



SBAOC Weekly Update

NEWS & PRAYER REQUESTS

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

CONFESSONAL CHRISTIANITY

D. Matthew Allen

In the short number of years that I knew Ernest Reisinger, I was privileged to write three Founders Press books with him. A fourth is almost completed. As a result of this collaboration, I got to spend many hours with Ernie, listening to him, praying with him and learning from him. It was from Ernie that I learned to cherish the deep biblical faith of the Puritans. From him I learned to appreciate more fully the rich heritage of our Baptist forebears. Ernie introduced me to the preaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the works of John Owen and the systematic theologies of James P. Boyce and John L. Dagg. Among these things, one of the most vivid lessons I learned from Ernie is that biblical Christianity must be a confessional Christianity. Ernie felt so strongly about this that he at least twice reprinted the *Abstract of Principles*, the confessional statement of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, as an appendix to other works. Our final work together, to be published in the near future, will be a commentary on the *Abstract of Principles*, based in part on articles Ernie wrote on the *Abstract* in his North Pompano Baptist Church newsletter. Ernie approved the manuscript of the final chapter only days before he died.

Baptists Are a Confessional People

Ernie never understood the often expressed sentiment that "Baptists are not creedal people." Conservatives who make this statement sometimes add: "We have no creed but the Bible." Liberals sometimes follow it up with the statement: "We have no creed but Christ." These statements beg the question. Which Bible? The Bible of Thomas Jefferson (who took a razor blade to the passages he didn't like)? The Bible of those who argue that homosexuality is consonant with Christianity? Or the Bible of John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards and John Bunyan? One has to interpret the Bible in order to determine what it means. This requires an understanding of one's doctrine. Which Christ? The Christ of the Jesus Seminar?

(Continued on page 2)



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Confessional Christianity..... 2-4
- Comments on Our Purpose Statement 2
- Contact Us 5
- Pulpit Supply 5
- Prayer Meetings..... 5

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

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.

"In vain we may talk of being converted till we are bought out of ourselves; to come as poor lost undone sinners, to the Lord Jesus Christ; to be washed in His blood; to be clothed in His glorious imputed righteousness. The consequence of this imputation, or application of a Mediator's righteousness to the soul, will be a conversion from sin to holiness."

George Whitefield

(Continued from page 1)

The Christ that the Dalai Lama preaches? Or the divine God-man of the Bible? Determining which Christ one believes in similarly requires a doctrinal analysis. This is all a creed is.

In other words, a creed (from the Latin *credo*, meaning "I believe") is merely a summary of one's set of beliefs. It can be informal. As B.H. Carroll said, "Whatever a man believes, that is his creed and is bound to be his basis of life."¹ Therefore, the notion that Baptists have no creed but the Bible is tantamount to saying Baptists have no coherent beliefs at all, but merely see the Bible as a collection of random stories and sayings. May it never be! When we say that God is triune, this is credal. When we say that God is love, this too is credal. Every Christian and every Baptist has at least an informal creed.

Of course, Baptists always have been formal credalists. This is inherent in the name "Baptist," which says something about what we believe about baptism. Baptists have always insisted on defining the boundaries of their faith, beginning with the General Baptists' *Short Confession of Faith in Twenty Articles* (1609) and the Particular Baptists' *London Confession of 1644*, and continuing to the current *Baptist Faith and Message*. As William Lumpkin wrote a number of years ago, "few Christian groups have confessed their faith so freely as the Baptists."²

What is the difference between a creed and a confession of faith? None. A creed is a doctrinal statement. So is a statement of faith or confession of faith. A catechism is a particular type of confession of faith, presented in the form of questions and answers, frequently designed for teaching children. Historically, catechisms have been used as a valuable teaching tool in many Baptist homes and churches. Sadly, they are less used today.

The Value of Confessional Christianity

Why should we be confessional Christians? Why should we value and use a confession of faith? The first reason is that confessing one's faith by reciting a doctrinal statement follows the examples of the biblical writers themselves. Confessionalism is as old as the Bible itself. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, Paul declared: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" (ESV). In 1 Timothy 3:16, he wrote: "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory" (ESV). These are early credal statements. Credal fragments are also found in Philippians 2:6-11, 1 Peter 3:18 and 1 John 2:22, 5:1, among other passages. The writer of Hebrews instructs us to "hold fast our confession"

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

and "the confession of our hope" (Hebrews 4:14, 10:23; 3:1; ESV).

