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The New Hampshire Confession of Faith

by Terry Basham, II

When I began pastoral ministry, the first church I worked for after college was one in West Virginia pastored by a Baptist Bible College graduate (Class of 1968, I think). Most of the men that I knew, and was exposed to, were either from there or from one of the many splinter groups of the BBFI. My Dad attended a college based on the BBC model in Averyville, Illinois. Because of the vast number of BBFI churches, and 50 years of turning out pastors and missionaries, the Doctrinal statement of the Baptist Bible Fellowship is used far and wide! You will find it gracing the webpages of Churches in every area of the Independent Baptist world. When I came to Bethel Baptist we had that good old BBF style confession or statement of faith in our church handbook, but the constitution stated that our Confession was the New Hampshire Confession.

In 2013 we voted to put the 1833 New Hampshire in the handbook in place of the old BBFI one. The original statement in the handbook actually turns out to be the SBC Faith and Message of 1925! It is a sound document, but does not express the ideals of the sovereign grace position, so I was surprised to see it as the confession of Bethel Baptist Church of Lawton, Oklahoma, a prominent Doctrines of Grace Church. This year, while reading one of Pastor Keener's books (Church Polity), I learned that Bethel Adopted those Articles of Faith because they were the articles of Faith that Bible Baptist Church in Duncan, Oklahoma, used, and that church is responsible for Bethel's beginnings in Lawton.

An interesting side note is that the 1925 SBC confession, and the original General Association of Regular Baptists, and the World Baptist Union (later World Baptist Fellowship) articles of faith, were an edited version of the NHCF. This edited version was the

work of J. Frank Norris and W. B. Riley, both graduates of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Since the NHCF was our official confession, I read it over and it sounded very familiar in some parts to the BBFI statement. So I wrote to the editor of the Baptist Bible Tribune, and he sent me a copy of a little book by Robert Delnay called "*A history of the doctrinal statement of the General Association of Regular Baptists.*"

Delnay in his little book begins with the History of the New Hampshire Confession because the GARBC statement of faith has its beginnings in the NHCF. In the 1830's, in the New Hampshire Association, there was a growing number of churches (130 organized between 1780 and 1808) within the Association that were Free Will or Non-Calvinistic Churches. This movement in New Hampshire was the work of Benjamin Randall, a veteran of the Revolutionary war and a Congregationalist who came to embrace the Baptist position on the Church and baptism. In 1780 he formed a church that was decidedly opposed to the Doctrines of Grace and emphasized *God's love for all, the free offer of grace to all men, Christ's universal atonement for all, and the Gospel's universal call.* (Before 1780 he was a member of a Particular Baptist church and preached in that fellowship often.) As it so often is, these Churches soon outnumbered the Calvinistic churches who held to unconditional election and particular redemption. The association was in danger of splitting. I guess the only thing worse than a church split is an Associational split! So in an attempt to keep the thing together they commissioned a new doctrinal statement that could state the essential truths in a way that would satisfy both sides. When that happens, it cannot be good because someone is going to have to compromise.

These issues were spurred on by the rise of the national Missionary movement launched by the work of Luther Rice. The first Triennial was held in 1814 and grew in size steadily. At first, it was a cooperative effort between Local Missionary Societies, but that soon changed to state conventions, and ultimately regional and national ones like we know today. The New Hampshire Convention rose from this period in History. These state conventions needed something to rally the churches around so they could keep the missions money flowing to the field. While their motivation was good, it eventually led to compromises.

E. The New Hampshire Confession, 1833

On June 24, 1830, the Baptist Convention of New Hampshire appointed a committee to prepare and present at the next annual session "such a Declaration of Faith and Practice, together with a Covenant, as may be thought agreeable and consistent with the views of all our churches in this State." The resolution calling for this action indicates the feeling of the body was that the known Baptist declarations of faith were not "in precisely the same language as it is desirable they should be." In point of fact, the theological views of Calvinistic Baptists in the New Hampshire area had been considerably modified after 1780 by the rise of the Free Will Baptists (later called Free Baptists) following the leadership of Benjamin Randall. The Free Will Baptist message was welcomed with enthusiasm by the great middle class in New England, and its warm evangelism produced a revolt against the rigid theological system of some Calvinistic Baptists. The New Hampshire Convention thus sought to restate its Calvinism in very moderate tones.

