

Calvinism should not divide Baptist churches, Truett dean says

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FRISCO—Varying degrees of allegiance to Reformer John Calvin’s views on the doctrine of salvation should not split Baptist churches, Todd Still, dean of [Baylor University’s Truett Theological Seminary](#), told a Texas Baptist workshop.

“Let’s not allow our congregations to fissure over the Calvin/Arminius debate,” Still told a workshop titled “How Great a Salvation,” held in conjunction with the [Baptist General Convention of Texas](#) annual meeting.

Historically, Calvin’s teachings popularly have been summarized by the acronym “TULIP,” standing for total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints.

The ‘young, restless and reformed’

In recent years, Calvinists who characterize themselves as “young, restless and Reformed” vigorously have espoused all five points of the TULIP acronym and often asserted they are reclaiming the historic Baptist position.

“The Baptists I grew up around were two-point Calvinists,” Still said. They agreed human beings are sinful and unable to be “good enough to get to God,” he noted, and they agreed “saving faith is continuing faith.”

However, they steadfastly taught and preached “whosoever will may come” to faith in Christ, and they rejected the idea God would coerce faith from

anyone, Still said.

“God enables. God does not force,” he said.

Still presented a detailed examination of the article on salvation in the Baptist Faith & Message, looking at both the 1963 and 2000 versions of the confessional statement.

In spite of numerous overall changes in the 2000 version, he noted, the only substantive revision to the article on salvation was the addition of one sentence: “There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.”

Exploring ‘faith statements’

Still explored the faith statements on regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification.

“Salvation is a past, present and future event,” he said. “We are saved from sin’s penalty, power and presence. Salvation is from sin, self and separation.”

The confessional statements include no references to limited atonement, and they present salvation as initiated by God but dependent upon people to respond voluntarily in faith and repentance.

“Salvation is a divine gift available to all people,” Still said. “I do not regard that as inconsequential nor as tangential.”