

Major Emphases in Baptist Theology

by

James Leo Garrett, Jr.

With the assumption that there is such a thing as "Baptist theology" or "the theology of the Baptists," one should, it seems, ask first of all, how does one locate or identify Baptist theology. Baptists have no pope with the authority to speak infallibly *ex cathedra* for all Baptists and no body of patriarchs or bishops invested with a teaching authority by which they can deliver carefully defined and authority-bearing dogmas. The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) has no authority to adopt definitions or impose them upon the Baptist churches.

Among Baptists authority flows upward from many local congregations (more than 150,000 as of 1994¹) to the associations and to the conventions and unions and through the latter to the BWA. Ideally one should investigate or interrogate all of these 150,000 congregations as to their Christian beliefs if one should desire precision and accuracy in such a quest. The impracticality of such a worldwide investigation, however, leads instead to the search for representative expressions of the beliefs of Baptists.

Two of these representative expressions will be utilized for the present statement of emphases in Baptist theology. First, the various confessions of faith adopted and published by various groups of Baptist churches, beginning in the seventeenth century, will be consulted. The British and North American Baptist confessions of faith, together with a few from Continental Europe, have been assembled by William L. Lumpkin.² The Baptist confessions of faith originating in Continental Europe, together with a few from Great Britain, have been edited by G. Keith Parker.³ Baptists

have characteristically understood their confessions as growing out of, but at the same time subordinate to and subject to correction by the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.⁴ Likewise they have defended the right of "any group of Baptists, large or small," to compose and publish and/or to revise their own confessions.⁵ These Baptist confessions of faith have been reckoned to be voluntary, declarative, and testimonial in nature, but not the instruments of coercion or repression.⁶ One confession by General or Arminian Baptists in England during the seventeenth century taught that the Apostles' Creed, "the Nicene Creed"—presumably what the creedal scholars now call C rather than N, and the so-called Athanasian Creed were to be "received" and "believed" and to be taught by "the ministers of Christ" and "expounded in all christian [sic] families."⁷ In the latter twentieth century the German-speaking Baptist confession used in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland has declared that it "presupposes the Apostles' Creed as a common confession of Christendom," and the confession of Swedish-speaking Baptists in Finland has accepted the same creed as "comprehensive," whereas Norwegian Baptists have affirmed "the content" of both the Apostles' and the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan creeds.⁸ The latest declaration by European Baptists recognizes the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene (presumably Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan) Creed, and the Symbol of Chalcedon.⁹

Along with confessions of faith, which have been doctrinal in nature, Baptists have also adopted and used documents on church order and church covenants, designed to express norms for

⁴This may be seen both in the practice of appending lists of biblical texts to the various articles of the confessions and in explicit statements within the confessions that the Scriptures have supreme authority over creeds and confessions of faith. As examples of the former, see both the First London (1644) and Second London Assembly (1677) Confessions of Particular Baptists in England, in Lumpkin, 153-71, 241-95. As an example of the latter, see the New Hampshire Confession (1833) and the Statement of the Baptist Faith and Message of the Southern Baptist Convention (U.S.A.) (1925), in Lumpkin, 361-62, 391-93.

⁵Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), preface, items 3, 2. Some Baptist conventions or unions do not have a confession of faith; for example, the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., the Baptist unions of Denmark, Italy, and Bulgaria, and the Orebro Mission in Sweden. Parker, 94, 117, 232, 104.

⁶Confession of Faith (1977) of German-speaking Baptists in the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, Austria, and Switzerland, preamble, 1st paragraph, in Parker, 57.

⁷"An Orthodox Creed" (1678), art. 38, in Lumpkin, 326-27. Only the first line of each of these creeds, not the full text, has been preserved in copies of "An Orthodox Creed."

⁸Parker, 57, 78, 111, 97.

⁹What Are Baptists? On the Way to Expressing Baptist Identity in a Changing Europe (n. p.: European Baptist Federation, 1993), 2.

¹Baptist World Alliance General Council Meeting Agenda Book, July 18-24, 1994, Uppsala, Sweden (McLean, VA: Baptist World Alliance, 1994), 82.

²Baptist Confessions of Faith (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959; rev. ed.: Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969). Preceding Lumpkin's collection had been two others: Edward Bean Underhill, *Confessions of Faith and Other Public Documents Illustrative of the History of the Baptist Churches of England in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hanserd Knollys Society, 1854), and William Joseph McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911).

³Baptists in Europe History and Confessions of Faith (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982). There is as yet no collection of Baptist confessions of faith adopted in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

the common life in Jesus Christ in the churches.¹⁰

The second representative expression of the theology of Baptists to be examined is the doctrinal writings of Baptist leaders—pastors, theologians, historians, biblical scholars, et al., which may afford added nuances and insights as to doctrines found in the confessions as well as specific teachings not included in the confessions. There is no published collection of the texts of such writings, but there have been two volumes interpreting the thought of leading Baptist theologians.¹¹ Also to be consulted are the addresses given at the world congresses of the BWA.

On the basis of these two types of representative expression of Baptist theology we must now attempt to set forth the nature of that theology under two major divisions: that which Baptists share with the wider or worldwide company of Christians, and that which is unique to or at least peculiarly emphasized by Baptists.

