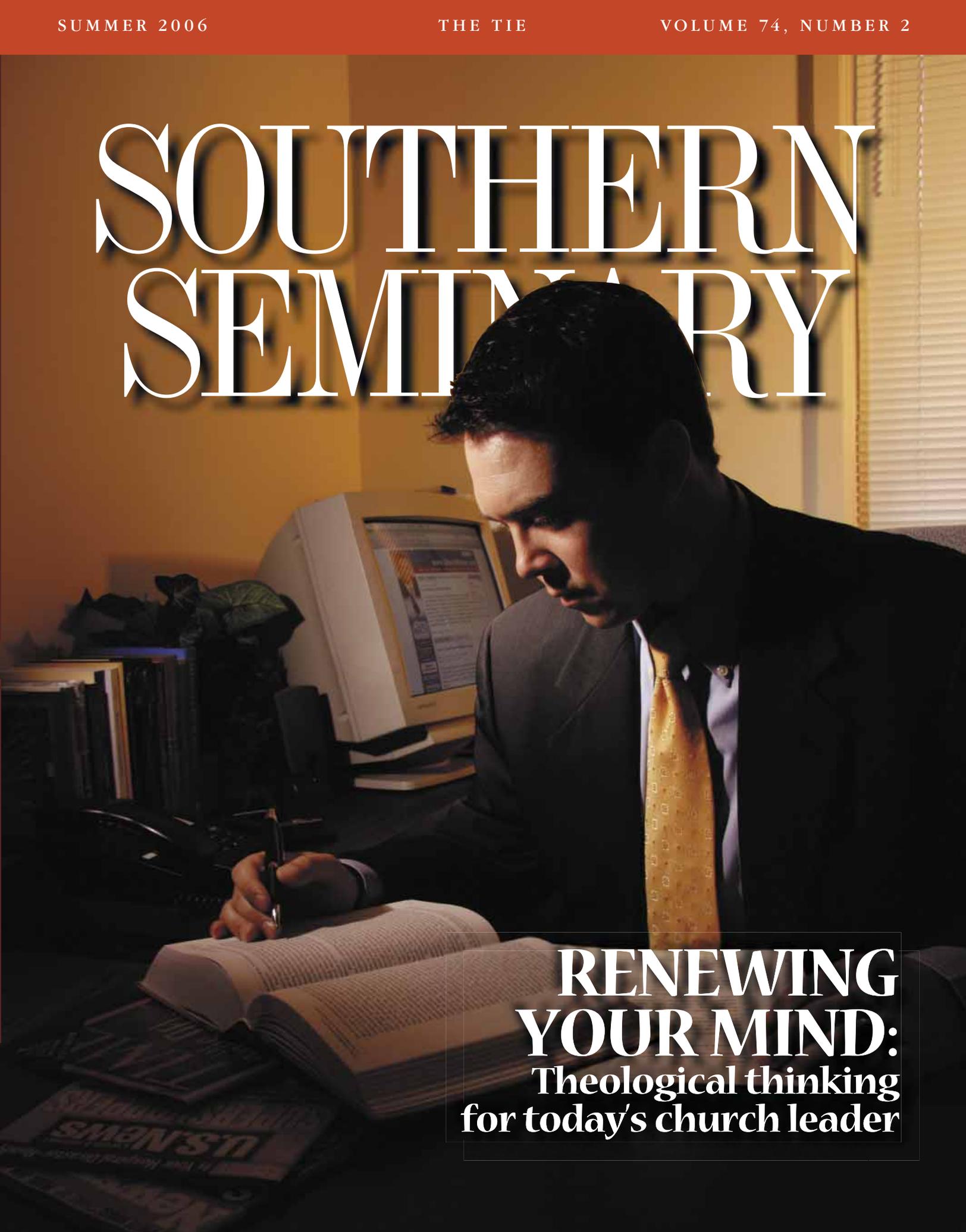


SOUTHERN SEMINARY

A man in a dark suit and a patterned yellow tie is seated at a desk, looking down at an open book. He is holding a pen in his right hand. In the background, there is a computer monitor displaying a website, a potted plant, and a window with blinds. The lighting is warm and focused on the man and his work.

**RENEWING
YOUR MIND:**
Theological thinking
for today's church leader

The pastor as theologian

Every pastor is called to be a theologian. This may come as a surprise to some pastors, who see theology as an academic discipline taken during seminary rather than as an ongoing and central part of the pastoral calling. Nevertheless, the health of the church depends upon its pastors functioning as faithful theologians – teaching, preaching, defending and applying the great doctrines of the faith.

The pastoral calling is inherently theological. Given the fact that the pastor is to be the teacher of the Word of God and the teacher of the Gospel, it cannot be otherwise. The idea of the pastorate as a non-theological office is inconceivable in light of the New Testament.

Though this truth is implicit throughout the Bible, this emphasis is perhaps most apparent in Paul's letters to Timothy. Paul emphatically encourages Timothy concerning his reading, teaching, preaching and study of Scripture. All of this is essentially theological: "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you" (2 Tim 1:13-14).

As Paul completes his second letter to Timothy, he reaches a crescendo of concern as he commands Timothy to preach the Word, specifically instructing him to "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim 4:2). Why? "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Tim 4:3-4).

The pastoral theologian must be able to defend the faith even as he identifies false teachings and makes correction by the Word of God. There is no more theological calling than this – guard the flock of God for the sake of God's truth.

Clearly, this will require intense and self-conscious theological thinking, study and consideration. Paul makes this abundantly clear in writing to Titus, when he defines the duty of the overseer or pastor as one who is "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those

who contradict" (Titus 1:9).

In reality, there is no dimension of the pastor's calling that is **not** deeply, inherently and inescapably theological. There is no problem the pastor will encounter in counseling that is not specifically theological in character. There is no major question in ministry that does not come with deep theological dimensions and the need for careful theological application. The task of leading, feeding and guiding the congregation is as theological as any other vocation conceivable.

Beyond all this, the preaching and teaching of the Word of God is theological from beginning to end. The preacher functions as a steward of the mysteries of God, explaining the deepest and most profound theological truths to a congregation which must be armed with the knowledge of these truths in order to grow as disciples and meet the challenge of faithfulness in the Christian life.

Evangelism is a theological calling as well, for the very act of sharing the Gospel is a theological argument presented with goal of seeing a sinner come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to be a faithful evangelist, the pastor must first understand the Gospel, and then understand the nature of the evangelist's calling. Every step of the way, the pastor is dealing with issues that are irrefutably theological.

As many observers have noted, today's pastors are often pulled in many directions simultaneously and the theological vocation is often lost amidst the pressing concerns of a ministry. The managerial revolution has left many pastors feeling more like administrators than theologians. The rise of therapeutic concerns within the culture means that many pastors, and many of their church members, believe that the pastoral calling is best understood as a "helping profession."

As such, the pastor is seen as someone who functions in a therapeutic role in which theology is often seen as more of a problem than a solution.

All this is a betrayal of the pastoral calling as presented in the New Testament. Furthermore, it is a rejection of the apostolic teaching and of the biblical admonition concerning the role and responsibilities of the pastor. Today's pastors must recover and reclaim the pastoral calling as inherently and cheerfully theological. Otherwise, pastors will be nothing more than communicators, counselors and managers of congregations that have been emptied of the Gospel and of biblical truth.



R. Albert Mohler Jr.
 R. Albert Mohler Jr.
 President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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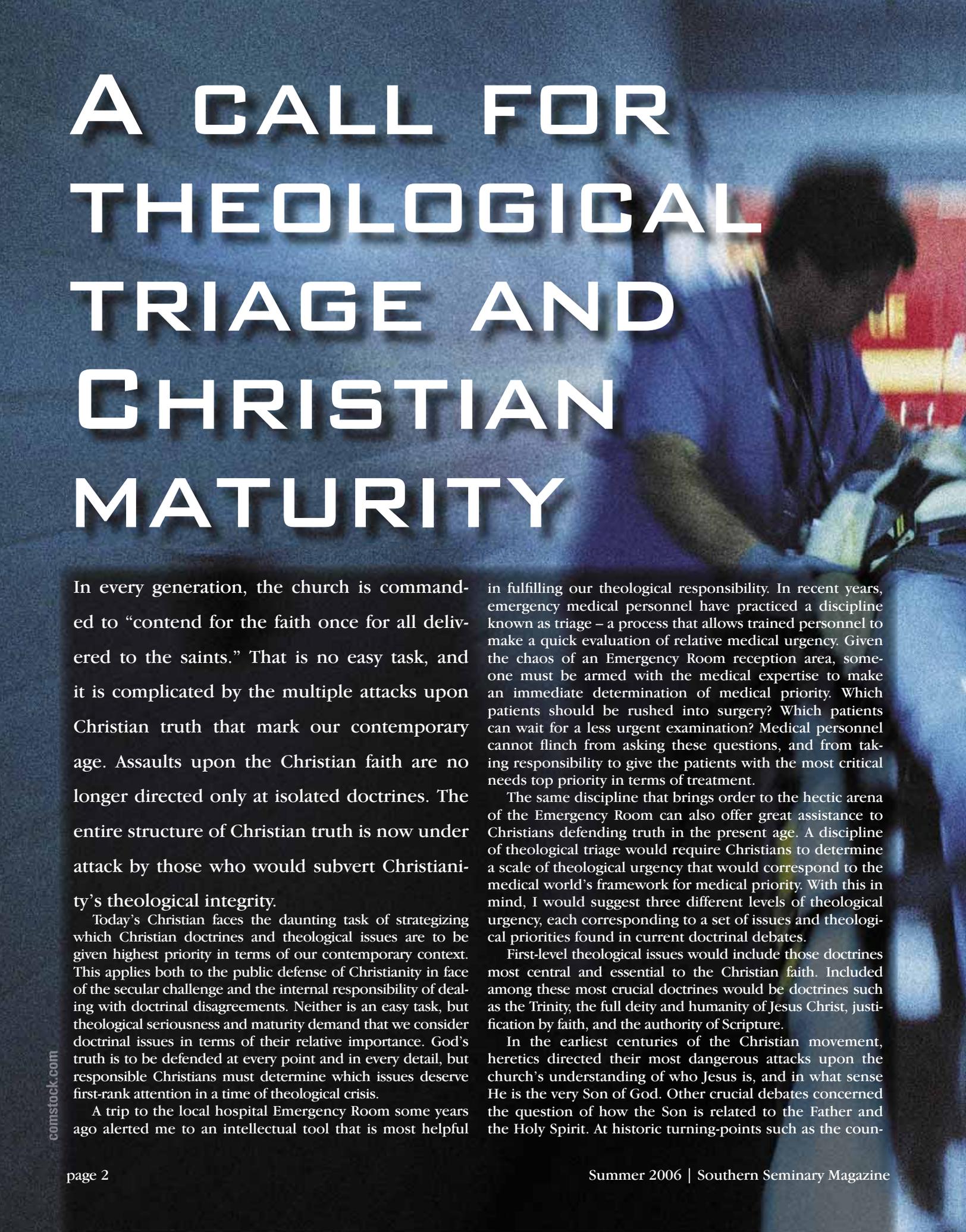
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Under the lordship of Jesus Christ, the mission of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is to be totally committed to the Bible as the Word of God, to the Great Commission as our mandate, and to be a servant of the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention by training, educating, and preparing ministers of the gospel for more faithful service.



A CALL FOR THEOLOGICAL TRIAGE AND CHRISTIAN MATURITY



In every generation, the church is commanded to “contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” That is no easy task, and it is complicated by the multiple attacks upon Christian truth that mark our contemporary age. Assaults upon the Christian faith are no longer directed only at isolated doctrines. The entire structure of Christian truth is now under attack by those who would subvert Christianity’s theological integrity.

Today’s Christian faces the daunting task of strategizing which Christian doctrines and theological issues are to be given highest priority in terms of our contemporary context. This applies both to the public defense of Christianity in face of the secular challenge and the internal responsibility of dealing with doctrinal disagreements. Neither is an easy task, but theological seriousness and maturity demand that we consider doctrinal issues in terms of their relative importance. God’s truth is to be defended at every point and in every detail, but responsible Christians must determine which issues deserve first-rank attention in a time of theological crisis.

A trip to the local hospital Emergency Room some years ago alerted me to an intellectual tool that is most helpful

in fulfilling our theological responsibility. In recent years, emergency medical personnel have practiced a discipline known as triage – a process that allows trained personnel to make a quick evaluation of relative medical urgency. Given the chaos of an Emergency Room reception area, someone must be armed with the medical expertise to make an immediate determination of medical priority. Which patients should be rushed into surgery? Which patients can wait for a less urgent examination? Medical personnel cannot flinch from asking these questions, and from taking responsibility to give the patients with the most critical needs top priority in terms of treatment.