Another reason to be confessional is that it reflects a high esteem of the Bible. Confessions do not take the place of the Bible, but they help us systematize and summarize the teachings of the Bible. They are useful in the same ways that systematic theologies are useful. A systematic theology is a work that sets out in an orderly and coherent manner the truth respecting God and His relations to men and the world. This is to be distinguished from biblical theology, which is the study of a particular Bible book or author. A confession of faith falls on the systematic side of the equation. It describes in a clear, concise and coherent manner what the whole Bible teaches on a number of key topics. The *Abstract of Principles*, for example, contains twenty short but substance-packed articles on the following topics: The Scriptures, God, The Trinity, Providence, Election, The Fall of Man, The Mediator, Regeneration, Repentance, Faith, Justification, Sanctification, Perseverance of the Saints, The Church, Baptism, The Lord's Supper, The Lord's Day, Liberty of Conscience, The Resurrection, and The Judgment.³

Another reason to be confessional is that a confession of faith provides a fixed compass by which doctrine can be judged. Ernie Reisinger believed confessions are useful to (1) describe the truth, (2) discriminate truth from error, (3) delineate the boundaries of ecclesiastical fellowship and (4) disseminate instruction.⁴

The *Abstract of Principles* suitably serves each of these purposes. It was formulated in 1858 by Basil Manly, Jr., under the direction of James P. Boyce, at the founding of Southern Seminary. It was designed to be an "abstract," or summary, of the Bible's teachings on the twenty fundamental doctrines listed above. In addressing these twenty topics, it was intended to describe the basic doctrines held by all Baptists. In forming the *Abstract*, Manly drew from the *Charleston Confession*, a reproduction of the *Philadelphia Confession*, itself a minor modification of the *London Baptist Confession of 1689*. Because the *London Confession*, in turn, was adapted in large degree from the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (except for those few articles dealing with Baptist

distinctives), the *Abstract of Principles* is a compendium of what C.S. Lewis called "mere Christianity."⁵ Albert Mohler calls it "a brilliant summary of biblical and Baptist conviction" and "a faithful repetition of the central truths found within the *Westminster Confession*."⁶

The *Abstract* also was intended to discriminate truth from error. When James Boyce proposed the founding of a Southern Baptist seminary, he was concerned to protect the Baptist flock from the inroads that German criticism already had begun making on other American institutions of higher learning. He proposed the preparation of the *Abstract*—and the requirement that every seminary professor at the new institution sign it—to guard against the rise of liberalism in theological teaching. He believed that anyone who sought to teach in the Baptist seminary should be required to teach according to a "formal and explicit confession of faith which would set forth without compromise, and without forsaking clarity, precisely what would be taught within the institution."⁷ As later Southern Seminary president E.Y. Mullins put it in advocating the adoption of a denomination-wide confession, "If a man holds consistently the Unitarian view of Christ's person, he cannot long cooperate with those who hold the deity of Christ."⁸ The *Abstract* still governs the teaching parameters at Southern Seminary, as well as its sister institution, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The *Abstract of Principles* additionally is a sound teaching instrument. When analyzed article by article, it provides a fine summary of doctrinal theology. Ernie was firmly convinced that the use of confessions and catechisms to teach the young was a central tenet of biblical evangelism.

Answers to Objections to the Use of Confessions

Some people who oppose the use of creeds and confessions are merely ignorant. They know nothing of the history, purpose, value or biblical substance of the historic creeds of the church. This is not true, however, of most opponents of creeds. They are, as Ernie once wrote, "latitudinarians and heretics."⁹ This is because a sound confessional statement exposes false teaching for what it

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

is. It provides a fixed standard by which to judge false teachers' doctrine. These people really do not oppose the idea of a creed, but the content of orthodox confessional statements.

What are some more honest objections to the use of creeds? One is that requiring subscription to a confession of faith supercedes the Bible. But as Ernie has pointed out, this objection is based on a false assumption—that the confessional statement is of equal authority with the Bible.¹⁰ Confessions cannot usurp the Bible's place of authority (nor do they claim to do so), but necessarily retain a subordinate place to the Bible. A. A. Hodge noted over a century ago that the real conflict is not between the Bible and creedal statements but between the church's orthodox interpretation of the Bible and an esoteric private interpretation.¹¹

Another objection is that confessions interfere with the rights of conscience and naturally lead to oppression. A few Southern Baptist missionaries were vociferous in making this argument to the International Mission Board's requirement that all SBC missionaries subscribe to the revised *Baptist Faith and Message* as a condition of continued employment. But this objection was answered by Ernie years before the *IMB/Baptist Faith and Message* controversy:

If a body of professing Christians have a natural right thus to associate, to extract their own Creed from the Scriptures and to agree upon the principles by which others may afterwards be admitted into their number, is it not equally manifest that they have the same right to refuse admittance to those with whom they believe they cannot be comfortably connected?

