

Evangelical Forum Newsletter



Vol. 3. No. 4
October 2006

Doctrine to be the Focus in Virginia Beach

The fifth annual gathering of the Evangelical Forum will take place on Wednesday, November 8, 2006. We will once again meet for an afternoon session from 3:30-5:30 pm and an evening session from 7:00-9:00 pm, with an on site supper fellowship in between. This year our gracious host is the Green Run Baptist Church of Virginia Beach and its Pastor Shane Martin.

Though it will be difficult to match the quality of last year's stellar presentations by Mark Dever and Tom Nettles, we have no doubt that this year's preachers are up to the task. Dr. Nettles will return as one of our featured speakers, and he will be joined by Dr. Andrew Davis, Pastor of First Baptist Church, Durham, North Carolina. We have asked our speakers to address the subject of "The Place of Doctrine in the Local Church." Dr. Nettles will approach the topic from a historical perspective and Dr. Davis from the practical perspective of local church life.

The Evangelical Forum is open to any who desire to attend, whether Pastors or laymen. We are a gathering of Baptists from various backgrounds (SBC and independent; BGAV and SBCV) who desire to see a renewal of traditional Baptist theology and a revival of purity and faithfulness within our churches in Virginia.

BGAV Reaction to the SBC

The *Religious Herald's* headline reporting Frank Page's Presidential election at the June 2006 SBC Meeting in Greensboro called it a "razor-thin" margin. I found this humorous given the fact that Page's astounding first ballot win with 50.48% of the vote was 26 percentage points and 2,299 votes ahead of the second place finisher. My guess is that George W. Bush would have been happy with such a "razor-thin" percentage margin of victory in his last election! The *Herald's* reporting on the SBC often recalls the old story about Cold War Soviet journalistic coverage of the Olympics. In one three man race, an American

came in second and a Russian came in third. The Soviet paper reported: "Russian athlete finishes third, while American finishes next to last!" For some the SBC is always finishing next to last.

What liberal Baptists are reluctant to admit is that the SBC is slowly becoming more balanced, mature, and faithful, while the ever-shrinking CBF is steadily tacking leftward. There was open discussion in Greensboro on divisive topics (Calvinism, church discipline, etc.) and a record setting number of motions from the floor in business sessions. There was real freedom of thought and diversity of opinion at the 2006 SBC meeting. Sadly, this kind of dialogue is largely missing among those who claim the banner of "free and faithful" Baptists.

The *Religious Herald* Editor has also reported, after an interview with the new President, his hope that Frank Page will arrange for the appointment of BGAV loyalists to the SBC Executive Committee. He somehow fails to see the irony of this demand when the BGAV has consistently excluded SBC supporting conservatives from leadership and meaningful participation. At least Page reportedly responded that this might be possible if the BGAV could recommend persons who would gladly affirm Biblical inerrancy and their support for the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

I offer three humble suggestions to those in BGAV leadership. I suggest that:

1. An open invitation be extended to Frank Page to address the BGAV in its annual meeting. How long has it been since an official representative of the SBC, the denomination still receiving the largest amount of financial contributions from BGAV churches, was invited to speak at a BGAV meeting?
2. The Virginia Baptist Mainstream organization be discouraged from endorsing any candidate for leadership this year. Virginia moderates should not look past the log in their own eye to criticize "power-brokers" in the SBC.
3. The BGAV follow the SBC's courageous lead and offer an honest opportunity for open doctrinal dialogue on divisive issues (e.g., women as pastors, ministry to those involved in homosexual behavior, etc.) at its future meetings. How about inviting Al Mohler to dialogue with Tom Graves on any of these controversial topics?

Will the wind of responsible freedom blow among Virginia Baptists?

JTR

In Memoriam Edgar Brown (1922-2006)

Edgar Brown was a dear friend and faithful supporter of the Evangelical Forum. He went to his reward with the Father on Monday, September 25, 2006. Ed was raised in an orphanage in New Jersey after the untimely death of his parents. As a young man, he fought in an infantry unit at the Battle of the Bulge in WWII. After a successful career in insurance in Manhattan, New York, he retired to Palmyra, Virginia, along with the love of his life and his wife of over 60 years, Evelyn. Ed often relayed how he was converted by reading a Moffett translation of the Bible while riding a commuter train to work in New York City. His negative experiences in a liberal, mainline Methodist Church as a new Christian gave him a passion for evangelical and orthodox truth and led him to become a devoted Southern Baptist. Ed was a member, Sunday School teacher, and Deacon at Jefferson Park Baptist Church in Charlottesville. He was a voracious reader and self-studied, lay theologian. Ed frequently wrote letters to the Editor of the *Religious Herald* protesting the compromising positions of the BGAV. Ed was present at our meeting last year in Northern Virginia, as he had been at several of our previous meetings. Having kept the faith, he has now finished his course and received the crown of life. *Soli Deo Gloria!* ♦

Purpose: The Evangelical Forum is a network of concerned evangelical Pastors and laymen who desire to see renewal and reformation within Baptist churches in Virginia. 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."