The same discipline that brings order to the hectic arena of the Emergency Room can also offer great assistance to Christians defending truth in the present age. A discipline of theological triage would require Christians to determine a scale of theological urgency that would correspond to the medical world’s framework for medical priority. With this in mind, I would suggest three different levels of theological urgency, each corresponding to a set of issues and theological priorities found in current doctrinal debates.

First-level theological issues would include those doctrines most central and essential to the Christian faith. Included among these most crucial doctrines would be doctrines such as the Trinity, the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, justification by faith, and the authority of Scripture.

In the earliest centuries of the Christian movement, heretics directed their most dangerous attacks upon the church’s understanding of who Jesus is, and in what sense He is the very Son of God. Other crucial debates concerned the question of how the Son is related to the Father and the Holy Spirit. At historic turning-points such as the coun-

cils at Nicaea, Constantinople and Chalcedon, orthodoxy was vindicated and heresy was condemned – and these councils dealt with doctrines of unquestionable first-order importance. Christianity stands or falls on the affirmation that Jesus Christ is fully man and fully God.

The church quickly moved to affirm that the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ are absolutely necessary to the Christian faith. Any denial of what has become known as Nicaean-Chalcedonian Christology is, by definition, condemned as a heresy. The essential truths of the incarnation include the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who deny these revealed truths are, by definition, not Christians.

The same is true with the doctrine of the Trinity. The early church clarified and codified its understanding of the one true and living God by affirming the full deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – while insisting that the Bible reveals one God in three persons.

In addition to the Christological and Trinitarian doctrines, the doctrine of justification by faith must also be included among these first-order truths. Without this doctrine, we are left with a denial of the Gospel itself, and salvation is transformed into some structure of human righteousness.

The truthfulness and authority of the Holy Scriptures must also rank as a first-order doctrine, for without an affirmation of the Bible as the very Word of God, we are left without any adequate authority for distinguishing truth from error.

These first-order doctrines represent the most fundamental truths of the Christian faith, and a denial of these doctrines represents nothing less than an eventual denial of Christianity itself.

The set of second-order doctrines is distinguished from the first-order set by the fact that believing Christians may disagree on the second-order issues, though this disagreement will create significant boundaries between believers. When Christians organize themselves into congregations and denominational forms, these boundaries become evident.

Second-order issues would include the meaning and mode of baptism. Baptists and Presbyterians, for example, fervently disagree over the most basic understanding of Christian baptism. The practice of infant baptism is inconceivable to the Baptist mind, while Presbyterians trace infant baptism to their most basic understanding of the covenant. Standing together on the first-order doctrines, Baptists and Presbyterians eagerly recognize each other as believing Christians, but recognize that disagreement on issues of this importance will prevent fellowship within the same congregation or denomination.

Christians across a vast denominational range can stand together on the first-order doctrines and recognize each other as authentic Christians, while understanding that the existence of second-order disagreements prevents the closeness of fellowship we would otherwise enjoy. A church either will recognize infant baptism, or it will not. That choice immediately creates a second-order conflict with

those who take the other position by conviction.

In recent years, the issue of women serving as pastors has emerged as another second-order issue. Again, a church or denomination either will ordain women to the pastorate, or it will not. Second-order issues resist easy settlement by those who would prefer an either/or approach. Many of the most heated disagreements among serious believers take place at the second-order level, for these issues frame our understanding of the church and its ordering by the Word of God.

Third-order issues are doctrines over which Christians may disagree and remain in close fellowship, even within local congregations. I would put most of the debates over eschatology, for example, in this category. Christians who affirm the bodily, historical and victorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ may differ over timetable and sequence without rupturing the fellowship of the church. Christians may find themselves in disagreement over any number of issues related to the interpretation of difficult texts or the understanding of matters of common disagreement. Nevertheless, standing together on issues of more urgent importance, believers are able to accept one another without compromise when third-order issues are in question.

A structure of theological triage does not imply that Christians may take any biblical truth with less than full seriousness. We are charged to embrace and to teach the comprehensive truthfulness of the Christian faith as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. There are no insignificant doctrines revealed in the Bible, but there is an essential foundation of truth that undergirds the entire system of biblical truth.

This structure of theological triage may also help to explain how confusion can often occur in the midst of doctrinal debate. If the relative urgency of these truths is not taken into account, the debate can quickly become unhelpful. The error of theological liberalism is evident in a basic disrespect for biblical authority and the church's treasury of truth. The mark of true liberalism is the refusal to admit that first-order theological issues even exist. Liberals treat first-order doctrines as if they were merely third-order in importance, and doctrinal ambiguity is the inevitable result.

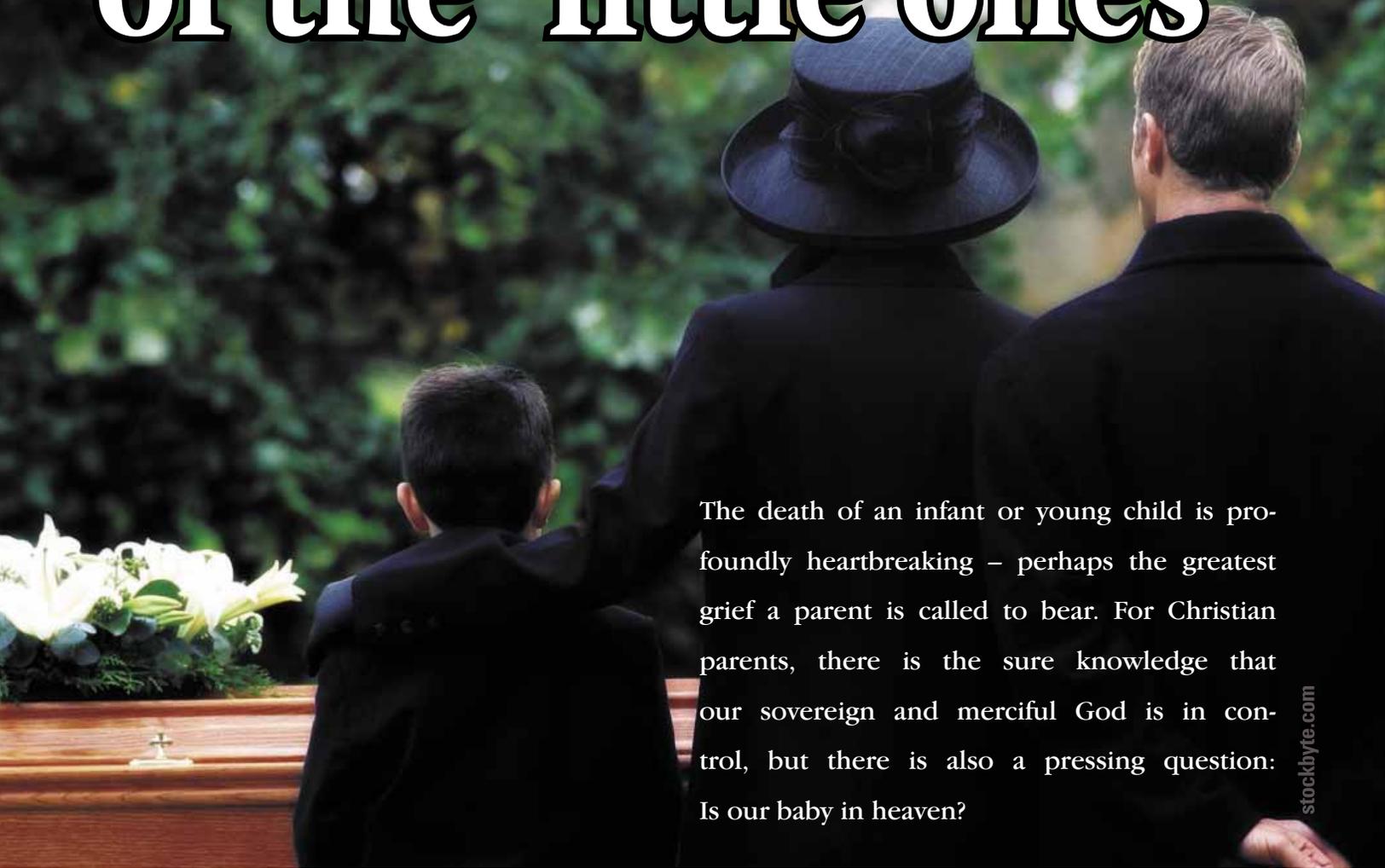
Fundamentalism, on the other hand, tends toward the opposite error. The misjudgment of true fundamentalism is the belief that all disagreements concern first-order doctrines. Thus, third-order issues are raised to a first-order importance, and Christians are wrongly and harmfully divided.

Living in an age of widespread doctrinal denial and intense theological confusion, thinking Christians must rise to the challenge of Christian maturity, even in the midst of a theological emergency. We must sort the issues with a trained mind and a humble heart, in order to protect what the Apostle Paul called the "treasure" that has been entrusted to us. Given the urgency of this challenge, a lesson from the Emergency Room just might help. 

By R. Albert Mohler Jr.

**These first-order doctrines represent
the most fundamental truths of the Christian
faith, and a denial of these doctrines
represents nothing less
than an eventual denial of Christianity itself.**

The Salvation of the 'little ones'



The death of an infant or young child is profoundly heartbreaking – perhaps the greatest grief a parent is called to bear. For Christian parents, there is the sure knowledge that our sovereign and merciful God is in control, but there is also a pressing question: Is our baby in heaven?

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Do infants who die go to heaven?

This is a natural and unavoidable question, calling for our most careful and faithful biblical study and theological reflection. The unspeakable anguish of a parent's heart demands our honest and humble searching of the Scriptures.

Some are quick to answer this question out of sentimentality. Of course infants go to heaven, they argue, for how could God refuse a precious little one? The universalist has a quick answer, for he believes that everyone will go to heaven. Some persons may simply suggest that elect infants go to heaven, while the non-elect do not and must suffer endless punishment. Each of these easy answers is unsatisfactory.

Mere sentimentalism ignores the Bible's teaching which bears on the issue. We have no right to establish doctrine on the basis of what we *hope* may be true. We must draw our answers from what the Bible *reveals* to be true.

Throughout the centuries, the church has offered several different answers to this question. In the early church, Ambrose believed that baptized infants went to heaven, while unbaptized infants did not, though they received immunity from the pains of hell. His first error was believing in infant baptism, and thus in baptismal regeneration. Baptism does not save, and it is reserved for believers – not for infants. His second error was his indulgence in speculation. Scripture does not teach such a half-way position which denies infants admission to heaven but saves them from the peril of hell. Augustine, the great theologian of the fourth century, basically agreed with Ambrose and shared his understanding of infant baptism.

Others have taught that infants will have an opportunity to come to Christ after death. This position was held by Gregory of Nyssa, and is growing among many contemporary theologians, who claim that all, regardless of age, will have a post-

mortem opportunity to confess Christ as Savior. The problem with this position is that Scripture teaches no such post-mortem opportunity. It is a figment of a theologian's imagination and must be rejected.

Those who divide infants into the elect and non-elect seek to affirm the clear and undeniable doctrine of divine election. The Bible teaches that God elects persons to salvation from eternity and that our salvation is all of grace. At first glance, this position appears impregnable in relation to the issue of infant salvation – a simple statement of the obvious. A second glance, however, reveals a significant evasion. What if **all** who die in infancy are among the elect? Do we have a biblical basis for believing that all persons who die in infancy are among the elect?

We believe that Scripture does indeed teach that all persons who die in infancy are among the elect. This must not be based only in our hope that it is true, but in a careful reading of the Bible. We start with the biblical affirmations we have noted already. First, the Bible reveals that we are “brought forth in iniquity,” and thus bear the stain of original sin from the moment of our conception (Ps 51:5). Thus, we face squarely the sin problem. Second, we acknowledge that God is absolutely sovereign in salvation. We do not deserve salvation, and can do nothing to earn our salvation, and thus it is all of grace. Further, we understand that our salvation is established by God's election of sinners to salvation through Christ. Third, we affirm that Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is the sole and sufficient Savior and that salvation comes only on the basis of His blood atonement. Fourth, we affirm that the Bible teaches a dual eternal destiny – the redeemed to heaven, the unredeemed to hell.

What, then is our basis for claiming that all those who die in infancy are among the elect? First, the Bible teaches that we are to be judged on the basis of our deeds committed “in the body” (2 Cor 5:10). That is, we will face the judgment seat of Christ and be judged, not on the basis of original sin, but for our sins committed during our own lifetimes. Each will answer “according to what he has done,” and not for the sin of Adam (2 Cor 5:10). The imputation of Adam's sin and guilt explains our inability to respond to God without regeneration, but the Bible does not teach that we will answer for Adam's sin. We will answer for our own. But what about infants? Have those who die in infancy committed such sins in the body? We believe not.

