

# Ministerial Training

## Seminars and Seminaries For The Training of Ministers

by Bob Allgood, Editor, The Cords of Truth

**Primitive Baptists, who trace their beginning back to the time Christ established the Church on the banks of the river Jordan, (although not by this name), have always been opposed to man-made institutions, (Seminars, Colleges and Seminaries), being used to "train and prepare" ministers to preach the gospel. They are never opposed to the method set forth by Paul in teaching Timothy (II Tim. 2:1-5), whereby a minister, such as a father in the ministry, teaches and guides a novice, as a son in the faith, who has been called of God to preach. Primitive Baptists believe that God calls only men whom he has endowed with a gift for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:8-12) and that these men will be taught and directed by the Holy Spirit in their efforts to minister (John 16:13).**

**A brief historical perspective proves the above Primitive Baptist position is true. We go back to 170 AD, and quote from The Concise History of Baptists by G.H. Orchard. "The first, and most fatal of all events to the primitive religion, was the setting up of a Christian academy at Alexandria. Christians had been reproached with illiteracy, and this seemed a plausible method to get rid of the scandal. --- In this school baptism was first associated with a learned education. --- In this school human creeds were first taught and united with baptism. In the apostolic days a simple expression of faith was required of each candidate (Acts 8:37), but in after-periods, to accommodate the ignorance of catechumens, short sentences were drawn up for the candidate to utter" (page 65). "Most of the churches at the end of this century assumed a new form. As the old disciples retired to their graves, their children, along with the new converts, both Jews and Gentiles, under the new ministers from the Alexandria school, came forward and new-modeled the cause. When the evil of the new system had developed itself, a new course of discipline was adopted; but the character of the community was changed, and purity with primitive simplicity took leave of such a mixtion" (page 111).**

**We now go forward to 1832 AD, and the division that took place between the "New School" or Missionary Baptist and the "Old School" or Primitive Baptist. I quote in part from the Blackrock Address: "We decidedly object to persons after professing to have been called of the Lord to preach His gospel, going to a college or academy to fit themselves for that service -- 1st. Because we believe that Christ possesses perfect knowledge of his own purposes, and of the proper instruments by which to accomplish them. --- 2nd. Because we believe that the Lord calls no man to preach His gospel, till he has made him**

**experimentally acquainted with that gospel, and endowed him with the proper measure of gifts, suiting the field he designs him to occupy; and the person giving himself up in obedience to the voice of Christ will find himself learning in Christ's own school". They go on to say, "As to Theological Schools, we shall at present content ourselves with saying that they are a reflection upon the faithfulness of the Holy Ghost, who is engaged according to the promise of the great Head of the church to lead his disciples into all truth. See John 16:13. Also, that in every age, from the school of Alexandria down to this day, they have been a real pest to the church of Christ -----". It has been quoted many times, "Those who will not learn from history are bound to repeat it".**

**Peter and John were perceived by the learned, "that they were unlearned and ignorant men" but "they marveled and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Paul was educated by the learned before his conversion, but afterward counted those things loss and as dung "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:4-11). I do not know of any Primitive Baptists who do not believe that ministers should "study to show themselves approved unto God" (II Tim 2: 15). The Scriptures are given for this purpose (II Tim. 3:16-17). A God called minister must 'rightly divide the word' and be taught of God "precept upon precept" and "line upon line" (Isa. 28:9-11). God has not chosen the wise men after the flesh, the mighty and noble among men, but the weak and foolish and base to confound the wise, that no flesh should glory in his presence. (I Cor. 2:29).**

**There may be some Primitive Baptist ministers who do not practice what the Scripture teach, but their disobedience can not justify the use of seminaries and seminars for the training of ministers. There are some Primitive Baptists who seem to agree about seminaries, but claim seminars or preacher's meetings qualify for the Biblical pattern. I disagree, and will try to prove my position from my personal experiences.**

**When I graduated from college in 1960, I began a secular career to try and become a successful tax accountant. I knew I would have to attend many seminars, which I did over the next 30 years. However, by January 1962, I found myself enrolled in a seminary (i.e. a Bible College) where I began my training at the hands of men in order to also become (as I was told) a successful Baptist minister. To become a trained accountant and a trained minister would require me to study much source material in both fields of what was then to be my 'expertise'. Having once traveled this road I feel somewhat qualified to write this article.**

**A seminar, by definition, is a scheduled meeting of a group of like-minded students who have a similar goal and wish to pursue the same particular course of study or action. They are**

students, regardless of their age, because something is taught at a seminar. Of course disinterested visitors can attend seminars to observe or enjoy the other benefits, such as food. My wife used to go to Tax Seminars with me for just such reasons.

A seminar may be called by many other names than a seminar. For instance we used to have a monthly seminar we called the Accountants Meeting - but we always had a speaker who taught about taxes. For Continuing Education Credits I had to attend seminars called 'Workshops' or 'Refresher Courses' but they were still seminars. A seminar by what ever name you call it is an educational or training session for those who want to be educated or trained.

**SEMINARS FOR THE CLERGY:** Seminars are not just for secular business professions. They are also held for the Religious Profession known as The Clergy: professional Ministers, Evangelist and Missionaries. Recently on one of the electronic mail exchange services, I had some e-mail conversations with some brethren known as Progressive PB's (who dominate the discussions on this particular service). I noticed a reference to their ministers as 'The Clergy'. This is a term we used "on the other side" as Missionary Baptists, along with our titles of 'Reverend'. In fact I used to have a little sticker and a license plate that identified me as a 'Clergy'. The 'Clergy' is a short name for the "Nicolaitans" which comes from Nicolos and means victorious over the people. From this comes the division of God's people into "Priest and Laity". While most Primitive Baptists do not use these terms, it is becoming more common to read in some articles and books written by some younger Primitive Baptist Elders the term 'Laity' or lay persons referring to non- Clergy, or the common church members. Such a classification of God's people is an abomination in the sight of God. Jesus said he hates such a doctrine and practice (Rev 3), and since Jesus hates it, so should his sheep.

