

Texas Baptists Committed

August/September 1995

TBC RALLIES TO EMPHASIZE MARY HILL DAVIS OFFERING

Texas Baptists Committed will sponsor our regular fall Convention Update Dinners starting September 11. These are annual meetings around the state where we explain the ministry of Texas Baptists Committed and give an update regarding this year's annual BGCT meeting.

In the past, I have spoken at most of these meetings and then a prominent pastor has shared why they are a part of Texas Baptists Committed. Some have given a history of the SBC controversy and why they are for keeping the BGCT committed to traditional Baptist principles.

This years meetings will have a different focus. The TBC part of the program will still be a "Convention Update," but then the featured speaker will focus strictly on the mission needs

of Texas Baptists and the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions.

Why are we changing our format? We believe our work at Texas Baptists Committed can be just as successful by promoting the Baptist General Convention of Texas and its ministries as we would be talking about problems in the SBC.

We want to be seen as a group of Texas Baptists truly committed to Jesus Christ, and to the BGCT and its institutions and ministries. That is our mission statement. If people understand the great things being done by Texas Baptists and the challenges we also face as Texas Baptists, they will not want the BGCT to lose its current focus on missions.

We are asking several Texas Baptist De-

nomination Leaders to speak regarding the Mary Hill Davis Offering at out rallies. By doing so, they are not endorsing our organization. We would expect them to speak at a meeting of "Southern Baptists of Texas" or "Baptists With a Mission," (the two organizations in Texas who publicly state their desire to change the focus of the BGCT), if they were asked to speak on missions, starting new churches, world hunger, or some other ministry related, non-political topic of importance to Texas Baptists.

Watch for invitation letters in the mail regarding the rally nearest you. Encourage your friends to come learn more about the BGCT and the mission needs of Texas Baptists.

CONVENTION UPDATE DINNERS REVEAL STRENGTH OF TBC

This is the fourth year for *Texas Baptists Committed* to sponsor "Convention Update Dinners" across the state. A look at where we are having these dinners and where we have had them in the past, reveals the strong support TBC has among traditional Texas Baptists.

It also makes you wonder how Walt Carpenter could write in the *Texas Baptist* (a fundamentalist newsletter) the following in reference to churches in Texas, North Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky: "The 'flagship' churches in these states want nothing of the moderate state conventions but are firmly tied to the SBC. So while things may look bleak now, there is bright light at the end of the tunnel."

This year we will have dinners or lunches at quite a few "flagship" Texas churches: the First Baptist Churches in Gladewater, Sanger, Abilene, Dimmitt, Richardson, and The Woodlands. We will also be at Baptist Temple, San Antonio; Highland Park, Austin; Central, Carthage; Shadow Hills, Lubbock; Calder, Beaumont; and several other churches we are finalizing at print time.

Over the past three years, we have held dinners and lunches in association with the following First Baptist Churches: Austin, Amarillo, Midland, San Antonio, Waco, San Angelo, Brownwood, Stephenville, Crockett, Tyler, Longview, Cleburne, Lewisville, Duncanville, Garland, Waxahachie, Plainview, Canyon, Muleshoe, San Marcos, Corpus Christi, Sulphur Springs, Brownfield, Levelland,

Dickinson, Lexington, Bryan, and College Station.

We have also met in Columbus Avenue and Calvary in Waco; Ridglea West, Birdville and South Hills in Fort Worth; Calvary, Garland; South Main, Westbury, Trinity and Easthaven in Houston; Shearer Hills, Trinity and First Mexican in San Antonio; Southland and Harris Avenue in San Angelo; Alliance in Lubbock; Austin Heights in Nacadoches; Immanuel in Paris; and Second in Corpus Christi.

That is a pretty impressive group of "flag-

ship" churches.

What does this mean? It means that Texas Baptists Committed is accepted, respected, and supported by many mainstream Texas Baptists. We are proud of that because our only reason to exist is to support a traditional Baptist General Convention of Texas focused and united on winning our state and world to Christ within the context of historic Baptist principles and practices.

To all the above churches, we are grateful!

Texas Baptist Committed ANNUAL BREAKFAST

featuring

Dr. Buckner Fanning

Tuesday, November 14, 1995

7 a.m.

**La Villita Assembly Hall
San Antonio**

A MATTER OF
PERSPECTIVE:
Tradition is
very important
to me

By
David R. Currie,
Coordinator

On Wednesday, June 7, 1995, I had the tremendous honor of conducting the funeral service for my Uncle Floy, my Uncle David Floy Currie. I was named after him. He was my Dad's identical twin brother. Uncle Floy was named after his grandfather, David Currie, who came to Paint Rock (30 miles from San Angelo) in 1879.

The name David is a part of Currie tradition. My oldest son is named David Lance. **Tradition is very important to me.**

I worked hard preparing my message for Uncle Floy's funeral. I spoke of the reunion in heaven with Daddy, Uncle Bill, Uncle Herbert, Uncle Willard, Aunt Ruby, Aunt Mary, and on and on. I mentioned that Daddy had probably already introduced Uncle Floy to Don Drysdale, Roy Campanella, Billy Martin and many other baseball players. (And now they are with Mickey Mantle, whose picture is on my office wall, and who was the greatest of them all, much sooner than my heart was ready to accept. But it is wonderful how God healed and touched Mickey before his death and the honesty with which he shared his journey over the last year.)

I spoke of Uncle Floy's life of grace. I mentioned his continuing water pistol fight with the postman (up until his death at 87 years of age), of his driving through the bank deposit window backwards, and of his always keeping candy in his pickup to give children.

I mentioned his contentment of living in the same town all his life, of he and Aunt Lois's 63 year marriage, of their living in the same home all those years, of his over 50 years of service as Sunday School secretary and of the Currie family's involvement in the church. In looking at the church's history, there are many years when the treasurer, training union director, WMU director, and Sunday School secretary were all kin to me. **Tradition is very important to me.**

I did not prepare any remarks for the cemetery. Yet when I stood at the head of his casket, I could not help but think and remark about how meaningful it was to me that Uncle Floy was being buried in the same cemetery as his grandfather and

grandmother, father and mother, and on the same row with his brothers and sisters. **Tradition is very important to me.**

Shortly after Uncle Floy's funeral, I got up in the middle of the night thinking about how important my Baptist heritage is to me. I went and reread the history of First Baptist Church, Paint Rock. I pulled a "Currie History" file I had and read again about my great-great-grandfather Robert M. Currie.

He was the first Currie to come to Texas in 1856. He settled on the Cibolo Creek, Wilson County. He was a Southern Baptist preacher. According to the Texas History Collection at Baylor University, he served the Cibolo church thirty years. He also served Stockdale, Marsalina, Sardis and Salem churches.

He was a charter member of the San Antonio Baptist Association and was elected its first Moderator, and "continued to be elected at every term at which he was eligible, until his bearings failed him." (I know, some of you think my bearings have already failed me!)

Reading about him reminded me that my Baptist **tradition is very important to me.**

Being a Baptist is very important to me. I am always sad when I hear of another young pastor who has become a Methodist or Presbyterian minister (it is happening more than many realize) because they are so tired of the SBC controversy.

Baptist traditions are important to me. To this day, my voice breaks and tears well in my eyes when I read about our Baptist founders and the price they paid for religious liberty and soul freedom. The Baptist traditions about the priesthood of all believers and local church autonomy are very special to me.

