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...associational Baptists would do well to recover a confessional grasp of their historic identity...

The Value of Confessions of Faith

by Dr. Charley Holmes, president
Baptist Missionary Association of
America Theological Seminary
Jacksonville, Texas

Contemporary Christianity faces an intellectual crisis of faith that, regrettably, equals its ethical deterioration. By "contemporary Christianity" we do not mean Christianity inclusive of Catholic or liberal churches but rather contemporary evangelical churches including Baptists. By "intellectual crisis" we do not refer to a mere dearth of scholarship at the seminary podium or in the pulpit; rather, we mean an intellectual crisis in the typical church wherein the average member and, too often, even the pastor, remain ill-informed about their theological roots and historical identity. For over a century, and more especially in the last fifty years, Christianity has homogenized theologically, resulting in a will-

ful yet unconscious ambiguity about a given religious group's theological ancestry. One wonders if such ancestral forgetfulness results from embarrassment about our religious past or perhaps stems from our desire to excuse ourselves from explaining to our churches who we really are. Such ecclesiastical denial falsifies many churches' claims to religious non-affiliation and deceives their membership into believing "we are just a Christian church; we don't want to be labeled," when the truth is that, except for extreme cult groups, almost every so-called non-de-



Dr. Charley Holmes

nominational church has a history traceable to a specific theological movement and denominational identity.

Preeminent among such non-affiliation groups would be what are commonly called "Bible" churches. What

continued on page 2

Annual President's Message On Line

The annual message brought by BMAA President Ed Stephenson has been transcribed and made available to us by Editor Diane Spriggs of the Arkansas Baptist Trumpet. It is lengthy, but worth your time to read.

Space in this publication does not allow us to print the sermon, but we have made it available on our website. Please do to www.msbaptist.org and take time to be blessed by the sermon titled "WE MUST!"

Camp Jobs & Camp Needs

by James Speer
BMA Camp Ministry Director
Daniel Springs Camp

Every summer we hire 5 girls and 3 boys to work at Daniel Springs for 2 months. It is a job that has many rewards for the young people who have tackled this tough job. We still have a few openings for girls and boys and we have applications on our web site at www.discipleguide.org/camps. This is both a job and a ministry and gives the workers a broad range of experiences that will help equip them for life in the job market.

The Master's Builders built us 60 new bunk beds a few weeks ago and now we need 120 mattresses for them. The mattresses cost us \$60.00 each and this would be a good project for small groups or a church.

We are in the process of enlarging our canteen (snack bar) area with more fans and lights that will also enable those waiting in line for the cafeteria to wait in a shaded area with fans for cooling.

New metal roofs are being put on 2 more cabins in the next 2 weeks and other cabins have been remodeled. We now have almost all the cabins on the girl's side of the camp either totally or

continued on page 6

CONSIDER THIS

God prefers

**Fruits of the Spirit
over Religious Nuts**

Military Chaplaincy Still a Valid Calling and Vital Field

by David Norvell
BMAA Chaplaincy

National news stories in the last few days have talked about military chaplains losing their freedom of speech and evangelism being illegal in the military. Don't believe everything you hear or read.

Chaplains still have freedom to share their faith and preach the gospel according to their endorsing churches' guidelines. Soldiers, airman, seaman, marines and coastguardsmen still have the right to share their faith with others.

Chaplains conducting worship services in the field or in a chapel operate much like he would if he were a pastor in the civilian world. He may choose to preach an evangelistic sermon or a disciple building message according to his audience. In his counseling he would be expected to do the same thing.

Where issues could arise is if he is praying or speaking before a captive audience. For example, if a Battalion Commander stands before his soldiers, in a mandatory formation, and shares his faith he could be open to complaints from troops who are of other faiths or of no faith. Chaplains also have to be respectful of everyone when speaking in front of "required attendance" formations and training events. Operating in today's world and governmental systems requires skill and wisdom.



David Norvell

Thank God, the Constitution does work both ways and for everyone. It protects my rights as well as everyone else's freedoms. Because we live in a diverse nation and the military is a diverse organization, trust and respect are vital. Chaplains would not be in the military uniform at all if it were not for the constitutional right of every service member to worship as he/she sees fit.

After reading the latest news stories your BMAA Chaplains said, "Business as usual, I have not personally experienced any problems with any of the issues mentioned in the news." "Evangelize, preach the word, and love your service members and their families (while taking care of your own family)."

Pray for the military, the chaplains, the families, the leadership and our nation and its leadership. Lead from where you are!

DiscipleGuide's new DisciplePoints Coordinator

DiscipleGuide is blessed to have Cindy Williams as a partner in a new effort to empower parents, the new DisciplePoints website and DiscipleKids curriculum, arriving this fall.