One biblical text is particularly helpful at this point. After the children of Israel rebelled against God in the wilderness, God sentenced that generation to die in the wilderness after forty years of wandering. “Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers” (Deut 1:35). But this was not all. God specifically exempted young children and infants from this sentence, and even explained why He did so: “Moreover, your little ones who you said would become prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good and evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it” (Deut 1:39). The key issue here is that God specifically exempted from the judgment those who “have no knowledge of good or evil” because of their age. These “little ones” would inherit the Promised Land, and would not be judged on the basis of their fathers' sins.

We believe that this passage bears directly on the issue of infant salvation, and that the accomplished work of Christ has

removed the stain of original sin from those who die in infancy. Knowing neither good nor evil, these young children are incapable of committing sins in the body – they are not yet moral agents – and die secure in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John Newton, the great minister who wrote the hymn *Amazing Grace* was certain of this truth. He wrote to close friends who had lost a young child: “I hope you are both well reconciled to the death of your child. I cannot be sorry for the death of infants. How many storms do they escape! Nor can I doubt, in my private judgment, that they are included in the election of grace.”¹ The great Princeton theologians Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield held the same position.

One of the most eloquent and powerful expressions of this understanding of infant salvation came from the heart of Charles Spurgeon. Preaching to his own congregation, Spurgeon consoled grieving parents: “Now, let every mother and father here present know assuredly that it is well with the child, if God hath taken it away from you in its infant days.”² Spurgeon turned this conviction into an evangelistic call. “Many of you are parents who have children in heaven. Is it not a desirable thing that you should go there, too?” He continued, “Mother, unconverted mother, from the battlements of heaven your child beckons you to Paradise. Father, ungodly, impenitent father, the little eyes that once looked joyously on you, look down upon you now, and the lips which scarcely learned to call you father, ere they were sealed by the silence of death, may be heard as with a still small voice, saying to you this morning, ‘Father, must we be forever divided by the great gulf which no man can pass?’ Doth not nature itself put a sort of longing in your soul that you may be bound in the bundle of life with your own children?”

Jesus instructed his disciples that they should “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mark 10:14).

We believe that our Lord graciously and freely receives all those who die in infancy – not on the basis of their innocence or worthiness – but by His grace, made theirs through the atonement He purchased on the cross.

When we look into the grave of one of these little ones, we do not place our hope and trust in the false promises of an unbiblical theology, in the instability of sentimentalism, in the cold analysis of human logic nor in the cowardly refuge of ambiguity.

We place our faith in Christ, and trust Him to be faithful to His Word. We claim the promises of the Scriptures and the assurance of the grace of our Lord. We know that heaven will be filled with those who never grew to maturity on earth, but in heaven will greet us completed in Christ. Let us resolve by grace to meet them there. 🙏

By R. Albert Mobler Jr. and Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

1. John Newton, “Letter IX,” *The Works of John Newton* (London, 1820), p. 182.

2. Charles H. Spurgeon, “Infant Salvation” A sermon preached September 29, 1861. *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (London, 1861), p. 505.



THE URGENCY OF PREACHING

Has preaching fallen on hard times? An open debate is now being waged over the character and centrality of preaching in the church. At stake is nothing less than the integrity of Christian worship and proclamation.

How did this happen? Given the central place of preaching in the New Testament church, it would seem that the priority of biblical preaching should be uncontested.

Yet, numerous influential voices within evangelicalism suggest that the age of the expository sermon is now past. In its place, some contemporary preachers now substitute messages intentionally designed to reach secular or superficial congregations – messages which avoid preaching a biblical text, and thus avoid a potentially embarrassing confrontation with biblical truth.

A subtle shift visible at the onset of the twentieth century has become a great divide as the century ends. The shift from expository preaching to more topical and human-centered approaches has grown into a debate over the place of Scripture in preaching and the nature of preaching itself.

Two famous statements about preaching illustrate this growing divide. Reflecting poetically on the urgency and centrality of preaching, the Puritan pastor Richard Baxter once remarked, “I preach as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men.” With vivid expression and a sense of Gospel gravity, Baxter understood that preaching is literally a life or death affair. Eternity hangs in the balance as the preacher proclaims the Word.

Contrast that statement to the words of Harry Emerson Fosdick, perhaps the most famous (or infamous) preacher of last century’s early decades. “Preaching is personal counseling on a group basis.”

These two statements about preaching reveal the contours of the contemporary debate. For Baxter, the promise of heaven and the horrors of hell frame the preacher’s consuming burden. For Fosdick, the preacher is a kindly counselor offering helpful advice and encouragement.

The current debate over preaching is most commonly explained as an argument about the focus and shape of the sermon. Should the preacher seek to preach a biblical text through an expository sermon? Or, should the preacher direct the sermon to the “felt needs” and perceived concerns of the hearers?

Clearly, many evangelicals now favor the second approach. Urged on by devotees of “needs-based preaching,” many evangelicals have abandoned the text without recognizing that they have done so. These preachers may eventually get to the text in the course of the sermon, but the text does not set the agenda or establish the shape of the message.

Focusing on so-called “perceived needs” and allowing these

needs to set the preaching agenda inevitably leads to a loss of biblical authority and biblical content in the sermon. Yet, this pattern is increasingly the norm in many evangelical pulpits. Fosdick must be smiling from the grave.

Shockingly, this is now the approach evident in many evangelical pulpits. The sacred desk has become an advice center and the pew has become the therapist’s couch. Psychological and practical concerns have displaced theological exegesis and the preacher directs his sermon to the congregation’s perceived needs.

The problem is, of course, that the sinner does not know what his most urgent need is. She is blind to her need for redemption and reconciliation with God, and focuses on potentially real but temporal needs such as personal fulfillment, financial security, family peace and career advancement. Too many sermons settle for answering these expressed needs and concerns and fail to proclaim the Word of truth.

Without doubt, few preachers following this popular trend intend to depart from the Bible. But under the guise of an intention to reach modern secular men and women “where they are,” the sermon has been transformed into a success seminar. Some verses of Scripture may be added to the mix, but for a sermon to be genuinely biblical, the text must set the agenda as the foundation of the message – not as an authority cited for spiritual footnoting.

Charles Spurgeon confronted the very same pattern of wavering pulpits in his own day. Some of the most fashionable and well-attended London churches featured pulpiteers who were the precursors to modern needs-based preachers. Spurgeon – who managed to draw a few hearers despite his insistence on biblical preaching – confessed that “The true ambassador for Christ feels that he himself stands before God and has to deal with souls in God’s stead as God’s servant, and stands in a solemn place – a place in which unfaithfulness is inhumanity to man as well as treason to God.”

Spurgeon and Baxter understood the dangerous mandate of the preacher, and were therefore driven to the Bible as their only authority and message. They left their pulpits trembling with urgent concern for the souls of their hearers and fully aware of their accountability to God for preaching His Word, and His Word alone. Their sermons were measured by power; Fosdick’s by popularity.

The current debate over preaching may well shake congregations, denominations and the evangelical movement. But know this: The recovery and renewal of the church in this generation will come only when from pulpit to pulpit the herald preaches as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men. ❖

By R. Albert Mohler Jr.

DELIBERATE CHILDLESSNESS AND MORAL REBELLION

According to The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Joe and Deb Schum of Atlanta aren't worried about baby proofing their house or buying a car seat. As a matter of fact, the couple doesn't ever intend to have children and they are proud of their childlessness. According to the newspaper's report, "The Schums are part of a growing number of couples across the country for whom kids don't factor in the marriage equation."

"Many childless couples," according to the report, "revel in their decision, despite badgering from baffled mothers and friends. Others struggle with the choice before keeping the house kid-free."

This pattern of childlessness has caught the attention of others in the media. The left-wing Internet site Salon.com actually published a series of articles entitled, "To Breed or Not to Breed." These articles featured couples and individuals who have decided that children are not a part of their chosen lifestyle.

One woman wrote that parenthood just isn't a part of her plan, regardless of cultural expectations to the contrary. Motherhood just doesn't fit her self-image or her schedule. For others, the bottom line is simply financial. One woman asked: "What would the return be on the investment? Are there any laws that would require my children to pay for my nursing home when I am old? Are they going to be a sufficient hedge against poverty and loneliness?"

A return on investment?

Christians must recognize that this rebellion against parenthood represents nothing less than a revolt against God's design. Scripture points to barrenness as a great curse and children as a divine gift. The Psalmist declared: "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate" (Ps 127:3-5).

Morally speaking, the epidemic in this regard has nothing to do with those married couples who desire children but are for any reason unable to have them, but in those who are fully capable of hav-

ing children but reject this intrusion in their lifestyle.

The Scriptures do not envision married couples who choose not to have children. The shocking reality is that some Christians have bought into this lifestyle and claim childlessness as a legitimate option. The rise of modern contraceptives has made this technologically possible. But the fact remains that though childlessness may be made possible by the contraceptive revolution, it remains a form of rebellion against God's design and order.

Couples are not given the option of chosen childlessness in the biblical revelation. To the contrary, we are commanded to receive children with joy as God's gifts, and to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We are to find many of our deepest joys and satisfactions in the raising of children within the context of the family. Those who reject children want to have the joys of sex and marital companionship without the responsibilities of parenthood.

They rely on others to produce and sustain the generations to come.

This epidemic of chosen childlessness will not be corrected by secular rethinking. In an effort to separate the pleasure of sex from the power of procreation, modern Americans think that sex totally free from constraint or conception is their right. Children, of course, do represent a serious constraint on the life of parents. Parenthood is not a hobby, but represents one of the most crucial opportunities for the making of saints found in this life.

The church should insist that the biblical formula calls for adulthood to mean marriage and marriage to mean children. This reminds us of our responsibility to raise boys to be husbands and fathers and girls to be wives and mothers. God's glory is seen in this, for the family is a critical arena where the glory of God is either displayed or denied. It is just as simple as that.

The church must help this society regain its sanity on the gift of children. Willful barrenness and chosen childlessness must be named as moral rebellion. To demand that marriage means sex – but not children – is to defraud the Creator of His joy and pleasure in seeing the saints raising His children. 📖

By R. Albert Mobler Jr.



No ordinary God: A Christian worldview Reset

The foundation of the Christian worldview is the knowledge of the one true God. The fact of God's existence sets this worldview apart from all others – and our knowledge of God is entirely dependent upon the gift of divine revelation.

All Christians need a regular “reset” of

our worldview perspective. The

times demand that we ad-

dress the pressing issues

and controversies of

the day with Chris-

tian truth. Eternity

demands that we

take every thought

back to the reality

of God's existence

and the revelation of

His character and will.

The world's rejection of the Christian worldview is rooted in its ignorance or rejection of the one true God. Thus, a moral recovery must follow a theological recovery – and that represents the true nature of our challenge.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God spoke these words: “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord . . .” (Jer 9:23-24). The highest aspiration of the human soul and mind must be to know the one true and living God, to enjoy Him, and to serve Him with gladness.

The good news is that a vast majority of Americans report a belief in God. Indeed, pollsters indicate that only a bare fraction of Americans are atheists or agnostics. If you take these data at face value, you would think America must be experi-

encing a great revival and spiritual recovery. This is hardly the case, however. Do Americans live as if they believe in a God of holiness who hates sin? Do Americans fear a God of wrath who shall surely judge sinners? Do Americans find their security in a God of omnipotence who holds all creation by the power of His might and the exercise of His providence? Do Americans believe in a God who created the heavens and the earth? Do Americans find their hope in a God who is rich in mercy? I think not; and the polls indicate not. The bad news is that the god in whom millions of Americans believe is not the God of the Bible.

A remarkable insight into the contrast of this apparent religious belief with genuine faith in the living God is found in a study of the British population. Like Americans, the great majority of Britons report a belief in God. The pollsters then asked a revealing question: “Do you believe in a God who can change the course of events on earth?” One man's response was taken as so indicative of the public's general view, that his answer became the title of the study. Do you believe in a God who can change the course of events on earth? “No,” he replied, “just the ordinary one.” Just the ordinary God, he said – meaning a god empty of identity and lacking in definition. This god provides an easy answer for a pollster, but is not a God who rules the universe, not a God who can change your life, surely not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – clearly not the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This man's response is, I believe, sadly indicative of modern belief in God. It is not a true belief at all, but superstition at best. We are standing once again where the Apostle Paul once stood at Mars Hill in Athens. Acts chapter 17 tells us that Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with the inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.”



Our message must be the same. “Men and Women of America, we observe that you are very religious in all respects. We have seen your altars and your crystals, we have heard your prayers and have watched your lives, we have observed your worship and heard your conversations. What you worship in ignorance, this we proclaim to you.”

The unavoidable truth is that most modern Americans do not know God. Ignorance of basic biblical truth is rampant and now expected. People are perishing because of a lack of knowledge. Remarkably, this is a problem inside, as well as outside, the church. Many church members are as ignorant of the true and living God as is the general public. Too many pulpits are silent and compromised. The ‘ordinary God’ of popular belief is the only God known by so many. The God of the Bible is as unknown in many pews as He is unknown in the world at large.