This is a quarterly newsletter. Projected publishing dates for Volume 3: January, April, July, October 2006.

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

Quick Quote

There is an amazing ignorance of Scripture among many and a consequent want of established, solid religion. In no other way can I account for the ease with which people are, like children, 'tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine' (Eph. 4:14). There is an Athenian love of novelty abroad, and a morbid distaste for anything old and regular and in the beaten path of our forefathers. Thousands will crowd to hear a new voice and a new doctrine without considering for a moment whether what they hear is true. There is an incessant craving after any teaching which is sensational and exciting and rousing to the feelings. There is an unhealthy appetite for a sort of spasmodic and hysterical Christianity. The religious life of many is little better than spiritual dram-drinking, and the 'meek and quiet spirit' which St Peter commends is clean forgotten (1 Peter 3:4). Crowds and crying and hot rooms and high-flown singing and an incessant rousing of the emotions are the only things which many care for. Inability to distinguish differences in doctrine is spreading far and wide, and so long as the preacher is 'clever' and 'earnest', hundreds seem to think it must be all right, and call you dreadfully 'narrow and uncharitable' if you hint that he is unsound!

—J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*

In the blogosphere

You can read the Stylos weblog (blog) of EFN Editor Jeffrey T. Riddle at www.jpbcstylos.blogspot.com.

You can also read the Baptist Reform weblog (blog) of Evangelical Forum steering committee member Travis Hilton, pastor of Parkview Baptist Church in Bluefield, Virginia at www.baptistreform.blogspot.com.



5th Annual Evangelical Forum Meeting

November 8, 2006

Green Run Baptist Church
Virginia Beach, Virginia

2006 Theme:

The Place of Doctrine in the Life of the Local Church

Schedule:

Afternoon Session:
3:30-5:30 pm

Supper Break
5:30 pm-7:00 pm

(A complimentary supper meal will be served on site for all attendees and guests. Donations accepted.)

Evening Session:
7:00-9:00 pm

Keynote speakers:

Dr. Tom Nettles, Professor of Historical Theology, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. Dr. Nettles is a committed and productive scholar for the church. Among his most important works is the groundbreaking *By His Grace and For His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life*.

Dr. Andrew Davis, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Durham, North Carolina. Davis was converted while a student at M.I.T. in Boston. After a call to ministry, he completed his Master of Divinity degree at Gordon-Conwell Seminary and a doctoral degree in Church History at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also served as an IMB missionary in Japan. Davis has a passion for scripture memorization, advocacy for the unborn, and personal evangelism. He has served as Senior Pastor at FBC Durham since 1998.

Book Displays:

Sprinkel Publications

Sherman Isbell (Free Church of Scotland [Continuing])

Directions:

Check the website for Green Run Baptist Church:

www.greenrunbaptist.com

Or call: (757) 427-5087

Do SBC Moderates Really Believe Women Should Serve as Pastors? An Important Research Project

By R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

The following article was posted on Dr. Mohler's "conventional thinking" website on August 21, 2006. <<http://www.conventionalthinking.net/home.php?id=26>> Dr. Mohler calls into question moderate Baptist rhetoric supporting women in the role of local church pastor, concluding that such support is "hypothetical, not real."

The controversy over women in the pastorate has been a part of Southern Baptist life for the last three decades. This is not to say that the controversy has itself reshaped the Baptist landscape at the congregational level. As is now clear, "moderate" churches historically identified with the Southern Baptist Convention are virtually as reluctant as conservative churches to call a woman as pastor. Instead, the question of women in the pastorate has become something of a symbolic issue for SBC moderates and their successors. In a very real sense, the question has become rather hypothetical, serving as an indicator of a theological trajectory rather than a genuine openness to having a woman serve as pastor.

The conclusive evidence for this is found in a report commissioned by Baptist Women in Ministry. "The State of Women in Baptist Life, 2005" by Eileen R. Campbell-Reed and Pamela R. Durso is a major research project that should reshape the conversation over women in ministry among Baptists.

The researchers acknowledge their own ideological commitments, but their analysis appears to be both comprehensive and fair. "The perspective of this report rests firmly in the moderate-to-progressive constellation of Baptist organizations in the southern United States," the authors state. "Institutions that make up this constellation are those that parted company with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), some gradually and others more abruptly beginning in the 1980s."

After tracing the history of the ordination of women in Baptist life, the report turns to the controversial question of women serving in the pastorate. With specific reference to moderate and liberal Baptist bodies including the Alliance of Baptists, the Baptist General Association of Virginia, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the authors offer this blunt assessment:

Never before have so many Baptist women officially served as pastors and co-pastors, and yet statistically the great majority of Baptist churches affiliated with the Alliance, BGAV, BGCT, and CBF have not called women to serve as pastor.

