

Evangelical Forum Newsletter



Vol. 4. No. 1
Winter 2007

New Directions for the Evangelical Forum

On November 8, 2006 we held our fifth annual Evangelical Forum in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia (see the Report) in Virginia Beach. Just before our meeting we formed our Steering Committee for 2007: Brian Davis, Layman, Jefferson Park Baptist Church, Charlottesville; Steve Clevenger, Pastor, Covenant Reformed Baptist Church, Warrenton; Travis Hilton, Pastor, Parkview Baptist Church, Bluefield; Jeff Riddle, Pastor, Jefferson Park Baptist Church, Charlottesville; and Rob Stovall, Pastor, Providence Baptist Church, Suffolk.

This year we plan to take some new directions with our fellowship. We still plan to continue the tradition of hosting an annual meeting in 2007 featuring another slate of excellent guest preachers. It is likely, however, that we will not hold our 2007 meeting in conjunction with the BGAV meeting since most of our participants have flagging interest in that body. We have also discussed the expansion of our ministry to become an affinity fellowship, society or association for individuals and churches based on a common doctrinal confession and vision for ministry. We also plan to continue publication of this quarterly newsletter. You can look here for more details, updates, and information on the Evangelical Forum as the year unfolds.♦

JTR

A Report on the Fifth Annual Evangelical Forum

The fifth annual Evangelical Forum was held on Wednesday, November 8, 2006 at the Green Run Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The plenary speakers were Dr. Tom Nettles, Professor of Historical Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dr. Andy Davis, Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Durham, NC.

The theme for the meeting was the place of doctrine in the pulpit and the pew. In the afternoon session, Dr. Nettles' first address offered a historical survey of doctrinal preaching. It is not enough, he noted, merely to affirm inerrancy, laudable as that is, but the pastor must also have a doctrinal framework for understanding what inerrant Scripture says about Christ. Nettles urged Pastors to preach Scripture in the full context of divine revelation. Also, in the afternoon session Dr. Davis preached an expositional message on Paul's doxology in Romans 11:33-36. Davis noted the text called for "expository exaltation." This message was a model of doctrinal preaching.

At the supper break participants enjoyed an excellent meal provided by the members of Providence Baptist Church in Suffolk, Virginia. The evening session began with Dr. Davis teaching on "The Role of Doctrine in Sanctification," using discipleship materials developed in his local church. Davis noted how the believer follows a path to Christian maturity from knowledge (the gaining of factual and experiential information) to faith (assurance and commitment to spiritual truth) to character (having the internal nature conformed to Christ) and action (an external lifestyle of habitual obedience). Dr. Nettles then spoke on the use of catechisms in teaching doctrine in the church. He offered practical

suggestions on how a Pastor might offer a series of Biblical and doctrinal messages using the catechism. He took as an example, how one might teach the doctrine of effectual calling with reference to the catechism question: "What is effectual calling?" and its answer, "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel."

There were about 75 participants at this year's gathering, representing about 15 Baptist churches (Southern Baptists and Independent) in Virginia. Pastor Rob Stovall of Providence Baptist Church did an excellent job again this year as Worship Leader, leading us in stirring singing of Psalms and hymns. Becky Stovall also did an excellent job as our pianist. Sherman Isbell and Sprinkle Publications also provided fine book displays. Links to audio files of the plenary session are available online (www.jpbc.org/ef.html). Mark Dever's presentation on *John Bunyan: Puritan Baptist Churchman* in our 2005 Evangelical Forum has been downloaded over 1,100 times!

One side note: We were happy to have James White, Editor of the *Religious Herald* join us for our afternoon session. White presented a front-page report on our meeting in the *Herald's* December 7, 2006 issue. The article was generally favorable, with an approving report of our guest speakers' presentations. The report ended, however, with the interesting note that "About 60 persons, including a dozen children, gathered Nov 8." This might be interpreted as dismissive of our gathering due to its small size (or the fact—thanks be to God—that

several of the attendees brought their families!). A corresponding article on the same page on the BGAV's annual Pastor's Conference, which has steadily declined in interest and attendance in recent years, offered no corresponding report on the number in attendance at that event.♦

In the blogosphere

Blogs from EFN Steering Committee members:

Baptist Reform (Travis Hilton):
www.baptistreform.blogspot.com

Stylos (Jeff Riddle):
www.jpbcstylos.blogspot.com

The Old Baptist (Rob Stovall):
www.ldbaptist.blogspot.com

Purpose: The Evangelical Forum is a fellowship of concerned evangelical Pastors and laymen who desire to see renewal and reformation within Baptist churches in Virginia. We affirm the *Second London Baptist Confession* (1689) and the *Baptist Faith and Message* (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 4: January, April, July, October 2007.

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

The Old Baptist on BTR

The Old Baptist is a new blog from Rob Stovall, Pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Suffolk, Virginia. Rob has an interesting pedigree. He is a conservative, evangelical Pastor who is Calvinistic in his doctrinal convictions. He is also a graduate of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. Below are two recent posts (slightly edited) from his blog that reflect on his alma mater. You can read more at www.oldbaptist.blogspot.com.