The problem is rooted in the godlessness of our age, and in the secularization of our culture. The disease is

also present in so much of what is called modern theology. For too long we have had theologians who have told us that God is doing the best He can under the circumstances. For too long we have been told that we must outgrow the primitive belief in God found in the Bible. For too long we have been told that God is

lacking the power to effect His will. For too long we have seen the God of the Bible replaced with the God of the modern theologians – a God who generally means well, but cannot accomplish His will. This God is a spectator, not a sovereign.

The one true God, the God who revealed Himself in the Bible, is a God who defines His own existence, sets His own terms and rules over His own creation. The sheer shallowness of modern “spirituality” stands as a monument to the human attempt to rob God of His glory. Our much-needed worldview reset will require a comprehensive theological reformation – and that will start with a profound recovery of the knowledge of God. 📖

By R. Albert Mohler Jr.



Many church members are as ignorant of the true and living God as is the general public.



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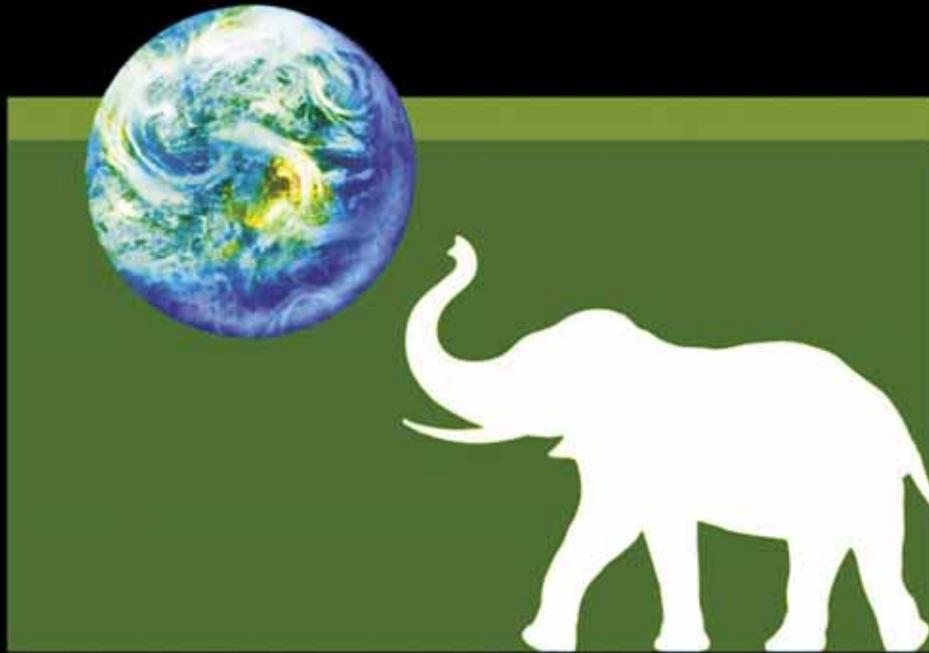
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A creationist watches



Animal Planet™

There are many tensions between so-called “young earth creationists” and “old earth creationists,” those who believe the universe is thousands of years old and those who accept contemporary dating of the universe at billions of years.

For a long time, I believed that Scripture was silent on the question of the age of the universe. After all, “day” in Scripture can and often does refer to a long period of time (the “day” of the Lord, for example). In recent months, however, as I have

... we have a storyline of origins that answers the most basic hopes and fears of all human beings ...

been teaching through Genesis and working on a lengthy article on general revelation, I have slowly changed my mind. The main issue for me is not the exegetical arguments for the use of the word “day” (although there are some compelling evidences there for 24-hour days in Genesis).

I think, however, what convinced me that the universe is much younger than we’ve been told was an episode of television’s “Animal Planet.” Specifically, the problem for Christian theology is the picture of a python swallowing a

pig. Is this what God created and declared good?

I find the primary text for understanding the age of the universe is Romans 8, in which the Apostle Paul reiterates the Genesis teaching that death and decay comes through sin. For Paul, this is not simply human bondage but the slavery of the entire created order, a created order over which the image-bearing sons of God were intended to rule in Adam.

We seem to recognize the problem of “natural evil” when it damages homes or property. Hurricane Katrina caused just such reflection – among both believers and skeptics. But too often there is an uncanny silence when we watch the image of a lioness tearing apart the bloody muscle of an antelope flickering by on the Discovery Channel. Such, we are told, is “natural” – and therefore morally neutral. This has not always been so.

C.S. Lewis, for instance, agonized over how to reconcile animal violence with a good Creator in his classic book, “The Problem of Pain.” Lewis’s conclusion was that predation is not in any sense “natural” – but can only be rooted in the ancient satanic rebellion. In the current era, author Matthew Scully has pointed to ancient Christian thought on the evil of predation in order to rebut the poor stewardship of animals by humans who point to the violent natural order as the “natural state” of animal life, a state that can morally be replicated in inhumane factory farms or research laboratories.

And yet, if Christians are ever to provide a “counter-story” to the Darwinist creation myth, we must account for a nature that certainly does seem red in tooth and claw, not only in terms of the obvious predators, but also in terms of the (often even more dangerous) microbial parasites.

I am more and more convinced that young earth creationism

answers these questions in a way that is faithful to Scripture, the historic confessions of the Christian church throughout the ages, and to the longings of the human heart for a God who created a world he declared “good.”

This doesn’t mean we have a ready-made scientific answer for every possible objection to a creationist understanding of the fossil record and astrophysics. Sometimes we must recognize that we are not at the point where we can know exactly how the shifting standards of science fit with divine revelation. More important is the fact that we have a storyline of origins that answers the most basic hopes and fears of all human beings, a story that resonates with our human experience of both dignity and frustration.

Christians should recognize that to us has been revealed the “mystery” of the purpose of creation (Eph 1:9-10). We know that the Wisdom that ordered the cosmos, the Word that called the galaxies together, is a Person – our King Jesus. We should recognize that the ends of the cosmos have been created as an inheritance for Jesus (Ps 2:8). He has been appointed “the heir of all things, through whom He also created the world” (Heb 1:2).

It should boggle our minds when we look at the far-off images from the Hubble telescope to recognize that these – and galaxies far beyond our reach or imagination – have been formed for Jesus and will be reconciled by the blood of His cross (Col 1:19-20). This means we should learn to interpret all of reality in terms of how it fits with God’s overall purpose to “sum up all things in Christ” (Eph 1:10). As the believing community, we have the interpretive grid for this – the Scriptures and the Spirit whereby we share “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16). In so doing, let’s remember to train up our children to recognize Darwinism for what it is. But let’s also remember to never be ashamed of what Scripture tells us – that long ago in an ancient land a king and a queen stood before a six-day old universe, and God called it “good.” That might not fit with your local high school’s biology textbook. But it makes sense of “Animal Planet.” 🐘

By Russell D. Moore

... if Christians are ever to provide a “counter- story” to the Darwinist creation myth, we must account for a nature that certainly does seem red in tooth and claw ...

Why I'm a happy "Evangelical"

The television program *"Seinfeld"* once featured a dentist who converted to Judaism and then began telling jokes about Jews. Jerry Seinfeld was uncomfortable but was assured by the dentist that he couldn't be anti-Semitic since he was, in fact, a Jew. Seinfeld suspected though that he had converted just so he could tell "the jokes." There is no comparison between anti-Semitism and anti-evangelicalism, but I sometimes get the same feeling as Jerry Seinfeld when I read comments by evangelicals bemoaning evangelicalism on the Internet.

I am what most would call a conservative evangelical; some would call me a fundamentalist. I am a Southern Baptist who believes in all the fundamentals, that biblical inerrancy is important, that personal regeneration is essential to the Christian life, and that conscious faith in Christ is necessary for salvation. I believe that Intelligent Design doesn't satisfy questions about origins nearly as well as old, pre-modern six-day creation. I believe not just in the complementarity of the sexes but in self-sacrificial patriarchy in the church and home. I do know Greek, but I still believe that "teetotalism" is the best option for my churches in the contemporary cultural context. I'm a convinced Protestant who believes in *sola scriptura* and *sola fide* without reservation. I think there's no such thing as an infant baptism, and that Jesus was immersed in the Jordan River. With all of this, I still think "mere Christianity" is an important thing, and that we can learn from one another even as we honestly lay out our very important differences.

I'm as frustrated as the next man about much of what passes for "evangelicalism" in the pages of *Christianity Today* and at colleges such as Wheaton and seminaries such as Fuller Theological Seminary. I roll my eyes in frustration at the faddishness of some mega-churches and the retreat liberalism of the "emerging churches."

And yet, I'm not all that worried about "evangelicalism." Indeed, I've found that most of the harshest "inside the tent" critics of evangelicalism share the basic assumptions of the early pioneers of the movement: that a constellation of para-church ministries and

institutions, unaccountable to specific local churches, can have an identity at all. Indeed, I've found that some of the harshest critics of evangelicalism are also the least ecclesially situated, and thus the most prone to the individualism that, it is asserted, threatens evangelicalism – whatever that is.

Yes, there are many "evangelical" denominations. But that is simply because "evangelical" is an adjective, not really a noun.

There are many Catholic "denominations" too, if one wishes to speak of Jesuits and Dominicans and Charles Curran-types and Mother Angelica-types in these terms. Yes, there are many evangelicals shot through with individualism. And there are Catholics and Orthodox who know barely anyone in their local parishes. Every tradition has its besetting sins, and usually all of us suffer from the same sins in different ways.

This is because Zion is not yet here.

I suppose I am a happy evangelical, precisely because I don't see myself as such, ever, except to explain myself in the broadest of terms to someone else. On Sunday morning I will not go to an "evangelical" church, but to Ninth and O Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist church with which

I am in holy covenant and a church that cooperates with like-minded Southern Baptist churches all over the world toward the Great Commission. The happiest and most vibrant "evangelicals" I know are in the same situation, though perhaps in confessional Presbyterian or Missouri Synod Lutheran or Pentecostal or Bible churches.

And that's how changes are to be made in "evangelicalism." It is not through new structures or initiatives but through confessional churches baptizing new converts and discipling the old ones. These churches are everywhere. They're growing and they're making a difference. They are on the move, but they recognize that there is no such thing as an "evangelical movement," and it's a good thing too. They proclaim the gospel but they don't really think of themselves as "evangelicals," not that there's anything wrong with that. ♣

By Russell D. Moore



Christ, Katrina, and my hometown



istockphoto.com,
by Rebekah Blocher

In a very real sense, my hometown no longer exists. And I watched it all on CNN.

I am from Biloxi, Miss. My family members are there now, having endured the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The house I grew up in is a complete catastrophe, but at least it was not completely swept away. And as I spent most of that frightful night praying and flipping from CNN to FOX News to MSNBC, I am reminded of how unnatural natural disasters really are.

The news reports, both nationally televised and through the south Mississippi grapevine, sound almost like a bad apocalyptic novel. Beauvoir, the Biloxi home of Confederate President Jefferson Davis, was destroyed. This old Coast landmark had stood since 1854. The home of my friend and former boss, U.S. Rep. Gene Taylor, was destroyed and washed away. He and his wife, Margaret, have lost everything. The mausoleums in some of the graveyards are said to have opened, with coffins and bodies floating down the streets. I watch the news reports, watching the place where I proposed to my wife, the place where I surrendered to ministry, the place where I ran down the beaches with my brothers, and all of it is gone.

As Christians we know something about Katrina that the rest of the world just can't know: This is not the way it is meant to be.

The Psalmist reminds us that God originally put all things under the feet of Adam (Ps 8:6). But the writer of Hebrews reminds us that we do not yet see all things under the feet of humanity (Heb 2:8), although we do see a crucified and resurrected Jesus (Heb 2:9). The apostle Paul likewise reminds us that the creation itself groans under the reign of sin and death, waiting for its rightful rulers to assume their thrones in the resurrection (Rom 8:20-23). The storms and the waves are one

more reminder that the "already" has not yet been replaced by the "not yet."

Against the backdrop of the hurricane, consider the contrast between the prophet Jonah and the Messiah Jesus. Like Jonah, Jesus is confronted by a seemingly murderous storm, with his fellow travelers convinced they would perish. Whereas Jonah the sinner could only still the storm by throwing himself into its midst, Jesus exercises dominion over the winds and the waves with his voice. Mark reminds us that the boat's occupants remarked: "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41).

The CNN meteorologists can explain the hurricane only in terms of barometric pressure and water temperatures. We know, however, that at its root this natural disaster isn't natural at all. It is a creation crying out, "Adam, where are you?"

