

# Evangelical Forum Newsletter



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Purpose: The Evangelical Forum is a network of concerned evangelical Pastors and laymen who serve in churches that are part of the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV). We are supportive of friendly cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention and affirm the Baptist Faith and Message of 2000.

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Contributions to support the Forum and this newsletter may be sent to JPBC and marked for "Evangelical Forum."

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Unsolicited articles, book reviews, and comments are welcomed by email or conventional mail.

## Second Verse, Same as the First

First, let me express thanks for the positive responses of so many to the formation of this newsletter. Encouraging emails, phone calls, and, yes, even financial contributions were received. In fact, the second edition of this newsletter, due to requests for addition, is being sent to twice as many people as received the first.

One might ask why the Evangelical Forum even bothers to exist. When Russell Moore, recently promoted to serve as Dean of Theology at Southern Baptist Seminary, came to speak to us in Richmond last year, he suggested that our meeting in the heart of the old Confederate capital (at All Saints Presbyterian Church) was appropriate, since the reformation of the

BGAV seems to worldly eyes a "lost cause." Indeed, our efforts might appear to be little more than a rear guard action. Still, we feel called to it. Again, we should not expect to prevail through politics but only through prayer.

It might also seem odd to launch a newsletter of this sort when there are so many interests competing to present us with news and views. We live with information overload. The internet and computer-assisted publishing have created what seems like a zillion websites, e-zines, and newsletters (online and hard copy) of every stripe. What is one more with so many?

The publishers of our conventional state Baptist papers, like the *Religious Herald*, surely understand this challenge. Once they had the freedom to manage the news of the day. This is one reason for the successful indoctrination of so many who sat in the pews of Baptist churches in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, and some who still sit there today. Their trusted state paper told them that the issues in the SBC were all about power politics and not theology. The editors chose (and still choose) to run stories that made the leaders of the conservative resurgence appear to be anti-intellectual hucksters and extremists and the "moderate" side to be mainstream and centrist. What they failed to convey was the great danger posed to our churches by the encroachment of secular and postmodern thinking, and the great need in our churches for a return to Biblical moorings.

Now, however, nearly all control has been taken out of these editors' hands. We can all read the online editions of Baptist Press and Associated Baptist Press, along with countless other news sources, blogs, and websites across the globe and muse at any editor's attempt to "manage" the news. So, the Forum and our newsletter's purpose is not to "manage" news but to encourage us to think Biblically about how God is calling us to be faithful members of his local Baptist Christian churches here in Virginia.

-JR

## Continually Working for the Purity of the Church

When thinking about why evangelicals should remain in the BGAV and work for reformation, I was reminded of a passage in Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994). I have shared this passage with many who have considered membership in my local church. Grudem says that there are two basic types of churches: true churches and false churches. In the Reformation tradition, Grudem notes that true churches are those where the Word is preached and the ordinances are rightly observed. An authentic believer first has an obligation to find a true church. Then, among true churches, he must realize that all stand somewhere on a continuum from "less pure," on one end, to "more pure," on the other. None are absolutely pure. The Christian's task is to find a true church and join it. He is then to work in that church, along with others of good will, to move the church toward greater faithfulness, as he is able. Here is an extended excerpt from Grudem:

*Of course, if we are to work for the purity of the church, especially of the local church of which we are part, we must recognize that this is a process, and that any church of which we are a part will be somewhat impure in certain areas. There were no perfect churches at the time of the New Testament and there will be no perfect churches until Christ returns. This means that Christians have no obligation to seek the **purest church** they can find and stay there, and then leave it if an even purer church comes to their attention. Rather, they should find a **true church** in which they can have an effective ministry and in which they will experience Christian growth as well, and then should stay there and minister, continually working for the purity of that church. God will often bless their prayers and faithful witness and the church will gradually grow in many areas of purity.*

*But we must realize that not all churches will respond well to influences that would bring them to greater purity. Sometimes, in spite of a few faithful Christians within a church, its dominant direction will be set by others who are determined to lead it on another course. Unless God graciously intervenes to bring reformation, some of these churches will become cults, and others will just die and close their doors. But more commonly these churches will simply drift into liberal Protestantism.*