Indeed, their research indicated that out of the thousands of churches involved in their sample, only 66 of these churches have called women as pastors or co-pastors. The percentages tell the story. The BGAV reports 16 women pastors among 1,411 churches. Among the BGCT's 5,900 churches, only 11 women serve as either pastor or co-pastor—and this amounts to .19% of the total. In other words, even if the BGCT is understood to be supportive of women in the pastorate, less than one-fifth of one percent of their churches have called a woman as pastor or co-pastor.

Unsurprisingly, the group most supportive of women pastors is the Alliance, and that group reports 26 women serving as pastor or co-pastor out of 118 affiliating congregations.

The bottom line of the research reveals that moderate Southern Baptists, while registering strong opposition to the 2000 revision of the Baptist Faith and Message, and while offering strong words of encouragement to women seeking to serve in the pastorate, appear to be extremely reluctant to call women to serve in these positions.

As a matter of fact, dozens of the largest and most visible moderate pulpits have transitioned over the last 20 years, but, as yet, not one of these churches has yet called a woman to serve as pastor. These churches would include congregations such as Crescent Hill Baptist Church and Highland Baptist Church in Louisville, Wieuca Road Baptist Church and First Baptist Church Decatur in the Atlanta area, South Main Baptist Church in Houston, First Baptist in Asheville, Second Baptist Church in Lubbock, Broadway Baptist Church and University Baptist Church in Fort Worth, College Park Baptist Church in Orlando, Third Baptist Church in St. Louis, Kirkwood Baptist Church in Kansas City, and even churches like River Road (Baptist) Church in Richmond. The list goes on.

In other words, moderate Baptist congregations—even self-consciously liberal congregations—are just not calling women to serve as pastors to any significant degree.

This report deserves a wide reading and should be of interest to both moderate and conservative Baptists. The researchers cover a wide range of questions and their quantitative analysis should prompt much discussion among Baptists on both sides of this controversy.

Among moderates, the report should serve as a catalyst for asking what must be a very hard question: To what degree are moderate Southern Baptists actually open to women serving in the pastorate? At the hypothetical level, this openness appears to be nearly universal among moderates—especially those associated with the CBF. At the congregational level, however, the reality appears to be dramatically at odds with this public commitment.

Beyond this, this report points to a future crisis in terms of a disconnect between moderate theological education and moderate churches. According to these researchers, women now constitute a majority of students studying for ministry at schools including Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, and Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology. Will churches call these women to serve as pastor? Will the feminization of these schools force a disconnect between these institutions and their supporting churches? Where are the men?

[The percentage of women enrolled at American Baptist Convention USA schools such as Andover Newton Theological School and Colgate Rochester Crozer Theological Seminary were even higher. At Andover Newton, 65% of students are women, reflecting an exodus of men from the ministry among mainline Protestants.]

This important report, now available online,¹ helps to clarify and to quantify where many Baptists really stand on the question of women serving in the pastorate. If nothing else, regardless of one's convictions on this question, the report must raise the question of credibility on the part of moderate Baptists who claim to support women pastors. At this point, with the singular exception of the Alliance of Baptists, this support appears to be hypothetical, not real. ♦

¹ <http://www.bwim.info/>

The Unquotable Spurgeon

By Ralph Traylor

Ralph Traylor is a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Lovington, Virginia.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is undoubtedly one of those preachers most often quoted from Baptist pulpits; however, a misleading picture often emerges if one listens only to selected Spurgeon quotes. This truth became obvious to me when I began to read some of Spurgeon's sermons in written form. When I did so, it became clear that Charles Spurgeon was unapologetically a Calvinist. It also became clear that Charles Spurgeon was a thorough Calvinist. There is not one of the doctrines of grace (the five points of Calvinism) that Charles Spurgeon did not eloquently expound in his sermons.

It also is interesting to read how Spurgeon received and responded to criticism of his theology. Spurgeon was called a hyper-Calvinist in his day just as modern critics attempt to label Calvinists in this day. The tactics have not changed. The arguments are the same. The response of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, however, produced some of the most thoughtful teachings on the doctrines of grace that I have read.

The following compilation consists of direct quotes from six of the many sermons Charles Spurgeon delivered on the teachings of Calvinism. The quotes are organized by sermon and then by point of theology within each sermon. In several of the sermons I have included the words of the "Invitation" at the end of the message. Those invitations provide quite a contrast to what often happens at the end of sermons today. I also have included quotes from a sermon that addresses the orthodoxy of Calvinism. Charles Spurgeon was clearly bothered by the notion that some considered his teachings heretical and he did a masterful job in refuting those charges.

