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COVER ILLUSTRATION: The cover features a photo illustration produced by Arala Photography which was acquired and licensed through iStock.com. The image is illustrative of Psalm 119:105 that states, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” The Word of God is the source and inspiration for the Baptist-developed confessions of faith that have been developed since the early teachings of the New Testament church. Growing from that tradition, 100 years ago, the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925 adopted its first official confessional statement, called *The Baptist Faith and Message Statement*.

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The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage

Volume 27

2025

The Legacy of Baptist Confessions of Faith

*On the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the
The Baptist Faith and Message Statement: 1925-2025*

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PREFACE

The Legacy of Baptist Confessions of Faith

On the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of The Baptist Faith and Message Statement: 1925-2025

The primary focus of the 2025 *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage* is to recognize the 100th anniversary of Southern Baptist's *Baptist Faith and Message Statement*. However, that *Baptist Faith and Message* was the beneficiary of a legacy of Baptist confessions of faith that had its foundation in the teachings of the early New Testament church. That legacy is highlighted through various featured articles in this issue of the *Journal*.

Prior to the development of Southern Baptist's confessional statement, Baptist-oriented confessional statements were developed in Europe and England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As a result, several articles present the history and focus of those various historic Baptist confessions that served as precursors to the 1925 action by the Southern Baptist Convention. Another article examines the relationship between some Southern Baptists' self-identification as a non-creedal tradition and the significant historic role of creeds and confessions in shaping Southern Baptist beliefs and practices.

The adoption of a confessional statement by Southern Baptists did not materialize as a result of a single motion considered by messengers during an annual Convention meeting. Rather it evolved out of a series of events and actions taken by the Convention that began with the organization of the Convention in 1845. Several articles highlight the process of how Southern Baptists came to adopt an official confessional statement in 1925 and the

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PREFACE - Continued

history that caused the subsequent 1963 and 2000 revisions. Additionally, an article highlighting the confessions of faith developed by Baptists in the United States prior to the 1924-1925 development of the *Baptist Faith and Message*. A biographical profile features the men involved in drafting the 1925 confessional statement.

In a contemporary context, two articles are featured. One article addresses the historic role and purpose of the local Baptist association serving as the guardian of doctrine for Southern Baptist churches. A second narrative sets forth the development of the concept of soul competency as a basic tenet of Baptist's faith and practice.

In the Appendix of this Journal is a reader-useful guide to the *Baptist Faith and Message*. Presented is a side-by-side comparison of the actual verbiage of each version – 1925, 1963, the 1998 addendum, and 2000 – of the Baptist Faith and Message. As a history reference document, these are presented without interpretation of the meaning and purpose of each confessional statement.

Finally, the Florida Baptist Historical Society is pleased to announce that three churches will observe their 200th anniversary since founding in 1825: First Baptist Church (formerly Bethlehem), Campbellton; Grand Ridge (formerly Sardis) Baptist Church, Jackson County; and Long Branch Baptist Church, Duval/Clay counties. An article within this Journal provides a brief history of each congregation.

D.S.H./editor

2025 Baptist Heritage Award



The Florida Baptist Historical Society, for the past 29 years, has recognized an individual for their effective preservation and promotion of Florida Baptist history. The Society's Board of Directors is pleased to announce that their selection as the recipient of the 2025 Baptist Heritage Award is Dr. Joel R. Breidenbaugh, of Apopka, Florida.

The Baptist Heritage Award seeks to recognize and honor those Florida Baptists who have exhibited rare and unusual dedication to the cause of Florida Southern Baptist history by having made a significant impact through such means as researching and writing Baptist history, teaching Baptist history, preserving Baptist history, and/or promoting the importance of Florida Southern Baptist history.

In considering a potential candidate to be the 2025 Baptist Heritage Award recipient, there is one noteworthy individual who has committed himself to the teaching, research and writing about Baptist history and related fields.

Dr. Joel R. Breidenbaugh of Apopka, Florida, has served as pastor of the Gospel Centered Church since August 2017 to the present. During the past eight years he has led this congregation from a mission start to a fully functioning church with over 100 persons in attendance each week. Currently the church is involved in a building fund drive to underwrite the construction of the church's first permanent facility. He previously served as senior pastor of the First Baptist Church Sweetwater in Longwood, from 2008 to 2017. He served a variety of church staff positions between 1996 and 2008.

Dr. Breidenbaugh has earned three degrees, including the B.A. from the Florida Baptist Theological College (now known as the Baptist University of Florida). Subsequently, he attended and graduated with a MDiv (dual major in preaching and church history) and the PhD degrees from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Concurrent in addition to his local church leadership, Dr. Breidenbaugh has been a teaching scholar, since 2002, having served as a parttime classroom teacher and as an on-line professor. Those schools have included Liberty University's School of Divinity, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Baptist College of Florida and Oklahoma Baptist University. His subject matter expertise has included a range of disciplines: Baptist history, church history, New Testament, theology, preaching, church ministry, personal evangelism, among other topics.

As a writer, Dr. Breidenbaugh has used sound academic research to prepare numerous articles for scholarly publications, including a regular series of articles for *The Church Revitalizer* E-Magazine. He has written over a dozen topical articles for the *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*. And he also wrote six articles, including biographical profiles on three historically significant Southern Baptists, that were included in the five-volume compendium, *Encyclopedia of Christianity*.

Joel Breidenbaugh, born in 1975, is a native of Indiana, and has served as chair of the Florida Baptist Historical Society's Board of Directors from 2020 to the present. He and his wife, Annthea Rhea West, have five children, including one by adoption.

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Twenty-eight individuals, since 1997, have been conferred the Baptist Heritage Award by the Florida Baptist Historical Society. These persons represented a broad range of Florida Baptists including pastors, denominational workers, college and seminary professors, and laypersons, all of whom had an interest and commitment to researching and publishing Florida Baptist history.

The following individuals are former Heritage Award recipients:

1997 – Earl Joiner	2013 – David Elder
1998 – Adolph Bedsole	2014 – Mark A. Rathel
1999 – Joe Bamberg	2015 – No recipient
2000 – Ruth Bagwell	2016 – David Lema and Roger Richards
2001 – John Hillhouse	2017 – Jerry M. Windsor
2002 – Martha Trotter	2018 – Sid Smith
2003 – Wiley Richards	2019 – Thomas A. Kinchen
2004 – E. B. Browning, Sr.	2020 – L. David Cunningham
2005 – E. H. Rennolds, Sr.	2021 – Donald S. Hepburn
2006 – Harry C. Garwood	2022 – Carolyn L. Calhoun
2007 – Pope Duncan	2023 – Linda Gramling Demott
2008 – John L. Rosser	2024 – Brenda “Penny” Baumgardner
2009 – Doak Campbell	
2010 – Judith Jolly	
2011 – Jack Dalton	
2012 – James C. Bryant	

Our Mission:



Serving Churches

In fulfilment of our Mission to research, preserve and promote the Legacy of Florida Baptists, the Society assists leadership of Florida Baptist churches and associations in a variety of ways:

- ◆ the research of local church and association histories;
- ◆ the research of pastoral leader biography;
- ◆ provide resources for publishing a history; and
- ◆ encourage and assist churches and associations to celebrate their respective heritage and anniversaries.

You Can Create Your Own LEGACY

by Financially Supporting the Ministry of the
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The Society's endowment fund supports the future ministry of the Florida Baptist Historical Society.

You can create your own LEGACY by making a financial gift right now – E-check, credit card or debit card -- by using the Society's on-line giving portal: www.FloridaBaptistHistory.org.

Click on the DONATE button for further options.

The Endowment fund underwrites the ministries of the Society that include the collection, preservation, and interpretation of Florida Southern Baptist historically significant materials.

The Society serves Florida Baptist churches by providing assistance in history-related research, writing and publication of local church documentaries and histories.

To fulfill that mission, the Society collects and maintains collections of biographies, church histories and Baptist history publications that serve as resources for research.

Gifts to the Endowment Fund are tax deductible inasmuch as the Society operates under the auspices of the Florida Baptist Convention, a not-for-profit corporation, as defined by the Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3).

Ancestor Confessions of Faith in the Development of the *Baptist Faith and Message*

*by Joel Breidenbaugh, PhD
Pastor, Gospel Centered Church
Apopka, Florida*



This year marks the 100th anniversary of the adoption of the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925, rev. 2000) which affirms that Southern Baptists are not a non-creedal people, but are instead deeply rooted in a confessional and creedal tradition that spans 2,000 years of church history. Biblical creeds, as well as ancient church creeds from the second to the fifth centuries and the confessions from post-Reformation England and early America from the 17th to the 19th centuries, served to clarify Southern Baptists' identity in doctrine and practice in the 21st century.

Confession Is Good for the Soul

Having been a Baptist pastor for nearly 30 years and having taught a few thousand students as a professor of preaching and pastoral ministries, I have had the privilege of knowing many Baptist pastors. Virtually each one of them has shared stories of their own ministries and some of those stories stick with me. I remember hearing about a Baptist man who stopped by the pastor's office to complain about his references to their church's confession. This man insisted Baptists were not like Catholics and did not need to make a confession! Of course, he failed to understand what a Baptist confession of faith is.

Are Baptists Anti-Creedal?

Any reading of Baptists' views of creeds and confessions reveals that Baptists have a history of confusion over how they state their beliefs.

Sometimes I laugh and sometimes I roll my eyes when I hear someone insist Baptists are not a creedal people, all-the-while exclaiming "Baptists are people of the Book!" I fully affirm

that we are "people of the Book," but the Bible contains numerous confessions of faith, even creedal

statements. John Leith

correctly observed,

"Christianity has always been a 'creedal' religion in that it has always been theological."¹

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But some Baptists want to distant us from other denominations, especially on the use of creeds or confessions. Brown University President Francis Wayland claimed in the mid-nineteenth century that, for Baptists, "an established confession of faith . . . is impossible."² Of course, Baptists had already adopted numerous confessions prior to that, as will be seen later in this article, so it is difficult to make sense of his statement.

Also in the mid-nineteenth century, the first president of the Southern Baptist Convention, William B. Johnson, declared, "We have constructed for our basis no new creed; acting in this manner upon a Baptist aversion for all creeds but the Bible."³ Baptist historian Walter Shurden claims that "Johnson, the first president and founder of the SBC, was not opposed to truth, but he was thoroughly anti-confessional and anti-creedal."⁴ Of course, Johnson was a South Carolina Baptist, a group known for its adoption of the *Charleston Confession* (1767), noted

later, so it is wrong to label Johnson as “anti-confessional.” Moreover, all 293 delegates to the first meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, including Johnson, ascribed to the Philadelphia or New Hampshire Confessions, and Johnson was no different.

In a similar vein, there are many Baptists who may agree to a confession of faith, but they insist Baptists are not a creedal people. Some Baptist preachers have insisted, “No creed but the Bible!” or “No creed but Christ!” Church historian William Estep argued for a distinction between creeds and confessions, by stating, “Creeds are authoritative and often viewed as final, unalterable, and binding statements of faith, [while confessions are] abstracts of biblical truth as the group formulating the confession perceived it.”⁵ However, Southern Baptists have often viewed their confessions as authoritative, both in the local churches and in their entities.⁶

Along similar thoughts, Bill Leonard argued that Baptists wrote confessions early in their history. He stressed many Baptists used these confessions cautiously, careful to insist that these documents were not to take precedence over Scripture or even individual conscience. They were used to establish doctrinal boundaries, nurture fellowship, and deal with heresy. At certain times the confessions became selectively creedal; that is, they were sources for dealing with unorthodox belief or confronting specific doctrinal controversies.⁷

But how does the individual conscience reign over the confessions, if the confessions were used to “deal with heresy”? Even “when John Leland, the most famous Baptist exponent of individual autonomy, exercised his right of private judgment in scripture interpretation, his association disfellowshipped [sic]

him. Baptists opposed this kind of individualism. Conscience was not supreme.”⁸

Baptists, a Creedal or Confessional People

The confessional nature of Baptists has been greater than these individuals like to admit. Contrary to their claims, Baptists have not prioritized soul competency and religious liberty over creeds and confessions. Tom Nettles argues that Baptists were not anti-creedal or anti-confessional. He wrote:

Issues of church purity and individual clarity of conscience have prompted Baptists from the earliest days to produce confessions of faith. The confessions have been used, not only as personal declarations, but as documents of formative and corrective discipline. The disciplinary use of confessions seems to be one of the most offensive and misunderstood elements of the historic Baptist witness.⁹

This assessment falls in line with early Southern Baptists. B. H. Carroll, founding president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, affirmed the importance of creeds, when he wrote:

thee modern cry: ‘Less creed and more liberty,’ is a degeneration from the vertebrate to the jelly-fish, and means less unity and less morality, and it means more heresy. Definitive truth does not create heresy – it only exposes and corrects. Shut off the creed and the Christian world would fill up with heresy unsuspected and uncorrected, but none the less deadly.¹⁰

Ultimately, B. H. Carroll argued that creeds and confessions were practically synonymous and biblical.

He wrote, “There never was a man in the world without a creed. What is a creed? A creed is what you believe. What is a confession? It is a declaration of what you believe . . . [Carroll wrote] to show you how creeds and confessions of faith start in the Bible.”¹¹ He added, “A man cannot have a religion without a creed . . . The avowal of it is a confession of faith.”¹²

Similarly, E.Y. Mullins, long-tenured president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and president of the SBC at the 1925 drafting of the *Baptist Faith & Message*, exclaimed, “Creed and confession of faith mean the same thing.”¹³ Against the claim, “Baptists have no creed,” Mullins asserted, “Baptists have published a large number of articles of faith . . . a long list of Baptist creedal statements.”¹⁴

**It seems confessions
(and even creeds)
have played a
significant role in
Baptist life**

So we Baptists are a mixed bunch. One extreme argues against creeds and confessions.

Another extreme argue creeds and confessions are nearly synonymous. Some folks in the middle are willing to uphold a confession so long as it isn’t creedal. And some of those want confessions to deal with heresy, but not make it binding over individual conscience! How can one champion the individual conscience while telling someone their beliefs are outside the boundaries? It seems confessions (and even creeds) have played a significant role in Baptist life, and now we turn our attention to several of those statements of faith.

To Creed or Not to Creed, That Is the Question

While we celebrate the 100th anniversary of *The Baptist Faith & Message*, we also celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed. Creeds and

confessions have played an important role in Baptist polity. It is helpful to trace the use of the most historic creeds and their impact on later development of Baptist confessions.

Even though some Baptists have argued against Baptist creedalism, I believe we find examples in Baptist life where creeds and confessions are interchangeable. Because Baptists have always been known as “people of the Book,” the Bible is the best starting place.

Creeds in the Bible

We find numerous examples of creeds and confessions of faith throughout the Bible. Israel’s most basic creed is “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4).¹⁵ Likewise, once Elijah demonstrated Yahweh as the One True God against the false prophets of Baal, the people cried, “The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God” (1 Kings 18:39). Other passages are no doubt important throughout the Old Testament, but the New Testament utilizes several creedal statements.

When reading through Paul’s letters, we encounter early Christian hymns and creeds from the mid-first century stating basic elements of the Christian faith. Many New Testament scholars generally agree that creedal passages include the following:

- concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 1:3-4);
- if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9);

- for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist (1 Corinthians 8:6);
- that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:3-7);
- There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:4-6);
- Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is

Lord, to the glory of God the Father
(Philippians 2:6-11);

- He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross (Colossians 1:15-20);
- He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory (1 Timothy 3:16).

These passages contain concise statements of faith. Early Christians employed these statements to educate new converts about the Christian faith, defend the faith against false teachers and critics of Christianity, and promoted an essential baseline for the core teachings of the Christian faith.

Today's anti-creedalists might say, "But that's Scripture! We have no creed but Scripture!" While these texts are Scripture, they clearly contain summary statements of core Christian doctrine about the Triune God, the Person and work of the Lord

Jesus Christ, and the gospel of faith. In short, the New Testament church was a creedal people.

Ante-Nicene Creeds and Confessions

Shortly after the first century, Early Church leaders began contributing creeds and confessions of faith. Outside of Scripture, the earliest established creed is The Apostles' Creed. That creed "in its present form . . . has been in continual use since about AD 700, but elements of its wording have been traced to a baptismal confession from early-second-century Rome."¹⁶ Because of its brevity, it's worth quoting the Apostles' Creed in full:

I believe in God almighty
And in Christ Jesus, his only son, our
 Lord
Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the
 Virgin Mary
Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate
and was buried
And the third day rose from the dead
Who ascended into heaven
And sits at the right hand of the Father
Where he comes to judge the living and
 the dead
And in the Holy Ghost
The holy church
The remission of sins
The resurrection of the flesh
The life everlasting.¹⁷

This creed underscores basic beliefs of Christianity. It contains a simple, Trinitarian statement, underscoring God as Creator and the death-burial-resurrection-ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. With the exception of the late addition of "descended into hell" from the sixth-century Gallican Creed,¹⁸ it is difficult to understand any Christian disagreement with this creed. As Albert Mohler noted, "All

**All Christians believe
more than what is
contained in the
Apostles' Creed, but
none can believe less.**

Christians believe more than what is contained in the Apostles' Creed, but none can believe less."¹⁹

While the Apostles' Creed is the only universal creed before Nicea, other pastor-theologians submitted confessions of faith during the first few centuries of the Church. These confessions include Ignatius of Antioch, who wrote his *Letter to the Trallians* as early as AD 107, but possibly as late as the time of Emperor Hadrian, AD 117-138. Ignatius claimed, "Jesus Christ, who is of the stock of David, who is of Mary, who was truly born, ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of beings of heaven, of earth and the underworld, who was also truly raised from the dead . . ."²⁰

Likewise, the *Epistula Apostolorum* (c. 150), written from either Asia Minor or Egypt, states:

In the Father, the Ruler of the Universe
And in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer,
In the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,
In the Holy Church,
And in Forgiveness of Sins.²¹

Similarly, the *Witness of Justin Martyr* (c. 165) claims:

We worship the God of the Christians,
whom we reckon to be one from the
beginning, the maker and fashioner of
the whole creation, visible and invisible;
and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of
God, who had also been preached
beforehand by the prophets as about to
be present with the race of men, the

herald of salvation and teacher of good disciples.²²

In like fashion, Hippolytus preserved a confession of faith from a group of pastors in Smyrna (c. 180):

We also know in truth one God, we know Christ, we know the Son, suffering as he suffered, dying as he died, and risen on the third day, and abiding at the right hand of the Father, and coming to judge the living and the dead. And in saying this we say what has been handed down to us.²³

Additional confessions of faith came from the pen of Irenaeus (c. 190) and Tertullian (c. 200), among others. These confessions highlight shared beliefs with those cited previously in terms of the Triune God and the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Suffice it to say that Christian creeds and confessions of faith were regularly employed by churches during the first three centuries.

Nicene and Constantinople Creeds

The fourth and fifth centuries witnessed significant confusion throughout the Roman Empire in terms of theological orthodoxy. Once Emperor Constantine professed his faith in Christ as Lord, the Christian Church in Europe would never be the same. At the time Arius was teaching about Christ being a created god which brought turmoil to the empire.

Constantine, knowing he himself was not a theologian, called the first ecumenical council to convene in Nicea in 325 for the primary purpose of discussing Christ's divine nature. Even though previous councils had met, like those in Antioch in 268 and 325, Nicea was the first ecumenical council that "adopted a creed that was to be a test for

orthodoxy and was to be authoritative for the whole Church.”²⁴

After lengthy discussions in Nicea, the bishops voted 316-2 that the New Testament teaches the full deity of Christ. The opening lines of the Nicene Creed are virtually identical to the Apostles’ Creed. But when dealing with the doctrine of Christ, the Nicene Creed adds, “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.” Because of the controversy, it bears repeating: the Nicene Creed highlights the full divinity of Christ. A professing Christian’s faith was tested by one’s adherence to this creed.

History rarely records smooth sailing. Arianism was not completely defeated at Nicea. As new emperors arose, some were sympathetic to Arians’ teachings and confessed it as true. Pastor-theologians like Athanasius stood their ground, faithfully arguing for the veracity of the Nicene Creed. When the Council of Constantinople was convened in 381, the council provided a bit more clarity to the deity of Christ, “the Son of God, the Only Begotten, begotten from the Father before all time; Light of Light; True God of True God; begotten, not created; of the same essence as the Father . . .”²⁵ The council also highlighted the deity of the Spirit, who is “the Lord and life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and Son . . .”²⁶

The fifth century witnessed two more church councils to address heretical teachings about Christ. Both the councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) articulated the relationship between Christ’s divine and human natures, as “one person in two natures, without confusing the two natures, without

transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function.”²⁷

All of these early creeds and confessions emphasize the Christian faith as belief in the Triune God (Father, Son, and Spirit). The Person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, receives special attention, because of various heresies and because it is distinctively the *Christian* faith. These basic teachings became foundational for later confessions of faith.

Fast-Forward to the Last Few Centuries

Even though other councils were convened in subsequent centuries, they did not have the same effect on both Catholics and Protestants as the first four councils and the creeds and confessions of the first five centuries. The Reformation Era (1517-1648) saw numerous Protestant groups emerge, including Lutherans, Reformed, Anabaptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Baptists. Each group eventually developed their own confessions of faith in order to distinguish them from Roman Catholics and their Protestant family members. But these confessions were heavily dependent on the creeds and confessions from the Bible and the Early Church.

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)

No confession of faith in Reformed thought had as much of an impact as the *Westminster Confession*. From 1644 to 1646, a number of like-minded Protestants assembled in Westminster to discuss what they had in common as they looked for ways to exist next to the Church of England while in the midst of the English Civil War (1643-1649). Since it was more than a century removed from the initial Protestant Reformation, the composers were able to write with “the precision and comprehensiveness of a fully

developed theology.”²⁸ The impact of this confession on Baptist life will be presented later in this article.

Because this confession and its offspring are much lengthier than the Early Church creeds, space does not permit them to be reprinted here. Suffice it to say that core beliefs about the Triune God and Christ’s nature and work are foundational to these confessions. But the confessions of faith elaborate on many other doctrinal areas.

The Second London Confession of Faith (1689)

While the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is more Presbyterian, we can see its influence on Baptist confessions of faith, beginning with the *Second London Confession of Faith* (1689). It bears repeating that these confessions also drew from the Early Church creeds.²⁹

Even though the *First London Confession of Faith* was written in 1644, it was a separate work from the *Westminster Confession*. A few decades later, the Baptists in London faced new persecution from the Church of England. Such persecution drew dissenting groups together, especially Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians. Because the Presbyterians had gained some success in their defiance of the Conventicle Act (1664), aimed at suppressing nonconformists, Congregationalists and Baptists sought to demonstrate doctrinal unity with the Presbyterians. Since the *Westminster Confession* of 1646 was the official doctrine of Scotland, as well as English Presbyterians and English Parliament, Congregationalists adopted the confession with a few changes. The Particular Baptists of London followed suit. While the *Second London Confession* noted its essential agreement with the *First London Confession*, the *Westminster Confession* was “far

more complete and better ordered than that of 1644.”³⁰

One of the changes from the *Westminster Confession* desired to provide “a full account of ourselves to those Christians that differ from us about the subject of baptism.”³¹

Moreover, we did conclude it necessary to express our selves the more fully, and distinctly; and also to fix on such a method as might be most comprehensive of those things we designed to explain our sense and belief of; and finding no defect, in this regard, in that fixed on by the [Westminster] Assembly, and after them, by those of the Congregational way, we did readily conclude it best to retain the same order in our present confession.³²

This *Second London Confession* was first printed in 1677, but the more popular printing was done in 1689 in response to the Act of Toleration of that same year. Its influence would extend to subsequent centuries as well as across the pond among Baptists in America. Michael Haykin observed:

Of the many confessions of faith that Baptists have produced . . . none has been more influential than the *Second London Confession*, popularly known as the *1689 Confession* . . . it was also the major confessional document on the American Baptist scene, where it was known as the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (1742) . . . Among Southern Baptists this confession played an influential role as *The Charleston Confession* (1767), which became the basis of the *Abstract of Principles*.³³

The Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742)

Although Baptist churches in America began in the mid-17th century, the first association did not form until 1707 in Philadelphia. As a group of like-minded churches, the Philadelphia Baptist Association grew in influence due to their unity around doctrinal commitments. By 1742 they officially adopted the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith* as their commonly-held beliefs.

This confession is basically a reprint of the *Second London Confession* first produced by their English Particular Baptist brethren in 1677, and later popularly known by its printing as “the 1689.” Where the *Philadelphia Confession* differs from the *Second London Confession* is in the addition of two articles, Chapter 23 – The Singing of Psalms in Public Worship – and Chapter 31 – Laying on of Hands. These articles were not original in Philadelphia, however, for they “were direct carry-overs from articles 27 and 28 composed by the English Baptist ministers Benjamin and Elias Keach, which they had added to their own edition of the *Second London Confession* published in 1697.”³⁴

The New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1833)

After 1780 in New England, the rise of Free Will Baptists challenged the strict Calvinism of the *Philadelphia Confession*. In order to speak to as many Baptists as possible, the New Hampshire Baptist Convention appointed a committee in 1830 to bring at the next meeting in 1832 “such a Declaration of Faith and Practice, together with a Covenant, as may be thought agreeable and consistent with the views of all our churches in this State.”³⁵ William Lumpkin observed, “The *New Hampshire Confession* thus sought to restate its Calvinism in very moderate tones.”³⁶

Because of this moderate stance, many “Southern Baptists [with their stronger ties to Calvinism]

**In 1847 Florida Baptist
itinerant missionary
James McDonald
criticized the New
Hampshire Confession**

suspected groups that adopted the *New Hampshire Confession* not only because the creed contained error, but also because it failed to

distinguish clearly between error and truth, especially the truth of election.”³⁷ In 1847 Florida Baptist itinerant missionary James McDonald criticized the *New Hampshire Confession* “for being ambiguous about depravity, election, and perseverance.”³⁸

Even with its shortcomings, the *New Hampshire Confession* became widespread. The popularity of this Confession can be traced to J. Newton Brown, the editorial secretary of the American Baptist Publication Society. In 1853, Brown added articles on “Repentance and Faith” and “Sanctification” and published it through *The Baptist Church Manual*. It was picked up and reused in a number of church manuals, including Landmark Baptist leader J. M. Pendleton’s *Church Manual*. Because the *New Hampshire Confession* was something of a middle-way between strict Calvinism and soft Arminianism, it found acceptance among many Baptist groups in the late-19th century and into the 20th century, including Southern Baptists in 1925.³⁹

The Baptist Faith & Message (1925)

Some Baptist historians try to make too much of Southern Baptists not having a statement of faith for their first 80 years. Clearly, Southern Baptists held to such confessions as the *Charleston Confession* (1767), based on the *Second London Confession*, (1689), *Sandy Creek Confession* (1816 was Calvinistic, and

1845, followed the New Hampshire), and the *New Hampshire Confession* (1833). As a matter of fact, “the 1689 Confession was the confessional statement of the church or association of every one of the 293 delegates who gathered in Augusta, Georgia, to organize the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.”⁴⁰

Furthermore, the founding of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary realized the need for a confession to govern what was taught. At the request of founding president James P. Boyce, Basil Manly, Jr. drew up *The Abstract of Principles* (1858). It should be no surprise that this Abstract was “based upon the Second London Confession, which was itself a Baptist revision of the Westminster Confession. The Second London Confession had been adopted in slightly revised form by the Baptist associations in Philadelphia and Charleston, and had thus greatly influenced Baptists of both the North and the South.”⁴¹

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, with the rise of Darwinian evolution, anti-supernaturalism, and higher criticism of the Bible, Southern Baptists saw the need for a confession of faith to express where they

stood in the churches on important matters of the Christian faith. Rather than start from scratch, Southern Baptists turned to “the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, revised at certain points, and with some additional articles growing out of certain needs,”⁴² ultimately adding ten new sections.

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To come up with a statement of faith, SBC President E. Y. Mullins had revised and enlarged the New Hampshire Declaration of Faith, selecting that confession because it was “so widely accepted among Baptists.” Included were affirmations of belief in the virgin birth, bodily resurrection and physical return of Christ and the creation of man as a special act of God.⁴³

One distinctive article in the 1925 *BF&M* was “Article XXII. Co-Operation” as the SBC had just developed the Cooperative Program, calling for Baptists to share financial resources voluntarily in order to fund missions, theological education, and more.

The Baptist Faith & Message (1963)

Just as the 1925 *BF&M* came in the midst of cultural and doctrinal controversy, so the 1950s saw an attack on the nature and authority of the Scriptures in Southern Baptist life. In the early 1960s Baptist leaders saw the need to update their confession of faith. The 1962 annual meeting of the SBC adopted this motion:

Since the report of the Committee on Statement of Baptist Faith and Message was adopted in 1925, there have been various statements from time to time which have been made, but no overall statement which might be helpful at this time as suggested in Section 2 of that report, or introductory statement which might be used as an interpretation of the 1925 Statement.⁴⁴

As the 1925 *BF&M* leaned heavily on the 1833 *New Hampshire Confession of Faith*, so the 1963 *BF&M* adopted the same pattern. It sought to build upon the structure of the 1925 Statement, keeping in mind the “certain needs” of our generation. At times it has

reproduced sections of the Statement without change. In other instances, it has substituted words for clarity or added sentences for emphasis. At certain points it combined articles, with minor changes in wording, to endeavor to relate certain doctrines to each other. In still others – e.g., “God” and “Salvation” – it sought to bring together certain truths contained throughout the 1925 Statement in order to relate them more clearly and concisely. In no case did it seek to delete from or to add to the basic contents of the 1925 Statement.⁴⁵

One area of development, noted previously, came in Article “II. God” where the 1963 version added paragraphs on each Person of the Godhead. On Article “X. Last Things,” the 1963 update simplified the more developed 1925 version that had included articles on “The Righteous and the Wicked,” “The Resurrection,” and “The Return of the Lord.”⁴⁶ [See the *Appendix* at the end of this *Journal*, which provides the specific verbiage of the 1925, 1963 and 2000 doctrinal statements.]

Not only was the *BF&M* (1963) adopted to provide doctrinal guidance to churches, but there was a desire to see it implemented among the agencies. The 1969 SBC

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annual meeting in New Orleans witnessed a failed motion seeking to require all SBC agencies to adopt the 1963 *BF&M* as their confession. But in subsequent years, each entity adopted it voluntarily.⁴⁷ How the entity heads interpreted the confession, however, became a sticking point in the following decades, as many valued soul competency and individual freedom above confessional authority.

The Baptist Faith & Message (2000)

Even though the 1963 *BF&M* brought some clarity to certain Baptist beliefs, the liberals and moderates in the entities sought to skirt outside its boundaries. Those actions led to the Conservative Resurgence (1979-1993) to retake control of the SBC entities. Once the dust had settled, Southern Baptists realized the need to update their confession for greater clarity.

Adrian Rogers observed, “The 1963 statement added new articles and revised the language and content of the 1925 statement in significant areas. New concerns and emerging challenges led the Southern Baptists of that era to revise *The Baptist Faith and Message* and to clarify our common beliefs.”⁴⁸ Ongoing challenges required another update.

Around the same time, at the 1998 SBC annual meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, the convention adopted a statement on “The Family” to be added to the 1963 *BF&M*. This update led to a more complete update, for the 1999 convention approved a motion for the president to appoint a committee to review the *BF&M* and to bring a report and any recommendations the following year. As a result, the 2000 annual meeting in Orlando, Florida, witnessed the approval of the updated language of the *BF&M*. The 2000 *BF&M* Preamble noted:

Our confessions of faith are rooted in historical precedent, as the church in every age has been called upon to define and defend its beliefs. Each generation of Christians bears the responsibility of guarding the treasury of truth that has been entrusted to us [2 Timothy 1:14]. Facing a new century, Southern Baptists must meet the demands and duties of the present hour.⁴⁹

One of the updates occurs in Article “I. The Scriptures.” It always asserted, the Bible “has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.” But the 2000 version adds, “Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.”⁵⁰ That statement was included to keep liberals and moderates from claiming that falsehoods exist in the Bible.

Another update under Article “VI. The Church,” clarifies, “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”⁵¹ The 2000 version of Article “XV. The Christian and Social Order” adds that Christians should “oppose . . . all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography.”⁵²

What’s Next?

The Future *Baptist Faith & Message*

Should Jesus tarry a few more years, Southern Baptists will undoubtedly revise the *BF&M* (2000). The first two revisions were 38 and 37 years later, respectively. I’m no prophet, but I expect we’ll update it before 2037, because there are new matters to address.

As the chairman of the *BF&M* study committee in 2000, Adrian Rogers referring to a comment made by Herschel Hobbs in the introduction to the 1925 statement, repeated the same conditions: “This statement served in larger measure to anchor Southern Baptists to their traditional theological moorings for a generation.” In reality, each new generation must reclaim the priceless doctrinal

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heritage. At the dawn of a new millennium, *The Baptist Faith and Message* now serves to anchor this generation of Baptists to those same theological moorings.⁵³

As we move throughout the 21st century, it is important to look back

at our creeds and confessions and realize “Over time, Southern Baptists didn’t get less confessional; they got more confessional.”⁵⁴ While we will continue to dispute creeds and confessions, let us agree that a confession (of faith) is good for the soul.

ENDNOTES:

¹ John H. Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, rev. ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 1.

² Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, & Co., 1857), 13.

³ William B. Johnson, “Address on the Origin of the Southern Baptist Convention,” Augusta, Georgia 1845; <https://baptiststudiesonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/02/johnsons-address.pdf>. Accessed 30 June, 2025.

⁴ Walter B. Shurden, <http://www.centerforbaptiststudies.org/shurden/First%20President.htm>. Accessed 30 June, 2025. Former Southern Baptist James Denison writes that the SBC left him when it insisted on biblical inerrancy. Denison states, “The first Baptist doctrine I was taught is simple: ‘Baptists have no creed but the Bible’ . . . [but that is no longer true] I am a Baptist because I believe what Baptists have historically said: No creed but the Bible. You can say it’s right or it’s wrong to have a creed, but you cannot say it’s Baptist. I choose to be Baptist” (James C. Denison, “Claiming Your Inheritance,” in *Why I Am a Baptist: Reflections on Being*

Baptist in the 21st Century, Cecil P. Staton, Jr., ed. (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1999), 36.

⁵ William R. Estep, "Baptists and Authority: The Bible Confessions, and Conscience in the Development of Baptist Identity," *Review and Expositor*, 84, No. 4 (Fall 1987): 600-601.

⁶ Moderate Southern Baptists fought against an inerrantist reading of the 1963 Baptist Faith & Message, seeking "to confirm the traditions of confessionalism among Baptists, while simultaneously issuing another warning against credalism [sic]," (Jeff B. Pool, ed. *Sacred Mandates of Conscience: Interpretations of the Baptist Faith and Message*, [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1997], 1).

⁷ Bill J. Leonard, "Being Baptist Hospitable Traditionalism," in Staton, *Why I Am a Baptist*, 86.

⁸ Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South 1785-1900*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 32.

⁹ Tom Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity, vol. 1: Baptist Beginnings*, (Fearn, Ross-shire, Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 46.

¹⁰ B. H. Carroll, *An Interpretation of the English Bible, Vol. 11, Colossians, Ephesians, Hebrews*, (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1917), 142-143.

¹¹ B. H. Carroll, "Creeds and Confessions of Faith," in *Baptists and Their Doctrines*, Timothy and Denise George, eds. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 81.

¹² *Ibid.*, 86. For Carroll's distinction between creeds and confessions, which is not exactly clear, see Malcom B. Yarnell III and Steven A. McKinion, "On Baptist Creedalism," *The Baptist Review*, January 28, 2024; <https://www.thebaptistreview.com/editorial/on-baptist-creedalism>. Accessed 23 June, 2025.

¹³ E. Y. Mullins, "Baptists and Creeds" in *The Axioms of Religion*, Timothy and Denise George, eds. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 186.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 186-187.

¹⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

¹⁶ R. C. Sproul, *What We Believe: Understanding and Confessing the Apostles' Creed*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 25. The Old Roman Creed is comprised of the creed of Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra, given to Julius, Bishop of Rome, c. 340, as noted by Rufinus, priest of Aquileia, *Expositio in Symbolum*, c. 400 in *Documents of the Christian Church, 2nd ed.*, Henry Bettenson, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 23.

¹⁷ Bettenson, 23-24.

¹⁸ Ibid., 24.

¹⁹ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *The Apostles' Creed: Discovering Authentic Christianity in an Age of Counterfeits*, (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2019), xvi. Mohler provides "seven reasons why the Apostles' Creed is useful and necessary in the life of the church: creeds define the truth, correct error, provide rules and standards for God's people, teach the church how to worship and confess the faith, connect us to the faith of our fathers, summarize the faith, and define true Christian unity," *ibid.*, xx-xxii.

²⁰ The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Father down to A.D. 325*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers—Justin Martyr—Irenaeus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 69-70.

²¹ Leith, 17.

²² "Martyrdom of Justin Martyr," in Roberts and Donaldson, 305.

²³ "Profession of the Presbyters of Smyrna" in Leith, 18.

²⁴ Leith, 28.

²⁵ Ibid., 33.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 36.

²⁸ Ibid., 192.

²⁹ The tremendous importance of the early creeds can be seen in their recitation in numerous Protestant and Catholic churches today. Moreover, the Orthodox (Baptist) Creed (1679) includes "Article 38 Of the Three Creeds," noting the central teachings of the Nicene Creed, Athanasius's creed, and the Apostles' Creed, and then quoting each one. Malcom Yarnell and Steven McKinion argue that these creedal statements influenced early Baptists. Thus, "When the early Baptists began to confess their own faith amid persecution by the state churches, they incorporated these fundamental dogmas [from the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Formula of Chalcedon and the Athanasian Creed] into their confessions. Both the Orthodox Creed of the General Baptists (1679) and the Second London Confession of the Particular Baptists (1689) highlighted the great creeds (Malcolm B. Yarnell III and Steven A. McKinion, "First Person: For Baptist confessionalism," *Baptist Press*, January 4, 2024, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-for-baptist-confessionalism/>).