*It is helpful at this point to remember that liberal Protestantism is humanistic, and its approach is **primarily man-centered** rather than God-centered. When the church begins to stray from faithfulness to Christ, this will be evident not only in the shift to impure doctrine (which can sometimes be concealed from church members by the use of evasive language) but also in the daily life of the church: its activities, its preaching, its counseling, and even the casual conversations among members will tend to become more and more man-centered and less and less God-centered. There will be a repeated emphasis on the typical kinds of self-help advice given in popular journals and by secular psychologies. There will be a horizontal orientation as opposed to a vertical or God-centered orientation, there will be fewer and fewer extended times of prayer and less and less emphasis on the direct application of Scripture to daily situations, but more emphasis on simply being a caring and sensitive person, and on affirming others and acting in love toward them. The conversation and activities of the church will have very little genuine spiritual content—little emphasis on the need for daily prayer for individual concerns and for forgiveness of sins, little emphasis on daily reading of Scripture, and little emphasis on moment-by-moment trust in Christ and knowing the reality of his presence in our lives. Where there are admonitions to moral reformation, these will often be viewed as human deficiencies that people can correct by their own discipline and effort, and perhaps encouragement from others, but these moral aspects of life will not primarily be viewed as sin against a holy God, sin which can only effectively be overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit working within. When such humanistic emphases become dominant in a church, it has moved far toward the "less pure" end of the scale ... and it is moving in the direction of becoming a false church (pp. 875-76).*

This same analogy may be drawn to participation in the BGAV. If it still consists of true churches that are attempting to faithfully preach the gospel and obey the commands of Jesus, then it is worth remaining. Admittedly, to my eyes and to those of most evangelicals, it has seriously slid toward impurity. Is it not readily apparent that the BGAV is indeed drifting in the direction of liberal Protestantism? Is there still time to work and pray toward greater purity and faithfulness? These are the questions we are setting out to ask and answer.

-JR

## Concerning the Baptist World Alliance

The following letter to the editor by J.D. Greear (who formerly served as an SBC representative to the BWA) appeared in the February 28, 2004 issue of *The Biblical Recorder*, the state paper for North Carolina Baptists:

*Denton Lotz called the proposed Southern Baptist Convention withdrawal from the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) a “sin against love,” in direct defiance of Jesus’ prayer that the church be one. Those joined in Christ should never separate.*

*Why then have a “Baptist” World Alliance at all? Why not forsake all denominational distinctives and join anyone who names the name of Christ? If we are going to draw lines, there are more essential things to our Christianity than simply the mode of one of our ordinances. Are not the trustworthiness of our scriptures and the exclusivity of our Savior as essential as baptism by immersion, if not more so?*

*I have been told that it is missions, not doctrine, which brings Baptists together. Yet historically, Baptists on mission have at least assumed doctrinal agreement on the essentials. C.H. Toy was fired from Southern Seminary (and dumped by Lottie Moon) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for his espousal of the higher critical method. The Abstract of Principles, which each professor at Southeastern Seminary signs, was implemented at Southern Seminary by Basil Manly over 100 years ago.*

*I have been told that conservative Southern Baptists want to unite around “doctrine” instead of reaching people for Christ. Can you have one without the other? When you reach people for Christ, do you tell them He is Lord? That’s a doctrine. That He died for their sins? Another doctrine. That He’ll return one day? Doctrine again. Are we really expected to give our dollars to people who won’t acknowledge that certain doctrines are necessary?*

*The greater sin against love would be to mute our message by not being clear on the essentials of what we believe. If that means we divide from the BWA, so be it. For “can two walk together except they be agreed?”*

*J.D. Greear, Durham, NC*

Moderates have cried foul at the SBC’s distancing of itself from the BWA. There has, however, been a failure to address the concerns raised by the SBC (theological liberalism, anti-Americanism, unjust criticism of the International Mission Board, etc.). There has also been little consideration of the ethics of the role of CBF leaders in pushing for CBF acceptance into BWA membership, knowing the inevitable consequences.

Back to the whole issue of “managed” news (see front page article), have you seen the following articles printed in the pages of moderate state papers?:

- John Pierce, “BWA membership committee shares blame for SBC pull-out, says one member,” Associated Baptist Press, February 24, 2004.
- Art Toalston, “BWA officials, Europeans also ‘culpable’ for SBC-BWA schism,” Baptist Press, February 27, 2004.
- Bob Baysinger, “German Theologian confirms liberalism’s influence on BWA,” Baptist Press February 4, 2004.
- Don Hinkle, “First Person: The BWA: reasons for parting ways,” Baptist Press, February 4, 2004.

