



SBAOC Weekly Update

NEWS & PRAYER REQUESTS

- *The deadline to register for SBFYC is May 23rd. You can find more information at www.sbfyckansas.com.*
- *Please continue to pray for those affected by the Midwest flooding and our Disaster Relief teams.*

If you have any news, prayer requests, or events that you would like to have included in this update, please email the information to spurgeonassociation@gmail.com or call us at 785-456-8513.

THE CONSERVING POWER OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

By Tom Nettles

That which I propose in this article is that the Doctrines of Grace have an intrinsic tendency to preserve and give greater coherence to the defining tenets of orthodox evangelicalism. Of course, I am not the first to make this observation. Several in the history of the church have argued that Christian fundamentals are so dependent on God's initiative in revelation and salvation that any effort to maintain vibrant Christian witness and testimony apart from the Doctrines of Grace is a short-lived business.

This affirmation, however, holds particular relevance for Southern Baptists at this time. Having struggled valiantly and faithfully for years out of a sense of stewardship of the truth to reestablish absolute fidelity to the full truthfulness of Scripture as a foundation for theological education and missions, doesn't it make sense that we should understand some of the dynamics of how that affirmation is lost and what fabric of belief is most consistent with retaining it. In addition, when one sees denials of God's omniscience and immutability and a general leavening into evangelicalism of the leading principles of process theology; and when one realizes that the recipe for the mixture called for an initial dose of essence of Arminianism, one must cultivate discipline, caution, and the skill of theological analysis to be a faithful disciple of the Lord in these days.

When Spurgeon wielded both his sword and his trowel in the "Downgrade Controversy," he considered the engagement to be much

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PURPOSE STATEMENT:

We unite as an association of Southern Baptist churches in order to manifest the glory of God above all. We purpose to do this by seeking spiritual awakening and revival by intense prayer and earnest obedience to Scripture. We covenant to strengthen and support one another, motivated and guided by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, by facilitating faithful preaching of the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to all, making and gathering disciples, planting churches and coordinating unified missions efforts.

"If there is no church... should you not commence one?" C. H. Spurgeon

COMMENTS ON OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT

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“Our Gospel came not to you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance, and it is that matter of the Gospel centering everything, focusing attention on God and the realization that the full purpose of the Gospel is to put God first in our lives.”

Eifion Evans

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more fundamental than disagreement over the intent of the atonement. "The present struggle is not a debate," he wrote, "upon the question of Calvinism or Arminianism, but of the truth of God versus the inventions of men." [Sword and Trowel, April 1887, p 196] This fact, however, did not make Spurgeon overlook or fail to mention, "Arminianism has usually been the route by which the older dissenters have traveled downward to Socinianism." Again in the combination of reserve and affirmation, Spurgeon continues, "We care far more for the central evangelical truths than we do for Calvinism as a system; but we believe that Calvinism has in it a conservative force which helps to hold men to the vital truth, and therefore we are sorry to see any quitting it who have once accepted it." Southern Baptists once "accepted it;" now by God's grace may we stop "quitting it."

No person alive understands all of divine revelation. Each of us is susceptible to error in interpretation or in doctrine. To seek to avoid error as much as possible is a stewardship that rests upon all Christian ministers, particularly in vital areas of gospel truth. It becomes obligatory, therefore, to think through the implications of the doctrines we believe, and to seek earnestly to understand the relationship of one part of divine truth to another. All the elements are connected and not one part of it is inconsequential for another. God is one in being, though three in persons. Love for the Son does not at all diminish one's love for the Father, and understanding the work of the Son contributes to our understand of the Father; likewise with love for and knowledge of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Even so, an increase in one's understanding of justification may generate an appreciable increase in one's understanding of the cross, or even the Spirit's work in regeneration. These in turn will impact one's thinking about the church and the nature of its membership. "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism" and our goal is to lead our people into a "unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God." There are no unimportant doctrines in the Word of God; a weakness in one part makes us more susceptible to error in another. That is the truth which drove the Apostle Paul to tell the Galatians, "If salvation could come by the law, then Christ died in vain [Gal2:21]" and again to the Corinthians, "If the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins." And those who have fallen asleep with their hope in Christ have really perished under the wrath of God.

