

Evangelical Forum Newsletter



Vol. 4, No. 2
Spring 2007

Reflections: The Virginia Tech Shootings and Ministry

Monday, April 16—the day of the shootings at Virginia Tech—will long be remembered in the Old Dominion as a time of shock and sadness. No doubt many Pastors wrote articles, preached, taught, or offered counsel through conversation about this event. Indeed, there was much to consider about life, theology, and spirituality.

The killings were a rude reminder of the reality of the depth of sin in the human heart. Sadly, there was little attention given to serious Christian reflection at the politically-correct, university-hosted Convocation on Tuesday, April 16. At that event a Muslim imam, a young Buddhist woman, a female Rabbi, and a mainline Lutheran campus minister all spoke. No evangelical Pastor had a part in the program, even though evangelical Protestants are the largest demographic in the Virginia Tech community and the Commonwealth. The Buddhist spokeswoman made the unbelievable assertion that “we are born into this world with an inherent good nature” and “we must restore our faith in humanity.” No one uttered a word about the reality of original sin. The Lutheran minister told the audience that one of their purposes for coming together was to “drink deeply from religious streams.” Note the plural. The “all is one” spiritual philosophy was the only view on display. He also affirmed what he called “the sovereignty of life over death” but said nothing of the sovereignty of the God of the Bible. This event exposed the spiritual weakness of the secular university. When the God of the Bible is abandoned, how do men mourn, worship, comfort, and understand?

Another interesting development was the rush to provide supporting ministry from many religious bodies (including both the BGAV and the SBCV). The BGAV proudly reported its quick supply of trained “counselors” while the SBCV kept even with the supply of “disaster relief” meal preparation teams. *World Magazine* reported that the

small town of Blacksburg became a mini-Mecca not just for journalists but also for religious people. Franklin Graham showed up, as did many well-meaning Christians who were reportedly going up to grief stricken but annoyed students announcing, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.”

Yes, responding to help fellow believers in times of crisis has Biblical roots. In Acts 11:29, for example, we read how “the disciples, each according to his own ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Jerusalem.” One wonders, however, if the efforts to rush onto the scene in Blacksburg were legitimately Biblical or motivated by efforts to prove relevancy in a media saturated “crisis.”

The best help for the students, faculty, and town-folk at Blacksburg would not come in what could be sent into that community on the days after Monday, April 16, but in whether or not there were Christ-centered, Bible-preaching and teaching churches already planted in that community before April 16. Did they have local churches equipped and ready to speak relevant words of comfort and interpretation to those in need? Virginia, like every other place in our nation, has a need for authentic, Biblical churches. Pastors and laymen, events like this are a wake-up call for us to be ready to stand forward in all circumstances “to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15 KJV).◆

JTR

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: Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall 2007.

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

2007 Evangelical Forum Annual Meeting

The sixth annual Evangelical Forum will be held on Friday-Saturday, October 5-6, 2007 at Jefferson Park Baptist Church in Charlottesville, Virginia.

For the first time our meeting will spread out over two days. We will continue our recent tradition of having both a gifted Scholar and a veteran Pastor as the plenary speakers.

2007 Theme: *Baptists and the Bible*

Featured speakers:

Dr. Michael Haykin, Former Principal and Professor of Church History and Reformed Spirituality, Toronto Baptist Theological Seminary, Toronto, Canada. Recently named Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Church History at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

Dr. Haykin is a noted Baptist Church Historian. He has published scholarly articles in such journals as *Scottish Journal of Theology*, *The Evangelical Quarterly*, and *The Banner of Truth*. He is the author of numerous books, including most recently, *Defense of the Truth: Contending for Truth Yesterday and Today* (Evangelical Press, 2004) and *Jonathan Edwards: The Holy Spirit in Revival* (Evangelical Press, 2005).

Gregory N. Barkman, Senior Pastor, Beacon Baptist Church, Burlington, North Carolina.

Dr. Barkman has over 30 years of experience in pastoral ministry in a single congregation, having founded the Beacon Baptist Church in Burlington, North Carolina in 1973. Beacon is "Reformed in Doctrine, Baptist in Polity, Expository in Preaching, and Evangelistic in Attitude." Pastor Barkman also has a popular radio ministry called "The Beacon Broadcast."

Schedule:

Friday (October 5):

- 7:00 pm Session I, featuring messages from Dr. Haykin and Pastor Barkman.
- 9:00 pm Session I concludes.

Saturday (October 6):

- 9:30 am Session II, featuring messages from Dr. Haykin and Pastor Barkman.
- 11:30 am Session II concludes. Lunch break on site
- 1:00 pm Closing session: Open dialogue with speakers.
- 2:00 pm Meeting concludes.

