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The Errant Use of “Inerrant”

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Here is the eighth in a series of articles called The Pastor’s Sounding Board. This series gives you a chance to hear from senior pastors of CBF/GA. Richard Kremer, pastor of Garden Lakes Baptist Church in Rome, is the writer for this issue.

A sounding board is a structure over a pulpit or rostrum to give distinctness to a speaker’s voice. In these articles, we expect to hear about some of the “best practices” occurring in our churches, and we hope to hear some of the “best thoughts” that our lead pastors have. We hope these words will challenge you and your church to open new vistas of ministry in Georgia and around the world.

Mark 16: 1-8; Luke 24: 1-9

Few words in the last thirty years have caused more mischief than the little adjective “inerrant.” “Inerrant” would seem to be a perfectly fine word that, when applied to the Scriptures, appears to guarantee the authenticity and accuracy of the Bible. Yet I tell you plainly, the word “inerrant” has been misused and manipulated. Indeed, it would be fair to say that the sundering and destruction of the Southern Baptist Convention could be attributed to the manipulation of this single word—inerrant. This word has, in fact, done horrendous damage to the character of the Bible—and ruined countless lives. The cause of Christ is being damaged by its use even now. Yet “inerrant” continues to be employed frequently with reference to the Bible, usually by those who do not understand its implications. Not surprisingly, Shorter University’s new “Statement of Faith” begins with the declaration, “We believe the Bible . . . is the inerrant and infallible Word of God.” My question to those who penned that document is: “What do you mean by that term?”

Some years ago, the late Adrian Rogers, one of the architects of the fundamentalist takeover of the SBC, was asked exactly that question: “What does inerrancy mean?” He answered: “It means the Bible is truth without mixture of error historically, philosophically, scientifically, and theologically.” The conservative

scholar Paul Feinberg has offered a fuller exposition: “When all of the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be without error in all that they affirm to the degree of precisions intended, whether that affirmation relates to doctrine, history, science, geography, geology, etc.” Give these gentlemen their due—they were at least crystal clear in their definitions. But they were making claims about the Bible that the Bible does not make for itself.



Simply put, the Bible is not a history book. It certainly contains history—a lot of history, in fact—but the Bible’s history concerns the history of humanity’s encounter with God and with the revelation of God in Christ. The Bible does not intend to offer a chronicle of historical events in the same way as an account of the American Civil War in a history book. The Bible is not a philosophy book. It contains philosophy—the book of Ecclesiastes, for example, has been hailed as one of the most incisive philosophical statements ever penned. But the Bible’s purpose is not to articulate any particular philosophy. The Bible is not a science book. Those who assert that the Bible is correct in its teachings on geology grossly misinterpret the Bible’s purpose. The writers of the Scripture had no idea that

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Why Should We Support **CBF/GA** & STATE MISSIONS?



This issue of Visions focuses on CBF/GA's 2012 State Mission Offering. This year, the offering highlights two of CBF/GA's ministries within the state that are "sprouting forth" into new life and growth: Cooperative Student Fellowships and new church starts. As we seek to grow and support these two ministries through the State Mission Offering, we hope this issue of Visions gives you more information and insight into CSF and new church starts, and we hope you will join with us in supporting them.

Recently a missions chair from one of our larger congregations contacted me with a question. He wanted to know if I could send him a report regarding how the money his church had given was spent. That was a nice way of asking the "why" question. Why should the church support the CBF/GA? This is a very legitimate question, and I did my best in three pages to give him a clear answer.

Contributions go toward developing a support system for local Baptist congregations. We must always remember that what is at stake is a progressive Baptist vision and that the state CBF organization is essential

in nurturing that vision. Such a vision includes a strong emphasis on lay leadership, a commitment to support equal opportunities for male and female clergy, respect for ecumenical and interfaith relationships, a tilt toward ministries of reconciliation and social justice, a sensitivity to the marginalized, especially the poor, and finally a desire to do evangelism with integrity. If



FRANKLY SPEAKING

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your church values these things, then you will find what we are doing to be very important and you are likely to generously support the effort. If those values are not at the top of your list, then you are not likely to be that involved. I just happen to believe that creating and nurturing a progressive Baptist family is essential for our congregations to stay healthy, to be connected with each other, and to be engaged in the world.

What about specifics? How does the money given support this progressive Baptist vision? Leadership development is part of the answer. A large portion of our resources is spent on developing future leaders for our congregations. Programs like March Mission Madness, Georgia Youth Choir Festival, ReCharge, Now Serving: Atlanta, and our three student fellowships (CSF) at Mercer, UGA, and Georgia Tech provide opportunities for youth and college-age students to explore God’s call while joining with peers in activities designed to expand their knowledge and experience. Seminary scholarships are a part of this as well. Each year we grant scholarships to students from CBF/GA congregations who attend seminary and are committed to local church ministry. Our congregations are already being impacted by these scholarships as more and more graduates find their places in Georgia churches working with youth, music, and pastoral ministries.

Our work with interfaith groups is somewhat unique among Baptists. We sponsor annual dialogues with both the Jewish and Muslim communities. These dialogues are based on mutual respect and are designed to open up channels between faith traditions. They are part of what we call “restoring the neighborhood” and have been growing with each passing year.