Dan Bagby and The Defense of Marriage (12/15/06)

In the days after the voter approval of the amendment to the Virginia state constitution which strictly defined marriage as a legal arrangement between one man and one woman, the following letter to the editor appeared in the "Religious Herald," the newsjournal of the Baptist General Association of Virginia:

"I view with curiosity and bewilderment an amendment 'to protect the institution of marriage' in the Commonwealth. As a former pastor of 26 years, a current professor of marriage and family life at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, as a board member of the national Marriage Builders Coalition (an organization whose members hold a covenant to preside at weddings only after pre-marital counseling has taken place) and as a Baptist who is usually speaking twice a week in some Baptist church, I am aware that: (a) most Baptist pastors offer no premarital care or counseling to their parishioners; (b) very few Baptist churches require any kind of pre-marital counseling; and (c) most parishioners with whom I am acquainted have no interest in receiving pre-marital counseling (I wrote a book on the subject for pastors)."

"If we are serious about 'protecting marriage' as God intended, why doesn't someone offer an amendment that would prohibit divorce? That would scare a few more people from taking marriage lightly."

"Or, perhaps, offer an amendment that prohibits remarriage? Since both of these are 'God's intention,' why are we not espousing them as state laws to be enforced in Virginia?"

Daniel G. Bagby, Richmond

Dan Bagby's letter is intentionally provocative and more than a little revealing. Professor Bagby is no biblicalist and his sarcasm veils an animosity toward a strict enforcement of the biblical definition of marriage. Among pastoral confidants and former students, Bagby is known as being quite adamant in his support of the mainstreaming of the homosexual lifestyle within both the church and society, including same-sex marriage. During my years at BTR, I was taught that a long-term, monogamous homosexual relationship should be embraced by the church as emotionally/spiritually healthy, as well as being God-honoring; to quote Professor Bagby, "I have encountered quite a few homosexual relationships which were vastly superior to most of their heterosexual counterparts." For Dan Bagby homosexuality is not a sin to be condemned, but simply a natural sexual preference to be celebrated.

While unyieldingly and unabashedly critical of Bagby's dismissal of biblical authority, I will conclude on a note of agreement. I agree with Professor Bagby's implied assertion that heterosexuals bear the lion's share of the guilt for the damage done to the institution of marriage in the West. It is heterosexual fornication and adultery, along with the advent of the so-called "no-fault" divorce and serial remarriage, that has weakened the institution to the point that it is barely relevant in much of our society. According to 2005 statistics, 37% of children born that year were born out of wedlock; that's 37 out of 100 children who were without the provision and protection of a mother and a father who were in a committed, covenant relationship at the time of their births. Dan Bagby is correct about one thing: if Christians are truly serious about protecting the *definition* of marriage, then they should first strive to protect the *dignity* of marriage.

Reflections on the Retirement of the President of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (11/17/06)

A recent Associated Baptist Press article announced the 2007 retirement of Dr. Tom Graves, president of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (the alma mater of *The Old Baptist*), due to failing health. Dr. Graves has suffered for years from multiple sclerosis and is now restricted to the use of a wheel chair or walker. Giving credit where credit is due, it must be said that Dr. Graves has been conspicuous as an example of quiet courage throughout his tenure as BTSR's president. Never one to complain or to exploit his illness for the sake of sympathy, Dr. Graves has worked with tireless industry toward the establishment of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond's long-term institutional viability. With that said, the departure of Dr. Graves from the president's office brings into sharp focus the protracted theological identity crisis within the corridors of BTSR.

Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond is the latter-day embodiment of two now extinct institutions, Randall Lolley's Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Roy Honeycutt's Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The conservative resurgence of the last generation has destroyed the liberal spirit and aims of the two schools under their respective presidents, leaving both institutions radically transformed for the better. In the painful aftermath of those institutional makeovers, Lolley's SEBTS and Honeycutt's SBTS have both been viewed through liberal rose-colored glasses as examples of a sort of academic "Camelot," both schools representing a now lost paradise of scholastic freedom in the vigorous pursuit of religious liberty. Thus, when the Southern Baptist Alliance (now the Alliance of Baptists) voted to form a new school in Richmond, Virginia, it was purposefully modeled on Lolley's SEBTS. Apparently, BTSR also chose to follow the same disastrous path as her mother institution: pursue a radically liberal agenda while using main-stream, conservative rhetoric with her supporting constituency. This approach failed miserably at SEBTS and SBTS; when Southern Baptists learned what was really being taught at Southeastern and at Southern, they were incensed that their monetary gifts had been used to fund heresy. It became the ecclesiastical equivalent of "peasants with pitchforks" - the conservative laity rising up to take back the schools that they had birthed and supported.

BTSR has heretofore avoided the gratuitous self-destruction which was the hallmark of Lolley's SEBTS and the credit goes entirely to President Graves. Graves has worked hard at reassuring the school's largely VA and NC supporting constituency that BTSR understands the unique needs of their congregations and that it is in a better position to meet those needs than the "fundamentalist" schools of the Southern Baptist Convention. In this effort, however, Graves has not been helped by the faculty and the administration of the seminary. In 1998, when a BTSR faculty member was caught in an extra-marital affair, it was Graves who immediately dismissed him from his teaching post, over the loud protests of the majority of the remaining faculty members. Graves' quick and decisive action suppressed a potential conflagration and secured the continued support of Baptists who would not look kindly upon such a situation.

