

(BP)

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee
BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522, CompuServe 70420,250
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,115
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

July 31, 1995

95-118

ALABAMA--Calvinists note theological changes in SBC since founding in 1845.
ALABAMA--Be careful how and whom you fight, speakers tell fellow Calvinists.
ALABAMA--Calvinists favor missions, not lazy, say Founders Conference speakers.
ALABAMA--Sidebar: The five points of Calvinism.
DENVER--New study Bible designed for women, Patterson says.
TENNESSEE--B&H receives award for books promotion.
TENNESSEE--Correction.

Calvinists note theological changes
in SBC since founding in 1845

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
7/31/95

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention has come a long way since its founding, and that's not necessarily positive, said speakers at the 13th annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference, meeting at Samford University July 25-28.

Speakers said the SBC was founded by men who believed "the doctrines of grace" - also known as Calvinism -- but good theology in the SBC has since taken a downward turn.

Mark Coppenger, who Aug. 1 becomes president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., contrasted the language in several confessions of faith in Baptist history.

One 19th-century confession said "that lost man inherits nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His Law," Coppenger said, referring to the 1859 Abstract of Principles of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

"Sixty-five years later, the first Baptist Faith & Message says men inherit a nature corrupt and in bondage to sin. It's still strong but not 'wholly opposed to God and His Law,'" said Coppenger, who recently resigned as a vice president of the SBC Executive Committee to move to his new job.

The 1963 revision of the Baptist Faith and Message says man inherits "a nature and an environment inclined toward sin," Coppenger said. "True. I'm inclined not to get out of bed in the morning some days but I go into work nonetheless."

"Forgive me for wondering how a fresh revision might read in the year 2025. Perhaps then men will be said to inherit a nature open to sin as an option," said Coppenger, as many in the audience chuckled.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary, delivered a key address to the conference in which he described five periods of SBC history. In a later interview with Baptist Press, Mohler supplied approximate dates for each period, as shown below:

1. The Pre-denominational Generation (1815-1855). Key Baptist figures included John L. Dagg, Jesse Mercer and Richard Furman. "Their denominational consciousness was Baptist by conviction, worldwide in terms of missionary commitment. ... Strong reformed (Calvinistic) convictions were the order of the day. ... They saw themselves in theological continuity with the Reformation," Mohler said.

2. The Founding Generation (1855-1895). Key Baptist figures were Calvinists such as R.B.C. Howell, William B. Johnson, Richard Fuller, P.H. Mell, James Boyce, John Broadus, Basil Manly Sr. and Basil Manly Jr.

--more--

These leaders had a "denominational consciousness," Mohler said, in contrast to Southern Baptists' previous association with Northern Baptists in the Triennial Convention before a split in 1845 when the SBC was formed.

"This was to be something quite different, not merely a Southern version of the Triennial Convention," Mohler said, describing the early SBC leaders as "Baptist, reformed, orthodox, and scholarly, ... This generation established the early denominational consciousness, forged a theological consensus that was unquestionably orthodox (and) perpetuated that consensus for almost half a century."

3. The Transitional Generation (1895-1935). Key SBC personalities were A.T. Robertson, John R. Sampey, L.R. Scarborough, George McDaniel, George W. Truett and E.Y. Mullins.

The men belonged to "a self-conscious modernizing generation" that began to leave behind the Calvinism of the founding generation, Mohler said.

Although the generation "claimed the supernatural ... (and) affirmed the supernatural character of Christianity, the structure of the theological system was far different," Mohler said.

The most influential figure of the era was Mullins, who served as president of Southern Seminary from 1899 to 1927 and who largely embodied the character of the times, Mohler suggested.

Mohler said Mullins moved away from the Calvinistic theology of James P. Boyce, the first president of Southern Seminary. "Mullins honored the Boyce tradition, but I think it is very fair to say he did not mean to perpetuate it," said Mohler.

"Mullins would shift to a model more in keeping with the experiential and individualistic and libertarian motifs of his own era," said Mohler.

"I see Mullins as one who sought to be a bridge figure in his own conception of the moment in which he was living and exercising leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention," Mohler said. "He saw what he was doing as statesmanship. He saw a theological age coming to an end, and he wanted to be a transitional figure, I believe, ... from that passing age to that which was to come."

