likely he will acquire them, either during the process of education, or in the work of the ministry. A man, who cannot preach at all, before he comes to the theological seminary, rarely learns how afterwards.

And then *common sense* is a very important quality, a practical tact, in which often God has been training some, whom he calls, comparatively late in life from the counter, or the lawyer's desk, and who need not, therefore, count their time lost. ...

Energy of character is an important prerequisite. The duties of the ministry are such that an indolent man will find abundant temptations and plausible excuses, while he will be not merely useless, but positively hurtful. A sluggish body can be driven to work, a sluggish mind rarely, a sluggish heart never. There is the force of character, a habit of persisting and succeeding, a power to influence and kindle others, a capacity to inspire confidence and general esteem, which, whatever name may be given to it, is essential to success.

In regard to these qualifications, the churches are usually better judges than the individual himself, and must exercise their judgment with prudence and fidelity, under a solemn sense of their accountability, and “lay not careless hands on heads that cannot teach and will not learn.”

There is another qualification, however, on which the question mainly turns: it is *an ardent and self-denying desire to labor for the good of souls*. This is not a natural quality. It must be implanted by the Holy Spirit, and becoming an abiding, decided, and effective habit of the soul.

Now, whether the Holy Spirit has actually wrought this in the heart, thus signing, sanctioning, and sealing the call, is to be ascertained in the same way as other influences of the Holy Spirit; not by voices and visions, not by mere transitory impression, or confident, yet groundless, persuasion, but by positive moral changes produced in the habitual temper, character, and desires. We should seek for evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in calling to the ministry, as we seek for evidence of His work in the converting the soul. Neither is ordinarily manifested by a token, which admits of no doubt or hesitation, which is incapable of being either strengthened or weakened by subsequent developments; but usually by a number of particulars, which, when compared with the word of God, prove possession of the characteristics demanded.

We do not deny that the evidence may be instantaneous and overwhelming. It may be. Regeneration itself we suppose to be always instantaneous; the evidence of it to the individual himself may be, or it may not. Sometime it is as the flash of noonday radiance at midnight. At other times, it is as the gradual coming of the dawn, doubts being dispelled, and darkness gradually dispersed, as the morning mists flee, and shadows lessen, before the advancing sun. So [it is] in regard to a call to the ministry. There is a diversity of operation, but the same Spirit.

This steadfast and divinely implanted desire to labor for souls is substantially what is meant by “the internal call.” It may be distinguished from the early zeal, which young converts usually have, and which “generally subsides into a calm principle of benevolent activity” in their own particular sphere. In the man truly called, it grows, it increases. As he reflects on it, and prays about it, the great salvation becomes greater and nearer to him than when he first believed; the guilt and ruin of immortal souls weigh heavily upon him; he feels impelled to warn them to flee the wrath to come.

Sometimes the thought presses on one, so that he cannot rest. The strongest promptings of self-interest, the greatest timidity and natural reserve, the most violent opposition of irreligious relatives and influential friends, and even the most serious peril, prove insufficient to check this holy ardor. The man is made to feel that for him all other avocations are trifling, all worldly employments unattractive. "Woe is me," he cries, "if I preach not the Gospel!" Jails, and fetters, and the stake, have no terrors for him comparable with the guilt of disobeying Jesus, and the frown of his redeemer." ...

Sometimes, on the other hand, there is a more calm and gradual growth of a conviction of duty, drawn by delight rather than driven by dread. He loves to think of Jesus, and so he loves to talk of Jesus; and with much distrust of himself, perhaps, he finds an increasing desire to be wholly absorbed and occupied in such things. A calm and deliberate comparison of various courses of life shows him that the ministry offers arduous labor, with little worldly advantage or honor; heavy responsibility, painful to a sensitive nature; and a life-long toil, with no remission till Jesus calls him to rest. But though consciously weak, he can simply rely on divine direction to guide, and divine strength to uphold, and in view of the dying world and the bleeding cross and the burning throne, he can freely consecrate himself to be "Jesus Christ's man," to go where He bids, to utter what He teaches, to endure what He pleases to appoint, and thank God if he may be counted worthy to suffer for His name.