Born into a BMA preacher/missionary's family, Cindy accepted Christ as her Savior on her seventh birthday. She first taught Sunday school as a teen on the mission field with her family.

She said of her time overseas, "I consider it one of the greatest adventures and privileges of my life. It was great training for later life because I was responsible for teaching a Sunday school class from the time I was 13 and have been teaching for the past 47 years."

After many adventures in discipling others in Sunday school, Cindy has joined with DiscipleGuide in its newest effort to help churches make disciples. A parent herself, Cindy understands the importance of introducing her children to the Word of God, and also how daunting that task can be to parents. Her training and life experience have uniquely gifted her to minister to parents seeking tools for discipling their children.



Cindy Williams

DiscipleGuide welcomes Cindy as coordinator of the new DisciplePoints website at www.disciplepoints.com. DisciplePoints is an online community empowering parents with talking points, discussion starters and creative ideas to get the discipleship process started. The church provides support with the DiscipleKids curriculum. Parents can preview their child's lesson each week and take the lead by introducing it. Ideas for object lessons, activities and more will be easily available via smart phone alerts.

Cindy and her husband, Dan, have six children. She has earned a BSE in early childhood education, an MSE in reading with an additional certification in gifted education and hours in special education. She has been a kindergarten and preschool teacher and now works as a trainer and coach for preschool teachers.

She said, "As I had children of my own before finishing my degree, I learned to love early childhood and to appreciate how much of a child's foundational values are laid during that period. My goal for my (Sunday school) students was twofold: to have solid biblical knowledge and to know the plan of salvation so as to be ready when the Holy Spirit calls them."

Parents who take advantage of disciplepoints.com will be blessed by Cindy's ministry.

"I pray that our journey together will be a blessing to our students and their families as well as an honor to God," Cindy concluded.

Confessions of Faith

from page 1

could be simpler, more honest, truer, and more innocent than to say merely that we are a "Bible church"? Certainly, such a claim has been tremendously successful for "Bible churches" since the mid-twentieth century. But the truth is that presumably non-denominational "Bible churches" are in fact quite denominational, though not in name, and easily identifiable as descendants of the Plymouth Brethren movement, doctrinally characterized by Dispensational Premillennialism and modified Calvinism. The same idea holds true for major non-denominational, "Bible church" seminaries, such as Trinity Evangelical and Dallas Theological. Other, more specific and outstanding examples of this "we're just a Bible church" mentality would be Saddleback Church, California; Lakewood Church, Houston; and Cornerstone Church, San Antonio; who respectively are tethered to historical Southern Baptist, Pentecostal, and Assembly of God traditions. Arguing that denominational tags represent an obstacle to "seekers," many

Baptist congregations, follow this trend to disassociate themselves from their denominational identity.

While most Protestants may reject the Roman Catholic emphasis upon Holy Scripture plus tradition, the fact is that, whatever its theological faults, the Roman Catholics maintain a loyal respect for tradition that has sustained its identity for many centuries. Except for conservative Episcopalians and Presbyterians, such vivid and consistent respect for tradition does not characterize the majority of evangelical churches, including Baptists. One of the major contributing factors to the Baptist denomination's identity crisis is its form of church government, specifically congregationalism. Baptists are unlike other conservative groups whose confessional history is highly respected and guarded by a ministerial hierarchy of bishops, presbyters, and elders who govern paedobaptist congregations. Instead, even though Baptists are committed to a

continued on page 3

DiscipleGuide

Scott Attebery, Executive Director

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Twitter: [@scottattebery](https://Twitter.com/@scottattebery)



Scott Attebery

Fake Fruit

I remember walking into my mother's kitchen, picking up a plump red apple, and taking a bite. The bite marks are still there — in my mother's plastic apple. To this day, it sits in a bowl on mom's kitchen counter with other decorative plastic fruit.

Looking back, the experience is comical. But it is also educational.

Paul defines the fruit of the Spirit as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

Notice this is the fruit of the Spirit — not the fruit of my best efforts, social reform, behavioral modification or cultural influence. The only way to obtain this fruit is through the Spirit. Anything less is fake fruit.

For instance, I may act (fake) like I am patient when the shopper in front of me has 47 items at the 12 items or less line. I may smile as they look back and give me the obligatory "sorry." I may stand silently and keep my cool on the outside and by all appearances look patient. But if on the inside I am boiling over in frustration, and screaming at the shopper inside my head, I am obviously not patient.

In other words, I can do a lot of things to look and act like I have the fruit of the Spirit on the outside, but unless I am truly changed on the inside, it's just fake fruit. It is empty, useless, and amounts to no more than decoration.

Why is this important? Because Jesus is concerned about the inside. Consider what he told the Pharisees:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Matthew 23:27-28)

If you don't have real fruit of the Spirit — the kind that requires divine transformation in your life, consider this a red flag. Fake fruit doesn't exist in heaven.