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... creating and nurturing a progressive Baptist family is essential for our congregations to stay healthy, to be connected with each other, and to be engaged in the world.



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Significant parts of our budget find their way into ministry to the poor and marginalized. You can see this in Taliaferro County, where for the past twelve years we have sponsored two weeks of camp for low-income children and where we have worked with a local board to provide college scholarships to graduates of the new charter school. While the broader initiative has not flourished as we had hoped, our work with the children from the school has been significant. We must not forget that our congregations continue to work through CBF at home and around the world and that the CBF/GA office has provided assistance in helping congregations find their place in such ministries from Haiti to Liberia, from the Gulf Coast to Eastern Europe.

Contributions we receive go toward developing a sense of community. This is what we have traditionally called “fellowship.” This is done primarily at our annual

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Cornerstone Baptist Church

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I love to tell the story of our unusual beginning. We did not set out to start a church. We dreamed of ways to help those who were reaching out to us, those who left the church for one reason or another. But to start a church? That was not our plan.

The story of Cornerstone Baptist Church is of a six-year-old church start in Snellville that is now poised to lean into the lives of all peoples. One of my favorite parts of our story is how God led us to a little white church with a steeple, twenty-eight miles east of Atlanta, that had not been occupied for nearly four years and how God walked alongside of us and encouraged us. God painted a picture of hope in our minds and on our hearts, a picture of hope that described Cornerstone’s occupying that building one day.

On October 31, 2011, we purchased that little white church with a steeple. We are very grateful to God and to all who partnered with us as we discovered new ways to serve our community and as we have found a new place in which to worship.

Among our good friends who helped make this dream a reality is the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia. Thank you to Frank Broome, Joyce McCartney, Randy Shepley, Paul Baxley, and the CBF/GA missions committee for supporting our building project with a generous donation that served as our earnest money and helped with our down payment.

Many CBF churches in Georgia also made contributions to our building project, and we are grateful for their gracious financial support. A foundation and individual donors from across the United States also gave generously, and we are thankful for their believing in the work that Cornerstone is doing.

Our new building was in great need of repairs and renovations, and as a congregation we spent months working hard, painting and cleaning, but we could not have accomplished the more challenging projects without the support of Tim Adcox, Wayne Martin, Deborah Dice, Scott Keller, Page Fulgham, Jim Farmer, and the entire Smoke Rise Baptist Church Joseph Project. The Joseph Project team renovated our sanctuary, built classrooms in the downstairs area, installed an entrance door, and designed and implemented a plan for our sound system.

We at Cornerstone extend heartfelt thanks to all of the many volunteers from Smoke Rise Baptist Church and from other CBF churches. Thank you, Sarah Holik, for scraping wallpaper off the bathroom walls and providing children’s supplies. Thank you, Drayton Sanders, for helping Cornerstone find beautiful carpet at an affordable price.

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meetings that continue to be well attended. They have become a gathering place for the CBF/GA family and a place where our partner organizations can be seen and heard. These annual meetings offer a cross-generational experience that involves worship, study, and ministry. The communion service during the General Assembly at Johns Creek Baptist is but one example. It was a special moment as people from our Georgia and from the Republic of Georgia broke bread and shared the cup together.

A positive word must be said about our two new church starts, one in Cairo called Summit Baptist Church and the other in Snellville called Cornerstone. This past year CBF/GA allocated over

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A New Church Birthed!

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A DREAM

When I was five years old, my unchurched family began attending a mission church. My Sunday School teacher was Mrs. Mattie Lou Shiver. She delighted in teaching us about Jesus, stimulating us to memorize selected Scriptures, and explaining how to live the Christian life.

When I was ordained into ministry at nineteen years of age, I dreamed of mentoring others as Mrs. Mattie Lou had mentored/discipled me. Bringing the dream into reality was more challenging than I realized.

Yet, the goal of helping believers to grow to spiritual maturity has never left me. So, throughout my forty-plus years of pastoring, I have tried different approaches and methods to disciple God's people into a closer walk with Him.



A BIRTH

As a Baptist minister, I prayed about starting a church that would celebrate the highly valued, biblically based Baptist distinctives that birthed the Baptist movement. The genius of Baptist life is that, because we were born in the midst of persecution, our spiritual ancestors decided that we would be people of grace. How wonderful it is to examine the uniqueness of Baptist life (the priesthood of the believer, soul competency, church autonomy, the separation of church and state, etc.) and to celebrate that our movement was designed to follow the teachings of Jesus and to love others unconditionally (John 13:34-35). Wherever people were in their spiritual growth process, they were loved, accepted, and nurtured.



Of the many Baptist bodies within the United States, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has taken the lead to keep our Baptist uniqueness alive and well. Unlike being born into a family that we did not choose, our church chose the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship family because wherever you are in the spiritual continuum, you are loved, accepted, and nurtured to be a brighter light of Jesus' love on this earth.