Accessed 25 June, 2025.

³⁰ William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 237.

³¹ Preamble to the Second London Confession as cited in *Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith: Tri-Centennial Edition*, (Ashville, NC: Revival Literature, 2007), 13.

³² *Ibid.*, 13-14. For additional differences of the *Second London Confession* from the *Westminster Confession*, see Lumpkin, 235-240.

³³ Michael A.G. Haykin, "Foreword," in *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2012, 2017), 5.

³⁴ Terry Wolever, "Introduction," in *Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith*, 7-8. For the influence of the Philadelphia Confession throughout the American colonies, including associational adoptions in Virginia, Rhode Island, and South Carolina in 1766-1767, see Lumpkin, 352-353. Interestingly, the *Charleston Confession* adopted the *Philadelphia Confession*, but it omitted the article on "Laying on of Hands," making the *Second London Confession*, the *Charleston Confession*, and the *Philadelphia Confession* each distinct with an extra article, respectively.

³⁵ Lumpkin, 360.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Wills, 110.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ See Lumpkin, 360-361.

⁴⁰ Stan Reeves, "Introduction" in *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017), 9.

⁴¹ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Inaugural Convocation Address: Don't Just Do Something; Stand There! August 31, 1993" in *Confessing the Faith: The Living Legacy of Southern Seminary's Abstract of Principles*, ed. Mohler (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2016), xvii-xviii.

⁴² "Report of Committee on Baptist Faith and Message," Preamble to The Baptist Faith & Message (1963) in John A. Broadus, *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*, Timothy and Denise George, eds. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 138.

⁴³ Tammi Ledbetter, "Analysis: Baptists underscored supernatural faith in 1925 in response to evolutionists" *Baptist Press*, May 25, 2000, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/analysis-baptists-underscored-supernatural-faith-in-1925-in-response-to-evolutionists/>. Accessed 30 June, 2025.

⁴⁴ Preamble, BF&M (1963), cited in Broadus, 136.

⁴⁵ Herschel Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Convention Press, 1971), 3-4.

⁴⁶ A full comparison and contrast of the three editions of The Baptist Faith & Message (1925, 1963, 2000) is beyond the scope of this work, but the successor clearly borrows from the

predecessor. For a comparison and contrast chart of all three editions, see <https://bfm.sbc.net/comparison-chart/>. Accessed 23 June, 2025.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁸ Adrian Rogers, "Introduction," in Charles S. Kelly, Jr., Richard Land, and R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *The Baptist Faith & Message*, (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2007), 6.

⁴⁹ Preamble, *The Baptist Faith & Message* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2000), 3-4.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁵¹ Ibid., 13.

⁵² Ibid., 19.

⁵³ Rogers, in Kelly, Land, and Mohler, 6.

⁵⁴ Obbie Tyler Todd, "Southern Baptists Are Both Missional and Confessional: A Response to Rick Warren,"

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/baptists-missional-confessional-rick-warren/>. Accessed 25 June, 2025.

The London Baptist Confession of 1689 and Its American Successors

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Throughout the history of the Church, creeds, and councils have been of great importance. Church historians often note that every council meeting, particularly in the early church, centered on biblical Christianity and engaged with the heresy of the day. In the same manner, creeds became official statements often derived from the council meetings, declaring the divinity of Jesus Christ and the fundamentals of the faith. Three major creeds remain widely used today: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

Similarly, modern-day confessions grew in popularity and use in the 16th and 17th centuries. Inarguably a product of the Reformation, confessions helped solidify biblical doctrines, provide direct responses to Roman Catholicism, and identify fundamental practices of Reformation-era churches.

Shortly after Martin Luther's emergence and Philip Melancthon's work on the *Augsburg Confession*, followers of the Reformed faith compiled similar documents, upholding biblical Christianity and articulating their theological persuasions. The *London Baptist Confession* of 1689 is one of the most impressive confessions written in the post-Reformation era. Primarily based on the *Westminster Confession of Faith* model, the *London Baptist Confession* (LBC 1689) became a foundational

confession for Particular Baptists, later commonly referred to as Reformed Baptists.

The *London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689*, also known simply as the *Baptist Confession of Faith*, is the most widely known Calvinistic Baptist position

The London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689 . . . is the most widely known Calvinistic Baptist position statement

statement. While several other confessions exist, most of them resemble the makeup of the *London Baptist Confession*. Historically, though, The *London Baptist Confession 1689* retains its significance for Reformed Baptists and has shown value to Reformed and Baptist communities.

Defining Reformed Christianity and a Look at Its Early Confessions

Perhaps a self-explanatory definition exists for Reformed Christianity, found within its very name, emphasizing “Reformed.” Reformed Christians typically grab hold of their identity through the principles found in the Reformation. Of note, the five Solas hold great importance in the Reformed community: Sola Gratia (by grace alone); Sola Fide (by faith alone); Solus Christus (in Christ alone); Sola Scriptura (the Scripture alone); and Soli Deo Gloria (God’s glory alone). [See the *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, 2017, for the Baptist perspectives of those five Solas.] It is unmistakably true, though, that Lutherans as well as early Anglicans also adhered to these same principles. A more precise and profound distinction was made by early Reformed Christians, notably derived and centered on the teachings and positions of key figures such as Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. Calvin became the “Luther” of Reformed

Christianity. In modern-day times, the terms *Calvinist* and *Reformed* typically go hand in hand.

In Reformed theology, the distinguishing marks are “a theology that emphasizes the Calvinistic approach, especially with respect to the matter of salvation.”¹ Calvin’s teachings are typically highly respected, if not revered, notably in his biblical commentaries, which were the largest compilation of any of the Reformers, and in his *Christian Institutes*, which were in-depth theological works that explored systematic theology and highlighted God’s sovereignty and providence.

The Reformed tradition itself is defined as “the customary beliefs and practices of the Reformed churches as contrasted with the Lutheran and other traditions.”² Sharing a similar birthplace to Lutherans, who derived from Germany, Reformed Christians also trace their history to Europe, particularly in France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, England, and Scotland.

Zwingli, who preceded Calvin, is credited with writing the first Reformed confession, releasing the Sixty-Seven Articles in 1523.³ A group of Swiss Reformers produced the First Helvetic Confession in 1536.⁴ However, it was the Belgic Confession of Faith (1561), Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Second Helvetic Confession (1566), Canons of Dordt (1619), and the Westminster Standards (1643) that gained notable importance. The last, the Westminster Standards, which consisted of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms, played an integral role in not only shaping but also helping define the standards of the Reformed Baptists (known as Particular Baptists) and assisted in the ultimate creation of the *London Baptist Confession of Faith* (first and second editions).

Of course, the first Reformed confessions shared one particular element in common: an adherence to and declaration of paedobaptism (infant baptism). This largely explains why Baptists were not part of the Westminster Assemblies, as the meetings were attended by mostly Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Anglicans directly invited by the English Parliament. Baptists also were under much persecution in Great Britain. However, the model of developing such a thorough doctrine, as produced by the Westminster Assembly, gained popularity among Baptists, and soon thereafter, Particular Baptists birthed their own long-standing confession.

The Creation of the *London Baptist Confession of 1689*

Philip Melanchthon is credited as the primary author of the Augsburg Confession. Zacharias Ursinus, who trained under Melanchthon, is credited as the principal author of the German Heidelberg Catechism. Similarly, Heinrich Bullinger is the primary author of the First and Second Helvetic Confessions. The *London Baptist Confession* was a collaborative effort comparable to the Westminster Standards. There was no principal author of either historical confession, yet it was a compilation of work composed by several leading figures, mostly made up of appointed committees.

Perhaps unknown to many, a *First London Baptist Confession* was released in 1644, during the same period as the Westminster Assemblies. Baptists were misunderstood in the mid-to-late 17th century, particularly in the growing community of Anabaptists. For many Anglicans and Presbyterians, an Anabaptist was no different from a General Baptist (Arminians). Baptist theologians Richard P. Belcher and Anthony Mattia concluded, “These conditions led that a particular Baptist confession of faith was not only in

order but greatly needed. Calvinistic Baptists could not go on being mistaken for Anabaptists or Arminians.”⁵ Historically, in Great Britain, a Particular Baptist was nothing less than a staunch Calvinist, unwavering in his adherence to the doctrines of grace and the core tenets of Reformed theology. While fully embracing the sovereignty of God in salvation, Particular Baptists distinguished themselves from their General Baptist counterparts, who drifted toward Arminianism. Though the term “Reformed Baptist” is widely accepted today, it was not used in their time. Their identity was rooted in their confessional heritage, most notably the *London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)*, rather than in a label that would emerge in later centuries.

The *First London Confession* was compiled during the same time as the Westminster Assemblies, which lasted for several years. Belcher and Mattia gave insight into the first meeting, “Fifteen men representing only the seven churches in London signed the new confession in 1644, which has come to be known as the *First London Confession of Faith*.”⁶ Baptist historian William L. Lumpkin gave further insight into the structure of the 1644 document:

The Calvinism of the Confession is of a moderate type. The doctrine of election is balanced by the statement that the Gospel is to be preached to all men, and there is no teaching of reprobation . . . This is the first Baptist Confession to pronounce a favor of immersion as the proper mode of baptism. . . The Confession, in spite of its incompleteness and its infelicity of wording at points, is one of the noblest of all Baptist confessions. . . It largely anticipates the *Westminster Confession*.⁷

The 1644 *First London Baptist Confession of Faith* underwent several revisions, respectively, in “1646, 1651, 1652, and 1653.”⁸ James M. Renihan noted, “The 1646 revision was a direct response to charges leveled against the first edition of 1644 by a member of the Westminster Assembly, Daniel Featley, D.D., as well as several others.”⁹ Renihan later adds:

It must be noted that at least the 1644 edition of 1LCF [*First London Confession of Faith*] is the product of untrained theologians – men who didn’t have any specific theological instruction in the universities. They were not Puritan worthies, whose books were famous, they were laymen. This confession is actually well stated. In many cases it is very, very good, and this says something to us about the level of ability that belonged to laymen in the seventeenth-century churches.¹⁰

While there were accusations that the *First London Confession of Faith* derived directly from the Westminster Assembly’s theological framework, English Particular Baptists vehemently disagreed, asserting that their confession was independently rooted in Scripture and distinct from the Westminster tradition. Nevertheless, it was, in fact, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the Savoy Declaration, which the latter Calvinist Congregationalists used, that further expanded on the First Baptist Confession to produce the *London Baptist Confession of Faith in 1689*. Peter Masters shares:

The Congregationalists (at the Savoy Conference, 1658) took the *Westminster Confession* as their basis of faith after making modifications. Then in, 1677,

the Particular Baptists also took the *Westminster Confession* as the basis of a new confession of their own. They made changes to the articles covering the church, the ordinances and the civil magistrate, also slightly altering and extending some other passages.¹¹

Undoubtedly, Particular Baptists were motivated to refine their First Confession and emulate the thoroughness and theological distinctions of the neighboring Scottish Presbyterians. Much more organized than the First Confession, a “General Assembly” gathered from churches in England and Wales.¹² The purpose of the assembly laid on the importance of distinguishing Particular Baptists from Anabaptists and General Baptists and paedo-Reformed Christians – such as the Scottish Presbyterians, English Reformed Anglicans, and Dutch and German Reformed members. Austin Walker explains further, “The Assembly called on other Christians who differed from them over the matter of baptism to carefully consider The Confession.”¹³

Like *The First Confession*, *The Second Confession* sought to underline the Calvinistic background of their doctrinal beliefs, distinguish themselves from Arminians, most importantly the Arminian free-will theological system of belief. Further, the attendees of the Assembly wanted a coalition of like-minded believers following the unification of the Congregationalists and nearby Presbyterians. Also, similar to *The First Confession*, the second document was compiled in several years, starting in 1677, but gained full inclusion in 1689. Baptist historian Robert G. Torbet commented on the historical significance of the 1677 and 1689 Confession, “*The Second London Confession of Particular Baptists*, which was written

in 1677, primarily to show their agreement with the *Westminster Confession of the Presbyterians* in practically all points but baptism.”¹⁴

Torbet also noted that Particular Baptists agreed with General Baptists to document the heresies of Rome.¹⁵ Additionally, Torbet detailed the purpose of the Baptist Confessions:

(1) To maintain purity of doctrine; (2) to clarify and validate the Baptist position; (3) to serve as a guide to the General Assembly or local association in counseling churches; (4) to serve as a basis for fellowship within local churches, associations, or a General Assembly; (5) to discipline churches and members.¹⁶

Attendees of the 1689 Assembly made it clear their intention was to be God-focused and to proudly assert their Baptist identity as the cornerstone of their faith. A statement from the 1689 Assembly read:

We, the Ministers and Messengers of, and concerned for, upwards of one hundred Baptized Congregations in England and Wales being met together in London from the 3rd day of the 7th Month to the 11th of the same, 1689, to consider of some things that might be for the Glory of God, and the good of these Congregations . . . recommend to their perusal the Confession of our Faith . . . Which Confession we own, as containing the Doctrine of our Faith and Practice; and do desire that the Member of our Churches respectively do furnish themselves therewith.¹⁷

The *Baptist Confession of Faith*, published in 1689, gained immediate approval and accolades within the Baptist community. It modeled the highly successful Westminster Standards and set a foundation for Calvinist Baptists that would exist for generations to come.

**The Particular
Baptists' work in
creating and sharing
their Confession was
monumental**

To put the Baptist identity in England into context, one must consider that Baptists of all persuasions – whether Calvinistic, Arminian, or

Anabaptist – suffered severe persecution. The Particular Baptists' work in creating and sharing their Confession was monumental. While persecution had begun to ease by 1689, things were far from perfect. During this era, William III and Mary II allowed Baptists to worship freely under the Toleration Act of 1689. Sadly, though, Baptists still were considered second-class citizens. However, they now had legal protection as individuals, something that leaders such as John Bunyan had previously lacked.

The Subsequent American Reformed Baptist Confessions

The last production and agreement on *The London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)* created a new legacy for not only English Baptists but Baptists worldwide, and particularly those in the extended British Empire. Today, the *(London) Baptist Confession of Faith* is the most quoted and regularly used *Reformed Baptist Confession* in circulation. Its historical significance is paramount. However, it also helped bring forth similar confessions, many still used today.

It is necessary to define Calvinistic Baptists in the American colonies and early states. In England, Particular Baptist was a precise term for a Calvinistic or Reformed Baptist; but in North America, the terminology changed. While Reformed Baptist is a recognized label today, Regular Baptist was the commonly used term for Calvinistic Baptists in early America (though it had a different meaning than in England). Additionally, Strict Baptists were firmly Calvinistic, and over time, many Separate Baptists also embraced Calvinism. Regardless, Calvinism was a dominant theology and doctrine in early America. George Bancroft stated, "Calvinism came to America in the Mayflower . . . the Pilgrims Fathers were Calvinists in their faith according to the straightest system."¹⁸

Similarly, Presbyterian R. C. Reed commented on Calvinism and its connection to liberty and democracy, "A republican state took their rise about the same time in Geneva; and from that day this Calvinism has ever been identified with the cause of liberty, or the rights of man."¹⁹ Perhaps most profound was N. S. McFetridge commenting, "This great American nation, which stretches her vast and varied territory from sea to sea, and from the bleak hills of the North to the sunny plains of the South, was the purchase chiefly of the Calvinists, and the inheritance which they bequeathed to all liberty-loving people."²⁰ Noteworthy is that none of the three quotes specify a Reformed denomination, yet they label the Founding Christians as Calvinists, supporting the eventual impact and growth of American Reformed Baptists.

One Reformed group of American Baptists was the Calvinist Baptists in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Baptist Association accepted the *London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)* as their confessional

statement in 1724.²¹ Later, in 1742, they added two articles for a complete *Philadelphia Confession of Faith*. James L. Clark writes that there were two additions, “One numbered XXIII, concerned the

**The Philadelphia
Confession of Faith
was rightly known
as the American
version of the
London Baptist
Confession of Faith**

singing of Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as a divine institution, and the other, numbered XXXI, considered the imposition of hands upon baptized believers as an ordinance of Christ.”²²

Alongside the Confession, the Philadelphia Baptists also adopted a catechism known as Keach’s Catechism, which, too, had its history linked to London Particular Baptists. In reality, the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* was rightly known as the American version of the *London Baptist Confession of Faith*. The American version’s opening pages read, “It is very well known that the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is the mother confession of the *Old London Confession* and its American form, The *Philadelphia Confession of Faith*.”²³

The *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* remained important for Christians in the British colonies. It signaled their own identity. It is often noted that the independence and influence of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, along with the popular preaching of figures such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, and later the speeches and work of John Witherspoon, perhaps aided in a liberation mentality that eventually gained popularity and helped achieve victory in the American Revolution. Robert G. Torbet echoed this point: “Since the main leaders of the Awakening, with the exception of Wesley, were

Calvinists, the success of that movement gave an evangelistic zeal to many who adhered to Reformed doctrine.”²⁴

Following the pattern of the *London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689* and the *Philadelphia Confession*, the *Charleston Confession of Faith (1767)* mirrored its predecessors. Calvinist Baptists were not only present and impactful in the northern colonies, but also were found in areas such as Virginia and the Carolinas. Torbet further explained, “While some of these Baptists [Virginia and Carolinas] were Arminians, the Calvinists or Regular Baptists predominated in this area in later years, owing in all probability to their contacts with the Philadelphia Association.”²⁵ W. J. McGlothlin, a professor of church history (1894-1919), wrote, “The Charleston Association adopted it [*Philadelphia Confession*] in 1767. The article on the laying on of the hands was omitted from all the editions published by this Association, though the one on singing is retained. The second edition, published at Charleston, 1813, has, in addition to the Confession, a ‘Summary of Church Discipline’ and the ‘Baptist Catechism.’”²⁶ Torbet likewise recalled:

The publication of a *Calvinistic Confession of Faith* by the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1742 and by the Charleston Association in 1767 gave to Regular Baptists a theological tradition which was in accord with the best thought of Edwards and Whitefield . . . We have observed how the Separate Baptists united with the Regular Baptists, and how the General Baptists as in North Carolina, were transformed into Particular Baptists, until by 1800, Calvinism was the prevalent theology among them.²⁷

Needless to say, Calvinism dominated many Baptist circles in early America, though identifying them by their distinct titles remained difficult. Reformed Baptists' history in the formation of the American Baptist circle is nevertheless historical and inarguably tied to the Reformation and Reformers such as John Calvin and John Knox.

Another Calvinist Baptist association of ministers and churches sought an official Confession in New Hampshire. The *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* came into existence several years after the American Revolution, around 1833. It derived mainly from a desire to distinguish themselves from the growing number of Free Will Baptists gaining popularity in New Hampshire. Much shorter than the *Philadelphia Confession*, their Confession consisted of eighteen articles. John H. Leith shared, "The New Hampshire Baptist Convention appointed a committee on June 24, 1830, to prepare a statement of faith, which was published by the Board of the Convention in 1833. The confession reflects the moderate Calvinism of the time . . . Unlike earlier Baptist confessions, it is silent on the doctrine of the universal Church; and this has made it especially attractive to those who emphasized the local congregation and to the Landmark Baptist movement."²⁸ Preceding *The New Hampshire Confession* was the Kehukee Association of Articles (1777), composed by mostly Separate Baptists, which maintained a strong Calvinistic tone.

Similarly, the Georgia Baptist Association compiled its doctrine in 1790. E. Ray Clendenen shared, "The abstract affirmed the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity and the corruption of human nature and the impotency of man to recover himself by his own free will-ability."²⁹ He further added, "Those so elected in Christ in this eternal covenant, will be effectually called, regenerated, converted, sanctified, and

supported by the spirit and power of God, so that they shall preserve in grace, and not one of them be finally lost.”³⁰ Undoubtedly, the language of such a doctrine was Reformed to its core and signified the Georgia Baptist Association of 1790 was staunchly Calvinist.

Like *The New Hampshire Confession of Faith*, a short version of a Reformed Baptist doctrine was birthed in the historic Southern Baptist locale of Louisville, Kentucky, known as the *Abstract of Principles*. Released in 1858, the *Abstract of Principles* became the doctrinal statement of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Reformed Southern Baptists rightfully value it and still consider it an identifying statement. Its Calvinist verbiage is particularly seen in articles IV and XII:

IV. Providence: God, from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any wise to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures.

XIII. Perseverance of the Saints: Those whom God hath accepted in the Beloved, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the Church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.³¹

Today, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary still stands as one of the most prestigious institutes of higher learning, training ministers of the Word in the Reformed tradition. The growth and survival of Reformed Baptists in America is remarkable. A fair argument can be made that the *London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689* paved the way for American Calvinist Baptists' success in the United States. Proof of as much serves in the multitude of confessions that came into existence in America, which almost all mirrored the *London Baptist Confession*.

**the London Baptist
Confession of Faith
1689 paved the way
for American
Calvinist Baptists'
success**

Like their Christian counterparts in England, American Reformed Baptists suffered persecution, yet never yielded in their distinct identity. Their efforts paid off, as Reformed Baptists are welcomed in both the broader Baptist community and the Reformed body of churches. The latter point holds so much weight that it is not uncommon for Reformed Baptists to train for ministry alongside Presbyterian, Dutch, and German Reformed brethren.

Conclusion

It is fair to say that the American religious scene from the early colonies to the present day is a direct product of the Protestant Reformation. Early settlers fled Europe from religious persecution and embraced new ideas in a land developing its own way. As a result of the independence gained from the American Revolution, American Christians, too, achieved liberty in the official separation of church and state. The first of its kind, the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution paved the way for freedom of worship.

This remained especially personal to American Baptists.

A thorough study of Reformed Baptists makes it clear that their legacy stands alone. From the earlier Particular Baptists in England, facing arrest, death, and persecution, to the American Reformed Baptists, these Baptists held strong in their faith and doctrine. They stayed true to their convictions and sought to fulfill the Great Commission with unyielding determination in their Baptist identity. The history of the confessions shows that Reformed Baptists are some of the most historically rich Christians, direct products of the Reformation Era.

While they differed from their cousins, the Presbyterians, Dutch, and German Reformed Christians, Reformed Baptists nevertheless were firm followers of John Calvin's theology and those influenced by his teachings. Historical figures such as John Bunyan, Benjamin Keach, John Gill, Charles Spurgeon, Arthur Pink, and many others not only embraced the Calvinist title but also revered the Baptist distinction.

While it took years, inarguably hundreds of years, to gain the respect they deserved, Reformed Baptists are now in equal standing with the Reformed community, a product of their hard work and determination. Much of this can be credited to their steadfastness and adherence to confessions such as the London Baptist Confession of Faith and its successors. The Baptist Confession of Faith helped shape Reformed Baptists and laid the groundwork for the global church's present achievements.

ENDNOTES:

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 168.

² Ibid.

³ John R. Muether, “Reformed Confessions: The First Helvetic Confession (1536),” *Ordained Servant Online*, March 2017, https://opc.org/os.html?article_id=616&cur_iss=Y.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Richard P. Belcher and Anthony Mattia, *A Discussion of the Seventeenth Century Particular Baptist Confessions of Faith*, (Southbridge: Crowne Publications, 1990), 1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 146.

⁸ James M. Renihan, *For the Vindication of the Truth: Baptist Symbolics, Volume 1*, (Cape Coral: Founders Ministries, 2021), 9.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹¹ *Baptist Confession of Faith 1689 with Scripture Proofs*, ed. Peter Masters, (London: The Wakeman Trust, 1981), 5.

¹² *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura, (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2022), 21.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Robert R. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1950), 45.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 46.

¹⁷ James M. Renihan, ed., *Faith and Life for Baptists: The Documents of the London Particular Baptist Assemblies, 1689-1694*, (Palmdale: RBAP, 2016), 42.

¹⁸ Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1932), 382.

¹⁹ R. C. Reed, *The Gospel as Taught by Calvin*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 142.

²⁰ N. S. McFetridge, *Calvinism in History*, (Philadelphia: Westcott, 1882), 60.

²¹ *Baptist Confession of Faith 1689 with Scripture Proofs*, 5.

²² James L. Clark, *To Set Them in Order: Some Influences of the Philadelphia Baptist Association upon Baptists of America to 1814*, (Springfield: Particular Baptist Press, 2001), 148.

²³ *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith with Catechism*, (Marshallton: The National Foundation for Christian Education, 1970), 7.

²⁴ Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 254

²⁵ Ibid., 216.

²⁶ W. J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 298.

²⁷ Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 254.

²⁸ John H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1982), 334.

²⁹ Brad J. Waggoner and E. Ray Clendenen, *Calvinism: A Southern Baptist Dialogue*, (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 49.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Abstract of Principles*, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, accessed March 12, 2025, <https://www.sbts.edu/abstract-of-principles/>.

Baptist Confessions Developed in the United States Between 1665 and 1925

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The *Baptist Faith and Message* statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925 became the denomination's first official declaration of its theological parameters, since its organization in 1845. And yet, between 1665 and 1925, various Baptist groups in the United States developed and adopted faith confessions in an effort to define what they believed as Baptists and to provide distinct contrasts from all other faith groups.

When the Convention appointed a committee to develop a statement of faith, the work of the Baptist Faith and Message 1925 Committee (BF&M1925 committee) was not undertaken within a total vacuum.

Rather than relying on the faith confessions developed by British Baptists, other European Baptists, or Anabaptist confessions, the Southern Baptist committee benefitted from the prior efforts by various Baptist groups in the United States which were summarized by William Joseph McGlothlin (b. 1867; d. 1933). As a Professor of Church History for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, McGlothlin had edited the second anthology of *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (1911)¹ and as a member of the BF&M1925 committee, provided foundational

knowledge of available American-based Baptist confessions.

The following chart is a comprehensive list of available confessions, including ones McGlothlin did not deem historically significant.² This list includes relevant confessional statements not included in the major published anthologies. These confessions highlight some of the considerations Baptists have made when writing confessions. Quotations from these confessions illustrate the unique emphases of each confession discussed. Idiosyncratic or archaic spelling and grammar are retained in the quotations, in conformity to Tanselle's principles for reprinting published works.³

Confessions Written in the United States

<i>Title of Confession</i>	<i>Year</i>
Confession of Faith of First Baptist Church of Boston	1665
John Clarke's Confession	1669
Obadiah Holmes' Confession of Faith	1682
Philadelphia Confession of Faith (PCF)	1742
Confession of Faith and Covenant of the Baptist Church of Christ in Middleborough, Bridgewater, and Raynham	1756
Charleston Confession of Faith	1767
Articles of Faith of the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association	1777
Church Rules... of Salem Baptist Church (Mississippi Territory)	1791
Terms of Union between Elkhorn and South Kentucky or Separate Associations	1801

Articles of Faith of the Mississippi Baptist Association	1807
Principles of Faith of the Sandy Creek Association	1816
A Confession of Faith and Church Covenant (Cumberland Baptist Association)	1818
Declaration of Faith of the Eastern Maine Association	1825
Articles of Faith of Shaftsbury (VT.) Association	1828
Articles of Faith of the Baptist Church at Rock Spring, Illinois	1829
Articles of Faith and Covenant Adopted by Several Baptist Churches in the County of Worcester	1832
New Hampshire Confession of Faith (First Edition)	1833 (Lost?)
Treatise on the Faith of Free Will Baptists	1834
Articles (or Abstract) of Faith in Bible Language (Louisiana)	1842
New Hampshire Confession of Faith (Mississippi River Association)	1843
Articles of Faith of the Ouachita Baptist Association	1844
Declaration of Faith of the Sandy Creek Association	1845
Abstract of Faith of the Mississippi River Association	1845
Articles of Faith of the Sabine Association	1847
Abstract of Faith of the Red River Association	1848
New Hampshire Confession of Faith (William Crowell Edition)	1852

New Hampshire Confession of Faith (J. Newton Brown Edition)	1853
Sabine Association Union Articles	1853
Bayou Macon Association Articles of Faith	1855, revised unknown
Abstract of Principles (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary)	1858
New Hampshire Confession of Faith (Edward T. Hiscox's Baptist Church Directory)	1859
New Hampshire Confession of Faith (J. M. Pendleton Edition)	1867
New Hampshire Confession of Faith (Edward T. Hiscox's Standard Manual)	1890
New Hampshire Confession of Faith (Edward T. Hiscox's New Baptist Church Directory)	1894
New Hampshire Confession of Faith (Carroll/Scarborough Edition, SWBTS)	1908
Principles of Comity	1912
The Pronouncement on Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency	1914
Articles of Religious Belief ... of The Baptist Bible Institute (Now NOBTS)	1917 ⁴
Foreign Mission Board Articles of Faith	1919
“Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists”, or “To Those of Like Precious Faith with Us Scattered Abroad, Beloved in the Lord”	1920
Articles of Faith of the Baptist Bible Union	1923

Articles of Faith of Tabernacle Baptist Church of Chattanooga	1924
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**Confession of Faith of
First Baptist Church of Boston, 1665**

The Confession of Faith of the First Baptist Church of Boston was written shortly after the founding of First Baptist Church and shortly before a significant number of men (five of the seven) were to be charged with heresy by the Court of Assistants.⁵ Along with the confessions of John Clarke and Obadiah Holmes and the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (PCF), the Confession of Faith of First Baptist Church of Boston intended to separate the Baptists from the European radicals as a plea for toleration. This commitment can be seen in the clause, “we acknowledge Majestracy to be an ordinance of god & to submitt our selves to them in the Lord not becawse of wrath only but also for Consience sake.”⁶ Over half of the confession focuses on ecclesiology, even treating eschatology as a component of the church.

The Boston Confession’s clauses have scriptural citations as footnotes. Each clause and footnote are noted with letters “a” through “x”, excepting “j,” “n,” “r,” “s,” and “v.”⁷ No specific author of the confession was given, nor do the minutes provide the proceedings leading to the adoption of this document. William Lumpkin argues that confessions are crisis documents.⁸ That proposition is supported by James W. McClendon’s observation regarding the narrative context of propositional theology, and knowing the crisis in question, provides insights into what the confession affirms, denies, and omits.⁹ Certainly, the threat of the arrest of most of the men of the church would be a grave crisis to which none of the later confessions in the United States can compare.

John Clarke's Confession of Faith, 1669

John Clarke (b. 1609; d. 1676) was best known as the founder and pastor of the second Baptist church in the United States and author of *Ill Newes from New England*.¹⁰ He wrote his confession of faith as a response to religious persecution in the Massachusetts colony and the ever-present comparison to Anabaptists.¹¹ The text of the confession includes

seven statements regarding his beliefs concerning predestination.¹² The issues in the confession seem to fit the controversies involving Clarke at

Clarke's confession of faith was a response to religious persecution in the Massachusetts colony

the time.¹³ Neither Isaac Backus nor Sydney V. James indicate that the statement of faith held any official status in the Newport church, or even an official title.

Obadiah Holmes' Confession of Faith. (1682?)

Obadiah Holmes (b. 1610; d. 1682), was the pastor of Newport Baptist Church, and likewise suffered persecution for Baptist doctrine.¹⁴ The text of the confession includes thirty-five statements regarding his beliefs.¹⁵ It is a Calvinistic statement responding to hyper-Calvinist anti-missionary sentiments. This can be seen when he said,

I believe although God can bring men to Christ, and cause them to believe in him for life, yet he hath appointed an ordinary way to effect that great work of faith, which is by means of sending a ministry into the world, to publish repentance to the sinner, and salvation, and that by Jesus Christ; and they that are faithful shall save their own souls and some that hear them.¹⁶

This missionary zeal will prove to be a recurrent theme within the confessional tradition. Holmes' confession is significantly more developed than Clarke's. In *A History of New England*, Isaac Backus makes no indication that the statement of faith held any official status or an official title for Holmes' confession either.¹⁷ Holmes wrote his confession after Clarke and the "*First London Baptist Confession*" (1644), but before the "*Second London Baptist Confession*" (1689). An exact date is not clear.

Philadelphia Confession of Faith (PCF), 1742

The PCF dates to 1742. According to McGlothlin, the PCF was adopted by the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1742 and published by Benjamin Franklin in 1743.¹⁸ McGlothlin notes a reference to a confession in 1724, speculating it is the same statement. He asserts that the document is a modified form of the *Second London Confession of Faith*, with additions from Keach's Confession of Faith and a church covenant.¹⁹ William Lumpkin concurs with this analysis but does not cite McGlothlin.²⁰ Because the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (PCF) is largely a reprint of the *Second London Confession of Faith*, both McGlothlin and Lumpkin only include the additional points in their anthologies.²¹ The PCF has 34 articles. The two additional articles address singing during public worship and ordination. McGlothlin and Lumpkin only reprint these two articles in their anthologies of confessions of faith.

The Philadelphia Baptist Association felt free to amend the *Second London Confession of Faith*, and other Baptists in the United States felt free to amend the PCF. Lumpkin records that the **Charleston Association** in 1767, by means of its confessional statement, adopted the PCF with further amendments.²² The General Association of Separate Baptists of Virginia adopted the PCF acknowledging

that some Baptists disagree with the PCF at points.²³ This freedom to modify confessions to suit local needs became a notable trend across the Baptist confessional tradition. This license to modify confessions prevents devolution into creeds, from seed to weed, in that revision of confessions of faith prevents a confession supplanting biblical authority in the churches.

**Confession of Faith and Covenant of the
Baptist Church of Christ in Middleborough,
Bridgewater, and Raynham, 1756**

Isaac Backus (b. 1724; d. 1806), and five others, founded the First Baptist Church of Middleborough on January 16, 1756.²⁴ Before his conversion to Baptist convictions, Backus was a separatist. William G. McLoughlin (b. 1922; d. 1992), history professor at Brown University, connects a Separate confession by Backus to a diary entry dated to February 12-16, 1748.²⁵ This confession is substantially similar to a confession reprinted by Edward N. Lyon, pastor of Backus Memorial Baptist Church, in 1956 for the Church's Bicentennial.²⁶ Lyon's edition is modernized and removed the scripture citations. Original handwritten copies of the confession are still extant as part of the legal documents for First Baptist Church, Middleborough and in the Isaac Backus Papers Collection in the Archives at Yale University Divinity School Library.²⁷

"The Confession and Faith and Covenant of the Baptist Church . . ." has three sections. The first untitled part has seventeen points that cover the traditional loci of systematic theology. The second part titled "Concerning Church Affairs" has seven points addressing voluntarism, believer's baptism by immersion, the Lord's Supper, and the roles of Bishop, Deacon and Saints. Scripture citations are included at the end of each point in both parts. The

covenant is a liturgical document expressing the commitments of the members to each other. The additional point in section one, point sixteen, affirms freedom of conscience from civil government in religious matters. The Church Affairs part shows a shift in the opinion on infant baptism on point three. The covenant was expanded from the previous edition to include a vice list. Though the Southern Baptist committee certainly knew of Isaac Backus, there is no direct evidence of the influence of this confession on the BF&M1925.

Articles of Faith of the

Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association, 1777

William Lumpkin dates the Kehukee Association's statement to 1777 as a response to accusation of laxity from the Separate Baptists in North Carolina.²⁸ The Kehukee articles became the first uniquely American Baptist confession.²⁹ The Association divided over the Missionary Controversy in 1830.³⁰ The missionary controversy was over the validity of the use of missionary societies and seminaries. The Articles of Faith include 17 articles emphasizing the independence of local congregations. McGlothlin states, "The only Confession of any note produced by American Calvinistic Baptists is the so-called 'New Hampshire Confession of Faith.'"³¹ It is possible McGlothlin did not know about the Kehukee statement, but more likely McGlothlin may have excluded the "Articles of Faith" due to his pro-missions' stance and the decline of the Primitive Baptist numbers. Whatever the reason, this confession does not have any direct literary parallels with the BF&M1925.

**Church Rules, Discipline, and Covenant of the
Salem Baptist Church on Cole's Creek near
Natchez, the First Organized in the
Mississippi Territory, 1791**

Seven Baptists living in territory ruled by Spain gathered together to worship in accordance with Baptist principles at Margaret Stampley's home in the Natchez region of what became Mississippi.³² The document is divided into three sections titled "Church Rules," "Rules of Discipline," and "Church Covenant."³³

The Church Rules include four points. The rules of Discipline include six points. The Church Covenant, which formally functions as the articles of faith includes six enumerated articles. Point 4 in the Church Rules outlines nine doctrines, which is the same text as article 5. It is a basic confession of faith emphasizing Trinitarian doctrine, Particular Baptist soteriology and ecclesiology, and a literal belief in the return of Christ and final judgment. There are no scripture citations. There is no direct evidence that the BF&M1925 committee knew of this document.