The primary purpose of this article is instructive – to get the truth out. The secondary purpose is to be an encouragement to those who suffer the uninformed criticisms of those who cannot or will not understand sound theology. The booklets from which I have taken these quotations are reprints of individual Spurgeon sermons by Pilgrim Publications in Pasadena, Texas. One church I attended provided these booklets on the book table in the back of the church. I found them to be a source of wisdom and an aid to Biblical understanding. I keep them handy and I read them whenever I need a word of encouragement. I commend them to the reader and I recommend them as a source of doctrinal teaching in the church.

Free Will – A Slave (December 2, 1855)

Total Depravity

It has already been proved beyond all controversy that free-will is nonsense. Freedom cannot belong to will any more than ponderability can belong to electricity. They are altogether different things. Free agency we may believe in but free-will is simply ridiculous. The will is well known by all to be directed by the understanding, to be moved by motives, and to be a secondary thing.

Philosophy and religion both discard at once the very thought of free-will; and I will go as far as Martin Luther, in that strong assertion of his, where he says, "If any man doth ascribe aught of salvation, even the very least, to the free-will of man, he knoweth nothing of grace, and he hath not learned Jesus Christ aright."

Just as, in a certain moment, when this body shall die, the blood stops, the pulse ceases, the breath no longer comes from the lungs, so in the day that Adam did eat that fruit his soul died; his imagination lost its mighty power to climb into celestial things and see heaven, his will lost its power always to choose that which is good, his judgment lost all ability to judge between right and wrong decidedly and infallibly, though

something was retained in conscience; his memory became tainted, liable to hold evil things, and let righteous things glide away; every power of him ceased as to its moral vitality.

It would take too much time to mention any more scripture proofs. We will, however, refer to the great doctrine of the fall. Anyone who believes that man's will is entirely free, and that he can be saved by it, does not believe the fall. As I sometimes tell you, few preachers of religion do believe thoroughly the doctrine of the fall, or else they think that when Adam fell down he broke his little finger, and did not break his neck and ruin his race. Why, beloved, the fall broke up man entirely. It did not leave one power unimpaired; they were all shattered, and debased, and tarnished; like some mighty temple, the pillars might be there, and the shaft, and the column, and the pilaster might be there; but they were all broken, though some of them retain their form and position. The conscience of man sometimes retains much of its tenderness – still it has fallen. The will too, is not exempt. What though it is “the Lord Mayor of Mansoul,” as Bunyan calls it? – the Lord Mayor goes wrong. The Lord Will-be-will was continually doing wrong.

You have heard a great many Arminian sermons, I dare say; but you never heard an Arminian prayer – for the saints in prayer appear as one in word, mind, and deed. An Arminian on his knees would pray desperately like a Calvinist. He cannot pray about free-will: there is no room for it. Fancy him praying, *“Lord, I thank thee I am not like those poor presumptuous Calvinists. Lord, I was born with a glorious free-will; I was born with power by which I can turn to thee of myself; I have improved my grace. If everybody had done the same with their grace that I have, they might have all been saved. Lord, I know thou dost not make us willing if we are not willing ourselves. Thou givest grace to everybody; some do not improve it, but I do. There are many that will go to hell as much bought with the blood of Christ as I was; they had as much of the Holy Ghost given to them; they had as good a chance, and were as much blessed as I am. It was not thy grace that made us differ; I know it did a great deal, still I turned the point; I made use of what was given me, and others did not – that is the difference between me and them.”*

Particular Redemption

Another says, “I want to know about the rest of the people. May I go out and tell them – Jesus Christ died for every one of you? May I say – there is righteousness for every one of you, there is life for every one of you?” No; you may not. You may say – there is life for every man that comes. But if you say there is life for one of those that do not believe, you utter a dangerous lie. If you tell them Jesus Christ was punished for their sins, and yet they will be lost, you tell a willful falsehood. To think that God could punish Christ and then punish them – I wonder at your daring to have the impudence to say so!

The “Invitation”

It is sin that will always be charged on men; when they will not come unto Christ it is sin that keeps them away. He who does not preach that, I fear is not faithful to God and his conscience. Go home, then, with this thought; “I am by nature so perverse that I will not come unto Christ, and that wicked perversity of my nature is my sin. I deserve to be sent to hell for it.” And if the thought does not humble you, the Spirit using it, no other can. This morning I have not preached human nature up, but I have preached it down. God humble us all. Amen.

The Sum and Substance of All Theology (June 25, 1861)

Unconditional Election

The reason why one man is saved, and another man is lost, is to be found in God; not in anything which the saved man did, or did not do; not in anything he felt, or did not feel; but in something altogether irrespective of himself, even in the sovereign grace of God. In the day of God's power, the saved are made willing to

give their souls to Jesus. The language of Scripture must explain this point. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John i.12, 13) “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Romans ix.16).

