

A NEW BAPTIST COVENANT?



Jimmy Carter is the driving force behind the move to unite Baptists. Here he is seen at the opening press conference before the meeting in Atlanta, Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 2008

New Baptist Covenant Celebration: A Celebration of Liberalism

By David Cloud

The New Baptist Covenant Celebration convened January 30 to February 1 in Atlanta, Georgia, attended by 10-12,000 people. The conference was sponsored by more than 30 Baptist groups and institutions, including the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; American Baptist Churches USA; Baptist General Conventions of Texas, Missouri, and Virginia; Baptist World Alliance; Baptist Union of Western Canada; Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec; Canadian Baptist Ministries; Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches; Fellowship of Baptist Educators; General

Association of General Baptists; Mainstream Baptist Network; National Baptist Convention of America; National Baptist Convention USA; National Missionary Baptist Conference USA and Canada; North American Baptist Fellowship; Progressive Baptist National Convention; Texas Baptists Committed; Virginia Baptists Committed; Baylor University; and Mercer University.

Unlike the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, whereby God puts His laws into men's hearts so that they have a deep love for His

truth (Hebrews 10:16; Ezekiel 36:27), the new Baptist covenant is an agreement to ignore the doctrine of God's Word while uniting around an ill-defined "gospel."

In his keynote address on the first night of the conference, Jimmy Carter explained that he has been trying to bring unity among Baptists for many years and gave the history of the New Baptist Covenant as follows:

"This convocation is the culmination of several earlier efforts that began

several years ago. There were meetings at the Carter Center in the 1990s, of both what I call traditional and more conservative Southern Baptist leaders. The group included at least seven past and future presidents of the SBC [including Tom Elliff and Paige Patterson]. And we issued at the conclusion of those sessions a unanimous statement. Listen to this exciting excerpt. ‘We receive the Holy Scripture as inspired and authoritative, agreeing that the criteria by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ. We believe in the principle of local church autonomy, and our faith continues to be based on the historical Baptist principles of soul covenantancy, priesthood of believers, separation of church and state, religious freedom, compassion for unbelievers, and respect for all persons as inherently equal before God.’ That was more than 10 years ago. We thought at that time that this common commitment would be adequate and that maybe finally ... but tragically the tentative movement toward harmony was short lived and the hope of further moves toward reconciliation remained somewhat dormant until almost exactly two years ago. The decision was made by some of the folks on the stage and others to try to bring traditional Baptists together to discuss common beliefs and common commitments. Dr. Bill Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention USA; Dr. William Underwood, president of Mercer University; Jimmy Allen, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention; David Goatley, president of the North American Baptist Fellowship; Tyron Pitts, general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention. We met several times to explore new opportunities for fellowship and cooperation. Our group affirmed a common desire among many different kinds of Baptists to promote a positive, non-exclusive program of sharing the gospel of Christ, with an emphasis on freedom and practical ways to fulfill our duties as Christians. There was a

unanimous commitment to traditional Baptist values and the implications for public and private morality, promotion of religious liberty and also religious diversity. Last January, in this town, more than 80 participants representing, I think, more than 30 different groups, announced plans for this convocation based on the overall theme of unity in Christ.”

Thus, Carter is the main personality behind the New Baptist Covenant, and it is a fulfillment of his dream to unite Baptists.

UNITY, UNITY, UNITY

“Unity in Christ” was the major focus. The original Baptist leaders who joined with Jimmy Carter in 2006 and 2007 “were unanimous in their desire to TRANSCEND THEIR DIFFERENCES ... and seek common purpose” (“A New Baptist Covenant History”).

In his keynote address on Wednesday night, Jimmy Carter said, “There will be no criticism of others--let me say again--no criticism of others or exclusion of any Christians who would seek to join this cause.”

In his message on the opening night, Bill Shaw said: “This night and these days, we do a bold and glorious thing: We attempt to express the oneness which was our Lord’s desire for his people.”

“There will be no criticism of others--let me say again--no criticism of others or exclusion of any Christians who would seek to join this cause.” Jimmy Carter

Campolo the Chameleon

Tony Campolo knows how to play to his audience. Depending on where he’s speaking, he can sound like an old-time fundamentalist or quickly change colors and teach the most outrageous heresies and false doctrines.



Shaw was referring to John 17:21, which is not a commandment to create an ecumenical unity but a prayer for the miraculous spiritual unity that exists among those who are born again. John 17:21 is not something man is supposed to do, but is something that God has already done. Those who are saved are born into God's family and become members of Christ's very body. The unity of John 17:21 cannot be the type of unity that was preached at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration, because John 17 unity is a unity of those who love the truth and keep God's Word (John 17:6, 8, 17).

In the opening press conference, William Underwood of Mercer University said, "Our differences should not be allowed to divide us." He said the convocation is the fulfillment of a prophecy given by Martin Luther King, Jr., 45 years ago, that the "the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners would be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." Underwood said:

"After generations of putting up walls between us--separation, division by geography, by theology, but most of all division by race--a new day is dawning. Today, in this place, Baptists gather from the North and the South; from Canada, Mexico, the United States and around the world; white, black and brown; conservative, moderate and progressive. Today, we all sit down together at the table of Christian brotherhood and sisterhood."

The Southern Baptist Convention did not participate in the New Baptist Covenant, but Jimmy Carter said that he attempted to get them on board and he still hopes that they will join hands at some point. At the opening press conference, Carter said that he has a good personal relationship with Southern Baptist president Frank Page and that he contacted him directly about the meeting. Carter said, "I will be [continue to be] reaching out to them personally. It is my hope and prayer that we can cooperate."

UNITY IN LIBERALISM

In reality, the New Baptist Covenant's unity is a unity in liberalism and there is no place or love for a strong biblical stand, which they mislabel "legalism" and "partisan politics."

Jimmy Carter said that it is impossible to agree on doctrines and issues and we should unite rather on the "gospel," but the gospel was never defined. In his message on the opening night, Carter said:

"[There is] nothing wrong in believing in fundamentals, the most important of which is the gospel message, we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Under this

simple but profound banner we Christians must stand united."

That "banner" is doctrinally vague enough to unite every sort of "Christian," including Roman Catholics and Mormons and Modernists.

Nothing was said about the infallible Scriptures without which we have no certain gospel. Nothing was said about the virgin birth, the substitutionary blood atonement, the bodily resurrection, repentance as a necessity for salvation, etc. Grace was not defined nor was faith.