**Sandy Creek Statements and the
"Terms of Union," 1816**

The Sandy Creek Association adopted two Statements of Faith: Principles of Faith of the Sandy Creek Association, from 1816 and Declaration of Faith of the Sandy Creek Association, from 1845. The Principles of Faith included ten short statements from a Missionary and Calvinistic perspective. It affirmed believers' baptism and closed communion. The Sandy Creek Association replaced

**The Principles of
Faith included ten
short statements
from a Missionary
and Calvinistic
perspective**

the Principles of Faith with the Declaration of Faith on September 26, 1845.³⁴ The Declaration of Faith is a revision of the *New Hampshire Statement of Faith*. McGlothlin does not record either confession. He notes the existence of Sandy Creek elsewhere.³⁵ Therefore, since McGlothlin knew of these statements but did not include them in his anthology he may not have considered these statements to be one of the “Confession[s] of much importance which had any large circulation in any language.”³⁶ Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard include the Principles of Faith.³⁷ George W. Purefoy, pastor and historian in the 1800s, records the adoption of the “Declaration of Faith.” His record of the minutes of the association meeting does not say why they revised the confession.³⁸ Lumpkin knew that Sandy Creek had two confessions, but only included one. To conserve space in his *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, McGlothlin likely left out the Declaration of Faith because it is a near reprint of the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith*.³⁹

According to Lumpkin, the **Terms of Union between Elkhorn and South Kentucky or Separate Associations (1801)** was an attempt to unify Separate and Regular Baptists. The Terms of Union affirms the same theology as the Principles of Faith but adds an eleventh affirmation allowing for disagreement on limited atonement. That is the ninth statement.⁴⁰

The Sandy Creek movement provides a distinct practical emphasis to the Baptist ethos in the American South. However, a deeper look is outside the scope of this article as there is no documentary evidence of the influence of either Sandy Creek statement on the committee working on the BF&M1925.⁴¹

Articles of Faith of the Mississippi Baptist Association, 1807

On September 26-29, 1807, delegates from five churches in the Natchez region met at the Salem Baptist Church (Mississippi), previously identified, for the second meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Association. At this meeting they approved a constitution. The first section after the preamble is titled “Articles of Faith.” This document includes nine articles with different phrasing, but the same emphasis as the Church Rules . . . of Salem Baptist Church. Baptist Distinctives and ecclesiology are reserved for a seven-point list in the next section titled “On Gospel Order.” There is no scripture citation list.⁴² This document taken with the Sandy Creek documents show that there was a trend toward the affirmation of doctrine as part of cooperative work. However, there is no direct link from this confession to the BF&M1925.

A Confession of Faith and Church Covenant (Cumberland Baptist Association), 1818

The Cumberland Baptist Association was a group of twenty-three churches in Maine, first meeting on October 2-3, 1811.⁴³ These churches were eventually absorbed into the York and Portland associations in Maine, disbanding in 1902.⁴⁴ Charles R. MacDonald is the only source for the text of “A Confession of Faith and Church Covenant” available for this article.⁴⁵ The confession includes sixteen articles, split into two sections. The final six articles restart the enumeration and are under the heading “Concerning a visible church.” MacDonald characterizes the confession as “a strongly Calvinistic declaration.”⁴⁶ It lacks a scripture support list.

This confession marks the beginning of several trends that are of note. First, with the exception of the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (NHCF) and the

“Articles of Faith” of Shaftsbury (1828), the later New England confessions emphasize ecclesiology over the other components of the statement. Baptist ecclesiology is the distinguishing marker between Baptists and other Evangelicals. Second, there is a church covenant which accompanied this confession. Whenever the NHCF was printed in a book for churches, J. Newton Brown's Covenant went with it.⁴⁷ Third, there are some unique phrases within the body of the confession and the covenant which also appear in the NHCF and Brown's Covenant. For example, the phrase in article five in the Cumberland document, “by voluntary transgressing the law of his Maker, he fell,” is quite similar to the NHCF phrase, “by voluntary transgression fell.” Likewise, the opening of both covenants state, “We have been enabled, as we trust by divine grace.”

The language and theology of NHCF and Cumberland document are similar, though they do not share the same order of articles. Though there is no remaining documentation acknowledging dependence upon the Cumberland statement, it seems that this was a source document for the NHCF. This is plausible, as there are records of communication between Maine and New Hampshire Baptists.⁴⁸

Declaration of Faith of the Eastern Maine Association, 1825

Twelve churches founded the Eastern Maine Association on November 12, 1818, and first met the next October.⁴⁹ The fast-growing association split into the Hancock Association and the Washington Association in 1835.⁵⁰ Charles MacDonald is again the only available source for the Declaration of Faith of the Eastern Maine Association. He cites the 1825 minutes as his source.⁵¹

The Declaration of Faith includes twenty-five articles with scripture support lists for each point. The Declaration of Faith is divided into two parts. After article seventeen, the enumeration starts over in the second part titled “Concerning a visible Church of Christ and its Disciples.” The second section includes eight articles. NHCF has fewer parallels with this statement, and those parallels are less likely to show direct dependence. There are some possible places of dependence, like describing humanity as “happy” pre-Fall in Article Seven. The “Declaration of Faith” shows concern about the abuse of power, in the magisterial church system, recurrently in the second part.

The Articles of Faith Shaftsbury Baptist Association, 1828

The Shaftsbury Baptist Association in Vermont adopted an original, nine-point statement of faith as part of the *Constitution or Plan of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association*.⁵² It is explicitly Calvinistic, with points three, four, and five emphasizing the depravity of man, unconditional election, and perseverance of the saints respectively. The Articles contains no scripture support lists.

Additionally, point nine addresses the debate with Seventh-day Baptists regarding keeping the sabbath. Henry S. Burrage (b. 1837; d. 1926) gives no indication of the Vermont Baptist Convention incorporating the Shaftsbury Articles of Faith into their governing documents.⁵³ MacDonald points out that Shaftsbury had previously adopted the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (PCF), and they replaced it with a briefer statement.⁵⁴ If so, it may be reasonable to see the Shaftsbury Articles of Faith as an abridgement of PFC as was the *Abstract of Principles of Southern Seminary* (1858).

Articles of Faith of the Baptist Church at Rock Spring, Illinois, 1829

Rock Spring Baptist Church was founded in 1829 by Thomas P. Green, Zadock Darrow, and John Mason Peck in connection with Rock Spring Seminary. They adopted a collection of articles of faith upon the founding of the church on April 12, 1829.⁵⁵ The Articles of Faith include fourteen articles that affirm particular Baptist disincentives in soteriology and ecclesiology. There are passages from Scripture in quotation marks, but no references to where they were found. In 1831, Rock Spring joined with the churches in Edwardsville and Alton to form the Edwardsville Association.⁵⁶ At some point, no later than 1836, the association adopted a “Summary of Faith.” This confession summarizes the Rock Spring Articles of Faith.⁵⁷ There is no documentation that the BF&M1925 committee knew of either of these confessions.

Articles of Faith and Covenant of the County of Worcester, 1832

Charles MacDonald provides no background information about Worcester County Baptists.⁵⁸ The Worcester Association was founded in 1819.⁵⁹ No one has yet made a compelling case why NHCF became so dominant while Worcester did not receive widespread acceptance even in Massachusetts. Like NHCF, the Articles of Faith and Covenant has summary headings. The doctrinal content and structure are like NHCF, but the Articles of Faith and Covenant omits scriptural support lists. It is briefer than NHCF.

New Hampshire Confession of Faith

The Baptist Convention of New Hampshire adopted the “New Hampshire Confession of Faith” (NHCF) on January 15, 1833.⁶⁰ William McGlothlin records a series of revisions and expansions of the “New Hampshire Confession of Faith.”⁶¹ William Lumpkin

repeats the same history of revision, citing McGlothlin.⁶² Neither Lumpkin nor McGlothlin were able to get the first edition of the NHCF, as it was not included in the *Minutes: New Hampshire Baptist Historical Society*.⁶³ The scholarly consensus is that the first edition may be lost.⁶⁴

There is a dissenting option regarding the original text of the NHCF. Charles Riley MacDonald in his dissertation titled, “The New Hampshire Declaration of Faith,” reprints a copy with sixteen articles, lacking the articles “On Repentance and Faith” and “On Sanctification.”⁶⁵ MacDonald credits William Hurlin, secretary of the New Hampshire Convention, as his source for a second-generation copy of the autograph edition adopted at the 1833 meeting.⁶⁶

MacDonald examined one hundred nineteen printed editions of confessions of faith from Baptist churches in the Samuel Colgate Collection. He claims thirty match his copy of the original and twenty-eight match J. Newton Brown's expanded edition.⁶⁷ This is a fascinating claim, and there is little reason to doubt the authenticity of MacDonald's copy. It at least represents a different reception stream, if not the *vorlage*. Finding one of the unidentified thirty church documents and comparing Brown's edition of the NHCF, James Pendleton's edition, and the Sandy Creek Articles of Faith would verify MacDonald's claims. Lumpkin and McGlothlin utilized William Crowell's *Church Members Handbook* as a pre-Brown witness of the *vorlage*,⁶⁸ which varies from MacDonald's copy in places not marked as known edits by Brown. However, since the BF&M1925 includes Brown's additions and MacDonald's research was conducted after 1925, this is not the source text for the BF&M1925.

J. Newton Brown (b. 1803; d. 1864) expanded the NHCF and published it in *The Baptist Church Manual*. James Madison Pendleton (b. 1811; d. 1892) included the NHCF in his *Church Manual*. Edward T.

**Brown, Pendleton,
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Hiscox (b. 1814; d. 1901) also published editions in his *Standard Manual* and *New Directory*.⁶⁹ He revised the NHCF in each volume.⁷⁰ Brown, Pendleton, and Hiscox account for

the popularity of the confession as church manuals became a default resource for pastors needing help organizing churches, particularly across the South.

**Treatise on the Faith of
Free Will Baptists, 1834**

McGlothlin and Lumpkin both include the *Treatise on the Faith of Free Will Baptists*.⁷¹ McGlothlin includes the verse lists, while Lumpkin does not. According to McGlothlin, this confession comes from the group of General Baptists who were converted in the Great Awakening by George Whitefield. The most notable convert for this discussion was Benjamin Randall of New Hampshire.⁷² Scott Bryant argues that Benjamin Randall (b. 1749; d. 1808) founded the Freewill Baptist movement.⁷³

The Chapter on Justification and Sanctification articulate a synergistic view of the continuation of salvation. The chapter affirms that Christ initiates justification and empowers sanctification through the Gospel.⁷⁴ The *Treatise on the Faith of Free Will Baptists* is an Arminian statement, but not a semi-Pelagian statement. Regeneration comes from the application of prevenient grace through Christ, rather

than grace being applied after the initial work of salvation. This Arminian nature of this confession of faith is unique because this is the only American statement McGlothlin includes in his anthology designated as an Arminian statement.⁷⁵ The greater portion of the treatise is spent on the doctrine and practice of the church, six and a half pages out of the twenty total pages. Only the chapter on God receives a longer treatment. This chapter has a distinctly different style of argumentation than other confessions but comes to largely the same ecclesiological conclusions as articulated in the PCF.⁷⁶

Abstract of Principles, 1859

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Basil Manley Jr. (b. 1825; d. 1892) composed the doctrinal statement adopted by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), the *Abstract of Principles of Southern Seminary*. The Board of Trustees of SBTS adopted the Abstract of Principles in 1859. The *Abstract of Principles* includes twenty articles with no scriptural support lists. As professors at SBTS, three of the members of the committee commissioned to compose the BF&M1925, had signed the *Abstract of Principles* of Southern Seminary. In a separate article in this issue of the *Journal*, the perspectives of those professors – Edwin Charles Dargan (b. 1852; d. 1930), William Joseph McGlothlin, and Edgar Young Mullins (b. 1860; d. 1928) – were contributory in the BF&M1925 committee’s work.

Another Southern Seminary resource document was “What We Believe According to the Scriptures,” by Franklin H. Kerfoot, (b. 1847; d. 1901). F. H. Kerfoot was pastor of Eutaw Place Baptist Church of Baltimore, Maryland from 1877 to 1883.⁷⁷ According to Edwin Charles Dargan, one of the BF&M1925 Committee members, Kerfoot, “prepared this

Confession of Faith for that church as an expression of what is believed by them according to the scriptures. It has been adopted by many other churches.”⁷⁸ Dargan gave no publication date. Kerfoot divided his confession into two parts: “Doctrines We Hold in Common with Other Denominations,”⁷⁹ and “Distinctive Doctrines of Baptists.”⁸⁰ There are eleven common doctrines, including the Trinity, the sinfulness of man, the resurrection, and the “doctrines of grace.” Kerfoot’s phrase “doctrines of grace” expresses his Calvinistic soteriology. There are six Baptist distinctives: the sufficiency of scripture, voluntary religious practice, the duty of repentance, believers’ baptism by immersion, a theology of associations, and the memorial view of the Lord’s Supper. Kerfoot included scripture support lists in both sections.

Principles of Comity, 1912

The Principles of Comity or the Hot Springs Agreement comes from an attempt by Northern and Southern Baptists particularly to deal with church planting in New Mexico. The document does not constitute a full statement of faith, and neither party intended it to serve as one. It is primarily a practical document outlining the financial obligations of the two conventions. Its three fundamental principles are ecclesiological. H. Leon McBeth included it in his companion to *The Baptist Heritage*.⁸¹ In essence, the Hot Springs Agreement may have informed E. Y. Mullins and his understanding of the way corporate statements become authoritative.

Pronouncement on Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency, 1914

During the May 17, 1913 evening session of the SBC Convention, John R. White proposed a resolution establishing a commission of seven people to evaluate the efficiency of Southern Baptist missionary efforts.⁸²

The tone of the resolution, titled “Pronouncement on Christian Union” showed a desire to work with existing Baptist organizations instead of replicating efforts which result in competition between SBC bodies.

At the 1914 SBC annual meeting, the “Pronouncement on Christian Union and Denomination Efficiency” came to the convention floor for consideration by messengers. It reflected similar concerns expressed in the Hot Springs Agreement. However, as a document that also looked at denominational efficiency, the committee stated the following as an organizational goal:

4. By a complete alignment of all our denominational forces, churches, schools, hospitals, papers, Sunday schools, women's and young people's societies, in purpose, spirit and practice with the program of Christ as set out in the great commission, avoiding the weakness of vagueness and the diffusion of denominational strength into channels leading away from the churches.⁸³

By this, the Denominational Efficiency article instructed the agencies to work together and present a unified vision of the Gospel to the supporting churches. The seminaries and associational papers were the most important cooperative entities mentioned in the statement for the following study.

Articles of Religious Belief . . . of The Baptist Bible Institute, 1917, and Foreign Mission Board Articles of Faith, 1919.

Two Southern Baptist agencies, the Foreign Mission Board and the Baptist Bible Institute, developed their own confessional standards in the late 1910s. The

SBC renamed the Baptist Bible Institute in 1946 to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.⁸⁴ Neither statement is included in any of the major anthologies of Baptist or Southern Baptist life. Steve Lemke, of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), explained the meaning and importance of the “Articles of Religious Belief” in NOBTS’ 2013 Founder’s Day Sermon.⁸⁵ He said that the statement showed NOBTS is not a Calvinist institution and has a commitment to the authority of the Bible.

Five years later, Jeffery Riddle likewise reintroduced the Articles of Faith to the discussion of Baptist confessional theology.⁸⁶ The Articles of Faith show that the Foreign Mission Board believed that it had the authority to craft an independent confessional document, rather than adopt an existing statement.

The rationale for a new statement of faith by the Baptist Bible Institute is reflected in *A History of Baptists of Louisiana* by John T. Christian. He served on the committee that established the Baptist Bible Institute and joined the faculty as professor of Church History. He does not mention the Baptist Bible Institute’s doctrinal statement in his discussion of the school’s founding.⁸⁷ He reprinted twelve doctrinal statements from eight associations between 1818 and 1855.⁸⁸ One of the statements was the *New Hampshire Statement of Faith*. He identified two persistent and concurrent crises among Louisiana Baptists. The crises regarded debate around Calvinistic doctrines of the will and the schism with the Restorationist movement of Alexander Campbell (b. 1788; d. 1866) over the use of non-biblical language and missions.⁸⁹ Perhaps a new statement was a way to avoid the controversies that had previously embroiled Louisiana Baptists.

The close proximity of two Southern Baptist agencies crafting their own statements of faith led to the BF&M1925. The Articles of Religious Belief and the Articles of Faith seems to provide the encouragement needed for those like Mullins and McGlothlin to work for a standard statement of faith. The vacuum left by the SBC having no official statement of faith encouraged the proliferation of competing statements among associations and agencies. No statements could claim such a commission. The agencies' and associations' actions exposed an organizational need for such a standard, as each national body could write competing or contradictory statements. The proliferation of doctrinal standards by agencies violates the spirit, if not the letter, of the "Pronouncement on Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency." The existence of competing and occasionally contradictory statements undermined the "complete alignment of all our denominational forces, churches, schools."⁹⁰ These documents were known to the committee and thus were options for a starting point for the BF&M1925 committee.

Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists, 1920

At the 1919 SBC annual meeting, the Friday session included discussion on how the SBC would interact with other religious bodies. Part of the discussion related to non-Baptist works including the Inter-Church World Movement. The end of hostilities of World War I also may have contributed to a general milieu of reconnection with like-minded religious groups in Europe. In this context, J. F. Love proposed a resolution with no recorded objections. It said:

Resolved, That a committee of five messengers to this Convention be appointed to prepare greetings of this Convention of Southern Baptists to the people of "like precious faith with us"

scattered abroad in all nations; That the committee be composed of E. Y. Mullins, L. R. Scarborough, J. B. Gambrell, Z. T. Cody, and William Ellyson.⁹¹

The Fraternal Address was a precursor to the BF&M1925 in three ways. First, the Convention authorized a statement of Baptist distinctives.

The Fraternal Address was a precursor to the BF&M1925 in three ways.

Second, Mullins and Scarborough both participated in this document. Third, the responses to the Fraternal Address likely helped shape the process and content of the BF&M1925. Since there

was little response to this document, this BF&M1925 Committee may have tried to use existing confessions to get support from those who already affirmed the NHCF.

James E. Carter, formerly of the Louisiana Baptist State Convention, observed that the primary concern of the Fraternal Address was Christian Union.⁹² The theology is consistent with the BF&M1925, but the BF&M1925 shows little direct literary or structural dependency upon the Fraternal Address. Carter also noted that this document was never endorsed by a convention vote or printed in the *Annual* proceedings.⁹³ No printed anthology of Baptist confessions or other primary source documents includes this statement at this time, but it was printed in some of the state papers after the committee drafted the document.⁹⁴

Articles of Faith of the Baptist Bible Union. 1923

The Baptist Bible Union was a fundamentalist and confessional splinter group from the Northern Baptist Convention. The Baptist Bible Union adopted an amended version of the *New Hampshire Statement of Faith*.⁹⁵ The Baptist Bible Union became the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches.⁹⁶ Aside from the adoption of a confession with the same base text, the precedent set by the Baptist Bible Union impacts the life and thought of Scarborough through his sustained controversy with J. Frank Norris. Norris played a key role in the adoption of the Articles of Faith. Robert Galnay argues that Norris sought to exclude modernists from the Baptist Bible Union⁹⁷ and he charged Scarborough with modernism.

Articles of Faith of the Tabernacle Baptist Church of Chattanooga

On August 17, 1924, the Tabernacle Baptist Church, Chattanooga, produced a seven-point statement of faith within line citations. The confession affirms the doctrine of revelation, the Trinity, salvation, the ordinances, and the return of Christ. It was influenced by the NHCF and the affirmations of the Fundamentals. The Baptist Minister's Conference of Chattanooga approved the articles of faith.⁹⁸ J. D. Moore, the editor of the *Baptist and Reflector*, published these articles of faith, as a positive example for other churches. An editorial in the *Baptist and Reflector* said,

It is supposed that this Confession takes the place of any other declaration of faith which that church may have formerly made or adopted, but not necessarily so. A church can pass as many resolutions of that kind or any other as it wishes: since one might be of

value as a supplement or an elaboration of another.⁹⁹

This confession shows that Baptists are willing to have multiple confessions of faith as complementary attempts to address contemporary issues.

The BF&M1925 in the Confessional Tradition

In light of the variety of confessional statements produced in this time period, E. Y. Mullins saw the necessity for providing a better means to regulating the authority of confessional statements. In *Baptist Beliefs*, an interpretation of the *New Hampshire Confessions of Faith*, E.Y. Mullins argues, “creeds perform a useful function in educating us to unity of faith and practice so long as they are not worn as death masks for defunct religion, or employed as lashes to chastise others.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, Mullins believed that confessions should not be seen as exhaustive or comprehensive indexes of important or infallible beliefs.

Instead, Mullins saw confessions as documents designed to educate Christians by providing an

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example of how a religious group formulates doctrine. Mullins does not maintain a strict distinction between creed and confession in his writings, unless

responding to someone making such a distinction. As the chairman of the committee to draft a statement of faith for the SBC, Mullins seemed to have convinced the other committee members of this perspective by the time the *Baptist Faith and Message* was delivered to the Convention. There were “creedalists,” those who wanted to enforce uniformity among the

churches in the SBC, but the signatories were not among them.

In a separate article in this issue of the *Journal* is a brief overview of the lives of the Committee members tasked with developing the BF&M1925. The members of this Committee who signed the majority report were Sanford Miller Brown, Edwin Charles Dargan, William Joseph McGlothlin, Lee Rutland Scarborough, and Edgar Young Mullins.¹⁰¹ Robert Healy Pitt (1853-1937) also was appointed to the committee in 1924 but withdrew from the committee. These men's participation in Baptist life and educational work influenced the composition of the BF&M1925. This included the work done cooperatively with the Negro Baptist Seminary project and work with the Baptist World Alliance. Each made specific comments about what they thought was the work of the committee. Englerth rightly noted the importance of the situation of life of the authors of confessions. Specifically, confessions have “the stamp of its age and gave expression to the historical context out of which it arose.”¹⁰²

E. Y. Mullins' book *Baptist Beliefs* purports to be an exposition of the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith*, but also includes topics added to the BF&M1925. This book is the best source for Mullins' understanding of the weakness of the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith*.¹⁰³

Briefly, none of the previously cited statements of faith received authorization or ratification by Southern Baptist churches meeting corporately. The other statements represent small groups of Baptists, even if they were widely adopted later. The BF&M1925 Committee modified the text either to clarify essential components of doctrine or to allow for divergent explanations of Christian doctrine.¹⁰⁴

Mullins made an implicit distinction between essential Christian affirmations, essential Baptist affirmations and opinions.¹⁰⁵ R. Albert Mohler, Jr. provided a modern explanation of this distinction.¹⁰⁶ He described it as “Theological triage,” by observing:

A discipline of theological triage would require Christians to determine a scale of theological urgency that would correspond to the medical world’s framework for medical priority. With this in mind, I would suggest three different levels of theological urgency, each corresponding to a set of issues and theological priorities found in current doctrinal debates.¹⁰⁷

In summary, the thesis of this *Journal* article is that the BF&M1925 is a synthesis of the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* and the *Abstract of Principles* with new contributions to address important issues in Baptist life. The *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* emerged as a *de facto* universal confession in churches at that time due to its inclusion in the popular *The Church Manual, Designed for the Use of Baptist Churches* by J. M. Pendleton and *The*

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Standard Manual for Baptist Churches by Edward Hiscox.¹⁰⁸ The NHCF and the *Abstract of Principles* were the confessional standards for Southwestern and

Southern seminaries respectively. The BF&M1925 provided a consensus confession for all SBC agencies, without giving preference to the constituencies of Southern Seminary, Southwestern Seminary, or the remaining Landmarkists in the SBC.

Conclusion

In 2004, William Brackney convincingly demonstrated that Baptist life often reflects multiple genetic factors for Baptist thought and practice. His *Genetic History of Baptist Thought* argues that the importance of confessions in Baptist life is in the confessional tradition rather than any one confession.¹⁰⁹ The BF&M1925 reflected influence across the confessional tradition and was an attempt to unify the tradition, but identifies these genetic factors related to the purpose of the BF&M1925 and those who responded to it. For instance, of the three existing SBC seminaries only Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary added the BF&M1925 to their organizational documents. SWBTS and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary adopted the BF&M1925 as the statement of faith after initially adopting the NCHF, whereas The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary did not. These omissions and disagreements reflect a need for an additional thorough examination of the BF&M1925 in its social and literary context.

ENDNOTES:

¹ McGlothlin's work was preceded by Edward Bean Underhill, *Confessions of Faith and Other Public Documents Illustrative of the History of the Baptist Churches of England in the 17th Century*, (London: Haddon Bros., and Co., 1854). A contemporary competitor volume was Burrage, Champlin, *The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641)*, vol. 2, *Illustrative Documents*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1912).

² "Material was in hand to make the volume more complete, but the limits of space forbade the incorporation of a few Confessions and catechisms which might have been expected. It is believed, however, that no Confession of much importance which had any large circulation in any language has been omitted." William J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), v.

³ G. Thomas Tanselle, "Texts of Documents and Texts of Works," in *Textual Criticism and Scholarly Editing*, (Charlottesville: The Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1990), 9.

⁴ Steve Lemke dates the text to August 29, 1918, but the earliest copy available in the NOBTS archives is probably from 1927. The 1918 text is held by the President's office of NOBTS. For more information about this see, Steve Lemke, "10/1/2013 – Dr. Steve Lemke, Provost; NOBTS - Founders Day" (Founders Day 2013, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, posted September 19, 2014), <http://youtube.com/watch?v=4kbvvRuISIQ>, or Gary D. Mayers, "Lemke Examines NOBTS doctrinal statement at Founder's Day chapel," *The Gatekeeper* 43, no. 8 (October 8, 2013), 1-2., cf. William A. Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer: A History of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary* (New Orleans: New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1969), 21.

⁵ Carla Gardina Pestana, *Quakers and Baptists in Colonial Massachusetts*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 51, 54.

⁶ Thomas R. McKibbens, ed. *First Baptist Church, Boston, Massachusetts, Baptists in Early North America*, vol. 4, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2017), 4; cf. "First Baptist Church of Boston, 1665," in Charles Riley MacDonald, "The New Hampshire Declaration of Faith," (Th.D. Diss., Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, 1939), 124-125.

⁷ McKibbens, ed. *First Baptist Church, Boston, Massachusetts*, 3-4.

⁸ William L. Lumpkin, "Baptist Confessions of Faith," in *Baptist Advance: The Achievements of Baptists of North America for a Century and a Half*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1964), 15.

⁹ James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), 202.

¹⁰ "Clarke, John (1609-1676)" in *Historical Dictionary of the Baptists*, ed. William H. Brackney, 2nd ed. *Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements* 94, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 141-142; cf. W. R. Estep, "Clarke, John (1609-1676)" in *Dictionary of Baptists in America*, ed. Bill J. Leonard (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 84-85.

¹¹ Isaac Backus, *A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists*, ed. David Weston, 2nd ed, vol.1 (Newton, MA: Backus Historical Society, 1871), 204-205.

¹² Backus, *History of New England*, 206.

¹³ Sydney V. James, *John Clarke and His Legacies: Religion and*

Law in Colonial Rhode Island 1638-1750, ed. Theodore Dwight Bozeman, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 85-106.

¹⁴ “Holmes, Obadiah (1607-1682)” in *Historical Dictionary of the Baptists*, 2nd ed., 286-287; cf. T. P. Weber, “Holmes, Obadiah (1607-1682)” in *Dictionary of Baptists in America*, 144-145.

¹⁵ Backus, *History of New England*, 206-209.

¹⁶ Backus, *History of New England*, 208.

¹⁷ For more on Obadiah Holmes, see Edwin S. Gaustad, *Baptist Piety: The Last Will and Testimony of Obadiah Holmes*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

¹⁸ For more on the Philadelphia Association in the 1740's see: James L. Clark, “To Set Them in Order;” in *Some Influences of the Philadelphia Baptist Association Upon Baptists in America to 1814*, ed. Terry Wolever, The Philadelphia Association Series (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2001), 57-89, 147-324. A. D. Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association from A.D. 1707, to A.D. 1807*, (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 42-63.

¹⁹ William J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 294-297.

²⁰ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 348-351.

²¹ McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 293-299; Lumpkin *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 348-353.

²² Lumpkin, “Baptist Confessions of Faith,” in *Baptist Advance*, 13.

²³ Lumpkin, “Baptist Confessions of Faith,” in *Baptist Advance*, 13.

²⁴ Isaac Backus, *Diary of Isaac Backus*, vol. 1, edited by William G. McLoughlin, (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1979), 400-1; Henry S. Burrage, *A History of the Baptists in New England*, (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1894), 49.

²⁵ Backus, “[12 – 16 February (AFS).]” in *Diary of Isaac Backus*, vol. 1, 31-32; “Appendix 3,” and “Appendix 4,” in *Diary of Isaac Backus*, vol. 3, 1529-1533.

²⁶ Edward N. Lyon, “Backus Memorial Baptist Church, 1756-1956: Bicentennial, May 25-27, 1956,” 15-18. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/backusmemorialba00ounse>.

²⁷ Jason D. Genest, Pastor of First Baptist Church, e-mail, December 14, 2020; “Church records: Massachusetts/Middleborough/Third Baptist Church, Undated,” Isaac Backus Papers (RG 280), Series I, Box 6, Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library. <https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/4/resources/10689>

Accessed December 18, 2020.

²⁸ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 354.

²⁹ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 354.

³⁰ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 354. For more on the Kehukee Baptist Association see, Lemuel Burkitt and Jesse Read, *A Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist Association from its Original Rise to the Present Time*, ed. Henry L. Burkitt, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1850) A fuller treatment is overdue.

³¹ McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 299.

³² Richard Aubrey McLemore, *A History of Mississippi Baptists, 1780-1970*, (N.P.: Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 1971), 12-13.

³³ McLemore, *Mississippi Baptists*, 14-16.

³⁴ George W. Purefoy, *A History of the Sandy Creek Association: From its Organization in A.D. 1758 to 1858*, (New York: Sheldon, 1859), 198-214.

³⁵ William J. McGlothlin, *Guide to the Study of Church History*, (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), 288.

³⁶ McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, v.

³⁷ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 358, cf. Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd. rev. ed., 373-375.

³⁸ Purefoy, *History of the Sandy Creek Association*, 197-216.

³⁹ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 358, n 14.

⁴⁰ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 359.

⁴¹ For more regarding the Sandy Creek Movement and Shubal Stearns, see, John Sparks, *The Roots of Appalachian Christianity: The Life and Legacy of Elder Shubal Stearns*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005) and Lucille Dawdy, Milton Powell, and Kenneth S Barger, *Sandy Creek Roots: A Brief History of the Churches of Sandy Creek Baptist Association*, (Murrayville, IL.: Sandy Creek Baptist Association, 1986).

⁴² McLemore, *Mississippi Baptists*, 31-37.

⁴³ Henry S. Burrage, *History of the Baptists in Maine*, (Portland, ME: Marks Printing House, 1904), 149.

⁴⁴ Burrage, *History of Baptists in Maine*, 455-456.

⁴⁵ MacDonald, "New Hampshire Declaration of Faith," 130-133.

⁴⁶ MacDonald, "New Hampshire Declaration of Faith," 40.

⁴⁷ For example, Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs*, (Louisville: Baptist World Publishing, 1912), 83-94.

⁴⁸ Burrage, *History of Baptists in Maine*, 154.

⁴⁹ Burrage, *History of Baptists in Maine*, 153.

⁵⁰ Burrage, *History of Baptists in Maine*, 195.

⁵¹ MacDonald, "New Hampshire Declaration of Faith," 134-137.

⁵² Stephen Wright, *History of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association*

From 1781 to 1853, (Troy: A. C. Johnson, 1853), 188-190.

⁵³ Burrage, *History of the Baptists in New England*, 209-215, 252-255.

⁵⁴ MacDonald, "New Hampshire Declaration of Faith," 40. MacDonald gives a date of 1807, but he cites Wright who provides a date of 1828. Wright, *History of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association*, 188-190.

⁵⁵ Rock Spring Church, "Articles of Faith..." in *A Noble Company*, vol. 9, edited by Terry Wolever, (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2017), 589-590; Myron D. Dillow, *Harvesttime on the Prairie: A History of Baptists in Illinois, 1796-1996*, (Franklin, TN: Providence House, 1996), 94-95.

⁵⁶ Dillow, *Harvesttime on the Prairie*, 123.

⁵⁷ Dillow, *Harvesttime on the Prairie*, 123-124.

⁵⁸ MacDonald, "New Hampshire Declaration of Faith," 42, 139-140.

⁵⁹ John Woolman Brush, *Baptists in Massachusetts*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1970) 19. According to Isaac Davis, Fredric A. Willard became pastor of First Baptist Worcester that year. See Isaac Davis, *An Historical Discourse on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the First Baptist Church in Worchester, Mass.*, (Worcester: Henry J. Howland, 1863) 34. ATLA Historical Monographs: Series 1.

⁶⁰ The NHCF is called a "Declaration" and "Confession." Brown uses the word Confession and Declaration in his *Baptist Church Manual* on the Cover, Title Page, Table of Contents, and page 1. McGlothlin calls it a "Confession." Mullins calls it a "Declaration" in *Baptist Beliefs* in the Table of Contents and on page 83. These should be considered stylistic decisions rather than a theological distinction. Unless quoting other authors or in titles of other works, this article will use Confession.

⁶¹ McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 299-301.

⁶² Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 306-361.

⁶³ Including the confessional statement in the minutes of the meeting where a confession is adopted appears to be standard practice. It is unclear why the New Hampshire Convention did not do so.

⁶⁴ For examples, see, Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs*, 83-85; McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 299-301.

⁶⁵ MacDonald, "New Hampshire Declaration of Faith," 53-58.

⁶⁶ MacDonald, "New Hampshire Declaration of Faith," 79-80.

⁶⁷ MacDonald, "New Hampshire Declaration of Faith," 71.

⁶⁸ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 1st ed., 361.

⁶⁹ See Aaron Menikoff, "Edward T. Hiscox," in *A Nobel Company: Biographical Essays on Notable Particular-Regular Baptists in America*, vol. 10, edited by Terry Wolever

(Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2018), 356-407.

⁷⁰ McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 300-301.

⁷¹ McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 308-329; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 367-376. Baptists of this conviction are named variously "Free Will," "Free-Will," "Freewill," "Free," "Arminian Baptists," "General Baptists," and "Separate Baptists." There is no theological distinction between the various versions of the name, though may indicate a different movement within that sub-stream of Baptist thought.

⁷² McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 308.

⁷³ For more see, Scott Bryant, *The Awakening of the Freewill Baptists: Benjamin Randall and the Founding of an American Religious Tradition*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2011), Scott E. Bryant, "The Awakening of the Freewill Baptists: Benjamin Randall and the Founding of an American Religious Tradition," (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2007), 224-248.

⁷⁴ McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 320-321.

⁷⁵ McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 308-309.

⁷⁶ For more on Free Will Baptists, see, G. W. Million, *A History of Free Will Baptists*, (n.p.: Board of Publication and Literature National Association of Free Will Baptists, 1958), 55-119; Robert F. Davidson, *An Early History of Free Will Baptists; The Original Free Will Baptists in America, A Continuing Witness from Infancy to Identity (1727-1830)*, (Nashville: Randall, 1974).

⁷⁷ Leo T. Crismon, "Kerfoot, Franklin Howard," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, 2:749.

⁷⁸ Edwin Charles Dargan, *Doctrines of Our Faith*, (Nashville: Sunday School Board Southern Baptist Convention, 1905), 229.

⁷⁹ Dargan, *Doctrines of Our Faith*, 229.

⁸⁰ Dargan, *Doctrines of Our Faith*, 231.

⁸¹ H. Leon McBeth, *Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1990), 458-462, Logos edition.

⁸² Southern Baptist Convention *Annual* 58, (May 14-19, 1913) hereinafter referred to as *SBC Annual*: 69-70.

⁸³ *SBC Annual* 58 (1913): 77.

⁸⁴ *SBC Annual* 89 (1946): 100.

⁸⁵ Steve Lemke, "Founders Day."

⁸⁶ Jeffery T. Riddle, "The 1919 Statement of Belief and the Tradition of Confessional Boundaries for Southern Baptist Missionaries," *The Journal of Baptist Studies* 2 (2008), 27-43. Originally published in *Faith and Mission* 20 (2003), 40-59.

⁸⁷ John T. Christian, *A History of Baptists in Louisiana*, (Shreveport: Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1923), 248-250

⁸⁸ Christian, *Baptists in Louisiana*, 84-97.

⁸⁹ Christian, *Baptists in Louisiana*, 86, 92-93.

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- ⁹⁰ SBC *Annual* 58 (1913): 77.
- ⁹¹ SBC *Annual* 64, (May 14-18, 1919): 75.
- ⁹² James E. Carter, "Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists," *Baptist History and Heritage* 12, no. 4, (Oct, 1977): 218.
- ⁹³ Carter, "Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists," 214.
- ⁹⁴ For example: E.Y. Mullins, et al. "Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists," *Baptist Standard* 32, no. 9 (February 26, 1920): 5, 20, 24.
- ⁹⁵ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 1st ed., 384-385.
- ⁹⁶ For a full discussion of the history of the GARBC confessional tradition, see Robert G. Galnay, *A History of the GARBC Confession of Faith*, (Schaumburg: Regular Baptist Press, 1983?).
- ⁹⁷ Galnay, *History of the GARBC Confession of Faith*, 15-16.
- ⁹⁸ Keith J. Harris and T. W. Callaway, "Articles of Faith Adopted by the Tabernacle Baptist Church of Chattanooga," *Baptist and Reflector* 90, no. 4 (September 4, 1924), 9.
- ⁹⁹ Unsigned [J. D. Moore listed as editor], "Confessions of Faith," *Baptist and Reflector* 90, no. 4 (September 4, 1924): 2.
- ¹⁰⁰ E. Y. Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs* (Louisville: Baptist World Publishing, 1912), 9-10.
- ¹⁰¹ The order in the documents from the committee was: E.Y. Mullins, S.M. Brown, W.J. McGlothlin, E.C. Dargan, and L.R. Scarborough. R. H. Pitt, editor of the *Religious Herald* was appointed to the Committee, but his name did not appear on the final draft.
- ¹⁰² Englerth, "American Baptists: A Confessional People?" *Foundations* 4 (June 1985): 132.
- ¹⁰³ Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs*, 5-10, 83-85.
- ¹⁰⁴ James Madison Pendleton, *The Church Manual, Designed for the Use of Baptist Churches*, (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1867), 42-61. Edward Thurston Hiscox, *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches*, (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1890), 58-74; cf. Charles W. Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants*, (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1990), 67-68, 75-76.
- ¹⁰⁵ E.Y. Mullins, "Dangers and Duties of the Present Hour," Address to the Southern Baptist Convention, Kansas City, Mo. May 16, 1923, in *The Axioms of Religion*, edited by R. Albert Mohler (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 177-179.
- ¹⁰⁶ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity," Albert Mohler, July 12, 2005, <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/>.
- ¹⁰⁷ Mohler, "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity," paragraph 5.