I don't care to argue upon this point, except I put it thus: If any say, “It is man himself who makes the difference,” I reply, “You are involving yourself in a great dilemma; if man himself makes the difference, then mark – man himself must have the glory.” Now, I am certain you do not mean to give man the glory of his own salvation; you would not have men throw up their caps in heaven, and shout, “Unto *ourselves* be the glory, for we, ourselves, were the hinge and turning point of our own salvation.” No, you would have all the saved cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus, and give to Him alone all the honor and all the glory. This, however, cannot be, unless, in that critical point, that diamond hinge upon which man's salvation shall turn, God shall have all the control, and not the will of man. You know that those who do not believe this truth as a matter of *doctrine*, do believe it in their hearts as a matter of *experience*.

The doctrine of Election is God's purposing in His heart that He would make some men better than other men; that He would give to some men more grace than to other men; that some should come out and receive the mercy; that others, left to their own free will, should reject it; that some should gladly accept the invitations of mercy, while others, of their own accord, stubbornly refuse the mercy to which the whole world of mankind is invited. All men, by nature, refuse the invitations to the gospel. God, in the sovereignty of His grace, makes a difference by secretly inclining the hearts of some men, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to partake of His everlasting mercy in Christ Jesus.

If we were for a moment to admit that man's will could be more than a match for God's will, do you not see where we should be landed? Who made man? God. Who made God? Shall we lift up man to the sovereign throne of the Deity? Who shall be master, and have his way, God or man? The will of God, that says they “shall come,” knows how to make them come.

The “Invitation”

Sinner, trust in Jesus; and if thou dost perish trusting Jesus, I will perish with thee. I will make my bed in hell, side by side with thee, sinner, if thou canst perish trusting in Christ, and thou shalt lie there, and taunt me to all eternity for having taught thee falsely, if we perish. But that can never be; those who trust in Jesus shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. Come to Jesus, and He will in no wise cast thee out.

A Defense of Calvinism²

Particular Redemption

I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.

I know there are some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the merit of the blood of Jesus: if my theological system needed such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds. I cannot, I dare not allow the thought to find a lodging in my mind, it seems so near akin to blasphemy. In Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore. There must be sufficient efficacy in the blood of Christ, if God had so willed it, to have saved not only all in this world, but

² I was not able to determine the exact date of this message.

all in ten thousand worlds, had they transgressed their Maker's law. Once admit infinity into the matter, and limit is out of the question. Having a Divine Person for an offering, it is not consistent to conceive of limited value; bound and measure are terms inapplicable to the Divine sacrifice. The intent of the Divine purpose fixes the *application* of the infinite offering, but does not change it into a finite work.

If Christ on His cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were lost before He died. If the doctrine is true, that He died for all men, then He died for some who were in hell before He even came into this world, for doubtless there were even then myriads there who had been cast away because of their sins. Once again, if it was Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has He been disappointed, for we have His own testimony that there is a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, and into that pit of woe have been cast some of the very persons who according to the theory of universal redemption, were bought with His blood. That seems to me a conception a thousand times more repulsive than any of those consequences which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of special and particular redemption. To think that my Savior died for men who were or are in hell, seems a supposition too horrible for me to entertain. To imagine for a moment that He was the substitute for all the sons of men, and that God, having first punished the Substitute, afterwards punished the sinners themselves, seems to conflict with all my ideas of Divine justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of all men, and that afterwards some of those very men should be punished for the sins for which Christ had already atoned, appears to me to be the most monstrous iniquity that could ever have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, to the goddess of the Thugs, or to the most diabolical heathen deities. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the just and wise and good!

Perseverance of the Saints

I do not know how some people, who believe that a Christian can fall from grace, manage to be happy. It must be a very commendable thing in them to be able to get through a day without despair. If I did not believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I think I should be of all men the most miserable, because I should lack any ground of comfort.

There is nothing like a belief in my eternal perseverance, and the immutability of my Father's affection, which can keep me near to Him from a motive of simple gratitude. Nothing makes a man so virtuous as belief of the truth. A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice. A man cannot have an erroneous belief without by-and-by having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other. Of all men, those have the most disinterested piety, the sublimest reverence, the most ardent devotion, who believe that they are saved by grace, without works, through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

I ask the man who dares say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield, who in successive ages were the great exponents of the system of grace; or what will he say of the Puritans, whose works were full of them? Had a man been Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing, but now *we* are looked upon as the heretics, and they as the orthodox.

Human Inability (March 7, 1858)

Total Depravity

Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text [John 6:44] declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep *in his nature*. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit.

Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he neither has the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit.

Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

“Oh!” saith the Arminian, “men may be saved if they will.” We reply, “My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the if *they will* that is the difficulty. We assert that no man *will* come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, *we do* not assert it, but *Christ* himself declares it – ‘*Ye will not come unto that ye might have life;*’ and as long as that ‘*ye will not come*’ stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will.”

We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will ever be constrained towards Christ.

My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar of manhood that stood erect.

There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ...I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapped up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are able to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner’s state which we meet in God’s holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling.