Hospitality:

Any out of town guests who are attending the conference are invited to receive complimentary housing on Friday evening and breakfast Saturday morning in the home of a local believer. Just complete the following request form and return it by September 1, 2007. Note: The form will also be available online at www.jpbc.org/ef.html. There will also be a list of recommended hotels for those who wish to make their own local accommodations.



Hospitality Request Form 2007 Evangelical Forum

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Church affiliation: _____

Number of people in group (families are welcomed!): _____

Fill out and Return:

**Jefferson Park Baptist Church
Attention: Evangelical Forum
2505 Jefferson Park Avenue
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903**

Church Discipline: Baptist Past and Present

By David Roach

The Past: Church Discipline in Baptist History

Prior to the last century, Baptists “practiced church discipline on a large scale” and regarded the practice as a normal part of church life, according to church history professor Greg Wills.

Between 1781 and 1860, for example, “Baptists excluded more than 40,000 members in Georgia alone,” Wills, director of the Center for the Study of the Southern Baptist Convention at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, noted in a 2001 essay in *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life*, edited by Southern Baptist pastor Mark Dever.

“Across the nation in this period they excluded between one and two percent of their membership every year. But the number of church trials was yet greater. Only about half of the offenders received excommunication. Baptists on average disciplined between three and four percent of their membership,” Wills wrote.

Baptists generally exercised discipline at monthly Saturday conference meetings, Wills noted. At such meetings church members accused offenders of specific sins. The accused usually confessed guilt. But when the accused either denied guilt or was absent, the church appointed a committee to investigate the matter. The committee reported its findings at a subsequent meeting and recommended a verdict and sentence. The members then voted on the verdict and the penalty if the offender was found guilty.

Churches generally imposed either admonition or excommunication on offenders who were found guilty, Wills noted. Many excommunicated members maintained their piety and were eventually restored to church membership, he wrote, noting that Baptists followed the process outlined in Matthew 18 for church discipline.

“Baptists sought to restore offenders to holiness,” Wills wrote. “They believed that church discipline helped believers overcome sin and temptation.”

Several documents from past generations of Baptists confirm that discipline was the norm among Baptists in general and Southern Baptists in particular through the 19th century.

A Summary of Church Discipline, written by the Charleston Baptist Association in 1774, argues that the Bible prescribes three “censures” for “rebellious and unworthy members”—rebuke or admonition, suspension and excommunication. The various censures should be applied depending on the severity of an offense, according to the document.

The goals of church discipline are “the glory of God,” “to purge the church and preserve it from infection,” to clear the church of immorality and false doctrines and “the good of persons excommunicated,” the document says.

William B. Johnson, the first president of the SBC, argued in an 1846 essay that Scripture demands church discipline.

“In relation to this part of the discipline of a church (the exclusion of disciplined members), it is important to understand, that a proper attention to its exercise is indispensable to the welfare of the body,” Johnson wrote. “And further, that by the faithful, vigilant supervision of the rulers of the church and the duty of the members, the necessity of its exercise may be, as far as possible, prevented.”

Patrick Hughes Mell, a former president of both the SBC and the Georgia Baptist Convention, presented a detailed summary of the discipline procedure for both public and private offenses in his 1860 treatise *Corrective Church Discipline: With a Development of the Scriptural Principles Upon Which it is Based*.

“The views which are presented in the following pages are such as have been held by the Baptist churches from time immemorial,” Mell wrote in the preface. “The Author attempts to do no more than to exhibit the sentiments of our Fathers, and to defend them by showing that they are sustained by the Scriptures.”

The Present: Church Discipline on the Rise

Increasing numbers of Southern Baptists are claiming that church discipline is not merely a relic of the past. Some churches have instituted a process drawn from Scripture of correcting and, if need be, eventually dismissing unrepentant members for public sins. The ultimate goal of the discipline process is repentance and restoration of sinners, the churches say, citing Baptists of past centuries as examples of how church discipline can benefit individuals and churches.

The return to church discipline has been gaining momentum for several years. “The decline of church discipline is perhaps the most visible failure of the contemporary church,” R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., wrote in a 2001 essay in a book titled *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life*, edited by Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. “No longer concerned with maintaining purity of confession or lifestyle, the contemporary church sees itself as a voluntary association of autonomous members, with minimal moral accountability to God, much less to each other,” Mohler observed. “[W]ithout a recovery of functional church discipline -- firmly established upon the principles revealed in the Bible -- the church will continue its slide into moral dissolution and relativism,” Mohler wrote.

Jeff Noblit, pastor of First Baptist Church in Muscle Shoals, Ala., agreed with Mohler’s call for church discipline and said he has seen it practiced successfully firsthand. Eighteen years ago when Noblit became pastor of First Baptist, he developed a conviction that church discipline is biblical and builds the purity of the church. Noblit’s conviction stemmed from reading the Bible and Baptist writings from past generations, including the New Hampshire Confession, the First and Second London Confessions and the works of Charles Spurgeon.