Baptist Sharing of the Common Christian Tradition

Holy Scriptures

Baptists share with non-Roman Catholic Christians the Old Testament canon of thirty-nine books, or twenty-two by combination in the Hebrew Bible, as stated in the Longer Catechism adopted by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1839.¹² Baptists share with all other Christians, except the Nestorian Church,¹³ the canon of twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Baptists have with virtually no exceptions affirmed the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Certain seventeenth-century Baptist confessions affirmed that the Scriptures "contain" the Word of God,¹⁴ but other confessions, both in the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries, have insisted that the Bible "is" the Word of God.¹⁵ Some

Baptist theologians have held to the plenary theory of inspiration, that is, the fullness of truth and authority by means of inspiration yet without mechanical dictation or unconscious human authors.¹⁶ Other Baptist theologians have concluded that no precise theory of the mode of inspiration is possible or necessary.¹⁷ In their more responsible moments, Baptists have sought to balance the divine and the human in the origination of the Bible,¹⁸ or to effect a Chalcedonian doctrine of the Scriptures.

With the heritage of the Protestant Reformers, Baptists have shared a commitment to seek the single sense of a biblical text, to avoid allegorization, and to interpret the Scriptures in the light of the Scriptures.¹⁹ Today Baptists face the challenges both of the critical reassessment of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation²⁰ and of a plethora of new hermeneutical methods that are seeking adoption.²¹

Baptists have gratefully acknowledged the providential preservation of the Scriptures, have been involved in many nations and languages in the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular, often in cooperation with Bible societies, and holding to the perspicuity of the Scriptures, have

(1801), art. 1; Principles of Faith of the Sandy Creek Association (1816), art. 2; Goodchild Confession (1921), art. 1; Articles of Faith of the Baptist Bible Union of America (1923), art. 1; Confession of Faith and Ecclesiastical Principle of the Evangelical Association of French-speaking Baptist Churches (1924), art. 2; Revision of the Treatise of the Faith and Practices of the Free Will Baptists (1948), art. 1, in Lumpkin, 198, 250, 359, 358, 383, 385, 411, 369.

¹⁶ John Leadley Dagg, *A Manual of Theology* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1857; reprint ed.: Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1982), 22-24; Basil Manly, Jr., *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration Explained and Vindicated* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1888; reprint ed.: Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1985), 59-60.

¹⁷ Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1907), 211; Edgar Young Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1917), 144; Walter Thomas Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), 108-9, 119-20. There have been Baptist theologians who have adopted the dynamic theory of inspiration: Alvah Hovey, *Manual of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1877), esp. 81.

¹⁸ Harvey Eugene Dana, *Searching the Scriptures: A Handbook of New Testament Hermeneutics* (New Orleans: Bible Institute Memorial Press, 1936), 221-38.

¹⁹ Bernard Lawrence Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics* 3d rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970) esp. 104-13.

²⁰ Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method*, trans. Edwin W. Leverenz and Rudolph F. Norden (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977); Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990).

²¹ Anthony C. Thistleton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Concerning church covenants, see Charles W. Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990).

¹¹ James E. Tull, *Shapers of Baptist Thought* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1972); Timothy George and David Samuel Dockery, eds., *Baptist Theologians* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990).

¹² Questions 31-35, in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1877), 2:451-52.

¹³ Kurt Aland, *The Problem of the New Testament Canon* (London: A. R. Mowbray and Co., 1962), 13; Frederick Fyfe Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 215.

¹⁴ "A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland" (1611), art. 23; First London Confession of Particular Baptists (1644), art. 7, in Lumpkin, 122, 158.

¹⁵ Midland Association Confession (1655), art. 3; Second London Confession of Particular Baptists (1677), art. 1, sect. 5; Terms of Union between the Elkhorn and South Kentucky, or Separate, Associations

eagerly entrusted the Scriptures to the hands of all believers and made extensive efforts to teach the Scriptures, not only to children and youth but also to adults, especially through the all-age Sunday School.

Although Baptists have rather uniformly taught the truthfulness, trustworthiness, and dependability of the Scriptures,²² the issues as to the inerrancy of the Scriptures in all chronological, geographical, scientific, and literary details has recently become intensely controversial among some Baptists, thus necessitating detailed theological attention to this issue.²³

Baptists share with classical Protestantism the doctrine of the supreme authority of the Scriptures for determining the truth that inheres in and has been revealed by the triune God. For Baptists the Scriptures rank above church tradition, experience, reason, or any other so-called channel of religious authority. These latter channels must always be subject to revision or correction in light of the biblical revelation. Most Baptists would not deny any roles to the secondary channels by an extremely strict interpretation of *sola Scriptura*.²⁴ The Scriptures ought to be interpreted by the criterion of Jesus Christ.²⁵ Indeed the authority is "the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures."²⁶

The Triune God

A common feature in Baptist confessions of faith has been the inclusion of an article, usually near the beginning, affirming belief in the one yet triune God, Father, Son or Word, and Holy Spirit.²⁷ Such articles were normally brief affirmations without any polemic against alternative teachings about God. Baptists tend to perceive unitarianism as a greater threat to the doctrine of the Trinity than either tritheism or modalism.²⁸ Systematic theologies written by Baptists are marked by

specific treatments of the Trinity,²⁹ though Baptist theologians have not written monographs on the Trinity. Baptists seem to be resisting the efforts by radical feminists, process theologians, and liberation theologians to replace the language of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptists, therefore, do indeed share the doctrine and mystery of the essential or immanent Trinity with other Christians.

Creation and Providence

Most Baptist confessions of faith contain an article affirming that the triune God created all the universe, including all human beings.³⁰ This creative activity has been said to be *ex nihilo*,³¹ to be good,³² and through Jesus Christ.³³ The focus in the twentieth century has been on the Genesis accounts of creation.³⁴ Modern Baptists, especially in Europe and North America, have had to deal with the challenge posed by Charles Darwin and the concept of human evolution. Some Baptist theologians (e.g., W. N. Clarke, A. H. Strong, Bernard L. Ramm) in response have opted for "theistic evolution,"³⁵ whereby the human body derives from animal life but the human soul and/or spirit from God's direct action, whereas others (e.g., Millard J. Erickson)³⁶ have opted for "progressive creationism," whereby "God created in a series

²² New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 1, in Lumpkin, 361-62; Confession of Faith...of the Evangelical Association of French-speaking Baptist Churches, art. 2, in Parker, 137-38; Hovey, 50-59, 79-87.

