

**Talmadge Amberson**  
**Part One**  
**2012.3.49**

*A male speaker, presumably Mr. Amberson, stands at the front of a large room, facing a seated audience. The speaker is addressing the audience when the recording begins, mid-sentence.*

TALMADGE AMBERSON: . . . fascinated with history when I was a high school student. My three years of college in preparation for going to law school before World War II, I secured a major in history, and then after World War II a venture or two in business on my own. After a lot of dissatisfaction, became aware that God wanted me in the ministry, surrendered to preach, was ordained, pastored a church while I went back for another year of college because of changing directions and going on to seminary. And at seminary I liked church history, took more than I needed to take—I'll tell you about more in a moment. Did teach for two semesters, a course in church history and for four semesters a course in theology. In historical theology you've got to know church history, because it is related; it's theological interpretations as it interacts with what's going on. That's just a little bit to acquaint you.

I think it is absolutely essential, before I give you some general things about church history, to tell you some principles of Baptists. Unless I do that, I don't think you'll understand Baptist history to some extent. [*Picks up and displays a book.*] Now, a recent book, a book that came out in 1972, is a history of the Georgia Baptist Convention. It has a lot of good material, and I think any denomination would be interested in it. [*Picks up and displays another book.*] An old general book, which is in two volumes, is a book by [Albert Henry] Newman, *Church History*. It just covers the whole ramification of church history, all denominations, two volumes of it. [*Finds and displays another book.*] There's a book on Baptists only, an old standard book that covers the American Baptist Convention, the Northern Baptists—they changed their name, the Southern Baptist Convention, and some other things, by [Henry C.] Vedder: *A Short History of the Baptists*. It even goes back and ties it in with some old movements out of Europe that influenced Baptists, and I'm going to come back and pick that up in a moment. [*Picks up another book and displays it.*] Southern Baptists, I guess our greatest historian was W. W. Barnes, and he wrote this book about Southern Baptist history. Dr. Barnes was from up in one of the Carolinas. The government used him in a case in the '60s to lead the judge and the jury to understand the principles of the Baptist Church so that they might reach a proper decision in disposing of some property. And I was made aware that Dr. Barnes was not going to teach but

one more semester, and he was going to teach this book [rest of sentence inaudible]. And I took that course, because I wanted to say I took a course under W. W. Barnes. We became great friends, he tried to persuade me to teach in the area of Baptist history permanently, and I refused to do it. [Mr. Amberson does not give the name of the book, but it may be Dr. Barnes's *The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953*.]

Now, let me draw those three or four things. The newspaper article—in the course here, I will correct some errors that are there. There is a mention that most Baptist churches started because of a person just going there and starting one. And that's true up until the '50s, 1950s. For over a hundred years somebody that was a Baptist preacher or a Baptist family went there and started a church. The first Baptist church [sic] in the South—not Southern Baptist, but Baptists of any stripe—was William Screven. Now, a few years ago for the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, I was asked to do a study of the history of church planting. The oldest church in the South as far as we know, as far as we've been able to determine, in the early 1700s, was founded by Screven. Now, I think you also ought to be giving credit—Screven was a Particular Baptist, capital P; because that's part—that's the Calvinistic branch of Baptist work. And you can be moderately Calvin, or you can be extremely Calvinistic. And this movement affects the Baptist church beginning and [inaudible]. Screven's church at Charleston [South Carolina] split. There were some people in there that did not agree with this particular theology that were Armenian, Wesleyan. And they began—this was before Wesley's name became associated with it—they began out of the church because of the split. That's another way we get churches started as Southern Baptists. [Audience laughter] [Inaudible] six hundred churches [inaudible] across the United States. About three hundred of them were because two parties in the church disagreed and went out and started another one. Sometimes that figure's been a little less, but around fifty percent every year [inaudible] a new church starts, Southern Baptist, have been because of people disagreeing in the church and then go out and starting their own church.