Responding to Noblit’s leadership, First Baptist began to practice church discipline according to the process outlined in Matthew 18. The first step in church discipline is for one person to confront a sinning church member privately, Noblit said. If the individual does not repent, the confronting person should take two or three others with him and confront the sinning church member again, the pastor continued.

If the sinning church member still will not repent, Matthew 18 says to take the matter before the

church, Noblit said, noting that First Baptist does this in Sunday School departments initially. “In a church our size (approximately 1,000 active members) ... we tell it to a Sunday School class or maybe a Sunday School department,” Noblit said. “And that group of people will begin to appeal to that person. If they refuse to listen to that group, then the Bible says to bring it before the church.”

When a discipline case proceeds to the point of coming before the entire church, Noblit shares with members the steps already taken and mentions the name of the offender and the sin in question. The church subsequently votes on the member’s removal. “We exhort the body to not be gossiping or spreading strife, but to pray,” Noblit said. “As the Scripture says, if they see this person or have fellowship with them, they’re to humbly appeal to them to repent and be restored to the body.”

In most cases discipline never advances to the point of a vote to dismiss the offender from the church because people generally repent early in the process, Noblit said. “Fortunately there is repentance very often,” the pastor said. “The great majority of times things can remain covered. The Scripture says it’s a blessing to cover sin. It doesn’t mean you excuse sin, but you deal with it confidentially and privately. And that is discipline. But it is fairly common in the life of our church to publicly dismiss someone -- it has happened numerous times.”

When a person is dismissed from the congregation, the dismissal is never permanent and the offender may always repent and be restored, Noblit said, adding that restoration is the goal of discipline. One of First Baptist’s many examples of restoration is Scott Carrier, who was dismissed five years ago for drunkenness. After a process of recovery, he was allowed back into the church’s membership and is an active member today.

Carrier said he deserved the discipline and that God used it to change his life. “It was genuine repentance on my part, and after a time I was allowed back into the church,” Carrier told Baptist Press. “One of the major things [discipline] did for me was humble me. It also let me know I was coming back to something worth coming back to. I was coming back to something that’s valuable and not to be toyed with and not to be sinned against.”

Being disciplined was “grievous” initially, Carrier continued, but brought a “peaceable and good fruit.” “I can honestly say today my life is better than it’s ever been. I’m closer to God than I’ve ever been. My marriage is in better shape than it’s ever been, and God’s done some remarkable things in His grace.”

Carrier strongly disagrees with those who say churches should not practice discipline today. “I know a lot of people in this day and age don’t like this idea (church discipline), but it was a valuable thing in my life,” he said.

Al Jackson, pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, Ala., is another pastor with a conviction that church discipline is essential for a congregation to serve God obediently. Jackson has pastored Lakeview 27 years but led the church to practice discipline only after a providential encounter on a mission trip to Latvia about 10 years ago.

While leading a conference for Latvian ministers, Jackson was asked by a Latvian pastor how his church practiced church discipline. “I had to hang my head in shame and say, ‘My brother, I’m sorry but we don’t. And I know better because I’m very familiar with what the Scripture teaches,’” Jackson

recounted. He came home determined to obey God and preached a three-part sermon series on church discipline, in which he explained the purpose of church discipline, who should be disciplined and the process that should be used. Following the series a woman approached Jackson and told him that her husband was committing adultery and seemed like a candidate for the discipline process. After several visits to the offender, first by Jackson and then by Jackson along with other leaders, the man refused to stop his adultery.

Jackson brought the matter before the deacons next, who agreed to proceed with discipline after prayer and discussion. A letter to the offender informed him that the deacons would recommend to the church that it break fellowship with him if he failed to respond to the letter. The man never responded, so the church held a special business meeting following a Sunday morning service. At the meeting Jackson reviewed the biblical guidelines for church discipline and presented the name of the man to be voted on but did not disclose the specific sin.

“Then I took a deep breath and we voted,” Jackson said. “And it was a lot harder than I thought it would be. We voted by lifted hands, and I think there were six no votes (out of approximately 1,000 members present).” In the aftermath of the vote at least one member was confused, thinking that the church’s decision would result in the man going to hell. But after clearing up the misunderstanding, the church maintained unity.

The offender never repented, but Jackson said maintaining holiness in the church and obeying the Bible made the matter a success. He advises other churches that are thinking about beginning church discipline to obey God but proceed carefully and slowly. “My caution would be: Build consensus and work with your deacons to do this,” Jackson said. “... In order to be unanimous in a decision like this, you’ve got to have godly lay leaders who desire above all else to please God.”