Irresistible Grace

It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God.

I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, “Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their head and drags them to himself.” I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon

wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is not compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing...

...He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved "with full consent against his will;" that is, against his old will he is saved.

Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The "Invitation"

Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I only had to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away from me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it."

A Testimony to Free and Sovereign Grace³

Unconditional Election

There is a choice somewhere, and I am persuaded we have not chose him, but he hath chosen us...The salvation of the righteous was determined on in the council chambers of eternity or ever the stars began to shine. It is of God, and of God only.

That is the awkward point about a salvation which is of man: it is worth nothing when you get it. We want an eternal salvation. We want a salvation which does really save. We want something which is not made up of "ifs and ans," and "buts," and "peradventures," and "may be," and "if you do this," and "if you do that."

Particular Redemption

"Whom the Lord loveth he chaseneth;" but often those whom he loves not he leaves to indulge in such pleasure as they can find. He gives his swine good measure of husks, for he would not be unkind even to them; and there they lie and feed without fear, knowing nothing of another world, neither caring for it.

Perseverance of the Saints

We shall work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because he first works it in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. There is no working out our salvation unless the Lord works it in. We bring to the surface of our life what he works in the deep foundation of our inward nature; but both within and without the spiritual life is all of grace.

³ This message appears in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 33 (1887): p. 157.

Depend upon it, if any man is saved in the midst of this wicked and ungodly generation, in which the very air smells of corruption, and the common talk is polluting – his salvation will be evidently of the Lord. If any believer remains steadfast in this day of philosophic doubt, verily, I say unto you, his salvation must be of the Lord. He cannot go through this Vanity Fair, he cannot pass through this horrible slough, this Stygian bog of modern society, and be pure in heart, lip, and life, unless God shall grant him his salvation.

Election (September 2, 1855)

The Orthodoxy of Calvinism

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, which are called by nickname Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus. By this truth I make a pilgrimage into the past, and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me. Were I a Pelagian, or a believer in the doctrine of free-will, I should have to walk for centuries alone. Here and there a heretic of no very honorable character might rise up and call me brother. But taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brethren – I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do, and acknowledge that this is the religion of God’s own church.

As for human authorities, I care not one rush for all [...] of them. I care not what they say, *pro* or *con*, as to this doctrine. I have only used them as a kind of confirmation to your faith, to show you that whilst I may be railed upon as a heretic and a hyper-Calvinist, after all I am backed by antiquity. All the past stands by me. I do not care for the present. Give me the past and I will hope for the future. Let the present rise up in my teeth, I will not care. What though a host of the churches of London my have forsaken the great cardinal doctrines of God, it matters not. If a handful of us stand alone in an unflinching maintenance of the sovereignty of our God, if we are beset by enemies, ay, and even by our own brethren, who ought to be our friends and helpers, it matters not, if we can but count upon the past; the noble army of martyrs, the glorious host of confessors, are our friends; the witnesses of truth stand by us. With these for us, we will not say that we stand alone, but we may exclaim, “Lo, God hath reserved unto himself seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal.” But the best of all is, *God is with us*.

If Jesus Christ and his apostles were accustomed to style believers by the title of elect, we must certainly believe that they were so; otherwise the term does not mean anything.

It would also be unnecessary to repeat the whole 9th chapter of Romans. As long as that remains in the Bible, no man shall be able to prove Arminianism; so long as that is written there, not the most violent contortions of the passage will ever be able to exterminate the doctrine of election from the Scriptures.

Canst thou, O rejector! cast it out of the Bible? Canst thou take the penknife of Jehudi and cut it out of the Word of God?

“Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?” Who is he that shall say unto his father, “What hast thou begotten?” or unto his mother, “Why hast thou brought me forth?” “I am the Lord – I form the light and create darkness. I, the Lord, do all those things. Who art thou that repliest against God? Tremble and kiss his rod; bow down and submit to his scepter; impugn not his justice, and arraign not his acts before thy bar, O man!

◆

News of Interest

- *Wall Street Journal Article Asks: Does the “Purpose Driven Church” Split Churches?*

Many evangelical and Baptist churches have jumped on the bandwagon of laid back Southern California Pastor Rick Warren’s “Purpose Driven” church model. A September 5, 2006 *Wall Street Journal* article titled “A Popular Strategy For Church Growth Splits Congregants” by Suzanne Sataline, however, asks some difficult questions about the impact on some churches that have adopted Warren’s model.

The article claims that “the purpose-driven movement is dividing the country’s more than 50 million evangelicals.” It points out that while some churches have used Warren’s model to gain numerical growth, others adopting it have experienced significant numerical decline.

Among the examples cited is the First Baptist Church of Lakewood in Long Beach, California. Pastor John Dickau led the congregation to adopt the Purpose Driven model and saw attendance decline from 700 to 550. Pastor Dickau laments: “I’ve often wondered, where’s bottom?” After attending several of Warren’s Church Transitions conferences, Dickau began favoring sermons on marriage and family issues. He suggested the congregation drop the word “Baptist” from its name, though the church rejected this move.