Thus, the answer to the one asserting this objection is to say that association with a group (such as the SBC) is: "Your demand is very unreasonable. Our union is a voluntary one for our mutual spiritual benefit. We have not solicited you to join us, and you cannot possibly have a right to force yourself into our body. The whole world is before you. Go where you please. We cannot agree to receive you unless you are willing to walk with us upon our own principles."¹²

Conclusion

Ernest Reisinger was a confessional Christian. He believed in, used and distributed the great Baptist confessions of faith such as the *Second London Confession of 1689* and the *Abstract of Principles*. Ernie's confessionalism, however, did not stand alone. It was part of his broader emphasis on the sacred marriage of biblical doctrine and devotion to Christ. Ernie loved the great gospel doctrines expounded in the historic confessions. Even more so, he loved the impact those doctrines had on his own life and the lives of those he touched for the Lord. Oh, that we who follow in Ernie's footsteps would love and use the confessions and catechisms of our faith as mightily as Ernie did.

Notes:

- 1 B.H. Carroll, "Creeds and Confessions of Faith," in Timothy and Denise George, ed., *Baptists and Their Doctrines* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 84.
- 2 William Lumpkin, "Confessions of Faith, Baptists," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), vol. 1, 304.
- 3 The *Abstract of Principles* is available on the website for Founders Ministries. See: <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/abstract.html>
- 4 See Ernest C. Reisinger, "Creeds, Confessions, Articles of Faith," *Good News*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Jan. 31, 1984).
- 5 Ernie took delight in telling people that the *Westminster Confession* is our "mother confession."
- 6 R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "To Train the Minister Whom God Has Called," *Founders Journal* (Winter/Spring 1995), 49.
- 7 Ibid, 38-42. See James P. Boyce, "Three Changes in Theological Education" is reprinted in Timothy George, *Treasures From the Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 103-138.
- 8 E.Y. Mullins, "Baptists and Creeds," in Timothy and Denise George, ed., *The Axioms of Religion* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 190-91.
- 9 Ernest C. Reisinger, "Creeds, Confessions, Articles of Faith," *Good News*, part 2, undated article, available on the internet at www.reformedreader.org/rbb/reisinger/goodnews02.htm
- 10 Ernest C. Reisinger, "Creeds, Confessions, Articles of Faith," *Good News*, part 3, undated article, available on the internet at www.reformedreader.org/rbb/reisinger/goodnews03.htm
- 11 A.A. Hodge, *Commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), 1.
- 12 Reisinger, "Creeds, Confessions, Articles of Faith," part 3.

**SPURGEON
BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION
OF CHURCHES**

**PO Box 155
Wamego KS 66547**

Phone: (785) 456-8513

Email:
spurgeonassociation@gmail.com

Contact Us:

Administrative Council:

J.W. Glidewell
Moderator & Western Coordinator
Phone: (785) 772-1176
jwglidewell@gmail.com

Terry Coker
Vice Moderator
& Eastern Coordinator
Terry.Coker@fbcfenton.com

Tony Mattia
Corresponding Secretary
Phone: (785) 456-3796
spurgeonassociation@gmail.com

Ken Jorgenson, At Large
kjorg@hotmail.com

Robin Jackson, At Large
jacksonrobin@gmail.com

Bill Ascol, At Large
bascol@sbcglobal.net

Lyn Hansen, At Large
pastorlyn@insidenp.com



WWW.SBAOC.ORG

MEN AVAILABLE FOR PULPIT SUPPLY

Kevin Berens
Colby, Kansas
Email: berens.kevin@gmail.com
Cell Phone: 785-332-7184

Bake Ottofy
St. Louis, Missouri
Email: bakeottofy@gmail.com
Phone: 636-467-7446

Tim Lambert
Lindsborg, Kansas
Email: tlambert@smokyvalley.org
Phone: 785-614-3651

John Grove
Ocala, FL
Email: trsjwg@gmail.com
Phone: 352-286-5494

Brad Richardson
Lawrence, Kansas
Email: richbud@hotmail.com
Phone: 785-766-7268

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