Carter acknowledged that there are many things that divide Baptists. He mentioned the issues of legalized abortion, homosexuality, women church leaders, and creationism vs. evolution, and he said those issues are like "eating meat offered to idols." In other words, they are peripheral and non-essential and of no great consequence.

What is of great consequence to Jimmy Carter and the New Baptist Covenant is unity and "social-justice" work.

In fact, the leaders and participating organizations of the New Baptist Covenant are very liberal.



At a Special Interest Section on the theme "Can We All Get Along?" Pastor Gerald Durley of Providence Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta, said that Baptists need to get over their desire to convert everyone to faith in Christ and appreciate the beauty of religions like Islam. He said that John 14:6 doesn't necessarily mean that Jesus is the only way to salvation and compared the various religions to a vegetable soup that is flavorful because of its diversity ("Confusion Concerning Kindness," Baptist Press, Feb. 4, 2008).

Novelist JOHN GRISHAM, who spoke on the final night of the conference, exposed his theological liberalism by

criticizing the Baptist church that he grew up in because it “taught that the Bible is the infallible, inerrant Word of God - every word is divinely inspired and it is to be read literally.”

JIMMY CARTER believes Mormons are Christians and loves modernistic theologians such as Barth and Brunner who denied the infallible inspiration of Holy Scripture and many other cardinal doctrines. After his election to the U.S. presidency, Carter appointed pro-abortion activist Sarah Weddington to the position of assistant to the president. Weddington was lead attorney in the 1973 abortion case, *Roe v. Wade*, which resulted in legalization of abortion in America and the murder of millions of unborn babies. In 1992, Carter agreed to serve as the honorary co-chair of the Human Rights Campaign, a homosexual advocacy group. In January 2004, after Georgia public school superintendent Kathy Cox ordered the word “evolution” to be removed from its science textbooks, Carter entered the fray and won the day for evolution (“Another Attempt to Deny Evolution,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Feb. 12, 2004).



Adam Garner

The cover of the Lent 1977 *Lutheran Forum* featured Carter on the cover with his “Lutheran mentors,” the very liberal Paul Tillich, Soren Kierkegaard, and Reinhold Niebuhr. Tillich called the Christmas story a “legend” in the December 1977 issue of *The Lutheran*. Tillich rejected Christ’s divinity, virgin birth, and bodily resurrection. On his visits to India in 1989, Carter accepted a Hindu tika on his forehead, and in 1990 he said that the principles of Christ are “not incompatible with the principles of other faiths” (*Christian Century*, June 6, 1990). In 1998, Carter told the press: “There are some elements of harshness and massive destruction [in the Old Testament] where every person in a village is killed, all the cattle are killed, carrying out the orders of God. They cause us concern” (*Huntsville Times*, Dec. 21, 1998). Liberals love a God of their own invention and reject the God of the Bible, who is a God of holiness and judgment as well as a God of love.

In a 1997 teleconference interview with religion writers from across the nation, Carter said that Mormons are Christians and they should not be the targets of evangelism, which he mislabeled “proselytizing” (“Are Mormons Christians,” *Deseret News*, Nov. 15, 1997). Carter said that SBC leaders are wrong in characterizing Mormons as non-Christians and testified that “the people in my own local church have no

interest in trying to condemn Mormons or trying to convert Mormons to be good old Baptists like me.”

During his presidency, Carter was even rebuked for his liberalism by Adrian Rogers, then-president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Carter said that Rogers, on a visit to the White House, told him: “Mr. President, I hope you will give up your secular humanism and return to Christianity” (Religious News Service report, cited from *Sword of the Lord*, July 16, 1993).

BILL CLINTON, who spoke on the final night of the New Baptist Covenant Celebration, believes that God is at work in voodoo. In his autobiography, *My Life*, Clinton described a visit to Haiti where he witnessed a spirit-possessed voodoo priestess bite off the head of a live chicken before “the spirits left and those who had been possessed fell to the ground.” Clinton wrote:

“Haitians’ understanding of how God is manifest in our lives is very different from that of most Christians, Jews, or Muslims, but their documented experiences certainly prove the old adage that the Lord works in mysterious ways.”

MERCER UNIVERSITY, a proud sponsor of the New Baptist Covenant Celebration, is a hotbed of theological modernism. Kirby Godsey, who was president of Mercer from 1979 to 2006 (when he was replaced by William Underwood, one of the leaders of the New Baptist Covenant), denies practically every doctrine of the Christian faith. In the book *When We Talk about God ... Let’s Be Honest* (Smyth & Helwys), which was displayed for sale at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration, Godsey claims that “the notion that God is the all powerful, the high and mighty principal of heaven and earth should be laid aside.” We interviewed a young man named Adam Garner who is pursuing his doctor of divinity at Mercer University and who was manning the Mercer booth at the conference, and he told us that he believes that no doctrinal issue whatsoever should divide Christians as far as limiting their ability to work together in unity, and that includes the virgin birth and divinity of Christ. He refused to answer when asked if he believes that those who die without faith in Christ will go to an eternal fiery hell.

As for dealing with false teachers, Adam said:

“Instead of going around stomping out false prophets I do my job to be a true prophet of my Christ and allow those folks and the Spirit to help them to discern what is the proper worth and the false worth.”

Thus, this conference stands in direct disobedience to Jesus Christ, who commanded us to beware of false prophets

(Matthew 7:15-17) and it stands in direct opposition to the apostles, who stood against false teachers with great boldness and conviction. See, for example, Acts 13:8-12; 20:28-31; Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 1:6-9; Philippians 3:17-21; Colossians 2:8, 18-23; 1 Timothy 1:5-7, 19-20; 4:1-3; 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:16-18; 3:13; 4:14; Titus 1:9-16; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-3; Jude 3-16.

The **COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP** is another prominent sponsoring organization of the New Baptist Covenant. The CBF's 2001 conference in Atlanta featured prayers to "Mother God." At their annual breakfast that year, the leaders of the Baptist Women in Ministry (BWIM, an auxiliary of the CBF), stated their discomfort at calling God "Father," "Lord," and "King." Sally Burgess, the BWIM treasurer, said she believed that more Southern Baptist women would be ordained to the pastorate "because I believe God is good, and She knows what She's doing" ("Women Celebrate 'Mother God' as Moderate Baptists Gather," *Religion Today*, July 2, 2001). In 2000, CBF coordinator Daniel Vestal told the press that there are congregations that support the CBF that ordain homosexuals, and that he does not want anyone to leave over this issue ("CBF 'welcoming but not affirming' of homosexuals," Associated Baptist Press, Oct. 23, 2000). CBF council member Dixie Lee Petrey said, "I don't think we should limit the Spirit of God in the way that it moves. Do we really want to sit here and say God's Spirit cannot call a homosexual to follow God's call?" CBF council member Bob Setzer said, "We're not saying that God cannot call a homosexual, even a practicing homosexual." I talked with Flo Shepley at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration who works in the CBF main office, and she said that she was never asked whether or not she was born again at any point during her application process.