¹⁰⁸ Pendleton's edition provides the basis for the revision adopted by SWBTS as its confessional standard.

¹⁰⁹ William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought With Special Reference to Baptists in Britain and North America*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004), 62.

The 100-Year Legacy and History of *The Baptist Faith and Message Statement:* Part I – 1845 – 1925

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The *Baptist Faith and Message Statement* was not officially developed and adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention until 1925, which marks its 100-anniversary during this year of 2025. However, the confessional declaration of Southern Baptists had its roots in a variety of historical events that occurred before and after the organization of the convention. This Part 1 article seeks to highlight some of those various contributory issues that occurred prior to and during 1925. A later Part 2 article will highlight the revisions made to the confessional statement in 1963, 1998 and 2000.

“A Baptist Aversion for all Creeds but the Bible”

The Southern Baptist Convention was organized during a four-day meeting that began May 10, 1845, in Augusta, Georgia. There were no official declarations of doctrinal beliefs or intents that the convention upheld. Although the primary stated purpose in the formation of the convention was to fulfill the Great Commission by sending missionaries to domestic and foreign fields. That singular purpose was stated in the Preamble to the Convention Constitution, affirming the convention would be “carrying into effect the benevolent intentions of our constituents, by organizing a plan for eliciting, combining and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort, for the propagation of the Gospel, . . .”¹

However, in the address of the convention’s first president – William Bullein Johnson (b. 1782; d. 1862) of South Carolina – who stated the convention’s purpose was not only affirmed but clarified. Johnson stressed, “We have

constructed for our basis no new creed; acting in this matter upon a Baptist aversion for all creeds but the Bible.”² The remainder of the convention’s brief constitution defined organizational structure, procedural guidelines, and parliamentary rules governing the then triennial meeting.

The singular rationale for the convention’s organization was the issue of slavery and the right of Baptists in the South to appoint slaveholders as Gospel-preaching missionaries. Baptist historian W. W. Barnes characterized the organization’s situation as a multi-faceted dimension that in effect was “a political, economic, social, moral, and religious issue.”³ The 293 delegates, from 165 churches, at the convention’s formation, understood their primary focus was to immediately authorize two missionary enterprises that would enlist and send missionaries – including slaveholders – on behalf of Baptists in the South: a Foreign Mission Board and a Board of Domestic Missions.⁴

Over the ensuing 80-years the Southern Baptist Convention expanded to include churches beyond the Mason-Dixon line and its number of cooperating churches increased. Southern Baptists were becoming imbedded in the American cultural landscape which was changing.

Additionally, among some Southern Baptists, there was a growing perception of liberalism taking hold of missionary personnel and

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seminary professors. And following World War I, various Baptist groups were seeking to cooperate with Christian brothers and sisters of different Baptist groups and develop unifying statements of faith. Those converging issues caused alarm among some Southern Baptists who felt the time had come to publicly state the scriptural based theological parameters that clearly defined Southern Baptists. Interestingly, many of the scriptural based doctrines Southern Baptist came to claim had been drawn

from Anabaptists and the succession of Baptist groups since the sixteenth century.

The Foundation of the Baptist Movement

The roots of the Baptist movement likely had its genesis during the sixteenth century in Europe as a parallel reaction to the Protestant Reformation. Baptist theologian William Lumpkin noted, “It has not been proven, however, that the Baptist Movement has a genetic connection with the pre-Reformation evangelical groups.”⁵ He went on to explain, “At the beginning of the sixteenth century there were people in every country of Western Europe who earnestly protested against corruption in the [Catholic] Church and who, therefore, welcomed the protests of Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. Such were the people who came to be called Anabaptists.”⁶

The influence of the European Anabaptists soon came to bring their reactionary views to the English continent. There the “Baptist Movement reflected, particularly, a heritage from an older native reform spirit as well as a heritage from sixteenth century Continental Anabaptism and Calvinism.”⁷

The Anabaptism movement that had begun in 1525 in the Netherlands and spread throughout Europe and the English continent thrived because of their basic tenets and Biblically based principles. William Lumpkin summarized the Anabaptists’ perspective:

The Anabaptists held that the New Testament Church is a voluntary community of individuals who have been transformed by the working of the Holy Spirit, in an experience of grace, and that baptism is ‘the symbol and seal of the faith of the regenerated.’ From these views there followed the doctrines of the brotherhood of baptized believers and the separation of the Church from the State and the world. With the great reformers of the sixteenth century, Church and State were practically coextensive. . . The Anabaptists were despised by the reformers for insisting that

the Church is composed only of deliberate followers of Christ, that admission to it is by confession and baptism, that it is autonomous, and that it keeps itself pure by discipline.”⁸

Those Anabaptist basic principles and tenets were embraced and refined by various English and American Baptists during the ensuing centuries. “Principles, per se, are enduring characteristics that give shape to a tradition; they identify priorities and primary concerns,” wrote William Brackney. The Baptist historian explained that those principles became the “strands of denominational DNA that predict how Baptists will respond to circumstances and issues.”⁹ Those theological distinctives, while not necessarily the polity and practices, would come to define and be embraced in part by contemporary Southern Baptists.

The Baptist Movement Comes to America

Driven by the desire for religious freedom, many English Baptists and other Christians fled to the American continent. Among those groups the need and demand developed for “reformatory creeds,” as William Lumpkin called them. The Baptist historian noted those creeds grew out of a “conviction that evangelical theology had not been consistently taught for hundreds of years . . . that was true to the scriptures and harked back to the teachings of the early Church.”¹⁰

Consequently, many Baptist groups “adopted confessional declarations in order to provide a summary of basic doctrines affirmed in affiliated

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churches,” wrote Bill J. Leonard. The scholar noted that in America the two “most influential doctrinal statements” were the *Philadelphia Confession* (1742) and the *New Hampshire Confession* (1833). [Those confessional

statements are discussed in separate articles within this issue of the *Journal*.] “These documents have been used more than any others as guidelines for confessions written by Baptist groups,” Leonard explained.¹¹

Although those two confessions of faith were developed for unique purposes and specific audiences, they came to be widely used by pastors in the organization of Baptist churches and associations. Awareness of these confessions was promoted and distributed through several church manual publications of the nineteenth century. Gateway Seminary Associate Professor Jonathan McCormick summarized that effort:

J. Newton Brown (b. 1803; d. 1864) expanded the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (NHCF) and published it in *The Baptist Church Manual*. James Madison Pendleton (b. 1811; d. 1892) included the NHCF in his *Church Manual*. Edward T. Hiscox (b. 1814; d. 1901) also published editions in his *Standard Manual* and *New Directory*.¹² Brown, Pendleton, and Hiscox account for the popularity of the confession as church manuals became a default resource for pastors needing help organizing churches, particularly across the South.¹³

SBC Functioned Without an Adopted Confession

By the time the Southern Baptist Convention organized, many of its constituting churches had adopted for themselves one of the two previously described confessions, or some variation. And during the remainder of the nineteenth century, Baptist churches and associations that affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention represented themselves as adhering to one of the two confessions. Consequently, with an unofficial “standard” of doctrines being used by Southern Baptist churches, there appeared little need or demand for a convention-defined confession of faith.

However, during the ensuing years several of the convention’s agencies did adopt doctrinal position statements for themselves. And as Southern Baptists

entered the twentieth century, a series of events began to lay the groundwork for the denomination to address the issue of developing a confession of faith statement to define themselves to the world at large. Finally, there were several events during the early 1920s that propelled the preparation and adoption of a convention-adopted statement of faith.

Agencies Adopt Respective Doctrinal Statements

One of the earliest agencies created by the Southern Baptist Convention was The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary established in 1859. There does not appear to be any official action by the convention directing the seminary to develop a confession of faith to guide the faculty. Rather, Basil Manley Jr. (b. 1825; d. 1892), as the seminary's first president, composed a doctrinal statement – *The Abstract of Principles* of Southern Seminary – which was incorporated into the charter adopted in 1859 by the seminary's board of trustees.¹⁴ *The Abstract of Principles* included twenty articles with no scriptural support lists. As professors at Southern Seminary at the time, three of the members of the future 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message Statement* committee had signed the original Abstract of Principles. Those professors were Edwin Charles Dargan (b. 1852; d. 1930), William Joseph McGlothlin (b. 1867; d. 1933), and Edgar Young Mullins (b. 1860; d. 1928).

In the second decade of the twentieth century, two other Southern Baptist agencies – the Foreign Mission Board in 1919-1920 and the Baptist Bible Institute (now the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) in 1917 – developed their own confessional statements. The Institute's original Articles of Religious Belief had ten-points of doctrinal declarations without scripture references. James Carter noted “the Foreign Mission Board in 1920 prepared a thirteen-point statement of beliefs to be read and subscribed by all new appointees of the board.”¹⁵ The agencies' actions, observed Jonathan McCormick, indicated these were among the motivating factors within the denomination that led to an adopted statement of faith:

The chronology suggests that the decisions by two Southern Baptist agencies to craft their own statements of faith led to the

Baptist Faith and Message, 1925. The Articles of Religious Belief [NOBTS] and the Articles of Faith [FMB] seems to provide the encouragement needed for those like E. Y. Mullins and W. J. McGlothlin to work for a standard statement of faith. The vacuum left by the SBC having no official statement of faith encouraged the proliferation of competing statements among associations and agencies. No statements could claim such a commission. The agencies' and associations' actions exposed an organizational need for such a standard, as each national body could write competing or contradictory statements. . . The existence of competing and occasionally contradictory statements undermined the 'complete alignment of all our denominational forces, churches, schools.'¹⁶

Pronouncement on Christian Union

A framework for a confessional statement was made informally by the convention when its messengers received the report of the Efficiency Committee in 1914. The report was called the "Pronouncement on Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency."¹⁷ The committee noted "many evils arise from the divided state of modern Christendom," and presented the efficiency rationale for the convention's

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missionary efforts by means of separate boards with greater trustee representation, as well as a re-organization of the convention's governing document.¹⁸

Also suggested by the Efficiency Committee were possible cooperative endeavors with other Christian groups to carry-out the gospel. Despite the cited advantages, the committee identified five principles the convention likely was unwilling to compromise or surrender. Those doctrinal positions, as summarized herein, included: (1) a person's equal and direct access to God; (2) the

regeneration of an individual when a right relationship is established with God; (3) the Scriptural basis of baptism by immersion; (4) the role and nature of the church which “conserves and propagates the spiritual principles” previously defined by the committee; and (5) the complete separation of church and state.¹⁹ Although not adopted as a confessional statement, the “Pronouncement” constituted what amounted to the first unofficial publicly defined doctrinal position by the Southern Baptist Convention.

Fraternal Address Became Informal Doctrinal Statement

Following the conclusion of World War I, and during the 1919 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, J. B. Gambrell of Texas, as president of the SBC, delivered his official address during the opening session of the annual meeting. In concluding his message which challenged Baptists to be faithfully committed to the Great Commission, Gambrell stated:

It is, moreover, a conviction as deep as my soul that this Convention, representing the sentiments and convictions of millions of Christ's baptized people, ought to send out to our fellow Baptists everywhere a rallying call to unite to make effective in all lands the unique message of Christ and His apostles which we hold in trust for our brothers in every part of the world, to the end that humanity may be made free with the freedom wherewith Christ liberates individuals and nations. Only the Truth can make the world free and safe.²⁰

J. F. Love, corresponding secretary of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, and as a messenger from Virginia, offered a resolution which was adopted: “That a committee of five messengers to this convention be appointed to prepare greetings [known as a Fraternal Address] of this Convention of Southern Baptists to the people of ‘like precious faith with us’ scattered abroad in all nations; and ‘that the committee be composed of E. Y. Mullins, L. R. Scarborough, J. B. Gambrell, Z. T. Cody, and William Ellyson.’”²¹

“The greetings, prepared largely by E. Y. Mullins, took the form of a statement of faith and were sent out following the 1919 meeting,” according to William Lumpkin. “The statement was not a complete system of doctrine . . . and it did not pretend to be an official declaration.”²² The following year, convention messengers having learned positive reports about the fraternal message, responded with another resolution of support. The latest resolution referred to “the widespread interest created by the sending out of a statement of their (Southern Baptist) faith” and called for the appointment of J. B. Gambrell and E. Y. Mullins as messengers to visit Baptists “as far as possible” all over the world “to convey greetings, good wishes, love and affection of Southern Baptists.”²³

“The Fraternal Address was a precursor to the *Baptist Faith & Message* 1925 in three ways,” explained Jonathan McCormick. “First, the Convention authorized a statement of Baptist distinctives,” that was included in the 1919 greetings to other Baptist bodies. Secondly, the two main writers of the document were E. Y. Mullins and L. R. Scarborough, both of whom would later serve on the committee that prepared the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message Statement*. And finally, “the responses to the Fraternal Address likely helped shape the process and content” of the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message Statement*.²⁴

Northern Baptists Rejected a Doctrinal Statement

Since 1845, when Southern Baptists became organizationally and regionally distinct, they maintained friendly cooperation with their Baptist and Christian counterparts. Between 1919 and 1922, Edgar Mullins had been the Southern Baptist-designated representative to the Northern Baptist Convention (organized 1907-1908). Mullins “was seeking to mend fences with his brethren in the North since he had discovered they were ‘abnormally sensitive’ due to a misperception of Southern Baptists’ intentions in the Fraternal Address of 1919.”²⁵ Additionally, Mullins and others had been meeting at various times with Northern Baptist leaders to study the

possibility of issuing a jointly drafted confession of faith and agree on exclusive mission territories.

After at least three consecutive years attending the northern body's annual meeting – including the pivotal 1922 convention – as well as participating in joint study consultations, Mullins was an eyewitness to a growing encroachment of liberalism among Northern Baptists' churches and schools.

According to Tom Nettles, “conservative leadership in the North sought to stem the tide of this ‘unquestioned defection from the faith that now endangers the good name and greater progress of our holy cause.’”²⁶ In response to what was perceived as a “doctrinal permutation,” cited during the 1922 annual meeting, a Minnesota pastor made a motion that the Northern Baptist Convention “adopt the *New Hampshire Confession* and recommend it to the local churches.” Subsequently, a substitute motion was made by a New York City pastor. That motion stated, “The Northern Baptist Convention affirms that the New Testament is the all-sufficient ground of our faith and practise [sic], we need no other statement.”²⁷ The convention majority voted to accept the substitute motion of no doctrinal statement.

Subsequently, during the 1922 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, messengers adopted a recommendation that the proposal for a joint confession of faith be rejected because “neither demand nor necessity for any new statements of Baptist faith and polity by Southern Baptists.”²⁸

Growing Threat of Evolution

By 1923, “a controversy was raging across the nation,” according to Herschel Hobbs. “This had to do with the theory of evolution, especially its being taught in the public schools. Southern Baptists could not ignore it.”²⁹ As a consequence, during the May 16, 1923, Southern Baptist Convention meeting, E. Y. Mullins delivered the President's Address on the topic, “Present Dangers and Duties.” In a segment on “Science and Religion” Mullins decried several trends. These trends included the use of

specific aspects of the scientific method to attempt to debunk the supernatural nature of Christianity. He decried the evolution doctrine which, he stressed, “has long been a working hypothesis of science . . . but its best exponents freely admit that the causes of the origin of the species have not been traced.” Mullins declared, “We protest against the imposition of this theory upon the minds of our children in denominational or public schools as if it were a definite and established truth of science.”³⁰

Recommendation “To Consider Advisability” for a Statement of Faith

The following year, during the opening sessions of the 1924 annual meeting held in Atlanta, Georgia, two state Baptist newspaper editors and registered messengers – R. K. Maiden of Missouri and C. P. Stealey of Oklahoma – offered separate resolutions, each calling for the Convention to adopt a doctrinal statement. The resolutions were referred to the Committee on Resolutions, which subsequently rejected the proposals and reported the following recommendation, which was approved by Convention messengers:

Your committee does not recommend the passage of either of these resolutions by this Convention on the grounds that the Fraternal Message authorized by the 1919 Convention as a circular of information, which was given worldwide distribution, and the statements of Baptist beliefs by the President of the Convention at its session in 1923, which was unanimously endorsed and broadly published, are sufficiently comprehensive and definite. These statements are accessible for all who seek to be informed of the fundamental beliefs commonly held by the Baptist churches and people of the South.³¹

Stealey – editor of the *Oklahoma Baptist Messenger* – was not satisfied with the response by the Resolutions Committee and attempted twice more to introduce his “statement on Bible doctrines.” A motion was made to suspend the rules and give immediate attention to Stealey’s

statement of resolution. The messengers voted not to consider the statement but agreed to refer it to the Resolutions Committee.³² Subsequently the committee reported to the convention, “we do not recommend a reopening of the same matter today.” However, the Committee then proposed, and the convention agreed, “a supplementary recommendation that the following brethren ‘consider the advisability of issuing another statement of the Baptist Faith and Message:’ E. Y. Mullins, chairman, L. R. Scarbrough, C. P. Stealey, W. J. McGlothlin, S. M. Brown, E. C. Dargin, R. H. Pitt.”³³

Between June 1924 and May 1925, the committee comprised of three presidents of educational institutions, three Baptist state newspaper editors, and the editorial secretary of the Sunday School Board who previously served as a seminary professor, undertook its assignment primarily by correspondence. [See related article on the Baptist Faith and Message committee members in this issue of the *Journal*.]

The 1925 Report on “The Baptist Faith and Message Statement”

The committee held its final face-to-face meeting just prior to the 1925 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Memphis, Tennessee. However, Robert H. Pitt was not present, and Clarence P. Stealey left the meeting while it was in progress. Mullins “presented a revision of the *New Hampshire Declaration of Faith* for their consideration. He had earlier written a shorter statement which the committee did not accept.”³⁴

The final report to the convention was presented by Edgar Y. Mullins, considered by many as “the undisputed theological authority among

Mullins “presented a revision of the New Hampshire Declaration of Faith for their consideration. . .”

Southern Baptists.”³⁵ The report contained an introduction indicating that the revised and enlarged *New Hampshire Declaration of Faith [1833]* was the primary resource

document.³⁶ Although not a part of the doctrinal statements, also included in the introduction was a separate stand-alone statement on “Science and Religion” which had been adopted by the convention in 1923. That reminder of prior convention action likely was necessary because of the issue of “evolution and the perceived threat of scientific teachings” observed Baptist chronicler Jesse Fletcher.³⁷

The report included 25 doctrinal topics that were summarized as declarations with only two of those statements containing a brief scripture reference. The topics included: The Scriptures; God; the Fall of Man; the Way of Salvation; Justification; the Freeness of Salvation; and Regeneration. Other topics included: Repentance and Faith; God’s Purpose of Grace; Sanctification; Perseverance; A Gospel Church; Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; The Lord’s Day; and The Righteous and the Wicked. The final group included: the Resurrection; the Return of the Lord; Religious Liberty; Peace and War; Education; Social Service; Cooperation; Evangelism and Missions; Stewardship; and the Kingdom.³⁸ [See the *Appendix* at the end of this *Journal*, which provides the specific verbiage of the 25 doctrinal statements.]

**The Confession
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Given his fundamentalist theological perspective, Clarence Stealey was not fully satisfied with the final report of the committee. He offered a minority report objecting to the committee’s declaration on

the “Fall of Man,” stating it was not a strong enough condemnation of evolution. Stealey’s proposed amendment to the committee’s report was voted down by messengers.³⁹ The committee’s report on the *Baptist Faith and Message Statement* was adopted as presented.

“The Confession was intended only as a general expression of the faith of Southern Baptists,” observed William Lumpkin, “and it has never been looked upon as authoritative or binding.”⁴⁰

Subsequently, at the convention's directive, the Baptist Sunday School Board printed the newly adopted statement and distributed it to every Southern Baptist pastor.⁴¹ Southwestern Seminary professor of church history W. W. Barnes noted in 1934 the doctrinal statement was adopted "by a large majority of messengers present, but it has been received by Southern Baptist churches generally with a tremendous outburst of silence."⁴²

The 100-year Legacy of the *Baptist Faith and Message Statement* is continued in a Part 2 article within this *Journal* which will highlight the revisions made to the 1925 confessional statement in 1963, 1998 and 2000.

ENDNOTES:

¹ Preamble and Constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Convention *Annual*, 1845, hereinafter referred to as *SBC Annual*, 3.

² Proceedings, William B. Johnson's "President's Address", *SBC Annual* 1845, 19.

³ W. W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention: 1845 – 1953*, (Nashville, TN.: Broadman Press, 1954), 18 – 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 23 – 32.

⁵ William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, (Valley Forge, PA.: Judson Press, 1959, Rev., 1969), 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 12

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ William H. Brackney, *A Capsule History of Baptist Principles*, (Atlanta, GA.: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2009), 13.

¹⁰ William L. Lumpkin, "The Nature and Authority of Baptist Confessions of Faith," *Review and Expositor*, Winter, 1979, 17.

¹¹ Bill J. Leonard, "Types of Confessional Documents Among Baptists," *Review and Expositor*, Winter, 1979, 30.

¹² Aaron Menikoff, "Edward T. Hiscox," in *A Nobel Company: Biographical Essays on Notable Particular-Regular Baptists in America*, vol. 10, edited by Terry Wolever (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2018), 356-407, cited in Jonathan A. McCormick, "The Genealogy of a Confessional Tradition: A Source Critical Analysis of the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message,"

a PhD dissertation for Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention, 2019, 39 – 40.

¹³ Jonathan A. McCormick, “The Genealogy of a Confessional Tradition. . .”

¹⁴ History of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary accessed April 15, 2025, on <https://www.sbts.edu/history/1859-1878/>.

¹⁵ James E. Carter, “A Review of Confessions of Faith Adopted by Major Baptist Bodies in the United States,” *Baptist History and Heritage*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April 1977, 84. Also see, Appendix A, *SBC Annual*, 1920, 196-199.

¹⁶ Jonathan A. McCormick, “The Genealogy of a Confessional Tradition. . .”, 40.

¹⁷ Proceedings, item 97, “Pronouncement of Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency,” *SBC Annual*, 1914, 73 – 78.

¹⁸ W. W. Barnes, “The Southern Baptist Convention . . .,” 177.

¹⁹ Proceedings, item 97, *SBC Annual*, 1914, 73 – 78.

²⁰ Proceedings, item 10, J. B. Gambrell’s President’s Address,” *SBC Annual*, 1919, 17 – 23.

²¹ Proceedings, item 71, *SBC Annual*, 1919, 75.

²² William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 390.

²³ Proceedings, item 89, *SBC Annual*, 1922, 86.

²⁴ Jonathan A. McCormick, “The Genealogy of a Confessional Tradition. . .”, 39.

²⁵ Tom J. Nettles, “How to Lose Your Way: A History Lesson in Confessions,” cited in Douglas K. Blount and Joseph D. Wooddell, *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, (Landam, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers 2007), xiv.

²⁶ Tom J. Nettles, “How to lose your Way: A History Lesson in Confessions,” xiii.

²⁷ *Annual of the Northern Baptist Convention*, (American Baptist Publication Society, 1922), 129.

²⁸ Proceedings, item 88, “Report on Committee on Columbia Conference Memorial,” *SBC Annual*, 1922, 66.

²⁹ Herschel H. Hobbs, “Southern Baptists and Confessionalism: A Comparison of the Origins and Contents of the 1925 and 1963 Confessions,” *Review and Expositor*, Winter, 1979, 55.

³⁰ Proceedings, items 10 and 11, “E. Y. Mullins’ President’s Address,” *SBC Annual*, 1923, 19.

³¹ Proceedings, item 77, number 2, “Report of Committee on Resolutions,” *SBC Annual*, 1924, 70-71.

³² Proceedings, item 90, *SBC Annual*, 1924, 80.

³³ Proceedings, item 100, *SBC Annual*, 1924, 95.

³⁴ James E. Carter, “A Review of Confessions of Faith . . .” 85.

³⁵ Jesse C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention, A Sesquicentennial History*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 142.

³⁶ Proceedings, item 53, "Report of the Committee on Baptist Faith and Message Statement," *SBC Annual*, 1925, 71.

³⁷ Jesse C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention . . .*, 141.

³⁸ Proceedings, item 53, *SBC Annual*, 1925, 71-76.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 391.

⁴¹ Proceedings, item 78, *SBC Annual*, 1935, 87.

⁴² W. W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention: A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology*, (Fort Worth: self-published by the author, 1934, reprinted 1946), 8; accessed April 30, 2025, on <https://archive.org/details/studyindevelopme0000barn>.

Biographical Sketches of the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message Committee Members

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The *Baptist Faith and Message*, 1925, was part of a set of organizational reforms within the Southern Baptist Convention. The theology of the Baptist Faith and Message (hereinafter referred to as BF&M1925) is a theological defense at least for the existence of what would become the Cooperative Program. Who did Southern Baptists entrust with this task addressing external threats, like philosophical naturalism, and internal challenges, like coordination of financial systems?

The immediate impetus for the appointment of a study committee to develop a statement on Baptist doctrine, faith and practice grew out of a resolution offered by C. P. Stealey of Oklahoma, who requested the preparation of a “statement of Bible doctrines.”¹ The resolution was made during the 1924 annual meeting of Southern Baptist Convention held in Atlanta, Georgia. The matter was referred to the Convention’s Committee on Resolutions. The seven-member committee subsequently recommended and the Convention messengers approved that: “the following brethren be appointed as a committee to consider the advisability of issuing another statement of the Baptist faith and message to report at the next Convention (1925): E. Y. Mullins, chairman, L. R. Scarborough, C. R. Stealey, W. J. McGlothlin, S. M. Brown, E. C. Dargan, R. H. Pitt.”²

The early biographers of these men spent little if any ink discussing the work of composing the BF&M1925.³ The biographical treatments highlight other services rendered to Southern Baptist work. The lack of attention to the

BF&M1925 by the reflections of the committee members or close associates shows that the BF&M1925 was not an end in and of itself.

Instead, the BF&M1925 was a means of preserving the cooperation of the institutions they served.

The Committee's major objective was to assure congregations of the

fidelity of the SBC institutions while asking for funds in the \$75 Million Campaign.⁴ The \$75 Million Campaign was a five-year fundraising push by the Convention led by George Truett. Primarily, L. R. Scarborough recognized that this was a test of the viability of a centralized missionary program “based upon the voluntary principle.”⁵

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As noted, the Committee initially included seven people – three presidents of institutions of higher learning, three Baptist state newspaper editors, and the editorial secretary of the Sunday School Board who previously served as a seminary professor. The signatories were Sanford Miller Brown, Edwin Charles Dargan, William Joseph McGlothlin, Lee Rutland Scarborough, and Edgar Young Mullins. Two other men were assigned by the SBC to the task of exploring the need for a statement of faith. The remaining men were Robert Healy Pitt and Clarence P. Stealey.⁶ The non-signatories will be presented first, then the signatories in the order previously identified.

Robert Healy Pitt

Dr. Robert Healy Pitt (b. 1853; d. 1937) was deeply invested in denominational work. He served as pastor of Venable Street Church in Richmond, Virginia, and the editor of the *Religious Herald*, the state paper for Virginia Baptists.⁷ Pitt shared his perspective through editorials in the *Religious Herald* on confessions in general and the BF&M1925 in particular. In 1924, he served on the Foreign Mission Board, the Committee on Change of Representation in the Convention, and the Committee on Correlation of Convention Activities.⁸

Pitt opposed the consolidation of hierarchical authority at a national level. At a Baptist General Association of Virginia meeting in 1923, Pitt said of Virginia Baptists:

The atmosphere of this State, so far as our brotherhood is concerned, has never been favorable to the development of doctrinal martinets who demand that we shall pass all in review before them. Even in our own day of doctrinal turmoil our people are thoughtful and considerate, claiming for themselves a reasonable personal freedom and freely granting to others what they ask for themselves.⁹

He reprinted his statement in the *Religious Herald* on November 15, 1923, thus representing to the committee those who shared his sentiments on statements of faith.

Pitt was at the 1925 convention. He endorsed Sanford Miller Brown's report of the Southern Baptist Press Association.¹⁰ He did not leave off his name by accident or from a failure to participate. Reuben Edward Alley argued that Pitt saw the anti-evolutionary stance and what he saw as the authoritarian nature of the BF&M1925 as a source of division.¹¹ Alley argued that Pitt opposed the BF&M1925 as an erroneous creed.

If the November editorial was the only information available, this would be a sufficient explanation of his stepping aside from the Committee and not signing the report. However, Pitt gave a different reason for his name's absence in the issue cited. Following a five-point proposal regarding the authority of confessions, Pitt wrote:

It will be observed that the question of authority is quite well guarded. Nevertheless, as a member of the committee the present writer desired to go on record in a somewhat and perhaps clearer and more positive expression on this point. It was impractical for him to go to Memphis to meet the committee in its last meeting when the report was submitted. His friend, Dr. Z. T. Cody [Zechariah Thornton Cody (b.1858; d.1935)]

kindly consented to act as his proxy, and to him the present writer wrote giving him large discretion, and him [sic] in the event that the report was adopted substantially in the form in which it had been prepared and submitted to the committee, to affix to signature of his principal to the report, asking, however that the following note should as a matter of privilege be added: [sic] I desire to accompany my signature with the distinct assertion of my inalienable right to modify at any moment any part of this declaration which may then seem to me in the strict accordance with the Word of God, and with the emphatic declaration that is the mere expression of my own beliefs at this time and in no reasonable sense a formulary to be imposed in any way upon anyone else in all the round world.¹²

Pitt blamed his missing signature on the fact that he was not at the final meeting discussing the BF&M. His five points appeared in the final report.¹³ Since Pitt was at the convention meeting as shown in the official minutes discussed previously, the reference to the Memphis meeting appears to be an error. Instead, Pitt likely referred to the drafting meeting in Nashville at the end of 1924, where Pitt was absent.¹⁴ Pitt opposed the propriety of the SBC issuing a confession, rather than any particular doctrine expressed in the BF&M1925. Pitt affirmed what the BF&M1925 said, but thought the SBC was the improper forum for a confession. Such an action would be a violation of local church autonomy. His withdrawal from the BF&M1925 committee is a precursor to the anti-creedal movement after the adoption of the BF&M1925.

Clarence Perry Stealey

Clarence Perry Stealey (b. 1868; d. 1973) was the founder and first editor of the *Baptist Messenger*, which became the official paper of the Oklahoma Southern Baptist Convention in 1919.¹⁵ He was a rising Fundamentalist voice among Oklahoma Baptists. At the SBC meeting in 1925, Stealey proposed a revision to the BF&M1925 related to science and

religion. The amendment failed.¹⁶ He represented constituencies that wanted a stricter confession.

Sanford Miller Brown

Sanford Miller Brown (b. 1855; d. 1938) was the son of a Baptist preacher and founder of *The Word and Way*, the official paper of the Missouri Baptist Convention. Brown participated in denominational life as well.¹⁷ Brown wrote the report titled “For the Southern Baptist Press Association.”¹⁸ The concern voiced by Brown and the other papers related to the financial viability of the papers for the state conventions. Brown called for the consolidation of Baptist statewide papers and SBC institutions to pay for the advertising space used in the papers.¹⁹ The report quotes Mullins, Scarborough, and Stealey affirming the need to financially support the state papers.²⁰

At the 1925 Convention, Brown joined the Committee for the Preservation of Baptist History and updated the Convention on the state of the Southern Baptist Press Association.²¹ Stealey and Pitt provided a concurring opinion among others in this report.²²

Brown wrote extensively. Three of his books, *Church Organization and Work*, *The Gospel in Nature or God's Demonstration*, and *The School of Experience*, provide information on his position related to confessions and ecclesiology. *The School of Experience* was Brown's autobiography. He does not mention the BF&M1925 or his work on the committee in this book. In *The School of Experience*, Brown does deal with theological concerns and agrees with Thomas Treadwell Eaton (b. 1845; d. 1907) regarding Biblical authority and other doctrines.²³

Edwin Charles Dargan

In 1925, Edwin Charles Dargan (b. 1852; d. 1930) served as the editorial secretary of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Dargan graduated from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and served as professor of homiletics. His books, which included *History of Preaching*, *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches*, and *Doctrines of Our Faith*, established his reputation as a scholar of Baptist history and doctrine.²⁴ On April 30, 1925, Dargan gave the

Fraternal Greeting to the Baptist Union of Great Britain. In his message reprinted in the *Baptist Quarterly*, Dargan emphasized the \$75 Million Campaign and the need for education of Southern Baptist leadership.²⁵ He relayed a message from the Baptist Union back to the SBC at the 1925 Convention meeting.²⁶ Neither message discussed the BF&M1925 or the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith*.

Regarding confessional theology, Dargan denied the direct mandate of the New Testament for “creeds, or declaration of principles, and a

covenant.”²⁷ On the other hand, he acknowledged that covenants and creeds are essential for the organization of Baptist churches.²⁸ Dargan did not think a creed, per se,

**Dargan did not
think a creed,
per se, was
essential**

was essential. However, he thought that “some kind of doctrinal agreement lie at the root organization, or it cannot be a church.”²⁹ Dargan talks about confessions and the ordinances in *Ecclesiology*. His record leading to the 1924 and 1925 conventions regarding his opinion on confessions is mixed. Dargan’s most visible contribution relates to Article 13, on Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

William Joseph McGlothlin

William Joseph McGlothlin (b. 1867; d. 1933) was president of Furman University. Before this post, he taught Church History for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1894 through 1919.³⁰ He worked on the Commission on the Co-operative Program and the Education Board report.³¹ McGlothlin established his authority on Baptist confessions with his book *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. Without his research, few living scholars would have as deep a historical knowledge of historical Baptist confessions. To illustrate the paucity of scholars of Baptist Confessions, the two other major anthologies containing Baptist confessions were *Confessions of Faith and Other Public Documents* (1854) by Edward Bean Underhill (b. 1813; d. 1901) and *The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641)*, Volume 2 (1912) by Champlin Burrage (b. 1874; d. 1951). Based upon publications, Burrage and McGlothlin

were the two most knowledgeable historians of free-church confessions in the United States, if not among English speakers. Therefore, McGlothlin would be a strategic member of such a committee.

McGlothlin made his perspective regarding confessional statements clear in his introduction to *Baptist Confessions of Faith*.

Their Confessions are, strictly speaking, statements of what a certain group of Baptists, large or small, did believe at a given time, rather than a creed which any Baptist must believe at all times in order to hold ecclesiastical position or be considered a Baptist.³²

In this passage, McGlothlin shows a moderately libertarian or descriptivist position toward confessions. Confessions describe a shared belief but may be modified as needed.

Lee Rutland Scarborough

Lee Rutland Scarborough (b. 1870; d. 1945) held the Chair of Evangelism and was the second President of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS).³³ Scarborough was a graduate of Yale with honors, and studied at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary under among others E. C. Dargan, W. J. McGlothlin, and E. Y. Mullins.³⁴ Aside from his teaching load in 1919, he served as a member of the Relief and Annuity Board, the chair of the Committee on the Report of the Sunday School Board, and a member of the Committee on the Report of the Education Commission.³⁵ He also worked with E. Y. Mullins, J. B. Gambrell, Z. T. Cody, and William Ellyson on a Committee on Fraternal Greetings to Baptists of the World.³⁶ He became the chair of the \$75 Million Campaign when he proposed in 1919 a five-year plan to fund cooperative efforts and Baptist agencies.³⁷

The \$75 Million Campaign provided important context for the need for the BF&M1925.³⁸ Scarborough believed that the SBC agencies would fight over funding rather than cooperate on concurrent objectives. In a 1924 essay titled “Baptists Facing the Future,” Scarborough identified several achievements of

the \$75 Million Campaign, two of which are relevant to the BF&M1925.

We have learned to look on the world not as an opportunity for self-promotion but for self-service. We have learned to see more in dollars than pleasure, self-indulgence, and the causes dear to selfish interests. We have seen in these dollars orphanages, hospitals, schools, evangelism, Christ and a lost world . . . The Campaign Has greatly strengthened the loyalty of Baptists to the fundamentals of the faith. The old truth revealed in God's will has come to have a new appreciation as we have applied it in Kingdom effectiveness.³⁹ (Emphasis in the original.)

Scarborough saw cooperation and doctrinal consistency as necessary for the conventional model to work.

