

A PROBLEM PROPOSED FOR BAPTIST PREACHERS

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(1904-1969)

There is no logical intermediate between Calvinism and Arminianism that is capable of combining both systems. It is impossible to say: (a) That a man is both totally and partially depraved. (b) That election is both conditional and unconditional. (c) That regenerating grace is both irresistible and resistible. (d) That redemption is both limited and unlimited. (e) That perseverance is both certain and uncertain. Nor can there be a modification of one by the other. One or the other of the above mentioned points must overcome the other. It is impossible to blend the two, which is a requisite in order to a modification. History records such efforts in the past; but despite the efforts the two will not mix, nor can they walk together in peace. Nor can those holding either system force the other to their own view.

The endeavor by the Arminians in Holland, in the 17th Century, to modify the Belgic Calvinistic Creed (the chief Spirit of which was Calvin) and of the Calvinists to suppress the Arminian creed by the Civil power, resulted in one of the most bitter conflicts in Church history, and filled both parties with an unchristian spirit. Had there been no union of Church and State at that time, neither of these two theological divisions would have interfered, by civil and military power, with the doctrine and practice of the other and mutual respect would have characterized both. Whenever the endeavor is made to mix the unmixable and to fuse two types of theology that exclude each other, hypocrisy and the pretence of being what one is not are liable to prevail. A Calvinist is a dishonest disorganizer if he poses as an Arminian, and so is an Arminian if he pretends to be a Calvinist.

The above-mentioned facts (and they are facts) pose a tremendous problem for Baptist preachers. Whichever system of theology (of the two) be correct, or the nearest correct, is not my concern as I -thus write. Here is the problem: Every confession of Faith of Baptists, all standard books on theology written by Baptists, all doctrinal statements of our schools, without (I am informed) exception; confess, proclaim and expound the great Calvinistic system. At the same time, a Calvinist is not acceptable in Baptist pulpits for the most part.

In both message and method Baptists are more and more becoming Arminian. My contention is this: In order to be honest, new statements of belief, new confessions of faith, new doctrinal standards for schools ought to be formulated and published. Baptists ought frankly to be told by their pastors and leaders that our forefathers were wrong and

that what Baptists used to believe is just not so. The trouble today is that a present-day Baptist has nowhere to find out what a Baptist believes as to doctrine. If he goes to the books of theology or the old confessions of faith, he soon is informed that they are no longer held to be true.

To add to the dilemma, suppose by accident (?) a Calvinist comes along and preaches what he believes the Bible teaches, a fight is started at once. The Calvinist is branded as a disturber and a Non-Baptist. I know, from twenty-five years of holding meetings for Arminian Baptist preachers, whereof I speak.

Is it not time, in all honesty, for Baptist preachers to return to the old paths doctrinally or formulate new statements of Faith? I respect, honesty demands one or the other of these.

It is high time that preachers cease bragging about not being theologians. It is not a matter to brag about. This generation knows little of the character of the true God, nor of the condition and danger of mankind. We need some preachers who believe something, not just some cheerleaders for a program.

I see no discernible hope that Baptist leaders will either come back to the old beliefs or honestly frame new doctrinal beliefs, but as for me I am a Baptist who still believes in the doctrines and Christ of Sovereign Grace. If I could, I would call my brethren back to them.

We want no new convention or denominations, but we will not apologize for, in however poor way we are able, preaching the grand old truth that Whitfield and Spurgeon preached. If not in Baptist Churches now constituted, we will preach them in tents and chapels and new Churches. Thus . . . we earnestly solicit the prayers . . . of every preacher who believes in the old truths once held by and preached by Baptists and the many hundreds of God's dear sheep who hold membership in an Arminian Baptist Church, who long to hear the old truth preached again! We say that such ought to help support our small beginning and that without apology. We ought to support and bid Godspeed the preaching of what we believe to be the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

the late Evangelist Rolfe Barnard