-JR

# **“What Do Southern Baptists Believe?”**

## **Answering Common Questions and Misconceptions about the Southern Baptist Convention**

In these days, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has become known for taking clear and incontrovertible stands in the face of cultural relativism (the truth is “up for grabs”). In June 2000 the SBC approved a revision of its primary confession, the Baptist Faith and Message (BFM). Many of the SBC’s positions have been misinterpreted and misunderstood. Here are a few common questions and responses.

### **1. Does the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message represent an innovation among Baptists who have always been a non-creedal people?**

No. Baptists have long held to confessions of faith that set out their basic beliefs. In fact, most early Baptist churches drew up a confession of faith as a standard for church membership. Among the best known early Baptist confessions is the so-called Second London Confession of 1689. Early Baptists in America also adopted confessions, including the influential New Hampshire Confession of 1833. Southern Seminary, the oldest Southern Baptist Seminary, founded in 1858, has always required its professors to sign a confession called “The Abstract of Principles” to encourage doctrinal accountability. The first Southern Baptist confession, the Baptist Faith and Message, was adopted in 1925. It was revised again in 1963 and once again in 2000. All three versions follow the basic outline of the 1833 New Hampshire Confession. Baptist confessions of faith are not creeds. The ultimate standard for Baptist Christians remains the Scriptures.

### **2. Isn’t it a new idea to make missionaries sign the Baptist Faith and Message?**

No. In fact, Baptists have always held missionaries to doctrinal accountability. Pioneer English Baptist missionary William Carey drew up the Serampore Form of Agreement in 1805 to guide missionaries in India. The Foreign Mission Board of the SBC drew up a thirteen point doctrinal statement in 1919 to which missionaries were required to conform. In the 1960s the 1963 BFM began to be used as the doctrinal standard for missionaries. Each person under appointment was required to give a statement of faith and pledge to teach in accordance with and not contrary to the BFM. With the updating of the BFM in 2000 it is only natural that the confession be applied to the current missionary force.

### **3. Have some missionaries resigned rather than sign the new BFM?**

Although some predicted that many missionaries would resign, in fact, only a few have done so. In the Spring 2002 trustee meeting of the IMB, Vice-President Avery Willis announced that about 10 of the over 5,000 missionaries (or c. 0.2%) had resigned as a direct result of the requested compliance to the new BFM. This means that about 99.80% of the mission force remains in place. The truth is that the vast majority of the missionary force is in strong agreement with the basic tenets of the confession.

### **4. Is it true that the IMB does not appoint women as missionaries?**

No. Women are welcomed into missionary service. In fact the July-August 2002 edition of the IMB’s *Commission* magazine reported: “Today 54 percent of Southern Baptists’ 5,241 missionaries are women,

about a fourth of them are single.” In addition to service in church and home evangelism ministry, women missionaries serve the IMB as strategy coordinators, church planters, associational leaders, doctors, nurses, agriculturalists, teachers, and business consultants.

### **5. Is the SBC misogynistic (anti-women)?**

No. The SBC affirms the full equality of men and women. The article on humanity in the 2000 BFM affirms: “Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God’s creation.” The article on family affirms: “The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God’s image.”

### **6. Does the Southern Baptist Convention oppose women in ministry?**

No. In fact, the BFM 2000 plainly states that “both men and women are gifted for service in the church.” Southern Baptists affirm the ministry of women in countless official and unofficial capacities. Women serve in a wide variety of ministry positions on church staffs throughout the SBC. Women are admitted to all Southern Baptist Seminaries, including schools of theology where students pursue the basic professional ministry degree (the Master of Divinity) and doctoral programs. The calling to local church positions of ministry is a local church decision.

The 2000 BFM does, however, express the basic belief held by the overwhelming majority of Baptist churches that “the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.” Among passages cited in support of this qualification are: 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14.

The SBC has taken a “complementarian view” toward gender roles. Men and women are equal but not the same. Their differences complement each other. It is a good thing that we are different and not an “inequality” to be overcome. Our gender is not something we choose, but it is a fundamental way God has made us different from each other. One way that the Bible affirms the beauty of the gender difference is by affirming that men and women have different roles in ministry. In Biblical times, for example, there was an order of “widows” that excluded the participation of men (see 1 Timothy 5:3-16). In a similar way, the Biblical model seems to limit the role of Pastor or Elder to men only.