Now, this helps you see some things. Baptists do not require a man to have theological training to be a minister in a church. Never have, and they don't do it today; it's not a requirement. There are some churches—in fact, a couple of Presbyterian churches and a couple of revivals began because some Presbyterian people demanded that a minister have theological training. And these poor old hunters and farmers in the Kentucky mountains said, "We've never heard of a seminary." And they just felt that God wanted them to preach, and they began to preach. So that's a thing we have to keep in mind, this theological factor before we begin to look at specifics in history.

In the South, as well as everywhere else, there came a period of time as a wave of revivals that began in the early 1700s that Baptist churches multiplied rapidly. At the time just before the Great Awakening in America, and that would have been in the early 1700s, there were only forty-eight Baptist churches in all of the United States [sic]; and only seven of that forty-eight were south of [where] the Mason-Dixon Line [is today]. Forty-one of them were north of [where] the Mason-Dixon Line [is today]. But now after those differences of opinion and beginning to use men that just felt that God had called them into the ministry, Baptist work began to grow and to grow rapidly. By 1780—that's about 150 years after the time of the starting of the first Baptist church in Charleston, there were seven Baptist associations in the South.

Now, the Southern work grew more rapidly than anywhere else. That's 150 years, maybe a little over, a little less, had gone to associations. Now, Baptists are not a connectional people. We do not belong to an association as a church or a state convention as a church or the Southern Baptist Convention or the American Baptist Convention as a church or the Baptist World Alliance as a church. You hear a lot of talk about this because of the problems we've had in the last few years. Our people that are sent from the local church to these meetings beyond the local church are called messengers, not delegates. In the beginning of associational work, the idea was that these people from the [inaudible—sounds like "separate"?] church went and shared what their church was doing. They might raise questions about help they needed, and the association made recommendations; and those people that came from the churches to tell them what they were doing in turn shared some things that might help the churches. But never was it a directive this must be done. It was a fellowship sharing time. And we need to get that in mind.

Now, in relation to that, associations began, not because of geographic borders or boundaries or limitations, whatever you might want to call it. They have names, and it is interesting that sometimes the names have rivers and springs and biblical names associated with it. The earliest church—the earliest association in Georgia was the Yellow River Association. The newspaper article is in error. We know that on September 18, 1834 [sic; later says "1824"], with messengers from thirteen Baptist churches, the Yellow River Association was created. Now, Yellow River comes down across Gwinnett County; and that's where it gets its name. Organized September 18, 1824 [sic], thirteen churches. Seven of these churches were from a previous, existing association, the Ocmulgee Association. Six others had not identified with any association. That's the group beyond the local church. Now, while it [the Yellow River Association] came into existence in 1824 [sic], the Georgia Baptist Convention—that's not the

name that it had then; that's today's name—came into existence a year later and had 260 churches from all across the state, 110 member ministers, and 18,400 members. Now, six of these churches were not from Georgia; they were from South Carolina. They simply identified with this organization called the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Before—and I alluded to this a while ago—before the Great Awakening in 1700—the early 1700s, Baptists did not multiply very rapidly. Well, after the first one, we had three waves, about every fifty years, somewhere in the '30s to the '50s of the 1700s, another one that began somewhere [around] 1775 and hit its peak about 1800 and then died off. That's the one that Charles Finney was active in, sometime[s] identified as the Second Great Awakening in the United States. And then later another one that came up in the 1800s, and that's the one that was so effective--a lot of excesses, a lot of fanaticism because the people up in the Caroli--up in Kentucky and Tennessee were easily excitable, and you had some of that. There'd be things we didn't like, but you have to remember the background in which they were working.

Now, church historians and historians generally have given a lot of emphasis, and I believe because of the presence of Daniel Boone in that, that the people of the plateau along South Carolina and North Carolina and Virginia, migrated into Kentucky and into Tennessee. I was doing a study for the Home Mission Board and ran into some information a few years ago. My assignment in that study—and I did a lot of teaching of it—my assignment was the history of church planting, the beginning of new churches. Now, we did not begin—no denomination began—to do that systematically until the last few years. But it has been done, and I had to go back and dig that up. But one thing that I discovered, not all of the migration was exactly due west. Some of it was to the southwest, which brought these people out of the plateau coastal areas, down across northern Georgia, and into southern Georgia, and into Alabama and Mississippi, and then on later some of them to Louisiana and Texas. Now, if some of you would check out your history like I did, talk with some of your older family, this was true of both sides of my family—my mother's family, my father's family. They were not the great plantation owners like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and the others. They lived back at the edge of the foothills. They had their little farms. They also hunted and sold furs to make a living. And when things were rough, after the Revolutionary War—go back and study your history--we had a great depression after the Revolutionary War, because much of our trade beyond the United States was affected, these people were starving to death up there, and they began to migrate down into north Georgia, Alabama, and on across. Some of them may have come into the edge of Tennessee about Johnson City and then on down here, some of them may have simply spilled over the mountains up there. Now, I'll document that same thing. Both of my parents' families