Pastors who are new to their churches should be especially cautious when attempting to institute discipline because a proceeding without consensus could result in a church split or the pastor being fired, Jackson said. “If you can’t build consensus among your lay leaders, you need to just be patient and stay put until you can build consensus,” he said.

Hershael York, pastor of Buck Run Baptist Church in Frankfort, Ky., also has practiced church discipline on several occasions in the churches where he has pastored. Most recently he led Buck Run to rebuke publicly a man who embezzled approximately \$250,000 from his employer to fund a gambling addiction. The man repented and now praises church discipline as an instrument of grace in his life.

York, who also serves as Victor and Louise Lester Professor of Christian Preaching at Southern Seminary, advises pastors to teach their churches about discipline over time and realize that a loving church always seeks to deliver its members from sin.

“Get people to understand that our goal is always restoration,” York said. “Our goal isn’t a clean church role. Our goal is restoration. Get them to buy into that concept. Then I think you can really bring them on board.”◆

This article comes from the merging of two posts on church discipline that appeared in Baptist Press on March 26, 2007.



Book Review

Michael A. G. Haykin, *Jonathan Edwards: The Holy Spirit in Revival* (Darlington, England/Webster, New York: Evangelical Press, 2005): 227 pp.

There does not appear to be any diminishing of interest in the life, ministry, and thought of Jonathan Edwards among evangelical scholars. Haykin, Principal of Toronto Baptist Seminary, sees this book as filling the void of “a compact book-length study of Edwards as a theologian of revival” (p. xiv). Haykin makes excellent use of Edwards’ primary writings to exposit the great early American theologian’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit in theology and practice.

Summary of content:

The book begins with a sketch of Edwards’ life and legacy. This is a very helpful biographical introduction for those less familiar with the great colonial theologian. Next Haykin examines Edwards’ view of the Holy Spirit in the treatise *An Humble Attempt*. He concludes that Edwards stressed the link between the atonement and the pouring out of the Spirit. So, “a central purpose” of “God’s atoning work in Christ is to purchase the Spirit” (p. 41). The Holy Spirit, thus, is not only “the chief agent in the *application* of the benefits secured by Christ’s redeeming work, but he is *himself* the chief benefit procured” (p. 41).

Next, Haykin examines Edwards’ view of the Holy Spirit in the *Faithful Narrative*, his account of the Northampton revival. Haykin concludes that “the most important pneumatological aspect” of the *Faithful Narrative* is the use of the phrase “the pouring out of the Spirit of God” (p. 50). Edwards saw the revival as an extraordinary experience, not a part of normative Christian activity. Haykin next focuses on *Charity and Its Fruit*, arguing that Edwards saw the greatest work of God as saving grace and not extraordinary spiritual experiences. Haykin argues that Edwards was a cessationist: “The communication of the Spirit to the church during the apostolic era involved the giving away of a variety of extraordinary gifts to believers of that day. Unlike the Spirit’s indwelling, however, these gifts were but temporary” (p. 69). Though Edwards’ postmillennial eschatology envisioned “a future golden age for the church within the realm of history,” including a rich outpouring of God’s Spirit, this “would not include a restoration of the extraordinary gifts” (pp. 71-72).

Haykin then offers a historical sketch of “the transatlantic evangelical revival” of the late seventeenth century (pp. 75-89). He especially notes “the disfigurement of this revival” by the spiritual “enthusiasm” of some (p. 84). As the chief example, he cites the excesses of James Davenport, whom revival opponent Charles Chauncey described as the “wildest Enthusiast I ever saw” (p. 86). Edwards, thus, had to answer both the “pious zealots” like Davenport and the critics like Chauncey (p. 89). Haykin then looks to *Religious Affections* for Edwards’ views on the qualities of authentic spirituality. The mark of this authentic spirituality is not to be found in what is “unusual and extraordinary” (p. 92) but in the following five traits:

(1) a Christ-centered spirit; (2) a turning from sin; (3) a great regard for Scripture; (4) heartfelt assent to Christian truth; and (5) a humble love for God (pp. 97-100). Such views led Edwards to stress the centrality of Word-centered preaching ministry. Haykin then proceeds to discuss Edwards' description of his wife Sarah Edwards' spiritual experiences in *Some Thoughts*. What does one make of the descriptions of Sarah's somewhat extraordinary spiritual experiences of 1742? Haykin notes the suggestion that Sarah experienced a "nervous breakdown" (p. 114). He warns against misinterpreting Edwards' descriptions of his wife's spiritual experiences. He stresses Edwards' remark that her "joy was never attended 'with the least appearance of any laughter or lightness of countenance,'" nor did her experiences lean "towards sinless perfection" (p. 117). Rather, her experiences "were proven genuine by her refusal to look for God in any other place but his divine Word" (p. 117).

