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THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

JUNE 20, 2004

Worth Saying Again

These articles appeared in the June 1999 issue of this publication. They seem as relevant in June of 2004 as they did then. I trust the readers will find a fresh challenge with this re-heating of a five year old meal. I was tempted to season the articles a bit, but decided to just serve them as they are.

DRIFTING ALONG WITH THE TUMBLING TUMBLE WEEDS

Readers who are near my age must immediately associate the title with Bob Nolan's song, especially as sung by Roy Rogers and the Sons of the Pioneers. Those twenty and under, who know neither the song nor the singers, are the poorer for that lack. For the older generation, I mention that the song was originally written as "tumbling autumn leaves"; had he not changed the words, I doubt you or I would have ever heard it.

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this and that

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J. Alan Wolf

Gary Roland

May has been my favorite month since I was a boy in Indiana. The arrival of May signified important things to me: (1) school would be out soon, (2) Mom's birthday was on the 12, (3) Mothers Day was coming, (4) the world's two greatest sporting events (the Kentucky Derby and the Indianapolis 500) would occur, (5) Memorial Day with its parades and the annual trip to the family graves was the climax of the month.

Now I have another reason in my later years to be grateful for May. During the 30th Commencement Exercises, Pensacola Christian College conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity on this preacher. It was an act of gracious kindness by Dr. Arlin Horton and the College to do this. May the LORD be glorified.

—Pastor Manley

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JUNE 20, 2004.

WORTH SAYING AGAIN

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OR AN EXCELLENT CO-WORKER, BUT HE OR SHE WILL NOT BE HAPPY IN THIS CHURCH, BUT WILL INSTEAD BE VERY UNHAPPY AND VERY SOON HE OR SHE WILL BECOME MOST MISERABLE.

THAT IS BOTH A GUARANTEE AND A PROMISE. YOU AND I ARE NOW IN AGREEMENT, RIGHT?

If so, we can stand together and declare that while the Heritage Baptist Church Of Pensacola is open to ANYBODY, the Heritage Baptist Church of Pensacola is not the church for EVERYBODY.

The Heritage Baptist Church of Pensacola is now, and, as ordered by the Chief Shepherd, shall continue to be, solely through His grace, a New Testament Church founded upon the Bible as the sole and final authority for all matters of faith and practice; operating with the autonomy, full, complete, and total, of the local church; where the priesthood of the believer is both believed and practiced; where the Lordship of Jesus Christ is admitted and accepted; where the order is the immersion of believers (upon a credible confession of faith) and reception by the church, to be followed by the Lord's Table; where salvation and security by grace is preached and loved and guarded; and where the separation of church and state is still the watchword.

—Pastor Manley

Reprint permission always granted; acknowledgment is appreciated.

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*where the so-called "Christian rock" or
 contemporary music is used,
 where political activism in marches and
 picketing is endorsed and promoted,
 where he or she can be "at ease in Zion,"
 where standards of separation are ignored
 where members can live in immorality without
 facing discipline,
 which is a convention bound or an association
 tied church or is a fellowship dominated
 church,
 where having unity is more important than
 being godly,
 where a deacon board controls the church
 where the pastor is the dictator,
 where the pastor is a puppet on a string,
 where "approved" denominational materials are
 used,
 which is a perfect church
 where there are no faults,
 where there are no problems,
 where there are no needs;
 THEN,
 PLEASE,*

**LET IT BE KNOWN TO ANY PERSON SEEKING
 SUCH A CHURCH THAT THE HERITAGE BAPTIST
 CHURCH OF PENSACOLA IS NOT THE CHURCH TO
 CONSIDER JOINING. HE OR SHE SHOULD KNOW
 THAT SUCH A PERSON MAY BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR,**

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No generation of that people called Baptist is more fittingly described by Bob Nolan's western song than the contemporaneous melange masquerading as Baptists. Many individuals now assuming the name Baptist seemingly have no concept of what that use of that name implies. Taking the name Baptist is to accept a name that connotes life but many of those carrying that ancient and honored name are themselves, instead, "grave-yard dead."