Now we need numbers in the ministry. The plenteous, perishing harvest wails out a despairing cry for more laborers. But we need purity more than numbers; we need intelligence more than numbers; we need zeal more than we need numbers. Above all, we need consecrated men, men who have stood beneath the cross, till their very souls are dyed with Jesus' blood, and a love like his for perishing millions has been kindled within them. We long for such men, but for such only, as are willing to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

If I address any young brother, whose mind may have been directed to this subject, allow me to present some practical inquiries, which may help you to come to a decision.

- Do you habitually entertain and cherish the conviction that you are not your own; but, as dead with Christ, are bound to live unto yourself, but inform Him who died for you, and rose again?
- Do you feel willing to serve Him in whatsoever employment you can most glorify His name?
- Do you watch for opportunities of doing good, and avail yourselves of those that offer, in the Sunday school, in the prayer meeting, and by the way-side?

- Do you sincerely desire to make it the business of your life to labor for souls? Is the desire habitually, disinterested, and prompted by love to Jesus, and compassion for the impenitent?
- Do you find that other employments seem comparatively uninviting, and this delightful, apart from any considerations of worldly ease or emolument?
- Does your impression of duty with regard to the ministry grow stronger, at such times when you are most favored with nearness to God, and when you most distinctly realize eternal things?
- Is your willingness to engage in such service with a clear and cordial renunciation of self-seeking, and a simple reliance on Him whose grace is promised to be sufficient?
- Is it joined with a humble estimate of your own powers, and with a willingness to use all necessary and suitable means for the improvement of those powers?
- Is it a desire for this work, not as a temporary resort, as a refuge for indolence, or an avenue to fame, but as a lifetime labor, in prosperity or adversity, in evil report and in good report, that God may be honored and sinners saved?

If you can answer, “Yes,” then welcome brother! We give you the right hand of fellowship to go forth and labor for Jesus. ☺

—Excerpt from *Soldiers of Christ: Selections from the Writings of Basil Manly, Sr. and Basil Manly, Jr.*, by Michael Haykin, Roger Duke and A. James Fuller (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2009), 173–178.

Sleepless in Babylon

Daniel 2:1-23

Roger Ellsworth

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a serious problem on his hands. He kept dreaming the same dream, and it was such a troubling dream that he couldn't sleep (v. 2).

Nebuchadnezzar had magicians, astrologers and sorcerers to help him with such matters, and he called in them. But he had come to know the manner in which these men operated. He would tell them his dream, and they would craft an interpretation. And the interpretation would be such that they would be able to claim that it had come true no matter what happened.

Having had enough of this business and earnestly desiring the true interpretation of his dream, Nebuchadnezzar decided to do things differently. He would not tell his wise men what he had dreamed. They would tell him! And they would then give the interpretation (vv. 8-9). When these men protested, Nebuchadnezzar began putting them to death (vv. 10-13).

By this time, Daniel and his friends had risen to the level of being wise men in Nebuchadnezzar's court. So his decree of death included them (v. 13). When Daniel learned of these developments, he appealed to the king to give him time to discern the dream and its interpretation (v. 16).

We know what Daniel did. He gathered his friends to pray, and God graciously gave Daniel both the dream and the interpretation.

A king having a dream! A king executing people! The dream being interpreted! What does it all have to do with us? No one had a cell phone or an iPod. There was no *My Space*. Surely this old story has no value for us!

Perhaps we need to think again! This ancient episode actually contains principles that are just as vital today as they were in old Babylon. The first principle is this:

God is at work in this world.

It did not appear to be so. The only people who believed in the God of the Bible were the Jews, and many of them were in Babylon, which was the place of many gods. It looked for as if God had been thoroughly discredited. What kind of God is it who cannot protect the city devoted to His honor and keep His people out of captivity?

Babylon, on the other hand, was an exciting place. It was powerful, successful and prosperous. The gods of Babylon seemed to have achieved for their adherents everything that the God of Israel had failed to achieve for His.

But the Bible constantly tells us that things are not always as they appear, and the world has often showed up for God's funeral only to find that the corpse was not present!

Now here is Nebuchadnezzar in the midst of his Babylon, secure in his belief that his ideas and his ways are correct, and the God of the little, defeated kingdom of Judah is nothing at all. But here now is this dream, and it is deeply troubling—so much so that the man can't sleep. If it were the dream of one night, it could easily have been dismissed. But it is the dream of every night, and Nebuchadnezzar earnestly desires to sleep because he is so tired, but he is afraid to sleep because of the dream that preys on him.