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JOHN THOMAS

First Baptist Missionary to Bengal. 1757-1801.

BY

REV. ARTHUR C. CHUTE, B. D.,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA.

(Part 3)

CHAPTER IV JOHN THOMAS AND CHARLES GRANT

“The contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.”

—Acts 15:39

“The regenerate and the unregenerate differ in their motives and their ends; the one party are governed by regard to this world, the other by regard to eternity; but the differences of good men respect only minor arrangements for promoting the benefit of mankind and the glory of god.”

—ROBERT HALL

In March of 1786, Dr. Thomas again sailed for India. On reaching there he was introduced to the little circle of Christians then in Calcutta, and was warmly welcomed. Strongly desirous of seeing India won for Christ, Charles Grant expressed the wish that Thomas, who was fervently devoted to Christian work, might remain in Bengal and preach the gospel to the heathen.

This proposal, as will be seen, was entirely in accord with the aspirations begotten in the Christian surgeon by that chapter in Isaiah. But there were obstacles in the way of acceding to Grant's desire. Behind him in England the doctor had left his family, and before him in India, was the task of acquiring a difficult language. Furthermore, he was already employed as a ship's officer, and how could he allow the ship to return without him? But these things were surmountable. As for his family, they could come later, and by dint of diligence the new tongue could be mastered. But what about his position on ship board? Between him and fellow officers some unpleasantness had arisen because he had been so taken up with religious matters on shore; and on ac-

count of this variance Thomas was the more anxious to get free from the engagement which bound him. The night of Jan. 12, 1787, was spent by him in meditation and prayer, and the conclusion was reached that God would have him stay and begin work with a view to saving the benighted pagans. Accordingly, after quite a financial surrender, his connection with the ship was severed.

Engaging a moonshee of the writer caste, Ram Basu by name, afterwards Carey's teacher, he earnestly set about to learn Bengali, the language of the common people. But besides this he must also labor the while for the spiritual welfare of European residents. At the outset of the new effort it seemed that everything would move smoothly. Thomas soon found it to be one thing, however, to be engaged in Christian service during times of leisure from the ship, and quite another, and more difficult thing, to be regularly employed as a religious instructor. Grant, occupying a prominent official position, mingled much more with the world than Thomas regarded as proper; and the newly-engaged missionary wrote in his journal: “Reputation is a snare to those who are called to follow Him who made Himself of no reputation.” This was the commencement of failing sympathy between these two worthy men.

Rev. David Brown, of whom mention has been made, was not among those who had to do with enlisting Thomas in this enterprise. Had he been consulted it is probable he would have pointed out difficulties likely to arise between a Baptist missionary and Paedobaptist supporters. Brown and Thomas were men of totally different make-up, and they could not well get along together. As a preacher Brown was scholarly and unattractive, though quite evangelical; while Thomas was vivacious and popular, and evangelical to a high degree.

Thomas hoped Grant would make him minister at Kiernander's mission church until he had acquired the Bengali tongue; but in this he was disappointed, for Brown was chosen to the office.

Grant now desired Thomas to go up country three hundred miles to Malda, where one of the Udney brothers lived, and there study the vernacular and preach to Europeans; and then later, when Bengali had been learned, to remove to Goamalty, nearby, where Grant owned a tract of land and an indigo factory. Into this plan Thomas entered, May, 1787, although he would greatly have preferred remaining where he was until he could preach to the natives. His brief labors in Calcutta had resulted in the conversion of two or three young Englishmen, one of whom, Robert Thomas Burney, was the means of turning many to Christ within the twenty years of subsequent continuance there.