The venerable name of Baptist, easily traceable through a trail of martyrs' blood, has a two millennia pedigree that provides a clearly discernible definition. It is an honorable name established by a relationship to specific and distinctive doctrines that have identified individuals and churches, though widely separated in both time and location, as being 'Baptist.' There are various ways to identify the particular doctrines that have marked these people called Baptist. Perhaps, the easiest is to focus on those peculiar teachings for which men and women have been forced to give their lives. The issue of whether Sunday School should start at nine, nine-thirty or ten may have split Baptist churches, but no Baptist was ever willing to die over the time to start a service. Many are the things that individual Baptists have preferred, even to the point of fighting each other; but only the purity of doctrine has called for martyrdom. Baptists, since the days of

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the apostles, have been willing to die for doctrine and have done so by the millions. Those identifying doctrines that cost them their lives may be summarized very simply. Other Baptists may list them in a different order or state them in other terms, but the result will be the same. Baptists have lived and died contending for certain narrow truths. Whether Bogard, Armitage, Vedder, Christian, Torbet, Cross, Carrol, Newman, Orchard, Jarrel, Cramp, Mason, Hoard, Parker or Manley, Baptist and other historians affirm that Baptist men and women died because they believed these truths.

1. The Bible is the sole and final authority for all matters of faith and practice.
2. Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, and He alone is the Lord, the Chief Shepherd, of the church.
3. The local church is autonomous.
4. Every individual believer is a priest before God and has personal soul liberty.
5. Baptism is for believers only, having nothing to do with obtaining salvation, and is by immersion administered through the authority of the church upon a credible confession of faith by the individual seeking baptism.
6. Salvation is by grace and by grace alone.
7. There is to be a separation of church and state.

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biblical in mandate. Yet, are there not also other barriers, which are as valid, reasonable, and scriptural?

CAN IT BE THAT THE SUBJECT IS NOT FINISHED YET?

I submit that the following barriers are scriptural; and, therefore, entirely as right, proper, valid, and reasonable as the ones we have already accepted. If so, then these additional barriers are as firm, as restrictive, and as conditional as were the previously accepted barriers. The conclusion is obvious. The Heritage Baptist Church of Pensacola is not the church for everyone.

IF A PERSON IS LOOKING FOR A CHURCH--which supports an interdenominational or ecumenical program,

where the King James Version has been replaced, where "baptistic" has replaced Baptist in practice, where doctrine is a subject to be debated, where practice is subject to cultural adaptations, where cultic teachings are tolerated, where the charismatic movement is acceptable, where "anything" is tolerated in the name of missions, where fellowship is extended to those who compromise doctrine, which is a "spiritual social club,"

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husband is possessed by a demon. He is not saved. Besides, I am in love with '____' and when his wife dies and when God kills my husband, I will marry him."

Yet Sunday morning, they came down the aisle smiling and requesting membership in the church. Needless to write, I could not and, therefore, did not present them to the church as candidates for acceptance as members.

ALL THIS SOUNDS BOTH SENSIBLE AND REASONABLE TO ME; HOW ABOUT TO YOU?

I believe that I have provided sufficient evidence to prove my premise. Church membership must be restrictive and remains conditional. Therefore, will you not agree with me that unrepentant and continued indulgence in doctrinal heresy as well as moral heresy (impurity) ought to be "good and sufficient" grounds to prevent anyone from receiving baptism and church membership; and, that unrepentant and continued indulgence in doctrinal or moral heresy ought to be "good and sufficient" grounds to discipline anyone from the membership of a church. Certainly, you should agree with these restrictive barriers as being both right and proper to be erected. Only a person with a vested interest in opposing their application would raise any objections to their use. These are obviously sound in logic and in reason as well as

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The fact of simply holding a belief in these (as I list them) seven doctrines has been the death sentence for *millions* in the past, is today being the charge bringing imprisonment and/or death for tens of thousands, and will be a capital offense in the dark days yet to be on this earth. The persecution of Baptists started early and is not yet over.