A VISION

My vision for Summit Baptist Church is to go back to what Jesus commanded His church to do: "As you go, make disciples..." (Matthew 28:19). So, unique to our body of believers is that we are focused on making disciples. We hope to achieve this by offering a Bible study during the week (every Tuesday night). Further, to those interested, we invite them to enter a one-on-one discipleship time that meets once each week for up to one year, or until one reaches the understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The second uniqueness of our body is that we are a free church. That is, we the created do not tell the Creator whom He can or cannot call to serve Him. We affirm those God calls: both male and female. Third,

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Why Support? *(continued from page 5)*

\$25,000 to help Cornerstone purchase a church building in the area. The end result was very positive. The monthly mortgage payment for this facility is less than what was being paid for rent by a considerable amount. Work with the Summit church continues. Just recently FBC Tifton assisted the church with a VBS, and plans are being made to assist with outreach and other ministry needs.

Some of what goes on in the

state CBF office cannot be fully reported, yet what is done is so very important. Such special ministries include pastoral care to pastors and staff when they are hurting, conflict resolution when churches are experiencing internal differences, assisting pastors and staff when they need to relocate, and assisting churches when they need to find an interim, pastor, or staff leader. These are all priorities for us and require significant staffing time.

Not long ago one of the pastors asked me what he could do to assist our work. I told him to invite me or one of the staff to preach on Sunday or lead a CBF discussion on Wednesday evening. That is one sure way for your congregation to know how their funds are being used. It also provides the opportunity for your congregation to give needed feedback so that we can strengthen the work we do together.

CBF/GA

Cornerstone Baptist *(continued from page 4)*

Thank you, Trey Lyon, for designing our terrific new logo! Thank you, Marc Burcham and Jim Walls, for helping with the landscaping. Thank you, Laura Foushee, for helping beautify our campus—the team of youth who helped us during March Mission Madness and the financial support are greatly appreciated.

We appreciate the time that all of you have given to work on our renovations and repairs project. We are thankful for the hard work you have done to make our new church building a beautiful place that we will call home for many years. We are blessed by your contributions and support. You have filled our new building with so much love and joy, and your kindness and generosity will always be remembered.

I love to tell the story of Cornerstone—a mission-minded church that is ready and willing to share the Good News about Jesus Christ with all of God's people. We are ready and willing to do our part to feed the hungry, pray with those seeking help, serve, and support local and worldwide mission projects in places like Kampala. We are partnering this summer with the Southeast Gwinnett Co-op and Snellville United Methodist Church in preparing and distributing lunches to underprivileged children in and around our community.

And we are off to a great second half of 2012! Church attendance has increased in recent weeks, and we are looking forward to creative ways to serve our new community. We need your prayers and support as we continue to make improvements to our building and launch new ministries. Some of our new initiatives include an after-school program, an arts academy, a part-time music minister, and a part-time minister to families and children. We are excited about the future of Cornerstone, and we appreciate the cooperative spirit of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia—thank you for believing in our dream and helping us make our dream a reality.

I love to tell our story because it reminds me, amazes me, and humbles me to see all that our God can do. CBF/GA

A New Church Birthed

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we embrace all people. We accept people where they are and aid them in their spiritual growth. Fourth, we find meaning in affiliating with all Baptists around the world through the Baptist World Alliance. No other church in our area offers this level of broad-ranged partnership. Our vision is to be Jesus-focused, living out the teachings of Jesus and reflecting a little of the atmosphere of Heaven on earth. Another uniqueness about our church is that we are focusing on the young people thirty-five years of age and under. Barna research shows that this age group is only three-to-four percent Christian. George Barna reveals further that unless a spiritual awakening takes place within this age group, then approximately fifty percent of all churches in the U.S. will be closed by 2050. Our heart's desire is to be part of a spiritual awakening in our country.

Our congregation meets each Sunday at 4:00 p.m. for Sunday School and at 5:00 p.m. for worship. Thank you for praying for us that we will be about our Father's business in a way that will glorify His Name. CBF/GA

Cooperative Student Fellowships

CSF at Georgia Tech

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“Grace.” That’s usually my response when someone asks me what is distinctive about Cooperative Student Fellowship (the college ministry of the CBF) at Georgia Tech. Grace. We really try to get grace right. Looking out across organizations, denominations, fellowships, and churches, grace seems to skew to one extreme or the other. It is either trampled under depravity or distorted to minimize sinfulness. Both of these miss the amazing, biblical, distinctively Christian grace found in the pages of Scripture. Two things must be true in order for grace to exist. 1) We don’t deserve something. 2) We get it anyway. If either of these is diminished, grace is no longer grace. If we deserve something, it’s not grace. It’s payment, wage, or compensation—it’s getting what we have earned, and that isn’t grace (Romans 4:4-5). Conversely, if we only focus on our fallen nature, we obviously miss the explosion of joy generated by the revelation of God’s unmerited and unending love for us.



So we try to get grace right. We stress as strongly as we possibly can both God’s love for us in Christ...and...our unworthiness of that love.

This seems to play itself out in everything we do. We have student-led small group Bible studies that meet once a week and alternate every semester between studying a book of the Bible and studying a book of Christian inspiration/devotion/literature. The amazing thing about these small groups is that several of the people involved are non-Christians. What an amazing blessing! Their perspectives and questions challenge us in so many unexpected and appreciated ways. We love

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What Are the Mission and Purpose of CSF?

