

Convocation Address
September 1, 2006
Union University
David S. Dockery, President

**“Between Galatians and Colossians:
A Renewed Vision for Baptist Higher Education”**
Galatians 1:6-9; 2:20-21; Colossians 1:15-20; 2:6-9

Our identity statement at Union University says that we are an academic community, affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention, equipping persons to think Christianly and serve faithfully in ways consistent with our core values. We have often said that we are an institution that is evangelical by conviction and Baptist by tradition. Three years ago with this Convocation address we attempted to define what it means to be an institution that is evangelical by conviction, so today we think together corporately about the meaning of Union University, a place that is Baptist by tradition.

Early Baptist Education

What does that tradition look like? This tradition in the United States stretches back into the 18th Century, and it's very important to us. But recently a *New York Times* article (July 22, 2006), which received national attention, suggested that Baptist institutions that want to be faithful in the academy, to reach the top level of work of academic excellence, perhaps need to cut their ties with their Baptist associations. The article raised a very important question, “do religion and education go together?” Is it possible for Christian commitment to be compatible with serious intellectual inquiry? It raises the question for us today at Union University. Can Union University be faithful to our Baptist heritage, and at the same time, participate in the Academy in the larger work of colleges and universities across this country among the top tier institutions. We were pleased this year that *U. S. News and World Report* recognized Union University for the tenth straight year as a top tier institution in the South, ranking in the top ten in six subcategories, recognizing the tremendous quality of our faculty, the outstanding students who are here, and the kind of academic excellence that permeates what we do on a day to day basis. But the article raised a very important question, and one which I think we need to explore today. Can Union University be faithful

to our Baptist heritage and at the same time be an institution that participates among the top tier institutions in the United States?

Baptist higher education actually began in this country in 1764, at what was called the College of Rhode Island, now known as Brown University. About 130 years after the founding of Harvard University, which was founded in 1636, and about 125 years after the founding of the First Baptist church in the United States, the First Baptist Church of Providence, Rhode Island, Baptists started the College of Rhode Island. Brown University now no longer thinks of itself in any way, shape, or form as having a Baptist identity.

The second institution that came along was Colby College (1813), which was a very fine Baptist institution in Maine for many years. Today it's one of the top liberal arts colleges in the United States, but no longer does it think of itself connected to Baptist life at all.

Colgate was an institution founded in the state of New York by the Baptist Society of Education in 1819, but today you can search high and low across Colgate University and not find anything that resembles a connection to Baptist life. If we understand these things and realize that the forerunner to this institution was founded in 1823, it provides Union University with a unique opportunity to carry on the work of Baptist life and the Baptist heritage for none of these other institutions continue to be related to a Baptist body in any way or in any form at this particular time. With this opportunity I believe comes a special responsibility.

Union University was actually established twenty years before the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention, and almost fifty years before the founding of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. We have been in existence since 1823 as the oldest private institution in the MidSouth, the oldest institution in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, and the oldest institution that continues to relate to a Baptist body. And so we think today about those shaping traditions that have made us who we are.

Baptist Shaping Traditions

Many Baptist historians talk about four shaping traditions. I will refer to these as “so-called” traditions, because I’m not as sure that these traditions are as clear-cut as some Baptist historians make them out to be. But the first of these in the South is what is known as the “Charleston Tradition.” The Charlestown Tradition developed out of the founding of the Charleston Association in South Carolina, which was the first Baptist association founded in the South in 1751. We

know it as a place that produced great leaders in the 19th Century, such as Richard Furman and Basil Manly, Sr.

The “Sandy Creek Tradition” arose out of the Sandy Creek Association, which was the second association established in the South. It was founded in North Carolina in 1758. Some have said that the Charleston Association is characterized by order and the Sandy Creek Association characterized by ardor, that is that they had a great deal of freedom in what they did. They were very different in many ways, but they shared a common Baptist commitment.

The Landmarkist tradition was one that was very important for Union University in the middle of the 19th Century, led by J. R. Graves and J. M. Pendleton (whose legacy can be found on the portrait that hangs outside the door of the Presidential Office here at Union University). J. R. Graves was the leader of Landmarkism, which was a very conservative movement in Baptist life. It emphasized the local church, as well as authority and polity. Some people want to distance Union from J. R. Graves and not connect with him, but if you’re here today as a female student at Union University, or a female graduate of this institution, you owe a great deal to J. R. Graves, for he is the one who in the 1880’s made the recommendation that women should be admitted as students here at Union University. The reality is that we all have much for which to be grateful to the Landmarkist tradition, even if today we don’t accept all of the tenets of this tradition. And the “Frontier Revivalist Tradition,” which went on to start the schools in Texas, particularly Baylor University, is the other shaping tradition.