In our day, this historic and honorable name has been usurped by brigands that have no concept of the meaning behind the word. Those using the name today fall into *several* categories: *those who are, those who are not and know they are not, those who are not but who think they are, and those who use the name but do not know what they are.* Without apology or hesitation, I write that a multitude of preachers, churches and schools that lay claim to being Baptist in 1999 do so under false pretenses with a deliberate intent to deceive. They do not walk in the footsteps of Keach, Spurgeon, Clarke, Bunyan, Ireland, Backus, Carey, Pendleton, Judson, Graves, Holmes, Carroll, Doane, Lowery, Norris, Lee, Rice, Truett, or the multitude of others whose names would fill this volume and many more like it. They are not Baptists in any accurate use of the word. Instead, they have swooped like vultures upon the doctrine of soul liberty, separating it from all other truth, thereby using it as an occasion to the flesh. In doing so they have perverted that

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blessed truth into a lying license to believe anything and to do everything they might choose.

Soul liberty, the priesthood of the believer, has never been believed or taught by true Baptists so as to supersede the *Lordship* of Jesus Christ or the supremacy of the written word of God. Every soul is individually accountable before God for him/herself; but no soul is free to do that which is right in his/her own eyes in direct or indirect conflict with the revealed will of God as recorded in His word. True Baptists are not spiritual anarchists. They willingly bow the knee to Christ, but only to Him. Pseudo-Baptists, counterfeits, frauds, and phonies abound in such numbers that the use of the name is no guarantee of how it is being used or what it is representing. No honest soul would attempt to pass him/herself as a Baptist baby-sprinkler or a Baptist Charismatic, but such abnormalities and perversions are attempted to be passed in the currency of the day. Baptists, among other things, do not 'speak in unknown tongues,' do not receive 'special words and new revelations,' do not deny the virgin birth, do not mock the blood of Christ, and do not hang around with those who do.

Some preachers, churches, and schools (and I must and do credit them) with more honor and integrity than the afore mentioned counterfeits, carefully claim only to being 'baptistic.' While the fact that they borrow some truth and label it as

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agreement with the doctrinal statement of the church.

WOULD YOU NOT ALSO DENY MEMBERSHIP TO SOMEONE INVOLVED IN MORAL HERESY?

Surely, you would not wish me to present anyone for *church* membership, if I have knowledge that the person is living an impure moral life (as in adultery, living with someone "without benefit" of marriage, homosexuality, lesbianism, murder, stealing, etc.). While any individual is welcomed to hear the gospel, including those who would come under that listing, church membership is rightly and biblically denied to all who are engaging in these sins. Sadly, I also have had to take that exact step.

COULD THERE BE ANY OTHER POSSIBLE REASONS TO DENY MEMBERSHIP?

Obviously, I have not attempted to cover every conceivable reasonable ground upon which to deny membership and could not do so, even if I tried. There are many and varied situations that might arise, some occurring only once in a lifetime (I hope!). A married couple once presented themselves for membership in a church on a Sunday morning. That very couple had told me during the previous week the following facts.

The Husband: "Pastor, my wife is not saved. She is mentally unbalanced." The Wife: "Pastor, my

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church was a Baptist church and that Baptists historically had believed in both grace and security and asked her why she had ever decided to join a Baptist church in the first place? She said, "The pastor who was here before you came said it made no difference what I believed about security."

I asked her if I could show her from her Bible why *Baptists* believe in security and she replied, "Absolutely not!" She declared that she would be happier in a Pentecostal church. I replied that I did not know whether she would or not, but I was positive that she would no longer be happy in that particular Baptist church.

I will not knowingly present anyone for membership who has not received believer's baptism under the authority of a local New Testament Church. I recall a person who thought that the sprinkling she had *been* given as a baby ought to be sufficient for anyone; after all, she herself was satisfied. I also have known those who thought that "any" baptism ought to be adequate, even if it was a baptism to "wash away sins" or only "spirit" baptism.