Knowing the doctrine of election helps one know more about the reality of regeneration and both in turn make one more confident in the power and purpose of the preached word. Otherwise Paul could not have said, "Knowing brethren beloved by God, your election, for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" [1 Th. 1:4,5]. Realizing the ideal of a regenerate church membership would be greatly enhanced by a thorough knowledge of the nature and evidence of the new birth. Much of the current puzzlement over the large number of absentee and non-resident members could be, not only explained, but remedied by careful and courageous application of the doctrine of effectual calling to situations in local churches.

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UPCOMING CONFERENCES & EVENTS

2019 National Founders Conference—May 14-16.

Louisville, KY. *The Gospel And Justice: Contending For The Faith That Was Once Delivered To The Saints* with Tom Ascol, Jared Longshore, Tom Nettles, Fred Malone, Tom Hicks, & Jon English Lee . <https://founders.sovalliance.com/2019-founders-louisville/>

Saved By Faith Youth Camp—June 17-21, 2019.

Webster Conference Center, Salina, Kansas. Speaker: Dr. Jim Orrick. *God Is Sovereign*. For more information go to www.sbfyckansas.com or email trinitybaptistwamego@gmail.com.

Encouraged to Endure Conference—July 25-27,

2019. Second Baptist Church, West Frankfort, IL. Speakers: Joseph Mahlaola, Larry McCall, & John Snyder. Worship Leader: Tom Clay.

Reformation Weekend Conference—October 25-

27. Trinity Baptist Church, Wamego, KS. The SBAOC annual business meeting will

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With this background, therefore, I will seek briefly to demonstrate these connections through a merely suggestive discussion of two doctrines: the inerrancy of Scripture and substitutionary atonement.

In addition to the historical reality that the most cogent and formidable defenses of biblical inspiration have come from within the Reformed wing of Protestantism (see the works of Warfield, Hodge, Turretin, Calvin, Dabney, Thornwell, Andrew Fuller, J. P. Boyce, and John L. Dagg), historic Calvinism provides the most theologically integrated rationale for inerrancy of any theological system. Arminianism propounds a view in which it is impossible for God infallibly to superintend any activity to a predetermined result which at the same time involves human agency without destroying the freeness of human agency in the process. Their theological system can guarantee the inerrancy of Scripture only by assuming that human writers became automatons during the process of inscription. (They do not actually claim this, but their system logically requires it.)

Calvinism, on the other hand, does not depend on indeterminacy for freedom. The most potent illustration of this is the doctrine of God. God is determined in holiness and truth and yet is perfectly free and praiseworthy for his truthfulness. Even so there can be free human action which absolutely conforms to the respective personalities involved and at the same time absolutely conforms to the decretal providence of God. This extends to the production of a written revelation. If Herod and Pontius Pilate can act condemnably in executing the exact purposes of God in the crucifixion of Christ, then the apostles, in whose hearts love for Christ has been shed abroad, can function freely as teachers of the church and at the same time produce a God-determined inerrant scripture.

Inerrancy appears as an aberration in the Arminian system; it is a coherent part of the Calvinist system.

Second, a substitutionary, propitiatory atonement has been at the heart of evangelical Southern Baptist life. Arminianism produces a tension with that understanding of the atonement, while Calvinism embraces it as endemic to, supportive of, and, indeed, necessary for its exposition of the gospel. There can be little doubt that Scripture teaches Christ's substitutionary death. "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He died the just for the unjust, that he might lead us to God." "He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us." "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." In addition, the entire biblical witness leaves no exit from the altar on which a propitiation is offered. "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him." "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement. .. so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus." Those who were alienated from God and were enemies he has reconciled by "making peace through his blood shed on the cross." "He has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Arminianism has tended to produce systems of atonement which are variations of the moral influence theory. Grotius, a leader of the Dutch Arminians developed the Moral government theory of the atonement. The attraction these views of the atonement have for Arminianism is that they do not demand that Christ's atoning work have a

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corresponding objective result. The impact of the atonement is subjective and is thus merely a motivating power to repentance and faith by which forgiveness comes. Substitutionary, propitiatory atonement envelopes the biblical idea of justice that punishment must fit the crime and not be carried beyond the deserts of the crime. If Christ has suffered indeed for sins, and God's wrath has received a just settlement, then something objective has taken place and all the benefits caused by Christ's death must be given, else punishment be inflicted without corresponding release and Christ's soul experience travail without satisfaction. These objective aspects of the atonement are inconsistent with a universal atonement that has a subjective delivery system, that is, the efficacy of a propitiatory substitutionary atonement cannot finally be suspended on the human responses of repentance and faith. Several non-Calvinist groups, therefore, have been pressed by the logic of their own position to reject substitutionary atonement.