came the same way. I was over in Alabama a few years ago, and I've been studying this, and I told what I'd found and that I had just learned that my great-great-great grandfather on the Amberson side was buried at Spring Hill—Spring Garden, Alabama. Don't know whether any of you know, it's just across the Georgia line in Alabama, between the Georgia line and Piedmont, Alabama. And then my Grandfather Matthew Amberson first had the town named for him. It was Ambersonville. And I don't know why they changed the name, because Ambersonville would be a nice name, but I guess because they had so much trouble with our name, they did it; and that town is there.

Interestingly enough, the first Sunday that I was in that church, while a third cousin was having me for lunch that day on Sunday—her husband's a medical doctor—and that afternoon they said, "You mentioned that your great-great-great grandfather was buried over there. We'll take you over there and show you." Grandfather Matthew Amberson had four different wives that preceded him in death. And you'll find the burial spot fenced in. Within it is his grave and all four different wives, the first one next to him and the others as they died, and some children that died. Now, others that follow up some will find this interesting. I had shared this with my family so much. I have a niece majoring in history; she is certified as a public school teacher on the history of Alabama. And she talked with her history professor and learned that he was writing a book dealing with the same thing that I have discovered and was trying to document. And I have the book, a copy of it, but I've never had time to read it, I've been so busy. I need to take it with me on some trips. Now, it's not to say all of you were out of the back woods like I was, but most of us were. Most of us were those that were small farmers, not big plantation owners. Some may have had two or three slaves, but this matter of fifty or a hundred like *Gone with the Wind* presents it is not the usual thing. More of us come out of the background that I have just given.

Now, that adds a fact when we think about our Baptist history. These people were [inaudible] as they were nowhere else for the message of the Gospel. And these Baptists that came worked with people that were just like them, and it is a factor in church growth. Churches that are growing with the average, common, run-of-the-mill folks reach more people than they do anywhere else. Now, then, to show you, I don't remember some of the Presbyterian fellows, but [inaudible phrase] [inaudible first name—could be "Israel" or "Azriel"?] Jones and I come from the same town over in Alabama. If you're a Methodist, you've got to know him, because he is the great historian, he is the great understander of the movement of Methodist churches and has written a lot about the need to begin new churches. He lived on the western end of Birmingham; I lived on the eastern end of Birmingham. Cass Robbins was on the Joint Strategy

and Action Committee along with us before he came here, went into some kind of business and then into politics. He was the representative from three Presbyterian boards. And my work, along with Ezra Rawls's [spelling?], were used with all of those.

Now, there's another fact that I'd like to go back and pick up. Baptists are the product of a free church movement. In other words, out of the Reformation, Baptists were not those people that broke away from Rome and began a church similar to Rome; they were free church people. Now, to show you what I'm talking about, Luther did not change his church structure; he had the same structure that the Roman Catholics had. He modified it somewhat, but there is a connectional link all the way through his structure. The Methodists came out of the Anglican. The Anglican Church came into existence because Henry VIII wanted a divorce. The pope wouldn't give him a divorce, so he [Henry] could declare the Church of England separated from the Roman Catholic Church, became the head of it; and the Methodists are out of that. Now, Methodists are indebted to the Free Church Movement. John Wesley got on a ship going back to England [from the American colonies], and on that ship were some Moravian missionaries who had been over here working with the Indians. And they disturbed John Wesley so that he went back to England and had his great Aldersgate [Street, London] experience, when he really came to really know the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal savior.