But it’s the Charleston Tradition where we find a commitment to education and a commitment to serious scholarship. And we are the heirs of that tradition in so many ways. The Charleston tradition prioritized ordered worship and an educated clergy. The vision of Basil Manly, Sr., for higher education and theological education in Baptist life grows out of this Charleston Tradition. And his son, Charles Manly, served as President at Union University after the Civil War in the 1870s. We are the heirs of that Manly tradition, and we have a responsibility to carry on that commitment to serious scholarship, to quality education and at the same time, to the confessional foundation that has so influentially shaped Baptist life.

Ten Shaping Influences

But beyond these various geographical trajectories, we can think of about ten other things that have shaped Baptists so that we are who we have become at this particular time. 1) The British Baptists

influenced every aspect of Baptist life, for we trace the history of the first Baptist churches to 1607 in Britain. Two different streams—one flowing out of what is called the Particular Baptists which had more Calvinistic leanings, and the General Baptists which had more Arminian leanings. But both grow out of that British Baptist soil. 2) The Princeton influence was great, particularly in the 19th Century, for it was there that the two great thinkers, James Boyce and Basil Manly, Jr., were educated.

3) A third factor is pietism, which is so important in Baptist life. Often you hear people talk about Baptists as a people of the heart. I know many of you have heard a sermon that says something like this, “Don’t miss heaven by 18 inches, don’t just have a head knowledge of Christianity, because you need a heart knowledge as well.” That is pietism at its best, and pietism has influenced who we are as Baptists in ways in which we sometimes are even unaware.

4) Similarly, revivalism is very important across Baptist life, with its emphasis on conversionism and strong preaching.

5) We need to recognize that there are sometimes people who want to just say Baptists are either part of a confessional tradition, “the truth party,” or part of the experiential tradition, part of “the experience party.” I believe the reality is that we are both, and both simultaneously. There is not a single Baptist entity since the 17th Century that has not had an important confessional statement of faith. Beginning with the Particular Baptists, and then the General Baptists, the Great London Confessions of the 17th Century, the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, and the Philadelphia Confession here in this country, the Baptist Faith and Message of 1925, 1963 and 2000—all of these have shaped who we are and we are heirs of that confessional tradition. Baptists are now a credal people—there’s a difference. But we voluntarily agree to surround ourselves with a common set of beliefs and commit ourselves to them in order to move forward together.

6) Some have elevated this confessional tradition as the only tradition of Baptist life. The Truth Party is very, very important, but it is not all that there is, because the Experience Party is also an important part of who are—it’s an extension of Pietism and Revivalism. How many of you at Easter have sung these words: “He Lives, He Lives, Christ Jesus Lives Today, He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way. He lives, He lives, salvation to impart. You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart.” It’s a different answer than what we give when we sing “Jesus Love

Me.” We know Jesus loves me because “the Bible tells me so.” It’s also a different answer than C. S. Lewis gave in his case for “Mere Christianity,” where he provided all of the historical and philosophical arguments for the reality of Christianity. But often we celebrate the reality of the resurrection according to this song, based on the reality of our personal spiritual experience. So we need to hold the Truth Party and the Experience Party together for both are vitally important to who we are.

7) Pastor-Theologians are another shaping factor in Baptist life. The two most significant of these during the 20th Century were Herschel Hobbs and W. A. Criswell.

8) Around the 1950’s, liberal European theology began to make headway into Southern Baptist life. Liberalism had made great inroads into Northern Baptist life at the beginning of the 20th Century, but it began to have an influence in Southern Baptist life in the middle of the century.

9) The North American Evangelical trajectory, which included Carl F.H. Henry, Harold Ockenga, E. J. Carnell, Billy Graham, and the *Christianity Today* movement also shaped an aspect of who we are.

10) One cannot understand Southern Baptist life in 2006 without understanding it in light of the Conservative Resurgence that began in a public way in 1979. These ten things shape who we are, and in many ways we are a synergistic confluence of all of these things.