²³ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983-85), 1: 221-40; James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 155-67.

²⁴ Garrett, 179-81.

²⁵ Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 1, in Lumpkin, rev. ed., 393.

²⁶ Bernard L. Ramm, *The Pattern of Authority* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), 28.

²⁷ Lumpkin, *passim*; Parker, *passim*.

²⁸ The original body of General Baptists in England, the General Assembly of General Baptists, became unitarian during the eighteenth century and ceased to have an identity as a Baptist movement.

²⁹ John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989; 1st publ. 1769, 1770), doct. div., bk. 1, chs. 26-31; Dagg, 181-201, 238-40, 246-53; James Madison Pendleton, *Christian Doctrines: A Compendium of Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1878), 64-71; James Petigru Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), 125-55; Ezekiel Gilman Robinson, *Christian Theology* (Rochester, NY: E. R. Andrews, 1894), 234-52; William Newton Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 15th ed. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1906; 1st publ. 1894), 161-81; Strong, 304-52; Mullins, 205-13; Conner, 260-67; Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 115-26; Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 59-64; Erickson, 321-42; Garrett, 262-88; Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 68-99.

³⁰ Lumpkin, *passim*.

³¹ "A Declaration of Faith of English People at Amsterdam in Holland (1611), art. 2, and An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 11, in Lumpkin, 117, 304-5.

³² First London Confession of Particular Baptists (1644), art. 4, in Lumpkin, 157.

³³ Somerset Confession (1656), art. 2, in Lumpkin, 204.

³⁴ Articles of Faith Put Forth by the Baptist Bible Union of America (1923), art. 5; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 3; Doctrinal Statement of the American Baptist Association (1950?), art. 3, in Lumpkin, 386, 393, 380.

³⁵ On Clarke, see Tull, 166; on Strong, see Kurt Richardson, "Augustus Hopkins Strong," in George and Dockery, eds., 297-98. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1954), 322-28.

³⁶ *Christian Theology*, 382-84. Also Garrett, 314-19.

of acts over a long period of time."

Baptists have also taught the providence of God, not merely a general providence but also a special providence, so as to avoid both deistic absenteeism and the denial of secondary causes.³⁷ Baptists have held to the reality and significance of biblical miracles, but on the issue of contemporary miracles it is unclear whether they favor the denial made by Reformed and Dispensational theologians or the affirmation made by Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, and Neo-Pentecostals.³⁸ The personality and work of Satan are commonly acknowledged among Baptists, as their confessions demonstrate.³⁹

Humanity and Sin

Baptist confessions have repeatedly affirmed that human beings were created in the image and after the likeness of God,⁴⁰ but no differentiation has been made between the image and the likeness.

Nor have Baptists generally attempted to define the image/likeness.⁴¹ Although Baptist theologians have advocated dichotomy (body, soul or spirit),⁴² Baptists have not been greatly concerned about dichotomy, trichotomy (body, soul, spirit), or holism. Baptists have shared with other Christians the convictions that monogamous marriage is ordained by God,⁴³ that sexual differences are God-given, and that sexual activity ought to occur within marriage. Baptists, however, have not accepted an androgynous origin of human beings or elevated virginity or widowhood above marriage or forbidden pastors to marry. Today Baptists continue to reassess biblical teachings concerning the roles of men and women in the light of contemporary feminism.⁴⁴ Baptists have accepted, sometimes with difficulty, as true that all human beings are one by virtue of creation⁴⁵ but have struggled as to how the reconciling work of Jesus Christ effectively overcomes family, racial, and ethnic prejudice, hatred, and conflict.

Baptists are agreed among themselves and share with other Christians the reality that all human beings, except Jesus Christ, have sinned and do sin.⁴⁶ The essential nature of sin has been identified

³⁷ Second London Confession of Particular Baptists (1677), art. 5, in Lumpkin, 256-58; Confession of Faith of German-speaking Baptists (1977), part 1, art. 4, in Parker, 61-62; Strong, 419-43; Mullins, 265-80; Erickson, 387-410; Garrett, 320-38.

³⁸ Garrett, 352-54.

³⁹ First London Confession (1644), arts. 4, 31; Midland Association Confession (1655), art. 4; Second London Confession (1677), art. 5, sect. 6; art. 6, sect. 1; art. 21, sect. 1; New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 3; Articles of Faith Put Forth by the Baptist Bible Union of America (1923), art. 4; Confession of Faith and Ecclesiastical Principles of the Evangelical Association of French-speaking Baptist Churches (1924), art. 3; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 3; Doctrinal Statement of the North American Baptist Association (1950), art. 4, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 157, 165, 198, 258, 279, 362, 386, 412, 393, 380; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 3, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 394-95; Confession of Faith of the Dutch Baptist Churches (1905?), art. 2; Confession of Faith of the Baptist Churches in Poland (1930), art. 3; Confession of Faith of the Yugoslavian Baptist Churches (1948?), part 2, art. 6; Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (U.S.S.R.) (1966), arts. 3, 10; Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 3; Confession of Faith of the Romanian Baptist Churches (1974), arts. 4, 12; Confession of Faith of German-speaking Baptists (1977), part 1, art. 2, in Parker, 88, 175, 208-9, 155, 158, 190, 219, 226, 59.

