

SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE FUTURE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

A CREATIVE THOUGHT ESSAY

98

A PAPER SUBMITTED TO

DR. PAIGE PATTERSON

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTERS OF DIVINITY

Well Ben,

I do not know how to help you. The paper is well-written, vintage Ben! Vocabulary is great. Observations are largely (though I suspect not completely) true. Insights are ^{BY} needed. So why do I feel frustrated and unable to cut this baby shark loose from the net in which I perceive him to be entangled? In the best case scenario, I am in error. Your heart is free from bitterness, arrogance, and anger and your mind is unclouded by bad and ~~and~~ rapid judgments. And maybe your motives are as pure as fresh fallen snow and void of unnecessary focus on Ben. If so then you are indeed a "young prophet." And if so, God will raise your standard at the right moment and use you mightily. A gifted mind will be a fabulous tool for God and he will bless your courage and your "gift of criticism." The worse case scenario is that you are only "hunkered down." Profound compassion for others (including leadership) has still not been learned. Love for God, His ways, and His work is less

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A guiding factor than the love of the life of a "rebuking prophet."
Some of the things you have said in this paper make me suspect
the latter. But, I cannot see your heart — only God sees and knows
the motives. All that I do know is this:

- God will greatly use you neither out of sympathy for existing and past sorrows nor because of great gifts, insights, and orthodoxy.
- Given the music you can make with a harp strung only in a minor key, it boggles the mind what music might issue forth if you ever find the missing strings with which to string your harp.
- If my suspicions are incorrect as they might well be, you bear part of that blame because of how you choose to express yourself. "Young prophet," for example. Who appointed you? Does this designation of yourself suggest that everything in this paper is from God?
- Prophets have a tough roll. They must always be right and they have to say what they say and act what they act with the precisely appropriate attitude for the moment. And when the message is condemnation and judgment, it must be delivered with a breaking, compassionate heart, even if few detect that.

Ben, I still pray for you. I love you. I believe in you. But gifts, insights, zeal, and courage are all like guns. They are valuable and useful, but always dangerous to him who possesses them.