My hometown isn't there anymore. But, then again, it never really was. The hope after Katrina is not for civil defense and architectural rebuilding. It is for Biloxi, Miss., and all of the created universe, to be redeemed and restored in Christ. There will come a day when the curse is reversed, and the Gulf Coast along with the entire cosmos fully reflects the glory of a resurrected Messiah. John saw in his vision that, on that day, "the sea was no more" (Rev 21:1). He also saw that in the Holy City, "nothing unclean will ever enter it" (Rev 21:27).

That includes the curse of Eden and all of its children: including a hurricane named Katrina. On that day, and not until then, nothing will ever threaten the New Jerusalem, our hometown. 🏰

By Russell D. Moore

The spiritual discipline of “Sir” and “Ma’am”

When one of my sons responded recently to a grown woman with a “yeah,” he received discipline from his father. It was a lesson passed down through the generations, because I received the same discipline. One responded to a grown man with a “yes sir” and to a grown woman with a “yes ma’am.” I grew up in an intentionally undignified Sandy Creek tradition Baptist church. We sang “Count Your Many

Blessings,” not “The Lord Is in His Holy Temple.” Still, our pastor was “Brother Naron.” If we had called him by his first name, we would have walked a familiar path to the switch tree.

This may be chalked up to Southern culture, and indeed it is rooted in old patterns of Southern manners. But what if Southern sensibilities about terms of address were rooted in something older yet?

Steve Hutchens, my fellow editor at Touchstone magazine, has raised on the magazine’s website the issue of manners and terms of address. He rightly contrasts the modern egalitarian ideal with a Christian view that goes far beyond manners.

“As Christians we are bound to give honor to those to whom honor is due, which includes the honor due everyone as made in the image of God (it is why we should both execute murderers and treat them humanely; it is why we treat unborn children as whole people), and then also of the ‘office’ he or she bears, beginning with ‘Father’ and ‘Mother,’” Hutchens writes. “This is why, I suspect, the various leveling movements in the history of the church have attracted only minorities, and have been very susceptible to heresy. Refusal to recognize the hierarchies placed in the world by its Maker, after his own image, is a recipe for not only theological but cultural disaster.”

Could such words sound any more alien to contemporary American culture, even conservative evangelical culture?

I sometimes still feel strange and rude calling my mentor, teacher and president Albert Mohler by his first name, even though I’m now his vice president rather than his research assistant and student. And yet, I’m amazed at how many Gen Y Southern Baptists speak about “Al” or “Paige” (although, remarkably, should any of the men referenced actually be present, such familiarity predictably reverts back to “Dr. Mohler” or “Dr. Patterson” or what have you).

Terms of address can be overdone, of course. Jesus counsels against those who insist on elaborate recognitions in public places (Matt 23:1-7). He insists we recognize that our ultimate “Father” and “Rabbi” (Matt 23:8-11) is not human but divine in the same way no one is anything but relatively good (Matt 19:17). But Jesus also recognized authority and even hierarchy in the choosing of the foundation stones of his temple, apostles whose authority was recognized by the church, and is still recognized as we listen to the Spirit through the Holy Scriptures they were inspired to write.

The problem with teaching honor through terms of address comes down to the fact that many people believe the issue is personal. When I tell my boys to say hello to “Mr. Smith,” Smith will often respond by saying, “Oh, it is fine for him to call me John.” Well, no, it really is not fine, because the issue is not what they call Smith.

The issue is instead that I want them to understand respect for elders and honor for authority. I want them to understand this not so John Smith will feel honored or respected or anything else. I want them to do so for the same reason they call me “Dad” and not “Russell D.” I want them to do so that ultimately they will understand and follow a Lord and a King.

Yes, I realize I’m probably a bit hyper-scrupulous about this. Mississippi mores are not easily overcome. But I want to raise three young men who are able to look King Jesus in the eye, and then bow before Him on the Day of Judgment. I want them to understand the goodness of hierarchy when hierarchy is good. I want to see our Lord Christ ask them if they wish to enter into a new creation which is not an egalitarian democracy but a glorious monarchy.

And I want to hear them say “Yes sir.”

By Russell D. Moore



**I want them to do so that
ultimately they will understand
and follow a Lord and a King.**

Russia's orphans & the Father of the fatherless

Somewhere in the Kremlin, officials are weighing whether to cut off the adoption of Russian children to Americans and other foreigners. As I type this, two former Russian orphans, my sons Benjamin and Timothy, are running around my chair singing songs.

At issue are a series of horrible abuse cases in which American families have harmed or even killed their children. These cases have given impetus to a nativist Russian nationalism that hates the idea of their children becoming, of all things, Americans.

Nonetheless, it would be quite different if there were a vibrant adoption culture in the former USSR. This is not the case. The leftover effects of Communist materialism matched with the instability of the new economy have resulted in a skyrocketing abortion rate and orphanages filled with abandoned infants and children. The children who are not adopted languish in these orphanages until they are old enough to be thrown out into society, where they often find few options beyond the Russian military, prostitution or suicide.

The Russian orphanage where my wife and I found our sons, then Maxim and Sergei, was the most horrifying place I have ever been. Its sights and smells and sounds come back to me every day. But, even more so, before my mind's eye every day are the faces of the children we couldn't adopt. I fear that these children will be sentenced to institutions, never to find families.

Yesterday my now four year-old Benjamin

walked up and hugged my leg, saying to me (in the little southern accent he picked up from us): "I'm glad you're my daddy, and I'm glad I'm your son." I have learned more about the Gospel of Jesus Christ from such statements than from all my studies in systematic theology. Before I met these two, I "knew" all about what it means to have a new name in Christ, a new household, a new identity, new brothers and sisters. But I knew so very little about these things.

There are other Maxims and Sergeis, sitting day and night in cribs somewhere in Russia. Let's pray that the Russian people make the right decisions for them. And let's pray for the providence of the One who promises to be a Father to the fatherless, the One who has adopted us as sons in Christ (Rom 8:15), teaching us to cry through the Spirit what many of these children will never learn to say: "Abba, Father." As perhaps one of the world's greatest examples of the "least of these," they are Jesus' little brothers, after all (Matt 25:40). 🙏

By Russell D. Moore

"I'M GLAD YOU'RE MY DADDY, AND I'M GLAD I'M YOUR SON."

photo by John Gill



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An awesome cover-up

God created the world, but the opponents of Intelligent Design (ID) would have us believe that, if He did so, He did it without a trace – or that it would be unscientific to admit that you found His fingerprints on nature.

They are ideologically, or at least methodologically, committed to a certain blindness should indicators of divine handiwork present themselves. To keep things strictly kosher, according to their form of secular legalism, you have to stick to a purely materialistic, naturalistic account of things if you are to continue to minister in the temple of science. Never mind that God built the temple of science, providing the natural laws and the scientists' wits.

"Friends of science" urge ID proponents to limit God talk to Sunday School if they can't help themselves, but to shut up about God on the public school field trip. Instead, they must stick to some version of "it just happened" — proteins clumped, enzymes flexed, primordial soup bubbled, winds blew, things mated, mutants soared, and Voila! — you have Bach's St. Matthew Passion. While evolutionists may not be able to say exactly how we got from trilobites to the Reformation using only natural selection, we just have to give them time. Time, that is, of two sorts: 1. gazillions of years to allow for all the happy and unhappy accidents it took for raw carbon (wherever that came from) and other elements to form single-cell organisms and then develop into Harvard professors; 2. gazillions of years (if necessary) for scientists to figure out a purely materialistic yarn. They demand a blank check wherewith to buy all the time they need, no matter how obvious it is to most that they'll never succeed in marginalizing God's contribution.

I'm reminded of the popular TV show, "CSI" (Crime Scene Investigation), where forensic scientists track down criminals who do their best to cover their tracks. Try as these felons might to swab up the blood, burn the documents, or bury the weapons, the sleuths (I've always wanted to use that word since reading the "Hardy Boys" mysteries in my childhood) track them down, whether with black light, DNA analysis of a single hair, carpet-fiber provenance or microscopic scrutiny of scratches on a thigh bone.

Imagine a CSI cop announcing, without so much as a glance, that the corpse in the park "just died" and then shushing anyone who suggested it wasn't simply from natural causes. When a rookie suggests that someone else might have been involved, he's quickly told that good CSI men don't talk that way, that the only proper explanation involves something like a blood clot in the brain, a falling branch or potassium imbalance. To suggest otherwise is simply unscientific. Of course, that would be ridiculous, yet biologists get away with this sort of imperious behavior all the time.

In suggesting that a purely physical explanation is possible, they, in effect, credit God with the most amazing cover-up in history. Though the Lord has created everything and sustains the universe with His unflinching attention, he has done so without giving away His activity. On their model, one can study the eye or the food chain for a lifetime and find not a trace of intelligence to it; it's just chance circumstance. What a master God is at masking His providence! Of course, I'm being sarcastic. Signs are everywhere, as countless scientists and poets have declared throughout the centuries.

But surely I'm missing the point. It's not that scientists deny the existence of God. (Actually many of them do, from

Oxford's vituperative Richard Dawkins to 90 percent of the membership of the National Academy of Sciences, who obviously favor agnostics and atheists in choosing their colleagues.) It's that they have to stick to testable hypotheses while doing science. And, so their reasoning goes, God's presence is not verifiable by experience.

But wait. In real life, CSI people don't always have closure; they don't always get their man or woman; sometimes they don't even succeed in confirming their hypothesis that someone did it. Does that make their unverified claims unscientific? No, for there is conceivable confirmation of their beliefs if not actual confirmation. They can imagine what it would be like to catch the culprit. But, so the evolutionists' argument goes, there is no conceivable way to confirm experientially a claim that God is/was involved in nature's workings.

Technically, that's not true. In the Judgment, before every knee bows and every tongue confesses, the Lord could say to scientists and non-scientists alike, "By the way, if you haven't figured it out by now, I made the universe." That would be confirmation, wouldn't it? But today's evolutionist would retort, "But not confirmation during this present age, when science must do its work." OK, so try this. Imagine that one day at noon, every engine and motor on earth shuts down. When people run outside to see what happened, a booming voice proclaims, "I am the Lord God, and I have stopped things to announce my sovereignty!" That would be sweet confirmation in this present age.

But again, they would say something like, "That would be a miracle, and not the stuff of science. We have to work with regularities." Hold on. They asked only for conceivable verification, not for actual verification, and not conceivable verification using only ordinary physical laws. Now they're arguing in a circle, or question-begging. They've excluded intelligent design by definition. It's like proving the illegitimacy of intelligent design by stipulating the illegitimacy of intelligent design.

Besides, the noon-time announcement would not simply be a physical miracle, like the arbitrary reversal of a river's flow and the mid-January budding of a pear tree in sub-zero weather. God is not a thing. He's a person, an all-powerful person, and He can do what He jolly well pleases when He jolly well pleases.

You really don't need astonishing mid-day announcements from the heavens to understand somebody is behind the universe. Most people can tell just by looking. And ID theorists are work-

ing to show that you can demonstrate personal involvement in nature using the standard canons of science. But above this, what's wrong with a good dose of academic humility? Doctors can have it, and they're scientifically respectable. Don't we hear them saying from time to time, "There's nothing that can explain this except divine action"? They know there is more to the universe than the domain of endoplasmic reticula, synapses and mutagens. And they don't lose their licenses or reputations when they admit this. So what's with the evolutionary biologists and their imperious or craven parrots? 🙄

By Mark Coppenger

When marriage isn't God's will

I never stop marveling at the way in which those who profess Christ will barge ahead with romances and even marriage plans where the Bible gives them no encouragement whatsoever. When the “love bug” bites, they will toss aside scruples, ignore Scripture, alienate their believing friends, horrify their family and embarrass the church. They will even fornicate and cohabit as they slide into marriage. And though they may make a gesture or two toward breaking it off, they'll then mope around as martyrs, only to spring back into each other's arms at the slightest prompting from their fevered brows. As a ministerial colleague volunteered last week, there's virtually no talking them out of it.

Why is this so? I can think of two reasons right off: relationship idolatry and mission deficit.

Most people would be satisfied with someone who would hold them on a cold night, offer a sympathetic shoulder to cry on, darn their socks or chop their wood, laugh with them over the intricacies of domesticity, buy them presents, plan trips with them and accompany them to entertainments. They just want someone who will make them feel good in a warmhearted sort of way. Who doesn't?

Relationships can be wonderful – unless, that is, they violate God's counsel. But God's counsel is usually displaced in this culture, relegated to the back shelves, well behind the prime stock of affections, affirmations and commiserations – even in church. Some call it the “Oprahfication of America.” Holiness is nice, but it doesn't have a chance against feelings.

Second, being “unequally yoked” or “living in sin” has little effect on spiritually useless lives. If there is no ministry to damage, no ministry gets damaged. With or without the stain of sexual or marital indiscretion, a vapid life is still vapid, at least in Kingdom terms. If you have no sense of teamship in marriage for the sake of the Great Commission, you hardly notice the loss when the very ground of that teamship – holy matrimony between a consecrated man and woman – is ignored.