"I believe, however, Mullins offers to us a very clear and urgently needed example of any mediating system in theology. We simply cannot create the halfway house. It will not stand the test of time," said Mohler.

4. The Expansionist or Progressivist Generation (1935-1975). Mohler cited a few of what he called the "characteristic" and "influential" figures of the era: Dale Moody, Frank Stagg, Henlee Barnette, Wayne Oates and Stuart Newman.

"This generation ... would embrace new developments in continental theology, and they would modernize theological and biblical studies in the very conception of theology and theological education," said Mohler. "This generation saw as its ... motif the building of a denomination, and they did build. ... They shifted from theology to a program orientation, and the dynamic of the Southern Baptist Convention shifted from conviction to cooperation, from doctrine to program. ... This generation is fully modern."

Mohler said Moody was the first Southern Baptist academic to embrace "comprehensive Arminianism," a theology that opposes key doctrines of Calvinism.

Stagg formulated a "vociferous" rejection of substitutionary atonement, Mohler said. "I believe in many ways it can be argued that Frank Stagg was even more effective than Dale Moody in assaulting the reformed synthesis of the founders," Mohler said. "... This was an authentically and undeniably liberalizing movement which had emerged."

Mohler said the theological expressions of the generation "cried out for address and correction," which led to a debate over the inerrancy of the Bible as messengers to annual SBC conventions began in 1979 to elect a string of conservative presidents.

5. The Mixed Generation (1975 and after). Mohler said the next generation will include some who wish to continue the "modernizing and liberalizing trends" but also some committed to a recovery of orthodoxy.

"Now the incompatibility of those two courses should be obvious to all, and the fact that conflict would come should be a surprise to none," said Mohler. "I believe it is in the providence of God that those who have sought recovery now are afforded an opportunity for leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention."

But, Mohler warned, the struggle is not over. "I believe one of the great dangers in the present hour is that there are many who believe the theological issues have been settled. ... We have found ourselves by God's grace and mercy faced with the opportunity to see a comprehensive theological reformation come among Southern Baptists," said Mohler, "but this will come by God's hand and not by ours."

"It strikes me that orthodoxy has very few grandchildren. We must ask the question of why it is so difficult to maintain theological fidelity across generational transitions. I believe we know the answer, do we not? It has to do with our own frailty and our own sinfulness -- of this generation as well as the generations which will follow 'til the Lord comes," Mohler said.

--30--

Be careful how and whom you fight,
speakers tell fellow Calvinists By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
7/31/95

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention should not fight among themselves over the issue of Calvinism, according to speakers at the 13th annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference, meeting at Samford University July 25-28.

"There is an agenda to divide the conservative resurgence. It comes from the moderates and liberals in this denomination. It comes from people who have access to the press, and they've admitted privately they would love nothing better than to see the conservatives split over this issue," said Bill Ascol, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Shreveport, La.

"We need to get the word out that we have no interest in that," said Ascol, who is chairman of the planning committee for the annual meeting attended mostly by Southern Baptist ministers who believe what they call "the doctrines of grace."

Many associated with the Founders Conference are seeking a revival of such beliefs as election, predestination and total depravity, which is the inability of man to exercise faith unless God first regenerates him.

"Our posture needs to be that of (Charles Haddon) Spurgeon who ... said, 'Our battle is not with the evangelical Arminians. We stand with them in wrestling to maintain the authority of Scripture,'" said Ascol. Arminianism is a theology that opposes many key doctrines of Calvinism.

Ascol said Calvinists should be grateful for such SBC leaders as Paige Patterson, Paul Pressler and Adrian Rogers whom God has used "in the battle of the Bible."

"Let us ... exude evangelical kindness toward our friends. Now sometimes we may forget that they're our friends. But the conservatives are our friends," Ascol said.

He said fellow conservatives may sometimes say things critical of Calvinists or Calvinism, but Ascol said such comments should be received "as a strike on the cheek, and turn the other cheek."