The Bible is the inspired, authoritative Word of God for me and no one better tell me otherwise or tell me how I have to interpret it.

I share all this personal history to say this: for all of us who value our family traditions and our Baptist traditions, what has happened in the Southern Baptist Convention is very painful. My guess is many of you reading this are struggling with these same mixed feelings.

Being able to live 26 miles from my Mothers house; being able to still walk the land where my father, grandfather, and great-grandfather walked and worked; still banking at the bank my other grandfather served as president of over 30 years — these things are important to me, and important for me to share with my children.

Being a Baptist is just as important to me. I could not, and will never be, anything but a Baptist!

If you are like me, tradition is important

to you; being a Baptist is important to you. Therefore it is truly painful and difficult to deal with the realities we currently face.

The problem for me is this: I am finding that for me to be faithful to my Baptist traditions I cannot remain faithful to the Southern Baptist Convention. I cannot send my money to the seminaries where Al Mohler and Paige Patterson are president and feel that I am being faithful to my Baptist roots. I cannot send my money to the SBC Christian Life Commission where I used to serve on staff, without feeling that I am showing disrespect for all the courage shown by Roger Williams, John Leland, George Truett, and other Baptist giants of religious liberty.

The Southern Baptist Convention has rejected my treasured Baptist traditions. My "traditions have all been messed up." If I am faithful to the name Southern Baptist with my tithes and offerings, I feel I am being unfaithful to my Baptist traditions!

For me, I have finally had to come to the following decision. My commitment to Jesus Christ and being a Baptist means that I am going to remain loyal to my historic Baptist principles and practices, i.e., traditions. I cannot be loyal to the Southern Baptist Convention because to do so is to be disloyal to the principles of the Bible as I interpret it, and to the principles my great-great-grandfather, great-grandfather, grandfather, father, and their wives, and my aunts and uncles, believed in.

I have signed a form at my church (whose regular giving plan supports SBC causes and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship causes about 50-50), indicating I want none of my Cooperative Program gifts to go to any Southern Baptist Convention agency. The portion of my gifts that goes beyond my local church and the BGCT now goes to CBF. I give my mission offering to the BGCT or CBF.

It was not an easy thing for me to do. When I was a youth minister, the pastor I served with is now on the foreign mission field with the SBC Foreign Mission Board. I have other friends serving with the SBC Foreign Mission Board as well.

For all of you reading this and struggling with the same issue, I pray for your wisdom, courage, and a sense of God's peace.

I have made my decision. It is my decision, not a position of *Texas Baptists Committed*. I am at peace after a long struggle. I will always be a Baptist, but please do not call me a Southern Baptist anymore.

Tradition, (the authority of scripture, the priesthood of all believers, local church autonomy, religious liberty and soul freedom,) is too important to me.

Paige Patterson labels 'weak' states out of step with conservative SBC

HOUSTON (ABP) — Kentucky, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia are four “weak” states that have not yet fallen into line with the Southern Baptist’s new conservative leadership, according to seminary president Paige Patterson.

Even in those states, however, “time is on the side” of conservatives as reforms instituted by national leaders trickle down to influence grass-roots participation in denominational affairs, he said.

Patterson, an architect of the SBC’s conservative juggernaut, assessed the state of the SBC in an interview published in the July issue of *Texas Baptist*, a newspaper edited by conservative leader Walter Carpenter of Houston. Carpenter also is a trustee of the 15 million-member convention’s Home Mission Board.

Baptists in states such as Oklahoma, Arkansas, Ohio, Florida and Georgia “realize better than most that their future is with the Foreign Mission Board, the Home Mission Board and the seminaries over and above what is going on in each particular state,” Patterson said.

Those states are in contrast to others “that have not come to this realization,” he continued. Asked by Carpenter if he was speaking primarily of Texas, North Carolina and Virginia, Patterson replied: “Those and Kentucky are our four weakest states.”

Patterson, since 1992 the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., is credited—along with Texas appeals-court judge Paul Pressler—with launching the movement in 1979 that elected a string of conservative SBC presidents and steered the convention’s agencies and institutions sharply to the right.

Today, “time is on the side of the SBC,” even in the problem states, Patterson mused. The state conventions he described as “not in harmony with the SBC” are “primarily aging state conventions,” he said.

In states such as Kentucky, Texas, North Carolina and Virginia, the Baptist churches that are growing and influential “are not involved with the state convention, and they are committed to

what’s going on in the Southern Baptist Convention,” Patterson said.

These state conventions face a situation they have “no opportunity of winning,” he added. “Eventually they will have to decide whether they are going to decline perceptively or whether they want to be a part of the overall program and grow.”

The four state conventions mentioned by Patterson sent a combined \$40.1 million to the SBC in 1993-94 through the Cooperative Program. That amounted to 28 percent of the total \$142 million the SBC received through the unified giving plan.

Yet moderate Baptists in those states have blocked several attempts to bring the state conventions in line with national conservative reforms.

In response to another question, Patterson blamed the historical influence of Southeastern Seminary for “liberal [Baptist] bureaucracies” in states like North Carolina and Virginia. “It’s also a cause of the crippling of the churches,” Patterson said.

The fact that many Mid-Atlantic churches do not conduct services on Sunday night is not in itself an indication of liberalism, Patterson said, but it is sort of an indication for the lack of vitality in many of the churches on the East Coast. The seminary has contributed to that largely, and it is the reason why 80-82 percent of our churches are either plateaued or declining.”

Three of the four states named by Patterson have an SBC seminary within their borders. Patterson predicted changes at the seminaries will reduce moderate influence at a grass-roots level.

The election of conservative leader Mark Coppenger as president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., “will have a good effect on that part of the country,” he predicted. Similarly, Albert Mohler’s leadership at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., “will mean that they recover their evangelical emphasis there.”

Also, Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, under the leadership of conservative Ken Hemphill, “will gradually

have an effect on Texas,” he said. Hemphill was elected last year, after trustees fired the previous president, Russell Dilday, over his moderate leanings.

Elsewhere in the question-and-answer interview, Patterson praised Mohler and declared that “the worst of the problems” at Southern Seminary are over. “Al Mohler has the brains of Erasmus and the courage of Luther,” he said.

(Erasmus was a 16th century Dutch scholar noted for his pioneer publication of the Greek New Testament. Martin Luther, a German, is regarded as founder of the Protestant Reformation.)

Among Patterson’s other observations in the four-page interview:

—Conservatives in Texas “could learn something from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship,” he said. “In Texas I would have a very strong conservative fellowship. I probably would not start a separate state convention at this time because time is on your side.”

—The SBC’s embracing of the biblical inerrantist position should settle any debate on social issues such as abortion and homosexuality, Patterson said. “Once you agree the Scripture is the inerrant word of God, then your position on issues like these is settled. I have great difficulty on seeing how one could support pornography or the taking of innocent life through abortion.”

—Seminary professors should not be tenured, Patterson said. He noted he is the last faculty member at Southeastern to be granted tenure and that he “probably will renounce that tenure at some future point.”

“What tenure has amounted to across the years has been, in the final analysis, a fortress to protect professors so that they can peddle anything they want to peddle or be as incompetent as they happen to be and still be protected in their jobs. I view that as far more like socialism than capitalism. It is no accident that the remaining bastions of socialism in America are in the universities,” Patterson said.

CO-CHAIR
THOUGHTS
FROM
MAURIECE
JOHNSTON

Texas is a Strong State!