⁴⁰ A Short Confession of 1610, art. 4; A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland (1611), art. 2; Propositions and Conclusions concerning True Christian Religion (1612-14), art. 12; First London Confession (1644), art. 4; The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations (1651), art. 11; Somerset Confession (1656), art. 3; Second London Confession (1677), art. 5, sect. 2; An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 11; Swedish Baptist Confession of Faith (1861), art. 3; Articles of Faith Put Forth by the Baptist Bible Union of America (1923), art. 5; Revision of the Treatise on the Faith and Practices of the Free Will Baptists (1948), ch. 4, sect. 1, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 103, 117, 126, 157, 177, 204, 255-56, 305, 408, 386, 370; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 3, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 394-95; Confession of Faith of the Baptist Churches in Poland (1930), art. 3; Confession of Faith of the Yugoslavian Baptist Churches (1948?), part 2, art. 5; Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (U.S.S.R.) (1966), art. 3; Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 3; Confession of Faith of the Romanian Baptist Churches (1974), art. 3, in Parker, 175, 208, 155, 190, 219.

⁴¹ Dominion over the rest of creation was taught in The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations (1651), art. 11, in Lumpkin, 157; and by Frank Stagg, *Polarities of Man's Existence in Biblical Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 25-27. A cluster of human capacities was taught by Conner, 303-5; William Wilson Stevens, *Doctrines of the Christian Religion* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1967), 140-41; and Erickson, 512-13.

⁴² Clarke, 182-88; Strong, 483-88; Mullins, 256-57.

⁴³ Propositions and Conclusions concerning True Christian Religion (1612-14), art. 13; Second London Confession (1677), art. 25; An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 47, in Lumpkin, 126, 284-85, 332; Confession of Faith of the Baptist Churches in Poland (1930), art. 12; Confession of Faith of the Yugoslavian Baptist Churches (1948?), part 2, art. 15; Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (U.S.S.R.) (1966), art. 8; Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 18; Confession of Faith of the Romanian Baptist Churches (1974), art. 14; Confession of Faith of German-speaking Baptists (1977), part 2, sect. 2, sub-sect. 3, in Parker, 182-83, 213-14, 157, 197-98, 226-27, 71. Most confessions having articles on marriage enjoin the marriage of Christians with Christians.

⁴⁴ Frank and Evelyn Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978); Priscilla L. Denham, "Life-styles: A Culture in Transition," in Maxine Galz and Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, eds., *Woman in Travail and Transition: A New Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 162-83.

⁴⁵ Thomas B. Maston, "Of One": *A Study of Christian Principles and Race Relations* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1946).

⁴⁶ First London Confession (1644), art. 4; Somerset Confession (1656), art. 7; Second London Confession (1677), art. 6, sect. 2; An Orthodox Creed (1678), arts. 14-15; New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 3; Swedish Baptist Confession (1861), art. 3; Articles of Faith Put Forth by the Baptist Bible Union of America (1923), art. 6; Confession of Faith and Ecclesiastical Principles of the Evangelical Association of French-speaking Baptist Churches (1924), art. 3; Confession of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (1925), art. 3; Doctrinal Statement of the North American Baptist Association (1950), art. 5, in Lumpkin, 157, 205, 258, 306-7, 362, 408, 386, 412, 420, 380; Confession of Faith

as willful "rebellion against God" and unbelief vis-a-vis Jesus Christ,⁴⁷ as "a breach or rupture of relations between the sinner and the personal God,"⁴⁸ as the "lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state,"⁴⁹ as "ungodliness" and "unrighteousness,"⁵⁰ as idolatry,⁵¹ as "essentially selfishness,"⁵² and as "lackadaisical" "sloth" or irresponsibility.⁵³ Nor has the precise relation of the sins of all humans to the sin of Adam and Eve reached a consensus among Baptists.⁵⁴ Baptists have retained, however, the historical fall rather than opting for only an existential fall,⁵⁵ have posited an "age [or stage] of accountability" at which children commit "personal sin,"⁵⁶ have increasingly recognized the social or societal dimensions of sin,⁵⁷ and have stressed death as a consequence of sin.⁵⁸

Jesus Christ

Baptists have so characteristically affirmed the deity of Jesus Christ that documentation of the same is unnecessary. When Baptists have probed the doctrine of the person of Jesus, they have tended to conclude concerning two natures, the divine and the human, and one person so as to be indebted to the Symbol of Chalcedon (451).⁵⁹

But Baptists also have explicated the two stages (*kenōsis*, *plērōsis*) of Jesus Christ, particularly under the influence of kenotic Christology,⁶⁰ have followed the line of salvation-history,⁶¹ and have utilized the titles of Jesus.⁶² Special attention has been given to the virginal conception, the sinlessness, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus. The three offices of Jesus Christ (prophet, priest, king) have constituted another pattern by which Baptists, following Eusebius of Caesarea and John Calvin, have undertaken to identify both the person and the actions—or the mediatorship—of the incarnate Son of God.⁶³

Baptist teaching and preaching have magnified the death of Jesus Christ as his atoning work. Central to Baptist interpretation of the atonement has been the punitive and sacrificial substitution of the Son of God for sinful humans to the satisfaction of God's justice or righteousness.⁶⁴ There have been, however, Baptist authors who have advocated the eternal atonement motif⁶⁵ and the Christ as Victor motif.⁶⁶ From the seventeenth century, Baptists have not agreed as to the extent of the atonement, that is, whether the death of Jesus was intended to be for the sins of elect humans only or for the sins of all humanity.⁶⁷ But they have been quite certain that there is no other means of true reconciliation with God.

of the Dutch Baptist Churches (1881), art. 1; Confession of Faith of the Baptist Churches in Poland (1930), art. 3; Confession of Faith of the Yugoslavian Baptist Churches (1948?), part 2, art. 7; Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (U.S.S.R.) (1966), art. 3, in Parker, 88, 175, 209, 155.