The Cooperative Student Fellowship exists in order to provide students a Christian community that is Baptist in nature; fosters authentic relationships; encourages open-minded conversation, learning, and discipleship; engages the world through missions; and creates experiences that nurture the development of students as current and future church leaders.

The amazing thing about these small groups is that several of the people involved are non-Christians. ...Their perspectives and questions challenge us in so many unexpected and appreciated ways. We love our non-Christian friends for who they are and where they are—unconditionally.

The History of the Cooperative Student Fellowships

The original Cooperative Student Fellowship began as a part of the collegiate ministry of First Baptist Church of Clemson, South Carolina, in 2004. In the summer of 2005, a group of six leaders from CBF/GA congregations in Macon began to discuss a dream of a coffeehouse campus ministry at Mercer University. In the fall of 2005, a small group of students met together for this fledgling ministry.

In 2006, CBF/GA partnered with McAfee School of Theology to host Now Serving: Atlanta, a 24-hour mission weekend for college students. Through conversations between Mercer students and Clemson students, the Mercer campus ministry decided to create another Cooperative Student Fellowship as an official religious organization at Mercer.

Two years later, a group of CBF/GA church leaders in Athens gathered to start a CSF for Athens-area schools, with a primary focus at the University of Georgia. In 2010, CBF/GA added its third CSF at Georgia Tech when an independent campus ministry decided to partner officially with CBF/GA as a CSF.

In this way, CSFs have become the CBF "brand" of campus ministry. While they are currently located in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, other state CBF organizations are considering the option of creating their own CSFs.

We have students studying medicine, engineering, gender studies, education, and Christianity. Most importantly, we have future leaders of the church.

CSF at Mercer

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Fellowship, Service, and Growth. It is these three pillars that encompass the mission of the Cooperative Student Fellowship at Mercer University.

CSF Mercer is a group of students from various church backgrounds and passions. We have students who come to us from First Baptist Church of St. Simons, First Baptist Church of Forsyth, Peachtree Baptist Church in Atlanta, and Heritage Baptist Church in Cartersville, while others come from Methodist and non-denominational congregations. We have students studying medicine, engineering, gender studies, education, and Christianity. Most importantly, we have future leaders of the church.

Fellowship for CSF comes in lots of different ways as we gather to know each other better. Movie nights, game nights with the Muslim Student Association, home cooked meals at the Foushee home, and an Atlanta Braves game are just a few ways that our students fellowshiped together this year. Food is a major player in college student life, and thus snacks are a must at nearly every turn! The smaller size of CSF Mercer has created lifelong friendships and companions along the way for the faith journey. We also were able to bond with fellow CSF groups from across the Southeast for the first time at an annual CSF retreat in the mountains of North Carolina. This was a great moment of growth for our group as it bonded together and found common ground with other CSFs in their goals for campus ministry.

Service to one another and our neighbors is an important facet of CSF Mercer life. A time for celebrations and prayer requests each week often is the highlight of our meeting. The honesty with which the students share makes this time of service to each other among the most important things that we do. The ministry also seeks to serve those who can benefit from the many gifts in talents of our group through the love of Christ. This year the students served alongside other student groups in working on local Macon homes as part of a university interfaith initiative, played board games with individuals with HIV and AIDS who reside in a transitional home in town, and joined other CSF ministries from neighboring states at Now Serving: Atlanta.



Some of the most significant time we have spent

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CSF at University of Georgia

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These are exciting times for the Cooperative Student Fellowship at the University of Georgia! Over the past several months, talks among the Athens-area pastors and churches have led to a move to expand our small but vibrant community at UGA. In particular, the footprint of CBF/GA on the university campus will be expanded as the ministry position evolves and the group begins a partnership with the Presbyterian Student Center for the use of space and resources.

But, perhaps that is a bit of putting the cart before the horse, so to speak. While that exciting news stands on the horizon, I can report that we have put another year of building relationships, studying the Bible, and serving in the Athens community under our belts. This past year, we had holiday parties where we gathered together and carved pumpkins, ate good meals, and shared the stories of life on campus. We studied hard texts like Ecclesiastes and inspiring texts like the Gospel of Mark. And, once a month, we banded together with money and talent and cooked meals for the Athens Area Homeless Shelter. This, more or less, has been the steady work of CSF at UGA over this past year and the few before it.

Our weekly group meeting has been held in the comfortable front room of Two Story Coffee House just off the edge of campus. It's our practice to share good conversation over good coffee. I'd be lying to you to say that these students, some of whom come to UGA from CBF churches a lot like yours, don't ask the hard questions. They do. From where I'm standing, theirs is a journey of faith that shows evidence of growing up in CBF churches. They prize faithful community first. They respect honesty and genuineness from one another and from their campus minister. They want to make the world a better place and believe that

Jesus had something to say about that too.

... students come together week after week purely out of their desire to continue the faith journey ... others come around because they find a Baptist campus ministry marked by Baptist freedoms to be more appealing ...