With the rise of feminism, equal rights, and the blurring of gender differences (homosexuality, transexuality, etc.), many see the complementarian position as unjust. What we have to struggle with is not how the current culture sees it, but whether or not it is a Biblically faithful position.

### **7. Do Southern Baptists teach that wives are “to graciously submit” to their husbands?**

Yes. Many times, however, this part of the 2000 BFM is quoted out of context. The idea of submission is not a modern innovation nor is it anti-women. It comes from the Biblical teaching on marriage, as found in Ephesians 5:21-33. In the Christian context, “submission” is not a negative or demeaning activity. All Christians are to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21). Biblical teaching about wives submitting to husbands is always accompanied by the command that husbands self-sacrificially love their wives. The 2000 BFM follows the Biblical pattern by affirming: “A husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church.” The 2000 BFM simply affirms loving, Biblical marriages where husbands and wives have different servant roles toward the other.

## **8. Do Southern Baptists hate homosexuals?**

It has become common for homosexual rights activists to protest outside meetings of the Southern Baptist annual convention meeting. Are Southern Baptists homo-phobic?

Rather than saying that the SBC is homo-phobic, it may be more fair to say that the SBC has taken a stand for committed marriages and Biblical standards for sexuality. The 2000 BFM affirms marriage as “the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.” It further affirms marriage as “the framework for intimate companionship” and “the channel of sexual expression according to Biblical standards.”

Southern Baptists do not hate homosexuals, but they love them enough to speak the truth in love. It would be unloving to see someone persist in a sinful lifestyle and not warn him about the dangerous consequences. Biblical Christianity tells the truth about God’s standards in hopes that those engaging in homosexual behavior will turn, repent and be reconciled to God and his ways.

## **9. What do Southern Baptists believe about abortion and other social issues?**

The 2000 BFM statement on “The Christian and the Social Order” reads in part: “In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.”

## **10. Are Southern Baptists intolerant of people from other religions and faith traditions?**

Some have criticized the SBC’s evangelistic and missionary zeal, including the IMB’s printing of prayer calendars to encourage the acceptance of the gospel among Hindus and Muslims.

It is true that Southern Baptists do not affirm the equality of all religions. Instead, they argue that salvation is found through faith in Christ alone. The 2000 BFM states: “There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.” This is as true for unsaved Hindus and Muslims as it is for unsaved Westerners. The acknowledgement of this exclusive claim lights a fire and passion among Southern Baptists to preach the gospel to the nations.

## **11. Are Southern Baptists always right?**

Of course not. Southern Baptist churches are not perfect nor do they hold the exclusive corner on the truth. Thank God! The Kingdom is a whole lot bigger than the SBC! Still, the SBC is a movement that has been used by God in the past to advance the kingdom, and it is still being used by God today. May it always seek to examine its beliefs and actions under the searchlight of Scripture!

-JR

*This article first appeared as a **Stylos** commentary in July 2002. **Stylos** is an occasional commentary on church and culture. This and other articles are available online at [www.jpbc.org](http://www.jpbc.org).*

# **Solving the Leadership Crisis in Virginia Baptist Churches**

By Ralph Traylor

At the annual meeting of the BGAV in November, one of the pressing issues before the assembly was the high number of open staff positions within Virginia churches. One report indicated that there were 400 open staff positions, with 200 positions having been vacant for two years or longer. One of the objectives of the *Kingdom Advance* program, having been identified since its inception, is to address the leadership crisis within Virginia Baptist churches.

Consider for a moment another leadership crisis, one that often isn't considered, but one that can be used as a model for responding to today's need for church leaders. The year is A.D. 64; the gospel is spreading throughout the Roman world where there are many converts but no leaders, save for a few missionaries. Unlike the predominantly Jewish congregations in Israel, there was no pool of trained men available to provide leadership to predominantly gentile churches. How was this crisis of leadership averted?

Fortunately, the Holy Spirit preserved a record of how that crisis was resolved. The answer is found in Titus 1:5 where Paul instructs Titus, a missionary to Crete, to appoint elders in every city. Elders? Yes, the model of church leadership used successfully in the synagogues and later in the congregations of believing Jews would work well in the newly formed gentile congregations. A careful study of the New Testament reveals that leaders known as elders consistently served as overseers of the early Christian churches.