Returning to *Religious Affections*, Haykin notes twelve signs of authentic "heart religion": (1) understanding that genuine spirituality begins with God; (2) love of God merely for who God is; (3) love for God's holiness; (4) a spiritually enlightened mind; (5) deep-seated conviction; (6) evangelical humility; (7) understanding that spirituality begins with conversion but does not bring immediate perfection; (8) a Christ-like character; (9) a tender heart, sensitive to what displeases God; (10) understanding of divine beauty; (11) a longing for more of God; and (12) visible fruit in Christian living and practice in the world (pp. 127-35).

In the closing chapter, Haykin presents Edwards' views on prayer. In his theology of prayer, Edwards was most close to the Puritan tradition. For Edwards, prayer does not change God's mind but "furthers the glorification of God," placing those who pray "in the proper frame of mind and heart to receive answers to their requests. Prayer changes those who pray, preparing them to be the sort of people through whom God can work" (p. 139). The book concludes with three appendices: (1) a brief study of Edwards' direction for judging individual spiritual experiences; (2) an essay on Edwards' views on beauty; and (3) an essay on the spirituality of Edwards' daughter, Esther Edwards Burr (pp. 153-77).

Closing Evaluation:

Though one might well paraphrase Ecclesiastes to say that "of the making of books on Edwards there is no end," we can be thankful for this particular contribution by Haykin. His study is careful, thoughtful, and convincing. Haykin succeeds in presenting Edwards as "pre-eminently the theologian of Revival" (p. 1; in quoting Martin Lloyd-Jones). The practical importance of this book for the evangelical church is also quite clear. Haykin acknowledges that "the theological mantle of Edwards has often been disputed," asking, "Who are his true heirs?" (p. 149). Indeed, Haykin argues for a cessationist perspective in Edwards contra those in charismatic circles who might justify their emphasis on extraordinary spiritual experiences as Edwardsian. According to Haykin, Edwards would not, for example, have supported "the Toronto Blessing" (p. 150). Nevertheless, the church has great need for learning from Edwards' "Calvinistic Augustinian vision of revival" (p. 151).◆

JTR

Book Review

John Blanchard and Dan Lucarini, *Can We Rock the Gospel? Rock Music's Impact on Worship and Evangelism* (Darlington, England/Webster, New York: Evangelical Press, 2006): 267 pp.

The authors' brief answer to the title question would be, "No, we cannot and should not rock the gospel." Apologist John Blanchard was among the first to sound a warning siren about the use of rock music in Christian songs in his 1983 book *Pop Goes the Gospel*. Lucarini made waves more recently in his 2002 book *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement*. In this work the authors combine forces to critique the widespread acceptance in evangelical circles of rock-influenced musical styles in Christian ministry.

The authors begin by acknowledging that theirs is largely a minority opinion in evangelical circles: "What was once outside is now inside" (p. 14). Contemporary Christian music has won the day in most churches. The authors are insistent, however, that rock music is not just another style and that it brings with it significant negative implications for the church.

One of the premier negative implications of the contemporary Christian music movement has been division in the body of Christ: "Rock music is a stumbling block and a scandal to many Christians today and it is dividing the church" (p. 21). Numerous testimonies are cited of sincere Christians (of all ages and generations) who have been deeply bothered in conscience by the use of worldly (rock) music in worship services in an attempt to transform the traditional to the contemporary. For them the use of rock music necessarily promotes "worldliness, irreverence, strong association with the deeds of darkness, sensuality, and the use of rock as a mystical new worship experience" (p. 32). Blanchard and Lucarini write on behalf of these "conscientious objectors" (p. 33).

To demonstrate these negative associations, the authors offer a review of the history of secular rock and roll music. Recognizing the diverse roots of rock and rejecting a simplistic "'All rock is African jungle music' line" (p. 41), the authors nevertheless trace the roots of rock to sensuality and anti-authoritarian impulses. Rock music reflects man's sinfulness.

Blanchard and Lucarini also attempt to define what uniquely distinguishes the rock musical style in all its diverse sub-genres, asking, "what do we mean when we use the phrase 'rock music'?" (p. 51). They identify the following traits: repetition, a driving and rhythmic beat, and a high volume. They conclude that using rock in God's service is "spiritually perilous" (p. 62). Key to their argument is the contention that musical style is not morally neutral. One who is a "music universalist" like Saddleback's Rick Warren argues that music is amoral. The authors of this work, however, contend that this view "effectively sets up man, not God, as the measure of all things good and righteous" (p. 63). The key question is not what men like but what God approves in worship.