Now, when I say that Baptists are free church people, that's a fundamental thing about Baptists. You can't be a member of the church, insofar as we can determine, unless you come to an experience of personal salvation. Unless you've been saved. Unless you've been born again. That doesn't mean that we're antagonistic toward others necessarily. Some of our number may be. But, you know, the strange thing, [inaudible—may be "you're going to" or "you go"] spend an eternity with some that may not spell it out in the same fashion that we do but that know the Lord Jesus Christ. But we don't believe anybody should be a member of the local church—and I'll grant you that some get in; I'm writing a book now on that fact—get into the local church, but that don't do them any good. You've got to belong to Jesus Christ and accept him as your personal savior, and that comes out of this free church movement.

There are a lot of things that were wrong, but at the same time there were a lot of things that were good in the free church movement. The Anabaptists—*ana* is the Greek word that means "again"—they were those that said that you had to be baptized again, and they were speaking primarily to a group that had been sprinkled as they were taken into the Roman Catholic Church. That [sprinkling?] is of no value. And some of them, [to] one of the great Anabaptists, [his tormentor] said, "You love going under the water so much," they held him under the water until he drowned. These are facts that are all confirmed in history. We were

condemned horribly. And another thing I've alluded, to it's only been within the last thirty, forty, maybe fifty years, that Baptists moved away from [sic; up to?] the middle strata [sic] of our society. We were a poor people. We were a poor people. We were in the church down on the corner. We didn't have churches like First Baptist Decatur. We didn't have churches like First Baptist Atlanta or Wieuca Road or some of the others. We had little shacks, the same thing the Assemblies of God and the Church of God have today. And if anything, it ought to say to us, if we want to carry the message of the Gospel to our day, we ought to get down where they are and work with the people where the great number of the people are.

Now, another factor that's related to this: Most people come to a personal experience of Jesus Christ when there's a crisis. When there's a crisis. Now, it doesn't have to be a hard crisis. But when you're struggling to put bread on the table, it's a crisis. It's a crisis. When you're struggling to have shoes on your feet, it's a crisis. Now, my daddy sometimes had to have a council of war with Mother, and he'd say, "Talmadge can get a piece of cardboard in his shoes and wear them another couple of weeks, but our daughter Jewel's got to have a new pair of shoes. Hers have come all to pieces." We don't live in that kind of world anymore. I remember, as a six-year-old boy, when FDR came through Birmingham—went on the back of the car, his car, and stood there and talked to us. My daddy held me up in his arms. Didn't even take my little brother. But my sister was there, and Mother was holding her. My daddy said, "There's going to be a change, because this man's going to be the new President of the United States." And, you see, it's very real to me, because I saw my daddy wiped out financially. He made a comeback before he died, but wiped out totally financially, '30 and '31. And it was a hard time. Now, people that are having a hard time, we're not giving them pie in the sky, but they're more open. You can't go talk to some of those that are well off. I talked to one of the Fisher boys when I was in Detroit because I happened to get on an airplane. We became personal friends. He said, "I want to carry you to dinner once in a while." But he owned the Fisher Building in downtown Detroit. He didn't--he was not open to the Gospel. He ought to have been. But this is a fact.

Now, I'm ready to come to Baptists here in DeKalb County, with those factors you keep in mind. The Yellow River Association was created by thirteen churches, six from another—seven from another association, six that were not members of any other association, in 1824. In 1841, seventeen years later, five churches withdrew from the Yellow River Baptist Association and joined with others to create the Rock Mountain Baptist Association; and this association later became the Stone Mountain Baptist Association. They used the name "Rock Baptist." Two of these churches were in DeKalb: Decatur First Baptist Church and Cool Springs Baptist

Church. We have a report of the Stone [Mountain?] Baptist Association—it goes back to 1909—and in that association there are several churches from DeKalb County: Clarkston [Baptist Church?], East End Baptist Church, Indian Creek Baptist Church, the old Kirkwood Baptist Church that's now Rainbow Park Baptist Church, Stone Mountain Baptist Church, and Sylvester Baptist Church. Now, the oldest Baptist church in DeKalb County is a Salem Baptist Church. I've never had anybody that could identify where Salem is; but because I have some friends out where Salem Presbyterian Church is, I'm assuming that it was in that area. That church was organized in 1820. That church was organized in 1820. In 1839 Indian Creek Baptist Church was organized They will observe in December of this year their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Organized in 1839. I was interim pastor of that church for a while a few years ago, and they thought at that time they were the oldest church in the county; but they discovered Salem was the oldest. There are some others that are old--First Baptist Decatur, 1860-something, I believe it was; but these are the churches that are oldest.