CHURCH NEWS

Hobolochitto WMA

The Hobolochitto District WMA met at Lee's Chapel #2 on April 27. After a welcome, a song and opening prayer, we enjoyed a devotion by Patty Fieldson entitled, "What Are You Doing With Your Life?"

Our guest speakers were Doug and Diane Lee, missionaries to the Philippines. They shared slides and updated us on their work in the Philippines.

Bro. Cedric Lumpkin brought a message from Mark 12 on the first commandment.

Westlawn Church was awarded the attendance banner. Our next meeting will be on July 27 at First Baptist Church of Henleyfield.

Debbie Lott, reporter

Rocky Branch Church to Dedicate New Building

Rocky Branch Baptist Church will hold a dedication service for their new facility on Saturday, June 1. The service will begin at 2:00 in the afternoon. The previous church

buildings were destroyed by an arsonist. We invite all to come and celebrate with us as we dedicate our new facilities to the Lord. We are located at 2401 Rocky Branch Rd., Sumrall, Mississippi.

For more information contact pastor Bro. Chris Gonthier at 601-596-6875.

Pine Grove Baptist Church Yard Sale

Pine Grove Baptist Church will be having a yard sale on Saturday, May 18, from 7 am to 12 noon. We are located at 860 Purvis-Oloh Rd. in Purvis, Mississippi. All proceeds will benefit the family of Robert Whitehead. Miscellaneous items priced to sell!

Tombigbee Report

The Tombigbee Association met May 9, 2013, at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. A gracious meal was served by the host

church. Special music was brought by Bro. Doug Lee and wife Diane and also Kerrie Smith. We were shown a film about the work being done in the Philippines by Bro. Doug and Diane Lee. Reports were brought by Bro. Elvis Garcia and Bro. Bobby Elliott. We had 9 churches represented with 48 messengers and 9 visitors.

East Central Report

The East Central Association met at Tiger Creek Church on May 9. There were nine churches represented. The evening message was brought by Bro. Greg Hillman. After business was cared for we heard reports from Missions Director Larry Geraldson and from Missionary Sidney Farmer. Bro. Paul Lee reported on the work of Prisoners Bible Crusade.

Our next meeting will be on August 8, at Zions Rest Church.

Henry Lott, reporter

Confessions of Faith

from page 2

scriptural form of church government, congregationalism often renders Baptists more vulnerable to the shifting opinions, biases, and attitudes of the broader culture from which they draw their membership. This most especially characterizes American Baptist churches. In contrast to their fellow Baptists in Europe and Great Britain whose church government is often elder-rule, American Baptists inherently disdain tradition and hierarchy, fostered by the political philosophy of the broader culture. In other words, American Baptists too often, probably unconsciously, allow secular politics to influence and even compromise their denominational identity and theological convictions. The theory that "all men are created equal" now permeates most Baptist churches to the extent that they tacitly believe that "all opinions are created equal"; thus, in terms of doctrinal belief, almost anything goes in a typical Baptist church: "Well, I know what you think" or "Well, I know what they thought," but "This is what I think and your opinion is no better, and certainly not more important, than mine." Such self-centered individualism has resulted in a doctrinal amalgamation of "all things evangelical" within the Baptist denomination. Now, broad and even antithetical opinions about cardinal doctrines can comfortably coexist

within the same church, shaping it not to look like the unified body of Christ but rather an ecclesiastical smorgasbord that proffers almost every theological morsel to its banqueters. More than this, even many associational Baptists are very unfamiliar with historic Baptist confessions that grounded them historically and shaped their destiny. The present writer's opinion is that associational Baptists would do well to recover a confessional grasp of their historic identity, the potential benefits whereof follow.

First, a valid, time-tested confession of faith represents an historical repository of the declared faith of specific churches, religious organizations, and their leaders, and tethers a contemporary church or pastor to a legitimate ancestry. One sees the evidence of the forefathers of the BMAA following this strategy in the addendum to our doctrinal statement which reads: "We (BMAA) endorse the New Hampshire Confession of Faith as a representative compendium of what Baptists have historically believed through the centuries." Our leaders were tethering i.e., tying us to the first recognized and widely spread doctrinal statement authored in the United States. An earlier and for many years more widely followed confession was the Philadelphia Confession of 1742 (an American

version of the 2nd London Baptist Confession 1677). By the early 1800's, Baptists were being plagued by an infiltration of Quaker inspired "freewill Baptists" who held heretical doctrines that distorted and confused the doctrines of free agency and free will. Baptist churches were simultaneously being affected by the Primitive Baptist movement (sometimes called hard-shells), who took an unscriptural view of what it meant to give a "free offer of the Gospel." The New Hampshire Confession was a restatement and clarification of the Philadelphia Confession that helped address the controversies of the day in a more modern manner of writing. Our founders wisely tied our new association to our Baptist forefathers of the early 1800's who had wisely tied themselves to the leading conservative Baptists of America in the late 1700's & 1800's; who had tethered themselves to their religious ancestors and counterparts in England such as William Carey, Andrew Fuller, Benjamin Keach, John Gill, & Charles H. Spurgeon.