The authors next trace the spiritual and moral associations of secular rock and roll music. They note the influence of the occult, Eastern religions, and paganism. Christian bands may change the lyrics, but can they cannot prevent the audience from "soaking up" the "anti-Christian philosophies and values carried along by the message of the music" (p. 103). The rock musical style is also inextricably connected with sexual immorality. One does not have to dig too deeply to uncover sexual immorality as part and parcel of the appeal of secular rock music, and it is vividly reflected in the often-debauched lifestyles of its most prominent performers. Beyond this, rock music is also associated with drug use, rebellion and blasphemy.

With this review of rock's history and character complete, the authors raise five red flags about the use of rock music in the church. First, they warn that the use of the rock musical style necessarily

“encourages worldliness” regardless of how the lyrics are cleaned up (p. 144). Second, they accuse the “rock idiom” of encouraging “exhibitionism and self-promotion, even in Christian circles” (p. 150). Christian rock has a tendency to produce “stars instead of servants” (p. 151). Third, they contend that the use of rock music in Christian ministry has tended to mix worship and evangelism with “a stimulating form of entertainment” (p. 157). Fourth, they charge the rock idiom with a tendency to “water down the holiness of God and the cross of Christ” (p. 162). Finally, they again note that rock “widens the generation gap and splits churches into musical camps by age group” (p. 165).

Having offered a disapproving critique of rock music, Blanchard and Lucarini next try to build a positive picture from Scripture of what is required in godly music. They note the Biblical witness that “God’s praises were not to be sung in a shoddy or haphazard way,” but great care was to be taken to “meet certain criteria” (p. 187). Close examination of the Psalms and Chronicles reveals that worship leaders could not do their own thing musically. Music in Old Testament worship was “rigidly controlled” (p. 188). “The broader lesson is that neither in music, nor in any other area of life, has God given us license to ‘do what is right in our own eyes’” (p. 188). In the New Testament, Ephesians 5:18-21 and Colossians 3:16 are the key passages. Among the lessons learned from these passages is the need for variety (psalms, hymns, spiritual songs) and the emphasis on vocal singing. For Paul, “music is not to be used to satisfy our personal desires and preferences” (p. 191). A final striking point is also made. Nowhere in Scripture do we find Israel or the church attempting to use secular music to appeal evangelistically to the heathen: “All the music references are to the church at worship; there are none to the use of music in evangelism” (p. 193).

As they draw to a close, the authors press the readers to examine their motivations. He asks Pastors and worship leaders to consider why they have desired to use the rock idiom. The authors reject the pragmatic defense of rock music in Christian ministry for its ability to draw a crowd, communicate the gospel to contemporary people, or produce evangelistic “results.” They also once again attack the notion of rock music’s moral neutrality. In addition they challenge the popular assumption that the church has always freely borrowed from secular musical styles (see especially pp. 204-10). In contrast to the pragmatic, the authors encourages leaders to ask if the music they choose helps them in things like hearing God’s Word more clearly and in encouraging holiness and separation from the world’s ways. In the final chapter, the authors ask the readers to consider the balance between the liberty or freedom of Christian conscience and the personal responsibility of living as captive to the Word of God: “Simply put, *what you think must be controlled by nothing other than what God says*” (p. 249).

The authors are to be commended for once again addressing this very important issue facing the evangelical church today. Many, if not most, evangelical churches and leaders have fully embraced the use of rock-influenced music in their ministries. The arguments presented in this book regarding the negative implications associated with the rock idiom is compelling. Evangelical pastors, musicians, and worship leaders should prayerfully read and consider the warnings presented by Blanchard and Lucarini as they go about the task of leading God’s people in the musical aspects of Christian worship. ♦

JTR

News and Analysis of Interest

- **Morris Chapman on Calvinism and Elders**

Steve Lemke recently posted a series of questions and answers with Morris Chapman, President and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, on the blog for New Orleans Seminary's Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry (see www.baptistcenter.blogspot.com). This interview was also published in the May 2007 issue of *SBC Life*. Among the topics Morris addresses are the rise of Calvinism and Elder leadership in SBC churches.

Chapman identifies the resurgence of Calvinism in the SBC as a byproduct of the SBC inerrancy debate:

The resurgence of Calvinism is largely a reaction against the shallowness of Baptist doctrinal instruction during the era of moderate-led seminaries coupled with a strong interconnection of the principle of sola scriptura ("scripture alone") with Reformed doctrine during the Protestant Reformation. Since the principle of sola scriptura resurfaced during the inerrancy debates of the Conservative Resurgence, it is only logical that its relationship with Reformed doctrine would also emerge. An additional reason for the resurgence of Calvinism is that a wide-open Arminianism under the guise of Open Theism must be refuted. Generally, where a heresy surfaces its closest theological polar opposites will appear and gain a relatively wide following.