Markers of Baptist Identity

But I want to think together in a more focused way to understand what it means to be a Baptist. My friend, Timothy George, in the introduction to the work, *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, suggested that Baptists share many things with other Christians. Particularly he says that there are four things we share in common with other North American believers: 1) that the Baptist heritage is formed by orthodox Christian convictions; 2) that we are influenced by the larger evangelical tradition; 3) that we are heirs of the 16th Century Reformation; and 4) there is a connection with the great historic confessions. With these four overarching markers, George suggests that we can connect Baptists with other Christians. In addition he has identified four key Baptist distinctives which include: 1) the regenerate church; 2) baptism by immersion; 3) religious liberty; and 4) church-state issues.

Viewing the Baptist heritage from an outsider’s perspective, Mark Noll, a Presbyterian and Professor of History at Notre Dame

University, has suggested six distinctives of Baptist life: 1) believer's baptism instead of infant baptism, 2) voluntary ecclesiology instead of inherited/parish ecclesiology, 3) local organization of church life instead of state control or even denominational control, 4) biblical authority as priority over tradition, 5) populist biblical interpretation instead of interpretation by bishops or academics, and 6) Christian ordinances practiced as matters of obedience instead of sacraments practiced as a means of grace.

Challenges From Our Heritage

These are things that have shaped who we are as Baptists. They have shaped George Savage for whom this chapel is named. They have shaped I. M. Penick whose family name rests upon this building and who held the Perry Chair of Bible that Dr. George Guthrie now holds. It shaped John Jeter Hurt, who many think was one of the most important Baptist leaders in the South during the time when he was President at Union University. These things have shaped our heritage; they reflect who we are. But like each of us individually, we all have strengths and weaknesses. I have a few strengths but many weaknesses, and thus the need for many other administrators, faculty, and staff, as well as trustees to surround and complement me. And in Baptist life we need to understand that we have many strengths. They shape who we are, but we also have weaknesses that present challenges to us as we are trying to build the idea of Baptist higher education for the future.

1) The first of these is the emphasis on localism, populism, and voluntarism, all of which have frequently acted to spur renewal and mobilization for ministry, but often carry with them a lack of appreciation for formal intellectual life. 2) Second, the stress on conversion and piety has sometimes stood in the way of sanctified intellectual development and cultural engagement. 3) Third, the influence of Landmarkism has often kept us from appreciating the breadth of the Christian intellectual tradition through the centuries. 4) Fourth, we must acknowledge that the general culture of the South has sometimes carried with it an imbedded anti-intellectualism. 5) Fifth, the challenge of avoiding the pitfalls of liberalism while seeking to address the previous four challenges, which together often grow out of our populist revivalistic, pietistic heritage. 6) And sixth, the challenge of avoiding the pitfalls of fundamentalism associated with some aspects of the current Conservative Resurgence in the SBC.

Unity and Variety

With Bill Leonard, in his book *Baptist Ways*, we recognize that there is great variety in Baptist life. But we must not think that there is unlimited variety in Baptist life without boundaries or without a core. We need to recognize there is a core and there is a center to which we all must hold. We need to recognize that it is possible to be a Baptist and believe in a young earth or in an old earth. We can be amillennialists or premillennialists. We can be dispensationalists or postmillennialists. We can lean towards Calvinism or we can lean toward Arminianism. We can think differently about order or ardor. We can enjoy free worship or we can enjoy liturgical worship.

Yet, we also need to recognize that there is a center that is non-negotiable. It is important for us to clarify our confessional commitments and to reappropriate the very best of the Baptist heritage, which requires us to know something about it in order to carry it forward with us.

Basic Baptist Beliefs

In 1994 the Southern Baptist Convention unanimously adopted a resolution which acknowledged that “Southern Baptists have historically confessed with all true Christians everywhere belief in the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the full deity and perfect humanity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, sinless life, His substitutionary atonement for sins, His resurrection from the dead, His exultation to the right hand of God, and His triumphal return; and we recognize that born again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ may be found in all Christian denominations.” I was privileged to serve on that resolution committee and to help author that particular resolution. The resolution recognizes common Christian convictions shared by Baptists with other orthodox Christians who stand in continuity with the consensus of the early church on matters such as the truthfulness of Holy Scripture, the doctrine of God, and the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Leon McBeth was most likely right when he observed that Baptists have often used confessions not only to proclaim Baptist distinctives, but also to show how similar Baptists were to other orthodox Christians. Thus the Orthodox Confession of 1678 incorporated the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, in Article 38, declaring that: “all three ought thoroughly to be received and believed. For we believe that they must be proved, by undoubted

authority of Holy Scripture and are necessary to be understood of all Christians.”