Before going north the missionary made in his diary an entry which may here be quoted as representing the place given in his life to prayer and the study of the Scriptures. It indicates, too, his desires and expectations with respect to those sitting in darkness. “Day and night,” he says, “I meditate on the word of God and have much fellowship with Him, and much confidence of being sent with a message from God to these poor heathens, and that the Lord will certainly bless the preaching of the gospel now at this very time. I have said that the gospel would never depart from this country till the glory of the latter times comes. I have made my boast of God amongst the people, and told them that I had unshaken trust in God; and I do not think of being ashamed of this boasting; but believe what God hath spoken concerning those that wait for Him and put their trust in Him — O for a seeking first His kingdom daily! O for the marrow of His word, the energy of His Spirit, and the sober consolations of

uninterrupted fellowship with Him. But I do not desire consolations only, seeing it is best sometimes to suffer; therefore I throw the reins to Jesus, not with an air of carnal ease, but with the utmost desire that He should undertake the work of guiding and governing me through a slippery, dangerous path.”

On the 18th of June, 1787, he reached Malda, where he was cordially received into the home of George Udny, brother of Robert, one of the circle of Christians in Calcutta. But Thomas took away with him overmuch care of the brethren he left behind. William Chambers and others were harboring Arminianism — a thing that Calvinistic Thomas could ill brook. He wished that at the beginning of the gospel stream in Bengal there might be purity; but his method of seeking to secure it did not work to advantage. At great length he wrote to correct what he thought serious error—wrote in quite a dogmatic and dictatorial way. Of the displeasure produced thereby Grant was a partaker. In the first letter written by Carey to the Society that afterwards sent him and Thomas forth as their first missionaries, Carey has this to say of his colleague: “The more I know, the more I love him. He is a very holy man—but his faithfulness often degenerates into personality, which may account for the difference between Mr. Grant and him.”[footnote]

When Thomas saw that by his plain correspondence, at the time of which we are speaking, serious offence had been given, he wrote with exceeding tenderness to Chambers, for he was not a man whose eyes never became opened to his mistakes, nor was it little that he grieved over them when he saw them. One sentence from this epistle we may here give as suitable to be remembered in connection with his own pioneer missionary labor as a whole: “You are sensible,” he says, “that I meant to do you good, and not evil, in what is past, and also that young beginners do mischief before they do good, in most trades and callings, and sometimes it is the same in the gospel.” We may add that but for the mistakes of predecessors, there would be less of success to successors. But to God be all the glory!

The ill feeling between Grant and Thomas kept increasing. After the latter had been about two months in Malda, his mind was turned to the neglect of the

Lord's Supper in which the little band of Christians there was living, and he determined that the ordinance should be administered once a month. First of all, however, he thought he ought to insist on the immersion of all who desired to participate. Accordingly, he began to speak out plainly upon the subject of baptism, and also to communicate with the Calcutta friends about it. “If the tiny pins of a watch,” he wrote, “are of so much value and use, notwithstanding their smallness, and if it be essential that they are rightly placed, who can say that the ordinances of God's house are less so?” Convinced of the importance of the matter, he prepared a pamphlet against infant sprinkling and in support of believer's baptism. This he supposed would silence all objectors and at once bring them over to his view, for he had not yet learned that “nothing is so hopelessly obstinate as theological traditional prejudice.”

This controversy caused the Paedobaptist friends of the man who was always loyal to truth, as he understood it, cost what it might, to draw off from him. To counteract his influence, if possible, books were sent up from Calcutta to Malda. But in spite of this, one man, William Long, who belonged to the civilian circle in which Thomas moved, became satisfied that the Baptist position was Scriptural, and was baptized, June 13, 1788, probably the first administration of Bible baptism ever occurring in Bengal. When the report of the event came south, Robert Udny wrote Thomas questioning the authority of a layman to baptize. “I wonder,” says Thomas, “what he thinks ‘a minister’ to be! I have been ministering to him these twelve months, and yet he is unwilling to allow me the same authority as a poor uncalled, unsent, unconverted, but ordained gownsmen!” At this point the humble Baptist missionary was in collision with a great ecclesiastical system; but he had the right of it, nevertheless.

Moreover; Thomas was now in a financial strait. His release from the ship had cost him considerable, and for Indian muslins sent to the English market he had received scarcely half what was reckoned upon. Besides, Grant's waning friendship made his income from that source precarious. In his extremity, George Udny, who was perhaps as faithful a friend as he ever had, although

much affected by the attitude of Grant, offered to advance Thomas half of what he then required, provided Grant would advance the other half. This Grant was not inclined to do; but after a while he agreed to the proposal upon certain conditions. Thomas must remove to Goamalty, near the ruins of the ancient city of Gour, must cease troubling Malda and Calcutta with his Baptist notions, and must not publish the translation of Matthew which he had just completed. The reason why printing of the translation was opposed is not quite evident. Perhaps Grant did not have confidence in the excellence of the work, and he may have been reserving his support for the translation which his brother-in-law, Chambers, contemplated making, but never made.