At the local-church and denominational levels, such historical tethering potentially fortifies a pastor's or congregation's claim to orthodoxy, especially in times of doctrinal ambiguity, controversy, or schism. If heresy or serious theological questions arise in a denomination or church, reference to a biblically-based, historically influential, and well-respected confession of faith

continued on page 6

Southeastern Baptist College

4229 Highway 15 North
Laurel, Mississippi 39440, (601) 426-6346

Serving Christ With a Biblical World View In A Christian Atmosphere

Graduation at SBC

Commencement will be held Thursday, 7:30 pm May 16. The following students have completed requirements for their degrees:



Joseph Harris

Interim President

A. A. Bible
Zachary Dant
Connie Evans (Honors)
Charles Lee (Highest Honors)

A. A. Business
Donald Miller (High Honors)

A. A. General Education
Emily Harris (Highest Honors)

B. S. Church Ministries
Zachary Dant
Delicia Henderson
Homer Kemp
Charles McNeil
Mossie Phipps
Billy Prestage (Honors)

B. S. Business Administration
Robyn Strickland

Diploma of Christian Leadership
Connie Evans

Diploma in Bible
Connie Evans

Congratulations to these students as they reap the rewards of their labor.

Summer Semester

Registration for the Summer Semester is now open. Here is a list of the online classes available:

BU-131 INTRODUCTION TO COMPUTER APPLICATIONS

BU-132 BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

BU-233 BUSINESS LAW

BU-331 PERSONAL FINANCE

BU-337 ECONOMICS I - MACROECONOMICS

BU-338 ECONOMICS II - MICROECONOMICS

BU-434 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

EN-131 ENGLISH COMPOSITION I

EN-132 ENGLISH COMPOSITION II

NT-131 NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

NT-437 PROPHETIC BOOK (REVELATION)

OT-131 OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

PY-131 INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY

SO-131 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

BI-232 BIBLE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

EN-231 WORLD LITERATURE I

EN-232 WORLD LITERATURE II

BI-332 BIBLE GEOGRAPHY

CM-331 HOSPITAL MINISTRY

CM-332 WORSHIP

CM-431 PRINCIPLES OF COUNSELING

HI-431 HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

MI-331 INTRODUCTION TO MISSIONS

OT-435 OLD TESTAMENT POETIC BOOKS

OT-436 ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, AND LAMENTATIONS

OT-438 THE MINOR PROPHETS

PT-331 PASTORAL MINISTRIES

TH-431 CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE I

TH-432 CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE II

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The semester begins June 3, 2013. Call or email today for more information. 601-426-6346 or rkitchens@southeasternbaptist.edu.

**Baptist Missionary Association
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P.O. Box 88, Mantachie, MS 38855**Mississippi
Baptist** | Opinion Page

Journal of the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi

Charity never faileth...Go and do likewise

In I Corinthians 13 the Apostle Paul admonishes God's people about things of the heart. He stresses that without true, heartfelt love, all of our works and deeds were just as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

When God gives opportunity to be a blessing, it is our duty to step through the door of opportunity.

I personally have a few areas of ministry in the BMA of America that are dear to my heart. The reasons are twofold. First, I know the people involved and support them and have seen them at work and second, I see the real need and I personally do all I can to help. We pray for them, support them and give financially to their work.

The Harper Family of Bunker, Missouri, are a Bluegrass Gospel singing group that continues to bless the hearts of our churches and others through their dedication and music.

This family felt the calling of God

to this ministry and left their secure jobs a few years ago to enter full-time ministry. If you have heard them or had them at your church, then you have also experienced God's blessings through their music and their testimony.

Gaylon, Katrina, Dalton, Dillon and Hannah Harper are truly blessed by the Lord with talent and they faithfully serve Him through their music.

Nineteen year old son Dalton Harper received some bad news recently. He has been diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma Stage 2.

He is in the process of taking chemotherapy treatments. This family's faith is strong and Dalton is certainly relying on God's providence as he deals with this.

Here is where God's people can help. They have no insurance. Living by faith on support from churches and individuals as they



Don Brown
Editor

travel and minister, the Harper family certainly is not getting wealthy.

I have spoken to Bro. Gaylon, Dalton's father, and he is aware of this appeal. If you can help with a love offering to help this family with these expenses you may send your offerings to:

Dalton Harper
14596 Highway 72
Bunker, MO 63629

I know Dalton and the rest of the Harper Family will be thankful and you will be blessed by this opportunity that God has given you.