"We have no battle with the conservatives. Now it may be -- sad as it may be -- that some may think they have a battle with us. But we will not treat our friends as our enemies, even if some of our friends treat us as enemies," Ascol said. "... The devil would just as soon use a mean-spirited Calvinist as a rank liberal to unravel the advance of the gospel."

Timothy George, dean of Samford's Beeson Divinity School, said Christians should be careful how they handle themselves during theological disagreements.

Speaking on "Rules of Engagement for Christians Caught in Controversy," George made three suggestions:

1. "Controversy like martyrdom should not be shunned if that would mean compromising our convictions, but neither should it be sought as if it were one of the higher gifts of the Spirit," George said. "We read that text from the Apostle Paul, 'As much as doth in us lie, let us live peaceably with all men.' Easier said than done, I know."

--more--

2. "In the midst of controversy, let us remember to speak and act with courtesy, with charity and with restraint. ... We ought to have before our eyes, posted on to our mirror every day when we go to brush our teeth, that verse from the Psalms: 'O Lord, put a guard on my lips,'" George said.

3. "When we have gone through the fire of controversy ... our lives ought to reflect the humility of Christ -- no gloating, no boasting, no arrogance -- but the same mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus," said George, who suggested anyone remaining true to the doctrines of Calvinism will experience opposition.

According to its leaders, the Founders Conference is so named because many of the founders of the SBC were Calvinists. Yet conference speakers denied they are engaging in ancestor worship.

"We are not here to dress the tombs of our forefathers, to worship them, but we are here to search the Scriptures and rediscover that their faith truly was biblical -- and truth has not changed," said Fred Malone, pastor of First Baptist Church of Clinton, La.

The purpose of modern SBC Calvinists is to work for revival and theological renewal within the SBC "of that sound, biblical faith, ... praying that that renewal will spread across the land in another awakening as of old," Malone said.

Ascol said the first five presidents of the SBC were, without exception, "evangelical Calvinists. By this, I mean men who embraced and expounded the truths often summed up in the phrase 'the five points of Calvinism.'"

Quoting Tom Nettles, a Baptist historian who also spoke to the conference, Ascol described early SBC leaders as "the men responsible for the birthing of the Southern Baptist Convention (who) rocked it in the cradle of evangelical, experiential Calvinism; that cannot be denied honestly."

Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, spoke to the conference about the Puritans of colonial America, whom he termed "the fathers in the faith of our (Southern Baptist) fathers in the faith."

Dever urged the recovery of certain Puritan distinctives and ideas, such as the pastor as theologian and shepherd -- and not as chief executive officer, psychologist and pragmatist.

By contrast, Dever said modern expectations for a pastor might read as follows in a classified advertisement: "Wanted: a pastor, not particularly theological, committed to the success of the church, a humorous risk-taker with a big personality, perhaps slightly irreverent at times, but with a driving ambition, committed first and foremost to the success in discovering and meeting the needs of the congregation, master of a wide array of self-help and recovery programs and yet at the same time easy on himself and others -- acceptance, tolerance and sociability a must. Also should value more emotionally engaging and non-cognitive aspects of worship, the centrality of self-expression and the great power of brief sermons."

--30--

Calvinists favor missions, not lazy,
say Founders Conference speakers By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
7/31/95

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Southern Baptist Calvinists are not against missions and evangelism, said a number of speakers at the 13th annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference, meeting at Samford University July 25-28.

"Sometimes people think if you're a Calvinist, it means you're lazy -- that if you think the Lord's determined it all, it takes the pressure off you, therefore you just don't have to do anything," said Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington.

"It's not been my experience. ... It has heightened the sense of being a steward of God's incredible work in Christ," Dever said.

Don Whitney, pastor of Glenfield Baptist Church in Glen Ellyn, Ill., told the group they should be expectant when doing evangelism. Because many Christians have a "not now" view of evangelism, Whitney said, they should remember Jesus' command to his disciples to lift up their eyes and see fields that are "white unto harvest."

--more--

When Jesus spoke those words, Whitney noted, he was with the disciples in Samaria and had just finished speaking with the woman at the well. Whitney said the Samaritans, because of their hostility against the Jews, might have caused Jesus' disciples to be pessimistic about Samaritan openness to the gospel.