How are we to explain this recurring and terrifying dream? This account leaves no doubt. It is from the *discredited* God of little Judah! (vv. 18–23, 28–30). Perhaps this God is not powerless after all! He can plant a dream in a king's head, and it won't go away.

Now take this home with you: God is always at work in His world! And oftentimes His work consists of doing something very little which will finally prove to be very big!

A second lesson that emerges from this account is this:

Left to themselves, men and women are completely helpless in regard to the things of God.

Nebuchadnezzar did not realize it at the beginning, but he had a message from the true God on his hands. God was speaking to him in that dream! And He was speaking a message of monumental significance.

But Nebuchadnezzar couldn't figure it out. He had no idea what it was all about. He was both sleepless and clueless! He called in his helpers, and they were equally helpless!

So how did Nebuchadnezzar come to understand the dream? He did so through the mediator that God provided for him—Daniel! Ronald S. Wallace writes: "The main point in the story is that Daniel at this moment becomes a key man. He alone is able to act decisively and shrewdly where others are hopelessly incapable and benumbed. By an act of solitary leadership he is able to prevent the disaster threatening both Nebuchadnezzar and his counsellors."¹

The helplessness of Nebuchadnezzar and his advisors represents the helplessness of us all in spiritual things. How helpless are we? Totally! The Bible tells us that our minds are so darkened that we cannot understand the truth of God (1 Corinthians 2:14) and our wills are so deadened that we cannot come to God (Ephesians 2:1–3).

But the fact that we are helpless does not mean we are hopeless. As God sent Daniel to help Nebuchadnezzar, so He has sent His Son to provide salvation for sinners and the Holy Spirit to apply that salvation to sinners. All of this is due to grace. The God who did not have to do anything for us has done everything for us.

That brings us to a third and final lesson.

Daniel's experience with Nebuchadnezzar teaches us where to turn in a troubled, threatening world.

There can be no doubt that Daniel and his friends were living in a very threatening world. Nebuchadnezzar was intending to take off their heads!

Our world is equally threatening and dangerous. At no time in recent memory has there been more hostility to the Christian faith than there is now. The hatred has reached such a point that one can easily imagine in the near future a law that makes it illegal to be a Christian!

What did Daniel and his friends do in their threatening world? They did something that seemed to be so very meager and unpromising. They prayed!

Centuries later, the people of God would find themselves in a situation much like that which Daniel and his friends were facing. King Herod is on the throne of Israel, and he decides to "harass" the church (Acts 12:1). He puts James to death, and he throws Simon Peter into prison (Acts 12:2-3).

It is a dark and ominous time. And what does the church do? Luke tells us: "constant prayer was offered to God" (Acts 12:5).

Here is Herod with all of his power and with all sorts of means to work his will. And here is the church resorting to prayer. Prayer seems to be such a pitiful resource in the face of such a monstrous challenge. But we know how the story ends. God owned and used the prayers of His people to completely reverse the situation. The chapter begins with James dying and Herod prevailing. It ends with Herod dying and the Word of God prevailing.

We do not know what we do when we pray! Prayer puts the people of God in touch with God, and with God nothing at all is impossible.

Many Christians look at our threatening world, and they conclude that we must seek political power. We must get organized. We must sign petitions. We must get the right people elected.

But the church's great resource is always prayer, and the most important business before the church, other than the preaching of the gospel, is fervent prayer that seeks the face of God.

God's word to his people has not changed: "... if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

With such a promise from God, why is it that we are not praying? It is harder to get the people of God to pray than anything else, and yet the situation in which we find ourselves demands prayer more than anything else.☺

Notes:

¹ Ronald S. Wallace, *The Message of Daniel: The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 52.

Book Review

by Ray Van Neste

John Calvin: *Writings on Pastoral Piety*, edited with translations by Elsie Anne McKee (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), pb., 360 pages. ISBN 0-8091-4046-2

This is a finely done and very useful book. Calvin scholar E. A. McKee (Archibald Alexander Professor of Reformation Studies and the History of Worship at Princeton Theological Seminary) here collects various writings from Calvin which demonstrate his piety or spirituality and his pastoral concern. This is a very useful point since many seem to conceive of Calvin as merely a cold academician and forget that he served as a pastor first and foremost. The book's preface aptly states, "Professor McKee's Calvin, by contrast [to negative views such as was just mentioned], is above all a caring pastor and teacher of pastors, and his piety is pastoral piety" (xiii).