1. The BGCT is strong in supporting missions! Last year Texas Baptists gave the SBC Foreign Mission Board \$10.4 million through the Cooperative Program. We gave an additional \$13.5 million to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Last year Texas Baptists gave the SBC Home Mission Board \$4.1 million through the Cooperative Program and gave an additional \$5.5 million to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

Last year Texas Baptists gave \$2.2 million to the mission efforts of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship \$4.7 million to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions.

That makes a total of \$40.4 million to the Foreign Mission Board, the Home Mission Board, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship,

and State Missions in 1994. That is strong missions giving in my opinion.

And in 1995, gifts to the SBC and CBF are up significantly. Texas Baptists are still giving.

2. The BGCT is strong regarding Baptist polity! Texas Baptists are “strong” Baptists. We understand and practice Baptist polity.

We have not given control of our leadership to a political group. We respect the choices of our local churches and individual Baptists. We understand and practice “local church autonomy” and the “priesthood of all believers.” We honor these Baptist distinctives in several ways.

-Our state convention does not tell a local church how to give its money or where to give its money. We count all gifts to Baptist causes as Cooperative Program gifts.

-We allow churches to designate away from SBC or BGCT causes and still count gifts as CP gifts. In doing so, we are respecting both sides of the SBC controversy.

-Our universities do not instruct their professors regarding what is the “proper and correct” interpretation of a scripture. We allow teachers to teach.

-Our state convention leadership does not have to pass a “litmus test” on their social and political views in order to be

I’m sure you have noted the recent proposals from the BGCT Administrative Committee to alter our financial percentage proposals in order to do what we must do to play “catch up” and begin some 1,400 new churches needed in Texas. Many of us know the pain in this agonizing decision necessary to reach Texas—and ultimately, we hope, provide the future base to do even more for world wide mission causes.

But the decision is a wise one. We have forgotten the critical fact that while Texas is the largest Baptist State convention, our Texas *unchurched population is greater than the combined population of 40 states!* That is a compelling fact that must not be forgotten.

In the face of a dramatically increasing immigration into Florida that necessitates greater SBC dollars for reaching people there, Texans seemed to have forgotten that for years, we have been *falling further and further behind in reaching the massive numbers of unreached immigrants pouring into our own state.* Everyone else seems to be aware of this need. Just last week, I was called by a major state newspaper wanting to know what our Baptist churches were doing to assist in this massive problem that must not be forgotten by Texans.

Continuing urban growth underscores a contemporary imperative need that Texas

hired.

-We still advocate the strict separation of Church and State and hold religious liberty in high esteem. Our Christian Life Commission avoids partisan politics and identification with political parties and seeks to “speak to Texas Baptists,” not for Texas Baptists.

-Our BGCT Executive Board does not endorse candidates for public office or support or oppose appointments made by the Governor of Texas.

-We have not fired any university presidents, Baptist press representatives, or other denominational leaders.

-We have not encouraged Texas Baptists to support everything we do or leave the BGCT if they do not. In fact, we have tried to accommodate the various perspectives of local churches and individuals.

-We operate as an autonomous, independent state convention of autonomous, independent local churches. ***How much more Baptist can that be?***

The fact is the Baptist General Convention of Texas is a strong state convention that has remained focused on the “mission of Texas Baptists.” I am committed to using my influence to encourage Texas Baptists to stay strong and focused. I hope you will join me.

Baptists seem to have forgotten. While we may be the second most populated state in the nation, are you aware that, *while most states average 50 churches per 100,000 people, heavily populated Texas has fallen to less than half that amount: only 24 churches per 100,000 people.* That is a Texas statistic that must no longer be forgotten.

Because of these pressing needs, it isn’t just the Alamo that Texas Baptists need to wake up and remember. Being led in this direction of greater attention to mission causes around us may have been a painful decision for the Administrative Committee and for SBC mission leaders, but it is a necessary wake up call.

We may well have forgotten our own location in the great commission. We well may have forgotten our own need to personally see and deal with fields for harvest at our own doorstep.

We must not only support the convention leadership proposal for Financial reality, we must strongly support our Mary Hill Davis State Mission offering. We might even lead our churches to wake up and remember that we are responsible for reaching our Texas part of the world.

Otherwise, it won’t just be Oly Rolvaag who has a real memory problem.

Think about it!

CO-CHAIR
THOUGHTS
FROM
DEAN DICKENS

Texas Needs The Gospel

You never met Oly Rolvaag. Well, perhaps you met him if you have travelled to Molde, Norway. If you had met him, you likely would not forget him. You see, the interesting thing about Oly Rolvaag is that he forgets. He seems to forget everything and everybody.

For instance, Oly has forgotten his correct house address and actually slept in the wrong house. He has even reported to work at the wrong job. Once, he told a perfect stranger (whom he thought was his wife) that he did not like her hairdo and wished she had left it the way it used to be. Now there is a man who has troubles because of his short memory.

Texas Baptists are moving toward San Antonio having awakened and remembered some serious and critical facts that not only relate to how we do convention business but how we do Kingdom business.

Gander vs. Goose: Let's Drop The Double Standard

Why is the Foreign Mission Board praised for working with other Southern Baptists who want to do missions, while the Woman's Missionary Union is vilified for doing the same thing?

*by Marv Knox, editor Western Recorder
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The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board recently signed a covenant to work with a consortium of Southern Baptist-led autonomous ministries. FMB President Jerry Rankin praised the action. "Here's a group of Southern Baptists who have a heart for a lost world," he said. "We can all be more effective by working together cooperatively."

Three weeks later, the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union announced it will produce study materials for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a group which, organized to do missions after its members felt their voice in the Southern Baptist Con-

vention had been silenced. Morris Chapman, head of the SBC Executive Committee, lambasted the action, calling it "astounding" and predicting it "will be regretted throughout the SBC."

Why the double standard? Is what's good for the gander not good for the goose? The FMB receives praise for wing with other Southern Baptists who want to do missions, and WMU is vilified for working with other Southern Baptists who want to do missions. This is not unique:

The SBC nominating committee recently rejected an SBC-supportive trustee candidate because his church allows members to designate funds to the Fellowship—even though the church still primarily supports the SBC.

Employees at several SBC agencies have been made to feel they will imperil their jobs if they join SBC-supporting churches which allow individual designations to the Fellowship.

Even as the FMB has signed the cov-

enant with autonomous ministries, it has backed away from cooperation with Baptist groups in Albania, where the Fellowship's ministry is prominent.

"Oh, but the Fellowship is competing with the SBC, while other organizations are not," comes the convention response. While some Fellowship money might otherwise go to the SBC, this rationale is nonsense. By the same logic, the organizations which signed the covenant with the FMB are competitors, since the money that goes to support them doesn't go into SBC coffers. Similarly, para-church groups supported by the mega-churches of current SBC leaders are "competitors" with the SBC. If we applied this logic evenly, we would throw out all but a handful of the very smallest SBC churches. And then where would we be?

It's time to quit trying to run the "competition" off the road. The SBC believes Jesus Christ is the only answer for a lost and hurting world. So does the Fellowship. Our real competition is Satan. Let's save our energy for battling the Evil One.

LEAVE THE WMU ALONE: THEY ARE JUST ACTING BAPTIST

by David R. Currie, coordinator

I grew up going to GA camp as a little boy with my mother serving as a sponsor. I went to WMU house parties in Waco. The WMU is why Baptists are mission minded and used to be mission focused, and still would be if this mess had not gotten us off the mission.