The **BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE** (BWA) is another of the partner organizations of the New Baptist Covenant. As far back as the 1930s, the Alliance was a hotbed of modernism. When J. Frank Norris led Temple Baptist Church of Detroit, Michigan, to withdraw from the BWA in 1935, he cited its "modernistic dominated leadership" as a reason (*The F. Frank Norris I Have Known for 34 Years*, p. 311). Prior to that, A.C. Dixon had tried to have a resolution passed in the BWA affirming "five fundamental verities of the faith," including the verbal inspiration of Scripture and the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, but an apostate majority of the BWA representatives voted down this simple resolution.

Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke at a Baptist World Alliance annual conference in 1988. Tutu is a rank liberal who in February 1996 called for the ordination of homosexual priests. Consider the following quotes by Tutu that expose his unbelieving heart:

"Some people thought there was something odd about Jesus' birth... It may be that Jesus was an illegitimate son" (Desmond Tutu, *Cape Times*, October 24, 1980).

"The Holy Spirit is not limited to the Christian Church. For example, Mahatma Gandhi, who is a Hindu ... The Holy Spirit shines through him" (Desmond Tutu, St. Alban's Cathedral, Pretoria, South Africa, November 23, 1978).

Brutal Marxist dictator Fidel Castro, who has persecuted and restricted the churches of Jesus Christ in Cuba for decades, was a speaker at the Baptist World Alliance meeting in July 2000.

In January 2001, a delegation from the Baptist World Alliance met at the Vatican with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity to continue their dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church.

On January 24, 2002, Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, joined hands with Pope John Paul II at the third Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi, Italy. This ecumenical pagan prayer gathering featured some 200 religious leaders, including representatives of such "Christian" denominations as Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Reformed, Baptist, Lutheran, Mormon, Methodist, Quaker, Pentecostal, Mennonite, as well as representatives of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Bahai, Confucianism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Tenrikyo (Japan), and members of African and North American "traditional religions." That the general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance would participate in such a thing is irrefutable evidence of his apostasy.

The **AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA** is another sponsoring organization of the New Baptist Covenant. As early as 1910 Baptist leader William B. Riley testified that the denomination had been "surrendered into the hands of the Higher Critics" (George Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism*). In 1932 and 1947, many pastors left the Northern Baptist Convention (the predecessor to the American Baptist Churches USA) in protest of its modernism and formed the General Association of Regular Baptists and the Conservative Baptist Association of America.

The American Baptist Churches USA has produced some of the most notorious, blasphemous heretics of the 20th century.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of Riverside Church in New York City*, denied practically every doctrine of the Christian faith. In 1945, Fosdick wrote the following to an individual who inquired about his beliefs: "Of course I do not believe in the virgin birth or in that old-fashioned substitutionary

doctrine of the atonement, and I know of no intelligent person who does.” Yet when an attempt was made by some to disassociate the convention from that church in 1926, the delegates, by a margin of three to one, voted to remain in fellowship with this blasphemous man and his congregation. (* James Forbes, the current very liberal pastor of Riverside Church, was one of the speakers at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration.)

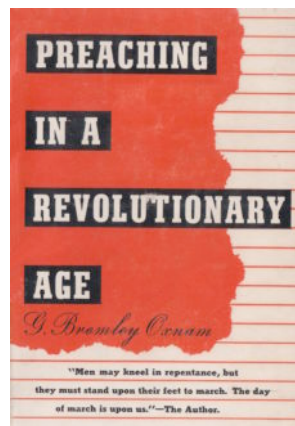
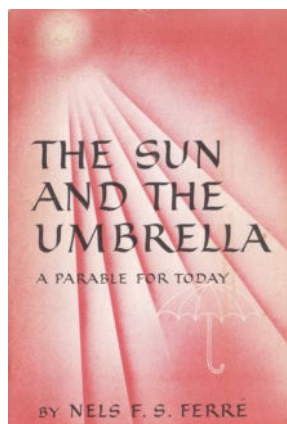
In his book *In Him Is Life*, Robert Beaven, president of the Chicago Baptist Missionary Training School, denied that Jesus Christ is God. This was the man chiefly responsible for the education of their missionaries in those days.

The 1950 Baptist Convention meeting featured blasphemous modernist G. Bromley Oxnam, who called the God of the Old Testament a “dirty bully” (Oxnam, *Preaching in a Revolutionary Age*, p. 72), because his unregenerate, rebellious mind would not accept the righteous judgment of God upon sin.

A.S. Hobart and Henry Vedder, professors at the American Baptist Crozer Seminary, denied the substitutionary blood atonement of Jesus Christ.

Norris Tibbets, former pastor of the Riverside Church, denied Christ’s bodily resurrection.

Nels F.S. Ferre, professor at Andover-Newton Theological School, denied the virgin birth, deity, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He claimed that the Old Testament taught an “outworn morality” (Ferre, *Pillars of Faith*, p. 95). He stated that “God differs from all men, including Jesus, in that His personality alone is eternal and the Creator of all other personalities” (Ferre, *The Christian Faith*, 1942, p. 102). He conjectured that Jesus might have been the son of a Roman soldier (Ferre, *Christian Understanding of God*, p. 186). He claimed that accepting the Bible as the infallible Word of God is idolatry (Ferre, *The Sun and the Umbrella*, p. 39).



G. Bromley Oxnam. Books like Oxnam’s *Preaching in a Revolutionary Age* and Ferre’s *The Sun and the Umbrella* brought the heresy and unbelief of modernism out into the open.

In the 1960s, William Hamilton of Colgate Rochester Divinity School (American Baptist) taught that God is dead. Hamilton was defended in 1966 by Colgate president Gene Bartlett. Eventually Hamilton dropped out of church entirely. An article in *Baptists Today*, February 2008, was titled “Theologian Who Heralded ‘Death of God’ Ponders His Own.” Copies of this issue of the magazine were available at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration. The article concluded, “He remains a Christian who doesn’t go to church. And faced with his own morality he doesn’t think much about God anymore, except when asked.”