The article notes: “He jettisoned the piano for the guitar. And still people left, he says—because the music is modern, because the congregation no longer uses hymn books, because the center screen that displays the song lyrics obscures the cross. Having a smaller congregation has meant trimming the \$1.7 million budget to be able to afford adding the sound system and new stage lights, which cost \$150,000, Mr. Dickau says.”

Another cited example is the experience of the Brookwood Baptist Church in Burlington, NC, which introduced Warren’s “Purpose Driven” model in 2001 under the leadership of Pastor Bob Felts.

The article reports: “Half the members, he said, balked at his decisions to dress casually, restrict choir performances and use electric instruments. Services now start with an ear piercing electric guitar solo, boosted with amplifiers from the \$50,000 sound system.” Felts notes that five years into the process, church attendance has shrunk from 600 to 275, resulting in a significant reduction in the church budget.

This article is a refreshing call for discernment and evaluation of the “Purpose Driven” church movement.

- *Lifeway Research Project Reports 10% of SBC Pastors are Five-Point Calvinists*

A September 18, 2006 Baptist Press article announced the results of a recent Lifeway Research report. The study of Calvinism in SBC life was conducted from a sample of 413 Pastors surveyed by phone in July and August. Of those pastors surveyed 10% answered affirmatively

when asked, “Do you consider yourself a five-point Calvinist?” The vast majority, 85% answered in the negative, while 4% said they were not sure, and 1% did not respond.

Though 10% is a small figure, it is larger than many might have imagined and gives evidence of a surge in interest in Reformed theology (Calvinism) among Southern Baptists. Though many have identified the resurgence of Calvinism with younger Southern Baptists (see the September 2006 cover article in *Christianity Today*), the Lifeway study found “no clear age correlation,” noting “age is not a determining factor in those who embrace Reformed theology.” Pastors both over and under 40 were as likely to respond affirmatively.

- *September 2006 Christianity Today cover article focuses on resurgence of Reformed Theology among American evangelicals.*

The cover of the September 2006 *Christianity Today*, the flagship magazine for new evangelicalism, features a person with a t-shirt depicting Jonathan Edwards and the caption: “Jonathan Edwards is my Homeboy.” The cover article is titled “Young, Restless, Reformed: Calvinism is Making a Comeback—And Shaking Up the Church.”

The article features photos from the recent “Together for the Gospel Conference” organized by Mark Dever (a keynote speaker at our 2005 Evangelical Forum meeting). It also notes the rise in popularity of Reformed preachers and teachers like John Piper and Joshua Harris.

The article also highlights the influence of Al Mohler and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in bringing the Reformed resurgence to Southern Baptists. Of SBTS and Mohler, the article observes:

Now it’s hard to believe that less than 15 years ago, Southern merited a reputation as a liberal seminary. Mohler has attracted a strong faculty and spurred enrollment to more than 4,300 students—which makes it the largest Southern Baptist seminary. But SBC conservatives have gotten more than they bargained for in Mohler. The tireless public intellectual freely criticizes perceived SBC shortcomings, especially what he considers misguided doctrine. Oh, and Mohler is an unabashed Calvinist. His seminary now attracts and turns out a steady flow of young Reformed pastors.

The article also cites criticism of and caution toward the resurgence of Calvinism in SBC as articulated by men like Malcolm Yarnell of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Steve Lemke of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

- *Oklahoma SBC Church Postpones Consideration of “Open Membership”*

Henderson Hills Baptist Church of Enid, Oklahoma, an elder-led SBC mega-church, recently drew criticism from fellow Baptists in and outside of Oklahoma when it began consideration of an “open membership” policy. The policy was suggested to the church by its elder body and would have made membership in the church possible without the requirement of believer’s

baptism by immersion. The proposal was very similar to that recently under consideration at John Piper's Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The proposal came under serious criticism this summer from editorial articles in the *Baptist Messenger*, the state paper of Oklahoma Baptists. Pastor Dennis Newkirk accused some of his critics of interfering in the church's local autonomy. In another similarity to Piper's Bethlehem Baptist Church's consideration of "open membership," the Henderson Hills elders decided to withdraw the proposal from consideration in the face of heavy criticism. The decision to withdraw the proposal was announced in Pastor Newkirk's blog on July 31, 2006.

- *Moderate Virginia Seminaries Facing Leadership Transitions*

It has recently been announced that the Presidents of both Leland Seminary and the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond are stepping down. Tom Graves, who became the founding President of BTSR in 1991, cited health concerns as the reason for his planned departure in 2007. Graves has multiple sclerosis. It has also been announced that Randall Everett, the founding President of the Leland Seminary, will resign at the end of 2006, after nine years in service at that school. Everett is the former Pastor of Columbia Baptist Church in Northern Virginia, but currently serves as Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Newport News, Virginia. Little explanation has been offered publicly as to why Everett is resigning. Conservative observers expect both institutions to select leaders who will guide their respective institutions even further afield from the evangelical Baptist mainstream.

