

I have known Mark Ballard for over 30 years and have been blessed to preach in his church in New England before he founded Northeastern Baptist College. He was a trustee when I served as president of LifeWay. He and his wife Cindy are remarkable leaders who have made an indelible impact upon New England. These pages confront issues that every Bible believing and Christ honoring believer must face. These are the critical issues for our day, and we must find a way to confront them in a way that is consistent with God's Word! God was not surprised by the 21st century. He gave us His inerrant Word to guide us as we navigate the stormy waters of contemporary culture biblically and effectively. Every believer will find encouragement and clarity in this volume. This is a strong statement for all who desire to be true to the principles found in these pages. One thing for sure as you read these chapters, you will find them faithful to the Word of God and edifying for all the churches in our land.

JIMMY DRAPER

President Emeritus,
LifeWay

You will consult *Does it Still Matter?* often. Each chapter is written by someone knowledgeable in the particular subject matter of that chapter. Read it and be encouraged and blessed.

JERRY VINES

Pastor-Emeritus,
First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL
Two-time President,
Southern Baptist Convention

Mark Ballard and Timothy Christian brought together a stellar team of essayists and compiled a work that is much needed. As Southern Baptists and evangelicals in general currently struggle to find a way forward that is faithful to Scripture, this book takes a sobering look at the place from whence we have come to offer a path forward for the future. Under the guise of the dominant question set forth in the title, *Does It Still Matter?*,

multiple contributors mine the richness of biblical truth and Southern Baptist heritage to address an array of issues. This is a work illustrative of the scriptural fidelity needed to address the serious challenges facing believers today. *Does It Still Matter?* belongs in the hands of the pew member, preacher, pupil, and professor, for it offers great perspective on the Conservative Resurgence while issuing a challenge to hold a biblical line on each topic addressed in the book.

LEE E. BRAND JR.

Vice President and Dean,
Mid-America Baptist Seminary
First Vice President,
Southern Baptist Convention

In a day and age of cultural confusion and biblical compromise, even within the churches, this book, written by warriors of the faith who have invested their lives for the Gospel, answers prophetically the most pressing questions of our day. It is a must read for every pastor and lay leader.

EMIR CANER

President,
Truett McConnell University

Some men and women lived it, some prayed for it, and some were the products of the Conservative Resurgence of 1979. The basic foundational question for the CR is the issue of inerrancy. Would Southern Baptist decide to be people of the book or would we reject the God who communicates in favor of neo-orthodoxy? The question is still relevant. Over 40 years later, the question is once again, at the forefront of theological institutions, churches, and ministries. The contemporary issues of hermeneutics, meaning, gender issues, transgender issues, gospel content are all up for grabs as the Conservative Resurgence seems to be but a whisper on history books. Eleven masters work their way through these 21st century issues that present a formidable challenge to inerrancy. They peel back the layers of contemporary thought and expose them for undermining the very fabric of the Conservative Resurgence-inerrancy. These eleven

masters deal with problematic issues by demonstrating that the God who speaks is still relevant to humanity's problems. The Conservative Resurgence still matters!

MARVIN JONES

President,
Yellowstone Christian College

With so many changing winds in our culture, there are now a variety of pressure points that pastors and churches must navigate. This new resource from Dr. Ballard is tremendously helpful for anyone who strives to stay strong in Biblical truth and stand for what pleases God.

BRAD JURKOVICH

Senior Pastor,
First Baptist Church, Bossier City, LA
Spokesman,
Conservative Baptist Network

The title of the book asks "*Does it Still Matter?*" The answer is yes. The issues deftly addressed in this short, readable resource are among the most important of our day. But the Conservative Resurgence itself matters as well, forty years later, as we face a new leftist threat from within and without, seeking to co-opt the church and assert a false gospel. The church must win this battle of ideas: it matters now more than ever.

ROD D. MARTIN

Founder and CEO,
The Martin Organization, Inc.

In every generation the Christian message of the gospel is under attack. Understanding the importance of the conservative resurgence within the Southern Baptist Convention will serve to remind the future generations of faithful men and women how important it is to fight strenuously for the defense of the faith. This work is written by a coterie of scholars addressing

a wide range of critical theological issues which matter! Many of the key leaders of the conservative resurgence are contributors.

ANTHONY ALLEN
President,
Hannibal-Lagrange University

This superb volume will make a significant contribution to resolving the current crisis of identity that is roiling practically every facet of the Southern Baptist Convention. Grounding their work in rigorous study of the Bible, the authors provide answers to many of the identity-shaping questions we are asking ourselves forty years after our battle for the Bible. Anyone who wants to understand what is at stake and how we must answer the question of who we are as Southern Baptists must read this book.