As missionary Baptist ministers we had regular monthly Fellowship Meetings. Churches from the general area would get together for singing and preaching. The preachers were always few in number compared to the whole congregation. The host church took care of all the arrangements and the host pastor served as the preaching committee. There was no Agenda or an assigned theme, but preachers always preached their latest best sermon so they could share the outline with others. Even though the preachers might preach about ways we could: (1) be more effective ministers, (2) preach more effective sermons, (3) increase our attendance, (4) save more lost souls and (5) raise more money for the cause, since we never held any private sessions, I thought of this as a Fellowship Meeting, not a Seminar.

**A Seminar is a micro Seminary ! A Seminary (you see you only need to add a little 'y') is by definition "A school for training priests, ministers or rabbis". A Seminary is the extension or protracted days of a Seminar. So if people believe in having a Seminar -- they are not far away from believing in having a Seminary since Seminars are Mini Seminaries. Since we (as Missionary Baptists) already had our Seminary we had no need for a Seminar just for our preachers. Had we not had our Seminary, we would have no doubt had Seminars or Preachers Meetings. (Is everybody still with me ??)**

**Resource Material used for a Seminar or a Seminary is nothing more than the books and/or other material the directors or teachers choose to use as teaching tools. They may be used directly or just recommended for study. When I enrolled in the seminary I was given A List of source material (i.e. books) that I had to buy at the bookstore. This is called a Source List. (I am sure we can all understand this one).**

**SOMETHING NEW AMONG US ? Or Something Old Brought in From Alexandria or The New School Missionaries ? In 1976 when I first came among Primitive Baptists the Elders did not hold Seminars or Preachers Meetings. Most of them still will not participate in one. What was held and is still being held is Special and Fifth Sunday meetings where church congregations and visitors come together, with visiting ministers, to sing praises unto God and hear the gospel preached. There are no special theme's or subjects assigned for the ministers to go by; no outlines to follow; no training sessions just for preachers; no source list of books recommended for us to buy. This is called a Worship Service not a Seminar. At these meetings, ministers almost always sit around discussing the Scriptures as in an unorganized Bible study without an agenda.**

**In 1992 the first annual National 'Preacher's Meeting' was held in Ohio at the Cincinnati PBC. Who knows for how long it had been in the planning stages. The annual meetings have been held there every year since then. As I understand it, from talking directly with some who have attended, and from what I have read, it is not a secret meeting, for it is well advertised. It is not a public worship service for only preachers are invited. It is not an Old Baptist type worship service because other church members are not invited to attend. (Starting in 1998, for whatever reason, Deacons are now invited to attend). After looking at all the options I could only conclude that this Preacher's Meeting is nothing more than an 'Annual Seminar'. They do not call it a Seminar, they call it a Preacher's Meeting. (Remember, a Seminar, that is a Seminar, is a Seminar no matter what you call it). I have reasons to believe it started out as a Seminar, and for the past few years, based on the manuals and according to what I have read, in my opinion, it has definitely turned into a Ministerial Training Seminar. (Now I'm sure everybody is with me).**

**JUDGMENT WITHOUT ATTENDANCE ! READ THE BOOK -- FOLLOW THE FACTS:** Some may ask, how can you judge a meeting without ever attending it ? Attendance is not always necessary in order to know the facts. There are many places that children of God do not need to attend in order to know what goes on there. I do not have to attend a Masonic Lodge in order to know what goes on there. I simply need to read what is written in 'Morals and Dogma', and I know that Freemasonry is an ungodly, un-biblical secret religion that denies Jesus Christ and the Word of God. If everyone must 'go there' before making judgment about something, then God's people would be required to experience everything in this world first hand. That is not Biblical !

I have a copy of the first Manual that was published at the first preacher's meeting in 1992. It appears the theme was "The Church In A Day Of Moral Crisis", based on the first study outline presented in the manual. There was no printed agenda to be followed, but the study manual does have several sections with subjects that compare to Seminary courses taught ministerial students: (1) accurately 'Interpreting Scripture' (Hermeneutics), (2) developing 'Spiritual Leadership' (Pastoral Development), (3) 'Systematic Bible Study' (Systematic Theology), and (4) 'Practical Preaching' (a Homiletics or preacher training course). My pastor, at the time, had attended the 1992 Preachers Meeting. We discussed the meeting in detail. He asked me if I would make up a dozen copies of the manual. He said he planned to teach it to all the pastors in the area who did not attend the meeting and especially to the young ministers who were exercising. That included me, even though I was not young. I had my secretary make up 15 copies, and in the course of checking her work, I examined the manual. I was very surprised to see the content, as it looked like strange material for Primitive Baptists to be publishing. I sent a copy to an Elder friend in Georgia, who I knew had a similar background as I did, and without comment, asked his opinion of the Manual. He replied that it reminded him very strongly of courses that we had studied in College, especially the Homiletic courses on "Sermon Preparation".

**NOTE:** Religious Seminars, Seminaries and Resource Materials have historically been used to bring about liberal changes. Nothing is new under the sun. Some of these same man-made inventions are now being used to try to bring changes into the Old Line Primitive Baptist Churches. My purpose is to deal with the issues and not with the personalities of the men involved in these efforts.