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EDITORIALS

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AND
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A Word from the Editor-in-Chief

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This issue of the Southwestern Journal of Theology introduces the new managing Editor, Malcolm B. Yarnell III, and his Editorial Assistant, Madison Grace II. Malcolm Yarnell is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Director of the Center for Theological Research at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. A native of Louisiana, Yarnell is a graduate of Louisiana State University and has also completed the Master of Divinity at Southwestern, the Master of Theology at Duke University, and the Doctor of Philosophy at Oxford. The topic of Yarnell's dissertation was *Royal Priesthood in the English Reformation*.

In addition to teaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Yarnell also taught at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he served as Academic Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Recently B&H Academic published Yarnell's groundbreaking book *Formation of Christian Doctrine* on theological method in a free church context, reviewed in this issue by Distinguished Professor of Theology, James Leo Garrett, Jr. Southwestern Seminary is privileged to have Yarnell as the new Managing Editor, and this issue welcomes him to this important position.

The *Southwestern Journal of Theology* will assume a different look and a distinct new direction in the days ahead. We at Southwestern are convinced that a journal can reflect the best in technical, scholarly works and remain vital to the life of the churches. Future issues devoted to The Family, Missionary Methods, and the Bible in the Twenty-first Century will capture the attention of pastors and church leaders. Mark Howell, a Houston pastor, and Steven Smith, Southwestern's Assistant Professor of Preaching, Associate Dean for the Professional Doctoral Program, and the professor occupying the James T. Draper, Jr., Chair of Pastoral Ministry, as well as others will be serving as assistant editors. An outstanding sermon will be a part of each issue, together with articles and reviews.

The *Southwestern Journal of Theology* will reflect, but not be limited to, the Baptist tradition that gave birth to the seminary publishing the journal.

The noble perspective of a regenerate church, witnessed by baptism and a common commitment to holy living, will characterize the direction of the journal. With gratitude to God for His grace and to other noble men and women who witnessed to their faith—sometimes even to the point of martyrdom, we present this new approach and our new editor, Malcolm Yarnell.

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Editorial

The British Baptists: Sources for Free, Believing, Baptizing Churches

Baptists are a people passionate about the gracious salvation they have received from their Lord Jesus Christ; therefore, Baptists are passionate about implementing His will in their churches. We believe in Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, who atoned for the sins of the world through His cross, and rose again from the dead so that believers would have eternal life. We believe that this one we call our Savior is by necessary implication also our Lord. Baptist disciples willingly offer their obedience to His will, a will expressly formed around the cross as revealed in the Bible. His will demands both spiritual appropriation and visible expression in our individual and corporate lives. Passion for the Word drives Baptists to associate with one another as they seek to live out the one will of God as the one people of God who have received the one baptism, which is for believers only by immersion only. Yet this passion to become and walk as His disciples creates huge tensions amongst Baptists regarding the exact shape of His will. Moreover, when Baptists fail to convince one another of a particular schema based upon Scripture, they often resort to history as secondary evidence regarding a particular understanding of the dominical will.

Due to their visible implementation of Christ's will, Baptists embody a definite historical presence, with traces of both the beauty of divine glory and the ugliness of human fallibility. The people called Baptist have a history and a compulsion to understand that history, because they understand that not only is true Christian faith properly internal or spiritual, but also external or incarnate. As an incarnate faith that confesses an incarnate God, and as a Word-oriented faith that receives a perfect revelation, Baptists intuitively understand that the history of their successes and failures involves unified yet divergent interpretations of that divine Word. In arriving at these interpretations Baptists believe they have been led by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. The evidence of Baptist *unity* with regard to Christ's Lordship, on the one hand, alongside evidence of Baptist *disunity* with regard to His Lordship, on the other hand, is the stuff

of which Baptist history is constructed. Baptist history evinces ebb and flow, a cycle of the coming together and the pulling apart of a people who would rather die than betray the One who died for them.

Moreover, not only does history serve as evidence of harmony and discord, but the practice of history has the potential to foster further unity and disunity. Baptist history thus paradoxically may serve as another source of tension amongst those who wish to call one another, "Brother." Especially with regard to the crucial Baptist doctrines of salvation and the church, there is ever possibility for strained fellowship. Because Baptists have been saved by the grace of faith, they want to exhibit communal evidence of their salvation. And this evidence tells them that they are saved by grace and saved for service as a church. It is here, in the midst of living in and living from their salvation in Jesus Christ as churches elected from eternity and called to mission that Baptists find cause for both community and controversy.

The dialectical nature of Baptist soteriology and Baptist ecclesiology exhibits itself amongst well-meaning Baptists in our day. First, as one Baptist dwells upon the graciousness of a God who elects and saves, another Baptist is dwelling upon the necessity of a human response to divine grace, both in human will and human deed. In other words, the Calvinist Baptist confronts the non-Calvinist Baptist with the graces of God, while the non-Calvinist Baptist confronts the Calvinist Baptist with the commands of God. Second, as one Baptist dwells upon the unrestricted love of God acting for a lost and dying world, another Baptist dwells upon the unchangeable holiness of God acting against a wicked world. In other words, the ecumenical Baptist confronts the ecclesial Baptist with the need to build bridges to the world, while the ecclesial Baptist confronts the ecumenical Baptist with the need to maintain the purity of the congregations of Christ.