BARRETT DUKE
Executive Director,
Montana Southern Baptist Convention

Dr. Ballard and his team have accomplished what very few are able to do in writing. Their work, *Does It Still Matter?* is richly theological, deeply devotional, and accessibly readable for every follower of Jesus. I highly recommend this book to pastors, church leaders, deacons, Sunday School teachers, and anyone committed to biblical orthodoxy. This work is a great contribution to the local church.

TIMOTHY PIGG
Senior Pastor,
Fellowship Church, Immokalee, FL

In a time in which secular ideologies embedded in social and cultural frameworks are challenging the foundations of the church while many evangelical institutions have begun to dwindle in their commitment to the truth of the Gospel, it is encouraging to read a book that reminds us of who we

are, what we believe, and why we believe. *Does It Still Matter?* calls us to an unequivocal adherence to those Baptist distinctives that have defined us through the years as a people on a mission.

JAVIER CHAVEZ
Senior Pastor,
Iglesia Bautista Amistad Cristiana International
Visiting Professor of Global Studies,
Truett-McConnell University

If I may use the voice of Amos in chapter 7... "And the Lord said unto me, Amos what seest thou? And I said, A plumb line." That's what I see in this very timely book - a pertinent reminder of the biblical plumb line of righteousness because it still very much matters and should be heeded **today!**

LORINE HEARNE SPRATT
Executive Assistant to Dr. Brad Jurkovich,
First Baptist Church Bossier City, LA

In an age marked by apathy and indifference in a sea of information inundation, the question "Does it still matter?" should shake readers out of an autopilot reverie and back to the biblical command to "not grow weary in well doing" (Gal. 6:9). *Does It Still Matter?* presents nearly a dozen subjects worthy of contemplation, providing even the most disillusioned and distracted a point from which to re-engage and rediscover the satisfaction of not only spending time on worthy endeavors (Eph. 5:16) but also of simply obeying Scripture's admonition to work "heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col. 3:23). This volume, compiled by refined-as-gold Christian leaders, will encourage your heart and provoke you to God-honoring action in areas of life that do indeed still matter a great deal.

H. SHARAYAH COLTER
Founder,
Colter & Co.

DOES IT STILL MATTER?

Essays in Honor of
the Conservative Resurgence

Edited by
MARK H. BALLARD
& TIMOTHY K CHRISTIAN

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Does It Still Matter: Essays in Honor of the Conservative Resurgence is dedicated to the thousands of Southern Baptist Pastors and People in the Pew who at great personal cost stood firm on the inerrancy of Scripture. These amazing folks dedicated their lives, their resources, and their reputations to stand firm on the Word of God. Many traveled hundreds of miles, slept in their cars, and ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to serve as messengers at the SBC annual meetings from 1979–2000. Many were attacked verbally, threatened physically, and suffered the loss of pay and/or loss of ministry positions to take a stand. Yet, year after year, no matter the costs, they stood firm. These faithful servants of the Lord handed off to a new millennium a SBC fully committed to the Inerrancy of Scripture. With these essays, we pay honor to each of them.

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CONTRIBUTORS, QUALIFICATIONS, AND CHAPTERS

Introduction

DOES IT STILL MATTER?

Timothy K. Christian

Timothy K. Christian (B.A., Tennessee Temple College; M.Div., D.Min. Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary; Th.D., University of South Africa) was a pastor for twenty-seven years and a college and seminary administrator and Professor of Theology for 20 years. He retired at the end of 2020 to be a part-time writer and the full-time caregiver for Judy, his wife of 45+ years, who battles Advanced Secondary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis. They enjoy their two married children and their spouses, Trina (Shane) and Marcus (Sarah), and their seven grandchildren.

Christian pastored Baptist Churches in TN, AR, IN, Italy (English speaking), GA, FL, NH, NY, and CT. He is a conference speaker, author, coauthor, or editor of thirteen books, several theological journal articles, and dozens of sermon booklets. He participated in the Conservative Resurgence from its inception, and is a member of the Conservative Baptist Network. He has served the Southern Baptist Convention as: Member—Committee on Committees representing New England; Chairman—Credentials Committee; Chairman—Committee on Committees representing New York.

Chapter 1

DOES INERRANCY STILL MATTER?

Mark H. Ballard

Mark H. Ballard (B.A. Criswell College; M.Div., Ph.D. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) faithful pastor, diligent church planter, passionate evangelist, innovative educator, creative and prolific author, and pacesetter Baptist leader—is the Founding President of Northeastern Baptist College in Bennington, Vermont. He and his wife Cindy have a teenage son, Benjamin. Ballard has served as a church planter and pastor in New York, New Hampshire, Virginia, Florida, North Carolina, and Texas. He has filled pulpits, held revival services, and served as a conference speaker in numerous states for 30+ years.

Ballard was involved in the Conservative Resurgence from its early years and is a member of the Steering Council of the Conservative Baptist Network. He has served the Southern Baptist Convention as a Baptist Convention of New England representative: Member—Committee on Committees; Trustee—LifeWay Christian Resources; Member—SBC Executive Committee; President and Vice President—Baptist Convention of New England.