I got over being mad about all this several years ago. Personally I want to keep Texas free, support CBF as an individual, and ignore the SBC and what its leaders say and do. Nothing surprises me much anymore.

Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin just ruined my day! **And I am mad!**

Paul Pressler never made me this mad. Paige Patterson never came close. I always figured they would get Russell Dilday sooner or later so that did not make me mad.

But Jerry Rankin has made me angry! Under the guise of "prayer" he writes 40,000 pastors, WMU directors, and other Southern Baptists and urges them to pray that the WMU will not respond to the wishes of local Southern Baptist churches who support CBF. He says CBF is competing for money from Baptist churches. This from a Foreign Mission Board that regularly works with other organizations that raise funds from Southern Baptist Churches, and the FMB even recently contributed \$200,000 of your tithes to one of these organizations.

Leave the Woman's Missionary Union alone. They are the reason the Foreign Mission Board has missionaries. They are a Baptist auxiliary doing what a Baptist auxiliary is supposed to do—respond to the mission needs and desires of local Baptist churches. Mercy, the WMU can sure get in trouble acting like Baptists in this day and time!

DO NOT STOP SUPPORTING UNITY

by David Currie, Coordinator

The track that the Southern Baptists of Texas is seeking to put the BGCT on is the same one followed by the SBC. It does not lead to unity.

We may not be able to keep Texas Baptists unified, but it should not stop us from trying. In Texas, we are trying to maintain unity by respecting two Baptist distinctives: local church autonomy and the priesthood of all believers.

We are doing this by recognizing the gifts of all churches equally, being neutral in regards to giving.

We are doing this by respecting our institutions and our leadership. No one is pressured regarding the local church they attend, or their personal views regarding politics and social issues.

We are doing this by accommodating, (unlike the SBC), those in Texas who do not agree with the direction of the BGCT, by respecting negative designations by local churches to parts of the BGCT budget

and by respecting those churches who are a part of Southern Baptists of Texas who have flipped their mission giving percentages and are giving 64.5% to the SBC and only 35.5% to the BGCT.

In a divisive period of Baptist history, we are striving for unity by following Baptist heritage and principles. We are doing at the state convention level what Charles Wade said in the *Baptist Standard* he was doing in his local church. Dr. Wade said:

"We have simply tried to maintain the mission hearts of our people. Through a strong missions program of CBF and SBC, all Southern Baptists will be able to give gladly to missions and hopefully give more. If we can allow diversity among our people and let them give as they feel led to do, more people will be saved, more churches will be started and more young people trained for seminary."

Well said. That is a unifying, respecting, realistic attitude. Sounds like he should be president of the BGCT!

RICHARD LAND ADMITS THE TRUTH

Current SBC Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard Land told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram that the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission would not remain in Fort Worth despite the desires of current Radio-TV Commission president Jack Johnson. Then he explained why.

Land said that would never happen for several reasons, including tensions between conservatives who lead the national body and the moderates who are in control of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"It seems to me that Texas Baptist can't expect for the national convention to move anything to Texas as long as the Baptist General Convention of Texas is adopting the positions it has," Land said.

The decision to move the radio-TV agency was not made to "punish" Texas Baptist, Land said. But national officials might have been influenced some by their displeasure with the independent Baptist state convention, he said.

BGCT PRESIDENT JEROLD McBRIDE RESPONDS TO RICHARD LAND

I am disappointed but not surprised by the attack on Texas Baptists made by Richard Land, president of the SBC Christian Life Commission. On June 21, Jim Jones of the Fort Worth Star Telegram quoted him as saying, "It seems to me that Texas Baptists can't expect for the national convention to move anything to Texas as long as the Baptist General Convention of Texas is adopting the positions it has." To be quite frank, Texas Baptists are not the kind of people to "expect" anything from the national convention. Texas Baptists are *givers*, not *takers*. The 41 million dollars Texas Baptists gave to the Southern Baptist Convention this past year is ample testimony to that fact.

Mr. Land was correct in labeling Texas Baptists as "independent." In fact any *true* Baptist is independent. That is part of our age old belief in "soul liberty." Governor Clements' former staff member expressed a pork barrel mentality when he stated that national officials might have been influenced some (in their decision to move the Radio-TV Commis-

sion out of Texas) by their displeasure with the independent Baptist state convention. This kind of raw politics that seeks to punish those who do not fall in line may be acceptable in the secular world but it has no place in Baptist circles.

Texas Baptists expressed their "independence" this past year by giving more than 20 million dollars to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program for worldwide causes. Furthermore, Texas Baptists' gifts represented 33% of the total increase in SBC Cooperative Program gifts in 1994. This is the Texas way of expressing cooperation and independence. The two terms are not mutually exclusive. Some of us may be labeled "independent" because we think for ourselves and practice what we preach about soul liberty. In Texas each church and each member is free to give their gifts in cooperation with others as God leads them. This is the Texas spirit! This is the Baptist spirit!

Mr. Land would do well to remember that Texas Baptists averaged giving his Christian Life Commission better than \$3,940.00 every week throughout 1994. Instead of biting the hand that feeds him, he should thank the good Lord for us "independent" Texas Baptists.

*Jerold R. McBride
President
Baptist General Convention of Texas
First Baptist Church
San Angelo, Texas*

REVIEW OF "THE NEW SBC: Fundamentalism's Impact on the Southern Baptist Convention"

By Grady C. Cothen

Reprinted permission of Baptists Today

By David R. Currie,

Coordinator, Texas Baptists Committed

The power of Grady Cothen's book is that it is so intensely personal. While he may have tried to write an objective account of the impact of "takeover of the SBC," the fact is he cannot do so. He was too intimately involved in the Southern Baptist Convention for too many years to write as a bystander.

Grady Cothen was president of Oklahoma Baptist University, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and president of the Sunday School Board. He spent his ministry within the "Baptist system" and therefore writes as a man who watched that which he was part of building being torn down. The pain is evident in his writing.

This is not a weakness, but rather the strength of the book. Southern Baptist Convention leadership today does not cherish, value, or follow our historic Baptist principles and practices. We are a divided people who have lost our focus on the Great Commission. "What might have been" is gone forever. For Grady Cothen, this is intensely personal and painful. He writes on page 23: "The fundamen-

talist capture of the Southern Baptist Convention set the stage for a most difficult period in my life. It introduced a personal nightmare that would last for the rest of my life. These people who were so efficient and ruthless were not in the tradition of Baptists as I knew them."

I would suggest that there are three major emphasis to the book that are very valuable for traditional Baptists.

First, is his emphasis throughout that conservative Christianity and fundamentalism are not one and the same. Dr. Cothen is a traditional Baptist, very conservative theologically. He believes all the fundamentals of the faith. He is not a fundamentalist. There is a huge difference. He writes: "Note that this religion of 'conservatism' bears little resemblance to conservative biblical theology, though it claims to be at one with it."

He agonizes over the fact that the world now cannot distinguish between fundamentalism and conservative Christianity and the impact this has on our Baptist witness. He writes: "The aggressive modern movement to defend the Bible by its so-called friends has

done more damage than all of its enemies." (page 31) He further adds: "One of the serious consequences for the SBC is that it has aroused the ire of multitudes and seriously affected our ability to witness to unbelievers." (Page 46)

Especially insightful is his chapter on the firing of Russell Dilday. He concludes this chapter by writing: "Now, conservative Christianity is once again lumped with fundamentalism. The growing opposition of 'the religious right' on every side is reinforced in its belief that all conservatives fall in the category of fundamentalism." (page 120)

Second, is his deep commitment to religious liberty. Through this reviewer's years of denominational work, I have found that traditional Baptists are most passionate about religious liberty. In fact, I would go so far as to say that while traditional Baptists feel strongly about the authority of scripture without a creed, local church autonomy, and the priesthood of all believers, the strongest passions revolve around religious liberty.