⁴⁷ Conner, 318-26.

⁴⁸ Mullins, 288-90.

⁴⁹ Strong, 549-57, esp. 549.

⁵⁰ Moody, 275-79.

⁵¹ Erickson, 577-80.

⁵² Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 50.

⁵³ Harvey Gallagher Cox, *God's Revolution and Man's Responsibility* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1965), 39-49.

⁵⁴ The Augustinian theory of natural headship was held by Strong, 619-27. The federal or covenantal (covenant of works) theory was taught by Gill, doct. div., 324-30, and by Boyce, 234-39, 250-58. Both of these are theories of imputation of guilt. The delay of imputation until the commission of actual or personal sin was advocated by Erickson, 631-39, esp. 639. The inheritance of depravity was espoused by Conner, 330-42, and Stevens, 151-53, and the imputation of depravity by Hovey, 144-51.

⁵⁵ Moody, 200-202, 285-88, who accepted polygeneticism, deemphasized the historical fall. See Garrett, 467-73.

⁵⁶ Mullins, 301-2; Conner, 340-42; William Lawrence Hendricks, "The Age of Accountability," in Clifford Ingle, ed., *Children and Conversion* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), 84-97; Garrett, 502-7.

⁵⁷ Partly as a result of the Social Gospel movement. See, for example, Erickson, 641-58.

⁵⁸ Boyce, 240-47; Strong, 590-93; Mullins, 297-99; Conner, 348-50; Moody, 293-99; Erickson, 611-15; Garrett, 517-19.

⁵⁹ Second London Confession (1677), ch. 8, sect. 2; An Orthodox Creed (1678), arts. 4-7; Swedish Baptist Confession of Faith (1861), art. 4, in Lumpkin, 260-61, 299-301, 408; Gill, doct. div., 378-423; Strong, 669-700; Mullins, 176-80; Moody, 408-26; Erickson, 683-738; Grenz, 319-423.

⁶⁰ Strong, 701-10; Mullins, 182-95; Conner, 162-79; Moody, 402-8; Erickson, 769-79.

⁶¹ Somerset Confession (1656), arts. 12-17; Confession of Faith and Ecclesiastical Principles of the Evangelical Association of French-speaking Baptist Churches (1924), art. 4, in Lumpkin, 206-7, 412-13; Confession of Faith of the Federation of French Baptist Churches (1879), part 1, art. 4; Confession of Faith of the Dutch Baptist Churches (1881), art. 2; Confession of Faith of the Yugoslavian Baptist Churches (1948?), part 2, art. 3; Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 4, in Parker, 126, 88, 208, 190.

⁶² Garrett, 544-619.

⁶³ A Short Confession of Faith (1610), arts. 9-18; Propositions and Conclusions concerning True Christian Religion (1612-14), art. 30; The True Gospel-Faith (1654), art. 8; Midland Association Confession (1655), art. 9; Second London Confession (1677), art. 8, sects. 1, 9-10; An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 17; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 8, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 105-7, 128-29, 193, 199, 260, 263, 310, 394; Gill, doct. div., 424-53; Dagg, 207-29; Boyce 291-95; Strong, 710-76; Mullins, 303-4; Moody, 366-85 (prophet, priest, potentate).

⁶⁴ Gill, doct. div., 475-93; Dagg, 210-21; Hovey, 207-30; Boyce, 295-340; esp. 317; Conner, 380-409; Stevens, 169-92; Erickson, 781-823.

⁶⁵ Strong, 750-71.

⁶⁶ W. T. Conner, *The Cross in the New Testament*, ed. Jesse J. Northcutt (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954).

⁶⁷ The names of the two earliest bodies of Baptists in England derived from this difference: General Baptists and Particular Baptists.

The Holy Spirit

Baptists hold to, if more implicitly than explicitly, the personality and the deity of the Holy Spirit, even as did the Cappadocian Fathers. The Spirit is "one substance or nature with the father and son, coequal, coeternal, and coessential with the father and son."⁶⁸ John L. Dagg in 1857 clearly expounded both the hypostatic nature and the deity of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹ Twentieth-century confessions have affirmed these complementary truths.⁷⁰

But the emphasis for Baptists, as indeed for classical Protestants, in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is upon the Spirit's work or activity. The Spirit inspires the writers of the Holy Scriptures,⁷¹ convicts human beings of sin,⁷² brings about regeneration,⁷³ bestows the repentance and faith whereby humans are justified,⁷⁴ grants adoption into the family of God,⁷⁵ affords assurance,⁷⁶ sanctifies believers,⁷⁷ and enables believers to persevere

unto final salvation.⁷⁸ Partly at least in response to nineteenth-century Holiness and twentieth-century Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal movements, Baptists have interpreted the baptism in or with the Holy Spirit which was promised⁷⁹ as either having occurred once-for-all at Pentecost or occurring with every Christian conversion.⁸⁰ From the seventeenth century, Baptist confessions of faith have affirmed spiritual gifts, but these were normally the "ordinary" gifts (preaching, teaching, etc.) rather than the "extraordinary" gifts (tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, prophecy).⁸¹

Redemption

How is the saving work of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit applied to individual human beings? What is the nature of the Christian's experience with God? Baptists have been and are deeply concerned with the answers to these questions. Much of what is taught is shared with other Christians.

Occasionally Baptists have answered the soteriological question in terms of three tenses—past, present, and future. Hence justification or regeneration is taken to be punctiliar, sanctification to be a process, and glorification to belong to the future.⁸² More often Baptists have emphasized by use of New Testament terms and imagery what God does to or for or in Christian believers: conversion,⁸³ justification,⁸⁴ new life (both new

⁶⁸ An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 8, in Lumpkin, 301

⁶⁹ Dagg, 236-40.