These objective elements, however, are at the heart of an understanding that affirms the certitude of the complete effectuality of the death of Christ. Such an atonement, rather than being suspended on subjective response, is among the causes of repentance and faith. The doctrines of Grace see no incongruity between the question, "Who is he that condemns?" and the confident answer, "It is Christ who died." The death of Christ without fail releases its beneficiary from condemnation. Universal atonement cannot with doctrinal consistency engender such confidence.

Before my final observations, I want to issue one caveat concerning the approach taken in this presentation. While the argument is that the Doctrines of Grace give greater coherence to the whole system of divine truth, and particularly those central evangelical tenets of the gospel, I am not arguing that the Doctrines of Grace are merely the result of inferential reasoning. They are primarily the embodiment of a holistic approach to biblical interpretation. One can see these truths operative in apostolic teaching from Romans 8, to Ephesians 1, to 1 Peter 1 and many other places and in our Lord's own discussions in John 3 and 6 and 10 and 17 and in Matthew 11 and other places. They form the decretal and experiential substratum for the more kerygmatic aspects of God's saving work such as the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension and human response such as repentance and faith. For that reason they are slightly more hidden in mystery not only in reality but in revelation; thus these issues are the source of evangelical disagreements. But for that reason also, they do provide the most pleasing and

defensible source of unity to all biblical truth.

Finally, while I think that this issue of consistency and conservation must be pressed and argued with as much spiritual fervor as possible, two factors must always be present in our demeanor and inform our mental orientation. One, a blessed inconsistency, powered by the clarity of Scripture, often salvages evangelical affirmation and practice. This week in chapel at TEDS, I led the congregation in a great William Gadsby hymn, "O What Matchless Condescension." All sang it with joy and exuberance. One of the leading Arminians on our campus told me afterwards how much he enjoyed the hymn and how wonderfully poetic and clearly accurate theologically it was. I told him that it was written by a 19th century Baptist hyper-Calvinist. Still he found nothing in it with which he could disagree. One of the verses says:

Would we see his brightest glory,
Here it shines in Jesus' face;
Sing and tell the pleasing story,
O ye sinners saved by grace;
And with pleasure,
Bid the guilty Him embrace.

One of the Hyper-Calvinist tenets is the rejection of duty faith on the part of sinners which implies the illegitimate status of ministerial urgings in a mixed assembly for sinners to embrace Christ. Yet here we have it in a hymn; An Arminian singing the affirmation of a hyper-Calvinist, "And with pleasure, bid the guilty Him embrace."

Two, we must recognize that we too hold some doctrines or interpretations at an inchoate or embryonic stage which if allowed to mature with their present tendencies could be destructive. We stand in need of constant reproof and correction from the word of God. In addition, we hold some true things in such a manner as would be unnecessarily destructive of Christian love and unity if God's Spirit gave license to our spiritual pride to have its ultimate devastating impact.

O please God, grant us by your grace the courage to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, the perseverance to walk in truth, the skill to teach toward a unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, the energy to press toward the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the humble consistency to live by the truth to which we have presently attained, and the hope to believe that if in anything we are otherwise minded, it is your purpose and prerogative to reveal it to us, correct us, and to swallow up our partial understanding and partial holiness with the fullness of Christ's glory.

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PRAYER MEETINGS FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AND REVIVAL

- Fellowship Baptist Church in Onaga, Kansas—5:00 pm on Sundays
- Trinity Baptist Church in Wamego, Kansas—8:00 pm on Saturdays

The Spurgeon Baptist Association of Churches is an association of Southern Baptist Churches that are united to manifest the glory of God above all. We set out to do this by seeking spiritual awakening and revival by intense prayer and earnest obedience to Scripture. As an association of churches we are bound in mutual covenant to strengthen and support one another - motivated and guided by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture - by facilitating faithful preaching of the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to all, making and gathering disciples, planting churches and coordinating unified missions efforts.

We are a non-geographic association seeking to include any like-minded body of believers so that together we might better fulfill the great commission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our intent is to lean on His instruction and not our imaginations so that He is honored in all that we do. We welcome churches who adhere to the confessions of faith accepted by Southern Baptists throughout their history, including, but not limited to, the Second London Confession (1689) and the Baptist Faith and Message.



Baptist Association of Churches