The elder model of church government was based on identifying those individuals who possessed the appropriate spiritual qualities and attendant gifts to lead the church (Titus 1:6-9). These leaders were selected from among the congregation, and served as part of a body or council of leadership rather than as individuals. This model promoted stability in that those who were selected were already connected in some way to the assembly, and presumably had been evaluated as to their capabilities prior to being selected. Given that the elder council was composed of several leaders, rather than one individual, succession planning was not a major concern. If one elder departed, the others remained to lead. There was no need to form an elder search committee or to hire an interim elder to fill the void until a new elder could be hired. Multiple elders also provided the opportunity for cross-training and leadership development. The elder body worked well together with one person's strengths complementing another person's weaknesses (I Corinthians 12:4-11).

Between the time of the early church and today, different churches have adopted different models of church government. The Southern Baptist model is typically a business model. The pastor (elder) serves as the CEO and the deacons serve as the Board of Directors. This model can have the propensity to create, rather than solve leadership problems.

The business model of church leadership functions differently. First and foremost, the pastor serves as an employee and may have had no previous connection to the congregation he is called to serve. The pastoral career ladder often begins at Mountain View Baptist Church and ends at First Baptist Church. Pastoral turnover is the norm rather than the exception. In addition, the pastoral selection process often provides limited opportunity to evaluate a candidate prior to hiring. In the same way, the candidate has limited exposure to a new congregation and may be unprepared for

what he finds. These factors result in turnover, which is built into the system when churches use a business model to provide leadership. The crisis occurs when there aren't enough new candidates interested in a ministry career. The well runs dry and churches suffer. Every church knows pastoral tenures are limited, but few engage in succession planning; it's just not part of the system.

Biblical eldership has the potential to address these issues. Since eldership involves shared leadership, more persons are automatically included in the ministry pool. This helps not only the church that is wise enough to implement such a system, it also provides a source of leadership for other churches that need leaders and have not prepared adequately for the loss of a pastor. The eldership model creates its own successors and multiplies the ranks of those who are available to assume leadership roles. It also helps eliminate the trauma associated with a pastoral departure, which often occurs when a ministry has been built around the work of one individual.

In considering these issues, the question that comes to mind is how to move from a business model to an elder model. The first step is found in II Timothy 2:2. Here we see Paul instructing Timothy to "commit these [teachings] to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Pastors who recognize the need for change must begin to identify potential leaders within their congregations. One place to begin looking is within deacon bodies. Many individuals who would otherwise serve as elders accept positions as deacons, since that is the only opportunity for leadership available to them. Another way to identify candidates is to ask for those who have a desire to serve to make it known to the church. Part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to place desires in the hearts of believers to fulfill the calling God has for them. God continues to provide leadership gifts; it is the pastor's responsibility to identify the ones who manifest those gifts.

The second step is to provide the necessary training so that those who are qualified will be able to serve in the office of elder. This implies more than the routine opportunities available to all church members. It implies one-on-one or small group discipleship and leadership training. It implies opportunities to serve as "the pastor" on occasion so as to provide a full range of exposure to what is involved. This aspect will no doubt be difficult for those who have built their ministries around a solo pastor concept. However, the cause of Christ is what is important, not a particular individual's ministry. In fact, that's the philosophy inherent in an eldership model. The Lord is the true leader around which the ministry revolves. Everything is done for Him. He is the true Shepherd.

The final step is to formally recognize those who are qualified and trained to serve. This process will involve educating the congregation. The business model is ingrained in Baptist church life to the point of being a tradition, so some resistance is likely. However, the benefits to be derived are worth the time and effort required to invest the members in addressing this pressing leadership issue.

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## Excerpt from Mt. View Baptist Church Newsletter

*The following article by Pastor John Green is an edited excerpt from the January 2004 newsletter of the Mt. View Baptist Church in Charlottesville, Virginia.*

The Evangelical Forum – Some of you listened to representatives of our Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV) and the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV) as they came in response to the invitation of the Stewardship Committee. Over four hundred churches have left the BGAV to join the SBCV in order to provide unquestioned support of our Southern Baptist Convention. Over three hundred of the remaining BGAV churches have adopted the “World Missions I” giving program that focuses annual support on the SBC. Our church is one of these. A smaller number of churches (91) have elected not to support the SBC, but rather contribute to the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) instead—with the blessing of the BGAV leadership. Many BGAV churches, however, have not taken a position within the BGAV, and, I believe, they have not understood the issues.