When Jesus finished the story of the Good Samaritan to the inquisitive lawyer He asked him who was the neighbor. The lawyer admitted it was "the one who showed mercy".

Let us be merciful and go and do likewise.

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SOAR 2013 JULY 2-4
STUDENT CONFERENCE
THREE CHAIRS
TO REGISTER GO TO WWW.DISCIPLEGUIDE.ORG/SOAR

Three large chairs (black, red, black) are arranged in a row. To the right, a black and white portrait of Lecrae is shown, looking towards the camera with his hand near his head. Below the chairs are six smaller portraits of speakers: Scott Attebery, Aaron Williams, Tracy McMillen, Rhett Walker Band, Dustin Wisely, and Panic Squad.

Special Guest
Lecrae



Mark 16:15 "... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Special Prayer Request

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." Matt 9:38

We are ready to add two new missionaries and we are praying that God will raise up men to answer the call to plant churches in Mississippi. I am having a direct dialogue and am engaged in unified prayer with 5 men about church planting. These men are giving serious prayer to God's will for their lives and we want nothing more than God's will. That said, I am confident that there are others who have grown cold, passive and indifferent to the challenges we face.

Bro. Floyd sang a wonderful old hymn at the Missions and Evangelism Conference entitled, "My House Is Full." I remember hearing this compelling hymn when I was growing up and it always stirred my heart. Here are the words to that song:

*There is peace and contentment in the Father's house today;
Lots of food on His table and no one is turned away.
There is singing and laughter as the hours pass by,
But a hush calms the singing as the Father sadly cries:*

*Chorus:
My house if full but my field is empty,
Who will go and work for Me today?
It seems My children all want to stay around my table,
But no one wants to work in my field.*



Larry Geraldson
Director

*Push away from the table, look out through the window pane,
Just beyond this house of plenty lies a field of golden grain;
And it's ripe unto harvest, but the reapers, where are they?
In the house, oh, can't the children hear their Father sadly say.*

Chorus:

*My house if full but my field is empty,
Who will go and work for Me today?
It seems My children all want to stay around my table,
But no one wants to work in my field.*

Tag:

Who will go and work in my field.

We are ready to go... we need men who will answer the call and surrender to the mandate to go and plant churches.

High Attendance and Total Offerings For The Month of April 2013 and Average Attendance for August 2012

Church Planters

Bob Burch

30 - \$936.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 9)

Bobby Elliott

27 - \$1,548.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 27)

Justin Rhodes

18 - \$1,255.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 13)

Kelby Johnson

19 - \$400.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 0)

Ray Boone

43 - \$1,813.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 34)

Sidney Farmer

31 - \$3,303.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 17)

Hispanic Missions – South; Pastor Estuardo Marroquin, Coordinator Hattiesburg

12 - \$471.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 10)
Biloxi

4 - N/A (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 0)
Laurel

107 - \$4,917.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 99)

Hispanic Missions – North; Pastor Elvis Garcia, Coordinator Tupelo

23 - \$319.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 23)
Oxford

25 - N/A (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 9)
Ripley

114 - \$4,270.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 111)

African American Missions; Pastor Ed DuVall, Coordinator Indianola

63 - \$1,500.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 10)
Olive Branch

16 - \$1,300.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 4)
Cleveland

20 - \$2,605.00 (Average Attendance in August 2012 - 8)

Collectively, our missionaries reported 353 new contacts made in April and 27 professions of faith and 14 baptisms 7 that joined by letter.

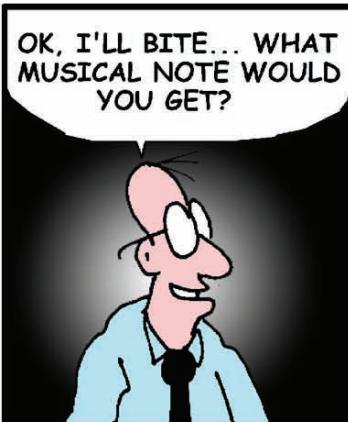
Revolving Loan Fund (as of May 14, 2013)

Here is where we stood as of the end of March 2013: Gross Assets = \$17,387,756.00, an increase of \$1,958,359.00 since August 1, 2012. We opened 35 new investment accounts this fiscal year totaling \$1,479,508.00. We have issued 11 new loans this fiscal year totaling \$3,040,149.00.

Visit Our Website and Facebook Page

Our website is www.bmams.org and our Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/bmamsmissions>

Church of the Covered Dish BY THOMAS TAPP



Sofilthy's Attic

by Barbara White

Danger In Fashion

Easter Sunday seems to be the time to wear the latest fashions. This includes footwear. I sat back and observed the girls and women who usually wear only flip flops or track shoes but have decided that they can "add one cubit to their stature" by wearing those giant wedge shoes.