"Too often, our view is that a field -- a person, a church, an area, a town -- is not ready for the gospel," Whitney said, "and the problem is not with the harvest; the problem is with our eyes. ... God wants us to have the 'right now' view about expecting to see people converted to faith in Christ."

Although some assert doctrines such as predestination will stifle evangelism and missions, Southern Baptist forefathers would not have agreed, said Bill Ascol, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Shreveport, La.

Referring to a sermon on predestination by Richard Fuller, who was SBC president from 1859 to 1861, Ascol said, "No farmer -- though in theology the most fierce hyper-Calvinist -- ever was heard of foolish enough to neglect the cultivation of his field, believing that ... it is predetermined whether he shall reap a harvest or not."

Yet the doctrine that God chooses who will be saved does not lessen human responsibility for sin, said Timothy George, dean of Samford's Beeson Divinity School.

"When lost men and women stand before the bar of God's holy judgment, they will not be able to say to God, 'I am here because you didn't elect me,'" George said. "They will have to say, 'I am here because of my own sin and my rejection of the Savior.'"

A key doctrine of many Calvinists is that God is sovereign over history, that nothing happens without his design or permission. One speaker urged the group to keep this idea in mind when evangelizing the lost.

"When we speak to people who are in rebellion against ... God, ... we can speak with the confidence that they are in the world because God has made them and in his providence has preserved them to that point," said Tom Nettles, professor of church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill.

"He has brought them to the very point in which they are hearing us speak to them or preach to them," said Nettles, a Southern Baptist who is a former faculty member at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas and Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn.

Tom Ascol, brother of Bill Ascol and pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Fla., said Christians are quick to recognize God's providence in good times, but Ascol urged the group to remember God is sovereign in all of history.

"God is just as sovereign in seasons of difficulty as he is in seasons of blessing," said Ascol, who cited the example of the Old Testament character of Job. "(Job's troubles) most definitely ... came through the ministrations of Satan, ... but we must also recognize that Satan couldn't lay one finger on one hair of Job's head apart from the sovereign permission of God.

"Yes, there is a Satan, but he is God's Satan -- and God uses him, and even as we must combat evil and trials and tragedies that are satanic in their origin in this world, we must not lose sight of the fact that even in these things, our God sits sovereign in providence," said Ascol, who is editor of the group's quarterly publication, The Founders Journal.

When Christians fail to recognize this, they often settle for "superficial answers," turning to what they see as better methods, equipment or strategies, Ascol said.

"Those things aren't wrong or bad in their place, but in seasons of severe spiritual darkness, to be tinkering with those things to the neglect of dealing with the sovereign reality of God's providence over all of our lives is tantamount to turning the air conditioner down when your house is on fire," Ascol said. "It may relieve you for a moment, but it doesn't touch the heart of the problem."

A belief in the reality of God's sovereignty "shuts us up to deal with God himself," Ascol said.

Walter Johnson, professor of religion at North Greenville College in Tigerville, S.C. said the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board was organized by Calvinists.

The first man invited to be the board's general secretary was Charles D. Mallary, although he was unable to serve because of health reasons, Johnson said.

"It was a bunch of Calvinists that organized the (FMB) to begin with, so they just turned to one of their own kind, because the only people that they could find were Calvinists," Johnson said.

Johnson criticized a view of God that treats him as needing human help in the world. "We have often heard someone say, '... God plus one is a majority.'

"Well, I've seen a lot of bad times, folks, but I've never seen any so bad that God needed somebody else on his side to get in the majority. God plus one is one more than a majority. God is the majority," Johnson said.

In difficult times, some may say, "In times like this, I'm glad I've got God on my side," Johnson said.

"But listen to me," Johnson told the group. "You don't have a side. You're on God's side, and that ought to humble us, that God condescended to let us be a part of the working out of his plan and that he lets us be on his side."

--30--

SIDEBAR:

The five points
of Calvinism

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
7/31/95

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--According to Calvinists, the five points of Calvinism -- often referred to by the acrostic word TULIP -- are key Calvinist doctrines that include:

T -- Total Depravity, the doctrine that unsaved people are spiritually dead and unable to respond in faith or repentance unless God first regenerates their souls.