Which brings me to Lottie Moon, the namesake of Southern

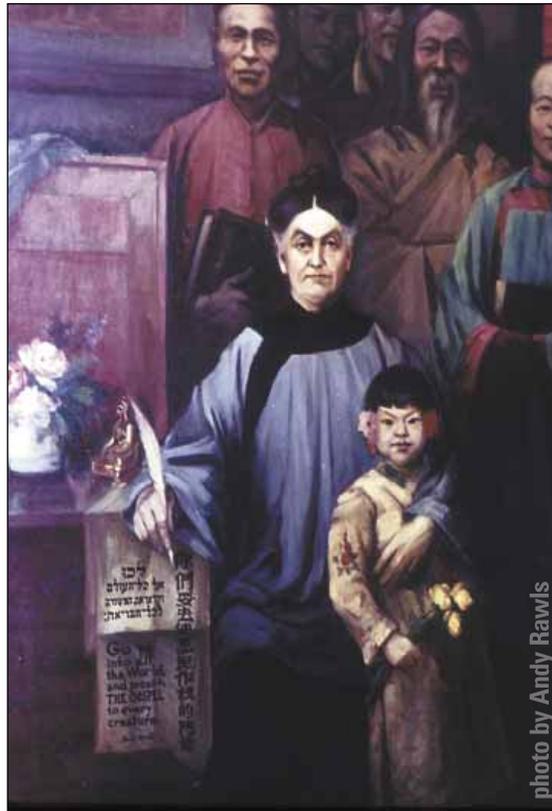
Baptists' annual offering for International Missions. She was engaged to Crawford Toy, a rising star in the universe of Baptist, and indeed American, academia. But when she found his treatment of Scripture objectionable, she walked away from the relationship and chose a life of sacrificial solitude half a world away. Consider this passage from Irwin Hyatt's book, “Our Ordered Lives Confess: Three 19th Century Missionaries in East Shantung,” found at the SBC website:

Professor Toy, as he had now become, wrote reproposing marriage and suggesting mission work together in Japan. ... He was known as a brilliant linguist and theologian. Following the Civil War he had studied in Europe, where he was exposed to Darwinian theory and to 'the new ideas of the German scholars' on Old Testament history and inspiration. ... Her conclusion was that ... evolution was for her an 'untenable position.' ... Later in China, heated letters arrive, and 'The temptation is great.' The professor, however, now espouses theories that 'do not square with God's Word.' Rejecting C.H. Toy, Harvard and glory, Miss Moon says, 'My cross is loneliness. ...'

Of course, Lottie Moon was concerned with relationships, but those that mattered most were with her Lord and with the Chinese people to whom he sent her on mission. She could have consorted and snuggled with Professor Toy in Massachusetts or Japan, but she knew that he was not her soulmate on mission for the Lord. This was quite enough to end that romance and free her for heroic service in Christ.

Those seeking marriage outside the counsel of God often quote the Genesis verse that says it was not good for Adam to be alone. I've just passed the life-sized portrait of Lottie Moon, hanging in Southern Seminary's Honeycutt Center, and I've been reminded that she was not at all alone. Standing around her are five Chinese beneficiaries of her life, prepared to say, “Thank you, Miss Moon” (and not “Mrs. Toy”).

By Mark Coppenger



GOD DOES NOT JUMP THROUGH HOOPS

A recent survey of heart-bypass patients in six hospitals showed almost identical recovery rates for those prayed for and for those not receiving prayer. Though I'm sorry that a number of patients suffered setbacks, I'm glad God didn't cooperate with this "Study of the Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer" (STEP).

God's not a lab animal, subject to clinical trials. Neither is He an automatic secretion which can be triggered by one stimulus or another. He is a person with a sovereign will, with the highest dignity and honor, and experiments can be right undignified.

So what shall we make of the intercessory prayer test? Well, first, I assume that the STEP team was well-meaning, even hoping to find a strong connection between prayer and recovery. That way, they could encourage the enlistment of intercessors to speed or secure healing. But their approach was wanting. Reading through STEP's press release, I see that the praying volunteers (both Catholic and Protestant) followed prescribed start and stop times, employed at least some formulaic wording, and worked only with first names and last initials. This seems to fall short of James 5:16, which teaches that the fervent prayers of the

righteous are effective. "Fervent clinical prayer" may be an oxymoron, and who knows if those praying were sold-out Christians?

But more than this, how could God submit Himself to this trial? In a sense, the STEP team held a hoop in front of the Lord and said, "It's showtime." That He did not jump is not surprising.

Some believers have retreated to the position that prayer doesn't change the world, just the praying person. It is meant only to bring the heart of the petitioner or intercessor in line with the will of God. Well, certainly that is an important component of prayer, but I think that view fails to do the biblical witness justice. Prayer is more than personal consecration; it is also, under God's sovereignty, strategic, impactful work in the world.

If all the data for all the righteous, fervent prayers for the sick in church history were in, I am confident that intercessory prayer would be shown to "work." (Though, of course, Christianity is more about how to die than how not to die.) I am just as confident that God is not amused at calls to perform healing feats on cue, and that He will ignore and resist the ringmasters, whether they wear lab coats or preacher garb. 🏴‍☠️

Responding to God's call to Romania: the story of Trevin Wax



While there are many opinions of what defines success – wealth, fame, business acumen – Trevin Wax recognizes that success in God's eyes takes on a different flavor.

"In God's eyes, it doesn't matter how much you acquire in the eyes of others, how popular you are, how successful your

business is or even how many evangelistic tracts you hand out. True greatness means suffering, serving and sacrifice."

Wax is a first-year master of divinity student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and this is a quote from his book "Red Letters: Devotional Thoughts on the Eternal Words of Christ." In the preface to the book, Wax said his desire with the book is to help people learn, love and live the words of Christ.

Suffering, serving, sacrificing, learning, loving and living the words of Christ are modeled by Wax's life.

Wax was born and raised in Murfreesboro, Tenn., just outside of Nashville, and attended the same Christian school from kindergarten through high school. Wax said he became a Christian at age four and was baptized at age eight, crediting his parents for greatly impacting his spiritual growth.

"Both of my parents are strong, committed believers and my dad is a Sunday school teacher and chairman of the deacons in our church," he said. "I see in my dad the character that a Christian should have and both of my parents have the

After graduating from high school in 1999, Wax worked for a year and went on two more mission trips to Romania. Between the two trips, Wax became convinced that God wanted him to go to college in Romania and in September 2000, he made the move.

Adjusting to the culture

The first year in Romania, Wax lived in a local village and focused on learning the Romanian language and adapting to the culture.

“It was a great village and a great experience to live in that kind of a setting,” he said. “I lived in a house with no running water, no indoor plumbing and where the chicken you eat for Sunday dinner was running around the night before. It was very rural, but the people were fantastic. I was able to begin preaching, teaching and working with the youth in a church in the village.”

After the first year, Wax began working on his bachelor’s degree in pastoral theology at Emanuel University of Oradea, becoming the first American student to enroll at the school.

While taking classes, Wax said he filled in for pastors at several different local churches serving as a “circuit-riding preacher without the horse.”

“Because pastors are so few and far between they usually have more than one church and they can’t be in every church at once,” he said. “When the pastor would be in another church I would fill in at one of his other churches, and I had four main churches that I preached in.”

The churches ranged in size from two to 60 people and Wax said that he grew as a minister from the experience.

“I would lead worship, do the prayer hour and preach and all of this in Romanian,” he said. “It was definitely a challenging experience. It was one of those things where I jumped out of the boat like Peter and drowned a few times before I started walking.”

Wax’s devotional book on the words of Jesus began to develop in 2002 as he did serious study in the Gospels.

“I wanted to have an outlet for my study, so I decided to do a weekly email devotional as I went along where I took something that Jesus said and expounded on it briefly,” he said.

This evolved into the book, which was published in 2004, an 18-week study based on the words of Christ. Wax said he recently emailed devotional number

173 and would eventually like to have a year’s worth of devotionals.

Getting married and coming home

Wax met his future wife, Corina, at Emanuel University shortly after he moved to Romania. They were married Dec. 21, 2002. On June 25, 2004, son Timothy was born. In May 2005, Wax graduated as the valedictorian of his class. He said that one lesson he learned was that though Romanian Christians are poor financially, they are rich spiritually.

“One year I went home for Christmas. When I got back to Romania and went back to the family that I had been staying with on weekends in the village they had saved me a shoebox they had gotten for Christmas,” he said. “It hit me for the first time that they were the type of people who were receiving Franklin Graham’s Samaritan’s Purse shoeboxes and they thought enough to save me a shoebox.”

“That is when it hit me that the people who receive those shoeboxes are real people, who have real emotions, real needs, real heartaches and real happiness and joy. I learned that people are people no matter how poor or rich they are.”

After graduating, Wax returned to America to earn a master of divinity and chose to go to Southern Seminary for several reasons.

“Southern, being the oldest of the Southern Baptist schools, was a factor and it was close enough to my home for us to be able to go home sometimes,” he said. “I knew that it was strong as an academic school. Southern puts out thinkers. I wanted an education where I would not only be trained in preaching and teaching, but also as a thinker and a writer.”

Wax began his studies at Southern in August 2005, working in the biblical and theological studies track in the School of Theology. He said that once he graduates, his ministry will probably include work in America and Romania.

“God hasn’t revealed to us where He wants us to be established, but we will either be in Romania most of the time and America some of the time or vice versa,” he said. “Preaching, teaching and writing are the main gifts God has blessed me with and I want to use them for His glory.”

By Garrett E. Wisball

I wanted an education
where I would not
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thinker and a writer.

gift of discernment and they have used it well and passed that on to me.”

In 1997, at age 15, Wax’s future life work began to come into focus. That year, he took a two-week mission trip to Romania with his dad and pastor, where they led several evangelistic services. Wax said that trip “got his feet wet” and every year after that he went back on mission trips with his church.

“I was the first person to sign the list every year that we went back,” he said. “I fell in love with the country and God really gave me a heart for the Romanian people.”

Whitney thankful for healing

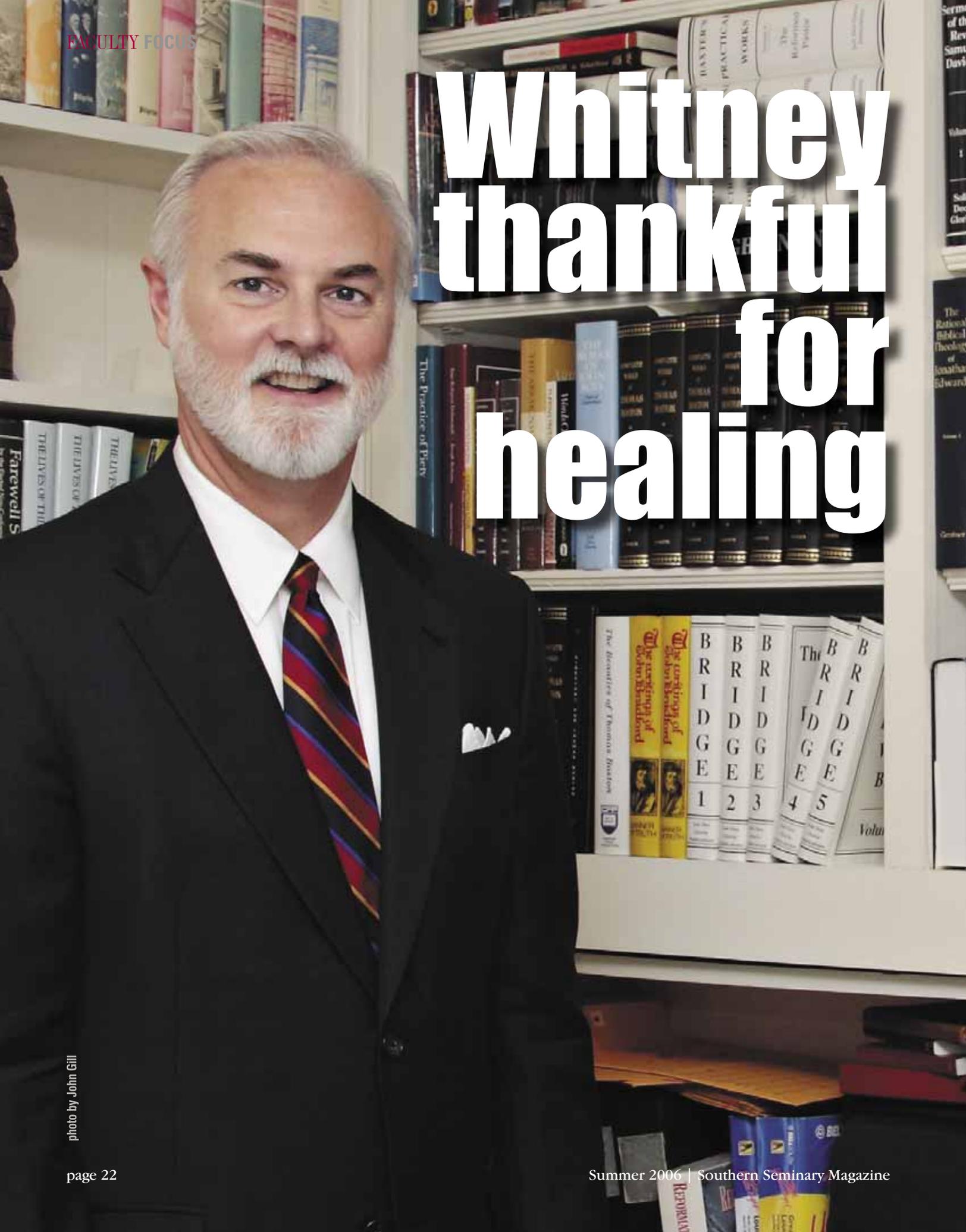


photo by John Gill

Just 11 days before Christmas last year, Don Whitney received three words from his doctor that no one wants to hear: “You have cancer.”