* * * * *

Ballard and Christian have collaborated on numerous projects, including Bible conferences, evangelism training events, regional church-planting strategies, nationally published articles, and previous books, including *Normal's Journey*; *Open Doors: The Pathway to God-Sized Assignments*; *Priorities: Reaching the Life God Intended*; and *Words Matter: What is the Gospel?*

Chapter 2

DOES THE GOSPEL STILL MATTER?

Johnny Hunt

Johnny M. Hunt (B.A. Gardner-Webb College, M.Div. and D.Min. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) is a member of the Lumbee Native American Indian tribe based in North Carolina. Hunt's father left the family when he was seven. Johnny became an alcoholic and gambler at a young age, dropping out of school at 16 and managing a poolroom. Jesus Christ radically transformed Hunt's life during his late teens, after someone shared the gospel with him. He detailed the story in his book, *Out of the Poolroom*. After his conversion, several men from his home church in Wilmington, North Carolina, mentored him. He realized not only that God was calling him into the ministry but that he must also prepare himself to fulfill God's calling. Therefore, he went to college and seminary.

Hunt's first pastorate was in North Carolina, his home state, but he became nationally known as the pastor of the dynamic, fast-growing First Baptist Church of Woodstock, GA. Under Hunt's leadership the church grew to be one of the larger churches in America with over 19,000 members. Hunt was a leader in the Conservative Resurgence. He served the SBC in many capacities, ultimately being elected to two terms as President of the SBC. He pastored FBC Woodstock for 42 years before transitioning to be the Senior Vice President for Evangelism and Leadership of the North American Mission Board. Since his conversion, Johnny Hunt's passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ and for mentoring other men have been well-known driving forces in his life. He authored 10 books and is in constant demand as a speaker across the US.

He and his wife, Janet, have two daughters and four grandchildren.

Chapter 3

DOES BAPTISM STILL MATTER?

Chuck Kelley

Dr. Chuck Kelley served as President of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) from 1996 until his retirement in 2018. He is now President Emeritus and Distinguished Research Professor of Evangelism at NOBTS, and also Director and Founder of Innovative Evangelism. He was a leader among leaders in the Conservative Resurgence and was on the Baptist Faith & Message 2000 revision committee.

Kelley describes himself as a follower of Jesus, husband to Rhonda, and Distinguished Research Professor of Evangelism at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Born in Beaumont, Texas, in 1952, Kelley grew up in First Baptist Church of Beaumont. He was ordained as a minister in February 1972 at the age of 19. Kelley earned a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Baylor University in 1974. While there, he met Rhonda Harrington, whom he married in June 1974. Kelley holds two degrees from NOBTS: M.Div. (1978) and Th.D. (1983).

Kelley began teaching evangelism at NOBTS in 1983. From 1989 to 1996, he was the Roland Q. Leavell Professor of Evangelism, and from 1993 to 1996, he directed the Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Health. In addition, he was chair of the Pastoral Ministries Division at NOBTS from 1993 to 1995.

Kelley has authored, edited, and contributed to seven books. He has also written multiple articles for journals and magazines, as well as Sunday School curriculum and Evangelism curriculum for local churches.

Chapter 4

DOES THE TERM BAPTIST STILL MATTER?

Michael W. McDill

Dr. Michael W. McDill (B.A. Portland State University; M.Div., Th.M., & Ph.D. Theology and Church History, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) is Professor of Church History and Theology at Northeastern Baptist College (NEBC). Previously, he was Associate Professor of Church History and Theology at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dr. McDill has served as a pastor, interim pastor, supply preacher, and Bible teacher for various churches in New York, North Carolina, Virginia, Oregon, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Connecticut. He also served as Pastor of the Deep Springs Baptist Church, Stoneville, NC from 1991-1997. He served on the trustee board of NEBC from 2013-2015. His writings include "Balthasar Hubmaier and Free Will," a chapter in *The Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists: Restoring New Testament Christianity*.

Michael and his wife Becky have four children and two grandchildren.

Chapter 5

DOES THE LOCAL CHURCH STILL MATTER?

Ronnie W. Rogers

Ronnie Rogers (B.A., Biblical Studies, Criswell College; M.S., Counseling, Henderson State University) has been a pastor for 35+ years. He currently serves as Senior Pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Norman, Oklahoma.

He has served his denomination in multiple capacities. He served as: Chairman - Nominating Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention; Chairman - Board of Trustees for Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; President - Arkansas Baptist State Convention; and Member - Committee on Committees of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Pastor Rogers is a seasoned pastor, prolific author and blogger. He has presented four papers at conferences in Oxford, England. He has authored seven books, including three on various aspects of the life and ministry of a local church. He is uniquely qualified to write the chapter, "Does The Local Church Still Matter?" He has also contributed chapters and essays to several other books.

