

Editorial

The Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry exists to provide theological and ministerial resources that enrich and energize ministry in Baptist churches. Our goal is to bring together professor and practitioner to produce and apply these resources to Baptist life, polity, and ministry. The mission of the BCTM is to develop, preserve, and communicate the distinctive theological identity of Baptists.

In keeping with this vision, the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry is proud to present this inaugural edition of the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*. We pray that the articles and essays presented herein truly address issues and concerns relevant for Baptist life. This first volume is devoted to the topic “Issues in Baptist Life.” Although broad in scope, we believe that every article speaks meaningfully to areas of common concern present among Baptists.

Issues of evangelism and apologetics are theologically and practically considered in this edition of the journal. Two articles reflect similar yet differing perspectives on the practice of evangelism. Dr. Ken Keathley provides a biblical, historical, and theological case as well as a passionate plea for public invitations as the necessary and appropriate culmination of gospel preaching. Dr. Chad Brand gives a history of evangelism within select periods of Baptist history. His three major points regarding evangelism will most assuredly resonate with most Baptists. Dr. Robert Stewart meticulously analyzes the relationship between Mormonism and Christianity. In particular, Stewart critiques the plea of Stephen E. Robinson that Christians should accept

Mormons as genuine Christians. Those involved in counter-cult ministry or those interested in cults will find Stewart's article both illuminating and helpful.

Issues of denominational life are also discussed. Dr. Chuck Kelley speaks pointedly and specifically to Southern Baptists. He provides a stimulating and provocative essay (accompanied with helpful and detailed statistics) on the relationship between the Cooperative Program and the denominational entities of the Southern Baptist Convention. Dr. Steve Lemke has graciously consented to allow us to reprint his presidential address from the 2000 Southwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. In his discourse, he casts our Baptist vision toward the broader horizons of the evangelical world, identifying what he believes will be future theological challenges within evangelicalism. Now three years removed from this address, it is noteworthy how many of his predictions have in some way "come to pass."

Issues of church practice and Christian living are also considered within this journal. Dr. Chuck Quarles provides a biblical and theological discussion on the meaning and purpose of Christian baptism and the observance of the Lord's Supper. He considers the question: should Baptists regard these as sacrament or as ordinance? Dr. Stan Norman supplies a biblical, theological, and pastoral discussion of divorce and remarriage. Although his application targets the seminary professor serving on the faculty of a Southern Baptist seminary, many will benefit from his biblical observations and theological discussions on the meaning of marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

It is our desire that interest and participation in this publication will expand to include a variety of Baptists from all segments of Southern Baptist life. The scope of our contributors in upcoming editions will hopefully include professors from SBC seminaries and Baptist colleges and universities as well as ministers from local Baptist churches and denominational ministries.

All Baptists are invited to inform us of topics of interest or relevance for Baptist thought or ministry.

The Fall edition of the journal will be devoted to the topic of “The Mission of Today’s Church.” Topics such as discipleship, evangelism, church planting, missions, etc. and the relationship of these within the ministry philosophy and practice of local Baptist churches will be discussed. We also hope to expand the offerings of the journal to include a section of book reviews.

Until the Lord returns, may He find us faithful,

Stan Norman, Editor