

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION: THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY



Steve W. Lemke, Ph.D.

*Dr. Lemke is Provost, Professor of Philosophy and Ethics, occupying the McFarland Chair of Theology, JBTM Executive Editor, and Director of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
New Orleans, Louisiana*

Evangelical Systematic Theology begins and ends with Biblical Theology. The Bible is the ultimate source of authority for Systematic Theology and is the standard by which all Systematic Theology is measured. Baptists in particular and evangelical Christians in general believe that the Bible is the plumb line by which all theology should be evaluated, not our own speculations and conjectures. It is perhaps the burden of conservative theology that it is seldom as interesting or fascinating as liberal Theology simply because liberal theology places a premium on novelty and creativity. Liberal theology delights in going directions no one has ever gone before. It is not so with conservative theology. As its name suggests, conservative theology is interested to “conserve” that what has been given to us in God’s Word. So conservative theology may not be as *innovative* as liberal theology, but it is more *reliable* because it is grounded in God’s Word rather than in mere human speculation. This Fall 2010 issue of the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* addresses the doctrine of Scripture as it informs theology.

The first section of this issue of the *Journal* considers how the Bible is foundational for theology. In this section, C. Fred Smith (Associate Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary) argues for the inerrancy of Scripture from the perspective of logic and philosophy. Steven L. Cox (Research Professor of New Testament and Greek at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary) discusses the relationship of Jesus’ teaching to pharisaical Judaism. Thomas P. Johnston (Associate Professor of Evangelism at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) contrasts Catholic and Protestant approaches to the availability of Bibles to laypersons, the use of vernacular translations, the proper translation of the Bible, and the use of the Bible in theology. Johnston notes how these differences in Catholic and Protestant approaches to the Bible become visible in the Green Bible Collection in Oklahoma City.

The second section of this issue of the *Journal* addresses “Key Issues in Theology for the Church.” James Leo Garrett, Jr. (Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Historical and Systematic Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), one of the giants in Southern Baptist Theology, contributes an article on the past and future of Baptist theology. This article was originally presented by Dr. Garrett at the special event sponsored by the Theological and

Historical Studies Division at NOBTS. The next two articles concern the application of theology to Christian worship. Ed Steele (Associate Professor of Music in Leavell College of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) contributes an article on “Theological Themes in Contemporary Hymnody,” and Greg Woodward (Assistant Professor of Conducting and Division Chair of the Church Music Ministries Division of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) contributes an article on reconciling evangelistic methods with worship models, particularly taking into account popular approaches to Apologetics. The last two articles in this section address two additional theological issues of relevance to the church. The article by Jacob A. Taggart (a bank vice-president, president of a Christian school, deacon, and recent M.A. in Theological Studies graduate of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary) issues “A Call to Harms” concerning the lack of church discipline. Finally, Christopher J. Black (Research Assistant to the Provost and Associate Editor of the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) contributes an article on how regional differences shaped the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. We also commend the good selection of book reviews that we offer our readers in this issue.

The editorial board of *JBTM* apologizes to our readers for the long delay in our completing this Fall 2010 issue of the *Journal*. A number of factors have put us behind our publishing schedule. However, we are hopeful that in addition to this Fall 2010 issue of *JBTM*, we anticipate following it with the Spring 2011 issue within just a few weeks. The theme of the Spring 2011 issue of the *JBTM* is “Arminians, Calvinists, and Baptists on the Doctrine of Salvation.” It features a paper presented by Dr. Matt Pinson, President of Free Will Baptist Bible College, at a Spring 2011 special event sponsored by the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry. Dr. Pinson’s paper is entitled, “Thomas Grantham’s Theology of Atonement and Justification.” Grantham was a General Baptist who was somewhat Arminian in theology. The interaction of three discussion panel members with Dr. Pinson is included. This issue will also include several other papers discussing the doctrine of salvation from Calvinistic and Baptist perspectives. We hope this upcoming issue will add further clarity to the continuing discussions about the doctrine of salvation in the SBC. Thank you for your continued support and interest in the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*!