Building on our heritage we will be ready to engage with the global Christian movement to recognize that Christianity is broader than just being Baptist, and that it's broader than just being Southern Baptist, that it's broader than just being Baptists in the South. We need to take a step back and see the amazing things that God is doing around the world. The Christian movement is alive and well in Asia, in Africa, in South America. Philip Jenkins, the Penn State University historian, has written a very important book called *The Next Christendom, the Coming of Global Christianity*. We stand on the forefront of seeing Christianity ready to explode in places where it has never done so before. Our Baptist forebearers recognized that this day was coming. About one hundred years ago E. Y. Mullins and A. T. Robertson led Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic to come together and form the Baptist World Alliance, to think globally about Christianity and about our Baptist work. We need to recognize the importance of what they did when they came together a hundred years ago. They demonstrated how significant it is to hold hands with believers around the world. And they acknowledged that the starting place for doing that was with a common confessional commitment. So they stood together as one and recited in unison the Apostles' Creed.

Developing Confessional Commitments

That starting place is good for us as well as we think about moving this project forward. We need to begin with the Apostles' Creed, and from there we can cultivate a holistic orthodoxy based on a high view scripture that is congruent with the great affirmations of the early church regarding the Trinity in Jesus Christ. We need also to find ways to avoid falling into the ditch on the left side of the road or the right side of the road, which is so easy to do. It seems so simple to avoid the ditches, but if you look at our history it is has often been the case of falling into one side or falling on the other, seeing the pendulum swing too far in one way or the other. I believe that if we reconnect with the great consensus fidei, the great confessional tradition of the church, we can avoid fundamentalist reductionism on the one hand, and liberal revisionism on the other. Fundamentalist reductionism fails to understand that there are priorities or differences in the Christian faith. Fundamentalists often fail to distinguish between saying “no” to the wrong kind of

movie and denying the deity of Christ. Liberal revisionism in its attempt to translate the Christian faith to connect with the culture has transformed it and revised it instead of translating it. To borrow words from the Apostle Paul, we are left with “no Gospel at all.”

Learning from the Apostle Paul

So I believe today we can turn to the Apostle Paul and find a way to steer our way clear between these two traps on either side of the road. The Apostle Paul writing to the Church at Galatia early in his ministry, warned them about Jewish legalism. He warned them about turning the Gospel into something that is not the Gospel. Paul stressed the importance of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and the freedom that is found in His grace.

About a dozen years later he had to correct a problem at the church in Colossae. And there he said, be aware of that religious philosophy which disguises itself as Christianity, which denies the very essence of the Christian faith, which denies that the fullness of the Godhead dwelled bodily in Jesus Christ. So the Apostle Paul was willing to address opponents coming from different directions and called his churches back to the center.

Toward a Renewed Vision for Baptist Higher Education

Some of you who are literalists have wondered where we were going today with the idea of “Between Galatians and Colossians.” If you were to count 130 verses from one side and 130 verses from the other, you would wind up at Ephesians 5:32. And there you find this statement that says, “This mystery is great--we are talking about Christ and the Church. “ That is what we want to do: To recommit ourselves to **being Christ-centered** and **church-connected**. John Paul II, the great leader of the Roman Catholic Church of recent years, in 1990 called for Catholic universities to reconnect their universities with the heart of the Church in a statement that he called “*Ex Corde Ecclesia*.” Today I think we can learn from our Catholic friends and seek to connect our Baptist institutions once again with the heart of the church, to be not only Christ-centered, but to be church-connected. In doing so we want to connect with the great confessional tradition through the years beginning with the Apostles’ Creed, Nicea, Chalcedon, and the great Baptist confessions. We recognize that none of these are infallible, but they’re all very important guides for us.