Again, in 2004, when then Director of Student Life, Warren Hammonds, signed his name to a document supporting gay marriage, it was Graves who cracked down on the very popular Hammonds so as to secure his silence and eventual resignation under protest. Although there is great institutional support at BTSR among students and faculty for the kind of "welcoming and affirming" approach indicative of groups like the Alliance of Baptists, Graves knew (and knows) that open support for gays and lesbians would mean the death of the school. Apparently, Warren Hammonds was sacrificed to save BTSR.

The Graves retirement means that this "conservative" facade will quickly crack and collapse, as the majority forces of liberal militancy will no longer be held in check. Graves departure also calls into question the future of "moderate" Baptist standard-bearer, Cecil Sherman, who has served as an adjunct professor of ministry

throughout most of Graves tenure, and who is generally dismissed as a fundamentalist by the seminary's more leftist students and faculty. It was Sherman who strongly lobbied for the aforementioned faculty member's dismissal in 1998—just a few days before the graduation ceremonies!—and Sherman, along with a cadre of old-guard liberals like James Slatton (former pastor of River Road Baptist Church in Richmond, where Graves keeps his membership), have labored to insure that BTSR remains publicly distant from the issue of homosexuality. But Sherman and Graves represent a dying breed within Baptist life. The vast majority of young liberals are anxious to shed the vestments of hypocrisy and “come out” strongly on a whole range of issues long considered taboo by the average “civilized” Virginia Baptist. It has been the “ick” factor that has kept an older generation of “moderates” from accepting homosexuality as wholesome and divinely sanctioned, a repulsion which is not shared by the majority of BTSR graduates. With Graves on the way out, it remains to be seen whether Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond will continue its informal policy of spin and dissembling, or whether the institution will finally and publicly embrace its true identity.

Quick Quotes

- ***The influence of Charles Hodge on James Boyce:***

James Boyce was more powerfully impressed by Dr. Hodge than by any other Princeton professor, and probably more than any other teacher except President Wayland. Dr. Manly also felt satisfied that he learned more from Dr. Hodge than from any of the others. It was a great privilege to be directed and upborne by such a teacher in studying that exalted system of Pauline truth which is technically called Calvinism, which compels an earnest student to profound thinking, and, when pursued with a combination of systematic thought and fervent experience, makes him at home among the most inspiring and ennobling views of God and of the universe he has made.

--John A. Broadus, *Memoir of J. P. Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893): p. 73.

- ***James Boyce on the necessity of doctrinal creeds for Baptist theology teachers:***

It is therefore, gentlemen, in perfect consistency with the position of Baptists, as well as of Bible Christians, that the test of doctrine I have suggested to you should be adopted. It is based upon principles and practices sanctioned by the authority of Scripture and by the usage of our people. In so doing, you will be acting simply in accordance with propriety and righteousness. You will infringe the rights of no man, and you will secure the rights of those who have established here an instrumentality for the production of sound ministry. It is no hardship to those who teach here to be called upon to sign the declaration of their principles; for there are fields of usefulness open elsewhere to every man, and none need accept your call who cannot conscientiously sign your formulary. And while all this is true, you will receive by this an assurance that the trust committed to you by the founders is being fulfilling in accordance with their wishes, that the [ministers] that go forth have here learned to distinguish truth from error, and to embrace the former, and that the same precious truths of the Bible which were so dear to the hearts of its founders, and which I trust are equally dear to yours, will be propagated in our churches, giving to them vigor and strength, and causing them to flourish by the godly sentiments and emotions they will awaken within them. May God impress you deeply with the responsibility under which you must act in reference to it!

*From James P. Boyce's July 30, 1856 inaugural address at Furman University titled, "Three Changes in Theological Institutions." The third change Boyce suggested was the adoption of a creed or "abstract of principles" to guide a theological institution. His suggestion was realized when the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was founded and took Boyce's "Abstract of Principles" as its creed. As quoted in John A. Broadus, *Memoir of J. P. Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893): pp. 120-21.♦*

Upcoming Events of Interest

- **2007 Deacon/Elder Seminar.**

Date: *Saturday, March 3, 2007*. Meeting times TBA (check website)

Place: *Covenant Reformed Baptist Church, Warrenton, Virginia*

Speaker: *Dr. Sam Waldron, Professor of Systematic Theology, Midwest Center for Theological Studies*

Topics:

- **“Why and How Your Church Should Hold to the 1689 Confession of Faith”**
- **“Issues Threatening the Doctrinal Heritage of the 1689 Confession of Faith”**

For more info and updates: www.covenantword.org

- **Paul Washer Preaching Mission in Charlottesville March 23-25.**

Paul Washer, Executive Director of HeartCry Missionary Society and one of the most downloaded preachers on the internet, will be in Charlottesville for a Preaching Mission at Jefferson Park Baptist Church in Charlottesville.