He and his wife Gina have two married daughters, Natalie and Nancy, two sons-in-law, Rocky and JR, and seven grandchildren.

Chapter 6

DOES GRAMMATICAL-HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION STILL MATTER?

Paige Patterson

Paige Patterson has more than four decades of experience in educating pastors and missionaries. After almost 18 years as president of the Criswell College in Dallas, Patterson served for 11 years as president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and then 15 years as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Patterson's leadership focus is on an intense commitment to evangelism and global missions with a foundational component of challenging research and rigorous academic preparation. He continues his influence on Christian Education today through his role as the President of

the Sandy Creek Foundation and his work with colleges and seminaries around the globe.

After graduating from Hardin-Simmons University, Patterson completed the Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Patterson, along with his long time friend Paul Pressler, served as the architects and key leaders of the Conservative Resurgence at great personal sacrifice. Southern Baptists elected him to serve as President of the Southern Baptist Convention for two terms (1998–2000). During those years, he appointed a committee to revise the Baptist Faith & Message. He also presided over the historic Southern Baptist Convention session that adopted the revised statement of faith.

Paige and Dorothy Patterson have traveled to and ministered in more than 138 countries of the world, sharing Christ with various heads of state, including Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and Menachem Begin of Israel. He led church planting movements in several states and also pastored churches in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas.

Patterson has penned numerous books and articles, including commentaries on Song of Solomon, 1 Corinthians, Titus, 1 Peter, and most recently the Revelation volume in The New American Commentary Series.

Chapter 7

DOES EXPOSITORY PREACHING STILL MATTER?

David Allen

David L. Allen is the Distinguished Professor of Preaching, holds the George W. Truett Chair of Pastoral Ministry, and is the director of the Southwestern Center for Text-Driven Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological

Seminary. He was married to Sherri for 37 years. She died of cancer in 2015. They had four children and five grandchildren. God in his grace brought Kate Finley into his life and they married in October 2016.

Allen earned the B.A., Criswell College, M.Div., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Ph.D. in Humanities with a Major in Linguistics from The University of Texas at Arlington.

During his ministry he served as senior pastor of two churches for a total of 21 years, and has served as interim pastor of a dozen churches. Allen has led or been a part of over 400 revivals, Bible conferences, and lecture series, including study tours in the Philippines, Israel, Oxford, and Germany. Along with numerous articles and chapters in multi-author volumes, he is the author of *Hebrews* in the New American Commentary Series; *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews*; *1-3 John: Fellowship in God's Family* in the "Preaching the Word" Series; *Preaching Tools: an Annotated Survey of Commentaries and Preaching Resources for Every Book of the Bible*; and *The Extent of the Atonement: History and Critique*. He is currently working on a commentary on Job (*Exalting Jesus in Job*) in the Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary Series, edited by David Platt and Danny Akin.

David Allen served as the co-editor and contributor to *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*; *Text-Driven Preaching*; *The Return of Christ: a Premillennial Perspective*; and *Preach the Word: Essays on Biblical Preaching in Honor of Jerry Vines*.

Chapter 8

DOES GENDER IDENTITY STILL MATTER?

Candi Finch

Candi Finch holds a B.A. in Communication, M.Div. in Women's Studies, and Ph.D. in Systematic Theology and Church History. She has served on

the Resolutions Committee and the Women's Ministry Advisory Council for the Southern Baptist Convention. Candi currently serves as a Trustee of Northeastern Baptist College. She is the Dean of Women, the Director of Admissions, and an Associate Professor of Women's Studies in Theology at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary.

Finch's life with God has been an adventure—she has been on mission trips both stateside and internationally, worked on a church staff doing girls ministry, served as a seminary professor teaching classes in the US and overseas, spent several summers working with teenagers both in the US and overseas, and even led a travelling drama group to raise money for missions.

Candi Finch has contributed to books for women and youth. She speaks at women's conferences and has a passion to see women of all ages come to know the Lord and be disciplined in their faith. Several people invested in her life when she was in high school and was a new believer. Their impact reminds her daily of the positive influence we can have on others for Christ.

Chapter 9

DOES GENDER ROLES STILL MATTER?

Dorothy Patterson

Dorothy Kelley Patterson is a self-described homemaker. She has been a lifelong helper to her husband, Paige Patterson, former President of three Christian institutions of higher education and of the Southern Baptist Convention. She has served as professor of theology in women's studies for almost four decades. She earned graduate and postgraduate degrees in theology, and teaches, speaks, and writes for women. She is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society, served on the founding board for the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, and attends First Baptist

Church of Dallas. She is a prolific author and contributor to more than fifteen books. She is also a blogger.

Dorothy Patterson has been active in theological education for women, serving as professor of theology in women's studies at both Southeastern and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminaries, but she sees her most critical roles as that of wife, mother, and grandmother. Their son Armour is a writer and lives in Melissa, Texas, with his wife Rachel. Their daughter Carmen is married to Mark Howell, President of E2initiative. The Howells presented the Pattersons with two granddaughters, Abigail and Rebekah.