CSF has been a gift to me this past year, as I hope it has been a gift to a few faithful students at UGA. I have seen a group of students come together week after week purely out of their desire to continue the faith journeys they began back home at church. I have seen others come around because they find a Baptist campus ministry marked by Baptist freedoms to be more appealing than what they get elsewhere. Going forward, thanks to the many generous gifts that folks are making—time and money—to



CSF has been a gift to me this past year ...

How Does a CSF Get Started?

One of the beauties of CSFs is that they have all been created in slightly different ways. Depending on the city, campus(es), and churches involved, there are four basic ways to begin a CSF:

- **One Church, One Campus:** In this model, one CBF congregation takes the role of primary sponsor of the CSF on a single campus. The congregation may host the CSF at the church or be its primary source of funding outside of state CBF budgets.
- **One Church, Multi-Campus:** This is like the first model, but the CSF may choose to serve multiple campuses within one city of geographical location to reach a broader student base.
- **Multi-Church, One Campus:** Using another method, multiple CBF churches come together to support a CSF on a single campus, including but not limited to financial gifts, reaching out to students for church homes, and providing other resources.
- **Multi-Church, Multi-Campus:** Similar to number three, the CSF is supported by multiple churches and serves multiple campuses.

In all of these cases, some funding contributes to the salary of a campus minister, most often on a part-time basis. The campus minister is the primary communicator among the CSFs, the state CBF organization, and local church partners.

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How Are CBF/GA CSFs Funded?

Each Georgia CSF receives programming funds of \$1,500 and a campus minister annual salary of \$3,000 through the CBF/GA budget. CSFs may also receive support from local congregations, most often in their city of origin, through church budgets or with one-time contributions. CBF/GA believes our CSFs are at a critical point now in “sprouting” growth beyond what we have seen so far. This year forty percent of your State Mission Offering will go to provide them with financial support outside of the CBF/GA budget and local church support, as well as provide financial resources for starting new CSFs in our state. We have a wealth of college students in our state in whom to invest, and the time to act is now.

We love as completely and wholeheartedly as we can ...

Campus Ministers and Student Leadership

CSF at Georgia Tech

Dan Stockum, campus minister
David Murray, president

CSF at Mercer

Carson Foushee, campus minister
Hannah Watson, president

CSF at UGA

Zach Bay, campus minister
Matthew Coleman, president

CSF Georgia Tech *(continued from page 7)*

our non-Christian friends for who they are and where they are—unconditionally. And we aren’t bashful about saying it. At the same time, we don’t hesitate to express our desire for them to acknowledge their critical need for a savior and to accept Jesus as that savior. It is grace...both sides of it. We love as completely and wholeheartedly as we can, and we press for repentance as clearly and compassionately as we can.

Once a month we partner with an Atlanta-area street ministry, giving out food to people living under bridges. Believe it or not, we literally go under bridges to give food, hugs, and prayers. It’s an intense experience that many of our students find quite rewarding, and again, it’s something bathed in grace. Yes, we are acting as the hands and feet of Christ, loving people who are mostly ignored and encouraging them to turn from their street life to a life of wholesome and healthy living. But that’s not where the real grace is experienced. We receive the grace. By bringing our meager offering of a little food, some hugs, and prayers, we are showered with an abundance of joy and Christ’s presence. Jesus does what only Jesus can do and turns our little efforts into an overflowing surplus, an undeserved, unmerited overflowing surplus of blessing. Grace. It’s why we continue to go back again and again, to see Jesus exactly where He promised He would be—in and among the people we serve (Matthew 25:31-46).

We have frequent socials where the entire purpose is simply to hang out and to be around each other. We gather with other CSFs from around the Southeast for service and fellowship a few times a year, which has created relationships among organizations and campuses. As campus minister, I meet regularly with our students, usually over lunch or coffee, to talk about their lives and what their next step with Jesus might look like. By God’s grace, through all these gatherings and activities, we have seen numerical as well as personal growth among our students. We have blossomed from our original seven students three years ago to over twenty students. More importantly, we have seen people transform from struggling with belief into some of our most solid anchors, using their faith to show others the way to Jesus. This continues to be a challenging, inspiring, and surprising journey fueled by God’s grace. We couldn’t have any of these experiences without God’s unearned favor upon us, and we wouldn’t want it any other way. Coming empty to Jesus and receiving endless blessings is the Gospel—and it’s grace. **CBF/GA**

CSF University of Georgia *(continued from page 9)*

CBF/GA, the future for CSF at UGA is bright. As mentioned above, this coming year CSF will be renting space in the Presbyterian Student Center on campus. An increase in the pay and hours of the campus minister will mean real potential for more outreach to the campus body and the growth of the ministry. If you are sending a student to UGA now or in the future, look us up! We’d love to offer them a faith home during what will be some of the most formative times in life. **CBF/GA**



*Show your support for CBF/GA State Mission Offering ...
remove and post this informational poster in your church!*

*Order your promotional pack by contacting Kelley Dixon
at 478-742-1191, ext. 26 or kdixon@cbfga.org. (See page 15.)*

2012 CBF/GA State Mission Offering



sprouting forth



Church Starts & Restarts



Cooperative Student Fellowships

This year CBF/GA is highlighting two of its ministries within the state that are “sprouting forth” into new life and growth!