The American Baptist Churches USA in 1968 stated that abortion “should be a matter of responsible personal decision.”

American Baptist (Harvard) professor Harvey Cox is a notorious modernist. He does not believe that followers of pagan religions are on their way to Hell. He was a speaker at the World Congress for the Synthesis of Science and Religion in India in 1986. The conference was organized by a Hindu organization.

The June 1991 issue of *WATCHword*, a women’s ministry paper of the American Baptist Churches, stated: “What I have come to love about Scripture is the fact that it is not inerrant. That it is not perfect. That it is not complete. That it does contradict itself...”

An ABC publication entitled “Oneness in Christ: American Baptists Are Ecumenical” leaves no doubt about their position. This publication was compiled and edited by the “Reverend” Martha Barr, former Assistant General Secretary and Ecumenical Officer of the ABC. “We American Baptists run the whole theological range--fundamentalists, conservative orthodox, liberal ... Maybe it is partly because American Baptists are so inclusive that we affirm that we are ecumenical. ... We do not have credal statements. We can worship and work with Episcopalian and Pentecostal, with Roman Catholic and Orthodox.”

Many American Baptist churches accept unrepentant homosexuals as members. Fifty-four ABC congregations are members of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, which encourages the acceptance of homosexuality



**Kathy Stayton, Council
Member with AWAB**

in Baptist churches. This Association “advocates for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons within Baptist communities of faith. The Pacific Southwest region of the ABC voted on May 11, 2006, to withdraw from the denomination because of the denomination’s acceptance of churches with lax policies on homosexuality (“Split among American Baptists,” Baptist Press, May 18).

The **ASSOCIATION OF WELCOMING AND AFFIRMING BAPTISTS (AWAB)**, though not official sponsors of the New Baptist Covenant Celebration, had a booth at the conference and thus promoted their agenda to the attendees, and the wife of Tony Campolo, one of the plenary speakers, is an outspoken supporter and a member of the AWAB council. The mission of the AWAB is “to create and support a community of churches, organizations and individuals committed to the inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in the full life and mission of Baptist churches.” We interviewed a council member of the AWAB, Kathy Stayton, and she told us that she does not believe that the first three chapters of Genesis are literal history, that marriage is a man-made institution, and that homosexual acts, even outside of “committed relationships,” are not sinful. She said that such things are entirely a private matter. She said, “I put no label on other people’s behaviors. I’m not going to ask any other heterosexual couple to tell me the last time you had sex with somebody who is not your partner.”

The Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists were distributing an article by Peggy Campolo entitled “Some Answers to the Most Common Questions about God’s GLBT [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered] Children” from the Summer 2000 edition of *The InSpiriter*. Campolo quotes James Forbes, one of the speakers at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration, as saying, “God has many children, and some of them are straight.” Campolo instructs homosexuals to “ask the Holy Spirit to give you a sense of God’s timing” about “coming out” of the closet! She says, “I can celebrate the committed monogamous partnerships of my gay brothers and lesbian sisters.” The AWAB also sold a 34-page booklet entitled “Jesus Loves Me This I Know: Stories of GLBT Christians.” In the introduction, Ken Pennings, Executive Director of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, said:

“Our hope in compiling the stories found in this little booklet is that the reader will ‘meet’ real live people who are dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ, who happen to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. These are stories of anguish and of joy, of giving in to and overcoming the fear that led to closeted lives.”

There is not a hint anywhere in the AWAB material that homosexuality is an abomination before God and a sin that must be repented of. They say that homosexuals should not only be welcomed in the sense of loving them and preaching the gospel to them, but also **AFFIRMED** in their homosexuality. To the contrary, the Bible teaches that homosexuality is a moral perversion which must be repented of by those who name the name of Christ. In Romans 1:24-28, homosexuality is called “uncleanness” (v. 24), “dishonour” (v. 24), “vile affections” (v. 26), “against nature” (v. 26), “unseemly” (v. 27), “error” (v. 27), “reprobate” (v. 28), and “not convenient” (v. 28). Paul said that some of the members of the church at Corinth had been homosexuals before their conversion, but this activity is spoken of in the past tense.

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such **WERE** some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

HYPOCRISY!

If the participants in the New Baptist Covenant believe so much in unity and don’t believe in disunity, it makes you wonder why so many of these same people, including Jimmy Carter and Al Gore, left the Southern Baptist Convention! In 2004, for example, Carter mailed a letter to 75,000 pastors stating, “I can no longer be associated with the Southern Baptist Convention.” He criticized the SBC’s “increasingly rigid creed.”

It sounds very hypocritical to me for a man to condemn separatism and say that unity should rule over all doctrinal considerations and then to separate from fellow Baptists because they are “conservative.”

Further, if the leaders of the New Baptist Covenant are so committed to not criticizing others, it makes you wonder why they have so often criticized biblical conservatives and fundamentalists of all stripes in such severe terms!

In 1986, Jimmy Carter said that the “fundamentalist” Jerry Falwell could “go to hell” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 12, 1986). In an interview with *GQ Magazine* in December 2005, Carter said: I define fundamentalism as a group of invariably male leaders who consider themselves superior to other believers. . . . It makes a great exhibition of rigidity and superiority and exclusion.” In 1997, Carter said that many of the leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention are “are trying to act as the Pharisees did” (“Are Mormons Christians,” *Deseret News*, Nov. 15, 1997).

Tony Campolo has also attacked fundamentalists in a harsh manner. At the National Council of Churches “Gathering” in May 1988, Campolo said those who stand firm on absolutes and strongly resist error are doing the devil’s work (*Foundation* magazine, June 1988). At the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s general assembly in June 2003, Campolo said that anyone who resists women pastors is an “instrument of the devil” and is committing sin.

It sounds very hypocritical to me to condemn fundamentalists for their “judgmentalism” and then to be judgmental and critical of them!

THE LIBERAL’S METHODOLOGY

While attending this meeting I was reminded of how deceptive liberalism is and how important it is to understand its methodology. Following are some of the liberal’s favorite tools.

The first instrument we will describe from the liberal’s toolbox is **CHANGING THE DEFINITIONS OF WORDS**. All of the speakers at the conference used this tool with great skill.

Consider Tony Campolo, for example. In my interview with him on Thursday afternoon, he said that he is a “conservative” on the issue of homosexuality. What he means is that he is not as “liberal” as his wife on this issue. She supports homosexual marriage, whereas he does not. But to label his position “conservative” is to abuse the term terribly! He believes that homosexuals are usually born that way, that it is not a “volitional” problem, and they should be allowed to join churches and be ordained as long as they remain “celibate,” but they do not have to renounce homosexuality as such.