The Pattersons reside in the Dallas, Texas area but travel extensively to preach, teach, and evangelize throughout the world.

Chapter 10
**DOES THE RAPTURE
STILL MATTER?**

Mark H. Ballard

Chapter 11
**DOES THE CONSERVATIVE
RESURGENCE STILL MATTER?**

Z. Scott Colter

Scott Colter earned a B.A. and M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been married to Sharayah for ten years. Scott and Sharayah are the proud parents of a four-year-old son and a one-year-old daughter.

He now serves as Director of Strategic Initiatives at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and as the Executive Director of the Conservative Baptist Network.

Prior to serving at Mid-America, Dr. Colter was the Executive Director of the Sandy Creek Foundation in Dallas, Texas. He helped facilitate international and domestic ministry, mission work, evangelism, theological publications, and cultural engagement. Before leading the Sandy Creek Foundation, he served for more than a decade at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where he worked ultimately as the Chief of Staff to the President and served in the institution's executive cabinet. Scott also oversaw the work of the research doctoral office and later served as the Director of Institutional Advancement. In ministry, he served as an associate to the senior pastor at Birchman Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

Epilogue
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Timothy K. Christian

Introduction

DOES IT STILL MATTER?

TIMOTHY K. CHRISTIAN

“Can you believe it?” the pastor said as he hugged his wife. “It’s finally over!”

“At last,” she said. “I wasn’t sure it would ever happen.”

“Me either. It took 21 years, but the truth finally won.”

Such was the sentiment of the vast majority when the gavel sounded concluding the Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) annual meeting in Orlando, Florida, on June 14, 2000. The hum of jovial camaraderie among the more than 11,000 messengers filing out of the Orlando Convention Center was palpable. They had represented their home churches and the 15-million+ members of the SBC churches spread across North America. They had publicly debated and voted overwhelmingly in favor of a newly revised “Baptist Faith and Message” (BF&M)—the SBC’s statement of faith. The messengers believed their vote had settled the controversy for the foreseeable future.

Through the BF&M 2000, Southern Baptists spoke decisively. Article 1, “The Scriptures,” affirmed the Bible’s full inerrancy, though it did not use the term. The 111-word statement declared:

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth,

without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.¹

What led to the climactic vote?

MOTIVATION FOR THE CONSERVATIVE RESURGENCE

Theological concerns had been brewing in the Convention at least since the 1960s. Subsequent chapters will describe some of the specific concerns. Here we summarize.

The Theological Issue: Inerrancy

The primary issue was whether or not the Bible is fully inerrant. Why does this issue matter?

One's view of the Bible ultimately determines how one answers all faith and practice questions. For example, is the Genesis creation account history or legend? Were Adam and Eve real people in an historic narrative, or representative characters in a symbolic narrative? Are the Old and New Testament miracles facts or myths? Was Jesus the promised Messiah—the Christ? Was He virgin born, God incarnate? Was Jesus Christ's death vicarious, substitutionary, and redemptive? Did He literally, physically rise from

1. "Article 1: The Scriptures," Baptist Faith and Message 2000, accessed 3 September 2021, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#i-the-scriptures>.

the dead? And what about baptism, church membership, or the role and gender of a pastor? Is the Bible true? Does it mean what it says? Is it worthy of careful exegesis and exposition? Is it the authoritative source for a pastor's sermon preparation and delivery? Is the Bible the final, trustworthy foundation that definitively answers all such questions?

A grassroots effort to clarify and reaffirm Southern Baptists' long-standing belief in the verbal-plenary inspiration of the 39 Old Testament books and the 27 New Testament books, gathered momentum in the late 1960s and 70s. A majority of the SBC pastors, along with the people in the pews, firmly believed the Bible and the Bible alone is the inspired, authoritative, infallible, and inerrant Word of God. It is the final authority for the faith and practice of all believers and every local church. Not every SBC pastor was a seminary graduate, but a majority of the pastors and people expected that SBC seminary graduates would believe the Bible wholeheartedly.

From time to time, however, reports surfaced that an increasing number of recent seminary graduates were answering the questions above with a veiled, spiritualized, "No." Some leaders of Baptist agencies, as well as some professors at Baptist colleges and seminaries, were redefining biblical terms and doctrines. Publication of books and articles by such leaders furthered these concerns.²

Pastors and laypeople published letters of concern in the Baptist papers of their various state conventions. They went to the annual Conventions to express sincere concerns. Leaders promised to investigate and, if needed, correct any problems. But year after year, nothing changed.