In the background of both the \$75 Million Campaign and the BF&M1925,

Scarborough and J. Frank Norris (b. 1877; d. 1952) had an ongoing dispute.⁴⁰ In his dissertation written at

**Scarborough saw
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doctrinal consistency
as necessary**

Southwestern Seminary, Glenn Thomas Carson called the conflict “a sad sequence of events which distracted Scarborough from more important matters.”⁴¹ Norris accused Southwestern Seminary and Baylor University of hiring Darwinian faculty. Norris also accused Scarborough of financial corruption.⁴² Norris was denounced by the SBC Pastors' Conference on September 15, 1924.⁴³ The Norris Controversy illustrated the need for agencies to show doctrinal conviction. A confessional standard would define Baptist convictions *contra* modernism. Barry Hankins notes, “While the terms *modernism* and *liberalism* are not very precise, in Norris's hands they became slippery.”⁴⁴

Scarborough's work related to doctrinal accountability predates the Norris controversy and expressed concerns

beyond evolution. In his history of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Scarborough identifies six steps for “safeguarding the theological views” of Southwestern Seminary, three of which are relevant to the discussion of the BF&M1925. The steps included ownership by the SBC, a statement of faith endorsed by the seminary, and active church membership.⁴⁵ Southwestern Seminary included in its charter and first catalog a modified form of the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (NHCF).⁴⁶ B. H. Carroll, the first president of Southwestern Seminary, made the edit to the NCHF.⁴⁷ Carroll and Calvin Goodspeed gave a series of lectures on the NHCF.⁴⁸ Scarborough printed J. W. Crowder's, Carroll's successor as Bible Professor and biographer, transcripts of the lectures in the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* from 1921 through 1924.⁴⁹

Edgar Young Mullins

The other committee members by most standards would be considered exemplary in their contribution to Baptist life. The organizations they led continue to influence Baptist life. Each individual as a ministry leader significantly shaped the theological and cultural expression of their ministry. It was however the broad influence that E. Y. Mullins wielded that led to his appointment as the chairman of the Committee. In this role, he had significant responsibility for organizing the BF&M1925.

E. Y. Mullins (b. 1860; d. 1928) was born in Franklin County, Mississippi. He was the son of a pastor. He graduated from Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (now Texas A&M University), seeking to study and practice law. He was converted and called to ministry as an adult after his college education. He graduated as a “full graduate” from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1885.⁵⁰ He served as pastor of three churches: Harrodsburg Baptist Church of Harrodsburg, Kentucky (1885-1888), Lee Street Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland (1888-1895), and Newton Center Baptist Church, Newton Center, Massachusetts (1895-1899). While in Baltimore, Mullins did additional coursework at Johns Hopkins University.⁵¹

Treatments of Mullins' life abound. Isla May Mullins (b. 1859; d. 1936), E. Y. Mullins' wife and a fine author in her

own right, wrote *Edgar Young Mullins: An Intimate Biography* (1929). More recently, William E. Ellis wrote a landmark biography titled “A Man of Books and a Man of the People: E. Y. Mullins and the Crisis of Moderate Southern Baptist Leadership” (1985). His papers are in the archives of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Thanks to these records, Mullins' thoughts on confessional theology remain in the historical record.

Mullins participated heavily in Southern Baptist life. There were five facets of Mullins' activity in the SBC life relevant to his work on the BF&M1925 Committee: President and Professor of Systematic Theology for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; author of nine books related to Baptist theology and apologetics;⁵² member of the Comity Agreement Committee (1912); participant in the \$75 Million Campaign; and SBC president from 1921 to 1923 – the years preceding the development and adoption of the BF&M1925.

As faculty at Southern Seminary, Mullins would be well acquainted with the *Abstract of Principles* of Southern Seminary, the confessional standard for Southern Seminary. The committee used direct language from the *Abstract of Principles* in the BF&M1925. Beyond this, Mullins' connections with the faculty provided the social context for his relationship with committee members Dargan and McGlothlin.

Mullins wrote prolifically. Six of Mullins' books, *Why is Christianity True?* (1905), *The Axioms of Religion* (1908), *Baptist Beliefs* (1912), *Freedom and Authority in Religion* (1913), *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression* (1917), and *Christianity at the Cross Roads* (1924) attempted to explain Baptist essentials. His prolific writing, administrative competency, and perceived neutrality in the Whitsitt Controversy, (a controversy resulting from President William Whitsitt's denial of the practice of immersion by early Baptists), contributed to his appointment as President of Southern Seminary.⁵³ Specifically, Gregory A. Wills said:

Edgar Y. Mullins seemed the perfect candidate. He was a native of Mississippi, was a seminary graduate, and was scholarly, eloquent, and urbane. Because he agreed with Whitsitt's

views and was no Landmarker, he was in a position to earn the support and trust of Whitsitt's supporters in the faculty and in the convention. And because he had avoided entanglement in the Whitsitt controversy, he could begin to earn the support of Landmarkers and Whitsitt's opponents from a neutral position. The board recognized that it needed a president with this background but had nearly despaired of finding such a man.⁵⁴

His books encourage Christians to think deeply and bring people to faith in Jesus Christ.

Mullins participated in the Hot Springs Comity Agreement over Baptist work in New Mexico in 1912. Though Leon McBeth had a pessimistic view of comity agreements, he states:

His books encourage Christians to think deeply and bring people to faith in Jesus Christ.

In a series of 'comity agreements' beginning with Fortress Monroe in 1894, Baptists North and South have attempted to reduce the overlap and ease the tension. Perhaps the most important comity agreement of this century was that reached at Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1912. These comity agreements never worked well, and after 1942 they did not work at all, due largely to a new wave of tension caused by admission of California churches into affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention.⁵⁵

The Hot Springs Comity Agreement failed as well. Mullins' participation is more important for this study than the success of the Hot Springs Comity Agreement for the BF&M1925. It showed two important components of Mullins' thought. A church must be free to join, or decline joining, organizations based upon the convictions of the churches. Cooperative organizations should avoid redundant initiatives. Mullins' participation exemplifies his commitment to

cooperation between various Baptist groups. The Hot Springs Comity Agreement also showed essential technical elements needed for cooperation.

A subtler contribution to the study of the BF&M1925 comes from the details of the Comity Agreement. The agreement included three sections important to the BF&M1925. These are the Fundamental Principles, the Organizing Principles, and the Application of the Agreement. The Fundamental Principles express local church autonomy. The Fundamental Principles are:

1. The independence of the local Baptist church.
2. The moral interdependence and the co-operation of Baptist churches in promoting the interests of the kingdom of God.
3. The purely advisory nature of all denominational organizations in their relation to Baptist churches.⁵⁶

The Organizing Principles affirm cooperation as positive. It stated in part:

Contiguous Baptists churches should unite in district associations and in State conventions for the promotion of the kingdom of God and their common denominational interests. The ideal organization is one association in a given territory and one convention in a given State.⁵⁷

The Application section outlined the funding mechanisms for new Baptist work in New Mexico.

Conclusion

Robert Healy Pitt, Clarence P. Stealey, Sanford Miller Brown, Edwin Charles Dargan, William Joseph McGlothlin, Lee Rutland Scarborough, and Edgar Young Mullins all warrant their own story, as the publications related to them attest. They represented divergent and convergent interests in Baptist life through the papers, presses, colleges, and seminaries they supported.

Mullins, Scarborough, and McGlothlin led significant Baptist educational institutions. Though they were not initial drivers

in the movement to draft a convention-level statement of faith, they recognized that Norris would erroneously accuse faculty members at other schools if he succeeded at Baylor. Southwestern Seminary had already experienced an initial push from Norris. Would he direct his attention to Southern Seminary and Furman next? These three men knew the trends of confessional adoption in the SBC from their published works. Their roles in their respective institutions make them strategic members if the BF&M1925 would have any momentum in their respective schools. Mullins and Scarborough gave an emphasis on the Kingdom of God as a theological motif for the BF&M1925.

The appointments of Brown, Dargan, Pitt, and Stealey were strategic choices for the distribution of the BF&M1925 to the church and making the case leading up to the 1925 convention meeting. Pitt's *Religious Herald*, Brown's *Word and Way*, and Stealey's *Baptist Messenger* had unique readerships, regionally and ideologically. Pitt's anti-confessional stance attracted anti-confessional readers and letters. Brown represented and corresponded with moderate confessional readers. Stealey represented and corresponded with fundamentalist readers. Dargan, as the head of the Sunday School Board, worked with Mullins and Hight C Moore⁵⁸ to publish the BF&M1925. Brown, Dargan, and Pitt were relevant to the story of the reception and dissemination of the BF&M1925.

E. Y. Mullins, James Petigru Boyce, and Basil Manly, Jr. laid the philosophical foundation to respond to objections to cooperation based on an explicit expression of the Gospel in a series of letters, sermons, and books. Mullins' *Baptist Beliefs* and *Axioms of Religion* presented the case for an agency confessionalism to ensure responsibility to the local churches.

ENDNOTES:

¹ *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* 69 (May 14-18, 1924), 80. (Hereinafter *SBC Annual*.)

² *Annual* 69 (1924), 95.

³ The contemporary biographies or autobiographies of the Committee members were: Sanford Miller Brown, *The School of Experience*, (Kansas City: Western Baptist Publishing Co., 1933), Isla May Mullins, *Edgar Young Mullins: An Intimate Biography*, (Nashville: Sunday School Board Southern Baptist Convention, 1929), H. E. Dana, *Lee Rutland Scarborough: A Life of Service*, (Nashville: Broadman, 1942), and Kathryn McGlothlin O'Dell, "McGlothlin, William Joseph," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, Clifton Judson Allen, et al., eds. 4 vols. (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), 1:348. None of these discuss the BF&M1925.

⁴ The Abstract of Principles had a similar objective. See Danny Martin West, "The Origin and Function of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's 'Abstract of Principles,' 1858-1959," (Th.M. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983), 44-47.

⁵ L. R. Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership: Or The Story of the Southern Baptist 75 Million Campaign*, (Nashville: Sunday School Board Southern Baptist Convention, 1920), 88. The \$75 Million Campaign was the predecessor to the Cooperative Program. Though the Southern Baptist Convention existed since May 1845, the formation of the Executive Committee and the ongoing fundraising through the Cooperative Program substantially changed the operation and nature of the Southern Baptist Convention. For a description of the evolution of the Southern Baptist Convention, see Albert McClellan, *The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1917-1984*, (Nashville: Broadman, 1985), Acknowledgments, 1-69.

⁶ *SBC Annual* 69 (May 14-18, 1924): 13; cf. *SBC Annual* 70 (May 13-17, 1925), 76.

⁷ Ryland Garnett, *The Baptists of Virginia, 1699-1926*, (Richmond: Virginia Baptist Board of Missions and Education, 1955), 327; cf. Ruben Edward Alley, *A History of Baptists in Virginia*, (Richmond: Virginia Baptist General Board, 1973), 280. His journalistic work provided biographical information for the book series. See George Braxton Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers*, 5th Series, (Lynchburg: J.P. Bell, 1915), 520.

⁸ *SBC Annual* 69 (1929), 3, 12.

⁹ R. H. Pitt, "Temper and Tradition" in *Baptists of Virginia: 1699-1926*, 343.

¹⁰ Garnett, *Baptists of Virginia: 1699-1926*, 109, 111.

¹¹ Alley, *History of Baptists in Virginia*, 315-316; cf. *Herald*, May 21, 1925. Alley incorrectly states that Pitt was the only committee member to not sign the recommendation.

¹² R. H. Pitt, "Somewhat but Not Wholly Personal," *Religious Herald*, (May 21, 1925), 10-11.

¹³ *SBC Annual* 70 (1925), 71.

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- ¹⁴ Kingman A. Handy, "Creed Making," *Religious Herald*, (January 29, 1925): 9; E. Y. Mullins, "The Committee on Doctrinal Statement," *Religious Herald*, (February 12, 1925), 14; Letter from R.H. Pitt to E. Y. Mullins, (January 2, 1925).
- ¹⁵ W. B. Shurden, "Stealey, Clarence Perry (1868-1973)," in *Dictionary of Baptists in America*, edited by Bill J. Leonard, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 259.
- ¹⁶ SBC *Annual* 70 (1925), 76.
- ¹⁷ H. H. McGinty, "Sanford Miller Brown," in *These Missouri Baptists*, ed. H. I. Hester, (N.P.: Missouri Baptist Press, 1970); *Baptist Messenger*. "About." Baptist Messenger, <https://www.baptistmessenger.com/about/>.
- ¹⁸ SBC *Annual* 69 (1924), 88.
- ¹⁹ SBC *Annual* 69 (1924), 92.
- ²⁰ SBC *Annual* 69 (1924), 89, 90, 93.
- ²¹ SBC *Annual* 70 (1925), 10, 109.
- ²² SBC *Annual* 70 (1925), 110-111.
- ²³ *The School of Experience*, 103-106.
- ²⁴ John D. Freeman, "Dargan, Edwin Charles," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, 1:348.
- ²⁵ Edwin Charles Dargan, "The Southern Baptist Convention," *Baptist Quarterly* 2, no. 7 (July 1925), 290-295.
- ²⁶ SBC *Annual* 70 (1925), 20-21.
- ²⁷ Edwin Charles Dargan, *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches*, 2nd ed., (Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1905), 172.
- ²⁸ Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 185.
- ²⁹ Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 191.
- ³⁰ Kathryn McGlothlin O'Dell, "McGlothlin, William Joseph," *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, 1:348.
- ³¹ SBC *Annual* 70 (1925), 9.
- ³² McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), xii.
- ³³ Franklin M. Segler, "Scarborough, Lee Rutland" in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, 2:1187.
- ³⁴ Harvey Eugene Dana, *Lee Rutland Scarborough: A Life of Service*, (Nashville: Broadman, 1942), 47.
- ³⁵ SBC *Annual* 64 (1919), 5, 46, 53, 57.
- ³⁶ SBC *Annual* 64 (1919), 84.
- ³⁷ SBC *Annual* 64 (1919), 82.
- ³⁸ Glenn Thomas Carson, "Lee Rutland Scarborough: Architect of a New Denominationalism within the Southern Baptist Convention," (PhD Diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, 1992).

- ³⁹ L. R. Scarborough "Baptists Facing the Future," (November 25, 1924) SWBTS Digital Archives: The L.R. Scarborough Collection, item 1287, 2-3.
<http://digitalarchive.swbts.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p16969coll11/id/1286>.
- ⁴⁰ J. Frank Norris was Pastor of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth. For further discussion relevant to this topic, see Barry Hankins, *God's Rascal: The Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1996), 19-44.
- ⁴¹ Carson, "Lee Rutland Scarborough," 41.
- ⁴² Carson, "Lee Rutland Scarborough," 73-78.
- ⁴³ J. P. Sherman and Walter Jackson, "A Statement and A Protest." SWBTS Digital Archives: The L.R. Scarborough Collection, item 330.
<http://digitalarchive.swbts.edu/digital/collection/p16969coll11/id/330/rec/7>.
- ⁴⁴ Hankins, *God's Rascal*, 33.
- ⁴⁵ L. R. Scarborough, *A Modern School of the Prophets: A History of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, a Project of Christ, A Product of Prayer and Faith, Its First Thirty Years- 1907-1937*, (Nashville: Broadman, 1939), 154-163.
- ⁴⁶ "Articles of Faith of the Seminary," in *Catalog*, (Fort Worth: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1909), 42-45. The one change from the Pendleton edition to the SWBTS edition is in the article Of a Gospel Church changing the word "visible" to "particular."
- ⁴⁷ Scarborough, *Modern School of the Prophets*, 155.
- ⁴⁸ Benajah Harvey Carroll and Calvin Goodspeed, "Foundations of Our Faith," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 51, no. 2 (Spring 2009), 134-256.
- ⁴⁹ Malcom B. Yarnell, III, "Editor's Introduction," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2009), 131.
- ⁵⁰ SBTS did not utilize the current ATS degree names. A full graduate would have completed the diplomas from all eight departments, which would take three years. This would be roughly equivalent to the M.Div. For more, see, Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: 1859-2009*, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26-30.
- ⁵¹ Gaines S. Dobbins, "Mullins, Edgar Young," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, 2:194; William E. Ellis, "A Man of Books and a Man of the People:" *E.Y. Mullins and the Crisis of Moderate Southern Baptist Leadership*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985), 1, 7, 9-10, 14-15, 18, 21,

⁵² At this point, Mullins had already written *Why is Christianity True?* (1905), *The Axioms of Religion* (1908), *Baptist Beliefs* (1912), *Freedom and Authority in Religion* (1913), *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression* (1917), *The Life in Christ* (1917), *Spiritualism, A Delusion* (1920), *Talks on Soul Winning* (1920), and *Christianity at the Cross Roads* (1924).

⁵³ Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: 1859-2009*, 230-237.

⁵⁴ Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: 1859-2009*, 233-234.

⁵⁵ H. Leon McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1990), 458.

⁵⁶ E. Y. Mullins, "Statement of Principles Adopted by the Committees of Conference of the Northern and Southern Baptist Conventions," in *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, ed. H. Leon McBeth, 460.

⁵⁷ Mullins, "Statement of Principles," 460. The logical conclusion of this claim would be that a merger of Northern and Southern Baptists would be ideal.

⁵⁸ The "Hight" came from his grandmother's family name, and the "C" (not an initial) was an abbreviation of another family name, most likely "Seay." "C." Sylvester Green, "Moore, Hight C," NCPedia, 1991. <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/moore-hight-c>.

The 100-Year Legacy and History of *The Baptist Faith and Message Statement:* Part II – 1925 – 2025

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[Editor’s Note: In a separate Part 1 article, the historical developments that led up to the 1925 adoption of the confessional declaration of the Southern Baptist Convention known as *The Baptist Faith and Message*, was presented. However, 100-years later, the 1925 statement revised in 2000, while clearly defining Southern Baptists’ faith and practice, did not remain unchanged. At its heart, *The Baptist Faith and Message’s* foundational declarations continue in force to the present day, although in 1962, 1998 and 2000 clarifications and distinct additions were made, as the result of a variety of events, highlighted herein.]

Responses to the 1925 BF&M Statement

“The purpose of the Baptist Faith and Message was to promote unity among Southern Baptists at a time of theological controversy,” explained James E. Carter, who did extensive research on Southern Baptists’ confessional statements. He further observed that “the fear of modernism and the teaching of evolution prompted the acceptance of this confessional statement.”¹

A significant result of the adoption and distribution of the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message Statement was its limited uses and influence among Southern Baptists. James E. Carter based upon his research on the use of the doctrinal statement between 1925 and 1945 reported:

... that though it was widely distributed,
included in church manuals and

adopted by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, it was never used by state conventions up to 1945, and remained comparatively unused by associations and churches. Reasons for limited use of the Confession, says Carter, were (1) Southern Baptists' reluctance concerning doctrinal centralization, (2) the popularity of the older *New Hampshire Confession* among Southern Baptists, and (3) the agitation and debate which followed the 1925 statement.²

Societal and Doctrinal Issues Confronting Southern Baptists

As noted in the previous Part I article (within this issue of the *Journal*), the development of the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message was a response to the growing trends of societal acceptance of evolutionary theories, the theories promulgated by the scientific method and increased doctrinal liberalism that questioned the inspiration and accuracy of the Scriptures. If nothing else, the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message defined what Southern Baptists believed and re-affirmed the authority of Scriptures as the lifestyle standard for God's people.

However, the adoption of the doctrinal statement did not stop the continued influence of the same issues of scientific skepticism and doctrinal liberalism that had expanded into the mid-twentieth century. In fact, Gregory Wills, associate professor of church history at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, made an analysis of the controversies that existed within the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1950s and 1960s. Wills observed the following historical summary:

Since the late nineteenth century,
progressive or liberal theology spread

significantly as many Southern Baptists sought an ‘intelligent’ response to the threat of irreligion posed by the established scientific approaches to evolution and biblical criticism rooted in historicism and comparative religion. By the 1960s conservatives became convinced that liberalism originating from the seminaries gravely imperiled the denomination. They agitated against liberal professors and successfully pressured the seminaries to dismiss some of their most vulnerable faculty members. The seminary faculties nevertheless remained overwhelmingly progressive. The chief impact on the seminaries was to frighten the faculties into becoming more cautious in their writings and public statements. Conservatives sensed that they were losing the war. The seminary purges of the 1950s and 1960s therefore served only to heighten their sense of denominational crisis.³

Author Nancy Ammerman noted that following the Great Depression and World War II there were population shifts that significantly altered the demographics of the South. In particular, the religious

dominance of the evangelical influence held by Southern Baptists was replaced with a cultural and religious pluralism.⁴ Additionally, as

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described by A. J. Smith, Southern Baptists were confronted by cultural changes that fell into one of two major categories: doctrinal and societal. The doctrinal concerns for Southern Baptists revolved around the need for clear doctrine on scripture, clarification on the security of the believer, ecclesiology, among other issues.⁵

Those societal and doctrinal challenges confronting Southern Baptist pastors and their churches resulted in the need to stay “relevant” to society. Wills further summarized those multi-faceted issues:

Both progressives and conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention believed that the very life of true religion in the churches was at stake. Progressives believed that rapid changes in society jeopardized the denomination’s future. Southern Baptists were being left behind, as evidenced by the fact they generally opposed or at most acquiesced to the emerging social trends: the civil rights movement; cosmopolitanism, especially as represented by the United Nations; ecumenism and the Federal Council of Churches; concern for the poor in the expansion of federally funded social welfare programs; the peace movement; John F. Kennedy’s presidential bid. Unless Southern Baptists embraced a more intelligent faith, progressives concluded they would become irrelevant to society and would be consigned to atrophy in southern backwaters.⁶

The Growing Denominational Crisis

The doctrinal concerns of Southern Baptist pastors and laity were not newly realized by the 1960s.

Rather, the growing doctrinal unrest within the denomination, was caused by a few seminary professors who were accused of being doctrinally unsound because of their questioning the interpretation and accuracy of the Scriptures. The concerns of pastors and laity can be traced back to the late nineteenth century.

The Alleged Doctrinal Heresy of Seminary Professors

The earliest of those labelled as having unacceptable doctrinal views was Crawford H. Toy, a professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. “Toy wrote articles, concerning the authorship of the Old Testament book of Isaiah that brought criticism from both Landmark and anti-Landmark sources. This brought his whole teaching bias under scrutiny,” explained Southern Baptist historian Jesse Fletcher.⁷ Toy submitted a letter of resignation in 1879 to the seminary trustees, who were set to vote for his dismissal for his “evolutionary linguistic approaches to the study of the Old Testament.”⁸

According to historian Wills, “The seminaries continued to come under suspicion in the first half of the twentieth century. Fundamentalist leader J. Frank Norris (b. 1877; d. 1952) led many Southern Baptists to doubt the orthodoxy of the seminaries. He repeatedly charged that the Southern Baptist Convention seminaries – specifically Southern and Southwestern – were riddled with modernists. Other Baptist leaders that made accusations of doctrinal heresy, cited W. O. Carver (1914) for supposedly denying the virgin birth and James E. Dean (1931) who reportedly had unspecified “liberal views.” Other seminary professors “came under suspicion of endorsing evolution or ecumenical efforts.”⁹ Another incident occurred in 1961, when Southern Seminary Professor Dale Moody expressed his views on the

issue of apostasy at a preaching event in Oklahoma. The comments ignited a mini controversy as the Oklahoma Pastors' Conference called for an investigation into the doctrinal soundness of Moody. It was charged that Moody's doctrinal positions were "inconsistent with traditional Southern Baptist views on the subject."¹⁰ The seminary trustees subsequently investigated the charges, interviewed Moody, and determined there was no cause for disciplinary action.

The Firing of Southern Seminary Professors

One of the more "earth-shattering" events that caused Southern Baptists to take notice of the growing doctrinal crisis occurred in 1958 when the trustees of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary fired thirteen faculty members. The reasons for the conflict at the seminary were considered complex by some observers. For others it was believed to be about personal animosities between some professors and President Duke McCall. However, according to professor Wills, "the role of the president and his authority played a central role. . . But at bottom the controversy was about theology. The disagreement however was not about fundamentalism and modernism, but rather about the role of the seminary in advancing more liberal views."¹¹

Herschel H. Hobbs, pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, and probably one of the most influential Southern Baptists at the time, believed that the controversy at the seminary erupted because some professors had incorrect "doctrinal positions as compared with the normal Southern Baptist position." Hobbs made it clear, in correspondence with other pastors and laypersons, "any man who aspires to teach either in our Christian colleges or seminaries should either stay within the 'pasture' of what Southern Baptist[s] believe and teach or else he

should hire his own hall. I am not for furnishing him a place to spout out his own views.”¹²

The Ralph Elliott Controversy

After a brief teaching stint at Southern Seminary, Ralph Elliott in 1958 was employed at Southern Baptists’ newest educational institution, the recently opened Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary located in Kansas City. After a few years, the Sunday School Board’s Broadman Press in 1961 published Elliott’s book, *The Message of Genesis*. As an Old Testament professor, “Elliott said he was seeking to clarify many of vexing questions that blocked young intellectuals from seeing the truth of God’s Word in the Book of Genesis in light of scientific advances and increasing acceptance of modern scientific theory,” summarized Southern Baptist historian Jesse Fletcher.¹³ The ensuing negative reaction to the book underscored that “Baptist reaction to modern theories of biblical scholarship and efforts to reconcile science and religion had not changed in many ways from the days of Crawford Howell Toy’s experience” in 1879.¹⁴

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Herschel Hobbs, who served as chairman of the 1962 Committee assigned to study the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message statement (discussed in a Part I article in this issue of

the *Journal*), over a decade later, wrote that the Elliott book “was not so much the cause as it was the occasion” for the firestorm that ensued. Much of the negative consternation was generated by many state Baptist newspaper editorials that mobilized pastors to demand an accounting. Hobbs further wrote that “the climate had been forming over a period of years. But the dual fact that the book was written by a Southern

Baptist seminary professor and published by the Convention's Broadman Press formed the catalyst which precipitated the storm of protest.”¹⁵

The Convention Sidesteps the Growing Controversy

The planned 1962 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting set to be held in San Francisco was shaping up to be a major denominational crisis of conflict. However, Herschel Hobbs, who as Convention president, sought the counsel of other Southern Baptist leaders for a way to avoid a major crisis at the annual meeting. At the heart of the issue was a “widespread concern that Southern Baptists were becoming more liberal doctrinally.”¹⁶ It was determined that a study be made of the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message and the task should be done by a “grass roots” committee of representatives from each of the states, then cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention. The proposal was made to the SBC Executive Committee, prior to the annual Convention meeting. The approved option resulted in an Executive Committee proposed Recommendation 14 to be presented to Convention messengers.

Although the Convention convened Tuesday night, June 5, it was the following morning before the business matters were considered. However, in an attempt to preempt the expected controversy, Hobbs’ delivered his President’s Address titled, “Crisis and Conquest.”¹⁷ He denounced “liberalism, materialism, and modernism in his introductory remarks, and then focused the force of his sermon on showing how neo-orthodoxy, for all its attempts to return to the Bible, failed to accomplish what it intended.”¹⁸ In a later published article, Hobbs said he had attempted to make an assessment of historical criticism in the study and interpretation of the Scriptures.¹⁹ As he concluded his sermon, Hobbs stressed that his

remarks were “not a plea to discard the intellect, but to employ it in giving to this age a theology which speaks to both the minds and the hearts of men.”²⁰

Following the President’s Address, Porter Routh, executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee, presented a series of proposed recommendations for consideration by Convention messengers. Recommendation 14 was presented which noted, in part: “Since the report of the Committee on Statement of Baptist Faith and Message was adopted in 1925, there have been various statements from time to time which have been made, but no over-all statement which might be helpful at this time as suggested in Section 2 of that report, or introductory statement which might be used as an interpretation of the 1925 statement.” The recommendation went on to authorize the Convention president to call a meeting of the cooperating state convention presidents to study and present “to the Convention in Kansas City some similar statement which shall serve as information to the churches, and which may serve as guidelines to the various agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention. . .”²¹

The recommendation was approved by the 9,300 registered messengers with only a single amendment requiring that a report be readied by March 1963, and to be included in the 1963 *Book of Reports*, which would be distributed during the 1963 annual meeting.

The Convention then proceeded to the next scheduled business item of electing officers. The messengers unanimously re-elected Hobbs as Convention president to serve 1962-1963.

**Bible Affirmed as “Authoritative,
Authentic, Infallible”**

During the following miscellaneous business period, K. Owen White of Texas presented a motion that sought, in part, for Convention messengers to “reaffirm their faith in the entire Bible as the authoritative, authentic, infallible Word of God, . . .”²² The motion was referred to the Committee on Order of Business to set a time for discussion. The following Thursday morning the Committee reported out the Owen White motion. President Hobbs ruled that the motion was “in reality two motions” which were to be considered separately. The first revised motion was unanimously adopted: “That the messengers to this Convention, by standing vote, reaffirm their faith in the entire Bible as the authoritative, authentic, infallible Word of God.”²³

**reaffirm their faith in
the entire Bible as the
authoritative,
authentic, infallible
Word of God**

The annual minutes reported, that “following extended discussion and an unsuccessful effort to refer the motion to the special committee appointed to prepare a statement of faith, the second motion, as amended by K. Owen White was adopted:”

That we express our abiding and unchanging objection to the dissemination of theological views in any of our seminaries which would undermine such faith in the historical accuracy and doctrinal integrity of the Bible, and that we courteously request the trustees and administrative officers of our institutions and other agencies to take such steps as shall be necessary to remedy at once those situations where

such views now threaten our historic position.²⁴

In what amounted to historical footnotes to the 1962 annual meeting, two additional motions related to the evolving doctrinal crisis were later presented. The first motion, which sought to require the Sunday School Board to cease publication of the Elliott book was defeated.²⁵ A second motion sought to request the special committee on the statement of faith to include in their report the definition of Baptist's "historic position." It also was defeated.²⁶

The Work of the 1963 BF&M Committee

The 24 persons who were appointed to the 1962-63 study committee on the Baptist Faith and Message were Convention President Hobbs and the 23 respective presidents of the Baptist state conventions, which at the time, were cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention. The members included: Herschel H. Hobbs, Oklahoma City, Okla., as chair; Howard M. Reeves, Mobile, Ala.; Ed J. Packwood, Phoenix, Ariz.; C. Z. Holland, Jonesboro, Ark.; W. B. Timberlake, Pomona, Calif.; C. V. Koons, Washington, D.C.; Malcolm B. Knight, Jacksonville, Fla.; Dick H. Hall Jr., Decatur, Ga., who served as secretary to the committee. Others included: Charles R. Walker, Marion, Ill.; Walter R. Davis, Hammond, Ind.; Garth Pybas, Topeka, Kan.; V. C. Kruschwitz, Elizabethtown, Ky.; Luther B. Hall, Farmerville, La.; Robert Woodward, Frederick, Md.; and Douglas Hudgins, Jackson, Miss., who served as vice-chair.

Additionally, serving on the committee were: Paul Weber, Jr., Springfield, Mo.; R. A. Long, Roswell, N. M.; Nane Starnes, Asheville, N.C.; C. Hoge Hockensmith, Columbus, Ohio; Hugh R. Bumpas, Oklahoma City, Okla.; David G. Anderson, North Charleston, S.C.; E. Warren Rust, Cleveland, Tenn.;

James H. Landes, Wichita Falls, Tex.; and R. P. Downey, Salem, Va.²⁷

A later analysis of the committee's makeup was made by the *Oklahoma Baptist Messenger*. It found that among its members, six held academic doctorates from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary while 14 others held degrees from other Southern Baptist seminaries. Among the remaining four, two laypersons and two pastors were without seminary training.

The study committee members were "acutely aware of the responsibility placed upon it by the Convention," Chairman Hobbs later wrote. "Each session was bathed in prayer for divine guidance. Evidence that the members took their work seriously was shown in the fact that when the committee met, most were present and entered freely into the discussions. The Greek New Testament was consulted often to ensure accuracy. . . ."²⁸

Hobbs said that between meetings "efforts were made to secure the opinions of lay people, pastors and theologians regarding various items of the statement." He went on to confirm that "every single item in the proposed statement was adopted by unanimous vote."²⁹ A. J. Smith, in his published analysis of the committee's work process and product, made a detailed review of the "outside" persons and groups who were invited to review the committee's preliminary statement drafts and provide suggestions. Smith noted Chairman Hobbs, "took great pains to involve himself in its revision from beginning to end."³⁰

The Presentation and Adoption of the 1963 BF&M Statement

The 1963 annual meeting convened in Kansas City, Missouri, on the evening of May 7. However, it was not until Thursday morning, [designated in the “Proceedings” as item 122] that the report of the Committee on Baptist Faith and Message was presented. It is likely the delayed presentation was designed to give messengers adequate time to read the report that was published in the 1963 *Book of Reports* each messenger received at registration.

In presenting the report President Hobbs and committee vice-chair Douglas Hudgins took turns reading the report verbatim. [See the *Appendix* at the end of this *Journal*, which provides the specific verbiage of the 1963 doctrinal statement.] Then Hobbs moved the adoption of the report. Subsequently several motions were made to amend the report. Florida pastor C. Earl Cooper made a motion to strike all the report except the Scripture references, was defeated. Another motion, seeking to receive the Statement on Baptist Faith and Message as “information” and “guidance” was ruled out of order. After several other parliamentary procedures, the report was adopted as presented by a majority of the 12,971 registered messengers.

The intent of this article is neither to dissect nor analyze the 1963 doctrinal statement which can be found in other sources.³¹ Rather the focus is upon the process and history on how the Southern Baptist Convention came to adopt and revise its confessional statement. However, scholar A. J. Smith, made an in-depth analysis of each of the 17-doctrinal articles included in the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message statement. In a concluding observation, Smith said, “The 1963 Baptist Faith and Message reflected changing trends in Southern Baptist thought . . .” He

then highlighted the significant differences found in the 1963 version, by the following summary assessment:

The doctrine of Scripture in 1963 BFM allowed a broader hermeneutical principle than Baptists of previous generations accepted. The articles on Man and Salvation were worded in such a way as to allow for a broadening evangelical interpretation, though not without some logical inconsistencies, especially in the treatment of regeneration. The doctrine of the Church gave renewed emphasis to the lordship of Christ in relation to local church autonomy while at the same time expressing a belief in a larger, universal church of all the redeemed. Considered under church practice were changes related to expression of the meaning of baptism and the proper elements of the Lord's Supper. Inasmuch as Hobb's intention was for the confession to be an expression of what Southern Baptists in 1963 believed, the BFM reflected shifts in Baptist thinking and practice during the first half of the twentieth century.³²

In a 1971 study course book on the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message, Herschel Hobbs noted, that the 1963 Convention action "for the time being largely put to rest" the doctrinal controversy. . . . Unsuccessful efforts have been made from the floor of the Convention to revise or amend the 1963 statement. But the 1970 Convention in Denver voted unanimously to reaffirm its acceptance of the statement. Probably some future Convention may feel it advisable to revise the 1963 statement in the light of future needs."³³

Moving Forward with a Tentative Peace

As previously highlighted, the single most significant issue confronting Southern Baptists were the controversies around theology. The 1963 Baptist Faith and Message sought to resolve those concerns. However, as one conservative Baptist scholar noted,

... the question arose as to whether or not professors at the seminaries were teaching things that were not in concert with what was believed by the majority of Southern Baptists. If they were being supported financially by the churches, their teaching should be consistent with what Southern Baptists believe. When the 1963 version [BFM] was adopted, it included language that was not to clarify what was believed, but which was made more broad and general so as not to exclude anyone. The difficulty with this was the ability to attach different meanings to words, so that two groups could use the same terminology, but have different meanings.³⁴

During the ensuing 37 years – from the time of the adoption in 1963 and the proposed revision in 2000 of the Baptist Faith and Message – Southern Baptists saw and experienced more controversy and growing division between counter-cultural viewpoints. One social scientist told of the changing views of younger Southern Baptists as it related to race, social justice, the Vietnam war, the changing relationships between men and women, and the challenge toward authority and institutions. “The 1960s were a decade of change throughout the nation, and the South was no exception. As a new generation of Southern Baptists emerged from colleges and seminaries in the 1960s, many were dreaming dreams of equality and progress in their church and in their world.”³⁵ On the other

hand, older, more experienced Southern Baptists, “looked at the changes of the 1960s as the sort of chaos one might expect when biblical rules are discarded.”³⁶

A Renewal of Controversy with Broadman’s “Genesis”

“From the 1963 Southern Baptist Convention until 1970, things were relatively peaceful,” explained pastor Jerry Sutton.³⁷ And then the controversy over theological interpretation of the Scriptures resurfaced in 1970 when the Baptist Sunday School Board’s Broadman book publishers released its first volume in a new series

of Bible commentaries.

The commentary on Genesis-Exodus had been written by British scholar G. Henton Davies, who presented a non-literal

the controversy over theological interpretation of the Scriptures re- surfaced in 1970

interpretation of the events recorded in Genesis. As an example, Davies contended that Abraham might have been mistaken to think God had commanded him to sacrifice Isaac. He wrote, “Abraham’s conviction that his son must be sacrificed is the climax of the psychology of life.”³⁸ Davies’ psychoanalysis “caused an uproar in the Southern Baptist Convention,” observed self-identified conservative Baptist historian Jerry Sutton.³⁹ The commentary’s release and ensuing “uproar” occurred just prior to the June 1970 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention held in Denver.