Now, there are some Baptist churches in DeKalb County that are in the Atlanta Baptist Association. And I believe this may be the figure that was given in the newspaper account, because I quoted over the phone when I was asked, that Atlanta began—I do not need [inaudible]—Atlanta began in 1910, Atlanta Baptist Association, somewhat later than the Stone Mountain Baptist Association. And I worked out, like in the era from 1900, the decade, there were only three churches in DeKalb that were started in DeKalb. In the next year, starting from 1910 to 1919, there were two. In the era of the '20s there were three. There were no churches started in the Depression Era. [From] 1930 to 1939 Baptists didn't begin a single new church [in DeKalb County]. But things picked up after that. [From] 1940 to 1949 there were seven new churches started by Baptists in DeKalb County, just in DeKalb County. Then in the '50s there were fourteen new Baptist churches started. Several psychological—sociological factors. I was up in Detroit and realized sociology played more emphasis on church work than we'd given credit and became aware that Wayne State University was one of the greatest departments of sociology in all the United States, so I took some [classes]. Now, there are several things about the '50s—there as an explosion of the family. The boys had come home from the war, and that began the Baby Boom era. There's also new housing development. We became better off, we got into some new ideas, and we had great growth. The '60s we only had seven churches that were started. [Appears to have skipped the '70s.] And then in the '80s I did not get those figures because they're not all in yet. And we've seen a decline as Baptists everywhere, just like we have in DeKalb County.



Now, I want to summarize. Remember, Baptists are non-connectional. You don't belong to a Baptist Association. That's why you can be in DeKalb County, and you can belong to Stone Mountain Association or Atlanta Association. You belong to the one you choose to belong to. Second thing, Baptists are a church of the free church persuasion. First of all, a person is to come to know Jesus Christ as savior, then he can be a member of the church. We have a view about the church as a whole, the totality of the church, that there is a universal church of all the believers, of all time, wherever they might live. The third thing is the sociological factors; and I wish that I had time, but it would take about an hour to deal with those things, which I've shared with people in my own denomination to help us get a new grasp of church planting. Now, I want to come to a conclusion here and let you ask some questions if you have them. I'd intended to leave about fifteen minutes; I think I've got thirteen minutes. Do you have any questions?

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Do you want to know about where Salem Baptist Church is?

MR. AMBERSON: Sir?

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I can tell you the exact location of Salem Baptist Church.

MR. AMBERSON: All right

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Off [inaudible, sounds like "I-20 Salem"?], you go to Salem Campground, which is the Methodist campground, a quarter-mile south, is where the Salem Baptist Church was. It's [inaudible].

MR. AMBERSON: Yeah. It's out of existence.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: It's out of existence. The burial ground is across to it. There's about eleven graves in it.

MR. AMBERSON: This is a fact that was mentioned in the newspaper article. Many of our older churches have a cemetery. You go back especially in the country areas, and everybody buried there was Baptist and some that were not Baptist in that cemetery [that] belonged to the church. I just recently went back to Alabama and had my aunt's funeral. She wanted to go back to the old country church and be buried there. And all of the family gathered around as I conducted her funeral. And they usually have, and I don't think—I'm not sure of this newspaper report, this part.

We had Decoration Days back in Alabama, which was a homecoming type of thing. And we'd have dinner on the ground, get all-day services, and between the morning time and eating, you went across the road and back over the hill and decorated those cemeteries with flowers.