Respected agency executives and seminary presidents denied that any problem existed. Repeatedly they reassured Convention Messengers that no

2. For the perspective of a pastor and Baptist historian, see "Theological Inadequacy" in Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 6-30. For the perspective of an active laymen, see "Seeds of Dissension" in Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 49-55.

liberals had infiltrated the SBC fortress. “Fear not. All is well,” they said. “The problem is not in our agencies or classrooms. The problem is with those sounding the alarm.” The leaders portrayed them as libelous fear mongers, worse than “Chicken Little,” agitating the uninformed, alerting them to a non-existent danger.

The Beginning

Nothing changed until the 1979 Convention in Houston, Texas. The SBC elected Dr. Adrian Rogers as President. The dynamic 47-year-old pastor of the fast-growing Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, TN, was fearless. In spite of harsh criticism, he used the little authority the SBC’s Constitution granted to its President. The President appoints members to one key committee in the Convention’s structure: the Committee on Committees.

Beginning with Rogers, and continuing for the next twenty-one years, the Convention elected bold, theologically conservative presidents. These men, in turn, appointed only like-minded inerrantists to the Committee on Committees. The Committee members nominated inerrantists to serve on the Committee on Nominations. The Committee on Nominations nominated inerrantists to serve as Trustees or Committee members of the various SBC Boards and Agencies. Subsequent Southern Baptist Conventions elected those nominees to serve. Thus, over time, the Boards of all SBC agencies were solidly committed to the Bible’s practical authority and inerrancy. The Trustees held their agency to the Convention’s Statement of Faith and the guiding principles near and dear to Baptists in the pews. We call this process and its results, *The Conservative Resurgence of the Southern Baptist Convention*.

If, however, the above process sounds easy, such was not the case. There were many controversial, tense, and even volatile moments and meetings along the way. Both sides made mistakes. Both sides, at times,

misunderstood and misjudged one another’s motives. No one knew how it would turn out.

The Pivot Point

The denials and reassurances—“Trust me; no liberals here”—continued, intensified, and culminated at the 1985 SBC annual meeting in Dallas. That year, at the urging of the moderates, President Charles Stanley appointed a Peace Committee to interview leaders of the agencies and the leadership and faculties of all six Southern Baptist seminaries. When the completed report was presented to the convention two years later, to the surprise of none of the conservatives, but perhaps to some of the moderates, all of the conservative’s theological concerns over the years were confirmed.

The Peace Committee members represented both the moderate and conservative sides in the SBC controversy. The Committee’s report revealed a glaring theological divide, even among the committee members. The report stated:

In meeting after meeting of the Peace Committee, talk turned to the nature of inspiration of the Scriptures, often to the point of preempting the committee’s established agenda. Gradually, it became clear that while there might be other theological differences, the authority of the Word of God is the focus of differences. The primary source of the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention is the Bible; more specifically, the ways in which the Bible is viewed.

All Baptists see the Bible as authoritative; the question is the extent and nature of its authority....

Early in its second year, the Peace Committee continued to discuss theological concerns, including the fact that there are at least

two separate and distinct interpretations of Article I of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963, reflective of the diversity present in the Convention. One view holds that when the article says the Bible has “truth without any mixture of error for its matter,” it means *all* areas—historical, scientific, theological and philosophical. The other holds the “truth” relates only to matters of faith and practice.³

The Peace Committee’s interviews were revealing. In reality, several of the ‘so called’ moderates, especially among seminary professors, were much closer to theological liberals than they had previously admitted. The report stated:

We have found significant theological diversity within our seminaries, reflective of the diversity within our wider constituency. These divergencies are found among those who claim to hold a high view of Scripture and to teach in accordance with, and not contrary to, the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963.

Examples of this diversity include the following, which are intended to be illustrative but not exhaustive.

1. Some accept and affirm the direct creation and historicity of Adam and Eve while others view them instead as representative of the human race in its creation and fall.
2. Some understand the historicity of every event in Scripture as reported by the original source while others hold that the historicity can be clarified and revised by the findings of modern historical scholarship.

3. SBC in St. Louis, Missouri, June 16, 1987, “Report of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee,” accessed 31 August 2021, <http://www.baptist-2baptist.net/b2barticle.asp?ID=65>.

3. Some hold to the stated authorship of every book in the Bible while others hold that in some cases such attribution may not refer to the final author or may be pseudonymous.
4. Some hold that every miracle in the Bible is intended to be taken as an historical event while others hold that some miracles are intended to be taken as parabolic.⁴

Further, many SBC missionaries had embraced the moderate-liberal teaching and had exported it to most of the 125 international mission fields where they served. Some, though thankfully not all, were primarily religious social workers. Many of these never shared the gospel with a single person from their appointment through their retirement.⁵

As a result of the Peace Committee report, it became clear that there was no room for compromise. The moderate and conservative views of the Bible were incompatible. One side or the other had to hold sway. Through the committee and trustee process, the conservative movement won the day. They accomplished what had never been done before. A denomination that was well down the road toward liberalism repented. It turned 180 degrees to become a thoroughly conservative denomination. Those involved were convinced the Conservative Resurgence was indeed the handiwork of God.