Paul's prophetic sermon at an Alabama Baptist Youth Evangelism Conference, dubbed "Shocking Youth Message Stuns Hearers" has been downloaded tens of thousands of times online. Washer will preach at Jefferson Park Friday-Sunday evenings at 6:00 pm, March 23-25 and Sunday morning at 10:45 am.

- **NT Conference: “The Last Twelve Verses of Mark: Original or Not?”**

This conference for scholar and pastors will examine the textual issues relating to the ending of Mark's Gospel. It will be held April 13-14, 2007 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. Featured speakers include Darrell Bock and Daniel Wallace of Dallas Seminary; Keith Elliot of the University of Leeds, UK; and Maurice Robinson and David Black of SEBTS.

Registration cost is just \$25. For more info: www.sebts.edu/ntconference

- **Baptist History Symposium at FBC, Charleston, SC, August 1-3, 2007.**

A diverse group of Baptists will meet for a "Baptist History Celebration" at the historic First Baptist Church of Charleston, SC on August 1-3, 2007. The three-day symposium will mark the 300th Anniversary of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, the first in America. There will be a diverse range of speakers, including Michael Haykin, Tom Nettles, and John Thornbury. For more info, go to www.baptisthistorycelebration.org.♦

News of Interest

- **SBCV tops BGAV in attendance for second straight year.**

For the second consecutive year, attendance at the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV)'s Annual Meeting exceeded that of the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV). According to Baptist Press, the SBCV registered nearly 1,300 messengers for its 10th anniversary meeting in Roanoke, November 13-14. The BGAV, on the other hand, registered just over 1,000 in attendance at its Virginia Beach meeting. The SBCV, with nearly 500 member churches, increased its annual budget by 6.1%, from \$8.2 to \$8.7 million. The BGAV, with over 1,000 member churches, minimally increased its budget goal from \$14.1 to \$14.2 million. The focus of the SBCV gathering was the marking of the group's ten years in existence under the theme, "More Beyond" and featured addresses by Morris Chapman and Paige Patterson. The 2006 BGAV theme was "A Voyage of Discovery" and featured the preaching of Leith Anderson. Conversations over the shrinking budget again dominated the BGAV business sessions as messengers reversed Budget Committee proposals to reduce the amount of financial support given to Bluefield College.

- **Former BGAV and BTSR staff member speaks out for gay marriage.**

In the November 7, 2006 election, the Commonwealth of Virginia voted on a marriage amendment to the Virginia Constitution. The amendment was supported by evangelical Christians as a move to protect the traditional definition of marriage (as between a man and woman) and to safeguard Virginia laws from the intrusion of activist judges. The amendment passed statewide by a margin of 58% to 42%. In the days leading up to the vote, Warren Hammonds, a former BGAV and BTSR staff member, was a vocal opponent of the amendment's passage.

In a "Virginia Currents" public television program aired before the election, Hammonds appeared on a panel with four "religious leaders." Hammonds and Richmond Rabbi Jack Spiro represented those who opposed the amendment, while Gerald Glenn, Bishop of New Deliverance Church in Richmond and Jeff Caruso, a Fredericksburg Roman Catholic, represented those supporting the amendment.

According to transcripts of the broadcast, Hammonds was introduced as "an ordained Baptist minister, formerly with the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond." Hammonds' comments on the program revealed his open support for same sex marriage and his liberal views of Scripture.

After a clip showing a rally of conservative pastors in support of the amendment, Hammonds was asked for his reaction:

Hammonds: My reaction is that they think they can give us one side of the issue and that one side, the way they present it, makes it sound like the only side. And from a Christian background, I say that it upsets me when I hear that there seems to be just one side of the faith argument. For my faith speaks of justice and reconciliation, and my faith speaks of other values that we didn't just hear on that screen. So, that's why I'm not in favor of the amendment.

Another interesting exchange took place after a clip showing a lesbian couple in a long-term gay marriage relationship. The host asked for Hammonds' reaction:

Hammonds: I love that picture of that couple. It affirms all I believe about marriage. You're right. It's not a man and it's not a woman. But it's two people who have committed together, who show a loving, mutual respect for each other, (who are) finding joy in living with each other.

I would use the same words to describe their marriage, their union as I do with (other) couples, heterosexual up to now, that I've chosen to marry.

Is that a definition of marriage? Absolutely! Between those two people. Is it a definition of marriage by the state? Well, of course not, because we do not recognize it.

Host: Warren, I need to clarify something here. I'm not sure how you can assert that opinion when you are an ordained Baptist minister...how can you say, as a Baptist minister, that this is OK?

Hammonds: Those issues aren't near as clear as you just put it. For one Jesus says absolutely nothing about it, and Jesus actually had several occasions where he could have cleared things up and didn't say a word. So we don't have any voice from Christ who is the founder of the faith that I am from.

And the Bible is a very complex book, group of books, and I don't think we can boil it down to simple phrases, to plucking this scripture or that scripture, as some of the proponents of the amendment do for religious reasons.... I'm so much against the amendment for my religious reasons.