But Thomas will receive help upon no such terms as those stated, great as is his need of money. He will remain a loyal Baptist, and will do his utmost to have the gospel of Matthew speedily published. And very soon, therefore, the breach between Grant and Thomas is made complete. But just before the final separation, Grant gave 500 rupees (nearly \$250) and George Udny as much more, to build for Thomas a bungalow at Harla Gachi, six miles from Udny's residence, which the missionary began to occupy in October of 1789. Then on the 7th of the following month, Grant informed Thomas by letter that henceforth he would cut off all allowances from him, and advised him to return to the practice of medicine. George Udny likewise declined further assistance for a while.

It was about this time, we may recall in passing, that Thomas first witnessed the burning of a widow upon the pyre of the dead husband. The year 1829 was a memorable one for India, because then, largely through Carey's efforts, this inhuman practice of Suttee was abolished by law. But ten years before Carey saw a case of this sort, Thomas looked upon it, August 30, 1789, and began immediately to exert himself to bring the horrible thing to an end. An account of this first scene he published in two Calcutta papers of September 3, 1789, the Gazette and Chronicle; and urged the duty of government interference with this heathen custom.

In connection with the above-mentioned withdrawal of temporal aid, it has

been customary to lay the blame upon Thomas. But it is worth while to recall what Carey wrote in 1796 touching the affair. This is what he says: "Mr. Grant's opposition to the work, I think abominable. The fact is, as can be proved by a long correspondence between him and Mr. Thomas, now in preservation, that Mr. Thomas left a much more lucrative employment and the society of his family, at Mr. Grant's desire, to preach the gospel among the natives; who afterwards, because he would not conform to his peremptory dictates, in matters which he could not conscientiously do, cut off all his supplies and left him to shift for himself in a foreign land."

And listen to Thomas's own words at this trying time: "I am afar off from riches, reputation and worldly pleasures. Many are they who rise up against me. Some are displeased with me for preaching at all; others are displeased with me for preaching to the natives. Others threaten me if I should print my trans-

lation. Others are angry because I preach the baptism of Christ and His apostles. Others, that I will not administer the bread and wine to them, because they were never rightly baptized. Others are angry with me for personal reproof, etc. But the greatest question of all is, whether He be angry or no, in whose name I continue to say and to teach these things.... My wife and family not coming out, is a grief to me. My circumstances are another source of trouble; but I believe that, by my poverty, the Lord is trying those who are rich and able, and on whom it is very incumbent to relieve me; and in due time I hope to be relieved. But, if not, I had rather be as I am than as they are; and blessed be God always, that He has afflicted and tried me, and, by some indiscretion of my own; brought me into a state of poverty and dependence. Blessed be the Lord, I am more safely wrapped up in reproach, while some are exposed to the dangers of fame and reputation." He

continues: "I begin to get old and this country will quicken my pace. It cannot be much longer; I may safely begin to take leave. Adieu, vain and empty world, vile and sinful body, frail and fluttering friends, kind and sterling brethren! Adieu. But where I am going must be considered, and alas, I cannot well say. I cannot truly constantly think. I am betwixt two opinions of myself. I have too much hatred of sin, and too much love for that which is good, to think myself still in the bonds of iniquity; and I have too many of those things which grow on corrupt trees to think steadily that I am a child of God. Sometimes I find my hopes are beyond all painful scruples; but never find my despair and doubt beyond any comfortable hope."

Poor lonely man! Multiform and heavy were thy hardships. But through grace thou didst triumph; and so may we. Difficulties are leaden steps upon which we may go up to a golden throne.

"NO SHOES, NO SHIRT, NO SERVICE"

by Pastor Bruce Oyen

We all have seen the sign, "NO SHOES, NO SHIRT, NO SERVICE" on doors to restaurants and other businesses, and we respect them for such standards. It is quite unfortunate that our society has gotten so sloppy that such signs are even necessary, but if businesses do not "lay down the law," customers would dress as casually as they dare to. Some go almost naked in public anyway.