Whitney, who serves as associate professor of biblical spirituality and director of applied ministry at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was stunned at such a diagnosis.

There were no signs that anything was amiss in his body. There was no pain, no bleeding, no mysterious lumps, nothing. He felt perfectly healthy.

The news came as a result of a routine medical checkup that included a colonoscopy.

“I think I was kind of numb at first,” he said. “I tried to ask some questions at first and I tried to write down his answers because I knew I wouldn’t remember. My hand was quivering as I tried to write down what he said.

“My mind was tumbling [with] a thousand things running through my head. I was trying to stay with the subject at hand and ask him questions [such as] ‘What’s next?’ and ‘How bad is this?’ At the same time I was a thousand miles away and was thinking ‘What about my family?’ I had just finished my first semester at the seminary and I was thinking ‘Am I going to die? Am I soon to stand before the Lord?’

“I thought about my little girl and my wife Caffy and my mother who is a widow and I am an only child. It was sobering. I mainly thought about family and future and what is this going to be like? I wondered if there would be chemotherapy and even if after the surgery they would just sew me up and say there was nothing they could do.”

Two surgeries, a painful recovery period and five months after the initial diagnosis, Whitney is cancer free and doctors have given him a healthy long-term prognosis. However, the type of cancer he had and early complications made the future somewhat dicey early on, Whitney says.

Whitney had colon cancer, a disease also known as the “silent killer” because it typically does not manifest any symptoms until it has reached an incurable stage.

“I had no problems, no pain, no symptoms,” he said. “I was absolutely shocked...The doctor said if I had put the colonoscopy off until May, he

wouldn’t have been able to save my life.”

It seemed that Whitney would face a grim waiting game in the beginning because surgery would be needed to determine how far the cancer had spread. However, it was near the end of the year and Whitney’s surgeon warned him that most, if not all, operating rooms in Louisville would be booked until January.

As the doctor called around city hospitals to try and find an open operating room, Whitney paced the floor in the doctor’s office and prayed. God’s hand of providence clearly trumped what seemed to be a negative set of logistical circumstances, Whitney said.

“We got the last operating room in the city of Louisville for 2005 and surgery was set for six days later,” Whitney said.

Still, Whitney faced a battery of tests and doctors said it would be difficult to impossible to get them completed within a week.

When I learned
that I had cancer,
it really comforted me
to know that God
was not surprised and that
He was in control.”

“I had to have several tests before the surgery and the doctor said it was unlikely they could get me in by that time for the test,” he said.

“I needed several procedures and tests, including a CAT scan. Before I walked out of his office that afternoon, all of that was set up. I had a CAT scan two hours later to find out how deep the cancer had gone into the tissue, and the other big test was the day before my surgery.”

Whitney had surgery on Dec. 20 and spent 10 days, including the entire Christmas holiday in the hospital. He went home in late December but soon developed complications and faced a second surgery and another week in the hospital. A second difficult recovery followed.

Despite complications from the second surgery, Whitney began to heal and was able to participate in the annual collegiate conference at Southern. He continues to regain strength and has resumed his full

course load of teaching at Southern and speaking engagements for his ministry, The Center for Biblical Spirituality.

Colon cancer is the No. 2 killer among the types of cancer, and Whitney says he is grateful that he had a routine colonoscopy which led to the discovery of his cancer. He urges all men over 50 to have the procedure.

“Ninety percent of the people who die from colon cancer would not die from it if they had a colonoscopy,” he said. “Adrian Rogers [the late Southern Baptist pastor] died of colon cancer...One of the doctors told me a thousand people in Kentucky die every year from colon cancer and they wouldn’t have died from this disease if they had a colonoscopy.

“Everybody should have one when they are 50. If they have a relative who had colon cancer, they should get it at 40.”

Whitney says his cancer caused him to reflect more deeply on biblical truths regarding life and eternity. He credits a strong belief in the sovereignty of God and the prayers of fellow believers for strengthening him through the ordeal. Whitney and friend John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minn., exchanged emails to encourage each other after doctors discovered that Piper had cancer on the day of Whitney’s surgery.

“It makes you realize your life is a vapor,” Whitney said. “You always realize you are going to die, but when you realize that you may be at the borders of heaven, it makes you think. It has made me appreciate time with my family more, especially with my little girl.

“I have never sensed the prayers of God’s people more. There were times I was so medicated or in so much pain that all I could pray was ‘Lord hear the prayers of Your people.’ I knew people were praying for me. I couldn’t put two thoughts together. It was a reminder of Romans 8:26-27, ‘You do not know how to pray as you ought but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us in groans too deep for words’ and prays according to God’s will for us. I was just relying on the Holy Spirit’s prayers for this.

“It reaffirmed things. My belief in the sovereignty of God is one of the things that got me through. When I learned that I had cancer, it really comforted me to know that God was not surprised and that He was in control.”

By Jeff Robinsom

Wittman preaching to impact culture



by Chuck Renstrom, Colorline Graphics

You might say ministry runs in Calvin Wittman's blood.

His grandfather was an evangelist in the United States, Mexico, Jamaica and several other countries, working at times with famed evangelist Billy Sunday in the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, if you walk into Wittman's office today, you'll find a handwritten letter from Sunday to his grandfather mounted on the wall.

Wittman's father continued the passion for revivals and evangelism, taking Wittman to church and revival meetings regularly.

"Growing up, if there was a revival in town, it didn't matter whether it was Christian Missionary Alliance or Nazarene or Assembly of God," Wittman said. "Man, we were there because my dad had grown up in that revivalistic environment."

So it seems only natural that Wittman began preaching at age seven to his next-door neighbors and felt God call him to ministry during early adolescence.

But that's where Wittman got sidetracked.

After graduating from high school in Texas, Wittman joined the Navy in an attempt to flee from his call to ministry. But God wouldn't let Wittman get away and convicted the young sailor of his call on a ship in the middle of the ocean.

"I remember being out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean on a ship and God just speaking to me, saying, 'Son, you can run but you can't hide,'" he said.

After getting out of the Navy, Wittman went to work for the department of public safety in Texas, and God confronted him again about ministry. This time Wittman surrendered to the call.

"God just said, 'I want you. I want you to surrender. This is what you have been made to do,'" Wittman recounted. "And there's this peace in your heart when you are walking in consonance with God's purpose for your life. And that's where I feel that He has me."

In preparation for ministry, Wittman attended Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Eventually he became a missionary in Spain before pastoring a church in Texas and coming as pastor to Applewood Baptist Church in Denver, Colo., in 1999.

During his ministry at Applewood, Wittman became convinced that further education would enhance his

preaching. So he enrolled in the doctor of ministry program in expository preaching at Southern Seminary and graduated in 2003.

Wittman says his training at Southern emphasized loving people by preaching the Bible to them.

"I believe strongly in expository preaching, and that's one of the things that most benefited me from the degree at Southern," he said. "There are a lot of places that will teach you how to illustrate your sermons or teach you what commentaries to choose. But (Southern taught me) to really delve into the text and let the text drive the sermon, to let the author of Scripture, God, be the one who decides the structure and the content.

"I believe expository preaching is one way a pastor loves his people. He shares the Word of God with them faithfully, consistently and, I must say, unashamedly."

**And there's this peace
in your heart when you
are walking in consonance
with God's purpose
for your life.**

Most of Wittman's preaching works through books of the Bible systematically. By taking this approach to preaching he ensures that sermons communicate the timeless truths of Scripture and address current issues in a biblical way, he said.

"The pastor needs to be the one to speak God's truth to every situation in life from God's Word," he said. "... I'm more concerned that I'm faithful to the text than anything else."

Some pastors believe that using catchy sermon titles, drawing ideas from popular television shows and mirroring the culture is the best way to reach people for Christ, Wittman said. But such an approach does not appeal to him.

"Sometimes in an effort to reinterpret [the Gospel] in a new way, we lose the substance," he said. "It's more important that it's true than that it's new. I think we have to stick with true."

During his time at Applewood the

congregation has grown from 300 to 850, and 45 percent of attendees are involved in ministries. Such success demonstrates for Wittman that faithfulness to God's Word can transform lives even in a city that does not have a large number of Christians.

"It's a very anti-Christian culture," he said of Denver, noting that there is also a great spiritual hunger in the city. Applewood has taken advantage of the spiritual hunger by creating an "enclave" of devotion to Christ, Wittman said.

"We have people coming from all over the nation," he said. "Ours is not a cultural enclave. It's a spiritual enclave."

In addition to focusing on Denver, Applewood also makes world missions a priority. Drawing on his experience as a missionary, Wittman leads the congregation to be missions minded. The church sends Wittman on two mission trips per year, allowing him to minister in places such as Belarus, Nepal, India and Bangkok.

For any church missions leadership comes from the pulpit, and the pastor has a responsibility to teach his people God's purpose in missions and evangelism, Wittman said.

"The pastor is the gate keeper," he said. "He's the catalyst, whatever direction the church takes. If the pastor has a passion for missions, then you're going to be attracted to people who have a passion for missions and attract people who have a passion for missions."

Reflecting on his success in ministry, Wittman says Southern prepared him and fed him more than any of his previous educational experiences.

"My seminary experience at Southern was the best," he said. "I was fed and learned more about preaching at Southern than I ever did in the other studies that I have had. I regularly tell people: if you want to learn how to preach better, go to Southern."

Wittman trusts Southern and Mohler's leadership so much that he is sending his son to Louisville to begin seminary in the fall. He calls Southern great preparation for anyone who wants to make a difference for Christ in ministry.

"I believe that Southern right now is the premier seminary in Southern Baptist life," he said. "I really believe the momentum that God has given to Dr. Mohler and the seminary is unique." ❧

By David Roach

SOUTHERN NEWS AND NOTES

Mohler in New York Times Evangelicals re-thinking “contraceptive mentality”

The development of the birth control pill has had a deeply negative impact on human sexuality and has effectively separated sex from procreation, R. Albert Mohler Jr. said in the cover story of the current issue of the New York Times Magazine.

The lengthy article, entitled “Contra-Contraception” and authored by contributing writer Russell Shorto, examines a growing debate among evangelicals and cultural conservatives regarding the propriety of birth control and reproductive technologies. In the article, Mohler, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, calls the birth control pill one of the most profound developments in human history.

“I cannot imagine any development in human history, after the Fall, that has had a greater impact on human beings than the pill,” Mohler said. “It became almost an assured form of contraception, something humans had never encountered before in history.

“Prior to it, every time a couple had sex, there was a good chance of pregnancy. Once that is removed, the entire horizon of the sexual act changes. I think there could be no question that the pill gave incredible license to everything from adultery and affairs to premarital sex and within marriage to a separation of the sex act and procreation.”

Mohler explains the evolution of modern evangelical thought on birth control, arguing that evangelicals have become far more critical of the pill and more thoughtful regarding

birth control as they have witnessed the pill’s devastating effects upon society.

The “contraceptive mentality” that has resulted from the widespread—and often unquestioned—use of the pill has raised deep concerns among

that may serve to divide evangelicalism.”

In the article, Shorto calls Mohler “one of the leading intellectual figures of evangelical Christianity in the U.S.” and also quotes a portion of Mohler’s December 2005 commentary on the question “Can Christians Use Birth Control?” which is available at www.albert-mohler.com

By Jeff Robinson



younger evangelicals, he said.

“I detect a huge shift,” he said. “Students on our campus are intensely concerned. Not a week goes by that I do not get contacted by pastors about the issue. There are active debates going on. It’s one of the things

“I cannot imagine any development in human history, after the Fall, that has had a greater impact on human beings than the pill,” says R. Albert Mohler Jr.