Later in the program questions from callers were taken. One courageous caller directed her question to Hammonds, incredulous that a self-described Baptist could take such a radically unbiblical position:

Caller: My question is directed to Rev. Hammonds. He's the Baptist minister. My question is, if you are a Baptist minister and you say you follow the Word of God or you read the Bible.... In the Bible it clearly (speaks) in Genesis (of) Adam and Eve, and throughout the Bible (it) talks about how homosexuality is sinful and that it is not approved by God. So, are you saying that the Word of God is wrong?

Hammonds: No, I'm not saying that the Word of God is wrong. I'm saying that the Bible can be interpreted in many different ways.

Caller: But it's very plain and it's very specific about this issue. So, it seems like you're having a hard time grasping that, and it's very specific. There's no "if"s, "and"s or exceptions about it.

Hammonds: That is your belief about the Bible. But the Bible cannot be clearly interpreted at some points. The Bible does not speak of loving, mutual homosexual relationships. So when this caller is referring to the Biblical Scriptures that seem to condemn homosexuality, those verses are not talking at all about our current understanding, the modern day understanding of what homosexuality is as orientation. It doesn't. The Biblical writers weren't conceiving of a loving, mutual same-gender relationship as we now know from the video that was shown just a few minutes ago of the couple that's been together 40 years. So, I affirm the Bible.

*Analysis: As a private citizen, Warren Hammonds certainly has a right to express his political and religious beliefs. We can even appreciate his candor in honestly expressing his opinions in a public forum. Virginia Baptists, however, should be very alarmed at the opinions he has expressed. Hammonds served from 1997 till 2004 as Dean of Students at the Baptist Theological Seminary (BTSR). He left BTSR in 2004 after a conflict with President Graves over interpretation of the BTSR code of ethics (see the October 2, 2004 **Richmond Times-Dispatch** article, "Director Leaves Seminary Over Code on Gays"). Prior to his service at BTSR, Hammonds served for six years as a BGAV funded campus minister in the Lexington, Virginia area and then from 1994-1997 on the BGAV staff as Associate Director of the Division of Campus Ministry.*

- **Declining Influence of State Baptist papers**

Just a few years ago in Baptist life, the state Baptist paper wielded enormous influence as gatekeepers of information about Baptist institutions, agencies, and activities. With the rise of the internet, weblogs, and instant information, state Baptist papers, like secular newspapers in major American cities, are facing declining circulation. Often the news items in state Baptist papers are dated mere hours after they go to press with information most readers can find online.

Two recent marks of this decline may be noted. First, Virginia's *Religious Herald* recently decided to alter its publication format to an every other week production in order to save costs. Second, Tony Cartledge, Editor of the *Biblical Recorder* in North Carolina, recently resigned that position in order to take a teaching post at moderate Campbell Divinity School. Cartledge's departure is certainly related to pressure from doctrinal conservatives in North Carolina, but it also reflects the fact that these editorial positions are no longer as desirable as places of influence as they once were. See in this regard, Michael Clingenpeel's decision to leave the *Religious Herald* for the pastorate.

- **The “New Baptist Covenant” and the Religious Left**

Former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton announced plans for the Celebration of a “New Baptist Covenant” on January 9 at the Carter Center in Atlanta. They were joined by over 80 leaders from 40 Baptist organizations. These leaders plan to convene a convocation in Atlanta January 30-February 1, 2008 which they hope will draw over 20,000 participants. Among the 80 participants was a who's who list of moderate SBC dissidents, including David Currie, James Dunn, Bill Leonard, Walter Shurden, and Daniel Vestal. Also attending the meeting was BGAV Executive Director John Upton and former BGAV President Beth Fogg.

Moderate-liberals have often criticized the SBC for its close association with the religious right and the Republican Party. One wonders why they did not apply these same standards to involvement in this “New Baptist Covenant”—a statement, by the way, not based on common confession but on commitment to the social gospel. Does this timing of this 2008 convocation have anything to do with the 2008 Presidential election and the fact that Hillary Clinton is a leading candidate for the Democratic nomination? Are those on the religious left willing to be used by the Democratic Party to woo middle of the road evangelicals?

- **Succession Difficulties in SBC Mega-churches**

Reports of church conflict have surfaced at two leading SBC churches following the departures of their longtime pastors. Steve Gaines succeeded Adrian Rogers at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis in July 2005, after Rogers had served the church for 32 years and was instrumental in the conservative resurgence in the SBC. Rogers died in November 2005. Gaines had come under criticism among church members in his brief tenure, most recently over his handling of a staff member accused of sexual abuse. Baptist Press reported on December 20, 2006 that the President of neighboring Mid-America Seminary, Michael Spradlin, had called for Gaines to resign.

Baptist Press also reported on January 24, 2007 the abrupt resignation of David Cox, the new Pastor at the First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Florida. Cox had succeeded Bobby Welch after his 32-year tenure in the congregation. Welch led the SBC “F.A.I.T.H.” Sunday School evangelism strategy and served two terms as SBC President (2005-06). Cox came to the FBC-Daytona staff as co-pastor and heir apparent to Welch in 2003. He assumed the senior pastor role in August 2006. Cox had apparently come under fire for introducing Rick Warren influenced “Purpose Driven” strategies in the congregation.♦

Book Review: *God, Marriage, and Family*

Andreas Kostenberger, with David Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundations* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004): 448 pp.