I believe that words are important and center on one’s conviction that the Bible is the “inerrant Word of God as a revelation.” Whereas the SBC and SBCV have clearly maintained this position, the BGAV has not. Furthermore, the CBF has purposely rejected this position altogether. Some churches within the BGAV hold to this position, but, in order to be accommodating and inclusive, the BGAV has refused to adopt it.

The Evangelical Forum is a newly formed group of pastors who have no political agenda. Rather they intend to pray for and encourage the recovery and revival of traditional conservative SBC support within the BGAV. The first issue of the “Evangelical Forum Newsletter” has been published providing an informative overview of what is happening in the BGAV.

As I hope you know, I feel very strongly about the priority and authority of the Bible. I believe it is not man’s record of encounters with God, but the revelation of God to man pointing us to Jesus Christ. I feel strongly that our financial support, as a church, should be through channels and agencies that adhere unquestionably to our traditional stance on the Bible. Hence, I hope you will study to understand who we are and what we believe. It is important!

John Green



### Evangelical Forum Upcoming Meetings

- Several people have suggested a Spring Meeting for those interested in being involved in the Evangelical Forum. We are tentatively planning a one-day gathering (10 am till 2 pm) on Friday, May 14, 2004 at the IMB’s Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Virginia (just west of Richmond on I-64). The cost will be \$7 and include lunch on site. Preregistration is required. If you are interested in attending, contact Pastor Rob Stovall: [preacherstovall@msn.com](mailto:preacherstovall@msn.com).
- Mark the date for the Fall 2004 Meeting of the Evangelical Forum in Roanoke, Virginia: Monday, November 8, 2004. Time, place, and program: TBA.

## *Paradosis*

*Paradosis* is the Greek word for "tradition." It is also the title for this recurring section featuring voices from the Virginia Baptist past. This article from Pastor J. J. Wicker appeared in the December 2, 1920 issue of the Religious Herald. A careful reading of this pastoral article might elicit thoughts of "the more things change, the more they stay the same," or, as the Preacher has said, "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

### "Pastors and Churches"

by J. J. Wicker of the Leigh Street Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia

In the *Herald* of November 18<sup>th</sup> there appeared a paid advertisement "Pastor Wanted." This was inserted in behalf of two churches combining a field and stated that they wanted "a live preacher, not past middle age." Drs. E. Y. Mullins, George W. Truett, Russell H. Conwell, E. C. Dargan, John E. White, et al. need not apply.

We have in Virginia more than two hundred Baptist churches that are now pastorless and there are many good preachers that are now churchless. There is great unrest all over our country and churches and preachers seem to be suffering with this disease. What on earth is the matter? Every effect must have a cause, and there is undoubtedly a reason for the deplorable condition that is obvious to all.

We have learned to say "like priest, like people" but this thing works both ways. Some time ago one of the trustees of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian church, New York City, invited a friend to hear the successor of Dr. John H. Jowett. At the close of the sermon, in response to a question of the trustee, "How do you like our new preacher?" the visitor replied, "Well, to be frank with you, I would not call him a great preacher." "True," replied the trustee, "he may not be a great preacher now, but we are going to make him a great preacher." I call upon our churches to have this story engrossed, framed and hung on the walls of the church, for a church can make or break a preacher. A sermon should articulate the life of the church in the light of the holy Scriptures. Some years ago, when I was pastor in Baltimore, practically all the Baptist pulpits were filled with a lot of boys. At the General Association Dr. James Nelson in a short talk voiced the above sentiment and told the churches they could make great preachers of their young pastors.

I know a church that recently had one of the finest scholars, best preachers, most warm-hearted and diligent pastors I ever knew and yet with a large membership he preached to small congregations. His successor came and people by the hundreds were turned away. How long will the crowds flock to this church? Just as long as the enthusiasm for the preacher lasts and no longer.

Our churches need enthusiasm and stability. The American life is like a moving picture and the demand is for constant change. Preachers and churches should get over this feverish disease. As for a minister's life, the typical, well prepared minister hardly gets into his work before thirty years of age. If he is healthy, he should be at his best far beyond "middle life." Observation will confirm this statement. Practically all great pastorates are held by men beyond the meridian of life. The late P. S. Henson entered the pastorate of Tremont Temple at seventy years of age and did a great work for four years. Russell H. Conwell is far beyond seventy and is still doing the greatest work of his life as a pastor and educator. George Truett is far beyond fifty and is the greatest force in the Southern Baptist Convention. And what is true of these men is true of hundreds of men who have passed their sixtieth milestone. In other years our greatest men were our old men and up to the last with but few exceptions (and the exceptions based usually on ill health) they died in the harness at the summit of their powers.