It was hilarious as each step they took was rather wobbly and I noticed they were lunging from one object to the next one that would give them support. I fully expected to hear that there had been a sprained ankle or two at the end of the day.

That got me to wondering if the foot-fashion folks and orthopedic surgeons were in cahoots.

I'm supposing that every one who wears that type shoe is confident in the promise in Proverbs 3:23, "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely and thy foot shall not stumble."

Former Mission to hold Homecoming

Lone Oak Baptist Church will be having homecoming services on June 2 beginning at 10:30 am with lunch to follow. Bro. James Estes will be bringing the message that morning. All former member and friends are invited to attend. For more info contact Pastor Rick Clark at 601-335-1886 or 662-494-1125.

On Being Blessed

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Psalm 1:1-3

Confessions of Faith

from page 3

provides a touchstone of comparison and contrast by which to discern the “faith of our fathers.” That also strengthens our ability to “mark them that cause divisions”¹ and empowering us to “fight the good fight of faith.”²

Presuming its theological integrity, a confession of faith could also serve as an anchor, compass, and lighthouse for associational Baptists. Paul warns the church that, like a wayward ship, she is not to be tossed about by “every wind of doctrine,”³ and Jude refers to false teachers and their deceptive doctrine as “raging waves of the sea.”⁴ One might convincingly argue that many “ships” upon the contemporary religious sea have been driven off course by the fickle winds and waves of unstable doctrine and therefore need a weighty anchor, an accurate compass, and a bright lighthouse. A confession of faith represents such an anchor, compass, and lighthouse.

Solomon teaches us that, “in the multitude of counselors, there is safety.”⁵ That proverb affirms the wisdom we derive from others. Certainly, we may cautiously look to contemporary leaders and their preaching, writing, and teaching for guidance, but God’s Word teaches us that we should “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set, and enter not into the fields of the fatherless”⁶; we should

“seek the old paths, wherein is the good way.”⁷ Time-honored, time-tested confessions of faith mark those “old landmarks” and “old paths” that map out the “good way.” A confession of faith is a repository of the collective wisdom of our elders – theological forefathers, preachers, pastors, and churches from centuries past who, “being dead yet speak”⁸ to us as a “multitude of counselors” in whom associational Baptists can find “safety.” A confession of faith also provides an effective tool for the sanctification and edification of pastors, individual Christians, and associational churches. Arguably, Baptists do fairly well with two-thirds of the Great Commission – Evangelize (make disciples) and Baptize – but we often struggle and even fail in our responsibility to its third commandment – Catechize “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Certainly, nothing replaces the study, preaching, and teaching of God’s Holy Word; however, we should not neglect to read and profit from ancient documents that our holy and wise forefathers have authored as aids to faith for their generation and ours. Alien to the frequent mediocrity and shallowness of contemporary commentaries and religious literature, a biblically tethered, well written confession of faith is, second to the Holy Bible, the soul’s best guide. Yet, too often associational Baptists neglect that rich vein of theological gold, choosing instead to erect our intellectual edifice with the bendable aluminum of the moment and the pliable plastic of the present. If we would teach, that is, catechize, our children well and, more importantly, the children of God, we could do no better than to return to those old confessions of faith that nurtured our forefathers in their youth – Spurgeon, Bunyan, Gill, Keach, Pendleton, Graves, and other great Baptists.

Moreover, a confession of faith might result in an unpleasant but healthy reduction in congregational numbers. In a religious generation that has abandoned radical repentance and authentic faith characterized by holy living, a unified confession of faith could separate sheep from goats, wheat from tares, and purify associa-

North Senior Adult Conference Held in Fulton



tional Baptist churches ethically and intellectually. But such a confessional revival among associational Baptists could necessitate a radical shift in many churches’ basic philosophy of church ministry, specifically, a shift towards the idea that the principal didactical and ethical aims of the New Testament Church are spiritual growth, not numerical; intellectual unity, not intellectual diversity; and moral accountability, not moral permissiveness coupled with an easy forgiveness that requires no hard repentance.

A confession of faith is also a window to the past and a mirror of the present. If we would know who Baptists were, we must peer into history. The most translucent medium through which to look at Baptist history is the windowpane of historic confessions. If we truly want to see ourselves as we really are, or as we really should be, confessions of faith reflect not only the image of our forefathers but also an image of ourselves, either convincing us of our rightful inheritance of identity with historical associational Baptists, or convicting us that who we are does not reflect who they were.