Whether they view themselves as Demo-

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crats, Republicans, or independents, like “high church” worship or old-time Gospel hymns, want an evangelistic sermon every Sunday or like the Gospel message applied to real life situations, all traditional Baptists are passionate about religious liberty and the separation of church and state.

While Cothen devotes a specific chapter to the topic, “Church-State and the Culture War,” he mentions religious liberty and how SBC leaders have abandoned the traditional Baptist position concerning church-state separation in every chapter. He writes of “A New Ecumenism” in chapter 4, where Southern Baptists now cooperate around political “causes and personalities similar to themselves.”

He continues: “For thoughtful and knowledgeable people in the SBC, the politicization of the denomination could only lead to conflict and division. Many of them thought they could envision a public departure from our traditional idea of church-state separation. They did not imagine enough conflict and division, however. From the beginning, it was difficult to determine whether these new cooperative efforts were ecumenical religion or organized partisan politics. If ecumenical, they did not deal with mainstream Christianity. If political, they did depart drastically from our historic positions.” (pages 57-58)

Third, is the recurring comment throughout the book that the SBC is no longer Baptist. Cothen does not use those specific words, but comments regularly to that effect. A few examples:

“Like popcorn jumping in every direction, incidents that are unbaptistic and unscriptural have sprung up around the Baptist World.” (page 15)

“The idea that someone should interpret scripture for everyone else, with penalties for those who do not subscribe, was totally foreign to everything I believed about the Bible. The idea of churches being intimidated by actions of a larger body was anathema. The concept of the pastor ruling the church was laughable — given the deacons and church members I had known and loved and with whom I had served.” (pages 22-23)

“Fundamentalism has brought to the denomination a new approach to polity, mission giving, and free exercise of religious faith.” (page 66)

“Clearly, Southern Baptists are moving in directions that have been rejected by previous leaders and generations.” (page 73)

“We are treated now to the use of denominational power — direct or implied — to repress dissent, control the press, criticize state conventions and by implication threaten them, control relationships of seminaries to their alumni, exile dissenters, and submit to political acts by leadership or be labeled disloyal. The list of requirements for fellowship are foreign to the history and traditions of Baptists. To truly valid, any religious decision must be free, uncoerced, unfettered, and unlimited by human interference and author-

ity.” (page 78)

“Some national and state leaders assume that they know what is a good Southern Baptist and what is best for one. They believe they have a right to dictate religious practices and can withhold position, prestige, or recognition. These ideas are contrary to Baptist polity and doctrine. If such leaders are permitted to define loyalty and assert a right to dictate how churches do missions in order to remain “loyal Southern Baptists,” we have surrendered our priesthood — we have already lost our denomination.” (page 81)

Many other examples could be cited, but you get the point. The Southern Baptist Convention today rejects the foundations of Baptist polity and practice.

The ultimate strength of Cothen’s book may be the questions left in the readers mind after finishing it. Cothen never states the question bluntly, but I was left asking myself the following question. “Can I be a real, traditional Southern Baptist and continue to support the Southern Baptist Convention?” For me, the answer is no. To support the current SBC is to make a mockery my Baptist heritage. Commitment to Christ, and the memory of my Baptist ancestors will not permit me to do so.

Another question left in my mind is the future of state conventions. Cothen writes on page 122: “State executive directors probably were the only ones who could have harnessed enough following and votes to curb the fundamentalist takeover.... Many, if not most, of the leaders hoped in vain that the controversy would remain on a national level and not invade their domain...”

Since peace was felt to be essential to the proper functioning of the body politic, many state directors privately complained about

the course of the denomination but did not organize to confront it.”

Now the issue is whether state conventions can be saved. And once again the state executive directors are crucial to that outcome. This reviewer believes that most state conventions could be saved today if state executive directors would stand up and be counted. If they abandon their role as leaders in the name of peace, they will allow their states to fall one by one to this same unbaptistic and unbiblical movement. Many mistakenly view their position as requiring neutrality. This is not the case. They should be fair and inclusive of all Baptists in their state, urging Baptists to cooperate around our historic practices of cooperation, but they should not be neutral. They should stand and be counted for what is Biblical and Baptist, while reaching out to include all perspectives.

By denouncing the fundamentalist takeover for what it is, unbaptistic and unbiblical, state leaders would lose some fundamentalist support in their states, but better to lose some support than the entire state convention and its ministries and institutions. Strong action would also energize traditional Baptists, start a convention wide dialogue on Baptist polity, and possibly bring about healing and renewal.

Cothen’s book reminds us that things are not normal and to pretend they are is as unhealthy as a dysfunctional family that never confronts an abusive parent and never deals with the problem. Everyone ends up damaged and no one finds healing because the problem is never confronted. It’s swept under the rug.

Cothen’s book tries to bring the mess out in the open. If we struggle with the questions his book raises, we may be healed — if not to reunite — to move forward at peace with ourselves and our ministries.

OUR OPPOSITION SPEAKS

J. Walt Carpenter edits a newsletter committed to a fundamentalist takeover of the BGCT. In one of his articles he writes the following about Texas Baptists. We share it with you in our newsletter so that you can better understand the mentality of those now in control of the SBC and who want to control the BGCT.

He writes (and we quote):

Texas: a microcosm of the problem

As I am most familiar with Texas, let me start there. The liberal paper in Texas called *Texas Baptists Committed* flatly stated, “**We do not trust SBC leaders.**” The Baptist General Convention of Texas (“BGCT”) is dominated by a Baylor political machine that would be the envy of Tammany Hall. They despise the conservative resurgence. This is because

of their rejection of Biblical inerrancy and their paranoia of anyone with a high view of Scripture.

Most Baylor/Truett professors miss no opportunity gleefully to deride biblical inerrancy... This major pocket of resistance has a time problem, as most of the support comes from Baylor graduates in their 60s. Most younger graduates have lost interest in denominational life, as you likely would as well if you worshiped a Lord who was confused and made mistakes and relied on a Bible that was full of error.

**Editor’s note: It is hard to trust people who call Richard Jackson and Russell Dilday liberals, who attack people’s integrity and character, fire people, and who refuse to respect the desires of local churches in mission giving.*

YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS

by David R. Currie, Coordinator

The Center for Christian Ethics is a new organization with a familiar leader, Foy Valentine. Dr. Valentine was the Executive Director of the SBC Christian Life Commission for many years.

The Center publishes a journal, *Christian Ethics Today*, out of its Dallas office. This journal is, in my opinion, one of the best publications on Christian Ethics in America today.

The Trustees of the Center include some familiar names to Texas Baptists. In addition to Dr. Valentine, they include Patricia Ayres, former moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Daniel Vestal, pastor of Tallowood Baptist Church, Houston, and

Alan Walworth, pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas.

To be on the mailing list of *Christian Ethics Today*, and to support the Center, write the Center for Christian Ethics, P.O. Box 670784, Dallas, TX 75367-0784.

