

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION: BAPTISTS ON MISSION

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The marching orders for missions and evangelism came not from a human organization, but from Jesus Christ Himself. Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus gave us the Great Commission: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20a, HCSB). However, sometimes the church has neglected this charge. Once while teaching a New Testament survey course at a Baptist college, one of my students mistakenly labeled this passage of Scripture as “the Great Omission.” As I was moving to mark the answer as incorrect, it struck me that in fact the student’s response might unfortunately be correct far too often in the life of the church.

From its inception in 1845, one of the primary *raison d’être* of the Southern Baptist Convention has been to organize to do missions and evangelism. The Charter of the SBC states that it is “being created for the purpose of eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the Baptist denomination of Christians, for the propagation of the gospel.” The SBC Constitution likewise describes “the purpose of the Convention to provide a general organization for Baptists in the United States and its territories for the promotion of Christian missions at home and abroad”¹

Being *missional*² involves not only going “to the ends of the earth,” but also to our own equivalents of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria for the early church (Acts 1:8, HCSB). An important part of the SBC’s focus on missions and evangelism has been giving careful attention to making the city of New Orleans an important *locus* for missions activity. At its first meeting in Augusta, Georgia in 1845, the newly formed convention instructed its Domestic Mission Board to focus on two primary activities: to reach Native Americans and “to direct its effective attention to aid the present effort to establish the Baptist cause in the city of New Orleans.”³

This same passion for missions in New Orleans led to the creation of Baptist Bible Institute in 1917, which we now know as New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. In an

¹SBC *Charter and Constitution, 2007 Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 4.

²The term “missional” was coined or popularized by Baptist Center fellow Ed Stetzer in works such as Ed Stezer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006); and Ed Stetzer, “The Missional Nature of the Church and the Future of Southern Baptist Convention Churches, in *The Mission of Today’s Church*, ed. R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007).

³*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 1845, 15.

editorial in the Mississippi *Baptist Record*, the paper's editor P. I. Lipsey stated the need for a Southern Baptist seminary to be planted in New Orleans:

There is . . . room for and need of just what a seminary can do in the district surrounding the city of New Orleans. Baptists have attempted to assault that stronghold of Satan with paper balls. Hitherto we have not made much impression on it; and are not now working in any adequate way. . . . A seminary there would plant the Baptist cause in this city in a way that would immediately command the attention and the respect of all. It would be planting the siege guns at the enemies' gates. It would rally the Baptists and put heart into them and equip them for their work as nothing else could. This is missionary territory in every direction from the city. Louisiana is probably the most needy mission field in the Southern Baptist Convention⁴

Southern Baptists are committed to fulfilling the Great Commission in our own cities, states, regions, nation, and around the world internationally. The primary issue is thus not about whether or not Southern Baptists are committed to missions and evangelism, but the methodological question of how Southern Baptists can accomplish missions and evangelism most effectively. Southern Baptists have been blessed through the mechanism of the Cooperative Program, which provides consistent funding and support for over 5,000 missionaries and church planters in the United States, and another 5,000 missionaries internationally. The missionaries do not have to go through the expensive and time-consuming process of raising their own support in local churches. The Cooperative Program, supplemented by the state mission offerings within state conventions, the Annie Armstrong Offering for missions in North America, and the Lottie Moon Offering for international missions, provide a consistent and reliable funding stream for our missions efforts.

The question of what the most effective means God would have us use to reach the world with the gospel, however, is subject to debate. Scholars in the discipline of Missiology weigh the advantages and disadvantages of various methodologies, and propose approaches which they deem best able to optimize resources and maximize impact for the gospel. Of course, the power of God transcends any human methodology. God could use simple fishermen, "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13, KJV) to accomplish His work. However, a prepared vessel such as the Apostle Paul was used to accomplish even greater things. There is no premium on bad methodology in sharing the gospel. It is incumbent on those who take the Great Commission seriously to utilize the most effective means to accomplish the propagation of the gospel.

This issue of the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* focuses on "Baptists on Mission," offering various perspectives on the most effective Missiological methodologies to accomplish the Lord's work. In Spring 2005, the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry sponsored a conference on "The Mission of Today's Church." Some of the papers delivered at that conference were printed in *The Mission of Today's Church*, edited by Stan Norman and published by Broadman and Holman in 2007. The first four articles in this issue of the *Journal* were also originally presented at that conference, and we felt they were of such significance that our readers would appreciate our sharing them. This issue has six articles

⁴ J. I. Lipsey, editorial in the Mississippi *Baptist Record* (November 26, 1914), 4.

addressing missiology in North America, and six addressing missiological approaches in an international setting.