Most of them happened in the early spring. And that gave a unity. Some churches are trying to reestablish this with homecomings. But Methodists and Presbyterians had the same thing. I had an uncle that was a great Baptist preacher. He's my model, he was a farmer, [inaudible] but a pastor. In the county where he lived twenty-something of the thirty different churches at some time, and some of them were responsible for their beginning because of him. I was invited the first time I ever preached at any church. A friend of my Uncle Doc's invited me to preach at his church. They took up an offering, and I got three dollars and eleven cents, all in nickels and dimes and pennies. And I think it may have had two or three quarters in the lot.

I surrendered to preach in 1950, and this was a month or so after I surrendered to preach. I went to another one of those churches where Uncle Doc pastored. I'll never forget Brother Reese [spelling?], who was a member of that community. The area was named for him, Reese Prairie. They were singing "Amazing Grace," a song where they skipped the third verse.

When we've been there ten thousand years,

Bright shining as the stars [sic],

We have no less time [sic]

To sing God's praise— [*Looks around, having misremembered or forgotten words.*]

And then Brother Reese went home from that service, sat down in the rocking chair on his front porch, and as he wept and told me, he said, "You sound like a younger Doc." And I have said again and again, I don't think I've had any greater compliment. His mother went on—his wife went on in and put the noon meal on the table and came back, called him. He didn't say anything. She moved out and shook him, and he had died and gone to glory. Amen. And I just thought how wonderful that singing that song just a few minutes, that verse, that in just a few minutes, he's going to experience it. Now, I'm just reminiscing. You were asking questions. [*Acknowledges question from the audience.*] Yes, sir.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I have two questions. Isn't it a misnomer for us, as Baptists, to call ourselves Protestants?

MR. AMBERSON: Yes, sir.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: And also you did not mention the splitting of the Baptists in the 1840s and 1850s, the Primitive Baptists and the Missionary Baptists.

MR. AMBERSON: That was the theological difference I was talking about. Protestants, first of all—we've never considered ourselves a part of the church that split off from Rome. That's what you're talking about when you talk about Protestants.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Why don't you consider—

MR. AMBERSON: What?

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Why didn't they? Why—

MR. AMBERSON: They were not. It is unbelievable how the Anabaptists were prosecuted [sic; likely means “persecuted”]. Calvin and Luther were not Anabaptists. You ought to get some of the history of these great Anabaptists, some of their biographies. They were real martyrs for what they understood the Bible to say. And we don't argue about it, but technically we're not Protestants. We came out of that— We don't agree with Rome. We don't agree with Rome. But at the same time, technically, you can't call us Protestant. That's what I meant when I say we're free church people.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: The Baptists are that way [inaudible]. They are free. There's just no other kind.

MR. AMBERSON: Yeah, you describe--

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I was in Japan, and the--on the post, which was the largest post in the military, in Tokyo, and all of them cooperated—the Catholics and the Methodists and the Congregation[alists] cooperated, used this chapel to [inaudible]—not at the same time—except the Southern Baptists. And they went [to] downtown Tokyo. And so I think that there's something good that comes out of everything you use it for good. And I think that the war [World War II]—we began revival services at [inaudible] the Methodist church [inaudible]. And the Baptists—we began to take part [inaudible] people in the service. And I think that is a very great thing that I thank our country for.

MR. AMBERSON: I think you're wrong not to cooperate in anything. But I'm trying to [say] that you can cooperate. Now, I have some dear friends like, I've got one, and it's interesting, and his name's Hubmaier [pronounces his name “Heathmyer”]. And one of the great Anabaptists was named [Balthasar] Hubmaier, H-U-B-M-A-I-E-R-E-R [sic], who [Mr. Amberson's friend] is a Roman Catholic. [Most sources give the 16<sup>th</sup>-century reformer's name as Hubmaier, but some spell it Hubmeier. Mr. Amberson's spelling is incorrect.] But you can hear him [Mr. Amberson's friend] preach, and he'll preach like a Baptist. And he believes like a Baptist; but now, he has been drawn up in that.