The Center also sponsors colloquiums "with knowledgeable participants coming together to discuss relevant ethical issues with a view to recommending appropriate actions."

Printed below is the T. B. Maston Colloquium statement regarding the Religious Right. We reprint it with permission of the Center, and with our strongest endorsement of "well done good and faithful servants."

Maston Colloquium Statement Countering the Radical Religious Right

(A statement made by participants in the Maston Colloquium. Their names are affixed, together with those of others who have identified with it. Convened by the Center for Christian Ethics on May 30, 1995, in Dallas, Texas, the Colloquium name honors Dr. T.B. Maston for his pioneering work in Christian ethics as a teacher, writer, and prophet.)

We are a company of American Christians who are committed to the integrity of our churches, the welfare of our country, and the strengthening of the moral fiber of our people.

We affirm the desperate need for love instead of hate in our churches and in our body politic. Therefore, in sincere Christian love we are compelled to take issue with the Radical Religious Right whose initiatives disturb Christians and concerned citizens across the political spectrum.

We are not willing for the Radical Religious Right with its demagogues, rabble rousers, opportunists, and business entrepreneurs masquerading as Christian evangelists to go unchallenged in their claim to be the only rightful occupants of the high ground of Christian morality. This is a firing line we ourselves have been on for a long time, are now on, and expect to stay on.

We will not allow the leaders of the Radical Religious Right to go unchallenged in their shameless identification of Christianity with one extremist wing of a single political party.

We are alarmed because the Radical Religious Right poses significant dangers to our churches, our political system, and our American way of life. These dangers include their:

1. Threatening our personal liberties with government intrusion into our most intimate religious experience, family life, and health decisions.
2. Distorting the gospel by identifying the cause of Jesus Christ with their own narrow political agenda.
3. Undermining the political process by attempting to merge church and state.
4. Abusing the powers of government and perverting the soul of the church to force their oppressive religious dogma on all Americans.
5. Stifling free and robust public discussion of political issues through arrogant intimidation that claims the exclusive right to speak for God.

For too long too many Christians have been silent about these grave dangers. We urge all concerned Christians to:

1. Confront and challenge the distortions, misstatements,

revisions, and myths of the Radical Religious Right.

2. Speak out, distribute materials, write letters, and communicate with your elected representatives in government and with your church leaders as well.

3. Vote for and support those public officials who courageously stand for America's historic tradition of religious liberty for all and oppose those who would merge church and state.

4. Give financial and moral support to individuals and organizations who work to awaken Americans to the dangers of the Radical Religious Right.

5. Challenge unethical tactics of the Radical Religious Right, such as the deceptive infiltration of churches, the distribution of inaccurate and biased "voter guides," the putting up of candidates who conceal their Radical Religious Right ties when running for school boards and other public offices, and the browbeating of public officials.

Keep the faith. What our forebears gained at great sacrifice, let us not now carelessly relinquish.

SIGNED:

Sarah Frances Anders, Professor of Sociology Emeritus,
Louisiana College, Pineville, LA

John Leland Berg, Pastor, Grace Fellowship Church, Meridian, MS

Lavonn D. Brown, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Norman, OK

James Dunn, Executive Director, Baptist Joint Committee of
Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Richard Pierard, Professor of History, Indiana State University,
Terre Haute, Indiana

Foy Valentine, President, The Center for Christian Ethics, Dallas, TX

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Daniel Vestal, Trustee, Center for Christian Ethics, Houston, TX

“Returning to Our Roots”? Inerrancy and History

by Jim Denison

Pastor, Second Ponce De Leon
Baptist Church, Atlanta

I'm not much of a gardener. However, our first pastorate was in a country church where keeping a garden was simply part of life. And so Janet and I tried—we really did. I roto-tilled until my arms were numb, we pulled weeds until our backs ached, and we killed fireants by the millions. But we failed. Between the ants and the worms and the weeds and the grassburrs, our gardening careers were short-lived.

But I did learn one important fact: roots are essential to life. Where the ground was too hard or too dry, the plant couldn't grow. It didn't matter how nice the topsoil looked, if the roots were weak the plant was doomed. And we had the weakest roots in the county.

Roots are vital, both to gardening and to faith. Jesus said, “Since he has no root, he lasts only a short time” MATTHEW 13:21. If we want faith that will endure, our roots must be deep and strong.

This is precisely what many claim for inerrancy today—that it is one of the vital historical roots of Christian faith. They argue that the inerrancy theory has been accepted and defended by the church throughout its history, and they are simply returning us to our theological and historical roots.

Let's see if they're right, by doing a little historical gardening. What does history *really* teach us about inerrancy?

Seeking the inerrancy root

We will dig first in our historical garden with those who claim to have discovered the inerrancy “root.”

The best-known such “gardener” is Harold Lindsell, who makes the historical argument his central defense of inerrancy. His *The Battle for the Bible*¹ and other writings claim without qualification that the church has historically affirmed the inerrancy argument.² Since Christians have always been “inerrantists,” he claims, we should be so today, and those who defend inerrancy are simply returning us to an indispensable root of our faith.

As another example, Jimmy Draper consistently equates “the full authority of Scripture” with “biblical inerrancy”³ and then concludes that his study “indicate[s] beyond any doubt that a belief in the full integrity and accuracy of Scripture [his synonyms for inerrancy] has been an integral part of the church's belief from the very earliest times.”⁴

But note that both Dr. Lindsell and Dr. Draper utilize an extremely broad definition of inerrancy, certainly nothing like the technical descriptions inerrantists typically insist upon today.⁵

And nearly anyone in church history can be called an “inerrantist” if we use the term loosely enough. J.I. Packer says that “To as-

sert biblical inerrancy and infallibility is just to confess faith in (i) the divine origin of the Bible and (ii) the truthfulness and trustworthiness of God.”⁶ Clark Pinnock claims that “If one believes the Scripture to be God's Word, he cannot fail to believe it inerrant.”⁷ To believe the Bible at all is apparently to be an inerrantist, in this view.

As a result, by this broad definition we can call anyone in church history who believes the Bible an “inerrantist,” and thus “prove” that the argument is historical. Anything can be a root if we so name it. But as we will see, this is both simplistic and misleading.

Looking for missing roots

And so inerrantists claim that their position is both the historic belief of the church and one of its vital roots. If their claim is true, it makes a powerful case for inerrancy. But digging further in our historical garden reveals that our roots are far more complex than this. Let's see what our historical garden really shows us about this issue. We'll discuss four “missing roots,” in chronological order.

The missing root in the New Testament church

First, we'll examine the New Testament church, the first followers of Jesus. If inerrancy is the root of our faith, it will first be growing here. However, both history and Scripture show that the New Testament believers had no inerrancy argument. Harold Lindsell admits this candidly:

Any serious study of the Old Testament and New Testament will show that the writers devoted little space to the careful formulation of doctrine of revelation, inspiration and inerrancy. Nowhere in Scripture is there any reasoned argument along this line... One can read the balance of the New Testament, and search in vain he must, for anything that suggests that the writers sought to formulate a carefully defined doctrine of an inspired, authoritative and inerrant revelation.⁸

Lindsell claims that this is because both Jesus and the New Testament writers took the inerrancy of the Bible “for granted.”⁹ However, his article offers not a single piece of evidence for his claim. We will deal with the matter of inerrancy and the biblical evidence later in this series. For now, note that the first believers made no argument for inerrancy as it is defined today. This root simply doesn't exist.