He repeats the often-heard caution against Calvinistic Pastors entering unsuspecting churches, noting: "One danger is that pastors are tempted to accept church pastorates in churches that are not Calvinistic, and then strive to drive them into the Calvinistic camp, thereby destroying an otherwise strong and healthy church."

While acknowledging that being a Calvinist does not preclude a warm heart for evangelism, Chapman also suggests: "Another danger is that the truly warm-hearted, 'evangelical' Calvinists often are misunderstood by second-generation successors, potentially resulting in a decline in evangelism and missions."

Though Chapman's attitude toward Calvinistic Southern Baptist appears softer and delivered with more nuance than some past statements, he still firmly rejects the concept of what he calls "elder rule" in SBC churches. The SBC leader makes the bold claim that, "The concept of elder rule is based upon the interpretation of a single verse in 1 Timothy 5 that is not a clear and compelling interpretation." From his perspective, Chapman expresses the belief that "Elder rule" is not compatible with congregational church government, and it "dilutes the Pastor's leadership as the visionary leader."

Though some may find Chapman's comments discouraging, it should be noted that, at the least, matters of doctrine and Biblical church government are coming under serious discussion at the highest levels of denominational life.

- **SBC International Mission Board issues new personnel guidelines on charismatic gifts and baptism**

The trustees of the SBC's International Mission Board meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, from May 7-9, 2007 issued revised guidelines for mission candidates on the exercise of charismatic gifts (tongues and private prayer language) and baptism. Previous revision of these guidelines sparked controversy in 2005. The newly approved guidelines read as follows:

GUIDELINE ON TONGUES AND PRAYER LANGUAGE

GLOSSOLALIA

- 1. The New Testament speaks of a gift of glossolalia that generally is considered a legitimate language.*
- 2. The New Testament expression of glossolalia as a gift had specific uses and conditions for its exercise in public worship.*
- 3. In terms of worship practices, if glossolalia is a public part of the candidate's current practice and it does not fall within the definitions of Parts 1 and 2 above, the candidate has eliminated himself or herself from being a representative of the IMB of the SBC.*

PRAYER LANGUAGE

- 1. Any spiritual experience must be tested by Scriptures.*
- 2. New Testament teaching is that prayer is to be made with understanding.*
- 3. The board is not persuaded that ecstatic utterance as a prayer language is a valid expression of the New Testament teaching on prayer.*
- 4. Therefore, if an "ecstatic utterance as a prayer language" is a part of the candidate's current practice, the candidate has eliminated himself or herself from being a representative of the IMB of the SBC.*

APPLICATION

- 1. This guideline is not retroactive.*

2. Any exceptions to the above guideline must be reviewed by the staff and the Mission Personnel Committee.

GUIDELINE ON BAPTISM

THAT each candidate's baptismal experience be examined, during the application process, in light of the "Baptist Faith and Message" statement and the points listed below:

"BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE": ARTICLE VII – BAPTISM Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

POINTS TO BE COVERED DURING THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS

1. The individual

a. Believer's baptism by immersion.

Baptism by immersion follows salvation.

b. Baptism is symbolic, picturing the experience of the believer's death to sin and resurrection to a new life in Christ.

Baptism does not regenerate.

2. The church

a. Baptism is a church ordinance.

Baptism must take place under the authority of a local church that practices believer's baptism alone, embraces the doctrine of the security of a believer's salvation and does not view baptism as sacramental, regenerative or essential to salvation.

b. A candidate who has not been baptized under the authority of a local church, which meets the standards listed above, is expected to request baptism in his or her Southern Baptist church.

3. The candidate

Candidates are responsible for requesting their home church assist them in meeting this doctrinal commitment to the above points.

4. *The consultant*

While the candidate consultant should have a working knowledge of many denominational groups, he or she is not expected to investigate every church.

APPLICATION

1. *The guideline is not retroactive.*

2. *Any exception to the above guideline must be reviewed by the staff and the Mission Personnel Committee.*

- **Geoff Hammonds, former SBCV leader, takes over leadership at the SBC's North American Mission Board**

Geoff Hammonds was unanimously elected as the new President of the NAMB by its trustees on March 21, 2007. Of interest for Virginia Baptists is the fact that Hammonds comes to this post from service as senior associate director with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia. Moderate Virginia Baptists are likely concerned about the election of Hammonds and how the NAMB will relate to the BGAV in the future. Questions have also been raised as to how the NAMB under Hammonds' leadership will relate to church planters who are Reformed in their theology and who do not embrace current methods in church growth strategy.