The Culmination

The impact of the Conservative Resurgence on the boards and agencies became transformative a few years before the 2000 Convention in Orlando. Yet, June 14, 2000, is considered the culminating event. That day the Convention Messengers overwhelmingly adopted a revised and updated version of the BF&M.

4. “Report of Peace Committee”; <http://www.baptist2baptist.net/b2barticle.asp?ID=65>.

5. Mark H. Ballard with Timothy K. Christian, *Words Matter: What is the Gospel?* (Bennington, VT: Northeastern Baptist Press, 2020), 19-20.

Throughout the controversy, the moderates claimed fidelity to the BF&M 1963. All seminary professors signed the BF&M when they were hired. They confessed to believe it and promised their teaching would remain consistent with it. Yet, as the Peace Committee report confirmed, many rejected the Bible's infallibility and inerrancy.

From June 1998–June 1999, Paige Patterson, credited with being one of the architects of the Conservative Resurgence, served his first of two terms as the SBC President. He appointed a committee to revise and update the BF&M. Adrian Rogers was the chairman. The committee reported their work and officially presented the document for approval at the 2000 SBC. Specifically, the document closed the gap on inerrancy. As noted above, the messengers believed the affirmative vote on the BF&M 2000 had settled the controversy for decades to come.

Such were the happy thoughts of most who left the Orlando Convention Center on that hot, June day in 2000. The co-editors of this volume, Mark H. Ballard and Timothy K. Christian, were present to give their affirmative votes. In fact, they were active participants in the Conservative Resurgence.

Leading up to the 2000 Convention, Ballard had served on the SBC Committee on Committees. At the 2000 Convention he was elected to the Board of Trustees of LifeWay Christian Resources. He was near the platform when the scheduled business session to debate the BF&M began. He and his wife sat about ten rows from the President's podium for the historic debate and vote.

Christian was the Chairman of the Credentials Committee at the 2000 SBC. The Committee registered messengers, confirming that each was a duly elected representative of a local Southern Baptist Church in good standing with the Convention. After completing a frenzy of late registrations shortly before the scheduled time for the BF&M business session, Christian and his wife found seats at the back of the convention hall. The debate was interesting and revealing. Finally, the question was called. The raised-ballot

vote was overwhelmingly affirmative. The Ballards and Christians joined the spontaneous thunderous applause and standing ovation. Many in the hall cheered; others wept for joy.

"We were convinced," Ballard later said, "that the BF&M 2000 securely tethered the SBC to an unwavering commitment to the Bible's full inerrancy, infallibility, and absolute authority. We thought it was settled for at least 50 years. Our conviction was based on more than the strength of the vote or the clarity of our new statement of faith. It was also based in a simple fact. Nearly all of the several dozen churches whose pastors and messengers voted against the BF&M 2000 withdrew their memberships from their local Baptist Associations, State Conventions, and the Southern Baptist Convention. Most, in protest, aligned themselves with the leftward leaning Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. We thought the opposing army had abandoned the battlefield, leaving us to freely and harmoniously work our mission fields. Of course, I now realize our confidence was naïve."

Some leaders noted that Baptists must be eternally vigilant. We must always "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). While everyone agreed, in reality most of us believed that any challenge to Baptist beliefs in at least the next two or three decades would come from outside the Southern Baptist camp. Challenges would arise within our ranks—someday. No doubt about it. Scripture and church history affirm the leftward tendency of spiritual and theological drift. Few thought internal challenges could arise within the first 20 years following the BF&M 2000's overwhelming adoption. But again, we were naïve.

Attendance at the annual conventions slowly declined over the next few years. The average Baptist was confident that the SBC's theological issues were settled. Our new agency and seminary leaders were unwavering inerrantists. We could trust them to ensure that those supported by the Cooperative Program, the denominational funding mechanism, would operate within the BF&M 2000. They would gladly adhere to the guiding principles set forth by the Convention.

WHY THIS BOOK?

For many of us who supported and participated in the Resurgence, it is shocking to realize that it began more than 40 years ago and the BF&M 2000 has been in use for more than 20 years. The editors of this volume were young pastors in the Resurgence days. Their present day gray hair and beards affirm this is no longer true. We, however, do not look back on those days with shame or embarrassment, but with joy. We believe both the Conservative Resurgence and the BF&M 2000 were necessary and God honoring. Now, however, we have a growing concern.

The theological focus of the Conservative Resurgence seems to be waning. We sense a growing indifference toward the BF&M, and an even greater antipathy for self-identifying as a Baptist. Our concern, however, is not for a movement, or even for our denomination. Our passion is for the Bible's God-revealed truth.

We are concerned for the health and future of biblical, pastoral local church ministry. Particularly, we are concerned about the chosen trajectory of several leading Southern Baptist pastors and churches. At times, we are more than concerned; we are alarmed. They influence many. The trajectory, in our understanding, already is having a debilitating influence on some of our Convention's agencies and schools.