A major part of the critical solution to these and similar tensions includes the task of teaching Baptist history. Baptist history is thus an obligatory, yet treacherous, task within the Baptist academy. The inherent tensions amongst Baptists necessarily require address by the Baptist academy, because Baptist academies exist *from* Baptist churches in order to minister for the good of the churches rather than seeking the good of the academy alone. Baptist tensions require a responsible address by the Baptist academy, because Baptist academies exist *for* Baptist churches and must recognize they have an enormous effect upon the teaching that occurs within our free churches. A responsible address requires, therefore, full information because it seeks to draw from the good of the churches for the purpose of promoting the good of the churches.

In other words, a responsible address requires an intentional effort by the Baptist academy to draw upon the entirety of Baptist history, exposing both the glories and the faults of all of our churches. A responsible address to the churches by a responsible Baptist academy will not repress the witness of the churches, but will draw upon that witness in order to reflect the theology of the churches back to them. Theology, including historical theology, exists to reflect upon the proclamation of the churches, as those churches fulfill their divine mandate. Baptist theology, including Baptist history, exists to reflect upon the proclamation of Baptist churches, as they fulfill their divine mandate. It is here that academics discover their greatest challenge, for academics, like pastors, sometimes become enamored with their own systems. This requires a diligence, not only for prophetic speech toward the churches, but also for prophetic speech toward the academy. For instance, the non-Calvinist Baptist academic must be careful to provide a faithful if frank evaluation of Baptist Calvinism even as he provides a frank if faithful evaluation of Baptist non-Calvinism. In other words, to treat a theological particularity as if it were the universality of Baptist history, by design or by mere happenstance, not only hints of a deficient historiography, worthy of censure by able historians, it may unfortunately serve for subsequent Baptists as evidence of an insidious spiritual myopia.

It is this precarious yet essential task of Baptist history performed by the academy on behalf of the churches that concerns the current issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*. In order to help Baptists reclaim a fuller understanding of their history than what may currently be the vogue, reintroduced and republished here are a few select and quite rare but very important works by British Baptists. To demonstrate that not only do the Particular Baptists of Britain in the formative years of modern Baptist history require attention, two glorious works by the General Baptists of Britain are brought forward. To demonstrate that not only should the General Baptists have their glories identified, a worthy example of a Particular Baptist, who stood boldly like Jeremiah in the midst of a corrupt Jerusalem, is also identified. Responsible history must account for all sides of Baptist beginnings. Yet, even as Baptists revel in their historical glory, the underbelly of Baptist life may not be forgotten. For set against the glory of seventeenth century Baptist thought is the Hoffmannite Christology of some General Baptists and the Hyper-Calvinism of some Particular Baptists in the eighteenth century. And against the glory of some British Baptists, who opposed slavery, there were some American Baptists, who incredibly supported slavery. As a Charleston pastor once argued, history is an exercise in mercy and judgment.

Three young scholars appear in this journal issue. First, there is W. Madison Grace, a PhD student in Systematic Theology and Baptist

and Free Church Studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Mr. Grace both transcribes and introduces, capably and thoughtfully, *An Orthodox Creed*. This is the first critical edition of that General Baptist confession ever published, and should become the scholarly standard for that theological masterpiece. Second, there is A. Chadwick Mauldin, an MATH student in Theological Studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Mr. Mauldin both transcribes and introduces a dialogue written by a seventeenth century General Baptist systematic theologian, Thomas Grantham. This insightful dialogue could revolutionize the current dialogue regarding Calvinism and non-Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention. Third, there is Colin McGahey, an MDiv student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Mr. McGahey transcribes a sermon by, and writes a concise theological biography about, a Particular Baptist pastor-theologian, Robert Robinson. Robinson exposed slavery as evil decades before American Baptists properly considered that peculiar institution. These three scholars have performed a major service for modern Baptists. Please note that the transcribers have prepared an exact representation of the originals, including irregularities in spelling and style so that readers might hear these historical figures without imposed filters.

As you read this issue carefully, hear the General Baptists of the seventeenth century as they promote a biblically faithful yet subtly complex theological confession that in some ways surpasses the more popular confessions of the Particular Baptists. Hear another General Baptist of the seventeenth century as he compiles Calvinist quotes to demonstrate problems with certain tendencies within the Reformed theological system. And hear the British Baptists through a subtle and courageous preacher, who fears not to confront the dominant culture regarding its horrific practice of human slavery, even as the culture poured its bile against him. Finally, consider the book reviews, all of which are written about Baptists by Baptists for Baptists. Hear all of these Baptist witnesses, and praise God for their manifold united witness. These are the ancestors of the free, believing, and baptizing churches known today as "Baptist." If God so wills it, perhaps by hearing our ancestors more clearly, Baptists may more closely approximate the proper interpretation of Scripture; and, perhaps by sensing their passion, we may more properly implement Christ's will revealed therein.