- **Changes at the *Religious Herald***

The *Religious Herald*, newsjournal of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, has taken perhaps the final steps away from its traditional Southern Baptist connections. Facing declining circulation, shrinking revenues, and diminishing relevance, the *Herald* has gone to a bi-weekly publishing schedule. With the April 19, 2007 issue the *Herald* also announced it has entered into a partnership with three other moderate news operations: the *Baptist Standard*, voice of moderate Baptists in Texas; the *Word & Way*, voice of moderate Missouri Baptists, and the *Associated Baptist Press*, the moderate alternative to the SBC-controlled *Baptist Press*. One practical result will be the omission of reporting on the SBC from its official news service, *Baptist Press*. In the initial issues, for example, there were no articles from the SBC-sympathetic *Baptist Press*. This means moderates in Virginia will continue to be fed a steady diet of anti-SBC rhetoric in the *Herald*, but they will likely have already picked up their news from a variety of alternative internet sources, including blogs and daily online feeds from both BP and ABP, days before the print version of the *Herald* lands in their mailbox. These changes are unlikely to arrest the sliding influence of print publications like the *Herald* and will continue to hasten their transformation from legitimate news operations into public relations and promotion organs. ♦

Quick Quotes

- **J.C. Ryle on “the diligent use of scriptural means” in sanctification:**

Sanctification, again, is a thing which depends greatly on a diligent use of scriptural means. When we speak of ‘means,’ I have in view Bible reading, private prayer, regular attendance on public worship, regular hearing of God’s Word and regular reception of the Lord’s Supper. I lay it down as a simple matter of fact, that no one who is careless about such things must ever expect to make much progress in sanctification. I can find no record of any eminent saint who ever neglected them. They are the appointed channels through which the Holy Spirit conveys fresh supplies of grace to the soul, and strengthens the work which He has begun in the inner man. Let men call this legal doctrine if they please, but I will never shrink from declaring my belief that there are no ‘spiritual gains without pains.’ I should soon expect a farmer to prosper in business who contented himself with sowing his fields and never looking at them till harvest, as expect a believer to attain much holiness, who was not diligent about his Bible reading, his prayers, and his use of his Sundays. Our God is a God who works by means, and He will never bless the soul of that man who pretends to be so high and spiritual that he can get on without them.

--From Ryle’s spiritual classic, *Holiness*.

- **Charles Spurgeon on Preaching as “The Thermopylae of Christendom”:**

The pulpit has become dishonored. It is esteemed as being of very little worth and of no esteem. Ah, we must always maintain the dignity of the pulpit. I hold that it is the Thermopylae of Christendom. It is here the battle must be fought between right and wrong—not so much with the pen, valuable as that is as an assistant—as with the living voice of earnest men, “contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.” In some Churches the pulpit is put away, there is a prominent altar but the pulpit is omitted. Now the most prominent thing under the Gospel dispensation is not the altar which belonged to the Jewish dispensation but the pulpit. “We have an Altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle!” That Altar is Christ but Christ has been pleased to exalt “the foolishness of preaching” to the most prominent position in His house of prayer. We must make sure that we always maintain preaching. It is this that God will bless. It is this that He has promised to crown with success.” Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” We must not expect to see great changes nor any great progress of the Gospel until there is greater esteem for the pulpit—more said of it and thought of it.

--From Spurgeon’s sermon “Preaching for the Poor,” January 25, 1857.

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

Evangelical Forum Newsletter



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On-line at www.jpbc.org/ef.html.

Paradosis

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

The Old Virginia Baptists, Revivals, and “the axe of discipline”

In Robert Baylor Semple’s *History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia* (originally published in 1810; extended and revised by G. W. Beale in 1894) there are numerous references to the practice of church discipline among the old Baptists of Virginia.

Semple especially stresses the exercise of church discipline after a season of spiritual revival or renewal among the early Baptists.

For example, of the October 13, 1792 meeting of the Dover Association at the Bruington meeting-house, Semple writes:

By then it appeared that in the Dover District the harvest was past and the summer ended. Coldness and languor were generally complained of. **The great revival had now subsided and the axe of discipline was laid at the root of the tree. Many barren and fruitless trees were already cut down. In many churches, the number excluded surpassed the number received.** The Association, however, was full. Great crowds attended the preaching, and it was doubtless a happy season to God’s children (emphasis added, p. 124).

In describing the history of the Grafton Church in York County, Semple explains:

They had in the year 1805, under the united labors of Elders Gayle and Wood, one of the most heavenly revivals; not less than about 330 or 340 were baptized. **After the revival they had a winnowing season. Many that seemed to be somewhat proved to be nothing.** Yet there is still a large and respectable church (emphasis added, p. 151).

The assumption seems to be that after a season of revival there would always be a season of “winnowing” or testing to see if the professions of faith were genuine. If there was no fruit, then “the axe of discipline was laid at the root of the tree.” What can we learn about revivals and integrity from the old Baptists?◆

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