⁷⁰ Articles of Faith Put Forth by the Baptist Bible Union of America (1923), art. 3; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 2; Revision of Treatise on the Faith and Practices of the Free Will Baptists (1948), art. 7, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 385, 393, 372-73; Confession of Faith of the Yugoslavian Baptist Churches (1948?), part 2, art. 4, in Parker, 208.

⁷¹ Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 2, sect. 3, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 394.

⁷² Ibid.; Goodchild Confession (1921), art. 4, in Lumpkin, 383.

⁷³ Second London Confession (1677), art. 10, sects. 1-2; Articles of Religion of the New Connexion of General Baptists (1770), art. 5; New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 7; Doctrinal Basis of the Baptist Union of Victoria, Australia (1888), art. 6, in Lumpkin, 264-65, 343-44, 363-64, 417; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 2, sect. 3; art. 4, sect. 1, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 394, 395; Confession of Faith of the Baptist Churches in Poland (1930), art. 6; Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (U.S.S.R.) (1966), art. 4; Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 6; Confession of Faith of the Romanian Baptist Churches (1974), art. 6, in Parker, 176-77, 155, 191, 220-21.

⁷⁴ Second London Confession (1677), art. 14, sect. 1; art. 15, sect. 3; An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 23; Swedish Baptist Confession of Faith (1861), art. 6, in Lumpkin, 268, 270, 314, 409; Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 6; Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (U.S.S.R.) (1966), art. 4, in Parker, 191, 155.

⁷⁵ Second London Confession (1677), art. 12, in Lumpkin, 267.

⁷⁶ Ibid., art. 18, sects. 3-4; Confession of Faith and Ecclesiastical Principles of the Evangelical Association of French-speaking Baptist Churches (1924), art. 6, in Lumpkin, 274-75, 413.

⁷⁷ Standard Confession of General Baptists (1660), art. 7; Second London Confession (1677), art. 13; New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 10; Confession of Faith of the Alliance of Evangelical-Free Church Congregations (Germany) (1944), art. 5, in Lumpkin, 227, 267-68, 365, 404; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 4, sect. 2, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 395; Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (U.S.S.R.) (1966), art. 4, in Parker, 155. Such sanctification was neither a premature perfectionism nor a second work of grace which downplayed the first but rather genuine growth in holiness.

⁷⁸ Confession of Faith of the Federation of French Baptist Churches (1879), part 1, art. 6, in Parker, 127; Confession of Faith and Ecclesiastical Principles of the Evangelical Association of French-speaking Baptist Churches (1924), part 1, art. 6, in Lumpkin, 413.

⁷⁹ Mark 1:8; Matt. 3:11c; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16.

⁸⁰ See the present author's *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (now in process of publication), ch. 53, II, G; ch. 54, II, E, 3. For recent statements, see Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 9; Confession of Faith of German-speaking Baptists (1977), part 2, art. 5, in Parker, 193, 67.

⁸¹ Garrett, vol. 2, ch. 56, II.

⁸² Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 4, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 395; Moody, 311. Baptist theologians have recognized that "sanctification" is not always used in a progressive or durative sense in the New Testament (Conner, 467-68; Erickson, 967-71). Only a few have treated the doctrine of glorification per se (Erickson, 997-1002).

⁸³ Boyce, 379-82; Strong, 829-49; Mullins, 377-78; Moody, 316-18; Erickson, 933-35.

⁸⁴ First London Confession (1644), art. 28; Somerset Confession (1656), arts. 21-22; Second London Confession (1677), art. 11; An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 24; New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 5; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 5, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 164, 209, 265-67, 314-15, 363, 393; Dagg, 265-74; Boyce, 394-404; Strong, 849-68; Mullins, 389-401; Conner, 447-53; Moody, 325-28; Erickson, 954-61.

birth and new creation),⁸⁵ adoption,⁸⁶ forgiveness,⁸⁷ reconciliation,⁸⁸ salvation,⁸⁹ liberation,⁹⁰ union with Christ,⁹¹ assurance,⁹² and sanctification.⁹³ Whereas earlier confessions of faith stressed that repentance and faith are given by the Holy Spirit,⁹⁴ increasingly these have also been identified as human duties,⁹⁵ lest unbelievers bear no responsibility for impenitence and unbelief, and hence they can be called both "graces" and "duties."⁹⁶ Prayer has been reckoned as an essential phase of the Christian life,⁹⁷ and now the stewardship of material things⁹⁸

and discipleship⁹⁹ are becoming topics in Baptist theology.

From the seventeenth century, Baptists have not agreed as to whether all genuine believers will be eschatologically saved. Some Baptists, following Dutch Arminianism, have posited either the possible or certain apostasy, or lapse from grace and faith, of some believers.¹⁰⁰ Others, following Augustine of Hippo and John Calvin, have held to the perseverance or preservation of all true believers.¹⁰¹ The latter seems to be the position of the majority of Baptists.

Nor have Baptists agreed as to how to interpret the doctrine of election, or predestination. Some have held to the eternal divine predestination of certain human beings unto salvation with God's passing over the non-elect (preterition, not reprobation).¹⁰² Others have taught the divine election of all those who believe in Jesus Christ and continue to believe.¹⁰³ Yet others have defined election as God's gracious and good salvific purpose which includes means and human agency.¹⁰⁴ Historically the Baptist doctrine of the universal church has grown out of the doctrine of election, the universal

⁸⁵ Propositions and Conclusions concerning True Christian Religion (1612-14), art. 42, 44, 47; New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 7; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 7, Revision of the Treatise on the Faith and Practices of the Free Will Baptists (1948), art. 11, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 131-32, 363-64, 394, 373-74, Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 4, sect. 1, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 395, Dagg, 277-85, Boyce, 374-79; Strong, 809-29; Mullins, 378-89, Conner, 456-67, Moody, 318-28, Erickson, 942-46.