The missing root in church history

Next, we'll explore the ground around the church which grew from these first believers. In so doing, we discover a second fact: the inerrancy argument as it is used today is missing until the nineteenth century. Church leaders have consistently accepted the Bible as God's word, for which we can be grateful. As noted above, this makes them “inerrantists” in the minds of some. But there is no evidence

of the modern doctrine of inerrancy in the historical roots of our faith.

Lindsell admits this for the “church fathers”: “In the early centuries of the Church, the theologians and church councils faced grave problems. But none of them devoted much time to the question of an inspired and inerrant Bible.”¹⁰ Both Lindsell and Draper document a strong trust in the Bible from Clement of Rome to Augustine, and call these leaders inerrantists.¹¹ However, they provide not a single statement from these fathers where they use either the word “inerrant” or its argument.¹²

Similarly, church leaders in the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformation, while affirming the Bible as God's word, articulated no inerrancy doctrine such as we have today. Lindsell claims that “Both Romanists and Reformers alike held firmly to an inerrant Word of God.”¹³ But his article offers no evidence for a formal definition or use of the term. Luther and Calvin undoubtedly held a “high” view of Scripture, but neither articulated the modern inerrancy doctrine.

The real roots of the formal inerrancy argument can be found with Francis Turretin, a nineteenth century theologian who highly influenced Princeton Seminary. Prior to Turretin, church leaders believed that the Bible's authority resides in its *function* in bringing people to faith in Christ. Turretin was among the first to define the Bible's authority in terms of its form as inerrant words. And his *Institution Theologiae Elencticae* became the principal textbook in systematic theology at Princeton from its founding in 1812 until 1872. With Turretin we begin to see a formal inerrancy argument enter the theology of the modern church.¹⁴

The fact is, inerrancy as it is typically defended today was not introduced to the church until the last century. For over eighteen hundred years, the root simply didn't exist.

The missing roots in “conservative” interpretation

Now, let's go back through our historical garden and examine some of the “produce” in more detail. If the roots determine the plant, then the plant should tell us something about the nature of those roots.

Interestingly, many in our history who are described as “inerrantists” held doctrinal positions which would trouble most Baptists. If their roots are inerrant and “conservative,” the biblical interpretations they produce often don't show it.

For example, Lindsell cites Origen as an inerrantist.¹⁵ But note Origen's interpretation of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem: Jesus' colt is the Old Testament which carries him to the cross, and the two apostles who contained the animal and brought it to Christ

continued on page 9...

are the moral and spiritual senses of biblical interpretation.¹⁶ His approach is called “allegory,” for it divorces the spiritual from the literal. Origen’s method is consistently rejected by nearly all biblical scholars today.

Augustine comes the closest of any early church leader to espousing an inerrancy doctrine:

...none of [the biblical] authors has committed an error in writing. If in that literature I meet with anything which seems contrary to truth, I will have no doubt that it is only the manuscript which is faulty, or the translator who has not hit the sense, or my own failure to understand.¹⁷

But see how Augustine interprets the text. In his approach to the parable of the Good Samaritan, the oil and wine are baptism, and the inn is the Church.¹⁸ He took Psalm 104:19, “the sun knows when to go down,” to refer to Jesus’ death and burial.¹⁹ Interesting uses of an “inerrant” Scripture, to be sure.

Lindsell cites the Roman Catholic Church as a consistent adherent of inerrancy.²⁰ And the Church does make this claim: “The inerrancy of Scripture has been the consistent teaching of the Fathers, the theologians, and recent Popes in their encyclicals on Biblical studies.”²¹ But note how the Church qualifies the term: “It is nonetheless obvious that many biblical statements are simply not true when judged according to modern knowledge of science and history.”²² And the new Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church makes clear the Church’s belief that the Bible’s “inerrancy” is confined to those parts of Scripture which deal with salvation.²³

Martin Luther and John Calvin are usually cited as strong supporters of inerrancy,²⁴ even though neither ever formulated such a doctrine formally. Luther could say that “in all the Bible there is not a superfluous letter,”²⁵ and Calvin’s acceptance and teaching of the doctrine of inerrancy is said to be “beyond denial.”²⁶

Yet Luther called James an “epistle full of straw,” and assigned the entire books of James, Jude, Hebrews, and Revelation to the back of his German New Testament, considering them to be secondary in importance. How would Baptists react to a professor or pastor who did the same today? And Calvin admitted that Genesis is not written in scientific language,²⁷ and side-stepped the issue of the authorship of Second Peter.²⁸ The latter position would put Calvin in a precarious position in many of our denominational institutions today.

In short, many of the so-called “inerrantists” of church history interpreted the Bible in ways which would bother most Baptists and “conservative” Christians today. *The fruit reveals the root.*

The missing root for Baptists

Last, our study of historical roots reveals that inerrancy is a new doctrine for Baptists. Historian Mark Noll characterizes the Baptist doctrine of authority as functional—we know the Bible is true because it works in our lives.²⁹ He states that for Baptists, “The language of inerrancy as developed by the conservative

Presbyterians and northern dispensational-fundamentalists remained a somewhat foreign dialect, at least until recent decades.”³⁰

Baptist confessions of faith have always affirmed the Bible as God’s word. The New Hampshire Confession of Faith in 1833 characterized it as “without any mixture of error,” and the Confessions of 1925 and 1963 followed suit. But in none of these statements were the word “inerrant” used, “error” defined, or the current inerrancy doctrine developed. Inerrancy as a doctrine or requirement is not in our historical roots at all.

Conclusions

So, what does history really teach about inerrancy? To summarize: the New Testament church had no inerrancy argument; the argument itself is a recent development; many church leaders usually cited as “inerrantists” have decidedly nonconservative interpretative positions; and the doctrine is very recent to Baptists. Inerrancy as it is defined today is in no way a vital root of our faith.

Mark Noll agrees: “historical examination would seem to suggest that the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is not by itself the key to understanding theological development or the general history of Christianity.”³¹ Jack Rogers goes farther: “It is historically irresponsible to claim for two thousand years Christians have believed that the authority of the Bible entails a modern concept of inerrancy in scientific and historical details.”³²

And Paul Rees, a well-known evangelical leader, warned: “It is historically obvious, when the records are studied in depth, that the Christian church, through its confessions and in its leadership, has been exceedingly cautious about formalizing a commitment to inerrancy.”³³

These are the lessons history teaches about inerrancy. But there are questions history asks as well. Among them: if inerrancy is so critical that it’s worth splitting the Southern Baptist Convention, how did the Christian church get along without it for so long? How did Southern Baptists become the greatest missionary force in Christian history without this doctrine? And further, has this Controversy made us more united or more divided? Has it made us more loving to one another (see John 13:34-35) or more bitter? Has it advanced our witness as Baptists, or harmed it?

To test the roots of a tree, you need only examine its fruit. In the controversy over inerrancy, have we found our roots, or have we damaged them?

¹Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1976).

²See also Harold Lindsell, “An Historian Looks at Inerrancy,” in *Evangelicals and Inerrancy*, ed. Ronald Youngblood (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 49-58.

³James T. Draper, Jr., *Authority: The Critical Issue for Southern Baptists* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1984); see 45, 46.

⁴*Ibid.*, 53.

