

## FROM THE EDITOR

# TONGUES ON FIRE

Ever since conservatives regained control of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), America's largest Protestant denomination has found itself embroiled in a variety of theological controversies. Critics claimed that once the battle had been won, the conservatives would turn and start taking aim at each other. Their prognostications were not far off the mark. Heated debates have ensued over egalitarianism, Calvinism, elder-rule, the Emergent church, social drinking, and support for President Bush's Iraq policy.

While some applaud the conservative direction in which the SBC is moving, others interpret the Convention's rightward swing as a move toward a rigid fundamentalism.

The latest controversy to surface is speaking in tongues. The SBC International Mission Board recently banned anyone who prays in tongues from being appointed as an IMB missionary. This action has caused a groundswell of reaction from the religious media as well as from bloggers who use the internet to make their voices heard.

In an effort to separate fact from fiction, we have chosen to examine the tongues issue in the Fall 2006 edition of the *Criswell Theological Review*. We open with an exclusive interview with Dr. Tom Hatley, who served as Chair of the IMB Board of Trustees when the tongues resolution was passed. Tom tackles some difficult questions and gives us an insider's account into the reasoning behind the decision. Whether one agrees or not with the new tongues policy, all who read this interview will come to view Tom Hatley as a man of God who serves the Lord with a clear conscience.

Edward Watson, Assistant Professor of Biblical Literature at Oral Roberts University (OK), and a licensed Baptist minister, in his "A History

of Influence: The Charismatic Movement and the SBC," presents a highly readable and balanced account of Pentecostalism's impact on the SBC throughout the twentieth century. Most readers will be surprised to learn that John Osteen, Joel's father and founder of Lakewood Church in Houston, actually served on the Executive Committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas in the mid-1950s, before embracing tongues and other charismatic practices.

While the Charismatic movement attracts many laypeople and clergy into its ranks, just as many leave the movement in disillusionment. Roger E. Olson, a highly respected scholar and Professor of Theology at Truett Theological Seminary (TX), is such a person. In his article, "Confessions of a Post-Pentecostal Believer in the Charismatic Gifts," Olson recounts his spiritual and intellectual journey out of Pentecostalism and into the Baptist fold.

The next contributor, Paul G. Chappell, a recognized Charismatic scholar and Vice President of King's College and Seminary (CA), traces the historical development of the doctrine that tongues is the initial evidence of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. This classical treatment will be very informative for our non-Charismatic readers. Dr. Chappell recently suffered a heart attack and a small stroke. Please pray for his full recovery.

"The Incompatibility of a Christian Perspective and Sign Gifts," by Barry K. Creamer, Associate Professor of Humanities at Criswell College (TX), tackles the issue of cessationism. Are miraculous manifestations, particularly the sign gifts, in operation today? Dr. Creamer approaches the topic from a perspective that few readers will have ever considered.

*CTR* concludes with Malcolm B. Yarnell's sermon, "The Heart of a Baptist." A distinguished graduate of Duke (NC) and Oxford (UK) universities, Dr. Yarnell serves as Associate Professor of Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (TX). This message, which was preached at a Criswell College chapel service, shows that scholarship and passion can co-exist in the heart of a Baptist.

We conclude this issue with a series of relevant book reviews. David Brooks, the *CTR* review editor, is always looking for scholars to review recently published books. If you are interested, contact him at [dbrooks@criswell.edu](mailto:dbrooks@criswell.edu).

Our Spring 2006 edition of *CTR*, which featured articles on the Emergent church movement, was well-received. Denny Burk, Assistant Professor of Greek and NT at Criswell College mentioned it on his blog and, as a result, the journal became a subject of discussion on scores of other Christian blog sites. We received numerous requests for the issue and gained

many subscribers. Which leads to a reminder that if your subscription is about to expire, renew quickly. Our Spring 2007 edition will focus on War and Peace. Many outstanding authors are contributing articles including Stanley Hauerwas and Richard Land, among others. You do not want to miss this issue.

Before closing, I invite you to visit our webpage: [www.criswelljournal.com](http://www.criswelljournal.com) where you can find a selection of past articles.

Yours for Christ and the Kingdom,  
R. Alan Streett, Ph.D.  
Editor