The book is divided into five parts: 1) autobiographical orientation to John Calvin, 2) theological orientation, 3) liturgical and sacramental practices, 4) prayer, and 5) piety in the Christian life, ethics and pastoral care. Professor McKee has included a good biographical sketch at the beginning of the book so Part One of the book provides the reader with the key parts of Calvin's writings where he spoke about his own experience, which was rare. Included are an excerpt from "The Reply to Sadoleto," personal letters (including one about his wife's death), and his preface to the commentary on the Psalms. Part Two draws from the *Institutes* for definitions of "piety," "faith" and "the Church." Part Three draws from Calvin's use of the Psalms, specific liturgies, a catechism and discussions of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Part Four draws from Calvin's exposition of the Lord's Prayer, some of his occasional prayers and prayers from sermons and lectures. Part Five draws from the *Institutes*, sermons, letters and other writings to document Calvin's approach to ethics and his counsel to those facing suffering and difficulty.

This book provides a good way for introducing oneself to Calvin or to fill out one's picture of him. The writings included provide much insight to issues of today. The book is useful in pastoral theology to show how one pastor, especially blessed by God, built his pastoral ministry on careful theology and lived this out before his people calling for the development of real godliness. One finds here no precedent for the CEO pastor to busy to be touched by his people. I close with the editor's summation of Calvin's pastoral piety:

"So what was Calvin's pastoral piety? Intensely personal but never individualistic. Woven through with the great doctrines of justification by faith and regeneration of life, the glory of God and providence. Undergirded with prayer, proclaimed in word and shared in sacraments, sung in

psalms. Embodied in action and demanding respect for the neighbor and solidarity with those who suffer in spirit, mind, or body. Not an easy or comfortable piety; it asks for one's all. Sturdy and down to earth, lived in the mundane context of daily work, yet always conscious of the presence of the transcendent God and the high calling of living before God. An energizing, lifelong response to God's liberating claim, God's righteous mercy, God's compelling love, a belonging that is all our joy. "We are not our own.... We are God's" (34–35).

May we remember one who has spoken the Word of God to us, and considering his way of life, imitate his faith (Hebrews 13:7). ☪

Dr Ray Van Neste is Assistant Professor of Christian Studies and Director of the R. C. Ryan Center for Biblical Studies at Union University in Jackson, TN.

Book Review

by Nathan A. Finn

Trueman, Carl R. *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man, Great Theologians* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), pb. 132 pages.

Many historians and theologians consider John Owen to be the greatest theological mind among the seventeenth-century Puritans. Recent years have witnessed a number of impressive studies of Owen by scholars in both Great Britain and North America. Carl Trueman, an academic administrator and church historian at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, is one of those scholars. His *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* is the most recent addition to Ashgate's impressive Great Theologians series.

Trueman begins by asking whether or not it is appropriate to call Owen a Puritan. Building on the insights of historians of Reformed theology, especially Richard Muller, Trueman contends that it is better to classify Owen as a proponent of Reformed Orthodoxy, a less vague term than Puritan (though Trueman agrees that Owen was ecclesologically a Puritan rather than a Separatist or Baptist). Though Owen was a minister, he was more than an exegetical theologian; he was well versed with the historical theology of the Patristic, Medieval, and early Reformation eras and dialoged with a variety of thinkers in his published works. Trueman also argues that Owen was a Renaissance generalist who read widely and was interested in numerous topics, though the bulk of his gifts were directed toward the advancement of English Reformed theology.

Many of Owen's works were polemical in nature, including his works devoted to the attributes of God and Trinitarian theology. Socinianism, a form of Unitarian theology, was making inroads among dissenters in mid-seventeenth century England. Like other Reformed Orthodox theologians, Owen argued from the scripture principle and in dialog with the ecumenical creeds of the fourth and fifth centuries that God is Triune, existing eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's salvation of sinful humanity occurs within the context of a Triune God who has revealed Himself in history and acted decisively to reconcile sinners unto Himself.