U -- Unconditional Election, the doctrine that God chose those whom he would save, not because he foresaw merit in them but because he loved them.

L -- Limited Atonement, the doctrine that Christ died only for the sins of the elect and not for the sins of all people.

I -- Irresistible Grace, the doctrine that when God regenerates a lost soul, he does it so perfectly and completely that faith and repentance will naturally follow, without exception.

P -- Perseverance of the Saints, the doctrine most Southern Baptists would call "once saved, always saved." Some Calvinists refer to the doctrine in other ways -- such as "perseverance of the Savior" -- and say all whom Christ saves, he will also keep in the faith.

--30--

New study Bible designed
for women, Patterson says

By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
7/31/95

DENVER (BP)--In an era where it seems there are more varieties of Bibles than flavors of ice cream, each packaged to appeal to a specific market niche, the Women's Study Bible is designed to reach the largest niche in the marketplace -- women.

Exactly a century after the publication of The Women's Bible by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, an early advocate of women's rights who sought to challenge the injustices toward women she claimed to have found in Scripture, this new study Bible for women has a much higher view of scripture, said Dorothy Patterson.

"Elizabeth decided she was going to put herself above Scripture," said Patterson, editor of the new Women's Study Bible which is to be published by Thomas Nelson Bibles in September. "She took her Bible and literally cut out half of it or more because she didn't like it."

The latest women's study Bible project brought together a team of 80 women, many of whom were theologically trained and who "saturated themselves in the Word of God ... standing under Scripture without apology," Patterson said July 17 during the annual meeting of the Christian Bookseller's Association.

--mor --

"Our number one goal was to let Scripture speak for itself. We tried to be very careful in doing our homework and our research, seeking to pull out as best we could exactly what the original text was saying," she said.

The association's meeting in Denver allowed Patterson to share with the booksellers her hope that the study Bible would minister to women who may have never given God a chance: "Perhaps the uniqueness of this Bible will prompt those women who have never gone to church or opened a Bible before -- when they see this Bible on a bookstore shelf -- to realize there is a Bible specially designed for them. It is a Bible written by women who believe God has something to say to all women."

Patterson, whose husband is the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., said the new Bible will bring readers more than devotional notes.

Explaining most students of the Bible do not have available a vast library of Biblical commentaries and reference works, Patterson said the Women's Study Bible will put in readers' hands "the finest scholarship in a succinct and precise manner."

Although Patterson said the women worked "to create a study tool marked by distinctive exegesis and intuitive scholarship," she said, "The Bible still speaks for itself.

"Any person who comes to God's Word, opens it and reads it with an open heart -- whether they've had an advanced education or not -- I believe God will speak to them."

--30--

B&H receives award
for books promotion

Baptist Press
7/31/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Broadman & Holman Publishers of the Baptist Sunday School Board received the first place impact award for a total promotion campaign for books and Bibles in July from Christian retailers attending the annual Christian Booksellers Association national convention in Denver.

Broadman & Holman was cited for its promotion of the "Experiencing God Study Bible" released in 1994.

"This is one of the highest marketing awards because it represents the opinions of retailers throughout the country," said Charles Wilson, vice president of the BSSB trade publishing group. This was the second consecutive year B&H has received an impact award. In 1994, B&H received the overall best promotional impact award.

Also at the CBA convention, B&H hosted a breakfast to introduce a new series of resources for use in conjunction with popular speaker and author Josh McDowell's Right from Wrong campaign. The materials were introduced in June at the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta

The campaign was begun in 1993 and is supported by 42 denominational and para-church groups. It has as its goal "to launch a nationwide grassroots effort to resource parents, grandparents, pastors, youth workers and Christian educators to equip youth to know right from wrong, enabling them to make right choices."

--30--

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "News media takes note of SBC racial resolve," dated 7/28/95, please delete the last sentence of the story which begins, "In order to remain active"

Thanks,
Baptist Press

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)	BAPTIST PRESS 901 Commerce #750 Nashville, TN 37234
F I R S T C L A S S	Southern Baptist Library and Archives