40%

of gifts go to

**Church Starts
& Restarts**



40%

of gifts go to

**Cooperative Student
Fellowships**



20%

of gifts go to

**New Initiatives
& Development**

Together We Cultivate Growth

CBF/GA Goal: \$50,000 Church Goal: _____

For more information: 478-742-1191 • www.cbfga.org

The Pastor's Sounding Board *(continued from page 1)*

some endeavor of inquiry called geology existed! The Bible makes but one clear and profound statement about the world: God is the origin of all creation—in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth—and all reality owes God a debt for the gift of its existence. But the Bible has absolutely no interest in offering a scientific explanation for how God brought this heaven and earth into being. The Bible says WHO created the universe. It offers no explanation as to HOW this process of creation occurred. Anyone who doubts the veracity of this observation need only examine the first two chapters of Genesis. In the creation account of Genesis, chapter one, God creates everything in the world, then creates humanity last. In Genesis, chapter two, God creates humanity first, then creates the remainder of the natural order. The brilliant editor who brought those two accounts into one sacred text was fully aware of the discrepancies in the accounts—but he did not care! He was not offering a scientific explanation for how reality came to be; he was simply offering the theological observation that all that is owes its life unto God. When you try to turn the Bible into a scientific text, you misuse God's word.

You might be wondering: "Dr. Kremer, why does it matter? Why even bring this topic to the fore?" Because it matters how you use the Bible. I don't want young people thinking that they have to discard their faith because some scientist has made a discovery that seems to contradict some Biblical principle. I don't want scientists to put their brains on ice because their discoveries contradict what the Bible allegedly teaches about one scientific discipline or another. A recent science professor at a local university had to leave his

faculty post, complaining that the administration had instructed him on what theories concerning creation he ought to teach—even though there was no empirical data to support their claims. Why would administrators with no scientific training be trying to tell scientists how to teach science? Because they think of the Bible as a scientific book that reveals to us the age of the earth as only six thousand years old. Essentially, this college administrator was instructing the scientist to turn a blind eye to the fossil records, to ignore the evidence of geological shifts and continental drifts, and to pay no attention to the pottery shards—all of which make the point that six thousand years is but a sliver of human existence on this earth, much less the history of the earth as a whole. Again, let's be clear on this point: When you try to turn the Bible into a science book, you misuse God's Word.

Why do people try to regard the Bible as a science text or a philosophy book or a history book? It is because they hold to a particular view of Biblical inspiration, a perspective that says the Bible came into being through plenary verbal inspiration. Succinctly expressed, the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration states: "God said it, and humanity wrote it down." (Incidentally, that is how Muslims view the Koran as having come into being.) There are a few passages in the Bible that suggest plenary verbal inspiration. For example, God dictates to Moses the Ten Commandments, and Moses writes them down. But think of something as simple as Psalm 16. God would have to be pretty egotistical to be dictating to David: "Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!" Can you imagine

God dictating unto David in Psalm 121: "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Surely God is not so insecure as to bother dictating words of praise about Himself for us to write down! When the Psalmist exclaims: "The Lord is my shepherd," he is giving evidence that he has experienced the living God profoundly in the midst of his life. His spirit swells up with joy, so much so that he can share his experience of God with others. He is not simply recording a speech that God dictated into his head.

Go back to the argument that scholar Feinberg offered regarding inerrancy: "The Bible is inerrant in its original autographs." That's very convenient. For no one has ever seen the Bible's original autographs. Do you know why? They don't exist! There is not some dusty original Biblical manuscript hiding in some obscure cave in Israel. The Bible came into being over a period of centuries. Its pages originated in diverse places and in diverse times. The Old Testament existed in oral tradition for centuries, passed down from generation to generation before it was ever recorded. When it was printed, it was preserved in a variety of places in a variety of versions. There is no such thing as an original autograph for the Bible, and to claim such a manuscript is the basis for the inerrancy of Scripture is intellectually dishonest.

So, when the Shorter University statement of faith declares: "We believe in the inerrant and infallible Word of God," is that true? Yes, in a way. For when the Bible is talking about the character of God, the Bible is, indeed, inerrant. When the Bible is talking about the

(continues on page 14)

What a Fellowship It Was!

JIMMY GENTRY *jimmy.gentry@tabernacle.org*



What a fel- low- ship, What a joy di- vine, lea- ning on the e- ver- las- ting arms;



Those of us from the CBF/GA who were able to attend this year’s General Assembly in Ft. Worth, Texas, experienced fellowship. I like that word “fellowship.” It is engraved in our Baptist lingo. How many Baptist churches don’t have a “fellowship hall” of some sort? The room may not be called that, but there is, most likely, a room dedicated to fellowship. Truth be known, every room in every church house (even those not Baptist) is, or should be, a fellowship hall. Here’s a better one. Wherever Christians are gathered, there is fellowship in that place. Fellowship isn’t just a Baptist thing. And some of us thought it was a creation of John “the Baptist” Smyth back in 1609. Darn!