Now, one of the exciting things—when the Pentecostal Movement began in Detroit. I had a contractor building a church building who is Catholic. They have some of these Pentecostal Catholics. And they were believing like Baptists believe. Now, I'm not downing them. I would not down them--I think that some people can come to meet the Lord. We're wrong to do that [“down them”], and I'm trying to say we do not consider ourselves protesting against the Catholic Church, which is what the Protestants did. If you go to church history, some of the early years [inaudible]. Again, Bishop Prim [spelling?] in India is a member of the

Syriac Catholic Church, which split off from the western [Roman] Catholic Church in the third century. And I'm a dear friend of his. But we have differences in what we believe. Now, the Syrian Church baptizes you three times, just like [Joseph] Stalin was baptized. Stalin was baptized three times. Gorbachev was baptized three times, because that's what you baptize: once for the Father, once for the Son, and once for the Holy Spirit. I'm not making fun of them if they believe that. That's fine. But I've said that we've got to have people come to really know the Lord. Got to have them have an experience—

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera, interrupting*: Where does the Hardshell Baptist come from?

MR. AMBERSON: Sir?

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: What is a Hardshell Baptist?

MR. AMBERSON: The Hardshell are the extreme of the regular Baptists. I just mentioned that. The regular Baptists are more Calvinistic. Free Will Baptists are Arminian [from Dutch religious reformer Arminius; not "Armenian"], close to the Methodist Church of God Assembly [sic; may mean Methodist Church "Assembly of God"]. But the interesting thing—

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera, interrupting*: [First several words inaudible, as he speaks simultaneously with Mr. Amberson] same thing? [Inaudible] wash feet?

MR. AMBERSON: Some of them do. The interesting thing is this man at Mount Paran Church of God is Calvinist. He believes in the security of the believer. I've read one book on that and [inaudible] another book.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera, interrupting*: What is the security of the believer?

MR. AMBERSON: Huh?

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: What is the security of the believer?

MR. AMBERSON: That once you're saved, you're always saved.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I see. I see.

MR. AMBERSON: Once you're saved, you're always saved.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: What verse is this in the Bible, "Judge not to be judged, for likewise you shall be judged"?

MR. AMBERSON: It is a matter of seeing that sin is done; and it is a caution to be careful, that only God can know all of the circumstances that are involved. I'm not going to say that one is saved or is not saved. I have to take his or her word for it. But nothing, nothing—I worked with Billy Graham, I've preached in Methodist churches, I've talked [could be "taught"?] with Billy Graham, I've organized revivals, I wrote the revival material for our Home Mission

Board, and I believe it. I've worked in community-wide meetings, I've preached in community-wide Thanksgiving-Christmas services, and everything else. But not to condemn. I've just got conviction about what I believe. Let me get to a question over here.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Where "free" comes up, some people don't understand that. They think maybe it means no offering plate.[*audience laughter*]. But it means, personally, no domination from the headquarters, no bishop or archbishop or pope.

MR. AMBERSON, *nodding*: That's right.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera, continuing*: No fear of ecclesiastical domination. And secondly, we are non-liturgical, free of form.

MR. AMBERSON: The form of worship is more open. I heard one state Baptist executive, as somebody had accused him of manipulating everybody, he said, "I'm the tail of the dog." And that's the truth. That is the Baptist conviction, that if you're at the top, you're still the tail of the dog. The pastor doesn't dominate the church. Now, he ought to be respected for his leadership; but the pastor is to be a leader, not a dictator. And the people—we've tried to emphasize this as Southern Baptists over the last twenty years—the people are to hammer out what they need to do and make their plans and not be dictated to by the pastor.

[*Acknowledging a question from the audience*] Yes, sir.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: You respect anybody's right to be wrong.

MR. AMBERSON: Yes, sir. That's what—that's part of the free church tradition that we were just talking about up here. You've got the right to be different from I am and you want to [sic]. This matter of nobody dominates, every man is personally responsible before God for himself, and that there is no hierarchy in the Baptist Church.

Now, I want to go back and pick up this question because of writing it in that area. This matter of the Calvinistic and the Arminian. I think one thing that got Baptists, and especially Southern Baptists--they came to grips with something that I've just put in writing. Your Calvinists, on your knees. "God, save people. God, save people." But when you're witnessing or preaching, you're an Arminian, which says you've got to make a decision for God to save you. *RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY.*

END OF RECORDING

Continued on 2012.3.50 Talmadge Amberson Part 2

Transcribed by CS