Well, the point is churches need to have dress codes, too. Unfortunately, Christians often are not too far behind the unsaved in how they dress, even for church services.

What happened to our sense of propriety about how we dress for church services? Now individuals want to attend church services wearing shorts, tank tops or whatever they feel comfortable in, and it is a shame!!

Some churches might do well to put a sign on the front door of the church that says, "no dress shoes, no dress clothes, no church service." I know that would be a radical thing to do, but it would make the point clear.

But what is the point? It is simply that we should remember church services are special. We attend them to worship God, and to think about serious matters, and one way to express the specialness of church services is to dress appropriately for them.

A simple way to do that is to dress better for church services than for ordinary occasions. Clothes should not only be neat and clean for church services, they should be better than what we wear at other times. Let others know church services are special by dressing as though they are. We can excuse the unchurched for dressing inappropriately for church services, but the rest know better.

It is noteworthy that the same generation that wants to dress down for church services has other faults, too. They want non-traditional church music. They like Saturday night church services so they can relax all day Sunday. They endorse social drinking. They don't like strong, doctrinal sermons and Bible studies. They don't want to be told to tithe or to attend evening services.

And the sad thing is, there are many churches that cater to these desires. They are known as "grace churches," which means they offer a "Christianity" that appeals to the baser instincts of fallen humanity. Not that these churches tell individuals they can live as they please, rather, they simply take the rough edges off true Christian discipleship and substitute for it an easy-going kind of "Christianity." One in which one does not live by laws, but by "grace."

That sounds good, but it is based on the faulty premise that the Bible has no laws by which Christians should live. However, a careful reading of just the New Testament epistles reveals that Christians are commanded to do certain things and to live a certain way. In other words, we who live by grace also have laws or commandments to live by.

Isn't it significant that the so-called "grace-awakening" experienced by many in our day leads to less careful living, which includes dressing down for church services? It all goes hand-in-hand.

So, along with being careful about how we live, let us also be careful about how we dress for church services. The church will only benefit from doing so.

Confession, continued from Page 1

N. W. Williams, William Taylor, and I. Person were named as the committee to draw up and present the new Confession, but their work being unfinished the next year, the assignment was committed to I. Person alone. As instructed by the Convention, Person submitted the draft of a Confession to the Board of the Convention on June 26, 1832. The draft was then referred to a committee of Baron Stow, John Newton Brown, Jonathan Going, and the author for revamping. The committee recommended to the Convention the adoption of the articles, but the Convention referred the articles “to the disposal of the Board” and never took up the matter again. The Board, however, discussed the articles and referred them for further revision to Brown and Stow. After more discussion, alterations were made upon the report of this committee, and Brown was appointed to prepare a final copy. This copy was presented to the Board on January 15, 1833, and approved after slight alterations. The Confession was published by the Board of the Convention, and was recommended to the churches for adoption.

The Confession might never have been known outside of New Hampshire except for the work of J. Newton Brown who, twenty years later in 1853, was editorial secretary of the American Baptist Publication Society. On his own authority, in that year, Brown revised the Confession and published it in *The Baptist Church Manual*. In revising it, he added two articles to the original sixteen, one on “Repentance and Faith”, and one on “Sanctification.” In various church manuals this Confession became the most widely disseminated creedal declaration of American Baptists. In 1867, J. M. Pendleton, pastor at Upland, PA, incorporated it in his Church Manual, and as a leader in the “Landmark Baptist” movement, he secured its adoption in the doctrinal statements of churches and associations of the Landmark type. Its silence on the doctrine of the universal Church made the confession particularly adaptable to the emphasis of this group on the local, visible congregation. Hiscox placed it in his Standard Manual and his New Directory, enlarging it each time.

The Confession has been reasserted or adapted by several groups in the

twentieth century. In 1902, Landmarkists of the Southwest organized a General Association of Baptist Churches (now the American Baptist Association) which adopted the Confession, along with a supplementary Doctrinal Statement. In 1933, a group of about fifty churches of the North, protesting against theological liberalism and denominational policies, withdrew to organize the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. This Association adopted the New Hampshire Confession, with a premillennial interpretation of its last article. In 1925, the Southern Baptist Convention worked over the Confession, adding ten new sections, and published it as an expression of the faith generally held by Southern Baptists.”