"How do you like the pastor?" is the slogan to today. You never hear the question, "How does the pastor like you?"

Preachers and churches are talking and writing on the dearth of young men entering the ministry. There is a reason for this. I do not believe it is as much in salary as it is in revealing large opportunity with

a willing and enthusiastic people in need of a leader. I grant that much depends upon the minister, but far more depends upon the church. He is one, they are many. If churches would give themselves to God and His work with loyal enthusiastic co-operation with the ministry, a revival beyond all imagination would sweep over our country. Churches somehow have the feeling that they are doing a preacher a great favor to call him to their pastorate. They think of him as a necessity rather than an opportunity. They do not clothe him in their thinking with the mantle of the prophet. Reverence for the ministry is far from what it should be. In many cases, he is a sort of a "hired man," to be directed by whim and fancy, whose chief business it is to keep peace and hold his job by pleasing and entertaining those who do him the honor to attend church. Churches ought to learn to look up to the Lord God of Elijah, and pray for the return of the prophetic spirit upon the pulpit.

My heart is sick as I go around over the country and hear the sorrows of the minister's life. In many cases the grasshopper has become a burden and the spirit of Caleb and Joshua has departed. I know a number of ministers, college and theological seminary graduates, in perfect health and in the prime of life, seeking pastorates. I grant you that they are not what may be called "stars," and yet they are men of God, eager, anxious and dedicated to the work of the ministry. It is difficult to enlist young men for the ministry with the conditions as they are today. Our Baptist democracy was never meant to be sinned against, or to give liberty for wrecking the lives of so many good and godly men as are being sacrificed to the perverted state of mind that exists in many places in Baptist churches. We have no pope or ecclesiastical power to deal with the situation. The New Testament furnishes the way out, and if our people will imbibe of that spirit they will get a new conception of the ministry, of the church, of the great commission and the Christian work, and will solve the present-day problem confronting pastors and churches to the glory of the Great Head over all.

A minister frequently takes a small church, and sometimes a factional church, with the avowed ambition and determination to make a great church. This high purpose is grand and godly and where it succeeds, it brings its own reward. Now, would it not be an equally worthy ambition for a church to take a minister whose life and present ability are lacking in the things that make a truly great man and determine under God to do in him just what a noble minister often does in a "down and out church?" It can be done. Is your minister a misfit? Is there an under current sweeping him backward? My brethren of the churches, strong, noble godly brethren, I appeal to you to meet the situation. You can do it. Put your arms around him, pat him on the back, pray for him, shout "Amen" every time he says a good thing in his sermon, help him in his pastoral work, think with him, sympathize with him, love him with all your hearts, thaw him out if he is cold, brush him up if he is shabby, electrify him if he is dull, for you can certainly do this. If you apply all these things without stint to his life and give him your whole-hearted support and after a patient, persistent and honest trial, he fails to "put it over," then take him out and kill him.

A word to the ministers. My brethren, forgive me, but it is on my heart and I must say it. Never look in the face of men until you have seen the face of God. Never speak to men until God has spoken to you. Stand erect, live the perpendicular life, ask God to clothe you with the imperial power of His ambassador and class yourself with the prophets and apostles. Never fear the face of mortal man (or woman). No man can be a coward who lives with God. Any man who is brave without God is a beast. Speak with authority. Command your people to hear the word of the Lord and believe that you speak for God or shut your mouth forever. No man is strong without a conscience and immediate union with God in the great work which Jesus Christ has given us to do. Our task is easy. "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." When a man lives with God he hasn't time to hear gossip and trifling things. Criticism makes no impression on him. Adverse winds serve only to kiss his cheeks into rosy health. Paul was never down and sang triumphant songs in the inner prison. He counted it an honor to suffer the loss of all things for the sake of Christ. Livingston was never lonely. Judson never retreated, and the countless hosts of heroes, prophets, apostles, martyrs, men and women call forth the men in the ministry of today to enter the arena without fear and to lift the flag of the conqueror in every battle.