During the Convention’s proceedings, at a time for presentation of new business, messenger Gwin T. Turner of California moved “that because the new *The Broadman Bible Commentary* is out of keeping with the beliefs of the vast majority of Southern Baptist

pastors and people,” that the Sunday School Board not only discontinue distribution of the commentary but “. . . that it be rewritten with due consideration of the conservative viewpoint.”⁴⁰ The motion was referred to a later time for consideration. When the motion was considered, eight messengers spoke, although their position of being either “for” or “against” was not noted in the official proceedings. A call for a vote by ballot, which was subsequently taken, reported that the Turner motion was approved by a vote of 5,394 “for” and 2,170 “against,” totaling 7,564 votes cast.⁴¹

Trustees of the Sunday School Board initially resisted enlisting another writer for the commentary and merely asked Davies and seminary professor Roy Honeycutt to perform a re-write. The following year (1971), when the Convention met in St. Louis, messengers considered a motion by Kenneth Barnette of Oklahoma. Barnette noted that the Convention’s 1970 vote on the *Broadman Bible Commentary* had been ignored by the Baptist Sunday School Board. In the latest motion, subsequently approved by messengers, the Board was directed to follow the Convention’s 1970 directive and find another writer with a “conservative viewpoint.”⁴² Subsequently seminary professor Clyde Francisco was contracted to re-write volume one and the Board sold – not stop distribution – its remaining stock of volume one to a British publisher.⁴³

The Genesis Commentary “crisis” was the benchmark in the late twentieth century for two growing trends in the Southern Baptist Convention during the ensuing years. In summary, seminary professors and agency staff were producing books and events that focused on “questionable” or “liberal” interpretations of Scripture. Additionally, seminary and agency trustees were resistant to calls for change in the practice by

their respective staff and/or professors. Neither the focus of this article, nor space, will permit an in-depth review of the Convention's additional controversies over biblical interpretation, the "conservative resurgence" (1979-1993), the battle lines drawn between moderates' and conservatives' viewpoints, and the need for a Peace Committee (1985-1988), among other actions. Those topics have been well-documented in various publications.⁴⁴

The 1998 "Family" Amendment to the BF&M

When the Southern Baptist Convention met in Dallas during June 1997, a motion titled, "On Adding an Article on Family to the Baptist Faith and Message," was made by messenger Charles Lawson of Maryland. The motion requested the Convention president to appoint a committee to review the BF&M1963 "for the primary purpose of adding an Article on The Family." The motion further specified a scriptural basis (Genesis 2:4) and directed the proposed revision should address the respective roles of husband, wife and children. The motion was subsequently considered and approved.⁴⁵

Convention President Thomas D. Eliff appointed the Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee comprised of seven members: Anthony Jordan, executive director-treasurer, Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma; Bill Elliff, pastor, First Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark.; Richard Land, president, SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission; Mary Mohler, a homemaker and director of the Seminary Wives Institute of The Southern Baptist Seminary; Dorothy Patterson, a homemaker and adjunct professor of Women's Studies at Southeastern Baptist Seminary; Damon Shook, pastor, Champion Forest Baptist Church, Houston, Tex.; and T. G. "John" Sullivan, executive director-treasurer, Florida Baptist Convention.

During the following year, the committee reviewed scripture which would serve as the basis for the proposed new article. According to committee member Dorothy Patterson, who later wrote about the committee's work, said the "statement on family is thoroughly biblical." In a later published commentary on the family amendment, Patterson affirmed that "God established the home by creating the man and the woman and bringing them together in the Garden of Eden to engage in spiritual ministry through companionship, domination, procreation and worship."⁴⁶

**"God has ordained
the family as the
foundational
institution of
society."**

At the 1998 SBC annual meeting held in Salt Lake City, Utah, the committee presented its proposed amendment to the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message. Committee

chairman Anthony Jordon presented the proposal by noting "God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of society." The proposed article provided scriptural support and commentary for the several topics, which included "The Family," "Marriage," "Husbands," "Wives," "Parents and Children." [See the *Appendix* at the end of this *Journal*, which provides the specific verbiage of the 1998 "Family" statement.] Although there were two attempts to amend the recommendation, each was defeated. The original committee recommendation was approved by messengers.⁴⁷

The Baptist Faith & Message Revised in 2000

When the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting convened in the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, in June 1999, longtime Southern Baptist, retired Brig. Gen. Thomas C. "T. C." Pinckney of Alexandria, Virginia, and editor of the conservative publication,

The Baptist Banner, sought recognition by the presiding officer. He then presented a motion “On Requesting Committee Review of the Baptist Faith and Message.” The motion requested the convention president to “appoint a blue-ribbon committee to review the Baptist Faith and Message statement with the responsibility to report and bring any recommendations to this meeting next June in Orlando.” The motion was subsequently approved by convention messengers.⁴⁸

Convention president Paige Patterson appointed a 15-member committee that represented the most diverse group of representatives from Southern Baptist life than had ever been assembled up to that date. The multi-ethnic group included pastors, educators, laymen and women, who collectively represented four ethnicities – African- Americans, Anglos, Asians and Hispanics.⁴⁹ The committee members were Max Barnett (Oklahoma), Steve Gaines (Alabama), Rudy A. Hernandez (Texas), Charles S. Kelley, Jr. (Louisiana), Heather King Moore (Indiana), Roger Spradlin (California), and Richard D. Land (Tennessee). Others included Fred Luter (Louisiana), R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Tennessee), T. C. Pinckney (Virginia), and Norman Price (Georgia). And finally, also serving were Susie Hawkins (Texas), Simon Tsoi (Arizona), Jerry Vines (Florida), and Adrian Rogers (Tennessee) who was chairman.

Committee chairman Adrian Rogers presented the report of the Baptist Message and Faith 2000, which had been printed in the *Book of Reports* that was distributed to messengers at registration. He initially sought to amend a paragraph in the proposed preamble, but after several messengers spoke for and against the amendment, the proposal was voted down. As a result of a call for the question, the proposed BF&M 2000, as printed, was approved by

messengers.⁵⁰ The intent of this article is neither to dissect nor analyze the 2000 doctrinal statement which can be found in other sources.⁵¹ [See the *Appendix* at the end of this *Journal*.]

The Preamble to the BF&M 2000 underscored several understandings which Rogers read to messengers and was included in a subsequent publication. An excerpt of two paragraphs is presented to highlight the committee's rationale:

Baptists are a people of deep beliefs and cherished doctrines. Throughout our history we have been a confessional people, adopting statements of faith as a witness to our beliefs and a pledge of our faithfulness to the doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture.

Our confessions of faith are rooted in historical precedent, as the church in every age has been called upon to define and defend its beliefs. Each generation of Christians bears the responsibility of guarding the treasury of truth that has been entrusted to us [2 Timothy 1:14]. Facing a new century, Southern Baptists must meet the demands and duties of the present hour.⁵²

Seven years later, in a book explaining the BF&M 2000, Adrian Rogers wrote in the introduction: "The 1963 statement added new articles and revised the language and content of the 1925 statement in significant areas. New concerns and emerging challenges led the Southern Baptists of that era [2000] to revise *The Baptist Faith and Message* and to clarify our common beliefs."⁵³

Affirming “Historic Succession”

Interestingly, the purpose and intent of the 2000 confessional statement, when compared to the 1925 and 1963 statements, provided a “historic succession” according to William Brackney. His assessment paraphrased Rogers’ “preamble” in the 2000 BF&M statement that affirms the contributions of the 1925 and 1963 statements:

. . . the purpose of the 1925 statement had been to recover the supernatural nature of the faith; that in 1963, the statement had been revised to address the authority and truthfulness of the Bible much under attack in that era; and, in 1998, an article on the family had been added to the document in light of the prevailing cultural confusion. Boldly, the new committee saw itself in ‘historic succession’ of intent and purpose with the earlier documents ‘to set forth certain teachings we believe.’ For many in the Southern Baptist family, the new revision became the test of ‘theological integrity.’ They held that the teachings of the theological schools and the doctrinal basis of the convention agencies should conform to what was endorsed by the convention as the widely held views of the denomination’s churches.⁵⁴

ENDNOTES:

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² Walter B. Shurden, "Southern Baptist Responses to Their Confessional Statements," *Review and Expositor*, Winter, 1979, 76-77, citing James E. Carter, "The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith, 1845-1925," (unpublished ThD dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth, Texas, 1964).

³ Gregory A. Wills, "Progressive Theology and Southern Baptist Controversies of the 1950s and 1960s," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, Spring, 2003, 12; accessed May 17, 2025, from <https://equip.sbts.edu/publications/journals/journal-of-theology/sbjt-71-spring-2003/progressive-theology-and-southern-baptist-controversies-of-the-1950s-and-1960s/>

⁴ Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, (Piscataway, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1990), 50-56.

⁵ A. J. Smith, *The Making of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 40-59.

⁶ Gregory A. Wills, "Progressive Theology . . .," 13.

⁷ Jesse C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention, A Sesquicentennial History*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 206.

⁸ William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004), 401.

⁹ Gregory A. Wills, "Progressive Theology . . .," 14.

¹⁰ A. J. Smith, *The Making of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message*, 19-20.

¹¹ Gregory A. Wills, "Progressive Theology . . .," 16-17.

¹² Gregory Wills, citing Hershel Hobbs' letters to various persons written between 1959 and 1960, which are included in the Herschel Hobbs Papers, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, "Progressive Theology . . .," 19.

¹³ Jesse C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 206.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Herschel H. Hobbs, "Southern Baptists and Confessionalism: A Comparison of the Origins and Contents of the 1925 and 1963 Confessions," *Review and Expositor*, Winter, 1979, 57-58.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁷ Proceedings, Item 26, Southern Baptist Convention *Annual*, 1962, (hereinafter referred to as the SBC *Annual*), 56 and 89.

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- ¹⁸ A. J. Smith, *The Making of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message*, 37.
- ¹⁹ Herschel H. Hobbs, "Southern Baptists and Confessionalism," 58.
- ²⁰ Proceedings, Item 26, *SBC Annual*, 1926, 89.
- ²¹ Proceedings, Item 44, *SBC Annual*, 1962, 64.
- ²² Proceedings, Item 57, *SBC Annual*, 1962, 65.
- ²³ Proceedings, Items 83 and 84, *SBC Annual*, 1962, 68.
- ²⁴ Proceedings, Item 86, *SBC Annual*, 1962, 68.
- ²⁵ Proceedings, Items 109 and 126, *SBC Annual*, 1962, 71, 78.
- ²⁶ Proceedings, Items 114 and 127, *SBC Annual*, 1962, 71, 78.
- ²⁷ Report of Committee on Baptist Faith and Message/Members, *SBC Annual*, 1963, 281.
- ²⁸ Herschel H. Hobbs, "Southern Baptists and Confessionalism," 59–60.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.
- ³⁰ A. J. Smith, *The Making of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message*, 115–134.
- ³¹ Several resources on the 1963 Baptist Faith & Message are: Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1971),); and A. J. Smith, *The Making of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008).
- ³² *Ibid.*, 152–153.
- ³³ Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1971), 15.
- ³⁴ Roger C. Richards, *History of Southern Baptists*, (Graceville, FL: Self Published, 2012), 403-404.
- ³⁵ Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 67.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000), 40.
- ³⁸ G. Henton Davies, "Genesis," *Broadman Bible Commentary*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), 198.
- ³⁹ Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 12.
- ⁴⁰ Proceedings, item 64, *SBC Annual*, 1970, 63.
- ⁴¹ Proceedings, items 180, 182, 198, *SBC Annual*, 1970, 76 – 78.
- ⁴² Proceedings, items 153, 156, and 188, *SBC Annual*, 1971, 71 and 76.
- ⁴³ Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 67 – 68.
- ⁴⁴ Two books provide excellent overviews and the detailed history of the conflicts that occurred within the Southern Baptist Convention in the late twentieth century and which are previously cited within this article: Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, and Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*.

⁴⁵ Proceedings, items 14, 38, and 82, *SBC Annual*, 1997, 36, 46 and 84.

⁴⁶ Dorothy Kelley Patterson, "The Family," in *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, ed. Douglass K. Blount and Joseph D. Wooddell, (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 185.

⁴⁷ Proceedings, items 67 through 81, *SBC Annual*, 1998, 77, 81 – 82.

⁴⁸ Proceedings, items 18, 52, 108 – 113, and 127, *SBC Annual*, 1999, 37, 79, 87, and 88.

⁴⁹ Blount and Wooddell, *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, ix.

⁵⁰ Proceedings, items 112 through 119, *SBC Annual*, 2000, 76.

⁵¹ Two notable books provide overviews and the detailed history on the development of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 and served as resource for this article: Blount and Wooddell, *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*; and William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought*.

⁵² Preamble, *The Baptist Faith & Message*, (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2000), 3-4.

⁵³ Adrian Rogers, "Introduction," Charles S. Kelly, Jr., Richard Land, and R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *The Baptist Faith & Message* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2007), 6.

⁵⁴ William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought*, 56.

The Role of the Baptist Association as the Guardian of Baptist Doctrine

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Baptists have long embraced a deep belief in cooperation, recognizing the exponential impact that a body of churches can make when joined together for gospel efforts. In 1925, Southern Baptists erected both a financial and a confessional framework that reflected the cooperative belief they held since their formation in 1845 – the Baptist *Faith and Message Statement* and the Cooperative Program, respectively. Both Kingdom tools have served Southern Baptists in advancing gospel efforts through theological education, missionary sending, and numerous other gospel ministries.

It is good to pursue a broad gospel reach – people going to our neighbors and the nations to fulfill our biblical task. There also are deep gospel roots – Baptist distinctives, theological convictions, shared beliefs – that undergird our cooperative going and giving. While there will be perpetually strategic improvements to our giving and going, sustaining the cooperative body around common theological convictions is essential, and such is where the local association has historically held post as guardian.

Background to Evolving Baptist Cooperation

In the late 1600s and early 1700s, the need for Baptist cooperation in America was realized as the number of churches increased. Baptists recalled the past pressures experienced by their English ancestors who briefly escaped to Amsterdam to avoid the Church of England's persecution before formally planting a church in 1611.¹ Further, they experienced present persecution in the colonies by not being a state-approved church (except in Rhode Island, each colony had its government-supported state religion). Baptists chose

to closely associate with one another to address governmental concerns (e.g., taxation) and to strengthen theological convictions and practice.²

Maintaining its commitment to autonomy within congregational polity,³ the first Baptist association was formed in 1707 – the Philadelphia Baptist Association.⁴ Pennepek, Coldspring, Middleton, Piscataqua, and Cohansie are but a few of the names of the original churches, mostly of Welsh descent, who comprised the Philadelphia Association.⁵ They imported their cooperative commitments from Baptists in London who, in 1689, adopted the thirty-two chapters of the *London Baptist Confession* amidst swirling theological tension between the Church of England and Puritanism, among others.

The *London Confession*, officially adopted in 1742,⁶ aided the Philadelphia Association, as well as other associations soon to come, by providing a common doctrinal tool, set within the relational environment of their shared context, to address doctrinal questions that rose from within member churches and to warn of emerging secular concerns. As to the process, should a doctrinal question arise within a given church, especially one that potentially challenged the practice of their cooperating confession, church leaders would bring the matter to the association. Delegates from each of the member churches would discuss, agree to a cooperative decision, and then advise the questioning church while concurrently supplying guidance for all association churches.

Such was the case when Philadelphia churches sought guidance on how to rightly incorporate singing in the church services, resolved in what soon became known as the *Philadelphia Confession*. Or, as another example, how women should exercise membership voting privileges during church gatherings when women had traditionally not had a voice. It was determined women could stand or raise their hand to vote.⁷

The Warren Association, as an example of aiding churches from secular challenges, formed a “Grievance Committee” and collected cases to seek redress from persecution against Baptists by courts and legislatures. Such guardian-like action

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made the Warren Association one of the first significant contributors to religious liberty in America.⁸

To further aid member churches, the Association would send out “helps,” ministers and laity who

went to churches to personally advise them in addressing doctrinal questions and practice.⁹ Similar calls for doctrinal clarity have extended across the history of associations as H.G. Jones notes, “In every period of its existence the Association has firmly maintained the soundest form of Scripture doctrine, nor could any church have been admitted, at any period, which denied or concealed any of the doctrines of grace.”¹⁰

Seeking Doctrinal Clarity

This pursuit of garnering doctrinal clarity from an association-like group is often traced back to Acts 15 as the Jerusalem Council provided guidance regarding the “heated argument” concerning salvation and the customs of Moses.¹¹ In that account, elders from numerous churches met, discussed, and rendered guidance. That priority to pursue doctrinal clarity through cooperative means reaffirmed Solomon’s “wisdom in many advisors” (Proverbs 15:22) and demonstrated it as appropriate and most helpful when extended *between* churches, not just within an individual church.

In the New World of the early 18th century, and in the face of the Church of England’s frequent overreach, there was debate among Baptists, still firmly committed to being autonomous, as to how much weight should be given to larger ecclesiastical bodies. For example, “General Baptists preferred a more centralized ecclesiology where questions were deferred to a broader body to discipline its members, while Particular Baptists magnified the autonomy of their local congregations.”¹²

To sustain the doctrinal clarity and prevent drift from their shared convictions as Baptist churches began, especially in

the growing South, additional associations were formed (i.e. the Charleston Baptist Association – first in the South, 1751).¹³ Because such a pursuit to hold churches to common theological convictions could challenge the deep conviction of church autonomy, clarity as to the functional role of the association was called for in a manner that honored both. In 1749, the Philadelphia Baptist Association tasked Benjamin Griffin with that responsibility, which he presented on September 17, 1749, through a paper entitled “*Essay*.” An excerpt:

Such churches there must be agreeing in doctrine and practice, and independent in their authority and church power . . . [the association] is not to be deemed a superior judicature, as having a superintendency over the churches, but subservient to the churches, in what may concern all the churches in general, or any one church in particular That a defection in doctrine or practices in any church, in such a confederation, or any party in any such church, is ground sufficient for an Association to withdraw from such. A church or party so deviating or making defection, and to exclude such from them in some formal manner.¹⁴

In short, each autonomous church voluntarily enters a confederation of churches (i.e., the Association), being primarily united by and for the practice and propagation of the shared doctrine. Furthermore, should a church deviate in its belief or practice of such shared doctrine, the association and its confederation of churches would withdraw from cooperation and communion with the deviating church.

Confessional Statements Provided Guidance

After the Revolutionary War, Baptist churches and their associations were rather widespread, at least forty-two associations by 1800.¹⁵ There were calls for a “national association,” whereby delegates from local associations would come together to address national issues. However, among numerous concerns was that developing a new denomination, among others, this idea was delayed for several years, and the

primary tool of cooperative mission and sustaining theological unity remained with the local Association.¹⁶

The *London Confession*, and later the *New Hampshire Confession*, adopted in 1833 as part of the Triennial Convention and promoted throughout the South by the Northern Baptist Publication Society, served the growing South as the confessional documents.¹⁷ Both confessions – the London and the New Hampshire – guided Baptists as they formed the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845. Those confessions remained the guiding cooperative confessions until joined by the adoption of the *Baptist Faith and Message Statement* in 1925, which became the SBC's primary confession.

These confessions aided associations into the twentieth century as Baptists weathered challenges, both from fellow Baptists and from the culture at large. For example, as Baptist historian Roger Richards recounts:

The leading fundamentalist figure among Southern Baptists was J. Frank Norris of Fort Worth, Texas. He participated in the World's Christian Fundamentals Conference of 1919 and helped form the Baptist Bible Union of America four years later. Because of the overwhelmingly conservative nature of Southern Baptists, he and his group found it difficult to establish doctrinal grounds for attacking the Convention and its agencies. Norris, however, used fundamentalism as a platform for personal controversy and to further his ambitions. Although he had previously exercised his considerable gifts in forming the work of Texas and Southern Baptists, he began to use his newspaper to attack the Seventy-five Million Campaign, Baylor University, Southwestern Seminary, Texas Baptists, and the Southern Baptist Convention. [His Association responded.] He was expelled from the Tarrant County Baptist Association in 1922 and 1924 and by the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 1923 and 1924. He continued to harass the

Southern Baptist Convention until he died in 1952.¹⁸

A second example is the issue of the ordination of women. These are a few records of many:

women being ordained until 1971, but the practice soon began to gain some momentum. While there were probably no more than fifty women ordained by 1978, the number later increased rapidly. In even greater numbers, churches ordained women as deacons or deaconesses. By 1976, the opposition to the practice had become solidified enough that the Black River Association in Arkansas passed a resolution, calling the practice ‘unbiblical’ and criticizing Charles Ashcraft, the Arkansas Executive Secretary, for his public support of the practice.¹⁹

The need for an advisory and guardian role to sustain the cooperative faith and practice has remained even through the formation of state and national associations (i.e., Conventions). Warning of doctrinal drift, Dr. Albert Mohler has cautioned:

“We are reaping the harvest of doctrinal neglect.”

—Dr. Albert Mohler

Baptists in general, and Southern Baptists in particular, have allowed theological and doctrinal neglect to erode the very foundation of our identity . . . Lulled into a season of theological self-confidence, Baptists of the last century directed their energies and attention into ambitious programs and numerical growth, they were confident that the doctrinal foundation was safe, secure and sacred to all Baptists. They were wrong . . . Baptists will either recover our denominational heritage and rebuild our doctrinal foundations, or in the next generation there will be no authentic Baptist witness . . . We are reaping the harvest of doctrinal neglect.²⁰

The Association's Guardian Role

Secular and unbiblical ideas have long sought to influence churches. As churches give their primary attention to internal church matters, the Baptist association has historically been positioned to quickly identify external matters that threaten its churches' doctrinal fidelity (e.g., changes in governmental policy regarding sexual ethics, or unjust actions that overlook or oppress the vulnerable). The association has reported such concerning matters to its cooperating churches, aided churches in forming a biblical response that is in alignment with their doctrinal confession using collaboration, and then resourced cooperating churches to respond with biblical fidelity.

Additionally, as some mal-intended pastors have sought to lead a cooperating Baptist church away from their Baptist distinctives and to disconnect from their historical Baptist cooperation, the association has aided churches through legal disputes (e.g., property ownership), even when baptistic members are in a minority, to help ensure the founding Baptist convictions and cooperations of the church endure. Though national boards and commissions have sought similar service on a national level,²¹ the local association has remained positioned as a practical guardian of doctrine as it has fostered a context of high-quality, undelegated deliberation to render a cooperative decision.

The Changing Dynamics of the Association's Functions

With the 1925 affirmation of the *Baptist Faith and Message* and Cooperative Program, the platform for addressing common Baptist distinctives shifted nationally. The Southern Baptist Convention and various state conventions were formed at times from coalitions of local Baptist associations. These bodies not only coordinated national missions and education, including endorsing those seminaries and missionaries who upheld Baptist beliefs, but also established a Credentials Committee in 2019 to render guidance to the SBC Executive Committee regarding churches that may have deviated from SBC cooperating commitments.²²

Some associations delegated, intentionally or otherwise, their guardian role to these state or national bodies while

prioritizing ministries common in all churches (e.g., ministries that focus on connecting all men or women within member churches) and developed ministries that addressed common needs within the association's context (e.g., area benevolence ministries, pregnancy resource centers, port ministry, etc.). With such reprioritization, the effort afforded to the role of doctrinal guardian diminished. In time, dealing with doctrinal matters in gathered settings became an anomaly (i.e., having member churches engage in intentional discussions to gain clarity on a doctrinal matter) as fellowship and ministry activity took center stage. In other words, "*what we can do together*" was pushed to the association's functional foreground (i.e., cooperation) instead of "*what we believe together*" (i.e., confessional).

With the emergence of the internet and social media came a further shift away from geographic-based relationships and toward affinity-based connections. This has come to mean, pastors being associated primarily with those, often on a national level, who share a particular belief within a given doctrine or ministry philosophy (e.g., everyone in the group has similar beliefs about church planting or a nuance in church structure). Over time, pastors and churches were participating in multiple "associations" (i.e., the local/geographic-based association, and national/affinity-based "association"). While such national networks on shared priorities have supplied encouragement, an emerging concern has been the development of ministry echo chambers (i.e., being exposed only to that which one fully agrees).

The local/geographic-based association, as servant and guardian for a given area's body of churches, has held the more challenging role as it seeks to serve *all* churches, despite the diversity of ministry priorities and encompassing all Baptist nuances that exist within the member churches. It has been the association's role to foster environments for cooperative conversations whereby pastors and churches can meaningfully and practically voice and think through theological matters, hear various perspectives, and then render guidance that can aid autonomous member churches, while seeing their cooperative Kingdom impact endure.

A decline in the health of some Baptist associations has further challenged their role as guardians. One, pastors and churches now have greater tools to easily connect with others with the expansion in technology beyond their local context and to gain clarity on their doctrinal questions, as previously cited. As some associations have been slow to recognize and respond to such shifts, their cooperating churches have relied less on their local association for both doctrinal clarity and missional opportunity. Second, some associations have not honored their subservient and advisory role to the local church²³ (e.g., seeking to undo minister ordinations) and have overstepped their responsibility. Third, association leaders who have viewed their ministry role as transitional to retirement instead of pivotal for advancing cooperative strength have aided in the decline. Fourth, relativistic philosophies and individualistically rooted cultural norms that question authority and accountability (e.g., “who are you to say what is right” and “my way is *the* only way”) have aspects that have seeped into the church, elevating personal preference over shared belief. This notion has been further exacerbated as churches struggle to implement church discipline of their members, and area churches neglect to honor the discipline practices of other churches.²⁴

**the active role of the
local association as
the guardian of
shared doctrine and
mission**

But trends appear to be changing. Because of time constraints and limitations for larger Baptist bodies (e.g., number of people in a deliberative body and frequency of meetings),

no other Baptist organization or entity can achieve the same quality of undelegated deliberation to address the doctrinal issues as the local association. Baptist state conventions are increasingly seeing the active role of the local association as the guardian of shared doctrine and mission.

A Florida Baptist State Convention Benchmark

From 1854 until 1996, the Florida Baptist State Convention’s Constitution and Bylaws did not define the theological guardian role of the Baptist association. Before the State Convention’s organization in 1854, the recognized role of a

theological guardian by Baptist associations came from the precedent set by the Philadelphia Baptist Association.

In the mid-1990s, several Florida Baptist associations encountered churches whose faith and practice deviated from the cooperating Baptist confessions, including the Alachua Baptist Association (now known as the Nature Coast Baptist Association). In 1995, the Alachua withdrew fellowship with three churches whose doctrines and practices were of growing concern. The association's director of missions advised the Florida Baptist Convention, which subsequently declined to receive Cooperative Program gifts and denied the church's messenger credentialing privileges for the State Convention's annual meeting.²⁵ This action marked a departure from the prior sole requirement for cooperation with the State Convention – financial contributions.

In 1996, the State Convention's State Board of Missions' Program Committee, and then a soon-formed ad hoc committee, sought to clarify the meaning of cooperation further. It was recognized that until that point, financial contributions had been the *only* "yardstick" to determine cooperation. The ad hoc committee's findings were presented on September 13, 1996, and included a "statement of facts," of which one of the "facts" outlined the historical role of the association:

(4) A church which is affiliated with a local Baptist association has been accorded automatic recognition by and affiliation with the State Convention. This so called 'recognition' was based upon the historic and traditional 'understanding that the local association, serving as the theological guardian of Baptist life, had verified that the theology, faith, practice, and polity of each of its cooperating churches fell within the parameters of historically accepted Southern Baptist theology, faith, practice and polity. Typically, this litmus test has been based upon whether or not the church adheres to a statement of faith which mirrors the *Baptist Faith and Message*, as adopted in 1963 by the Southern Baptist Convention.'²⁶

The “Statement of Facts,” along with the concurrently developed principles and practices, was adopted by the State Board of Missions as its “Policy Guidelines: Baptist Polity and Cooperation.” These policies served as the foundation for a proposed new Bylaw 2, which aimed to be included in the Constitution and the Bylaws of the Florida Baptist State Convention.²⁷ During the State Convention’s annual meeting in November 1996, the Board’s policy on “Baptist Polity and Cooperation,” along with the newly defined Bylaw 2, titled “Baptist Cooperation,” was approved by convention messengers. To date, the Florida Baptist Convention has continued to rely on the work of local associations to determine if churches applying for membership into the convention have faith and practice that is consistent with the *Baptist Faith and Message* and if member churches have deviated.

Conclusion

Over three centuries since the establishment of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, the significance of cooperation among churches has been firmly established. Thousands of missionaries have been dispatched, ministry leaders have been trained, and religious liberty has been championed. As this cooperative spirit has expanded (through the formation of state and national conventions, as well as digital networks) and strategic frameworks have developed (such as the Cooperative Program), the pressures for theological drift have increased. The bonds of Baptist distinctives have been strained.

But through it all, the local Baptist association has remained steadfastly committed to upholding those cooperative beliefs and seeking to unite autonomous churches to practice and propagate their shared faith. While associations will always need to look inwardly and undergo self-revitalization, just as they assist their member churches in the

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same manner, they must also continue to courageously and humbly serve all their member churches as guardians of doctrine, thereby fostering the collective power of Baptist churches on mission.

ENDNOTES:

Editor's note: Dr. Brian Nall, at the time of being assigned the preparation of this article, was serving as the associational missions' strategist for the Pensacola Bay Baptist Association, a position he held from 2017 to 2024.

¹ Roger C. Richards, *History of Southern Baptists*, 3rd ed. (USA), 14.

² Roger C. Richards, *We Are Southern Baptist: A Brief Introduction to Southern Baptists*, (Kindle Direct Publishing), 6.

³ John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 2005), 143.

⁴ Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 239.

⁵ A.D. Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, From A.D. 1707 to A.D. 1807*, (London, South Wales: Forgotten Books, 2018), 4.

⁶ Roger C. Richards, *We Are Southern Baptist*, 8.

⁷ McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 241.

⁸ McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 242-243.

⁹ McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 245.

¹⁰ Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 4.

¹¹ Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 144.

¹² Roger C. Richards, *History of Southern Baptists*, 3rd ed., (USA), 10.

¹³ Roger C. Richards, *We are Southern Baptists*, 8.

¹⁴ Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 61.

¹⁵ McBeth, *History of Southern Baptists*, 239.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁷ Roger C. Richards, *History of Southern Baptists*, 3rd ed. (USA), 327.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 364.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 378.

²⁰ R. Stanton Norman, *More Than Just a Name: Preserving Our Baptist Identity*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2001), vii – ix.

²¹ *Minutes*, State Board of Missions, September 13, 1996, 5881, Florida Baptist Convention, Jacksonville.

²² Laura Erlanson, "SBC Credentials Committee elects chair, vice chair," *Baptist Press*, August 22, 2023,

<https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/sbc-credentials-committee-elects-chair-vice-chair/#:~:text=Through%20a%20change%20in%20the,church's%20cooperation%20when%20questions%20arise>.

²³ Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 61.

²⁴ R. Stanton Norman, *The Baptist Way, Distinctives of a Baptist Church*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2005), 79.

²⁵ *Minutes*, State Board of Missions, May 1996, page, 5794, Florida Baptist Convention, Jacksonville.

²⁶ *Minutes*, State Board of Missions, September 13, 1996, page 5865, Florida Baptist Convention, Jacksonville.

²⁷ “Report and Recommendations from the State Board of Missions,” November 11-13, 1996, page 73-77, Florida Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

Soul Competency as A Southern Baptist Tenet of Faith

*by Mark A. Rathel, PhD
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Baptist theologians do not have a monopoly on doctrinal truth. We need to learn from our fellow evangelicals. Yet, Baptists affirm doctrines and practices that do not cohere with the larger Christian community such as our understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper. In my opinion, Baptists' unique contribution to the Christian community is in the understanding and affirmations regarding the doctrine of the church. Within Baptist ecclesiology there is a modicum of connection with some other ecclesiastical traditions that practice believers' baptism and congregational government such as the descendants of the Anabaptist movement.

One of the distinct affirmations of Southern Baptist doctrines related to the church's mission and the individual believer is the concept of soul competency. Yet, a survey of recent writings of Southern Baptist theologians reveals a neglect for the most part of the topic of soul competency. In my Baptist ministerial education at William Carey University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, I do not recall any mention of soul competency in the classroom or the textbooks. I admit that I never mentioned the doctrine of soul competency during my time on the faculty of the Baptist University of Florida. Professors at other educational institutions and SBC seminaries, namely Boyd Hunt and Walter B. Shurden at least mentioned the concept of soul competency in their

writings. In a list of religious axioms commonly affirmed by Baptists, former Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Boyd Hunt highlighted a corollary of soul competence with the definition: “The Religious Axiom— all persons have an equal right to direct access to God.”¹ Baptist historian Walter B. Shurden defined soul competency or what he labeled “soul freedom” in this way: “Soul freedom is the historic Baptist affirmation of the inalienable right of every person to deal with God without the imposition of creed, the interference of clergy, or the intervention of civil government.”²

E. Y. Mullins and Soul Competency

E. Y. Mullins was the foremost advocate of soul competency among Baptists in the early twentieth century. After receiving his college degree from Texas A & M University, Mullins, graduated from The Southern Baptist

Theological

Seminary. After serving as a pastor in the north and having exposure to northern Baptists,

E. Y. Mullins was the foremost advocate of soul competency among Baptists

Mullins returned to the south to serve as president of Southern Seminary, as well as professor of theology beginning in 1899. Through the publication of his *Axioms of Religion* and his major theological work titled *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, Mullins attempted to base the Christian faith on experience rather than doctrinal affirmations. For Mullins, Christianity was first and foremost an experience, rather than a set of doctrinal beliefs and truth. As the chair of the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message Committee, Mullins was the most influential person in the development and adoption of the Baptist Faith and Message in 1925. He also served as Convention president for the years 1921-1924.

Notably, the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message lacks any mention of soul competency in the preface or the text of the document. Nor have I found any other Baptist faith group that mentions soul competency in their doctrinal statements based upon my survey of *Baptist Confessions of Faith* edited by William L. Lumpkin.³

Mullins set forth his understanding of “soul competency” in his 1908 book *The Axioms of Religion* – a book that went through several editions. In *Axioms* Mullins did not list soul competency as one of his axioms. He discussed soul competency in the chapter “The Historical Significance of Baptists.” Mullins stated in the preface of his book that he was undertaking the task of theological restatement by focusing on experience. He did not intend to reiterate the methodology of his predecessors.

Mullins’ New Methodology

Rather than rehash theological methodology, Mullins hoped to set forth a new approach. “We need a transfer of emphasis.” Mullins believed that Baptists needed a fresh analysis of our fundamental principles. He further affirmed that we need to communicate our denominational beliefs to see what is on the other side, that is, the beliefs of fellow Christians. Then we need to publicly communicate our beliefs to other Christian bodies. “We need to reverse the shield of our denominational beliefs and see what is on the other side, and then we need to proclaim what we find there with the same earnestness and which have marked our conduct in the past.”⁴ This statement likely reflects Mullins encounter with other Christian groups during his service as pastor in Newton Centre Baptist Church in Massachusetts located near Harvard University prior to becoming a Southern Baptist seminary professor and president.

Mullins' Historical Survey of the Lack of Affirmation of Soul-Liberty By Faith Groups

Mullins affirmed that soul competency was a distinctive Baptist message to people of other Christian fellowships. Mullins surveyed the doctrines of other faith groups. Mullins began with a descriptive survey of “Romanists and the Soul’s Competency in Religion.” Mullins asserted that Romanism [the Catholic Church] is the direct opposite of the doctrine of soul competency because it assumes the soul’s incompetency in religion. As evidence, Mullins noted the theological issues between the Roman Catholic sacraments and Baptist ordinances. Mullins also denied that numerous Protestant groups such as the Reformed and Episcopal traditions were consistent because of their practice of infant baptism and non-congregational church polity.

Defining Soul Competency

Mullins defined soul competency in terms of all people having the equal right to direct access to God. Furthermore, soul competency means there can be no special classes in religion such as priestly mediators. Mullins affirmed a competency under God rather than an individual competency. I do not recall Mullins providing scriptural support for the concept of soul competency. Louie D.

Newton, president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1947-1948, in an article titled “This Changing World” published in *The Christian Index* paper

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of Georgia Baptist newspaper commented that Mullins served Baptists in terms of the issues of religious freedom. He cited a comment of Karl Barth, perhaps the most influential theologian of the early

twentieth century. According to Barth commented “Mullins has given the world a mighty phrase – the competence of the soul.”⁵

For Mullins, soul competency was not mere individualism. Walter Shurden commented that soul competency or the term he prefers ‘soul freedom’ “affirms the historic affirmation of the inalienable right and responsibility of every person to deal with God without the imposition of creed, the interference of clergy, or the intervention of civil government.”⁶ Shurden, therefore, connects soul competency and religious freedom. Religious freedom and soul competency do dovetail at many points. Southern Baptist author and a former assistant director of the Interfaith Witness Department of the then Home Mission Board C. Brownlow Hastings wrote a book to help Catholics and other denominations to understand Southern Baptists. He provided several bases for soul competency: First, humans are made in the image of God and therefore merits respect and consideration as a person of infinite dignity and worth. Second, humans can be recreated by God’s saving work. Third, all humans may be saved without any distinctions. Fourth, the competency of the soul in religion derives from the fact that the Holy Spirit lives within believers. Fifth soul competency is a divine gift to man by nature by virtue of our nature as being created in the image of God.⁷

Mullins’ Viewpoint on Personalism

Mullins came to support a philosophical view labeled “Personalism.” Personalism highlights the importance and centrality of human individuals. “For Mullins Personalism takes the individual and personal life of man as its starting point and finds a personal God as the goal of its inquiry.”⁸ Personalism and experience characterize Mullins major theological work *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal*

Expression. In the table of contents of his magus opus, the chapter titles emphasize Christian Experience.

For example, Mullins chapter subsets include, “Modern Ways of Regarding Religious Experience;” “How Knowledge Arises in Christian Experience;” “The Relation of Christian Experience;” “The Psychological Aspects of Christian Experience;” “How Knowledge Arises in Christian Experience;” “Elements of Knowledge in Christian Experience;” “The Relation of Christian Experience to Ethics;” “Christian Experience to Religion;” and “The Christian Experience to Philosophy.”⁹ Unless I misunderstand Mullins and his case for soul competency, then experience rather than the Word of God must be in the driver’s seat theologically. As an example, in the American legal system, a defendant must be recognized as competent to stand trial. If all humans possess soul competency, does this not imply that all humans are competent to stand before God in judgment?