The first section deals with Baptist missions in North America. Three of these articles address the interrelationship of Baptist ecclesiology and missiology. Dr. Phil Roberts, President of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, describes the early days of Baptist missions in “*Ad Fontes* Baptists: Continuity and Change in Early Baptist Perceptions on the Church and Its Mission.” Dr. John S. Hammett, Professor of Systematic Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, relates ecclesiology and missiology in an article entitled “The Mission of the Church as the Mark of the Church.” Continuing this theme, Dr. Roderick Durst, Professor of Historical Theology at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, contributes “The Emerging Missional Churches of the West: Form or Norm for Baptist Ecclesiology?” The *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* expresses appreciation to *The South African Baptist Journal of Theology* for permission to publish this article, a slightly revised version of which was published under the title, “Ecclesiology as Stewardship of the Gospel of Grace” (vol. 16, 2007). David Whitlock, Mick Arnold, and R. Barry Ellis offer “An Examination of Tentmaker Ministers in Missouri: Challenges and Opportunities.” At the time of the writing of the article, all three of these men served on the faculty of Southwest Baptist University in Missouri: Dr. David Whitlock as Associate Professor of Business, Associate Provost, and Dean of the College of Business; Dr. Mick Arnold as Professor of Educational Administration; and Dr. R. Barry Ellis as Professor of Business Administration. Dr. Ellis now serves as Associate Professor of Finance at the University of Central Oklahoma. The next article is authored by Dr. Jack Allen, a church planter who serves as the Nehemiah Professor of Church Planting and Director of the Day Center for Church Planting at NOBTS. Allen’s article connects the character of the church planter with effectiveness in church planting in “The Way of the Disciple in Church Planting.” Ecclesiology is a key doctrine for North American church planting, and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) statement on ecclesiological guidelines for church planting is included at the end of the domestic missions section. The background for this statement was developed by our Baptist Center founder, Dr. Stan Norman, vetted by the Deans of the six SBC seminaries, and approved by NAMB.

The second section of this issue focuses on missiological approaches to international missions. It begins with the International Mission Board statement on ecclesiology relating to international missions, which was crafted by IMB after the approval of the NAMB statement on ecclesiology. It is interesting to compare the NAMB and IMB statements side by side. Two of the articles in this section examine the viability of the practice of utilizing short-term missionaries to supplement the work of career missionaries on the field. Dr. Stan May, a former IMB missionary to Zimbabwe who now serves as Associate Professor of Missions and Chairman of the Missions Department at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, contributes an article on “The Priority of Incarnational Missions: Or ‘Is The Tail of Volunteerism Wagging the Dog?’” Likewise, Bob Garrett, a former IMB missionary to Argentina who currently serves as Professor of Missions at Dallas Baptist University, suggests guidelines for using short-term missions groups in “Towards Best Practice in Short Term Missions Trips.” Another significant tool in contemporary missiology is the use of chronological Bible storying. Dr. Grant Lovejoy, formerly a faculty member at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, now serves as Director of Orality Studies at the IMB. He has taught chronological Bible storying in over 20 countries, and has been a

keynote speaker in international conferences orality. Lovejoy contributes an article entitled “The Extent of Orality,” which describes this approach to missiology. This article was originally published in *Dharma Deepika*, a journal on theology and missions in India, and we express our appreciation to the journal for allowing us to share this article with an American audience. The last two articles address ministry to persons in Buddhist and Islamic settings. Dr. Philip Pinckard is a former Southern Baptist missionary to Macau who serves as Professor of Missions, occupying the Owen Cooper Chair of Global Missions, and as Director of the Global Missions Center at NOBTS. He addresses a key issue confronting missiology—contextualization. In his article, Pinckard builds the case that “The Truth is Contextualization Can Lead to Syncretism: Applying Muslim Background Believers Contextualization Concerns to Ancestor Worship and Buddhist Background Believers in a Chinese Culture.” The final article in the international missions section is authored by Dr. Michael Edens, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies at NOBTS and Professor of Theology and Islamic Studies. A veteran missionary in the Middle East, Edens contributes a helpful essay on “Addressing Islamic Teachings about Christianity.”

We are happy with this issue to be publishing book reviews again in the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*. I am grateful to three NOBTS faculty members who have agreed to serve as book review editors for various disciplinary fields: Dr. Dennis Phelps in ministry studies, Dr. Archie England in biblical studies, and Dr. Page Brooks in theological and historical studies. We encourage our readers to submit book review proposals to these gentlemen for publication in the *Journal*.

For our next issue, the *Journal* will be focusing on theological issues of concern to Baptists. Many of the articles in this upcoming issue will flow from two recent Baptist Center conferences – “Southern Baptists and Calvinism” in February 2007, featuring a paper by Steve Lemke; and “The Emerging Church, the Emergent Church, and the Faith Once Delivered to the Saints,” in April 2008 featuring a paper by Ed Stetzer.

Speaking of Calvinism in the SBC, the Baptist Center is also pleased to announce that we are co-sponsoring with Jerry Vines Ministries the John 3:16 Conference at First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia, on November 6-7, 2008. The conference will provide a biblical and theological assessment of five-point Calvinism. Jerry Vines and Charles Stanley will preach sermons on the John 3:16 text, and then Southern Baptist scholars will address the five points often associated with Calvinistic theology – Paige Patterson on total depravity, Richard Land on unconditional election, David Allen on limited atonement, Steve Lemke on irresistible grace, and Ken Keathley on perseverance of the saints.

Our hope is that the essays in this issue on Baptists on Mission will help further and sharpen the discussion of missiological approaches utilized to reach our world for Christ. We are already blessed as Southern Baptists with the most effective missions team in the world. May God bless us in our efforts to fulfill the Lord’s Great Commission to us.

In Christ,

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