The New Hampshire Confession (NHCF) is 182 years old, and has seen wide use as foundational confession for Churches that are both Calvinistic and those that are not! The NHCF is, in my opinion, a moderate (moderate might be too weak a word) statement of the Doctrines of Grace. And when compared to the Philadelphia Confession, the 1689 London, and the 1646, one could say it is “the cowardistic confession” of the Doctrines of Grace!

There are key statements that should be a part of a confession that make it very clear, even to the newly converted, the precise position of the Church on doctrinal matters. That is one reason why today many of the Gospel Churches of Christ (Baptists) will allow all kinds of “Garbage!” in the Church! They do not understand the confessions, and they do not read them! I read in the rules of a Church in London that they annually read the Confession and the rules to the Church in the Annual Church meeting so that everyone is made aware of these truths and guiding principles!

What is missing from NHCF?

- A statement on the extent of the atonement
- A statement on election that clearly says that Jehovah chose a certain number of people known only to Him to be His own people
- A statement that says anything about the Covenant of works and grace/redemption

Why is that? To keep general atonement and free will churches in the fold.

That is why today you can find churches that are not sovereign grace

using the same confession that sovereign grace churches use! This causes mixed messages to people, and is the reason non-sovereign grace candidates are considered when a Church calls a pastor! These men read the church’s doctrinal statement and see that in the confession there is no clear statement on the distinguishing positions of a Sovereign Grace Baptist, so they toss their hat in the ring, and at times much harm is done to the church. Because when a church that is one thing calls a pastor who is another, it causes a split—and we all know what fun those are.

Sadly, in the vast majority of churches, the devotion to doctrinal truth is talked about but not practiced. One church I know and love is verbally committed to doctrinal integrity and fidelity to the Bible, but they allow every kind of screwball to come in and preach. In a single meeting you will hear Lordship Salvation, Easy Believism, Light Calvinism, and decidedly Arminian sermons! You may even hear a man teach that in the Tribulation period you will have to trust Christ and keep the law to be saved! There ought to be a return to not only having, but also teaching and explaining, the doctrinal statement of the church to the members, so that every person, and each following generation, can receive the faith once delivered.

Abandon the NHCF?

Maybe, but not totally. What a church could do is to revise the NHCF to suit its own particular positions—for the sake of clarity. Or a church could write its very own confession, which is not uncommon. Or to save work, and to align themselves with a historically traceable confession, they could choose one of the London Confessions or the Philadelphia Confession. No doubt, even those historic documents may need tweaking because of the universal church position they hold, as well as other issues. What I mean to say is that if a church believes a particular thing, they should make every effort to state that position plainly.

A pet peeve of mine:

Some churches have a statement of faith on their website that is so general that one could be a Unitarian, a Pentecostal or even a Mormon and think “Here is a Church for me!” But if you contact the church for an official statement, you will typically find something way more detailed and helpful! If you

have a website, and you choose to put your statement of faith there, put the real thing on there! In this day and age, when people are moving to, or looking for, a new church, the serious minded skip the programs a church has and look at the doctrinal statement! If it is a watered down, “all things to all men” sort of thing, they just “x” that screen and on to the next listing on google!

What does the NHCF say?

Pastor Brown did however clearly state three times that repentance and faith is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit, and that regeneration precedes faith! And that is the section of the NHCF that people who use it do not understand or recognize as a distinctive of the doctrines of grace! But Brown put it there in ‘living color’:

7. Of grace in Regeneration. [We believe] That in order to be saved, we must be regenerated or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; and is effected in a manner above our comprehension or calculation, by the power of the Holy Spirit, [in connection with divine truth,] so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; and that its proper evidence is found in the holy fruit which we bring forth to the glory of God.

8. Of Repentance and Faith. [This article added in 1853.] We believe that repentance and Faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King, and relying on him alone as the only and all sufficient Saviour.