- *WMU of Virginia in Turmoil*

The Women's Missionary Union of Virginia is facing internal turmoil and external criticism. The June 22, 2006 *Religious Herald* reported that WMU of Virginia Executive Director, Earlene Jesse, would be taking "a sabbatical to address medical issues, as well as focus on academic projects." Jesse was scheduled to return to work on September 1st. On July 13, 2006 the *Herald* reported that the WMU of Virginia trustees had formed a panel to investigate personnel matters in the organization. It also reported complaints that originated with the WMU of Clifford Baptist Church concerning mismanagement of the Crossroad Camp and Conference Center resulting in a high turnover rate in camp personnel. In an unusual editorial titled "The dilemma of reporting facts" in the August 17, 2006 *Herald*, Editor Jim White responded to apparent criticism he has received for his failure to report on the surfacing of these problems within the WMU of Virginia. Liberal Baptists have frequently criticized the SBC's Baptist Press as a "public relations" operations rather than a "hard news" service, pointing to a perceived reluctance by Baptist Press to report stories unfavorable to the SBC. In this case, however, White defends his lack of reporting on the WMU crisis as coming from a desire not to unnecessarily air "dirty laundry." Along the way, however, he provides some information that raises concerns about WMU in Virginia. White asks: "When in a ten year span about 25 people have left the employ of one of our partners, many of them being fired or feeling forced out; when former employees speak to us of their concerns about leadership practices; and when a church's WMU claims that it cannot get complete information from the state office about bylaws, policies, procedures and disbursements, how do we respond?" White closes by urging Virginia Baptists to trust the process. ♦

Paradosis

Paradosis is the Greek word for “tradition.” It is also the title for this recurring section featuring voices from the Virginia Baptist past.

***John A. Broadus** (1827-1895) was a native of Culpepper County, Virginia. He graduated from the University of Virginia in 1850 and soon answered a call to ministry. He served as Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Charlottesville and as Chaplain at the University of Virginia from 1851-59. Among those converted and baptized under his ministry in Charlottesville was a young woman studying at the Albemarle Female Institute named Lottie Moon. Broadus became one of the four original faculty members of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina. After the Civil War, Broadus and the seminary made its move to Louisville, Kentucky.*

*Broadus was a confessional Calvinist as were the other founders of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. After a trip to Europe, including Geneva, Broadus wrote a letter to the Western Recorder in Kentucky: “The people who sneer at what is called Calvinism might as well sneer at Mount Blanc. We are not in the least to defend all of Calvin’s opinions or actions, but I do not see how anyone who really understands the Greek of the Apostle Paul or the Latin of Calvin or Turretin can fail to see that these latter did but interpret and formulate substantially what the former teaches” (A.T. Robertson, **Life and Letters of John A. Broadus** [Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1909]: 396-97, as quoted in Tom Nettles, **By His Grace and For His Glory** [Cor Meum Tibi, 2002]: 197).*

When the Baptist Sunday School Board was organized in 1891, the first publication projected was Broadus’ “A Catechism for Bible Teaching.” The booklet appeared in 1892. We reprint below Questions 1-10 of “Lesson 8: Regeneration.” The reader will note that Broadus clearly stresses the sovereignty of God in salvation by noting that regeneration precedes faith (see especially question 9).

*Source: Timothy and Denise George, Eds., **Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms** (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996, 1999): 270-71.*

A Catechism of Bible Teaching By John A. Broadus Lesson 8: Regeneration

1. *What is meant by the word “regeneration”?*
 - A. Regeneration is God’s causing a person to be born again.
2. *Are such persons literally born a second time?*
 - A. No, the regenerated are inwardly changed as if they were born over again.
3. *In what respect are men changed in the new birth?*
 - A. In the new birth men have a new heart, so as to hate sin and desire to be holy servants of God (Ezek 11:19, 20).
4. *Is this new birth necessary in order to salvation?*
 - A. Without the new birth no one can be saved.

5. *Who produces this great change?*

A. The Holy Spirit regenerates.

6. *Are people regenerated through baptism?*

A. No, only those whose hearts are already changed ought to be baptized.

7. *Are people regenerated through Bible teaching?*

A. Yes, people are usually regenerated through the Word of God (1 Pet 1:23; James 1:18).

8. *Can we understand how men are born again?*

A. No, we can only know regeneration by its effects (John 3:8).

9. *Does faith come before the new birth?*

A. No, it is the new heart that truly repents and believes.

10. *What is the proof of having a new heart?*

A. The proof of having a new heart is a new life (1 John 2:29; 2 Cor 5:17).

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