Finally, returning to a confession of faith could unify contemporary associational Baptists. The Apostle James tells us that “a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.”⁹ If instability characterizes the double-minded individual, how much more does it destabilize that collection of individuals

known as “the Church?” Paul’s mandate to the church is that she should embrace “one faith”¹⁰ and “speak the same thing”¹¹ in “the unity of the faith.”¹² Absolute Truth does not respect, tolerate, or encourage diversity of opinion within the body of Christ but rather seeks to “bring every thought captive to Christ,”¹³ resulting in actual fulfillment of the biblical mandate that the Church should “earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.”¹⁴ But if we speak different shibboleths, we are destined to fall before our enemies, turn upon one another, and find ourselves confused in the tower of theological Babel.

In summary, the current trend toward doctrinal homogenization has resulted in an identity crisis in contemporary Christianity. No group suffers more from this malady than Baptists, who have almost completely lost connection to their most influential and noble fore-runners whose faith was defined by formal confessions. Severance from our theological ancestry not only obscures our historical identity, it also threatens our claim to orthodoxy as we incautiously follow the popular trend of blended religious ideas. That is an unsafe path, for not only does it lead to compromise and error, it also ensures the “dumbing down” of our congregants for whom we are responsible to “sanctify” by the Truth.¹⁵ Such a rejection of our theological ancestry not only casts aspersions upon our forebears, it also forebodes continuing intellec-

tual regression among associational Baptists. Although a renewed emphasis upon our confessional history might be an enlightening and edifying development, it might also result in a modern exodus from our churches when our congregants, or even our preachers, find out whom we really are. But whatever collateral damage a confessional revival might inflict upon Baptists, the Bible teaches us that two cannot walk together except they are in agreement.¹⁶ A divided house or a kingdom must eventually fall.¹⁷ Even Gideon’s few or David’s outlaw band, when unified, are much more usable to God than a mighty army marching unattuned to their commander’s voice and out of step with their comrades’ strides. Even if such an exodus occurred, my conviction is that, even in this post-Christian, post-denominational era, a return to a strong, biblically-based confession of faith would appeal to the truly regenerate and thereby strengthen associational Baptists.

1 Romans 16:17

2 I Timothy 6:12

3 Ephesians 4:14

4 Jude 1:13

5 Proverbs 11:14

6 Proverbs 22:28; 23:10

7 Jeremiah 6:16

8 Hebrews 11:4

9 James 1:8

10 Ephesians 4:5

11 I Corinthians 1:10

12 Ephesians 4:3

13 II Corinthians 10:5

14 Jude 1:3

15 John 17:17

16 Amos 3:3

17 Matthew 12:25

Camp Jobs

from page 1

partially remodeled with better beds and mattresses. In the last 5 years we have bought over 500 new mattresses and built that many new beds to make our campers more comfortable at night.

We have one large project that will be coming up in August. We will be resurfacing all of the roads on the campgrounds at a cost of around \$50,000.00.

We have a construction company that has agreed to do this for us by supplying the machinery and manpower at a price far below the market. We have to wait until August since it needs to be very warm for the materials to bond correctly. Can you help us replace these roads?

Sleeper Cells

Ever since 9/11, we have been hearing about sleeper cells. It seems that every time some whacko blows something up, a sleeper cell was involved. Now I'm not the smartest guy on the block, but it would seem that if we have people smart enough to take a cell and grow a sheep, it would follow that some egghead out there could look into these sleeper cells. Surely there is a way we could modify a cell where it would decrease the tendency some people have of blowing stuff up.

I know there are some out there that think we shouldn't fool with cells, but hey, they started it. What with all there splitting and dividing, mitosing and meiosis, mutating and...well, whatever else cells do, they are guilty of throwing the first punch. If they didn't want us involved, they shouldn't have started causing so many problems. Now they have gone and created something called sleepers.

I'm not sure if these are teenage cells just doing what teenagers do, or if they are geezer cells that fall asleep during the

From The Mind of



Chuck Lee

middle of a conversation. Whatever group they identify with, when they wake up they sure are cranky. I can't really cast a stone at them, because I know how I feel when I get woke up. Actually, when I get woke up, I do feel like throwing stones.

It's possible that I have sleeper cells in me because I like a good sleep. In fact, when I fall asleep it is as if I am walking a tight rope between life and death. One misstep and I may just plunge to that eternal abode. Plunge is an unfortunate term, considering I have already made reservations

with the Angel Taxi Cab Service to pick me up immediately upon departure, but you get the point. When I sleep, it is a deep, cavernous sleep. My body instantly becomes twice as heavy as I sink deep into whatever is unfortunate to be my bed at the time. It would take a freight train roaring through the house with Johnny Cash singing 'Folsom Prison Blues' to wake me up.

My wife, on the other hand, wakes up with the slightest noise, especially when the children were babies. There were

many times when I would awake in the early hours of the morning and see her rocking one of them back to sleep. I would get up, take the baby and the bottle, tell her to go back to bed, and try to see what I could throw a rock at. Looking back, I think she would pinch me or something to make me get up, because as far as I know, we didn't live anywhere near a train track. There's probably a cell that causes wives to be mean like that.