Great Commission Week calls students to service

Several hundred seminary students and faculty expressed a commitment to minister anywhere God calls them during the culminating chapel service of Great Commission Week April 13 at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Responding to a sermon by Al Jackson, pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, Ala., the students and faculty stood to their feet, indicating that they will say with the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, "Here am I. Send me," should God call them to ministry in a difficult region of the world.

The seminary also recognized 94 students and faculty members who are either being

should be any more plausible today than it would have been when Paul was writing to Timothy," Mohler said. "We dare not allow ourselves the conceit that we live in such a changed intellectual climate and such a changed cultural situation that what Paul would prevent Timothy from doing, we now have license to do."

When believers take the true Gospel to the world, they will have no cause for shame, Mohler said.

"There is no shame in the Gospel," he said. "But God is ashamed of those who are ashamed of the Gospel."



Responding to a sermon by Al Jackson, students and faculty stood, indicating that they will say, "Here am I. Send me," should God call them.



photos by John Gill

deployed as full-time missionaries or participating in short-term mission trips.

Speaking at Great Commission Week along with Jackson were Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. and Tom Elliff, senior vice president for spiritual nurture and church relations at the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Mohler said that when Christians share the Gospel, they should do it without fear and without compromise.

"There is no fear in the ministry because it's not about us, and it's not about our power, and it's not about our effectiveness, and it's not about our eloquence," he said. "It's not about us. It's about Christ. And there is no fear in preaching Christ. There is no fear in the Gospel ministry because it is not our ability that is in question."

Preaching from 1 Timothy 1, Mohler warned ministers to guard the teaching of the Gospel. Rather than following the popular pattern of preaching a new message, ministers must stick with the sound words taught in the Bible, he said.

"Following requires humility," he said. "Follow the pattern of sound words."

Theologians who argue that they have discovered a new truth or a way of reinterpreting the Gospel for modern culture demonstrate a lack of humility and a wrong way of doing ministry, he said.

"We dare not believe that that argument

Preaching from 2 Kings 7, Elliff explained that there are three types of Christians: sitters, getters, and tellers. Sitters do not take any action to advance the Gospel or their own relationships with Jesus, while getters soak up spiritual information but fail to act on that information, he said. Tellers share the good news of Jesus with others.

All Christians have an obligation to be tellers, Elliff said.

"Silence is sinful," he said. "It's a sin to know that help is available and not to share it. It's a sin to know that eternal life is available and not to share it." ❖

By David Roach

LEGACY CENTER Event Calendar

- July 6 -7** Women's Ministry Institute: Women and Mentoring
- July 7-9** Women's Ministry Institute: Women and Evangelism
- Sept. 11-13** Women's Ministry Institute: Next Level
- Sept. 13-15** Women's Ministry Institute: Girls' Ministry
- Sept. 23** Youth Vision Conference VIII
- Oct. 9-12** Heritage Week
- Oct. 23** January Bible Study Preview Conference
- Oct. 31- Nov. 2** Mullins Lectures: R.C. Sproul

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Building a work with eternal value

Cary Young just can't get 1 Corinthians 3 out of his mind.

In fact, it's been sort of a life passage for him.

In that passage the apostle Paul warns believers, "If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become obvious, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work."

For Young, a retired investment management company executive from Portland, Ore., Paul's words have unmistakable application: give resources to a cause that makes an eternal difference. He discovered such a cause in Southern Seminary.

"I have been very moved and burdened by 1 Corinthians 3," Young said. "Those have been lifelong verses for me and have given me a lifelong burden."

Young first learned about Southern when his pastor in Portland left their church to pursue doctoral studies at the Louisville seminary three years ago. Young had known several professors at Portland's Western Seminary who went to Southern, and those professors' reputation as conservative, God-honoring scholars, combined with his pastor's willingness to study at Southern, gave Young confidence in Southern's commitment to training faithful pastors.

"I believe we can best build on the foundation of Christ with spiritual things," he said. "I'm committed to institutions that are based on Scripture. There are some seminaries out there that are not committed to Scripture. But there are some that are committed to that, and Southern is one of them."

Young became familiar with Southern's campus when he visited several times on business trips from Portland to Birmingham, Ala. The campus visits cemented his commitment to support Southern. So he began to contribute to the seminary and joined the Southern Seminary Foundation Board in 2004.

Today Young makes it one of his main ministries in life to encourage others to consider supporting Southern with their resources and prayers.

"I hear from professors from time to time," he said. "I know that pastors and missionaries are going out from Southern, and I want to encourage others to give of their finances to Southern so that they can be a part of what's going on there."

Christians in the western United States are particularly unaware of what Southern is doing and need to be informed of the seminary's work, he said.

"Many people in the west consider themselves spiritual or even religious but they are not interested in Christianity," Young said. "We're definitely not in the Bible belt. And even

among Christians, people don't know about ministries in other parts of the country like Southern."

Christians in all areas of the country need to know about Southern's renewed commitment to biblical doctrine under the leadership of President R. Albert Mohler Jr., Young said, adding that when believers of all denominations are aware of the God-honoring work at Southern, they will be more likely to participate in that work.

"People need to know about Southern Seminary's conservative change – even people outside the Southern Baptist Convention," he said.

In addition to his ministry with Southern, Young is a member of a Baptist church in Portland and has been involved in church planting in the past. Michael Pohlman, Young's pastor in a Portland church plant and a current doctoral student at Southern said Young's commitment to the local church along with his giving to Southern illustrate a lifelong commitment to honor God with his resources.

"Cary and Barbara were two of our most committed founders and members of Portland Community Church," Pohlman said. "Cary is a man who stands on the absolute authority of Scripture and seeks earnestly to follow Christ in his daily life. Cary is a humble man who deflects attention on himself while looking for ways to help and encourage others.

"Cary and Barbara are faithful stewards of the resources God has entrusted to them. Cary understands more than anyone I know that all he has is a gift from God and that he has been charged with being faithful in the stewardship of his resources. Cary has set an example for me in life that I pray I can one day attain."

Bruce Ware, senior associate dean of Southern's school of theology, met Young while teaching at Western Seminary and maintains a friendship with him. Ware called Young "a very gifted and successful financial officer who has a heart and passion for seminary education – not his own, per se, but the value of seminary education for the future pastors of our churches.

"God has given him a deep and strong longing to endeavor, as he is enabled by God to do so, to strengthen the education that seminary students receive. He loves the Bible and he wants future ministers to be the most capable students of the Bible that they can be. And what he believes, he practices. He takes great delight in supporting the education of our students here at Southern Seminary." 

By David Roach



"I'm committed to institutions that are based on Scripture. ... Southern [Seminary] is one of them."

– Cary Young, Southern Seminary Donor

Come and Play...

3rd Annual Heritage Week Golf Tournament

Thursday, October 12, 2006



One of the highlights of Heritage Week will be Southern Seminary's 3rd annual golf tournament. It will be held at Covered Bridge Golf Club in Sellersburg, Ind., on Thursday, October 12, 2006. Please call the Office of Institutional Relations at 1-800-626-5525 ext. 4700 for additional information on how you can be a part of this popular event.

Date: Thursday, October 12, 2006
Where: Covered Bridge Golf Club

We will begin with a buffet lunch at 12 p.m.
and a shotgun start at 1:00 pm.

Sponsorship Levels (entry fee):

\$1,200.00 – Team Sponsor (foursome)

\$600.00 – Hole Sponsor

\$300.00 – Single Player Sponsor

Participants are invited to stay overnight at the Legacy Center. For reservations call 1-877-444-7287 or visit www.legacycenteratsouthern.com

People and Places

Southern Seminary has a rich history of alumni serving Christ throughout the world. The intent of this section is to help the seminary family stay close – whether that be through the news of a new ministry position, a retirement, a birth or a death. To submit information to People and Places, call 502-897-4143 or e-mail irprojects@sbs.edu.

30s **Larry Lindsey** serves as pastor at Gaith Baptist Church in Wickliffe.

Kinnith Morris serves as pastor of Auburn Baptist Church, Russellville, Ky.

40s **Luther Tracy** ('43) received a presidential award for a lifelong period of volunteering.

Given by President George W. Bush, the award was presented to Dr. Tracy at the Forging New Links Conference in Columbus, Ohio, by Ohio's First Lady, Hope Taft.

50s **Harold Anderson** ('55), retired after 58 years with the state convention.

Dick Thomassian ('59) retired from the position of minister of missions at Whitesberg Baptist Church after 40 years of service and

has devoted his life to Training In Mission Evangelism (T.I.M.E) International Ministries.

70s **Barry Allen** ('73) completed 35 years of service on February 1, 2006. He served 25 years with the Kentucky Baptist Convention and 10 years as President/CEO of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Theodore Zachariades ('76) serves as pastor at FBC Winchester, Tenn.

Mike Lewis ('79) serves as the chaplain of the 30th Medical Brigade at Camp Victory in Baghdad, Iraq.

90s **Gregory DeLoach** ('92) serves as senior pastor of FBC Augusta, Ga.

Rick Hurst ('93) serves as director of donor relations of the Virginia Baptist Foundation Inc.

2000s **Jeffrey Scott Crawford** ('02) serves as senior pastor of Grand Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Smith, Ark.

Kenneth Freeman ('03) has served at Patterson Baptist Church as minister of music and education since March 2006.

Toby Johnson ('03) serves as senior pastor to Alta Loma Baptist Church.

Sarah Sleet ('03) is the director of children's ministry and women's ministry at Faith Family Church in Finksburg, Md.

Tracey Jines ('04) serves as senior pastor of Highland Hills Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, Okla.

Andrew Weaver ('04) serves as pastor of Audubon Baptist Church in Henderson, Ky.

Kevin White ('05) is the director of emergency services for The Central Vermont Chapter of the American Red Cross. 

Former SBTS trustee dies at 91

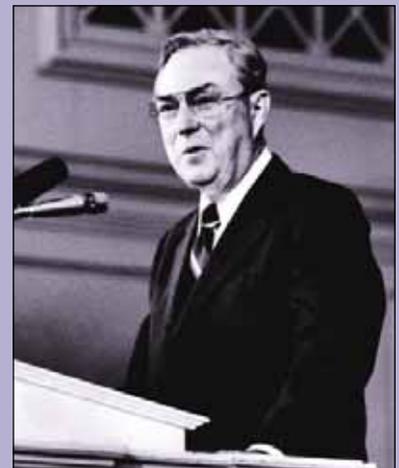
Joseph E. Stopher, who was the first layman elected chairman of the board of trustees at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, died April 27 of a heart attack at the age of 91.

Stopher, who practiced law in Louisville for more than 65 years, served as a seminary trustee for 30 years from 1955 to 1985.

"Joseph Stopher was a trustee for this institution almost longer than any other modern individual," Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. said. "He served as counsel to the seminary during many of those years and we are in his debt for his committed service."

Stopher was president of the Gheens Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helped finance primarily educational causes. He was also a member of the Kentucky State Fair Board for nearly 30 years. 

By Jeff Robinson



CELEBRATE THE LEGACY
THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
HERITAGE WEEK 2006 • OCTOBER 9-13

Alumni Memorial Chapel on the Southern Seminary campus, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY

Southern Seminary's 197th graduation was an historic occasion: it was the first time in the school's storied history that graduation was held outdoors. The 232 graduates received their diplomas during a ceremony held on the seminary lawn between the Honeycutt Student Center and the J.P. Boyce Library. After several days of rain raised concern that graduation might have to return indoors, blue skies and sunshine greeted the graduates on the morning of May 19, 2006. Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. delivered the graduation sermon. ☞



The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary



Boyce College

Boyce College held its graduation ceremony on May 12 in Alumni Memorial Chapel. More than 83 students received undergraduate degrees, 17 graduated from the Seminary Wives Institute and eight received certificates from the seminary's Women's Ministry Institute. Mohler and Boyce Dean Jimmy Scroggins issued brief challenges to the graduates. ☞



WE TRAIN LEADERS



who long for God to use them to reach unbelievers and disciple them for God's glory.

— **Chuck Lawless, Dean,**
author of *Discipled Warriors*

Looking for a Doctor of Ministry program that features the latest in research, a nationally-recognized faculty, and the flexibility to allow you to continue in your present ministry?

Southern Seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth offers four Doctor of Ministry programs designed for people just like you. The D.Min. in Evangelism and Church Growth offers three practical tracks as well as an Internet component (pastor/staff leadership, church consultation, and applied apologetics).

The D.Min. in Missions Leadership provides further training for missionaries and missions administrators. The D.Min. in Korean Church Leadership and the D.Min. in Black Church Leadership are other specialized degrees to train ethnic church leaders.

To find out more, call **1-800-626-5525, ext. 4113** or visit us on the Internet: **www.sbts.edu**.

The Southern Baptist



Theological Seminary