Let this truth be clearly understood, a person can (and has the God given right to) believe anything he or she desires to believe. Each individual has that right and that opportunity, which, by the way, is the Baptist doctrine of soul liberty, the priesthood of the believer. However, membership in this church is, and should be, contingent on doctrinal integrity and

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Baptist is a compliment to Baptists, one must acknowledge that a difference exists between reality and imitation. I rejoice that they have seen partial truth, I only desire that they might accept the whole truth. The admixture of the errors to which they continue to hold separates *them* from Baptists *even in their own mind*. I do not challenge their salvation or question their sincerity; but, they are baptistic and I am a Baptist. I have never cared to have much involvement with things that are 'ic-y' [pronounced -"iky"]; I much prefer that which retains purity.

Other preachers, churches, and schools have finally done something with some measure of decency and integrity after years of misrepresentation and prevarication. As Dr. Art Wilson wrote, "some churches are dropping the name Baptist and others ought to do so." For those preachers who are 'clean' enough to come out of the closet, confessing that they have long stolen Baptist money through willful deception, and who acknowledge that they are no longer (*and, likely, never were*) Baptists, I offer my gratitude for their 'honesty,' late though it be. Perhaps, having converted themselves, they would now like to 'out' others who are even now as they once were. Was it not pirates who flew false colors in order to capture treasures? Many the once stalwart Baptist church that now sails under a different banner.

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However, there remains another dangerous group flying the Baptist flag. Blown by the winds of satanic influence, caught on the tide of contemporary trends, and tossed by the waves of the advice of experts, the super-majority of today's Baptists might be *described*, at best, as a school of debilitated jellyfish and, at worst, a floating assembly of dead seaweed. Jellyfish, even debilitated, are a living organism; drifting, dead seaweed is merely the residence of some life forms. These are folk far more like the tumbleweeds of the west than the cedars of Lebanon. They have no doctrinal anchor to weather the tempests and no principles of truth to root them in place to withstand the storms. They carry the name Baptist, but the hirelings have failed to teach them the doctrine of the word of God. Ill fed and malnourished, they are easily victims of deceitful wolves. These good folk need a shepherd that cares for the flock instead of devouring the sheep. Men have too long stood in Baptist pulpits and failed to preach the whole counsel of God.

After *several* generations of concise, neat "three alliterated points and a poem" conversations from the pulpit, most believers claiming to be Baptists would not recognize sound doctrine were they to meet on the street. In the typical Baptist church, the sermons of the past year did not include the words justification, propitiation, providence,

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be judged.")

**WOULD YOU CONSIDER DOCTRINAL HERESY AS
A VALID REASON TO DENY MEMBERSHIP?**

Doctrinal heresies must be considered valid and *sufficient* grounds to prevent any person from being received into the membership of a church. Years ago, I discovered a "church" in Colorado that openly stated that it allowed anyone to join that "church" and therefore had both saved and unsaved members! Such a concept is at once ridiculous and repulsive. No person is a valid, proper, qualified candidate suitable for church membership who cannot give a clear and credible confession of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her personal Saviour. It is absurd to contemplate otherwise.

I once refused to present a man for membership in *this* church because he plainly confessed that he could not believe that Jesus Christ was God manifested in the flesh, the very Son of very God. Because of that heresy, he was not a proper subject for baptism and I told him so. Yet, other heresies would also be proper reasons for denying membership to anyone. I recall, in a new pastorate, a member who was greatly offended when I preached "salvation and security by grace." When she "informed" me of her disapproval and "advised" me she was Pentecostal, I reminded her that the

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in attendance.

I make no apology in stating that should a person *attend* a service and suddenly decide that he or she is "led" to interrupt that service by speaking in an "unknown" tongue, I would be "led" to interpret that "unknown" tongue in a "known" tongue and dismiss his or her service however necessary. I say this though I know that charismatics often have been present in services where I have preached.

I have never permitted smoking in a preaching service. *Once*, many years ago, while preaching in a youth camp, I had a young man escorted from a service because of that very issue.