Instead of spending all our efforts on trying to find where these guys that blow stuff up are sleeping, perhaps we could work on modifying their sleeper cells. We could put in some DNA or RNA or whatever else is in cells and cause them to dream sweet dreams. When they wake up, they may just want to be productive citizens. Our seal teams could stay home and raise their families in peace.

By the way, if they can train a bunch of seals to take out Bin Laden, surely we can come up with something to help with these sleeper cells. After all, Sea World probably needs them back.

In the interest of Mother's Day...Hi, mom! Sorry I was so hard to wake up in the mornings to go to school. Love you!

Hypostasis

**by Danny Pitts, pastor
First Baptist Church of
Shady Grove
Laurel, Mississippi**

The First Coming of Jesus in Salvation. He had to come as a human being in order to be the substitute for sinful mankind. The Fall left all men and women as sinners who could not avoid sinful acts nor the depraved nature. That bent toward evil was passed to every generation born of earthly parents. By the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth produced a God/Man who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). The limitations and experiences of being human were lived in Jesus' hunger, anger, tears, pain, facing temptations, and death. The context of the Account of the Gospel states that Jesus is God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). It illustrates the truth with "All

things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3).

In AD 451 the Council of Chalcedon stressed their conviction that Jesus was both human and divine, "united with neither confusion nor division." This view was known as "hypostasis." It became the bases for determining if doctrines were heretical or sound. As with other references to the Trinity, the Father and Son are of the same substance and subsistence. The Father and Son are distinct and yet one and the same. We do not believe in three Gods as idolaters do. Instead, the uniqueness of the Father and Son stand. Coexisting natures is probably a mystery. In fact, almost everything concerning God stretches our frail minds. Much has to be believed by faith. The difficulty of reconciling total deity and total humanity in one person becomes

more complicated in some passages. Luke recorded, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). How can the immutable, omniscient God of the Universe increase in wisdom?

Many have looked to Paul in what is known as the Kenosis Passage. He wrote: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8). "Made himself of no reputation" comes from the Greek form of the word kenosis meaning "to empty." What did Jesus give up to become our substitute? Clearly at great cost to Himself, He became the sinless human (and stayed that way) so He could become the substitute in death for sinful mankind.

Shepherds Bags Shipment Headed to the Philippines

by Fonda Norris, EIM Shepherds Bags Coordinator

It was rainy and cold but we finally made it! On May 1 after much hard work and trying to keep the boxes dry as we put them in the container, the Philippines Shepherds Bags shipment is now officially in our books as complete! Thank you Lord! Bro. Rocky and I believe it was the very first time we've loaded on a rainy day but God was good and provided a lot of great workers to help with the load. The truck driver even helped us load which was a first as well!



Workers from churches who helped are: Left to right: Curtis and Wanda Carr from Emmaus Baptist Church, New Edinburg, AR, Rufus our hard working truck driver, Bro. Rocky Goodwin minus his suit and tie, Roger Davis from Victory Baptist, Hampton, AR and Conway Thompson from Emmaus Baptist Church.

17,023 bags were sent to the Philippines! This is amazing but it is more so when you consider we just had our last shipment go out to Honduras on January 23. This is the closest time frame we've ever had shipments go out in the history of the Shepherds Bags Ministry. All the glory belongs to God! We know that God will save many souls because these bags will go into areas that have never heard the truth of the Gospel.

As I said in my last Shepherds Bags report, we are currently working on a shipment for Ghana, West Africa. We have almost 12,000 bags completed. We must finish and get ready to load on or about July 1. I would like to share a prayer request from our hearts at EIM to yours. I have 4,500 more Gospel Story/Coloring books that are in the language spoken in Ghana that I would love to be able to put into bags to finish up our Ghana shipment. They are designed specifically for our EIM Shepherds Bags. We are praying that God's people will provide the means for us to be able to buy the remaining supplies to finish up the 4,500 bags.



Loading in the rain

usually our busiest time of the year and we encourage everyone to keep us busy here! Thank you for all you do to help preach Jesus to children and adults around the world. If you have any questions about the Shepherds Bags Ministry and how you can help, go to our website at www.eimworldwide.org or give us a call here at the office at 870-226-3626.

2013 Missions & Evangelistic Conference Highlights

The 2013 Missions and Evangelistic Conference was held at First Baptist Church of Bay Springs. Pastor James Sprayberry and the entire church did a wonderful job of hosting. The meals were great and the people of First Baptist were gracious hosts.

A good crowd was on hand with good preaching and reports from our state missionaries. Blessings were reported and plans shared. Below are photos of the day's activities and participants.



Special Emphasis For State Missions Continues Through May
Support Missions In Mississippi