When the Pacific Southwest region of the American Baptist Churches voted on May 11, 2006, to withdraw from the denomination over the issue of homosexuality, Campolo criticized them. He said that it “runs counter to the prayer of Christ that we might all be one people.” Campolo was referring to Christ’s high priestly prayer in John 17, but this prayer is for those who keep God’s Word (Jn. 17:6, 8) and are sanctified through the truth (Jn. 17:19). It is obvious that this is not a prayer for nominal Christians that so disregard the

Scriptures that they accept homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle.

To use the term “conservative” to identify such a position is the typical liberal strategy of redefining words.

Another example of changing the definition of words is Jimmy Carter’s use of the term “traditional” to refer to the New Baptist Covenant crowd. According to him, they are the traditionalists, even though they are the ones that have introduced heretical novelties such as homosexual church members and Christian abortion rights.

Another of the liberal’s tools is **HOLDING CONTRADICTIONARY STATEMENTS**. The speeches and interviews at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration were filled with contradictory statements, yet no one considered this problematic. Again we will use Tony Campolo as an example. In his interview with us he said that the gospel and the preaching of the new birth must be preeminent, that without this nothing else matters, that social-justice work without the preaching of the gospel and the new birth is insufficient. He said that it should not be taken for granted that even church leaders are born again. He sounded at this point like one of the old-fashioned fundamentalists he so often lampoons! Yet, such statements were contradicted by the very context in which he was speaking. There was no emphasis at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration on the new birth. There was no requirement that the speakers and participants have a biblical testimony of the new birth. Many of Campolo’s ecumenical friends have no such testimony. As we have shown, instead of an emphasis on the new birth, the New Baptist Covenant Celebration focused almost exclusively on social-justice work. The gospel was mentioned only in passing, and it was never defined in a biblical fashion.

In fact, in other contexts Campolo has stated that people can be saved apart from faith in Christ and the gospel. In a letter to Jerry Falwell that was printed in the *National Liberty Journal*, August 9, 1999, Campolo stood by his earlier statement on *The Charlie Rose Show*, “I am not convinced that Jesus only lives in Christians.” In an interview in the late 1990s with Bill Moyers broadcast on MSNBC, Campolo was asked whether evangelicals should try to convert Jews. He replied:

“I am not about to pronounce who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. That is not within the realm of any of us. We are not here to declare who is out and who is in. All we are here to say is what is meaningful in our own lives, what has been significant in our own personal experience with God. I have come to know God through Jesus Christ. He is the only way that I know God. And so I preach Jesus, and I not about to make judgments about my Jewish brothers and my

Muslim brothers and sisters. I'm just not about to make those kinds of statements. I think we ought to leave judgments up to God and we ought to call people to obedient faith in their own traditions, even as we faithfully preach out own faith to others. I learn about Jesus from other religions. They speak to me about Christ, as well" (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4117713232348817752>).

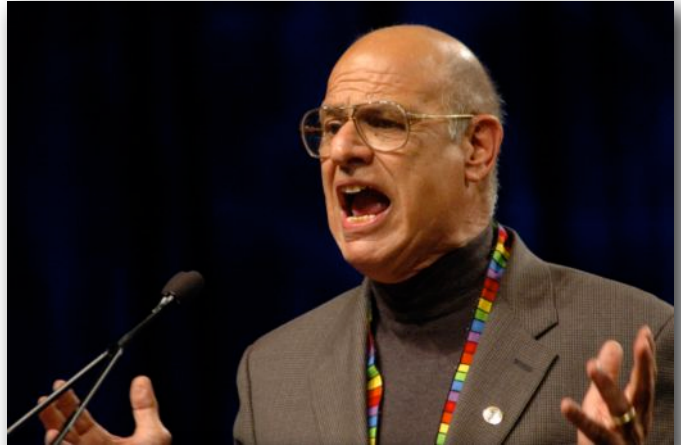
In an interview with Shane Claiborne in 2005, Campolo said:

"We don't have to give up trying to convert each other. What we have to do is show respect to one another. And to speak to each other with a sense that even if people don't convert, they are God's people, God loves them, and we do not make the judgment of who is going to heaven and who is going to hell. ... Those who write off Islamic people are making a serious mistake. ... I don't think you have to compromise as a Christian the belief that Jesus is the only Savior but what I do think we have to say is that the grace of God extends way beyond the limitations of my religious group. Our Muslim brothers and sisters can say Islam is the only true faith but we are not convinced that only Muslims enjoy salvation. I contend that there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ, but I am not convinced that the grace of God does not go further than the Christian community" ("On Evangelicals and Interfaith Cooperation," *Crosscurrents*, Spring 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2096/is_1_55/ai_n13798048).

Thus, on the one hand Campolo says the preaching the gospel and being born again is the most important thing in the Christian ministry and that it must never be taken for granted or reduced in priority, but on the other hand he says that people might very well be saved apart from faith in Christ! What an incredible contradiction!

Elsewhere in our interview Campolo said that he believes in the imminency of the return of Christ and believes that this means there must be an urgency about reaching the unsaved. He said we should work as if Christ would not return for a thousand years but we should be ready as if he could return at "any moment." Yet, Campolo has often criticized the doctrine of the imminent Rapture. In his book *The Kingdom of God Is a Party*, he lampooned the "doomsayers" who "preached the fundamentalist gospel" and leaned "on their Scofield Bibles." Speaking at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's annual meeting in June 2003, Campolo said the theology underlying the *Left Behind* series is "false theology and unbiblical to the core." In the same sermon he called dispensationalism "a weird little form of fundamentalism that started like a hundred fifty years ago." He also said, "That whole sense of the rapture, which may occur at any moment, is used as a device

to oppose engagement with the principalities, the powers, the political and economic structures of our age" ("Opposition to women preachers evidence of demonic influence," Baptist Press, June 27, 2003).



"I learn about Jesus from other religions. They speak to me about Christ, as well."

Tony Campolo

Thus, on the one hand Campolo says he believes in the imminency of the return of Christ and that this means there must be an urgency about winning souls, while on the other hand he mocks the doctrine of an imminent Rapture and says that it hinders social-justice work. What incredible contradiction!