We need to recognize that in essentials, those things which are life and death upon Christianity either stands or falls, there is no place for compromise. Faith and truth are primary issues and we stand firm

in those areas. Sometimes we confuse primary issues and secondary issues. In secondary issues and third level and fourth level issues we need mostly love and grace as we learn to disagree agreeably. We want to learn to love one another in spite of differences, and to learn from one another with whom we differ.

But sometimes we have a hard time distinguishing essential matters from non-essential matters. Many of you, I know, have had to be taken to an emergency room after spraining your ankle or some similar injury at a softball game. When you arrive at the emergency room they said you'll just have to wait for just a while. The triage nurse pointed out there's someone over here with a head injury from an automobile accident, and someone else who is having a heart attack. These are life and death issues--we'll take care of them first, and then we'll come to take care of your ankle. It's not that your ankle sprain is unimportant, it's just that it's not as important as these other matters. Sometimes we want to elevate sprained ankles to the place of head injuries or heart attacks in the Christian faith, and we fail the Church badly when we do so. We need to be triage nurses in the way we think about Christian doctrine and theology as we seek to move this Baptist higher education project forward.

These examples perhaps help us understand that in essentials, faith and truth are primary and we may not appeal to love or grace as an excuse to deny any essential aspect of Christian teaching. In secondary matters then, love is primary, and we may not appeal to personal conviction or zeal as an excuse for failure to exercise grace or demonstrate love. Faith instructs our conscience. Love respects the conscience of others. Faith shapes our liberty; love and a concern for others in the context of Christian community limits its exercise.

I believe as we center our work upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ that we will build upon the ultimate foundation. We can connect with the great Christian intellectual tradition of the Church, which can provide insight for who we are and guide us for our future. I believe it's the knowledge of the past that will keep us from falling into the ditch on one side or the other. Historical awareness will help us avoid confusing what is merely a momentary expression from that which has enduring importance for the sake of the Church.

A renewed vision for Baptist higher education must have a connection to the Church. This University is decidedly not a church. But we must stay connected to the Church. James Burtchaell in his important work, *The Dying of the Light*, has surveyed dozens of

institutions across various traditions, beginning at Harvard University in 1636 to some recent 20th Century examples. His massive research seeks to show all of these institutions have seen the light of the Christian faith die out on these campuses. Burtchaell may be wrong about some of the particulars as he discusses each institution, but he is right about the one overarching theme that connects each and every one of those institutions—the moment they began to lose the connection with the Church is the day that the light began to die on their campus. We must remain connected to the Church. Let me say again that this University is not a church. We do things differently than the church. Yet, we are an extension of the church, an arm of the church, and thus we must remain connected.

I believe that if we do high quality academic work that we will be recognized in the academy, and we can do so while keeping our connection to the church. The challenge that is ours is to preserve and pass on the Christian tradition, while encouraging honest intellectual inquiry. It can be done by the brilliant minds that sit here in front of me, one of the greatest teaching faculties to be found on any campus in America, and the outstanding students (ranked among the top ten student bodies of Universities in the South by *U. S. News and World Report*) who are now enrolled at Union. Curious minds can be found all across this campus. We need to find ways to pass on the Christian tradition while encouraging genuine intellectual engagement in the areas of teaching, research, and scholarship. There is no place for anti-intellectualism on this campus. Union University is not a Bible college. Union University is not a training center. Union University is not a center for ministry. Those things have their place and they are important, but it's not our calling. We are called to be an academically rigorous university, grounded in the liberal arts tradition, seeking to understand the great ideas of history and engaging with the issues of our day. The only way that we can have an influence in the culture and in the academy is to pull these great minds together to think about these important matters.

Therefore, we recognize the place of academic freedom on this campus within a confessional context. We recognize that exploration across the disciplines is good, but there are some things we will not advocate. There are some things that are pre-decided in our Mission Statement, in our Core Values, in our Confessional Statement, in our Student Life Book, and in our Faculty/Staff Handbook. These confessional commitments bind us together as a community. Still, we want to encourage genuine exploration. At the same time we recognize

that free inquiry, untethered to tradition or to the church, often results in the unbelieving skepticism that characterizes so much of higher education today. The directionless state that we see as we look across much of higher education is often because many institutions have become disconnected from their tradition. Therefore, we need a renewed vision for Baptist higher education that will help us develop unifying principles for Christian thinking, founded on the tenet that all truth has its source in God, our Creator and our Redeemer.