⁸⁶ Second London Confession (1677), art. 12, An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 25, in Lumpkin, 267, 315, Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 7, in Parker, 192, Dagg, 274-77, Boyce, 404-9, Mullins, 401-9; Conner, 455-56; Erickson, 961-65.

⁸⁷ Dagg, 262-65, Conner, 435-47, Moody, 317, Erickson, 963.

⁸⁸ An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 25, in Lumpkin, 315; Conner, 453-55, Moody, 328-32.

⁸⁹ W. T. Conner, *The Gospel of Redemption* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1945), 145-50, Moody, 308-11.

⁹⁰ Moody, 332-37.

⁹¹ Strong, 795-809; Mullins, 409-16; Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, 431-34; Erickson, 948-54.

⁹² Second London Confession (1677), art. 18, in Lumpkin, 274-75, Strong, 845-46; Conner, 469-72.

⁹³ First London Confession (1644), art. 29, Second London Confession (1677), art. 13; An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 26; New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 10; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention, 1925), art. 10; Confession of Faith of the Alliance of Evangelical-Freechurch Congregations (Germany) (1944), art. 5, Revision of the Treatise on the Faith and Practices of the Free Will Baptists (1948), art. 12, sect. 2, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 164, 267-68, 316-17, 365, 394, 404, 374; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 4, sect. 2, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 395; Confession of Faith of the Baptist Churches in Poland (1930), art. 7; Confession of Faith of the Yugoslavian Baptist Churches (1948), part 2, art. 10; Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 8, in Parker, 177, 210, 192; Dagg, 285-87; Boyce, 409-25; Strong, 869-81; Mullins, 417-32; Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, 467-68, Moody, 322-25; Erickson, 967-74.

⁹⁴ First London Confession (1644), art. 22; Second London Confession (1677), art. 14; art. 15, sect. 3; An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 23, in Lumpkin, 162-63, 268-69, 270, 314.

⁹⁵ Dagg, 138-41, 175-78; Strong, 832-49; Conner *A System of Christian Doctrine*, 414-31; Moody, 312-13, Erickson, 935-42.

⁹⁶ New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 8; Articles of Faith Put Forth by the Baptist Bible Union of America (1923), art. 12; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 8, Revision of the Treatise on the Faith and Practices of the Free Will Baptists (1948), arts. 9, 10, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 364, 387-88, 394, 373; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptists Convention (1963), art. 4, sect. 1, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 395; Mullins, 368-77.

⁹⁷ Second London Confession (1677), art. 22, sects. 3-6; An Orthodox Creed (1678), arts. 41-43, in Lumpkin, 281-82, 328-30; Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, 480-89, James Leo Garrett, Jr., "A Theology of Prayer," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 14 (Spring 1972) 3-17, Moody, 156-61, Erickson, 405-6.

⁹⁸ Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, ch. 67.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 65.

¹⁰⁰ A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland, art. 7, A Short [Somerset] Confession (1691), art. 17, sect. 2, Revision of the Treatise on the Faith and Practices of the Free Will Baptists (1948), art. 13, in Lumpkin, 118-19, 337, 374, Robert Shank, *Life in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Perseverance* (Springfield, MO: Westcott Publishers, 1960); Confession of Faith of the Romanian Baptist Churches (1974), art. 17, in Parker, 227-28; Moody, 348-65.

¹⁰¹ First London Confession (1644), art. 23, Second London Confession (1677), art. 17; Articles of Faith, Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association (1777), art. 10; Terms of Union between the Elkhorn and South Kentucky, or Separate, Associations (1801), art. 5, Principles of Faith of the Sandy Creek Association (1816), art. 4, New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 11, Articles of Faith Put Forth by the Baptist Bible Union of America (1923), art. 15; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 11; Doctrinal Statement of the North American Baptist Association (1950), art. 14, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 163, 272-74, 356, 359, 358, 365, 388, 394-95, 380; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 5, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 396; Confession of Faith of the Federation of French Baptist Churches (1879), art. 6, Confession of Faith and Ecclesiastical Principles of the Evangelical Association of French-Speaking Baptist Churches (1924), art. 6, Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 8, in Parker, 127, 140, 192; Gill, *doct. div.*, book 6, ch. 15; Dagg, 287-300; Boyce, 425-36, Strong, 881-86; Mullins 432-38, Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, 489-99; Erickson, 986-97.

¹⁰² First London Confession (1644), art. 3; Second London Confession (1677), art. 3, sects. 3-5; Articles of Faith, Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association (1777), art. 3, in Lumpkin, 157, 254-55, 355; Gill, *doct. div.*, book 2, chs. 2-3; Dagg, 309-23; Boyce, 341-67; Strong, 779-90.

¹⁰³ An Orthodox Creed (1678), art. 10; A Short [Somerset] Confession (1691), art. 20, sect. 2, in Lumpkin, 304, 338.