Therefore, we have asked a simple question. Does it still matter? Do the doctrinal issue that inspired the Conservative Resurgence still matter? What about the Baptist Faith and Message 2000? Does it still matter?

In the summer of 2019, Ballard and Christian discussed the need for this volume. "First, we consider writing the entire volume. But as we began," Ballard notes, "we discovered we were not alone. Concern was growing among pastors across the SBC. Looking back, I believe Resolution 9 [discussed below] that was passed at the 2019 Convention became the boiling point. As we prayed and talked, I identified crucial key issues, not only in SBC life, but also in the larger evangelical community. Through

my contacts at the college, the Executive Committee, and the Conservative Baptist Network, I identified a distinguished panel of authors who were theologically passionate and uniquely knowledgeable about their individual topics. They are also skilled writers. Nearly all have first hand knowledge of the Conservative Resurgence; they were active supporters and participants in part or all of the Conservative Resurgence years."

Thus this book was born: *Does It Still Matter? Essays in Honor of the Conservative Resurgence of the Southern Baptist Convention*. Each essay answers the question with a resounding, "Yes!" The essayists are convinced the issues that inspired the Conservative Resurgence remain relevant and urgent today. In light of recent drastic changes in our culture and the Convention's drastic decline in baptisms [discussed below], each chapter addresses a different area of concern for SBC life and ministry. Most of the chapters also speak to issues faced by all conservative evangelical churches and denominations.

The plans for this book were largely completed in the fall of 2019. Yet, the dawn of a new decade only increased the need for the book. As this volume went to press in 2021, the SBC was engaged in controversy over issues related to the ERLC, Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality, LGBTQ+ issues, and more. In addition, on Friday, February 14, 2020, a group of pastors announced the launch of the Conservative Baptist Network of Southern Baptists. Within hours of the announcement more than 2,000 Southern Baptists joined the network. Since that first day, the network has grown steadily. The growth rate demonstrates that thousands of Southern Baptist pastors, lay leaders, and churches are concerned about the future of the SBC. Many believe the gains of the Conservative Resurgence are now eroding, if not being totally jettisoned.

We the editors thank those who invested their valuable time to research and write these enlightening chapters. In doing so, the authors had no desire to be critics cursing the darkness. Anyone can complain and criticize. Rather, they sought to be helpful discerning analysts, shining the Scriptures'

illuminating light on their topic. Discernment is directly connected with accurately interpreting and applying the Bible (Heb 4:12; 5:14). Also, it should be motivated by love (Phil 1:9), and lead us to prayer. “God never gives us discernment in order that we may criticize,” observed Oswald Chambers, “but that we may intercede.”⁶

Each writer longs to encourage the saints, bless the churches, and glorify God. We are committed Baptists and unashamed. We are committed to our local churches and deeply concerned for the lostness evident in our culture. Above all, we are confident of our Savior’s power to save, forgive, cleanse, and revive. We are therefore not ashamed of the biblical gospel (Rom 1:16).

Finally, we thank you, the reader, for investing your valuable time to read, pray, and consider the challenges in the following chapters. May these pages grow your discernment and prayer life.

6. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1965), 328.

BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE

Article 1, “The Scriptures,” through the years

1925

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried.

Luke 16:29-31; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Eph. 2:20; Heb. 1:1; 2 Peter 1:19-21; John 16:13-15; Matt. 22:29-31; Psalm 19:7-10; Psalm 119:1-8.

1963

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruc-

tion. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.

Ex. 24:4; Deut. 4:1-2; 17:19; Josh. 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isa. 34:16; 40:8; Jer. 15:16; 36; Matt. 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Rom. 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

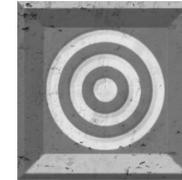
2000

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11, 89, 105, 140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

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DOES INERRANCY STILL MATTER?



MARK H. BALLARD

As people attended the Southern Baptist Convention Pastor's Conference in Houston on June 1, 1979, tension filled the room. Decades of frustration among conservative pastors and laymen were coming to a head. After repeated attempts to deal with a perceived theological drift to the left among Southern Baptist Seminaries and entity personnel, pastors and laymen felt they were deceived and ignored by entity leadership.

While seminary and entity leaders proclaimed their respective organizations held to the Baptist Faith and Message, last updated in 1963, pastors and laymen were repeatedly hearing of professors, missionaries, and authors, who taught, wrote, and did things contrary to their understanding of the Convention's statement of faith. The primary concern related to the nature and authority of the Bible.

Nearly everyone purported to stand by the Baptist Faith and Message's statement on Scripture. However, clearly there was serious disagreement over what the article on Scripture actually meant. Note the wording of Article I in the 1963 statement.