I’ll not bore you with all the intricacies of the Greek word *koinonia*, found throughout the New Testament and translated in an assortment of ways, including “fellowship.” If you need to know more, Alan Culpepper at McAfee School of Theology will gladly oblige. He’s pretty good at Greek. Fellowship is about sharing a common life together. It does include eating good Baptist food like fried chicken, okra, mashed potatoes, cornbread, and chess pie, and drinking good Baptist beverages like sweet tea (some of you were hoping I would write “bourbon” to keep the emphasis on the “B” words—Baptist beverages). But it embraces so much more than food and drink. It is sharing a common life rooted in the confession “Jesus is Lord.” While in Ft. Worth, I realized, again, the common life I share with so many “fellowship” Baptists across Georgia and the USA.

I found fellowship with Georgians in various places. On the flight from Atlanta, I sat with Warm Springs Baptist Church pastor, Bob Patterson, and his daughter, Erin. They took me to the Omni Hotel in their rental car. I roomed with former Georgia pastor and my dear friend of thirty-plus years, Bob Browning. He left Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain to become a missional journeyer to our native Kentucky last year. I still like him, although he left! He is a good roommate, since he doesn’t snore. Don’t ever room with Ron Grizzle. The fellowship hall will become a hall of Hell due to his snoring. Can I get a witness? Of course! Dock Hollingsworth is shouting: “Amen!” or “That’s right!”

At the meal table, Starbucks, or some lounge, there was fellowship with Bob Browning, Jim Dant, Greg DeLoach, Ron Grizzle, Dock Hollingsworth, Jon Roebuck, and Allen Walworth, to name a few. Jon is a pastor in Nashville, but was reared in Georgia. Allen isn’t a Georgian (poor guy), but is interim preaching minister at Smoke Rise. Then there was the Georgia meeting where a bunch of Peachtree State-ers showed up to greet and listen to one another. Renée Bennett, Frank Broome, Tommy Deal, and Laura Foushee shared reports that reminded me of our partnership (another way to express fellowship) with one another. Given that the CBF Resource Center is in Atlanta, I was encouraged by the fellowship with Rick Bennett, Emily Holladay, Ben McDade, Rob Nash, Devita Parnell, Bo Prosser, and Lance Wallace. And what of Daniel Vestal? He is the incarnation of fellowship in my humble estimation. Yes! What a fellowship with Georgians!

And then there was fellowship with all those non-Georgians—Bob Baker, Curtis Freeman, Keith Herron, David Hull, Amy Grizzle Kane, Charlie Johnson, Marv Knox, Bill Leonard, Ron and Brenda Lyles, George Mason, Dwight Moody, Dick and Alice Mull, Robert Parham, Suzi Paynter, and Brent Walker, to name a few. What a fellowship it was and is!

On Saturday, after our gathering, I found myself on the shuttle to the airport with one other soul: Matt Marston, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Moultrie. He is representative of the fellowship with many young Baptists. Whenever I hear Matt speak, I am hopeful for future fellowship.

What a fellowship it was! Together we were leaning on the Everlasting Arms of Jesus. And it is Jesus who creates that bond, that commonality, that partnership, that fellowship. What a fellowship it was, is, and will be! And one doesn’t even need a literal hall!

Jimmy Gentry is senior pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, Carrollton, and moderator of the CBF/GA Coordinating Council.

The Pastor's Sounding Board *(continued from page 12)*

nature of redemption, the Bible is absolutely infallible. When the Bible is presenting the revelation of God in Christ, we can trust that information with perfect confidence—for such is precisely the Bible's purpose. It is for these matters that the Bible is intended to be used and consulted. The Bible is a book about redemption, and on this point, the Bible is, indeed, inerrant. During one of our Vacation Bible School convocations a couple of weeks ago, our children's minister, Susan West-Colding, asked the children why we did a pledge to the Bible. A young voice answered: "Because it tells us about God." Yes! Yes! The Bible tells us about God, tells us about redemption, tells us about the love of Christ, and tells us how to live in right relationship with the divine. On that score, the Scriptures are pristine and true.

But these subjects are concerned with an entirely different ambit than geology or geography!

The Bible tells us about God, tells us about redemption, tells us about the love of Christ, and tells us how to live in right relationship with the divine. On that score, the Scriptures are pristine and true.

Think on the four versions of the resurrection. There is not a lot of difference among them as to who goes to the tomb: Matthew says "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary," Mark says "Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome." Luke adds the name of Joanna to the list. John mentions only Mary Magdalene. But who meets the women there? Matthew says that an angel met them inside the tomb. Mark mentions no angel but speaks of a young man dressed in a white robe. Luke says that two

men dressed in dazzling apparel were there to greet them. John testifies that Mary Magdalene didn't even enter the tomb and the only one who met her there was Jesus. In Mark's account, the women leave the empty tomb and don't tell anyone what they have heard. In Luke's account, they go straightway and tell their news, but the apostles don't believe them.