Would you not now agree that there are indeed certain activities and certain attire and certain conduct (and unquestionably not all have been listed either) that could and should be barred from a church service?

If there are any valid and proper reasons (and surely you must now agree that there are such reasons) for placing a firm barrier in the way of someone attending or remaining in a service, there unquestionably must be equally valid reasons for preventing *someone* from obtaining membership in a church or retaining that membership once it has been obtained. (If possible, do not judge me for having written such a harsh judgmental statement, because, as you know, it is written "judge not, lest ye

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Godhead or trinity, holiness, or sanctification. Often the only mention of the word 'election' in a Baptist pulpit is when some particular candidate or officeholder is castigated.

Doctrinal messages are considered antediluvian and impractical. Sermons on Baptist distinctives are extinct. It is embarrassing how many Baptist *preachers* cannot identify Baptist distinctives and do not own a Baptist theology. It is considered divisive to preach doctrine. It is most likely that the typical Baptist preacher could not define the differences between Biblical, Historical, Dogmatic, Systematic, and Practical Theology. I can recall asking ten young Baptist preachers if they would list the fundamentals of the faith and found they could not. I can remember asking an ordination candidate why he was seeking Baptist ordination and hearing him reply, "I believe in baptism by immersion." I even now see an article where the pastor of one of the largest Baptist churches in America responded to a question that he is a Baptist because that was the nearby church he joined after he was saved. There was a day when Baptists became Baptists by conviction and not through convenience.

Today, *many* are baptized into a Baptist church and, thereafter, call themselves Baptists, even though they can neither define nor defend what a Baptist is.

An entire growth industry has arisen to provide

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crowd-drawing sermons for Baptist preachers. Several organizations are willing to provide slick packages of well-prepared 'promotions and sermons' especially designed for over extended preachers and to do so at a most modest fee. The solicitations that regularly come to my attention include several formats from basic to complete. As I was making a purchase in a hardware store recently, the salesman asked "Do you get any of your sermons from the Internet?" I remarked that I stayed away from the Internet since I still felt lost using the telephone when the operator did not ask "Number please." He then advised me that he had read where most Southern Baptist preachers were getting their messages from the net. Perhaps that is true; if so, then it is tragic. Somehow, I cannot imagine R. G. Lee, Vance Havner, or George Truett preaching a message obtained *via* the Internet. Those men received their sermons on their knees with an opened Bible.

The problem with Baptists today is found in two words: *Baptist* preachers. Pastors have become executives; churches have become enterprises.

Ministerial success is measured in only two ways, the size of the church and the size of the crowd. 'How many?' is the only question asked. Baptist churches have been 'super-sized.' Baptist churches no longer have pulpits for preaching; they have stages for entertainment. The pulpits of wood

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church or even to prevent them from later becoming a member of that church? Are not the church doors always open to everyone? If these statements express the internal opposition you are feeling to the title, perhaps you and I could begin by finding some common ground in this statement:

"Barriers should never be erected to restrict any sincere person from attending the public services of a church."

At least, that statement expresses what both my private and my public position has been for over thirty years. Without regard to whom or to what he or she might be, anyone is welcome to attend the public services of this church and to hear the gospel, if he or she comes to the service in sincerity.

THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES MAY MAKE MY TITLE NOT SEEM QUITE SO STRANGE AS YOU FIRST THOUGHT.

Surely, you would agree that a person should not be welcomed who comes for the intentional purpose of disturbing or disrupting the service. I would not hesitate to tell a noisy drunk to be silent or to leave the service; and if he did not conform to one or the other, he (or she) would quickly find that the sheriff and I both take a very dim view of a person creating a disturbance within a church service. This is true, though I have preached with inebriated individuals

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through the centuries? Of course, it is "Drifting along with the tumbling tumble weeds."

Actually, the following article was reprinted in the June 1999 issue from an earlier issue in the 1980's. It is more needed today than when it was first written in tract form in the 1970's.