After the interview with Campolo was completed, I felt like saying, "There must be two Tony Campolos; I want to talk now with the OTHER one," because what he said in our interview contradicted in so many ways what he has plainly stated in his books and in other interviews. Billy Graham has been described as "Mr. Facing Both Ways," and that is an apt description of the leaders of the New Baptist Covenant Celebration.

A third instrument in the liberal's toolbox is **TAKING SCRIPTURE OUT OF CONTEXT**. Bible verses were continually taken out of context during the conference in an attempt to find Scriptural support for their agenda. Jimmy Carter even had the audacity to quote 1 Corinthians 1:10 and said it applied to the need for Christian unity.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

In fact, this verse defines true Christian unity as believing “the same thing,” which is contrary to the ecumenical “unity in diversity” philosophy that was promoted at the Atlanta meeting.

True Christian unity is experienced when born again believers are committed together to the same biblical faith. See also the following Scriptures:

“That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6).

“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27).

Biblical unity requires total commitment to the one apostolic faith. It is unscriptural to think that only a few “cardinal” Bible doctrines are crucial while other New Testament teachings and practices are tertiary and can be ignored for the

sake of unity. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to keep every aspect of biblical truth “without spot” until the return of Christ (1 Timothy 6:14). This refers to the details of the Word of God. Paul gave the example of preaching the WHOLE counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

It is impossible to stand unequivocally for New Testament truth in all its aspects and to be ecumenical at the same time. As one wise pastor observed, we will either limit our message or we will limit our fellowship. The choice is clear. If one is faithful to the New Testament faith, it is impossible to have a wide fellowship, and if one is committed to a wide fellowship he must limit his message, but this is to disobey God’s Word.

A fourth instrument in the liberal’s toolbox is **AVOIDING DIRECT ANSWERS TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONS**. We encountered this repeatedly in our interviews. When put on the spot about their heresies, they retreat into a defensive mode and refuse to give a clear answer to simple and very basic questions. When, for example, the representative for Mercer University was asked if he believed in Universalism, instead of answering the question he asked for clarification and even when clarification was given he refused to answer. When asked if he believed that those who die without faith in Christ are damned in an eternal hell, he said that no simple answer could be given. When, for example, various representatives were asked if Christians should ignore Bible doctrine for the sake of unity, they refused to give any sort of direct answer.



The front row of the Thursday night meeting consisted of (l-r) Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, and representatives of the National Council of Churches, the Methodist Church, Atlanta’s Islamic community, the Presbyterian Church, the Jewish Synagogue, the Roman Catholic Church. At the far right is the far left former head of the Baptist World Alliance, David Kim.

They didn't want to be seen as ignoring Bible doctrine, but they don't believe doctrine should ever divide, and to hide this dilemma they just ignore it.

A fifth and final instrument in the liberal's toolbox that we want to mention is **AVOIDING TERMS THAT IDENTIFY THEIR ERROR AND REPLACING THEM WITH SOFTER TERMS**. For example, the almost meaningless term "moderate" is their preferred name for theological liberalism. It is a use of semantics to hide their error.

It is important to understand that when dealing with liberalism, things are often not as they appear and one must learn to go beyond the surface of the matter in order to find the truth and avoid being deceived.

DUAL ASSOCIATION WITH THE COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP AND THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

The New Baptist Covenant Celebration reminded me that the Southern Baptist Convention is a mixed multitude at the state and local level.

The SBC has a local, a regional, a state, and a national aspect. Only someone trying to excuse his affiliation with liberalism would claim that the Southern Baptist convention only exists at the national level. If this were true, there would not be such a thing as a Southern Baptist congregation, but we know that there is such a thing. It is the state conventions that fund the national convention, and at the state level liberalism is very much alive among Southern Baptists.

Many pastors and congregations are dually affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and other liberal groups.

For example, the more conservative Southern Baptist pastors in the state of Virginia formed the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV) in 1996, but it works alongside of the older and very liberal Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV). One of the conservative leaders, T.C. Pinckney, testified, "The BGAV IS RAPIDLY DEPARTING FROM ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY" (Baptist Press, September 17, 1996).

Yet, churches can remain members of the old liberal Virginia state convention even while participating with the new conservative convention. Some 20% of the 292 churches in the SBCV are also a part of the BGAV (*Fundamentalist Digest*, March-April 2001, p. 11). This is strange. On one hand we are told by conservative Virginia Baptist leaders that the BGAV is rapidly departing from orthodox Christianity, **but they refuse to separate from this apostasy in a plain**

manner and they allow churches affiliated with this apostasy to join hands with them in their new convention.

This dual affiliation was evident at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration. We were told that many Southern Baptists were in attendance even though the national leaders refused to participate.

Adam Garner, who is pursuing a doctor of divinity at Mercer University and who was manning the Mercer booth, told us that his father is a long-time Southern Baptist pastor and a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I asked him if his father is more affiliated today with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship than the Southern Baptist Convention, and he replied:

"He is still a Baptist minister and a professor at a liberal arts school. He is affiliated with both [the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Southern Baptist Convention] and he enjoys that fellowship. He has networks in both places, and he talks about all the things the Southern Baptist Convention gave him and cultivated in him and taught him and all the lessons that got him to where he is now. And he also talks about those lessons being cultivated through the CBF."

Contrary to Southern Baptist practice, the proper biblical protest against doctrinal heresy is to separate from it.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

SOCIAL GOSPEL, KINGDOM BUILDING



Rauschenbusch

A secondary theme of the conference was social work or kingdom building. The objective of the New Baptist Covenant is to "promote peace with justice; to feed the hungry; clothe the naked; shelter the homeless; care for the sick and the marginalized; welcome the strangers among us; and promote religious liberty and respect for religious diversity."

Theological liberalism has always eventually replaced the biblical gospel of redeeming souls with a humanistic gospel of redeeming society. Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), often called the father of the "social gospel," was a Baptist. He was



Marian Wright Edelman

raised in a conservative family, but he adopted liberal theological beliefs as a student at Rochester Theological Seminary, which reminds us again that liberalism is not a new problem among Baptists. Rauschenbusch rejected the inerrancy of Scripture and the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. He wrote: “Jesus did not in any real sense bear the sin of some ancient Briton who beat up his wife in B. C. 56, or of some mountaineer in Tennessee who got drunk in A. D. 1917. But he did in a very real sense bear the weight of the public sins of organized society, and they in turn are causally connected with all private sins” (*Theology for the Social Gospel*, 1917).