The Axioms of Religion

Mullins highlighted six axioms of religion. In my opinion, all six axioms connect to the concept of soul competence. In other words, after more than a century removed from Mullins’ proposal of axioms of religion, Baptists need to highlight these axioms for a new century.

The theological axiom: The holy and loving God has a right to be sovereign;

The religious axiom: All souls have an equal right to direct access to God;

The ecclesiastical axiom: All believers have equal privileges in the church;

The moral axiom: To be responsible
man must be free;
The religio-civic axiom: A free church in
a free state; and
The social axiom: Love your neighbor as
yourself.¹⁰

I personally wish that Mullins connected or included “soul competency” as one of the axioms since the concept was central to his theology. Granted the religious axiom may express one aspect of the concept of soul competency in embryonic form.

Is Soul Competency the Same for each Human Being?

We are not all equally competent in normal daily matters. I am more competent in Greek than I am in Hebrew. As humans are we all equal in soul competency? As previously noted, a basic principle of our legal system is the question, “Is the defendant competent to stand trial.” In other words, the term competency may express a darker side than Mullins intended as lost people will give an account on judgment day. Soul competency may suggest that an individual is competent to stand before God in trial and judgement. Prior to Mullins, the key Baptist distinctives were centered in baptism, church membership, and the Lord’s Supper – in others words the doctrine of the church was the emphasis of Baptists rather than individual soul competency. Mullins defined soul competency in the following manner:

The competency of the soul in religion . . . means a competency under God, not a competency in the sense of human self-sufficiency. There is no reference here to the question of sin and human ability in the moral or theological sense, nor in the sense of independence of the

Scriptures. I am not here stating the Baptist creed. On many vital matters of doctrine, such as the atonement, the person of Christ and other Baptists agree evangelical world in general. It is the historical significance of the Baptists I am stating, not a Baptist creed.¹¹

Church Competency or Soul Competency?

John Hammett, senior professor of systematic theology at Southeastern Seminary authored a peer-reviewed article titled “From Church Competence to Soul Competence: The Devolution of Baptist Ecclesiology.” His thesis is threefold. “First, each church is competent to conduct its own affairs. Second, Baptists began to undermine the idea of church competence and replace it with an idea enshrined in the phrase “soul competency.” Third, Hammett claimed that by replacing “church competency” with “soul competency” resulted in weakened community life within churches as soul competency replaced church competency. In Hammett’s view, soul competency produced a decline in the practice of church discipline.¹² I presume that the decline of church discipline may be attributed to an emphasis upon the individual believer rather than the corporate body – the church – and potentially leading to individuals not accepting church discipline. Did the concept of soul competency contribute to a shift in Baptist churches that led to the decline of church discipline as individual church members exercised their rights based upon of soul competency?

Experiential Over Doctrinal Beliefs

According to Scottish Baptist theologian and professor at St. Andrews University Stephen R. Holmes, Mullins concept of soul competency was a competency under God, not a competency in the sense of self-sufficiency. In the good providence of God,

each person is granted the ability and the responsibility of responding to God's call. For Mullins Christianity was first and foremost an experience, not a set of doctrinal beliefs. Holmes further postulated that soul competency may grant too much spiritual capacity to the fallen human heart. Implications of soul competency include the understanding that "an individual does not need priest nor bishop, nor church nor community to respond adequately to God."¹³

The late nineteenth and twentieth century marked a new beginning for Christian doctrine due to philosophical concerns. Mullins was deeply influenced by the principles of personalism likely due to his service as a church pastor located near to Harvard University before becoming a well-known Southern Baptist leader. During his time near Harvard, Mullins became acquainted with the philosophy of personalism. Personalism focuses on the subjective and considers personality the supreme value and key to reality. Personalism emphasizes the significance, uniqueness, and dignity of each individual person. In Personalism the emphasis is upon the experience and dignity of the human person. Personalism may explain Mullins highlighting experience in his magnum opus *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression: The Theology of Christianity; the Divinity of God and Christ, Christian Experiences and Psychology*.

The Baptist Faith and Message and Soul Competency

Mullins was involved in the broader Baptist world. As previously noted, in addition to his service as president of Southern Seminary, as president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1921 to 1924, as President of the Baptist World Alliance from 1923-1928, he also was chairman of the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message Committee. If soul competency was the

key to Baptist theology according to Mullins in his published books, then why did Mullins not lead the Baptist Faith and Message Committee to include an article on soul competency in the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message? The 1963 Baptist Faith and Message states in the preamble. “Baptists emphasize the soul’s competency before God, freedom of religion and the priesthood of the believer.” The preamble to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 states, “We honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers, affirming together both liberty in Christ and our accountability to each other under the Word of God.” [See the Appendix in this issue of *Journal* that provides the preamble to the 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement.]

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Interestingly Mullins did not include a chapter on soul competency or on the church in his systematic theology *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*. Perhaps Mullins most influential book was *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith*. My seminary professor – Fisher Humphreys – commented on the book: “It probably has done more than any single volume to define Baptists in the twentieth century.” Mullins understood the most distinctive and important of all Baptist beliefs is the belief in “soul competency,” that is, in the freedom, ability, and responsibility of each person to respond to God for herself or himself.” Mullins labeled “soul competence” the universal ‘mother principle.’¹⁴ In *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*, Mullins emphasis on experience dominates his larger work. Humphreys postulated the rationale was

because Mullins recognized that the emphasis was his own rather than characteristic of the Baptist confessions of which he was providing a fresh statement of Baptist doctrine.¹⁵

As previously noted, in Mullins opinion, the competency of the individual soul distinguishes Baptist from all other Christian bodies. According to C. Douglas Weaver, professor at Mercer University, Mullins was a theologian of religious experience . . . or Mullins experience was ‘the holy of holies’ of theology. Soul competency functioned as the “peculiar teaching and historical significance of Baptists and the foundation of the Axioms of Religion and the essence of New Testament Christianity.”¹⁶ This is a strong claim since Mullins did not use the Bible in his exposition of soul competency.

Issues with the Concept of Soul Competency

Albert Mohler, the president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has pointed to several concerns about the doctrine of soul competency. In Mohler’s view, Mullins’ focus on individual experience contributed to the present state of theological amnesia among Southern Baptists. Mohler wrote, “Mullins precipitated a massive shift in Baptist methodological in theology that set the stage for doctrinal ambiguity and theological minimalism.” Mohler contends that an emphasis upon the individual religious experience “serves as an acid dissolving religious authority, congregationalism, confessionalism, and mutual theological accountability.”¹⁷ Perhaps a colloquial way of stating this is that religious authorities and accountability of individual believers to the church functions as theological guard rails. If any believer utilizes the concept of soul competency in a negative way – utilizing the doctrine, for example, as a support for sin or disobedience – then their actions and heart are corruptions of soul competency. According to my

seminary theology professor Fisher Humphreys, “Mullins was intoxicated by personal freedom, even by personal rights – a category which owes more to the Enlightenment than to the New Testament – even to the loss of the indispensability of society and social relationships for personal life.”¹⁸

Concluding Observation

In one sense E. Y. Mullins was recognized as “Mr. Southern Baptist” in the early twentieth century. Likewise, Herschel H. Hobbs fulfilled the role of “Mr. Southern Baptist” in the latter half of the twentieth century. I realize that my description may be debatable, but I think I am accurate in my describing these two key twentieth century Southern Baptist leaders as the key proclaimers of soul competency. Hobbs in the preface to his book *The Baptist Faith & Message*, commented “Baptists emphasize the soul’s competency before God, freedom in religion, and the priesthood of the believer.”¹⁹ I conclude with a quotation earlier in this article: “Mullins gave the world a mighty phrase – the competency of the soul.”

Editor’s note: Dr. Mark Rathel served as a professor of theology and philosophy at the Baptist College (now University) of Florida, from 1995 to 2024. He also concurrently served as pastor of several Florida Baptist churches, including most recently, the Friendship Baptist Church, DeFuniak Springs, Florida, from which he retired in 2025.

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ Boyd Hunt, *Redeemed! Eschatological Redemption and the Kingdom of God*. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 187. Boyd likely borrowed the terminology of “Religious Axiom” from E. Y. Mullins.
- ² Walter B. Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. (Macon, Ga.: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2013), 23.
- ³ William L. Lumpkin, ed. *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, (1959), 1969).
- ⁴ E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith*, ed., C. Douglas Weaver, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, (1908), 2010).
- ⁵ Louie Newton, “This Changing World,” *The Christian Index*, (December 19, 1968), 9.
- ⁶ Walter B. Shurden, *The Baptist Identity*.
- ⁷ C. Brownlow Hastings, *Introducing Southern Baptists: Their Faith & Their Life*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 16ff.
- ⁸ Walter B. Shurden, *The Baptist Identity*, 2.
- ⁹ E. Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1954).
- ¹⁰ E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*.
- ¹¹ E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*.
- ¹² John Hammett, “From Church Competence to Soul Competence: The Devolution of Baptist Ecclesiology,” *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*, Vol.3 Spring 2005, 153.
- ¹³ Stephen R. Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, (Edinburg, Scotland: T & T Clark Publishers, 2012), n.p.
- ¹⁴ Fisher Humphreys, professor of theology (1970 – 1990), New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, quoted in class notes by author (hereinafter cited as author’s class notes by Fisher Humphreys).
- ¹⁵ Author’s class notes by Fisher Humphreys.
- ¹⁶ E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*. Citing Weaver’s interpretation.
- ¹⁷ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., on-line blog, titled “E. Y. Mullins: The Axioms of Religion,” posted at: <https://albertmohler.com/2009/07/16/e-y-mullins-the-axioms-of-religion/>. Accessed May, 2025.
- ¹⁸ Author’s class notes by Fisher Humphreys.
- ¹⁹ Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1971).

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Three Florida Churches Observe Their 200th Anniversary in 2025

*by Donald S. Hepburn
Managing Director
Florida Baptist Historical Society*



Florida Became a Settlers' Destination in the 1820s

The discovery of Florida occurred in 1513 by three Spain-commissioned African explorers Juan Garrido and Juan Gonzales (Ponce) de Leon who accompanied Juan Ponce de Leon. Their ship landed on what they thought was an island and named it La Florida.¹ The Florida peninsula was subsequently controlled by the Spanish (1565 – 1763), the English (1763 – 1783), and again by the Spanish (1783 – 1821). It was during the second Spanish reign that two counties were established in July 1821: Escambia and St. Johns.

Finally, the Florida peninsula came under the possession of the United States with the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819. Although it was not until February 1821 that the United States assumed full control and appointed a territorial government. In August of 1822, the territorial government approved the establishment of two additional counties: Duval and Jackson. Duval was separated from the northern half of St. Johns County beginning at the Black Creek basin and extended north to the Florida-Georgia boundary. It also stretched between the Atlantic Ocean and the Suwannee River. Jackson County was drawn from the eastern half of Escambia County starting at the Choctawhatchee River (in present day

Holmes County) and continued east to the Suwannee River.

According to Historian Jerrell Shofner, “Fifty-four Americans were already occupying land in Jackson County” when the U.S. assumed control of the Territory. “By 1825 the population of the county was set at 2,256.”²

During the second Spanish occupation, Spain offered land along the northern border of the Florida Territory to settlers who were anxious to get basically free land and new opportunities. In addition, some American settlers secured land grants as far south as St. Augustine. Most of those early pioneer settlers were from Georgia and South Carolina. A stagnate U.S. economy – heightened by the panic of 1819 – combined with adverse climatic changes negatively affected the economic viability of commercial agriculture along the U.S. Eastern Seaboard.³ Once under the control of the United States, congressional initiatives were approved to make additional inexpensive land available in the territory. The Adams-Onís Treaty ensured that Spanish land titles to the territory would be recognized as valid by the U.S. government. Congress passed the Donation Act in 1824 to permit squatters to acquire for \$1.25 an acre valid title to a maximum of 640 acres.⁴ Later congressional action would expand the migration of settlers further south into the Florida Territory.

Prior to the United States purchase of Florida from Spain and designating it as a U.S. Territory, the peninsula was officially closed to non-Catholic evangelical groups. But as hundreds of settlers, mostly from Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama, ventured across the border during the last decade of the Spanish government’s control of the territory, many of those settlers brought their Christian faith

and practice. By 1822, organized groups of Baptists, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians churches had been established and begun to flourish in the territory.⁵

The first known Baptist church to be established in the Florida Territory was the Pigeon Creek Baptist Church. It was organized January 7, 1821, along the Florida-Georgia border south of the St. Marys' River. Although by the 1830s the congregation adopted the belief and practices of then recently formed association of Primitive Baptists, the church still functions in 2025.⁶

Subsequently Gospel-preaching itinerant preachers were sent into the Territory from Baptist associations in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. The year 1825 became a significant benchmark as several more Baptist churches were established along the Panhandle and three of those have survived the ravages of time and managed to continue to function 200-years later to 2025: Bethlehem Baptist Church and Sardis Baptist Church in Jackson County and Long Branch Baptist Church in Duval County.

Bethlehem (now Campbellton First Baptist) Church, Jackson County, 1825



“The smoke had barely cleared from the First Seminole War when the first settlers began to make their way back to the rich lands they had explored with Andrew Jackson in 1818,” according to Jackson County Historian Dale Cox. “Moving down through southern Alabama, they crossed into Florida just north of present-day Campbellton and

began to clear farms along Spring Creek. The land in the area was rich “for farming as was the presence of a good water supply.”⁷

Many of those settlers, brought their Baptist faith and practice and soon united to organize the first Missionary Baptist church established in Jackson County. Calling it the Bethlehem Church, the Baptist congregation was established in Campbellton about three miles south of the Florida-Alabama border.

An Alabama Baptist itinerant preacher named Elder Jeremiah Kimbrel was likely invited to come to

northern Jackson County by Elijah Calloway, a farmer-preacher then living in Campbellton. He and Calloway served as a presbytery to organize a church in this remote area. [In the nineteenth century the designation of Elder was a title of respect initially assigned to the recognized leader or pastor of a Baptist or Methodist church.⁸] Kimbrel travelled by horseback from the eastern end of Jackson County where earlier that year he had organized another Baptist church.⁹ Kimbrel likely crossed the Apalachicola River, perhaps at the Ocheese Landing. Traveling across Jackson County Kimbrel, true to his calling, conducted revival meetings in homes and shared the gospel with farmers and families.

Elders Kimbrell and Elijah Hosea Calloway served as a presbytery to screen the Christian credentials of the group of settlers who wanted to form a Baptist church. Such a process typically involved the individual Baptists presenting either a letter of dismission from a Baptist church back home or a letter of baptism signed by a Baptist preacher. The preachers would typically ask the petitioners about their profession of faith and simple Bible related questions. This evaluation process began on Friday, March 11, 1825.

The constituting group for the Bethlehem Church consisted of John and Sarah Beasley, Miller Brady, Sextus Camp, James and Lucy Chason, Ephriam and Elizabeth Chambers, Elizabeth Daniel, Benjamin Hawkins, Clark and Susannah Jackson, Robert Louckston, Martha Parker, W. and Martha Peacock, Nancy Philips, Elizabeth Taylor, and Sarah Williams.

Organizational Documents

The 19 persons approved to organize a Baptist church convened the following day – March 12 – to conduct a worship service and finalize the church's organization. Following a time of preaching and prayer, a

conference (business meeting) was held to draft the governing documents.¹⁰ Typically, the ministers presiding as the presbytery carried a sample constitution, bylaws and statement of faith for the new congregation. On that Saturday the church members agreed to a constitution, statement of faith and a church covenant.

The group recorded the church name as the “Church of Christ at Bethlehem” in Jackson County.¹¹ In those days it was typical for Baptist churches in the nineteenth century to initially identify themselves using the adjective phrase of “church of Christ” followed by a specific geographical location. Of course, this was more of a biblical affirmation of who these Christians represented. It was not a reference to a religious movement which developed in the early twentieth century and adopted as their designation the Church of Christ. Several years later the church changed its name to Friendship Baptist Church. And in 1859 again changed its name to Campbellton First Baptist Church.¹²

The church’s statement of faith, as was typical of nineteenth century Baptist churches, was likely based on the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742)*, which scholars agree is the American version of the Calvinism-oriented *Second London Confession (1689)*.¹³ However, the Bethlehem Church’s version was an abbreviated confession containing selected doctrinal statements. Interestingly, it was 22-years later – January 27, 1847 – before the church adopted a “Decorum.” That statement defined the expectations of and the responsibilities of members, as well as the guidelines for conducting church conferences.¹⁴

Part-time Pastoral Leadership

The church comprised of 19 charter members soon increased by three new members when it opened its doors for membership on Sunday, March 13, its first Sunday of preaching services that would be held monthly. After delivering a sermon, the church voted to call Elder Elijah H. Calloway (b. 1789; d. 1837) to serve as their pastor. Calloway, had migrated from Georgia in 1824 with his first wife Elizabeth and their six children. After settling in North Florida, Calloway purchased a quarter-section of farmland which provided his livelihood for many years.¹⁵ During the next eleven years the Calloways had four more children. As was typical of the times, Calloway likely had led prayer and preaching services for his neighbors who had gathered for worship in private homes. It was this nucleus that decided to organize a church.

By 1826 Calloway had been relieved of his pastorate and the church called Benjamin Foscue (b. 1789; d. 1850), who also was a farmer and parttime ordained preacher. Later in 1830 the church called another farmer and parttime ordained preacher James Watson (ca. b. 1791; d. 1860). Unfortunately, the church membership declined during the 1830s due in part to severe disruption to the economy due to a national depression.¹⁶ Evidently itinerant preachers who were ministering in Jackson County became acquainted with the church by providing parttime preaching services. In 1842 Joshua Mercer (b.1788; d. 1869) was called as parttime pastor by the Bethlehem Church.¹⁷ Mercer first came to the Florida Territory in 1835 as an itinerant missionary commissioned by the Georgia Baptist State Convention. When the Florida Baptist Association was organized in 1843, Mercer was employed as the association's itinerant missionary.¹⁸

Association Affiliation

The Bethlehem Church affiliated with the newly organized (1825) Chattahoochie [sic] River Baptist Association which had cooperating churches located in Florida and Alabama counties of Covington and Houston.¹⁹ The church likely remained affiliated with the association until 1835 when the first Baptist association in Florida was organized. The Suwannee River Association was organized with eight missionary churches – including Jackson County churches Bethlehem and Sardis. By the early 1840s, the anti-missionary movement became dominant among the association leadership. As a result, the Missionary Baptist churches were excluded and withdrew from fellowship with the association. By 1847 the association changed its name to the Suwannee River Primitive Baptist Association.²⁰ A year after the organization of the Missionary-oriented Florida Baptist Association in 1843, the Bethlehem Church became a cooperating member.²¹ A few years later, the church was a charter member of the West Florida Baptist Association in 1847. Later in the twentieth century, in 1925, the church was a charter group of churches that organized the Jackson County Baptist Association, which in 1946 changed its name to Chipola Baptist Association.

The Joshua Mercer Years

As previously noted, the church had the Providential blessing of God leading itinerant preacher Joshua Mercer to them and who agreed in 1842 to serve as the church's parttime pastor, preaching once a month. Mercer, whose legacy as the leading mission leader across the Florida Panhandle, continued to serve as the parttime pastor until 1854. When Mercer led in the 1847 organization of the West Florida Baptist Association, the Bethlehem Church hosted the organizational meeting.

By 1848, the church's membership had grown to forty-six inspired by their dynamic leader Joshua Mercer as pastor. This infusion of new leadership also inspired the church's commitment to missions which was evident when the Bethlehem Church became the first Baptist church in Florida to organize a woman's missionary society as early as 1848.²²

A brief history of the church was reported in the 1849 *Annual* of the West Florida Baptist Association which made the following observation: “. . . passing periods, however, say her glory measurably depart, and Ichabod written on her history. Under the ministry of Elder Joshua Mercer, the pioneer Baptist missionary in this section, this church was resuscitated, and for some time been steadily growing in membership.”²³

Through years of struggle and years of growth, this rural congregation has had a faithful remnant of God's people who have kept this lighthouse of Jesus Christ's love alive and active. Now 200-years since its founding, the Campbellton First Baptist Church is the oldest continuously functioning Missionary Baptist church cooperating with the Florida Baptist State Convention and the Chipola Baptist Association. Rev. Luther Pumphery has served as pastor since 1999. The church is located near U.S. 231 and State Road 2, at Campbellton, Jackson County.

Sardis (now Shady Grove) Baptist Church, Grand Ridge, Jackson County, 1825



The second pioneer Baptist church to be organized in the panhandle region of Florida was the Sardis Baptist Church in July 1825. Established in eastern Jackson County, it is approximately 50 miles southeast of Campbellton Church. It was likely established in an unincorporated settlement near modern day Sneads, a short distance to the Apalachicola River, surrounded by cotton fields. “Jackson County grew dramatically between 1822 and 1825. The population soared from fewer than 200 to more than 2,000 in that short time period,” according to local historian Dale Cox.²⁴ That influx of farmers likely included people who brought their Baptist faith and practice with them to the frontier.

Although the early church records were destroyed in a fire in the home of the then church clerk, the contemporaneous records of the West Florida Baptist Association affirm the church’s 1825 organization. The 1849 report on the status of its cooperating

churches noted, “Sardis, in the same Jackson County, originated in the year 1825. . .”²⁵

Many early settlers travelled by wagon and horseback down from Alabama or Georgia. Others may have taken a keelboat down the Chattahoochee River which connects to the Apalachicola River where settlers could ferry to the Ocheese Landing – named after the Lower Creek people of the Seminole Indians. The landing provided a trading post providing supplies for the long-established Indians and the influx of settlers. Ocheese Landing became a major entry point into Jackson County for the large influx of settlers seeking farmland.²⁶

Organizing a Baptist Church

Given the presence of Elder Jeremiah Kimbrel in much of Jackson County who was preaching the gospel and starting churches, it is highly likely this Alabama Baptist itinerant missionary participated in the organization of the Sardis Church. A presbytery of at least two ordained ministers was required to organize a Baptist church. Other than Kimbrel, there were two possible pastors who could have assisted him. Consider that in January, Kimbrel had assisted Elder William A. McElvey (b. 1778; d. 1842) in organizing a Baptist church in far northeastern Jackson County (present day Gadsden County) on the east side of the Apalachicola River.²⁷ Similarly, in March, Kimbrel and Elijah H. Calloway served together in the organization of the Bethlehem Church at Campbellton. It is reasonable that either one of these two preachers travelled across the county to assist in organizing the Sardis Church.

No Minutes of the Sardis Church’s original organization meeting exists having been destroyed by fire. [However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, a new *Minutes* book was begun, and an on-

line website provides a summarized continuous record – except for a period between 1937 to 1940 – of church actions to the present day.]²⁸ As a consequence, the size and circumstances of the Sardis Church's formation and the original members are not known. As previously noted, the church founding is verified in a report in the 1849 West Florida Baptist Association *Annual*. In the history of the organizing Baptist churches in the South during the nineteenth century the procedures were nearly identical.

Based upon circumstantial evidence, it is likely in the Sardis Church constitution the original church name was recorded as the "Church of Christ at Sardis" in Jackson County. In those days it was typical for Baptist churches to initially identify themselves using the adjective phrase of "church of Christ" followed by a specific geographical location. As noted earlier in this article, this was more of a biblical affirmation of who these Christians represented. It was not a reference to a religious movement which developed in the early twentieth century and adopted as their designation the Church of Christ.

The church's likely statement of faith, as was typical of nineteenth century Baptist churches, was probably based on the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742)*, which scholars agree is the American version of the Calvinism-oriented *Second London Confession (1689)*.²⁹ However, the Sardis Church's version was probably an abbreviated confession containing selected doctrinal statement suggested by Elder Kimbrel.

Again, there is no surviving record on the church's original building, although a stone marker – located between Sneads and Grand Ridge – commemorates that site. That first building was likely of log construction. But the ravages of time led to the decay

of the wood structure. Oral tradition notes that about 1895 the church relocated to a “loaned” property site adjacent to the pre-existing Shady Grove Cemetery. In 1906 W. H. Boone agreed to sell to the church the property site on which the church’s current building stands along Birchwood Road.³⁰ Over 91 years later – 1916 – the church changed its name to the Shady Grove Baptist Church.³¹ That new designation likely reflected its location adjacent to the Shady Grove Cemetery.

Association Affiliation

The Sardis Church, likely as did the Bethlehem Church, affiliated with the newly organized (1825) Chattahoochee [sic] River Baptist Association which had cooperating churches located in north Florida and the Alabama counties of Covington and Houston.³² The church likely remained affiliated with the association until 1835 when the first Baptist association in Florida was organized. The Suwannee River Association was organized with eight Florida-based Missionary churches – including Sardis. By the early 1840s, the anti-missionary movement became dominant among the association leadership. As a result, the Missionary Baptist churches were excluded and withdrew from fellowship with the association. By 1847 the association changed its name to the Suwannee River Primitive Baptist Association.³³

A year after the organization of the missionary-oriented Florida Baptist Association in 1843, the Sardis Church became a cooperating member.³⁴ Up until this point in time, it appeared the Bethlehem and Sardis churches were in regular communication given their mirrored participation in the several Baptist associations. It is quite conceivable that they shared pastors for their respective once-a-month worship services, including Elder Joshua Mercer.

According to the limited church records, Sardis hosted the organizational meeting and became affiliated with the newly organized Rocky Creek Baptist Association in 1888.³⁵ The association disbanded in 1925. To its credit in 1925, the church then became a charter member of churches organizing the Jackson County Baptist Association, which in 1946 changed its name to Chipola Baptist Association.

A Remanent Stays Faithful

The Sardis Church had its challenges in continuing to function through the centuries. As an example, the West Florida Baptist Association reported that “Antinomianism for several succeeding years and exerted a deleterious savour [sic] and came nigh [sic] destroying her existence. Already she would have been numbered with institutions that have been, had it not been for the blessing of God, who is ever merciful, upon the labors of” faithful itinerant preachers of the gospel.³⁶ [Antinomianism was a point of doctrinal contention since the days of the early Christian church. At that time Gnostics tried to sway Christian believers with the argument that salvation through mystical knowledge was needed and more important than faith alone.³⁷]

As was the case of so many early churches, it may have become inactive as its members migrated elsewhere as a result of the Seminole Indian war, the Civil War and/or economic calamities affecting agriculture. It is quite possible that a remnant of church members continued to meet in private homes on a regular basis for prayer and Scripture study. No doubt, they faithfully prayed for the day when God would bring more people into their area and become a part of this small fellowship of Baptist believers. As was the case with many small rural churches, several families served as the nucleus to hold the

congregation together through the difficult years, unfortunately we do not know their names.

As was the practice of many rural churches located in agricultural communities, Sunday services were held once a month. This meeting time also was dictated by the availability of the visiting itinerant preachers who were riding a circuit of preaching at a different church each Sunday. In 1910, the church changed its monthly meeting time to the third Sunday from the fourth Sunday. By 1935, the church began holding two Sunday services each month. The church continues to cooperate with the Chipola Baptist Association and the Florida Baptist State Convention.

In the year 2025, the church located near Grand Ridge, Jackson County, celebrates its 200th anniversary. The church is located north of I-10 on Hwy. 286 (Blueberry Drive), turn east on Shady Grove Road (CR 280), then go south on Birchwood Road.

Long Branch Baptist Church, Duval/Clay Counties, 1825



The Long Branch Baptist Church, located in northwest Clay County (est. 1858), observes its 200th-anniversary since founding in 2025. Unfortunately, there are no existent church records to provide direct evidence of such a founding event. However, there is ample circumstantial evidence that lends credence that the church was established two centuries ago.

As noted, in the introduction to this article, Duval County was created in 1822 out of the northern portion of the original St. Johns County. The county started at the Florida-Georgia boundary and proceeded south to the Black Creek headwaters that

was fed by the St. Johns River near St. Augustine. From there the county stretched directly west to the Suwannee River. The historic location of the Long Branch Church was the southwest corner of Duval County, located near the old Spanish Trail built during the first Spanish occupation, which traversed from St. Augustine to Pensacola. That road later was used as the foundation for the Bellamy Road authorized by the territorial government in 1824.³⁸

The presence of settlers, granted land during the second Spanish occupation (1783 – 1821), as well as traders, going from the Black Creek basin to the west further confirms the continual presence of persons in this area. The Duval County administrators designated this area from the St. Johns River going west as the Black Creek district. An 1825 census estimated 1,622 people living throughout Duval County.³⁹ The Long Branch Church and its cemetery, along with homesteads and small farms, were located in the district just south and west of a large forest area (currently named the Jennings State Forest). The forest provided a major economic resource of timber and turpentine, in addition to the naval stores, hides, cotton and other such raw materials which were drawn from the district.⁴⁰

Cemetery Confirms History

The Long Branch Cemetery provides another piece of confirming evidence. Based upon the existence of several headstones and analysis of burial sites, confirmation is provided that people were laid to rest here in the late 1700s and early 1800s. The cemetery is located about eight miles southwest of present-day Middleburg (originally established as Garey's Ferry in 1824 and later named Whitesville) and 20 miles north of Green Cove Springs.

Nearly 50-years ago, a Middleburg newspaper article told of how the church and cemetery came to be called Long Branch. The report noted, “back in 1800, a young woman was out picking huckleberries in the area of Middleburg when she was bitten by a rattlesnake. She died and lay in the woods for several days before being found by a Negro slave. Because of discomposure the man thought it best to bury her immediately where she lay. Soon afterward, some Negroes were buried in the same area.”⁴¹ According to local oral tradition this burial ground was named Long Branch.

A Church Sends an Itinerant Missionary

As noted previously there are no original records providing details on the establishment of the Long Branch Baptist Church. However, additional circumstantial evidence may provide a picture of how the church came to be organized.

The first Baptist church established in the Florida Territory occurred at the extreme north end of what became Duval County. The Pigeon Creek Baptist Church organized January 7, 1821, along the southside of the St. Marys’ River which served as the boundary between Florida and Georgia. That congregation was started by three families led by – Britton Knight, Thomas B. Prevatt and John B. Dixon – who had brought their Baptist faith and practice from their homeland of South Carolina by way of Georgia.⁴² Serving as the presbytery of ordained Baptist ministers who presided over the church’s organization were Elders Fleming Bates (b. 1771; d. 1840) and Isham Peacock (b. 1742; d. 1850).⁴³ [In the nineteenth century the designation of Elder was a title of respect initially assigned to the recognized leader or pastor of a Baptist or Methodist church.⁴⁴] These men had a tent-maker ministry typically working as a farmer and had no formal training in theology. What

they knew about spiritual matters came from their own rigorous study of the scriptures.

Fleming Bates was licensed and ordained (1815) by the Big Briar Creek Church, Warren County, Georgia. From that point forward, Bates conducted an itinerant preaching ministry in South Georgia along the St. Marys River, and in 1818 he crossed over into then defined Spanish Florida to seek out settlements where he would preach.⁴⁵ After Bates participated in the organization of the Pigeon Creek Church, he continued his itinerant preaching between Georgia and the Florida Territory. Additionally, he continued to serve as the parttime pastor of the Pigeon Creek Church once a month from 1821 to 1826.⁴⁶ That commitment placed Bates in Duval County at least monthly to continue his itinerant preaching and assisting groups seeking to organize a church. It is likely Elder Bates who had told the Pigeon Creek church member families what opportunities he saw developing both in the Black Creek district and Alachua County.

An Unexpected Church Established

In 1824 the Pigeon Creek Church authorized the issuance of letters of dismissal to Thomas B. Prevatt (b. 1774; d. 1837) and his spouse Mary “Polly” Studstill Prevatt (b. 1785; died unk.), as well as his brother Joseph R. Prevatt (b. 1784; d. 1851) and his spouse Susannah Prevatt (b. 1790; d. unk.).⁴⁷ Although not a part of the church’s dismissal, John B. Dixon (b. 1777; d. 1837) and his family, likely decided to travel with the Prevatts whose original destination was Alachua County. The church in their August conference, also authorized its pastor Elder Fleming Bates to participate in the organization of a new church in Alachua County.⁴⁸

The distance from the St. Marys River to the Black Creek district was approximately 80 – 90 miles (depending on the route), over a barely passable British-built Old Kings Highway, that today is designated collectively as U.S. 1/U.S. 23/Hwy 301. The trip by oxen-drawn cart or horseback would easily have taken two to three days. But by the time the group had reached the southern end of Duval County, Thomas and Polly's one-year old daughter Elizabeth had died of an unknown cause.

Thomas Prevatt was a devout Christian, having been ordained as a deacon and a minister of the gospel by the Pigeon Creek Church. As a student of the Bible and fervent prayer warrior, Prevatt likely viewed the untimely death of his daughter as a "sign" from God. For this event to occur near the Long Branch cemetery likely provided to Thomas Prevatt a God-sent message that he should travel no further and make a memorial to God at this place. After burying baby Elizabeth, the family likely created a brush arbor⁴⁹ in a clearing made in the forest. And soon thereafter the three family leaders likely decided to organize a church in this Black Creek district. With only three family groups to serve as the nucleus for the Long Branch Church, was a typical practice for many rural Baptist churches in the nineteenth century.

Likely Founding Members

Leading the family church was Thomas B. Prevatt and his spouse Mary "Polly" and their five children, including: John Thomas (b. 1802), age 23; Sarah (b. 1806), age 19; Valentine Rowell (b. 1809) age 16; John M. (b. 1813), age 12; and Nancy (b. 1821), age 4;⁵⁰ Joseph R. Prevatt and his spouse Susannah, by 1825, had two children: Keriah (b. 1816), age nine, and Joseph William (b. 1823), age two.⁵¹ The couple had one additional child while living in the Black Creek

district and by 1845 had four other children born in Alachua County.

The third group forming the church was the immediate family of John Dixon and his spouse Sophia Knight Dixon (b. 1770; d. unk.), and their two sons: Britton M., (b. 1812), age 13, and John (b. 1820), age five. The Dixons had two older children: Edward (b. 1790), age 25, (who likely stayed in northern Duval County to maintain the farmland his father acquired through a Spanish land grant); and a married daughter, Nancy Dixon Collar (b. 1796) who had married Levi Collar of St. Augustine in 1813.⁵²

Given the possibilities that there were farmers and traders in the Black Creek district in the mid-1820s, Thomas Prevatt likely preached to them. Again, as was typical of how churches were started, if there were enough settlers participating in the preaching services, Prevatt likely discussed with the people about organizing a church. A date would be set, and Bates and Prevatt would have served as the presbytery of ordained ministers required to organize an “in order” Baptist church.

In the history of organizing Baptist churches in the South during the nineteenth century the procedures were nearly identical. The presbytery would have heard the individual experiential conversion testimonies of Christian faith from each person seeking to be a member of the new church. Additionally, they would have presented either letters of dismissal from the participant’s former Baptist church or produce a letter of baptism signed by a Baptist preacher.

Statement of Faith

Based upon circumstantial evidence, in the writing of the Long Branch Church constitution the original

church name likely was recorded as the “Church of Christ at Black Creek” in Duval County. In those days it was standard practice for Baptist churches to initially identify themselves using the adjective phrase of “church of Christ” followed by a specific geographical location. As noted earlier in this article, this was more of a biblical affirmation of who these Christians represented. It was not a reference to a religious movement which developed in the early twentieth century and adopted as their designation the Church of Christ.

The church’s likely statement of faith, as was typical of nineteenth century Baptist churches, was probably based on the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (1742), which scholars agree is the American version of the Calvinism-oriented *Second London Confession* (1689).⁵³ However, the Long Branch Church’s version was probably an abbreviated confession containing selected doctrinal statements suggested by Elder Fleming Bates. This was a statement drafted by Elder Isham Peacock and often was the verbiage for the basic statement of faith for newly organized churches where either Bates or Peacock served as a member of the organizing presbytery.⁵⁴ The Long Branch Church’s statement of faith likely mirrored a similar doctrinal declaration used by the Pigeon Creek Church four years earlier:

“The existence of one Triune God, the fall of man and his inability to recover himself, God’s Sovereign choice of his people in Christ, their covenant [sic] head, from before the foundation of the world, effectual calling, justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, final perseverance of the saints in grace and eternal salvation in glory, and baptism [by] immersion, and the Lord’s supper.”⁵⁵

Initially the monthly worship services were held in private homes until a simple log structure was built as the church. This meeting time also was dictated by the availability of the visiting itinerant preachers, such as Bates, who was serving as parttime pastor of at least three other churches in Georgia and Florida. Inasmuch as Thomas Prevatt was ordained he likely led the worship services on a more frequent basis. Again, there is no surviving record on the church's original log building. But certainly, the ravages of time led to the decay of the wood structure. Oral tradition notes that about 1895 the church constructed a frame structure.

The Knight Family Arrives

Based upon circumstantial evidence and some ancestry records that indicate a Georgia branch of the Knight families soon moved into the Black Creek district and supported the Long Branch Church. That branch of the Knight family led by John Knight, Sr. (b. 1747; d. 1841), and his son Jonathan Knight (b. 1781; d. 1852) originally were from the Cheraw District of South Carolina. The senior Knight had secured a Spanish land grant for land later designated as Duval County. The Knights were in St. Augustine as early as 1802 to secure permission to return to South Carolina to bring their families to Florida. The Knights traveled by way of Lowndes County, Georgia, before moving down into the Black Creek district up until the mid-1830s. It is notable that Jonathan Knight was a cousin of William A. Knight (b. 1778; d. 1859) a distinguished Primitive Baptist pastor, who helped organize the historically significant Union Church in Lowndes County, Georgia.⁵⁶ William Knight, close friends with Isham Peacock and Fleming Bates, was an itinerant preacher who at times also ventured into the Florida Territory to preach the gospel.⁵⁷

Although the Prevatts and Dixons were homestead settlers, early land records denote that the children of the Thomas and Joseph Prevatt families and the Knights had acquired property in the Black Creek district. By the 1830s John and Sophia Dixon as well as Thomas B. and “Polly” Prevatt had moved on to Alachua County.⁵⁸

A Faithful Remanent Re-dedicated Themselves in Year 1878

The Long Branch Baptist Church is another example of a small Baptist church that struggled to stay alive and remain committed to the call of Jesus Christ. No doubt there were several disrupting events – the Second Seminole Indian war (1835 – 1842), the Civil War, the following years of Reconstruction and economic calamities – all of which caused the church members, along with other residents, to flee to safer places. And although the church had to forego regular meetings, there still was a faithful remanent who continued to pray that God’s will would bring back to active life this congregation.