9. Of God’s Purpose of Grace. [We believe] That Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which he [graciously] regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God’s sovereign goodness, being infinitely [free,] wise, holy and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, [love,] prayer, praise, trust in God,

and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it is ascertained by its effects in all who [truly] believe the gospel; [that it] is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves, demands and deserves our utmost diligence.

The issue of regeneration, or quickening, preceding faith is not new to us who believe that “salvation is of the Lord.” But to those who do not, it is very new and very misunderstood. I remember the first time I heard a minister say that being born again was not what you did when you believed on Christ, but that being born again was what caused you to believe on Christ—those words rang a bell in my mind. So I went and read John 3 and I could see that yes, being born again was the source of my desire for and faith in Christ. Now the term being born again was new to me in that usage of its preceding faith, but the teaching was not new. All my life, my Father (my first and best pastor) preached and taught that you could not just call out to Christ at any time, or anywhere, based on your whim of want to. He said, “The Spirit of God has to come and reveal to you your state and need of Christ. A sense of Conviction for sin and a repentant heart is needed for true salvation.” Oh yes, the term born again being used to describe something that preceded faith was new to me, but not the truth of regeneration coming before faith.

I remembered the little statement of faith that was made when I graduated from college. They said, “Do you believe that Repentance and Faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God? If you do, please stand!” (They said other stuff, too.) I stood, but I did not know then what they were saying in that statement! I am not sure that even the college leaders understood that vital Gospel truth!

That truth is not understood by the vast majority of Churches that use and subscribe to the NHCF. I have written to the heads of Fellowships and Associations to ask if, based on articles of faith like this from the Baptist Bible Fellowship in Springfield: **XII. Of Repentance And Faith** “We believe that Repentance and Faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our

souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby, being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Savior.”

This came from the Global Independent Baptist Fellowship here in Oklahoma City: “We believe repentance and faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in the soul of man by the quickening Holy Spirit of God; that being deeply convicted of his own guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, man must turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy, while at the same time heartily believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, openly confessing Him as the only true and all-sufficient Saviour.”

And this is from First Baptist Church of Lawton “God’s Purpose of Grace: Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ and sanctified by His Spirit will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end.” *This is almost an exact quotation of the NHCF article 7!*

Consider this from the General Association of Regular Baptists, article VIII. Salvation - We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith.

And this newer statement from Blessed Hope Baptist College, where I attended school: 5. Repentance – We believe repentance is necessary for the salvation of sinners as a work of grace upon the heart by the Spirit of God.

Finally, from what used to be called the Piedmont Bible College, now Piedmont International University, in North Carolina: Under the Way Of Salvation: Since the natural man is dead in trespasses and sins, at enmity against God, and blinded by sin and Satan to his own condition, it is only through the operation of the Holy Spirit using the Word that man is brought to repentance and faith.

There you have a cross section of Doctrinal statements from Churches, Associations and Colleges that all have language supporting the view of Regeneration preceding faith! But they do not really teach that. Consider the words of the Lord Jesus in John 3:1-13 & 19-21:

{1} *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:*
 {2} *The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.* {3} *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* {4} *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* {5} *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* {6} *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* {7} *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.* {8} *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* {9} *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?*

Christ the Lord describes to Nicodemus the new birth. It should be noted that Nicodemus does not ask about the new birth, but that must have been on his heart because Christ brings it up. Jesus knew what he needed to hear. These words by Christ on the New Birth put it totally out of the sinners hands! No one but God has anything to do with this birth. Nicodemus, in his human mind, one that has been steeped in a religion of *do*, hears that in Christ's religion: you cannot *do* anything, and you definitely cannot cause yourself to be born again!

{10} *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?* {11} *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.* {12} *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?* {13} *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he*

that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Here the Lord says that this birth is not to be comprehended by man's mental ability. It is not in man to discern the new birth.

{19} *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* {20} *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.* {21} *But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

And here again, fallen man's reaction to the light of the gospel is to hate the light and to avoid it because he knows his deeds are evil! If he enters the light, then his deeds/works will be revealed to be EVIL! Is it not obvious that men because of their natural, normal state will not come to the light? How then will they come? What causes them to go against their nature and come to Christ? It takes the New Birth. The New Birth gives sinners eyes to see and the desire to enter the Kingdom of God through Christ. Consider all the texts that refer to hungering and thirsting for righteousness, and thirsting for the living water! Even Christ in John 6 says that eating him is eternal life. These are all metaphoric for the result of the new birth. The new birth puts a desire within you for Christ and His Salvation.