This work is a general handbook on the Biblical view of Christian family covering a wide range of topics. Southeastern Baptist Seminary colleagues Kostenberger, a Biblical scholar, and Jones, an ethicist, offer both Biblical exegesis and practical application. The authors approach this subject with the conviction that “the current cultural crisis with regard to marriage and family is at the root a spiritual crisis” (p. 19). They are firmly committed to the authority of Scripture.

The book consists of thirteen chapters (seven of which Kostenberger is the primary author and six of which Jones is the primary author). It opens with a review of current challenges to the Biblical understanding of family and proceeds to survey marriage and family in the Old and New Testaments. Two chapters are devoted to special issues related to family, covering topics like infertility, birth control, adoption, and child training. Chapters are then devoted to singleness, homosexuality, divorce and remarriage, and qualifications for church leadership, respectively. The closing chapter offers a concluding synthesis. The book also includes a “Personal and Group Study Guide” (pp. 301-52) presenting not only discussion questions but also suggested answers to those questions. In reviewing the content of the book and its ambitious objective to offer a comprehensive look at the subject of Christian family from a Biblical perspective, perhaps it would be helpful to consider three aspects of the work: (1) the unique emphases and interpretations offered; (2) some points of controversy; and (3) some overlooked matters.

First, what is unique about this book? At the outset one must commend the authors for their commitment to integrating serious Biblical scholarship with practical applications for the church. The book offers an examination and discussion of some matters that are not always given attention in evangelical circles. This includes, for example, an evangelical perspective on the general question of the legitimate use of birth control and the particular question of the moral permissibility of various forms of contraception (in chapter seven, pp. 129-154, with special contributions from Mark Liederbach). While arguing that both natural [like abstinence] and “barrier” methods of birth control are morally acceptable for Christians, the authors discourage sterilization and “the pill” [due to its potential to act as an abortifacient], though taking care to avoid “dogmatism” (see pp. 133-42).

The book also is to be commended for its dedication of an entire chapter (nine, pp. 173-200) to issues relating to the Biblical view of singleness. The authors note that the Bible sees marriage as “the general expectation” and singleness as “the exception” (p. 198). They also point out, however, that “universal singleness” will be the “final state” of humanity at the end of the age (p. 198).

Another unique segment of the book is a section in chapter eight on spiritual warfare and the family (pp. 162-72). Rarely is this emphasis discussed outside of charismatic circles. Relying on exegesis of Ephesians 6, the authors attempt to take seriously the spiritual attacks against healthy and loving marriages and families. They point to sexual temptation, unresolved anger, and husbandly insensitivity as instruments in Satan’s toolbox to harm the family. They also outline strategies for combating these attacks including family worship, family traditions, and wholesome activities.

Having highlighted a few of the unique aspects of the book, we turn to look at some points of controversy. No one could write a book that covers this many practical, ethical topics and please all readers! The authors are to be commended for being unapologetic in staking out conservative, Biblical positions. They argue, for example, for a complementarian view of male and female roles in marriage and family, and they strongly oppose both homosexual practice and cohabitation as falling short of God's ideal for family.

On some controversial issues, however, the authors are more reluctant to stake out clear stands but give wide latitude to liberty of conscience. In the chapter on divorce and remarriage, for example, the authors present a survey of the key Biblical passages and on the range of evangelical interpretations of these passages. They conclude:

Unless one is very certain, therefore, that Scripture absolutely prohibits divorce and remarriage under any and all circumstances (only remarriage in the case of the death of one spouse excepted), it would seem wise to err on the side of mercy and to allow for divorce and remarriage in the cases of adultery and abandonment, lest people are held to a standard that may be even higher than the biblical one (p. 257).

Not all conservative Christians will agree with the latitude that the authors offer on the issue of divorce and remarriage. In direct relation to this, not all will agree with the weight given the perspective that "divorced (and remarried) men would not necessarily be excluded from consideration as pastors/elders or deacons" on the grounds that "people should generally not be held to a stricter standard just to be 'safe' and 'conservative'" or that the standard for church leaders is "spiritual maturity and moral uprightness" and not "perfection" (p. 265). What some see as freedom, others will see as indicative of compromise.

Finally, we address some overlooked matters. Certainly, the scope of this work is ambitious and given the ever-developing nature of the field, no study will ever be exhaustive. Though the authors are to be highly commended for addressing so many subjects with such precision and thoroughness, there were a few topics one would like to have seen addressed in the book. For one, the book does not offer a perspective on education in the Christian family and an evaluation of homeschooling, private schooling, and public (government) schooling. For another, it would have been helpful to hear the authors evaluate and interact with the current "patriarchy" movement (as in the ministries of Douglas Wilson, Doug Phillips, R. C. Sproul, Jr., etc.) among conservative Christians and the move toward practical family integration in church life as currently advocated by some Christian ministries.