⁵The term “inerrancy” has at least eight definitions and twelve qualifications, as I showed in “Inerrancy: Definitions and Qualifications,” in *Texas Baptist Committed* (June 1994), 9. However, this definition seems popular with most inerrantists in the

Southern Baptist Convention today:

“1. when all the facts are known, 2. they will demonstrate that the Bible in its autographs 3. and correctly interpreted 4. is entirely true 5. in all that it affirms” (J. Walter Carpenter, “Biblical Hermeneutics for Amateurs,” *Texas Baptist* (January 1995), 13. For the definitive statement of inerrancy see “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.” The “Chicago Statement” is found in many publications; one is *Evangelicals and Inerrancy*, ed. Ronald Youngblood (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 230-9.

⁶J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God: Some Evangelical Principles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 96.

⁷Clark Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation: The Foundation of Christian Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 74. Dr. Pinnock further defines the term: “‘Inerrancy’ simply means that the Bible can be trusted in what it teaches and affirms” (Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984], 78).

⁸Lindsell, “Historian,” 49-50.

⁹*Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 46-54; Draper, 45-53.

¹²Draper cites Clement of Rome as calling the Bible “true”; Justin, “divine”; Irenaeus, “harmonious”; Clement of Alexandria, “harmony”; and Origen, “seeds of saving truth” (Draper, 45-53). But “inerrant” is strikingly absent.

¹³Lindsell, “Historian,” 50.

¹⁴Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), xvii-xviii. Rogers and McKim’s book is important to the inerrancy debate, as it defends historically the position that inerrancy is both new to the church and unnecessary. The strongest response to their work came from John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), who criticizes them for what he considers inadequate scholarship. Mark Noll critiques both sides as going to excess: “neither side carries the day by providing answers from church history for questions which took on a new shape in the critical era” (*Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals. Scholarship and the Bible in America* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986], 218 n. 29).

¹⁵Lindsell, *Battle*, 51.

¹⁶Origen, *Commentary on John*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, rev. A. Cleveland Coxe (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, reprinted 1989), 10:396-9.

¹⁷Quoted in Lindsell, “Historian,” 58.

¹⁸Augustine, Sermon 81, *Sermons on New Testament Lessons*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, 6:503.

¹⁹Augustine, *On the Psalms*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, 8:515-6.

²⁰Lindsell, “Historian,” 51.

²¹The New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw, 1967), 2:384.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori Publications, 1994), 31. See further the discussion in Richard J. Coleman, “Reconsidering ‘Limited Inerrancy,’” in *Evangelicals and Inerrancy*, ed. Ronald Youngblood (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 163.

²⁴Lindsell, article, 52.

²⁵A. Skevington Wood, *Captive to the Word* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969), 142.

²⁶Lindsell, article, 52.

²⁷J. I. Packer, “Calvin’s View of Scripture,” in *God’s Inerrant Word*, ed. J. W. Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974), 106-7.

²⁸John Calvin, *Commentary on II Peter*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprinted 1993), 363-4.

²⁹Mark Noll, “A Brief History of Inerrancy, Mostly in America,” in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy*. 1987 (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 17-9.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 19.

³¹Noll, article, 21.

³²Rogers, 44; quoted by Carter, 29-30.

³³Quoted in Rogers, 44; quoted by Carter, 29-30.

BUCKNER FANNING TO HIGHLIGHT BREAKFAST



Dr. Buckner Fanning

The seventh annual TBC breakfast continues a tradition of outstanding speakers. This year we have Buckner Fanning, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, San Antonio.

Dr. Fanning is widely regarded as one of the finest communicators of the Gospel in Baptist life. Also, Trinity Baptist Church is recognized worldwide for its innovation ministries and evangelistic outreach.

This year's breakfast will be held on Tuesday morning, November 14, 1995, in the La Villita Assembly Hall. The address is 401 Villita. It is between the Hilton and the Plaza San Antonio Hotel, within a very short walk of the Convention Center.

The breakfast will be catered by the Plaza San Antonio and will be a full course buffet meal (eggs, meat, juice, waffles, sweet rolls and coffee).

We will also have a very special musical guest, Marilyn Cochran, a concert pianist. It will be a wonderful occasion.

Tickets are \$13 per person and a reservation form is provided below.

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THERE THEY GO AGAIN!

By David R. Currie, Coordinator

Ronald Reagan made the phrase famous, "There you go again" in a presidential candidates debate. He used the phrase in response to times when he thought the facts being shared or charges leveled against him were not accurate.

Well, when it comes to fundamentalists in Texas, **"There they go again."**

The group "Southern Baptists of Texas" has announced their slate of candidates for officers of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. They certainly have a right to support candidates who agree with their position. They openly urge Texas Baptists to approve of and cooperate with the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention. That is their right.

But, they need to have their facts straight.

With their announcement of a slate of candidates, they also released a resolution charging that BGCT leadership has "drifted away from its historical Southern Baptist roots."

They also charged that the BGCT is dually aligned with CBF and that many Texas Baptists "have been misguided in their understanding of Southern Baptist missions and theological education. I think there's been a lot of misinformation about our Southern Baptist entities. The SBC is true to the course and we are doing a great work."

Let's look at the facts.

The fact is SBC leadership has been true to the course they started in 1979. They have

elected fundamentalist officers, who have appointed fundamentalist boards, and hired fundamentalist agency and seminary presidents. That is all true.

But another fact is, in doing so, they themselves have led the Southern Baptist Convention **away from its historical course into radical fundamentalism, where Southern Baptists had never been before. They are on a totally new course never traveled by Southern Baptist in the past.**

Here are some facts. I realize you have heard all this before, but its like the pictures I took of my pickup after my 16 year-old flipped it through a telephone pole and rolled it in a cotton patch—every so often he needs to see those pictures and remember the importance of paying attention!

The fact is that in following this new course, they have slandered the character and reputations of hundreds of honorable men and women (have you not heard the word "liberal" a few thousand times in reference to past respected SBC leaders and seminary professors); defunded historic agencies like the Baptist Joint Committee and the International Baptist Seminary in Europe; fired honorable men and women like Russell Dilday, Dan Martin, Al Shackleford, and Molly Marshall; connived in every conceivable fashion to control the Woman's Missionary Union and degrade the WMU for responding to the wishes of local churches; told local churches they would accept money given only through certain channels; and, in the case of South-

ern Seminary this very year, announced that the qualifications to teach include interpreting the scriptures in accordance with the president's personal interpretations on social and political issues.

My mamma raised me a Southern Baptist and she did not teach me any of the above!

The groups presidential nominee, Gary Miller, said that prayer is the central issue and urged Texas Southern Baptist to join in prayer to ask the Lord to help the state convention get back to "its historical mission" of joining with others to fulfill the Great Commission. That is well said except for the **fact** that the Baptist General Convention of Texas remains focused on the Great Commission rather than "denomination cleansing" and we are trying hard to respect all local churches, including the one Miller is pastor of, and the decisions those local churches make in carrying out the Great Commission.

One of the many wonderful things my mamma did teach me is that a local Baptist church is Baptist headquarters and it decides who to align with and who to cooperate with. Therefore the state convention is not dually aligned with anyone. It is independent and autonomous just like the local church. I wish my 78 year-old mamma could address the Southern Baptists of Texas or the Executive Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. I think she needs to explain Baptist polity and the historical roots of Southern Baptists to them like she taught me. At least they would hear the **facts!**

MISSION STATEMENT OF TEXAS BAPTISTS COMMITTED

Texas Baptists Committed is dedicated to reach people for Christ through local churches, to uphold historic Baptist principles, and to cooperate with the mission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and its related institutions.

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