For that remanent, in the fulfilment of God’s time, and likely as a result of their collective spiritual wisdom, led the church leadership to re-organize the church in 1878.⁵⁹ That process would have included a re-statement of their faith and practice as well as new governing documents. By 1880, the church called P. M. Brooker who served as pastor from 1880 – 1887. Despite the difficult years and years of growth, this rural congregation has maintained a faithful remanent of God’s people who have kept this lighthouse of Jesus Christ’s love alive and active for 200-years.

In the year 2025, the church is located in the Clay Hill area of northwest Clay County. The current pastor,

Harry Conaway, who was ordained by the church in 2013, served as a bi-vocational pastor until 2017 when his ministry service was made fulltime. The church continues to cooperate with the Black Creek Baptist Association and the Florida Baptist State Convention. The church is expected to observe and celebrate its 200th anniversary later in October.

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² Jerrell H. Shofner, *Jackson County, Florida -- A History*, (Greenwood, FL: Penkevill Publishing Co., 1985), 23.

³ Edward E. Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier Before the Civil War*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 20 – 23.

⁴ Michael V. Gannon, ed., *The New History of Florida*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996), 215.

⁵ Doanld S. Hepburn and E. Earl Joiner, *Favored Florida: A History of Florida Baptist, Vol. One, 1784 – 1939*, (Gainesville, FL: StorterChilds, 2013), 33.

⁶ The organization, leadership, members, doctrine and practices of the Pigeon Creek Baptist Church are featured in the *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Vol. 23, 2021.

⁷ Dale Cox, “Jackson County’s Oldest American Settlement,” <https://twoegg.blogspot.com/search?q=Campbellton+First+Baptist>.

⁸ Hepburn-Joiner, “Pioneer Baptist Church Terminology”, *Favored Florida*, 60 – 61.

⁹ Hepburn-Joiner, *Favored Florida*, 78.

¹⁰ *Minutes*, March 12, 1825, Bethlehem Baptist Church.

¹¹ *Minutes*, March 12, 1825, Bethlehem Baptist Church.

¹² *Minutes*, October 8, 1859, now functioning as the Campbellton Baptist Church.

¹³ David T. Crum, “The London Baptist Confession of 1689 and its American Successors,” an unpublished paper commissioned January 2025, by the Florida Baptist Historical Society, Graceville, Florida, 5.

¹⁴ *Minutes*, January 27, 1849, Bethlehem Baptist Church.

¹⁵ Ancestry records of Elijah Hosea Calloway held in the files of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, Graceville, Florida.

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- ¹⁶ Shofner, *Jackson County, Florida*, 174.
- ¹⁷ *Minutes*, Bethlehem Baptist Church, April 8, 1826; May 22, 1830; and April 18, 1842.
- ¹⁸ Hepburn-Joiner, *Favored Florida*, 88 – 89.
- ¹⁹ Alabama Baptist Convention *Annual*, 1837, 7.
- ²⁰ Edward Earl Joiner, *A History of Florida Baptists*, (Jacksonville: Convention Press, 1972), 20.
- ²¹ Florida Baptist Association *Annual*, 1844.
- ²² Lelia Boring Lassiter, *On This Foundation: History of the Woman's Missionary Union*, (Jacksonville, FL: Convention Press, 1961), 7.
- ²³ West Florida Baptist Association *Annual*, 1849, 7.
- ²⁴ Dale Cox, "Webbville History," <https://twoegg.blogspot.com/2017/01>.
- ²⁵ "Circular" Report, West Florida Baptist Association, *Minutes*, October 27 – 30, 1849.
- ²⁶ Dale Cox, "Jackson County's Oldest American Settlement."
- ²⁷ Hepburn-Joiner, *Favored Florida*, 78.
- ²⁸ Minutes of church conferences and statistical records of the church prior to 1904 were destroyed in a fire at the home of church clerk J. M. Blount. Subsequently written records have been maintained by the current church clerks. A summary of highlighted church actions since 1904 appear on-line at a site on Sardis Cemetery, Jackson County, at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~fljackso/cemeteries/Sardis.htm>.
- ²⁹ David T. Crum, "The London Baptist Confession of 1689," 5.
- ³⁰ Shady Grove Baptist Church, *Minutes*, September 22 and December 31, 1906.
- ³¹ Shady Grove Baptist Church, *Minutes*, October 29, 1916.
- ³² Alabama Baptist Convention *Annual*, 1837, 7.
- ³³ Edward Earl Joiner, *A History of Florida Baptists*, 20.
- ³⁴ Florida Baptist Association *Annual*, 1844.
- ³⁵ Shady Grove Baptist Church, *Minutes*, 1888; also see Penny Baumgardner, "A Historical Summary of Florida Baptists' Cooperating Associations," *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Vol. 25, 2023, 101.
- ³⁶ West Florida Baptist Association *Annual*, 1849, 7.
- ³⁷ Jonathan Z. Smith, "Gnosticism Cosmologies," *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Religion*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 387.
- ³⁸ "Historical Sketch of Clay County," State Library of Florida, WPA - Historical Records Survey, County Histories, January 1941, on-line at <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/321087>.
- ³⁹ Dorothy Dodd, "The Florida Census of 1825," *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 22, July 1943, 40.

⁴⁰ Clerk of Court and Comptroller of Clay County, "Our County's Founding," available at <https://clayclerk.com/historical-archives/county-history/time-period/our-countys-founding>.

⁴¹ "Church Observes 160-Years," *The Middleburg Paper*, June 15, 1980, np.

⁴² Donald S. Hepburn, "The Church at Pigeon Creek: The Early Decades of Florida's 'First' Baptist Church," *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Vol. 23, 2021, 4.

⁴³ Donald S. Hepburn, "First Among Primitive Baptist Preachers: Elders Isham Peacock and Fleming Bates," *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Vol. 23, 2021, 88.

⁴⁴ Hepburn-Joiner, "Pioneer Baptist Church Terminology," *Favored Florida*, 60 – 61.

⁴⁵ Hepburn, "First Among Primitive Baptist Preachers," 90.

⁴⁶ Hepburn, "First Among Primitive Baptist Preachers," 91.

⁴⁷ Pigeon Creek Primitive Baptist Church, *Minutes*, August 1825.

⁴⁸ Pigeon Creek Primitive Baptist Church, *Minutes*, August 1825.

⁴⁹ A Brush Arbor was a large canopy formed by clearing brush and trimming back overhanging tree branches which would form a "cathedral that called attention to God's grandeur in a way unmatched by any human edifice." Brush arbors were used primarily by Baptists and Methodists in the 1800s for revival services, according to Dickson D. Bruce, "Brush Arbor," *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South*, ed. Samuel S. Hill, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 118 – 119.

⁵⁰ Thomas B. Prevatt family reported on-line at Ancestry.com, specifically <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/19162442/person/802588823/story>.

⁵¹ Joseph R. Prevatt family reported on-line at Ancestry.com, specifically <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/191624420/person/901592532/story>.

⁵² John B. Dixon family reported on-line at Ancestry.com, specifically <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/47722706/person/7033528050/story>.

⁵³ David T. Crum, "The London Baptist Confession of 1689 and its American Successors," an unpublished paper commissioned January 2025, by the Florida Baptist Historical Society, Graceville, Florida, 5.

⁵⁴ Donald S. Hepburn, "The Church at Pigeon Creek: The Early Decades of Florida's 'First' Baptist Church," *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Vol. 23, 2021, 6.

⁵⁵ John G. Crowley, *Primitive Baptists of the Wiregrass South*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998), 22; Also see Pigeon Creek Primitive Baptist Church *Minutes*, January 7, 1821.

⁵⁶ “Knight’s of Bulloch County Georgia,” an unpublished document with no author, held in the files of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, Graceville, Florida.

⁵⁷ John G. Crowley, *Primitive Baptists*, 42, 45.

⁵⁸ Dixon and Prevatt family records, previously cited, reported on-line at www.Ancestry.com.

⁵⁹ “Black Creek Inventory of the Churches,” Works Progress Administration, Historical Records Survey, ca. 1939, on-line at <https://www.floridamemory.com>.

APPENDIX

The chart on the following pages is a complete comparison of the approved three editions of *The Baptist and Message Statements* – including the 1998 addendum on The Family – as approved by messengers to the respective Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings, held in 1925, 1963, 1998 and 2000.

This chart was provided by the Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, Tennessee. A digital chart providing a side-by-side comparison of all three editions also is available on-line at:
<https://bfm.sbc.net/comparison-chart/>.

The Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings at which the original and the subsequently revised versions of *The Baptist Faith and Message Statement* were approved occurred as follows:

1925 – May 13 – 17, Memphis, Tennessee

The original Statement was presented by a committee chaired by E. Y. Mullins.

1963 – May 7 – 10, Kansas City, Missouri

A revised Statement was presented by a committee chaired by Herschel Hobbs.

1998 – June 9 – 11, Salt Lake City, Utah

The Statement on the Family, as an amendment to the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message*, was presented by a committee chaired by Anthony Jordan.

2000 – June 15 – 16, Orlando, Florida

The revised Statement was presented by a committee chaired by Adrian Rogers.

Comparison of 1925, 1963, and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message

Preamble to the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message	Preamble to the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message	Preamble to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message
The report of the Committee on Statement of Baptist Faith and Message was presented as follows by E. Y. Mullins, Kentucky:	Committee on Baptist Faith and Message The 1962 session of the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in San Francisco, California, adopted the following motion:	The 1999 session of the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, adopted the following motion addressed to the President of the Convention:
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE	“Since the report of the Committee on Statement of Baptist Faith and Message was adopted in 1925, there have been various statements from time to time which have been made, but no over-all statement which might be helpful at this time as suggested in Section 2 of that report, or introductory statement which might be used as an interpretation of the 1925 Statement.”	“I move that in your capacity as Southern Baptist Convention chairman, you appoint a blue ribbon committee to review the <i>Baptist Faith and Message</i> statement with the responsibility to report and bring any recommendations to this meeting next June in Orlando.”
Your committee beg leave to report as follows:	“We recommend, therefore, that the president of this Convention be requested to call a meeting of the men now serving as presidents of the various state conventions that	President Paige Patterson appointed the committee as follows: Max Barnett (OK), Steve Gaines (AL), Susie Hawkins (TX), Rudy A. Hernandez (TX), Charles S. Kelley, Jr. (LA), Heather King (IN), Richard D. Land (TN), Fred Luter (LA), R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (KY), T. C. Pinckney (VA),
Your committee recognize that they were appointed “to consider the advisability of issuing another statement of the Baptist Faith and Message, and report at the next Convention.”	In pursuance of the instructions of the Convention, and in consideration of the general denominational situation, your committee	

have decided to recommend the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, revised at certain points, and with some additional articles growing out of present needs, for approval by the Convention, in the event a statement of the Baptist faith and message is deemed necessary at this time.	would qualify as a member of the Southern Baptist Convention committee under Bylaw 18 to present to the Convention in Kansas City some similar statement which shall serve as information to the churches, and which may serve as guidelines to the various agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention. It is understood that any group or individuals may approach this committee to be of service. The expenses of this committee shall be borne by the Convention Operating Budget."	Nelson Price (GA), Adrian Rogers (TN), Roger Spradlin (CA), Simon Tsoi (AZ), Jerry Vines (FL). Adrian Rogers (TN) was appointed chairman.
The present occasion for a reaffirmation of Christian fundamentals is the prevalence of naturalism in the modern teaching and preaching of religion. Christianity is supernatural in its origin and history. We repudiate every theory of religion which denies the supernatural elements in our faith.	Your committee thus constituted begs leave to present its report as follows:	Your committee thus constituted begs leave to present its report as follows:
As introductory to the doctrinal articles, we recommend the adoption by the Convention of the following statement of the historic Baptist conception of the nature and function of confessions of faith in our religious and denominational life, believing that some such statement will clarify the atmosphere and remove some causes of misunderstanding, friction, and apprehension. Baptists approve and circulate confes-	Throughout its work your committee has been conscious of the contribution made by the statement of "The Southern Baptist Faith and Message" adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925. It quotes with approval its affirmation that "Christianity is supernatural in its origin and history. We repudiate every theory of religion which denies the supernatural elements in our faith."	Baptists are a people of deep beliefs and cherished doctrines. Throughout our history we have been a confessional people, adopting statements of faith as a witness to our beliefs and a pledge of our faithfulness to the doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture.
		Our confessions of faith are rooted in historical precedent, as the church in every age has been called upon to define and defend its beliefs. Each generation of Christians bears the responsibility of guarding the treasury of truth that has been entrusted to us [2 Timothy 1:14]. Facing a new century, Southern Baptists must meet the demands and duties of the present hour.

sions of faith with the following understanding, namely:

1. That they constitute a consensus of opinion of some Baptist body, large or small, for the general instruction and guidance of our own people and others concerning those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely conditions of salvation revealed in the New Testament, viz., repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

2. That we do not regard them as complete statements of our faith, having any quality of finality or infallibility. As in the past so in the future Baptists should hold themselves free to revise their statements of faith as may seem to them wise and expedient at any time.

3. That any group of Baptists, large or small, have the inherent right to draw up for themselves and publish to the world a confession of their faith whenever they may think it advisable to do so.

Furthermore, it concurs in the introductory "statement of the historic Baptist conception of the nature and function of confessions of faith in our religious and denominational life. . . ." It is, therefore, quoted in full as a part of this report to the Convention:

"(1) That they constitute a consensus of opinion of some Baptist body, large or small, for the general instruction and guidance of our own people and others concerning those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely held among us. They are not intended to add anything to the simple conditions of salvation revealed in the New Testament, viz., repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

"(2) That we do not regard them as complete statements of our faith, having any quality of finality or infallibility. As in the past so in the future, Baptists should hold themselves free to revise their statements of faith as may seem to them wise and expedient at any time.

New challenges to faith appear in every age. A pervasive anti-supernaturalism in the culture was answered by Southern Baptists in 1925, when the *Baptist Faith and Message* was first adopted by this Convention. In 1963, Southern Baptists responded to assaults upon the authority and truthfulness of the Bible by adopting revisions to the *Baptist Faith and Message*. The Convention added an article on "The Family" in 1998, thus answering cultural confusion with the clear teachings of Scripture. Now, faced with a culture hostile to the very notion of truth, this generation of Baptists must claim anew the eternal truths of the Christian faith.

Your committee respects and celebrates the heritage of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, and affirms the decision of the Convention in 1925 to adopt the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith*, "revised at certain points and with some additional articles growing out of certain needs. . . ." We also respect the important contributions of the 1925 and 1963 editions of the *Baptist Faith and Message*.

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|---|--|--|
| <p>4. That the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience.</p> | <p>“(3) That any group of Baptists, large or small, have the inherent right to draw up for themselves and publish to the world a confession of their faith whenever they may think it advisable to do so.</p> | <p>With the 1963 committee, we have been guided in our work by the 1925 “statement of the historic Baptist conception of the nature and function of confessions of faith in our religious and denominational life. . . .” It is, therefore, quoted in full as a part of this report to the Convention:</p> |
| <p>5. That they are statements of religious convictions, drawn from the Scriptures, and are not to be used to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life.</p> | <p>“(4) That the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience.</p> | <p>(1) That they constitute a consensus of opinion of some Baptist body, large or small, for the general instruction and guidance of our own people and others concerning those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely held among us. They are not intended to add anything to the simple conditions of salvation revealed in the New Testament, viz., repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.</p> |
| <p>The 1925 Statement recommended “the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, revised at certain points, and with some additional articles growing out of certain needs. . . .” Your present committee has adopted the same pattern. It has sought to build upon the structure of the 1925 Statement, keeping in mind the “certain needs”</p> | <p>“(5) That they are statements of religious convictions, drawn from the Scriptures, and are not to be used to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life.”</p> | <p>(2) That we do not regard them as complete statements of our faith, having any quality of finality or infallibility. As in the past so in the future, Baptists should hold themselves free to revise their statements of faith as may seem to them wise and expedient at any time.</p> |

- of our generation. At times it has reproduced sections of that Statement without change. In other instances it has substituted words for clarity or added sentences for emphasis. At certain points it has combined articles, with minor changes in wording, to endeavor to relate certain doctrines to each other. In still others—e.g., “God” and “Salvation”—it has sought to bring together certain truths contained throughout the 1925 Statement in order to relate them more clearly and concisely. In no case has it sought to delete from or to add to the basic contents of the 1925 Statement.
- Baptists are a people who profess a living faith. This faith is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ who is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” Therefore, the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is Jesus Christ whose will is revealed in the Holy Scriptures.
- A living faith must experience a growing understanding of truth and must be continually interpreted and related to the needs of
- (3) That any group of Baptists, large or small, have the inherent right to draw up for themselves and publish to the world a confession of their faith whenever they may think it advisable to do so.
- (4) That the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience.
- (5) That they are statements of religious convictions, drawn from the Scriptures, and are not to be used to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life.
- Baptists cherish and defend religious liberty, and deny the right of any secular or religious authority to impose a confession of faith upon a church or body of churches. We honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers, affirming together both

each new generation. Throughout their history Baptist bodies, both large and small, have issued statements of faith which comprise a consensus of their beliefs. Such statements have never been regarded as complete, infallible statements of faith, nor as official creeds carrying mandatory authority. Thus this generation of Southern Baptists is in historic succession of intent and purpose as it endeavors to state for its time and theological climate those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely held among us.	our liberty in Christ and our accountability to each other under the Word of God.
Baptists emphasize the soul's competency before God, freedom in religion, and the priesthood of the believer. However, this emphasis should not be interpreted to mean that there is an absence of certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe, cherish, and with which they have been and are now closely identified.	Baptist churches, associations, and general bodies have adopted confessions of faith as a witness to the world, and as instruments of doctrinal accountability. We are not embarrassed to state before the world that these are doctrines we hold precious and as essential to the Baptist tradition of faith and practice.
It is the purpose of this statement of faith and message to set forth certain teachings which we believe.	As a committee, we have been charged to address the "certain needs" of our own generation. In an age increasingly hostile to Christian truth, our challenge is to express the truth as revealed in Scripture, and to bear witness to Jesus Christ, who is " <i>the Way, the Truth, and the Life</i> ."
	The 1963 committee rightly sought to identify and affirm "certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe, cherish, and with which they have been and are now closely identified." Our living faith is established upon eternal truths. "Thus this generation of

Southern Baptists is in historic succession of intent and purpose as it endeavors to state for its time and theological climate those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely held among us.”

It is the purpose of this statement of faith and message to set forth certain teachings which we believe.

Respectfully Submitted,

*The Baptist Faith and
Message Study Committee
Adrian Rogers, Chairman*

1925 Baptist Faith and Message Statement

I. The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of

1963 Baptist Faith and Message Statement with 1998 Amendment

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God

Current Baptist Faith and Message Statement

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any

error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried.	for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.	mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.
<i>Luke 16:29-31; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Eph. 2:20; Heb. 1:1; 2 Peter 1:19-21; John 16:13-15; Matt. 22:29-31; Psalm 19:7-10; Psalm 119:1-8.</i>	<i>Ex. 24:4; Deut. 4:1-2; 17:19; Josh. 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isa. 34:16; 40:8; Jer. 15:16; 36; Matt. 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff; 17:11; Rom. 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.</i>	<i>Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.</i>
II. God		
There is one and only one living and true God, an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe, infinite in holiness and all	There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God	There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is

other perfections, to whom we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. He is revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

Gen. 1:1; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Deut. 6:4; Jer. 10:10; Isa. 48:12; Deut. 5:7; Ex. 3:14; Heb. 11:6; John 5:26; 1 Tim. 1:17; John 1:14-18; John 15:26; Gal. 4:6; Matt. 28:19.

is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. To him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

1. *God the Father*

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in his attitude toward all men.

Gen. 1:1; 2:7; Ex. 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff; 20:1ff; Levit. 22:2; Deut. 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chron. 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isa. 43:3,15; 64:8; Jer. 10:10; 17:13; Matt. 6:9ff; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Rom. 8:14-15;

infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. *God the Father*

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff; 20:1ff; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10;

1 Cor. 8:6; Gal. 4:6; Ephes. 4:6; Col. 1:15;
1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17;
1 John 5:7.

2. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself the demands and necessities of human nature and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, partaking of the nature of God and of man, and in whose Person is effected the recon-

Psalms 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8;
Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff;
7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John
4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7;
Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6;
Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians
1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9;
1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion.

ciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.	He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.
<i>Gen. 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isa. 7:14; 53; Matt. 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5,21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Rom. 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; 8:9; Gal. 4:4-5; Ephes. 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thess. 4:14-18; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Heb. 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Rev. 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.</i>	<i>Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5,21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28;</i>

3. *God the Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the assurance of God to bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Gen. 1:2; Judg. 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isa. 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matt. 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10, 12; Luke 1:35; 4:1, 18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8;

9:12-15, 24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. *God the Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Rom. 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11; Gal. 4:6; Ephes. 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:19; 1 Tim. 3:16; 4:1; 2 Tim. 1:14; 3:16; Heb. 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Rev. 1:10; 22:17.	Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.
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III. The Fall of Man

Man was created by the special act of God, as recorded in Genesis. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7).

III. Man

Man was created by the special act of God, in His own image, and is the crowning work of His creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the

He was created in a state of holiness under the law of his Maker, but, through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and in bondage to sin, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors.	original innocence; whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin, and as soon as they are capable of moral action become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfil the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore every man possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.	human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.
<i>Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:7; John 1:23; Gen. 3:4-7; Gen. 3:22-24; Rom. 5:12, 14, 19, 21; Rom. 7:23-25; Rom. 11:18, 22, 32-33; Col. 1:21.</i>	<i>Gen. 1:26-30; 2:5, 7, 18-22; 3: 9-6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Jer. 17:5; Matt. 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Rom. 1:19-32; 3:10-18, 23; 5:6, 12, 19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18, 29; 1 Cor. 1:21-31; 15:19, 21-22; Eph. 2:1-22; Col. 1:21-22; 3:9-11.</i>	<i>Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5, 7, 18-22; 3: 9-6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18, 23; 5:6, 12, 19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18, 29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19, 21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.</i>

IV. The Way of Salvation

The salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, through the mediatorial office of the Son of God, who by the Holy Spirit was born of the Virgin Mary and took upon him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by his personal obedience and made atonement for our sins by his death. Being risen from the dead, he is now enthroned in Heaven, and, uniting in his person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is in every way qualified to be a compassionate and all-sufficient Saviour.

Col. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:7-10; Gal. 2:19-20; Gal. 3:13; Rom. 1:4; Eph. 1:20-23; Matt. 1:21-25; Luke 1:35; 2:11; Rom. 3:25.

V. Justification

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of righteousness of all sinners who believe in Christ. This blessing is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, sanctification, and glorification.

1. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

have done, but through the redemption that is in and through Jesus Christ. It brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other needed blessing.

Rom. 3:24; 4:2; 5:1-2; 8:30; Eph. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:21.

VI. The Freeness of Salvation

The blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel. It is the duty of all to accept them by penitent and obedient faith. Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner except his own voluntary refusal to accept Jesus Christ as teacher, Saviour, and Lord.

Eph. 1:5; 2:4-10; 1 Cor. 1:30-31; Rom. 5:1-9; Rev. 22:17; John 3:16; Mark 16:16.

VII. Regeneration

Regeneration or the new birth is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit,

sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God.

2. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

3. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Gen. 3:15; Ex. 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matt. 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14, 29; 3:3-21, 36; 5:24; 10:9, 28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Rom. 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18, 29-39; 10:9-10, 13; 13:11-14; 1 Cor. 1:18, 30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Cor.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquital upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14, 29; 3:3-21, 36; 5:24; 10:9, 28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4;

whereby we become partakers of the divine nature and a holy disposition is given, leading to the love and practice of righteousness. It is a work of God's free grace conditioned upon faith in Christ and made manifest by the fruit which we bring forth to the glory of God.	5:17-20; Gal. 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephes. 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Tim. 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8, 14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Rev. 3:20; 21:1-22:5.	3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18, 29-39; 10:9-10, 13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8, 14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.
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*John 3:1-8, 1:16-18; Rom. 8:2; Eph.
2:1, 5-6, 8, 10; Eph. 4:30, 32; Col. 3:1-11;
Titus 3:5.*

VIII. Repentance and Faith

We believe that repentance and faith are
sacred duties, and also inseparable graces,
wrought in our souls by the regenerating
Spirit of God; whereby being deeply
convinced of our guilt, danger, and help-
lessness, and of the way of salvation by
Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned
contrition, confession, and supplication for
mercy; at the same time heartily receiving
the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet,
Priest, and King, and relying on him alone
as the only and all-sufficient Saviour.

Luke 22:31–34; Mark 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:13; Rom. 3:25, 27, 31; Rom. 4:3, 9, 12, 16–17; John 16:8–11.

IX. Sanctification

Sanctification is the process by which the regenerate gradually attain to moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts. It continues throughout the earthly life, and is accomplished by the use of all the ordinary means of grace, and particularly by the Word of God.

Acts 20:32; John 17:17; Rom. 6:5–6; Eph. 3:16; Rom. 4:14; Gal. 5:24; Heb. 12:14; Rom. 7:18–25; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:16, 25–26.

X. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which he regenerates, sanctifies and saves sinners. It is perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, and

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Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man and compre-

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man,

comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. It encourages the use of means in the highest degree.	ends all the means in connection with the end. It is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.	and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.
<i>Rom. 8:30; 11:7; Eph. 1:10; Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:17-19; 2 Tim. 1:9; Psalm 110:3; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:5; John 6:44-45,65; Rom. 10:12-15.</i>	All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the cause of Christ, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.	All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.
XI. Perseverance		
All real believers endure to the end. Their continuance in well-doing is the mark which distinguishes them from mere professors. A special Providence cares for them, and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.		
<i>John 10:28-29; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 John 2:19; 1 Cor. 11:32; Rom. 8:30; 9:11,16; Rom. 5:9-10; Matt. 26:70-75.</i>	<i>Gen. 12:1-3; Ex. 19:5-8; 1 Sam. 8:4-7,19-22; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 31:31ff; Matt. 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Rom. 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Cor.</i>	<i>Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1</i>

Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10, 19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5, 13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Col. 1:12-14; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:12; 2:10, 19; Heb. 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 1:2-5, 13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

Matt. 16:18; Matt. 18:15-18; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 2:41-42; 5:13-14; 2 Cor. 9:13; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 4:14; Acts 14:23; Acts 6:3, 5-6; Heb. 13:17; 1 Cor. 9:6, 14.

XII. The Gospel Church

A church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ, governed by his laws, and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Its Scriptural officers are bishops, or elders, and deacons.

Matt. 16:18; Matt. 18:15-18; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 2:41-42; 5:13-14; 2 Cor. 9:13; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 4:14; Acts 14:23; Acts 6:3, 5-6; Heb. 13:17; 1 Cor. 9:6, 14.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.

This church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In such a congregation, members are equally responsible. Its Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

This church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In such a congregation, members are equally responsible. Its Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages.	<i>Matt. 16:15–19; 18:15–20; Acts 2:41–42, 47; 5:11–14; 6:3–6; 13:1–3; 14:23, 27; 15:1–30; 16:5; 20:28; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 3:16; 5:4–5; 7:17; 9:13–14; 12; Ephes. 1:22–23; 2:19–22; 3:8–11, 21; 5:22–32; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:18; 1 Tim. 3:1–15; 4:14; 1 Peter 5:1–4; Rev. 2–3; 21:2–3.</i>	VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper	Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection
The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.	<i>Matthew 16:15–19; 18:15–20; Acts 2:41–42, 47; 5:11–14; 6:3–6; 13:1–3; 14:23, 27; 15:1–30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4–5; 7:17; 9:13–14; 12; Ephesians 1:22–23; 2:19–22; 3:8–11, 21; 5:22–32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9–14; 3:1–15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39–40; 1 Peter 5:1–4; Revelation 2–3; 21:2–3.</i>	VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper	Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in

newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and

to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

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Matt. 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; Acts 20:7; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 10:16, 21; 11:23-29; Col. 2:12.

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members of the church, by the use of bread and wine, commemorate the dying love of Christ.

Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 4:1; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Mark 1:4; Matt. 3:16; John 3:23; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; 1 Cor. 10:16-17, 21; Matt. 26:26-27; Acts 8:38-39; Mark 1:9-11.

XIV. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and

should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3, 33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1, 19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, and by refraining from worldly amusements, and resting from secular employments, work of necessity and mercy only being excepted.

Ex. 20:8-11; Matt. 12:1-12; 28:1ff; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3, 33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1, 19-28; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Col. 2:16; 3:16; Rev. 1:10.

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Ex. 20:3-6; Matt. 4:10; Matt. 28:19; 1 Tim. 4:13; Col. 3:16; John 4:21; Ex. 20:8; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:1; Matt. 12:1-13.

XXV. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is the reign of God in the heart and life of the individual in every human relationship, and in every form and institution of organized human society. The chief means for promoting the Kingdom of God on earth are preaching the gospel of Christ, and teaching the principles of righteousness contained therein. The Kingdom of God will be complete when every thought and will of man shall be brought into captivity to the will of Christ. And it is the duty of all Christ's

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

IX. The Kingdom

The kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

people to pray and labor continually that his Kingdom may come and his will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.	<i>Gen. 1:1; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; Matt. 3:2; 4:8-10, 23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Rom. 5:17; 8:19; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Col. 1:13; Heb. 11:10, 16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Rev. 1:6, 9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.</i>	<i>Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10, 23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10, 16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6, 9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.</i>
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XV. The Righteous and the Wicked

There is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and wicked. Those only who are justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit are truly righteous in his sight. Those who continue in impenitence and unbelief are in his sight wicked and are under condemnation. This distinction between the righteous and the wicked holds in and after death, and will be made manifest at the judgment when final and everlasting awards are made to all men.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in heaven with the Lord.

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Gen. 3:19; Acts 13:36; Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:1, 6, 8; Phil. 1:23; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:17; Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 6:3; Matt. 25:32-46; Rom. 9:22-23; Mark 9:48; 1 Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 22:20.

XVI. The Resurrection

The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus rose from the dead. His grave was emptied of its contents. He appeared to the disciples after his resurrection in many convincing manifestations. He now exists in his glorified body at God's right hand. There will be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. The bodies of the righteous will conform to the glorious spiritual body of Jesus.

1 Cor. 15:1-58; 2 Cor. 5:1-8; 1 Thess. 4:17; John 5:28-29; Phil. 3:21; Acts 24:15; John 20:9; Matt. 28:6.

XVII. The Return of the Lord

The New Testament teaches in many places the visible and personal return of Jesus to

Isa. 2:4; 11:9; Matt. 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27, 30, 36, 44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40, 48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28, 35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

Isa. 2:4; 11:9; Matt. 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27, 30, 36, 44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40, 48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 4:5; 15:24-28, 35-58; 2 Cor. 5:10; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thess. 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Rev. 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

this earth. "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The time of his coming is not revealed. "Of that day and hour knoweth no one, no, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36). It is the duty of all believers to live in readiness for his coming and by diligence in good works to make manifest to all men the reality and power of their hope in Christ.

*Matt. 24:36, 42-47; Mark 13:32-37;
Luke 21:27-28; Acts 1:9-11.*

XXIII. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty of every Christian man and woman, and the duty of every church of Christ to seek to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life. It is also expressly and repeatedly commanded in

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the

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the teachings of Christ. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by personal effort and by all other methods sanctioned by the gospel of Christ.	teachings of Christ. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by personal effort and by all other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.	The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undegirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.
<i>Matt. 10:5; 13:18-23; 22:9-10; 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; 16:19-20; Luke 24:46-53; Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-2, 21, 39; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2, 30-33; 1 Thess. 1-8.</i>	<i>Gen. 12:1-3; Ex. 19:5-6; Isa. 6:1-8; Matt. 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8, 16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2:8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Rom. 10:13-15; Ephes. 3:1-11; 1 Thess. 1:8; 2 Tim. 4:5; Heb. 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Rev. 22:17.</i>	<i>Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8, 16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2:8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.</i>

XX. Education

Christianity is the religion of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is therefore a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all

XII. Education

The cause of education in the kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence and should receive along with these the liberal

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Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth

human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. An adequate system of schools is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. The cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is coordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. <i>Deut. 4:1,5,9,13-14; Deut. 6:1,7-10; Psalm 19:7-8; Prov. 4:1-10; Prov. 8:1-7; Matt. 28:20; Col. 2:3; Neh. 8:1-4.</i>	support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian schools is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists. <i>Deut. 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Neh. 8:1-8; Job. 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Prov. 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Eccl. 7:19; Matt. 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Cor. 1:18-31; Eph. 4:11-16; Phil. 4:8; Col. 2:3,8-9; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:14-17; Heb. 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.</i>	opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists. <i>Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2;</i>
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7:24ff.; 28:19–20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18–31; Ephesians 4:11–16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3, 8–9; 1 Timothy 1:3–7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14–17; Hebrews 5:12–6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

XXIV. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to him. We have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in our possessions. We are therefore under obligation to serve him with our time, talents and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to us to use for the glory of God and helping others. Christians should cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally, contribute of their means to advancing the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Luke 12:42; 16:1–8; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 4:10; 2 Cor. 8:1–7; 2 Cor. 8:11–19; 2 Cor.

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12:1-15; Matt. 25:14-30; Rom. 1:8-15; 1 Cor 6:20; Acts 2:44-47.	Gen. 14:20; Lev. 27:30-32; Deut. 8:18; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 6:1-4, 19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21, 42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 20:35; Rom. 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 12:15; Phil. 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.	Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21, 42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.
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XXII. Co-Operation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure co-operation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over each other or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Individual members of New Testament churches should co-operate with each other, and the churches themselves should co-operate with each other in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent program for the extension of

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Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary co-operation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. It is permissible and desirable as between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such co-operation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and his Word as revealed in the New Testament.	and voluntary co-operation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Co-operation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such co-operation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and his Word as revealed in the New Testament.	spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.
<i>Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Neh. 4:4-6; 8:1-4; Mal. 3:10; Matt. 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; Acts 1:13-14; 1:21-26; 2:1, 41-47; 1 Cor. 1:10-17; 12:11-12; 13; 14:33-34, 40; 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:1-15; Eph. 4:1-16; 3 John 1:5-8.</i>	<i>Ex. 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judg. 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Neh. 4:4; 8:1-5; Matt. 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Cor. 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Cor. 8-9; Gal. 1:6-10; Eph. 4:1-16; Phil. 1:15-18.</i>	<i>Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.</i>
XXI. Social Service	XV. The Christian and the Social Order	XV. The Christian and the Social Order
Every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ regnant in his own life and in human society to oppose in the spirit of Christ every form of greed, selfishness, and vice; to provide for the	Every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in his own life and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of	All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of

orphaned, the aged, the helpless, and the sick; to seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth and brotherly love; to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and his truth. All means and methods used in social service for the amelioration of society and the establishment of righteousness among men must finally depend on the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus. <i>Luke 10:25-37; Ex. 22:10, 14; Lev. 6:2; Deut. 4:42; Deut. 15:2; Deut. 20:10; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Ezek. 18:6; Heb. 2:15; Zech. 8:16; Ex. 20:16; James 2:8; Rom. 12-14; Col. 3:12-17.</i>	society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. <i>Ex. 20:3-17; Lev. 6:2-5; Deut. 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zech. 8:16; Matt. 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12;</i>	society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus. The Christian should oppose in the spirit of Christ every form of greed, selfishness, and vice. He should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and his truth. <i>Ex. 20:3-17; Lev. 6:2-5; Deut. 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zech. 8:16; Matt. 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12;</i>
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Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 23:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

17:15; Rom. 12-14; 1 Cor. 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:12-17; 1 Thess. 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

XIX. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the pure gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of his teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of his law of love.

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

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XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

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We urge Christian people throughout the world to pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace, and to oppose everything likely to provoke war.

Matt. 5:9, 13-14, 43-46; Heb. 12:14; James 4:1; Matt. 6:33; Rom. 14:17, 19.

XVIII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and he has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to his Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate.

The state owes to the church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of

Isa. 2:4; Matt. 5:9, 38-48, 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36, 38; Rom. 12:18-19, 13:1-7; 14:19; Heb. 12:14; James 4:1-2.

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world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9, 38-48, 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36, 38; Romans 12:18-19, 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

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Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.	Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.	Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.
<i>Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:17; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; Gal. 3:9-14; John 7:38-39; James 4:12; Gal. 5:13; 2 Peter 2:18-21; 1 Cor. 3:5; Rom. 6:1-2; Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17.</i>	<i>Gen. 1:27; 2:7; Matt. 6:6-7; 24; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Rom. 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Gal. 5:1,13; Phil. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.</i>	<i>Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7, 24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2, James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.</i>
XVIII. The Family		
XVIII. The Family (1998 Amendment)		
God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.	God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.	God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.	Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.
<i>Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-25; 3:1-20; Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:4-9; Josh. 24:15; 1 Sam. 1:26-28; Ps. 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.</i>	<i>Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.</i>

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