As we do so we will struggle with many issues, because there are many issues for which we still see through a glass darkly, issues that are filled with ambiguities. Some things we'll just have to leave unanswered as we continue to struggle and wrestle together. Yet, we can envision a distinctive approach to higher education. What we are doing here is swimming upstream from the direction of the 2,500 other four-year accredited colleges and universities in the United States. This vision is even different from the several hundred other church-related institutions in the United States.

I believe that we must envision a distinctive vision that will connect us with our Baptist heritage and, in Burtchaell's words, keep the light burning at Union University. To do anything less would fall short of our calling as Christian scholars, teachers, and learners across this campus. We must not fail to recognize that there are many obstacles in our way. We must not be naïve to the challenges we will face, both from the culture and from the Church. There are those in the churches who would be satisfied if all we had was a warm-hearted place of piety that encouraged ministry and missions. We want to do that, but that's not ultimately what we are about. We are about Christian thinking and thinking Christianly, learning to think carefully, critically, and creatively, engaging the culture and engaging the academy. And as we do so, we need to be aware that some in the academy and in the culture will question the legitimacy of this project.

But I believe that ours is a calling which is extremely important, not just for 2006, not just to meet the goals of this University in 2010, but to equip the next generation so that they can be prepared and ready to face the challenges will that come in the 21st Century. These challenges could come from many directions. It could be evident in the persecution of the church, or in faithless scholarship that is so evident on many campuses and in many denominations, or even in the internal bickering within the churches.

What we need are bedrock, non-negotiable commitments to a belief in the Triune God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy

Spirit; to a belief that there is only one mediator, and that is Jesus Christ, and there is no other way to God except through Him; to a belief in a fully inspired and authoritative Bible and its wonderful message of God's justifying work of grace through faith revealed therein. We must stay connected to the church and to live in the light of the hope of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, which can transform our lives and make us a different kind of people, resulting in a life of prayer and holiness, obedience, and growth in Christ.

These bedrock commitments are not culturally confined. They're not even denominationally specific. These are things that cannot be easily expunged without great peril to ourselves personally and to this institution corporately, for the present and for its future. In the midst of a confused culture and the post-modern ethos of our day, we need to steer a clear course between the heirs of those who were the opponents of the Apostle Paul in Galatia and the heirs of the opponents of the Apostle Paul in Colossae. We need to avoid fundamentalist legalism on the one hand, and a secularized anti-Christian spirit on the other. We need commitments that are firm but loving, clear, but gracious, ready to respond to the numerous issues and challenges that will come our way, without getting drawn into every intramural squabble in the church or in the culture. We must again recognize our responsibility to be triage nurses to deal with those things which are primary and essential matters.

Conclusion

Why do I think these matters are so important? Because I believe we are at a unique moment in Baptist life. If your antennas are high and if you are listening, there are signs in the Baptist family to signal the beginning of a new humility. National and international issues coupled with denominational and cultural challenges will perhaps open the door for new opportunities. We will fail Union University if we fail to respond to this unique moment in Baptist life.

So this morning I would ask you to join with me in asking God to renew our vision for Baptist life, to renew our vision for Baptist higher education. We begin this new year by praying for one another across this campus, praying for our faculty and staff, for our students, for our trustee leadership, for those in the churches and in the community who support us. I believe that by God's good providence that there is an intersection between this unique moment in Baptist life and the people who have come together in this place. God has brought the right faculty here at the right time and the right staff

to serve this institution, the right students and the right trustee leadership, who together can corporately move this project forward to advance this distinctive mission for Union University.

So today we dedicate ourselves afresh, to leading this community toward academic excellence in teaching and scholarship, in research and service, as well as in personal discipleship and churchmanship across this campus. In doing so we have a unique opportunity to create a campus context to deepen and strengthen our dedication to our wonderful Baptist heritage, to connect with Savage and Penick and Hurt and the many who have gone before us. At the same time, we must lay hold of the best of the Christian intellectual tradition and carry it forward to engage the culture and engage the academy. Ours is a very unique calling. I pray that God in His providence and in His grace will allow us to be faithful to this kairos moment. May these things not be easily lost or forgotten. May they remain firmly sealed in both our minds and in our hearts for years and decades to come. May we join hands together to advance the distinctive mission of this University for the good of all concerned and for the Glory of our great God. May God's blessings rest upon this institution in the academic year 2006-2007.

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