My point to you is this: It is precisely these small details of difference that undermine the concept of inerrancy. If God were dictating to writers the record of something as important as the resurrection, God wouldn't be dictating differing versions to different writers. God wouldn't have been giving conflicting accounts. Each writer reflects the different traditions, witnesses, and influences to which he was exposed. The truth is, none of these accounts may have matters exactly right. But all four accounts are exactly right on their main point: God raised Jesus from the dead! All four accounts are right in saying that our God is a God of resurrection power and that we live in hope because our God through Christ has defeated death. The fact that one version of the resurrection speaks of one angel, and one version speaks of one man, and one version speaks of two men, and one version speaks of none—such niggling differences do not matter to the authenticity and importance of the message. The message is, our God is a God of resurrection power through whom we have hope beyond death. On this point, the Scriptures are infallible.

I tell you plainly, you can find differences in the Scriptures, even with regard to the same event. For example, in Matthew's version of Jesus' healing of the centurion's slave, the centurion himself comes to Jesus to ask for healing help. In

Luke's version of the same healing, the Jewish elders come on behalf of the centurion to ask Jesus for help with regard to his slave. What really matters to the centurion's slave is that Jesus had compassion on him and healed him. According to Mark, Jesus is leaving Jericho when he encounters blind Bartimaeus. In Luke, Jesus is entering Jericho when he encounters blind Bartimaeus. All that matters to blind Bartimaeus is that Jesus gave him his sight! What matters to us is that Jesus gives us our sight and has compassion on us in our weakness and in our need.

The Bible is not a science book. The Bible is not a history book. The Bible is not a philosophy book. The Bible is a book that tells us about God. Moreover, the Bible never claims perfection for its words. The Bible claims perfection only for the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ. Indeed, the pledge that many of us have been making to the Bible since we were children in VBS years (even decades ago) still holds true. "I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word. I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path and will hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God." That's the Scriptures' purpose and power. When we have lost our way in life, the Word illumines our path. When we are not sure how we should conduct ourselves, the Word is our lamp and our guide. When we are desperate for a word of encouragement, the Word offers us the way and words of life. And if we follow these words and hide them in our heart, they will lead us rightly. Of that we can be certain.

Richard Kremer is pastor of Garden Lakes Baptist Church in Rome.

OPPORTUNITIES, NEWS, & REPORTS



2012 CBF/GA State Mission Offering

CBF/GA will be mailing **State Mission Offering packets** in early August.

These packets will include

- a brochure about CBF/GA's ministries,
- information sheets about our church starts and Cooperative Student Fellowships,
- offering envelopes (regular and pew size),
- a letter from Frank and Laura explaining the purpose and direction of the offering,
- a PowerPoint presentation,
- a poster, and
- Frank and Laura's business cards.

Churches may order as many information sheets, envelopes, and posters as they wish for promotion of the offering.

To request a 2012 State Mission Offering packet or for more information, contact Kelley Dixson at 478-742-1191, ext. 26 or kdixson@cbfga.org.

CSF Mercer (continued from page 8)

together has come in our spiritual growth. Due to the great fellowship time we spent together, the students helped to create a safe space where all felt welcome to address important issues in Christianity today.

As a group, we addressed a new understanding of biblical framework through the help of Brian McLaren's *A New Kind of Christianity* in the fall semester. The study helped with discussions about thinking beyond the traditional understandings of biblical interpretation, especially in relation to some of the hot topics students face daily on campus.

We spent the spring semester studying the book of Matthew, read alongside Georgia Baptist hero Clarence Jordan's interpretation in *The Cotton Patch Gospel*. Jordan presents scripture with a local flavor that brought us laughs while providing thoughts to reflect upon during our time together. The students took the study seriously, and it is through this that we became a greater fellowship of believers.

CSF Mercer is a special ministry, one which CBF/GA churches should be proud to support. The seeds you have planted in local congregations across Georgia, as well as congregations beyond the state borders, continue to grow at CSF as we develop the leaders for the next generation of the Church. I hope you continue to join us in this journey as we fellowship, serve, and grow together. CBF/GA

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or 478-742-1191, ext. 23.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Budget Receipts as of 06-30-2012

Year to Date.....	\$ 236,697.61
Requirement.....	\$ 301,478.46
Over/Under.....	\$ (64,780.85)
April Contributions.....	\$ 31,979.46
April Requirement.....	\$ 50,246.41
Over/Under.....	\$ (18,226.95)

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EVENTS CALENDAR

■ **September 23-25**
Preaching Consultation
King and Prince Beach and Golf Resort
St. Simons Island

■ **October 5-7**
ReCharge
Woodland Christian Camp, Temple

■ **November 4-5**
CBF/GA Fall General Assembly
First Baptist Church of Griffin

2013

■ **January 18-20**
Georgia Youth Choir Festival 2013
Calvin Center, Hampton

■ **March 1-3**
March Mission Madness 2013 - Macon

■ **March 8-10**
March Mission Madness 2013 - Rome

■ **March 22-24**
March Mission Immersion 2013
Calvin Center, Hampton

LAUGHING
YOUR WAY
TO **GRACE**

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia
2012 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Sunday-Monday, November 4-5
Hosted by First Baptist Church of Griffin

Fellowship ... Worship ... Business ...
plus a little fun and celebration!
Susan Sparks will be our keynote speaker.

Mark your calendar!