Even as a liberal, Rauschenbusch believed in the preaching of the gospel and the call to a new birth (though, in typical liberal fashion, he redefined these terms), but he added the social dimension through the concept of kingdom building.

“Rauschenbusch's view of Christianity was that its purpose was to spread a Kingdom of God, not through a fire and brimstone style of preaching but by leading a Christlike life. Rauschenbusch did not view Jesus' death as an act of substitutionary atonement but in his words, he died ‘to substitute love for selfishness as the basis of human society.’ He wrote that ‘Christianity is in its nature

revolutionary’ and tried to remind society of that. He explained that the Kingdom of God ‘is not a matter of getting individuals to heaven, but of transforming the life on earth into the harmony of heaven’” (“Walter Rauschenbusch,” *Wikipedia*).

Rauschenbusch formed a group called the Brotherhood of the Kingdom, which sought to reestablish the priority of kingdom building as the proper objective of Christianity.

Rauschenbusch has been called “the one man who had done more than any other to change thought in the present generation” (*The Nation*, July 20, 1918). In 1919, the Northern Baptist Convention, the predecessor to the American Baptist Church USA, called him “the most potent personality in America in the modern revival of the idea of the Kingdom of God” (*Annual of the Northern Baptist Convention*, 1919, pp. 169-71).

Rauschenbusch’s views are echoed today by the New Baptist Covenant. He would have been perfectly at home at this convocation and they would have been perfectly at ease with him and his liberalism. Rauschenbusch’s doctrine had a strong influence on Martin Luther King, Jr., who was so exalted at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration.

It is enlightening that the August 2007 issue of the *Baptist Studies Bulletin*, a publication of Mercer University, contained both a challenge about the importance of the New Baptist Covenant as well as a positive review of Rauschenbusch's book *A Theology of the Social Gospel*. Rauschenbusch was also praised in a pamphlet on the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship that I picked up at the CBF booth at the conference.

Gospel preaching is always eventually crowded out by social work. The movement that Rauschenbusch created soon left gospel preaching behind and focused exclusively on the social aspect.

We witnessed the same thing at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration. The leaders claim to believe in the salvation of the soul as well as the salvation of society, but the fact is that the emphasis of the convocation was almost entirely upon the latter. During the more than 12 hours of plenary sessions, there were no messages on winning souls to Christ, but there were many messages on social work. Almost all of the 16 various Special Interest Sessions in the afternoons focused on social-justice issues. Following are some of the subjects: engaging the criminal justice system, breaking cycles of poverty, peacemaking, faith and public policy, sexual exploitation, race as a continuing challenge, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and responding to national disasters.

One of the plenary speakers was Marian Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund. She presented a litany of social troubles in America (e.g., one of three young black men will serve time in prison) and called for vast government intervention in the form of higher taxation, the redistribution of wealth, and every sort of governmental social program. What she did not say is that this liberal solution to the problem has been tried for the last half century, with mind-boggling amounts of money spent by the government on ending poverty and injustice, and the problem has only grown worse.

Edelman also called for an end to high military spending and quoted someone who stated that every gun and rocket that is purchased by the military signifies a theft from the poor. She quoted Martin Luther King saying that when a nation spends more on the military than social uplift that nation is near destruction.

Edelman mentioned the need for moral responsibility and leadership on the part of parents and adults, and said that the problem with "our children" is the failure of adults to be the examples and godly trainers they should be. She should have stopped right there, but she undermined this by her focus on liberal politics and her exaltation of the late Martin Luther King, Jr. The truth of the matter is that King's example and

principles have done much to destroy the moral and social fabric of black people in America. He was a dedicated communist and a very immoral man. Instead of teaching his people to help themselves, he taught them to look to government and to blame others for their problems. Instead of showing an example of morality, he led a degenerate life. The FBI uncovered his habit of using funds from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to hire prostitutes to keep him entertained during the civil rights tours. The night before he was murdered, he was at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis with prostitutes. J. Edgar Hoover tried to warn the president and congress by making all files available to them, but when a federal judge sealed the files until the year 2027 the mainstream media said nothing.

Edelman said that there are 77,000 Baptist churches in America, and that if every one of them would adopt an at-risk family it would go far to solve the problem. In fact, I know of many fundamentalist Baptist churches that not only minister to at-risk families, but go far beyond this and build up countless families so that they are not at-risk. They do this by preaching the new birth, upholding the godly standards of New Testament Christian living and separation from the world, teaching the biblical principles of a loving, holy Christian home, and emphasizing Christ's Great Commission and exhorting wholehearted surrender to God's will.

The social-justice emphasis at the New Baptist Covenant comes from a misunderstanding and misapplication of the kingdom of God. Tony Campolo said that Jesus has called us to build the kingdom of God today, but this is not true.

By surveying the Old and New Testaments we can see exactly what the Bible means by the term kingdom of God.

1. In the Old Testament the kingdom of God was God's rule over all creation (Psa. 103:19) and His kingdom in Israel (1 Chron. 28:5; 2 Chron. 13:8). That kingdom was destroyed because of Israel's disobedience, but Old Testament prophecies predicted that the kingdom would be established on earth by Christ, David's greater Son, and that He would reign in truth and righteousness (Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 2:44; 7:14).

2. Christ came to Israel and preached the kingdom. He said "repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 3:2). The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are largely synonymous in the Gospels. One emphasizes the fact that it is God's kingdom, and the other emphasizes that it is a kingdom that will come from heaven. Christ came to His own people, Israel, but they rejected Him, and He warned them that the kingdom would be taken from them because of their rebellion and given to another nation (Mat. 21:43). He preached a literal glorious kingdom that would be established on earth. Peter, James, and John were given a foreview of it on the Mount of

Transfiguration (Lk. 9:27-31). He taught His disciples to pray that God's kingdom would come to earth (Luke 11:2). He said Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be in the kingdom (Lk. 13:29). He corrected the view of those who thought the kingdom of God was going to be established at that time, saying that the kingdom would not be established until the "noble man" goes into a far country and then returns (Lk. 19:11-27). Christ said the kingdom would be established after the Great Tribulation (Lk. 21:31). He said He would drink the fruit of the vine with His disciples in the kingdom (Lk. 22:18). When the disciples were arguing about who would be great in the kingdom of God, Christ corrected their thinking about the nature of greatness but He also confirmed that the kingdom of God is a literal kingdom that will be established at His return (Lk. 22:24-30). Jesus plainly stated that His kingdom is not of this world NOW (John 18:36). His kingdom will be established when He comes in power and glory to establish it.