**THE HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH OF
PENSACOLA IS NOT
THE CHURCH FOR EVERYBODY**

Does this title appear to suggest a strange topic to you? It did to some readers in the 1980's, when it was first published.

The title may be more than a little jarring to you and may not be at all what you expected to find written by a pastor. It may even run contrary to what you have (or at least think you have) always heard from preachers. Perhaps, you may consider this a strange subject to find included in a church publication. After all, is not the name of the game to have as many in attendance as possible? Is not everyone welcome in a church?

Should there ever be any barriers erected to prevent anyone from attending the services of a

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(Nehemiah 8:4-6) have been replaced with removable, plastic, crossed-shaped podiums. Churches have constructed gymnasiums costing millions in order to attract the clamoring crowds while widows and orphans are neglected. Pure religion and undefiled is not fulfilled in catering to the exercise of the flesh. Preachers in Baptist pulpits ape Willow Creek and Wal-Mart more than they resemble Antioch and Berea. Services are choreographed. Sermons are calculated. Preachers are interested in production at the lowest bottom line.

Without shepherds, Baptists have become sheep without folds. The importance of the church to Baptist has diminished. In days past, Baptists were known as 'folks who are there when the doors are opened.' They came together because they were drawn by the longing for fellowship with the saints and the desire for the preaching of the Book. Baptists are no longer 'people of the Book'; they are people of programs. Promotions have replaced revivals as a means of attracting people. Individuals are not drawn through the power of prayer and the foolishness of preaching; instead, they are assembled through the slickness of the advertising, the relevancy of the entertainment, and a lot of foolish preaching. Many so-called sermons are far more entertaining than convicting. Where one to remove the fabricated stories, the joke-book

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frivolity, the one-liners, and the book found illustrations, what is left would not convict an Arkansas hound dog of having fleas. Unbelievably, I have both heard and read sermons delivered by Baptist preachers where the only scripture used was that of the text. All else was entertainment.

Where amusement is not the chosen device, pop-psychology is. Whatever was consuming the attention of the world last winter becomes the summer message of Baptist preachers. Rather than preaching *the* life-giving word of the eternal God, preachers are espousing warmed-over Freud, gleaned from the latest self-esteem book.

Almost weekly, I receive an invitation to purchase a 'plan' guaranteed to double our attendance. If I follow every detail and do not succeed, I can receive my money back. No week's mail fails to deliver an offer of sermons for a year. 'Reduction of preparation time' and 'the ability to be fresh' at the same time is the attractive sales pitch. I once asked Dr. Frank Bumpus how he managed to stay fresh in the pulpit week after week, year after year. He replied that he always found it wise to take a bath on Saturday night and to use a good deodorant. Better to follow his advice than to deliver warmed over, pre-cooked micro-wave meals, gleaned not from study and prayer, but received in the mail for a buck fifty each. To borrow a phrase used in a different context from Torrence, the average

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sermon today is as "weak as a rained-on bee."

Brethren, while the old cowboy song well describes *contemporary* Baptists, the sad fact is that the song actually contains more biblical theology than the average 'new millennium bound' Baptist knows and far better preaching than he/she hears from the pulpit. For instance, consider these lines from the song.

"See them tumbling down, pledging their love to the *ground*"—the tumbling and drifting comes from a love of the ground, certainly not a yearning for heaven.

"*Cares of the past are behind*"—not for the average Baptist. He/she keeps them packed up in the old kit trunk and carries them around all day.

"Nowhere to go but I'll find just where the trail will *end*"—untaught, Baptists no longer see the field white unto harvest and the laborers few; they have eyes only for the pursuit of pleasure.

"I know when night has gone that a new world's *born at dawn*."—Baptists do not seem to realize they are living in the night. They plod along thinking everything is fine and the world is getting better, becoming a more comfortable place to live today than yesterday. Frankly, they are not looking for the dawn of the Lord's return to bring a new world.

"I'll *keep* rolling along, deep in my heart is a song"—what modern song has replaced the song in the heart of the Psalmist and that in Baptists

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