Like previous generations of Reformed Orthodox theologians, and contra-Arminianism, Owen framed his soteriology around a series of divinely initiated covenants between God and man. Through Adam, humanity has broken a pre-fall covenant of works between God and the first man. But God takes action through the person and work of Christ to redeem all of those who have been chosen in Christ in a covenant of grace dating to before the creation of the world. Owen avoids speculation about the relationship of that covenant to God's eternal decrees, focusing instead on the role each member of the Godhead plays in saving all of God's elect. Owen's covenant theology was representative of the view of salvation that prevailed among Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Particular Baptists during the seventeenth century.

Also like other Reformed Orthodox theologians Owen strongly defended the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Against Roman Catholics, Socinians, Arminians, and even some Amyraldians like Richard Baxter, Owen contended for the importance of Christ's active and passive obedience to God's law and the imputation of His righteousness to all those who are in union with Christ. Against the emerging High Calvinism of thinkers like Tobias Crisp, Owen argued against eternal justification by claiming that Christ's atonement for the elect is federal (representative) and covenantal, actualized at the moment of justification rather than at the time of Christ's death.

There is much contemporary evangelicals can learn from Owen's theology. Like Owen, in our doctrinal articulations we must cling tightly to sola scriptura and reformational hermeneutics without discounting the (fallible) insights of tradition, particularly the great creeds of the church. In our own preaching and polemics we must guard against modern versions of the same errors with which Owen contended. We must reject the crypto-Unitarianism of so many evangelicals and articulate a robust Trinitarian theology. We must repudiate the anthropocentric understandings of salvation associated with Arminianism, or more often, semi-Pelagianism masquerading as Arminianism or revivalism, and defend God's sovereign prerogatives in the salvation of sinners. We must counter the dismissal—or at least downplaying—of justification by faith among many so-called evangelicals with a clear preaching of a reformational understanding of such doctrines as sin, justification, imputation, and sanctification.

Trueman is a first-rate historical theologian and his treatment of Owen is appropriately nuanced and contextualized. Trueman's argument that Owen is an

English representative of Reformed Orthodoxy makes a significant contribution to Owen scholarship. Unlike studies that focus on a single aspect of Owen's theology or his spirituality/piety, Trueman highlights the worldview and theological method of the man who produced all of those influential treatises, sermons, and other works. This book will likely be a starting place for all future scholarly treatments of Owen's thought.

For those not already acquainted with Owen, this book is probably not the best place to start. Trueman's book is written for scholars in the field, so it would probably be best to begin with a more introductory study like the recent collection of essays titled *John Owen: The Man and His Theology* (P&R, 2003); Trueman is a contributor to that volume. Of course the best place to begin is with Owen's works themselves, available in numerous editions through publishers such as Banner of Truth, Crossway, and Christian Focus. The reviewer recommends beginning with the short classic *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers*. ☺

Dr Nathan A. Finn is Assistant Professor of Church History at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC.

Letters

Dear Ones,

I have been in the ministry two years. I am in a learning phase, but have given most emphasis to the ministry of the Word, which I believe is essential, esteeming that which has the priority.

I seek to train leaders through discipleship. I also work hard in the ministry of visitation and evangelism. In preaching, I seek to emphasize the study of the Word of God in our worship service, preaching expositively, while recognizing that I still have much to learn.

There is a book that I studied as soon as I finished seminary that was a blessing in my life and ministry: *Dear Timothy*. I am reading it again because it has much to teach beginners like me.

Fraternally in Christ,

Pastor JR (Brazil)

Dear Dr. Ascol,

I just wanted to share a word of appreciation for the work of Founders to release the commentaries by Dr. Curtis Vaughan. Dr. Vaughan was my favorite professor at SWBTS. I had him for Greek, but it was like having Greek, New Testament, and Theology all in one. He first introduced me to the doctrines of grace. I had made some efforts to collect some of his writings, but without success; until Founders began publishing them. I just purchased the *Acts* commentary.

Thank you again,

BN

Dear Brother Nettles,

Having just finished your third volume [of *The Baptists*], I am compelled to say that you have distinguished yourself as the Philip Schaff of Baptists. What Kenneth Scott Latourette should have done, you have masterfully accomplished. Your discernment is keen, your judgment is sound and you have made all of us indebted to you. Your thorough presentation is an encouragement to all who adhere to a solid Scriptural position, and hopefully will inform the younger generation of our glorious heritage. May God's richest blessings be your portion day by day as you serve our Savior.

Sincerely in Christ,

VL

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