In conclusion, this book is a real treasure trove of thoughtful exegesis and ethical application on the Biblical family. It seamlessly integrates Biblical studies and Christian ethics. The authors are to be commended for a very helpful contribution to individual believers, Christian families, and the church. The thoughtful pastor will also profit from a close reading of this book as he forms his own positions and policies that will guide his personal counseling and teaching ministry within the church. □

JTR

Book Review: *Baptist Roots in America*

Samuel Waldron, *Baptist Roots in America: The Historical Background of Reformed Baptists in America* (Simpson Publishing, 1991).

Waldron, now Professor of Systematic Theology at the Midwest Center for Theological Studies in Owensboro, Kentucky, wrote this booklet to provide a historical context for the rise of Reformed Baptist Churches in America in the last thirty to forty years. The work has three primary chapters and a conclusion:

I. The Rise of Particular Baptists in America.

Waldron's basic thesis is that the early Baptists (pre-1900) were Calvinistic (Reformed), coming out of the English Particular Baptist movement and the Great Awakening. Their guiding confession of faith was the Second London Baptist Confession (1689), a Baptist revision of the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration. This Confession was adopted (along with two extra articles) by Baptists in America in the influential Philadelphia Baptist Confession of 1742.

II. The Decline of Particular Baptists in America.

Next, Waldron asks, "What happened?" (p. 9). How did early Calvinistic Baptist churches become so doctrinally shallow and Arminian? The author traces seven major factors:

1. The American, Democratic Ethos.

"There was something in the political philosophy associated with the American Revolution which was profoundly antithetical to Calvinism. There was something in the Baptist alliance with the likes of Thomas Jefferson which did not bode well for the future" (p. 10).

2. Revivalism.

3. Methodism.

4. Inclusivism.

By this Waldron means an effort to downplay the doctrinal divide between Arminian ("free will") and Reformed Baptists.

5. Hyper-Calvinism.

The "Hard-shell" views of men like Daniel Parker (1781-1844) led to "passivism in the Christian life and the rejection of evangelistic effort" (p. 22), placing the doctrines of grace in a distorted light.

6. Modernism.

Liberalism began to creep in after the Civil War, and by the 20th century "it was a flood of heresy among Baptists" (p. 25).

7. The Fundamentalist movement.

Waldron notes three harmful tendencies here: (1) dangerous reduction of focus to a few "fundamentals" that downplayed doctrines of grace; (2) domination of Dispensational Premillennialism; (3) Keswick focus on "higher life," a modification of Wesleyan perfectionism rooted in "a Pelagianizing view of sin."

Some of the ill byproducts here included "Easy-believism" and the teaching of "Carnal Christian Theory" (p. 28).

III. The Rise of Reformed Baptists in America.

Waldron cites the popularity of the writings of C. H. Spurgeon and A. W. Pink; the founding of Westminster Seminary; and the Banner of Truth's reprinting of Puritan literature as influences that have led to the contemporary reclamation of the Particular Baptist tradition in America.

IV. Concluding Observations.

Waldron closes by describing "the counter-cultural character of the Reformed Baptist movement in America" (p. 41). He urges Baptists to beware the dangers of "anti-creedalism" which "opened the door to Arminianism and made it impossible to shut the door against Modernism" (p. 43). He also warns against falling into "hyper-Calvinism": "The cult of five-pointism must be avoided" (p. 45).

Waldron notes that although Calvinists (and Calvinistic Baptists, in particular) promoted and encouraged religious liberty in America, the rise of the American democratic spirit, in turn, led to the decline of Calvinism in American Churches (Baptists included).

In his closing call for contemporary Reformed Baptist churches to be "counter-cultural" Waldron notes the exposure of "a fundamental tension between the spirit of American democracy and the spirit of Biblical Calvinism" (see pp. 41-43).

He continues: "Together with much that was good, sound, and even Biblical, there was mixed the little 'leaven' of a political philosophy fundamentally the same as that which spawned the French Revolution. Though long restrained and moderated by the vigorously Christian environment, in which it was planted, it blossomed in an increasingly general hostility to biblical Calvinism. Now its fruit is ripening in an America largely dominated by secular humanism and its radical separation of church and state."

Reformed Baptists, according to Waldron, must face the fact that "they are a counter-culture." Any insistence "on the electing grace and authoritative law of an absolutely sovereign God must seem un-American to their neighbors! In a certain sense it will be!" He adds, "Only sovereign grace can make a 20th century American a Christian."

Waldron concludes: "Any church, therefore, determined to preach and practice the whole counsel of God in America today must be ready for war. It must be ready to be called many things by those who believe in autonomous freedom and worship at the shrine of individual liberty! Even those who should know better may be alienated by the spirit of the age. Yet the war is not un-winnable.... The secret of winning the war is not compromise with the spirit of this age. It is uncompromising obedience to God which holds the promise of his blessing."