3. The kingdom of God is in a *mystery* form during this present church age (Mat. 13:10-11). A "mystery" is truth that was hidden in the Old Testament but revealed in the New (Rom. 16:25-26). The Old Testament prophecies did not see the church age in between Christ's two comings. During the church age, the kingdom takes a strange form not described in Old Testament prophecy. The king is in heaven and the kingdom is not yet established on earth. Instead, the kingdom of God resides in the small, despised apostolic churches, while the devil's false kingdom grows quickly and spreads throughout the world (Mat. 13:31-32). Leaven is always symbolic in Scripture of sin and error.

4. Believers enter a *spiritual* kingdom of Christ when they are born again (Col. 1:13). This is the kingdom comprised of all who submit to God's authority.

5. The kingdom of God will come to earth in its prophetic fullness at the return of Christ (Acts 14:22; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Tim. 4:1; Jam. 2:5; 2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 12:10).

Believers are not building the kingdom of God on earth today. They are snatching brands from the coming fire before the day of salvation is finished (1 Cor. 9:19; 10:33; 2 Cor. 5:11, 18-21; 6:2; Jude 23). Today the "whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19), and the devil is its god (2 Cor. 4:4). The apostles and prophets in the early churches (as described in the book of Acts and the Epistles) did not band together to accomplish grandiose social-justice projects; they preached the gospel and shined as lights in this dark world by their holy lives. Christ's Great Commission emphasizes gospel preaching (Mat. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:46-48; Acts 1:8).

ENVIRONMENTALISM



Al Gore receives a green Bible from Robert Parham, Executive Director of the Baptist Center for Ethics.

As a part of their kingdom building efforts, the New Baptist Covenant wants to try to save the earth.

Al Gore presided over a "Stewardship of the Earth" luncheon at the conference on the afternoon of January 31. The former U.S. Vice President was introduced by Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, who called Gore a "Baptist prophet" and presented him with a "Baptist of the Year Award" and a "Green Bible." Parham said that the Bible should be green because it "tells us to love our neighbor and loving our neighbor means not leaving him a ruined earth"!

Gore's misguided and error-filled movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, was shown during the conference, but the attendees were not told that British High Court judge Michael Burton ruled on October 10, 2007, that this movie can only be shown in British schools if the teachers point out 11 serious factual errors in the film. These include saying that melting snow on Mount Kilimanjaro is proof of global warming, that polar bears have drowned due to disappearing arctic ice, that global warming could stop the Gulf Stream, that the Greenland ice covering could melt, that the Antarctic ice covering is melting, that sea levels could rise by seven meters, and that rising sea levels had caused the evacuation of certain Pacific islands.

One of the organizations with a display at the conference was Heifer International. Its objective is ending hunger and saving the earth. Their magazine is entitled *World Ark*.

FEMALE LEADERS

The New Baptist Covenant Celebration boldly supported the unscriptural practice of female church leaders. Jimmy Carter



Julie Pennington-Russell, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Decatur, GA.

was introduced as the husband of the world's most famous female Baptist deacon, referring to his wife Rosalynn.

The main message on Thursday evening was by Julie Pennington-Russell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Decatur, Georgia. Prior to that she was the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, and Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church in San Francisco, California. Some of the members of her church wore "She's My Pastor" T-shirts to the New Baptist Covenant Celebration. She said that Baptist unity should bring together "left leaning, right leaning, contemporary, and traditional," and, "As Baptists we do agree to respect each other in our diversity."

BORN AGAIN?

Everyone that we talked to, speakers and representatives of the various organizations, had a testimony of being born again, usually at a young age. One said he was born again at age 5. Jimmy Carter said he was born again at age 11. Others at age 10 or 12 or 14. They are familiar with this terminology and have a ready answer to the question.

The problem is that the "new birth" in the liberal Baptist context isn't the new birth of the Bible. Whatever they have experienced, it hasn't given them a love for truth and holiness. The saved person receives the Holy Spirit when he believes on Christ (Ephesians 1:12-14). If a person does not have the Holy Spirit he is not saved (Romans 8:9), and if a person has the Holy Spirit he will love the truth. Four times in Scripture the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6). One of the Scriptural evidences of the new birth is an understanding of and a love for the truth. John taught that the indwelling Spirit is the believer's teacher (1 John 2:27). Jesus said that His true sheep hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:27). He said those who are of God hear God's words (John 8:47).

The representative of Affirming and Welcoming Baptists said she was born again (though she doesn't like that term because of its "negative" and "restrictive" connotations), yet she does not believe that Genesis is literal history and thinks that marriage is a man-made institution and that there is no such thing as sexual sin.

The representative of Mercer University said he was born again in his youth, but he went on to say that he doesn't

believe that the virgin birth or the deity of Christ are doctrines that should divide and wouldn't answer the question as to whether he believes that someone who dies without faith in Christ goes to eternal damnation in a fiery hell.

In such a context, the new birth becomes a vague religious experience. The representative of the Baptist Peace Fellowship said, "I was born again when I joined St. John's Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, at the age of 12." Joining a church is not the new birth!

Consider Jimmy Carter's testimony of salvation from his 1997 book *Living Faith*:

"Being born again is a new life, not of perfection but of striving, stretching and searching--a life of intimacy with God. Being born again didn't happen to me when I was 11. For me, **it has been an evolutionary thing**. Rather than a flash of light or a sudden vision of God speaking, it involved a series of steps that brought me steadily closer to Christ. **My conversion at 11 was just one of those steps.**"

Thus, Carter contradicts the term "born again," which describes a one-time event, a birth, by describing it in terms of a process.

Several things are missing from the liberal definition of the new birth. One can "believe in Jesus" or "receive Jesus" or "trust Jesus" or "ask Jesus into my heart" without being truly saved. What is typically missing from a liberal's testimony of salvation is a true acknowledgement of one's desperate sinfulness (e.g., Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:9-18), a proper understanding of and acceptance of Christ's blood atonement (e.g., Heb. 9:22; 10:19; 1 Peter 1:18-19), and a repentance toward and a rejection of sin and error (e.g., Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; 20:31).

James warned that a person can "believe in God" and not be saved. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:19-20). James is not saying that works is a part of salvation; he is saying that true salvation produces biblical works. Paul taught the same thing. He said that salvation is by grace without works, but he went on to say that salvation results in "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10). Paul described those who "profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). John taught the same thing. He wrote: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4).

My friends, beware of those who profess Christ but they are brashly disobedient to God's holy and infallible Bible!

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

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