Brothers, let us lift the banner of the scriptural new birth. We ought to examine the old confessions and teach them, correct them where needed, and lead the Churches of Christ in the old paths.

~ *By God's grace, Terry Basham, II*

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KEENER THOUGHTS *from December 2012*

The Greatest of These is Love

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing ... And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. (1 Corinthians 13:1-2, 13)

All of us, as Gospel preachers, know that this word charity comes from the Greek word agape and speaks of love in practice or deed. We also know that Paul says it is to be rated in the highest place. But how quickly Satan can persuade us to neglect it for "higher things." After all, if we are standing for truth, what does it matter if we are standing on someone's heart? We would never hesitate to kick a brother who errs, because we might be perceived as compromising. Entering into extended gossip about a brother who has stumbled is only standing against sin.

I am afraid the Lord could rightly say of most of us, most of the time, You do not "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." You rather bless your friends and berate all who dare to disagree with you. You put away a friend like an old shoe if he becomes an embarrassment to you, disagrees with you, or becomes a drawback to your advancement among the ecclesiastical powers around you. I fear that in many of our pulpits today I hear more contempt than compassion, more self-promotion than self-control, more self-exaltation than self-examination, and more criticism than concern. I may have overstated this, but we certainly do not esteem every man better than ourselves, as Paul instructs us. Am I wrong to say that we love self more than we love most of our brethren, even those in the ministry? With such contempt for those weak brethren who try to preach the Gospel, how can we claim a deep compassion for the lost and overtly wicked sinners around us. Is it any wonder that our evangelistic efforts are now so often exercises in futility?

Let us remember that, among all the things, we need from God the greatest of these is charity. Let us take time to check our love frequently.

LIGHT IN THE CLOUD

By C. H. Spurgeon

From *Gleanings Among the Sheaves*

“The Lord turned the captivity of Job.” So, then, our longest sorrows have a close, and there is a bottom to the profoundest depths of our misery. Our winters shall not frown forever; summer shall soon smile. The tide shall not eternally ebb out; the floods must retrace their march. The night shall not hang its darkness forever over our souls; the sun shall yet arise with healing beneath its wings. “The Lord turned the captivity of Job.” Thus, too, our sorrows shall have an end when God has gotten His end in them, The ends in the case of Job were these, that Satan might be defeated, foiled with his own weapons, blasted in his hopes when he had everything his own way. God, at Satan’s challenge, had stretched forth His hand and touched Job in his bone and in his flesh; and yet the tempter could not prevail against him, but received his rebuff in those conquering words, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” When Satan is defeated, then shall the battle

cease. The Lord aimed also at the trial of Job’s faith. Many weights were hung upon this palm tree, but it still grew uprightly. The fire had been fierce, yet the gold was undiminished; only the dross was consumed. Another purpose the Lord had was His own glory. And truly He was glorified abundantly. God hath gotten unto His great name and His wise counsels, eternal renown, through that grace by which He supported His poor afflicted servant under the heaviest troubles which ever fell to the lot of man. God had another end, and that also was served. Job had been sanctified by his afflictions. His spirit was mellowed, and any self-justification which lurked within was fairly driven out. And now that God’s gracious designs are answered, He removes the rod; He takes the melted silver from the midst of the glowing coals. God does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men for nought, and He shows this by the fact He never afflicts them longer than there is a need for it. He never suffers them to be one moment longer in the furnace than is absolutely requisite to serve the purposes of His wisdom and of

His love. “The Lord turned the captivity of Job. Despair not, then, afflicted believer; He that turned the captivity of Job can turn your captivity as the streams in the south. He shall make your vineyard again to blossom and your field to yield her fruit. You shall again come forth with those that make merry, and once more shall the song of gladness be on your lip. Let not Despair rivet his cruel fetters about your soul. Hope yet, for there is hope concerning this matter. Trust still, for there is ground of confidence. He shall bring you up again rejoicing, out of captivity, and you shall yet sing to His praise, “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.”

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