Closing Reflection:

Samuel Waldron has given us some keen insights on understanding not just the state of Baptists in America but of contemporary evangelicalism in general. Every Virginia Baptist, in particular, should read this booklet. True to Waldron's thesis, Calvinistic Virginia Baptists (born of the merger of Regular and Separate Baptists in the early 19th century) loosened their doctrinal convictions in the post Civil War era. One can clearly trace this if he goes back and reads the articles in the *Religious Herald*, the newspaper of Virginia Baptists. J. B. Jeter (1802-1880) was the last Calvinistic editor of the *Religious Herald*. With the transition to R. H. Pitt a period of doctrinal decline was hastened. Pitt used the pages of the *Herald*, for example, to speak out against the adoption of the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1925 (the SBC answer to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy). "Freedom" became more important than "purity." "Anti-creedalism" has subsequently led to liberalism. Waldron offers a compelling analysis of the Baptist trajectory, and a stirring challenge for faithful living in these days.

JTR

Editor's Note: EFN does not usually present book reviews on works published more than three years in the past. We made an exception for this booklet, published in 1991, however, since we believe the information in it will be of great interest and edification for our readers.

Paradosis

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

James Barnett Taylor (1804-1871) was born in England, but his family immigrated to the United States and eventually settled in Mecklenberg County, Virginia. Taylor was converted at age 13 and began preaching at 16. He was licensed in 1824 and ordained in 1826 at the Sandy Creek Baptist Church in Charlotte County. He served as Pastor of Second Baptist Church in Richmond from 1826-1839, as Chaplain at the University of Virginia in 1839, and as Pastor of Third Baptist Church in Richmond from 1840-1846. In 1846 he became the Corresponding Secretary for the newly formed Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, a post he held till his death in 1871. From his early manhood Taylor kept a detailed spiritual journal. Below is an excerpt from that diary from 1823 when Taylor was a mere 19 years of age. In it we see a young man trusting in God’s sovereignty, mortifying sin, and striving toward godliness.

*Source: George B. Taylor, **Life and Times of James B. Taylor** (Philadelphia: The Bible and Publication Society, 1872): pp. 27-29.*

From the Journal of James B. Taylor (1823):

1823, July 24. In reviewing the goodness of God as it relates to my own experience, I find abundant reason for the exercise of adoration and trust. That I may be more particularly reminded of my high obligation, arising from the circumstances of mercy in which I have been or may hereafter be placed, I propose to note from time to time my exercises of mind and the dispensations of providence and grace with which I may be visited. And may the Spirit of the Most High enable me to record with faithfulness all that appertains to my own experience and his condescending mercy!

December 16. Business called me to a public sale, where persons of all descriptions were assembled. There the pernicious effects of ardent spirits were evidently to be seen. Vice raised its unsightly form and religion was openly despised. O sin! what hast thou done? With what feelings of gratitude should such scenes inspire me! In the deepest humility and the most adoring wonder I should propose the question, “Who maketh thee to differ?” Why do I not plunge with headlong precipitancy into the commission of the grossest crimes, and drink in wickedness as the ox drinketh water? Were it not for the restraining grace of God I am sure I should be as bad as the worst, for about my nature there are propensities peculiarly my own. Oh that the goodness of God may lead me to the higher exercise of repentance and love! Oh that my heart could be completely under the influence of Bible principles that every grace of the Holy Spirit may flourish there, and all my life be an exemplification of their power!

December 17. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Although I am professedly a disciple of the Lord Jesus, there is a strange measure of forgetfulness and ingratitude cherished by me which ought to fill me with shame and penitence of soul. Did the Son of God condescend to be born of a woman and to be cradled in a manger? Did he pass a life of privation, persecution, and want? Was he a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Let my mind be drawn to the contemplation of this subject. Mark the deep distress that agitated his bosom in the garden of Gethsemane when he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood! Behold him on his knees, agonizing in prayer to his Father that if it were possible the cup might pass from him! In pursuing the Saviour I find him bowed down by a still heavier load of suffering, heightened by a thousand aggravated circumstances. I see him arraigned before the bar of Pilate, charged with guilt and numbered with transgressors. I see him scourged, spit upon, and buffeted. I see him crowned with thorns and hear him derided, insulted by every species of contumely. I see him at last led away to be crucified. Even the few followers he had have forsaken him and fled. His blessed hands and feet are nailed to the tree, and in anguish not to be conceived he gives up the ghost. And all this that I may never die! Truly I ought to love him with all my heart and supremely delight in his precepts. Oh that my

heart, under the influence of the dying love of Jesus, may run out in all its powers in love to holiness! May grace reign there, through righteousness unto eternal life, that I may die to sin, and show forth the praise of Him who hath called me from darkness into marvelous light.

December 18. Heard two discourses to-day, and at night endeavored, though imperfectly, to recommend religion to the people in a short exhortation. When I consider the repeated manifestations of Divine goodness in my behalf, how can I refrain from trying to promote his praise on the earth? But pride, accursed pride, so mingles itself with everything I do that I am afraid I shall injure rather than benefit the cause I espouse. Before I rise pride attends me, whilst I am up it follows me, and when seated I find it still with me. When on my bended knees, and indeed in every duty I perform, whether public or private, this abominable principle rises, and often, like a rushing torrent, would seem to carry every vestige of correct feeling away. In thus looking at the frailty of my nature and the sin attending my best efforts, I can magnify the name of the Lord for provision of grace abounding through the obedience and mediation of his Son. Pardon can thus be dispensed without money and without price, for the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin.♦

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