¹⁰⁴ New Hampshire Confession (1853), art. 9; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 9, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 364, 394; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 5, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 395-96, Mullins, 338-56; Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, 354-72.

church being composed of all the elect or all the redeemed.¹⁰⁵

Last Things

Baptists share with other Christians the central features of the Christian hope, or the doctrine of last things. Both their confessions and their biblical exegetes and theologians have affirmed life after death and bodily resurrection from the dead, the *parousia* of Jesus Christ, the last judgment, and the separate destinies of the redeemed (heaven) and the unredeemed (hell).¹⁰⁶ Like other Christian confessional families, Baptists have had within their ranks differences concerning the kingdom of

God and concerning the millennial reign. If in Europe within the twentieth century the kingdom of God as a concept has been the organizing focus of the doctrine of last things, in North America the millennium has had that role. Some Baptists have regarded the kingdom of God as having primarily an eschatological meaning.¹⁰⁷ Others have held that the kingdom is primarily a present reality.¹⁰⁸ A third position is that the kingdom of God has three tenses: past, present, and future.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, Baptists, especially during the twentieth century, have espoused each of the major millennial views: historical premillennial,¹¹⁰ dispensational premillennial,¹¹¹ postmillennial,¹¹² and amillennial.¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ Second London Confession, (1677), art. 26, sect. 1; An Orthodox Creed (1678), arts. 29-30, in Lumpkin, 285, 318-19; Dagg, *A Treatise on Church Order* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1858; reprint ed. Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1982), 100-43; Confession of Faith of the Alliance of Evangelical-Freechurch Congregations (1944), art. 6, in Lumpkin, 404-5; Confession of Faith of the Baptist Churches in Poland (1930), art. 10; Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (U.S.S.R.) (1966), art. 5; Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 12; Confession of Faith of the Romanian Baptist Churches (1974), art. 7, in Parker, 179, 155-56, 195, 221. The universal church has been recently interpreted as the "continuing stream of Christian truth and devotion that has flowed from Biblical times": *What Are Baptists?*, art. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Short Confession of Faith in Twenty Articles by John Smyth (1609), arts. 19-20; A Short Confession of Faith (1610), art. 38; A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland (1611), arts. 26-27; Propositions and Conclusions concerning True Christian Religion (1612-14), arts. 92-100; The True-Gospel Faith (1654), arts. 27-30; Somerset Confession (1656), arts. 39-42; Standard Confession (1660), arts. 20-21; Second London Confession (1677), arts. 31-32; An Orthodox Creed (1678), arts. 49-50; Articles of Faith, Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association (1777), arts. 14-15; New Hampshire Confession (1853), arts. 17-18; Swedish Baptist Confession of Faith (1861), art. 12; Doctrinal Statement of the American Baptist Association (1905), arts. 7-9; Articles of Faith Put Forth by the Baptist Bible Union of America (1923), arts. 16, 18; Confession of Faith and Ecclesiastical Principles of the Evangelical Association of French-speaking Baptists Churches (1924), part 1, art. 9; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), arts. 15-17; Confession of Faith of the Alliance of Evangelical-Freechurch Congregations (Germany) (1944), art. 10; Revision of the Treatise on the Faith and Practices of the Freewill Baptists (1948), arts. 19-22; Doctrinal Statement of the North American Baptist Association (1950), arts. 22-25, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 101, 112-13, 123, 141-42, 195, 214, 231, 293-95, 333-34, 356, 366-67, 409-10, 378-79, 389, 414, 395-96, 407, 376, 380-81; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), arts. 9-10, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 397; Confession of Faith of the Federation of French Baptist Churches (1879), part 1, art. 11; Confession of the Finnish Baptist Union (1891), art. 10; Confession of Faith of the Baptist Churches in Poland (1930), art. 14; Confession of Faith of the Yugoslavian Baptist Churches (1948), part 2, arts. 17-19; Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (U.S.S.R.) (1966), art. 10; Confession of Faith of the Hungarian Baptist Church (1967), art. 20; Confession of Faith of the Romanian Baptist Churches (1974), art. 19; Confession of Faith of German-speaking Baptists (1977), part 3, in Parker, 128, 109, 184, 214-15, 158, 198-99, 228-30, 77-75; Gill, *doct. div.*, book 7, chaps. 1-5, 9-11; Dagg, 339-79; Hovey, 345-64; Boyce, 437-93; Strong, 981-1056; Mullins, 439-66, 472-503; Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, 523-62; Moody, 481-515, 529-548, 557-94; Erickson, 1149-1204, 1225-41. By teaching the doctrine of hell, Baptists have rejected both eschatological universalism and annihilationism.

¹⁰⁷ Standard Confession (1660), art. 22, in Lumpkin, 231-32; Swedish Baptist Confession of Faith (1861), art. 12, and Confession of the Finnish Baptist Union (1891), art. 10, in Parker, 102, 109; Moody, 515-29.

¹⁰⁸ First London Confession (1644), arts. 23-24; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 25, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 165-66, 398; Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 131-66; Thomas Polhill Stafford, *A Study of the Kingdom* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1925).

¹⁰⁹ Mullins, 452-58; Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, 515-23; George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), esp. 338-39.

¹¹⁰ George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1952), 135-50; Dale Moody, *The Hope of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964); idem, *The Word of Truth*, 557; G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Revelation," in *The New Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Davidson (London: Intervarsity Fellowship, 1953), 1193-95; idem, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1974), 287-89, 293; Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 103-6; idem, *Christian Theology*, 1216-17; John Paul Newport, *The Lion and the Lamb* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986), 294-97.

¹¹¹ John Franklin Norris, *Christ's Second Coming: Pre-Millennial or Amillennial?* (Fort Worth: Calvary Publications, n.d.); idem, *The Millennial Reign of Christ* (Fort Worth: Calvary Publications, n.d.); idem, *The Battle of Armageddon* (Fort Worth: Calvary Publications, n.d.); idem, *Is the End of All Time Near?* (Fort Worth: Calvary Publications, n.d.); W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969); idem, *Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); idem, *Welcome Back, Jesus!* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1976); idem, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, vol. 3, *Ecclesiology*, and vol. 5, *Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).

¹¹² Strong, 1009-15; Benajah Harvey Carroll, *An Interpretation of the English Bible*, 17 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1948), 6:221-75.

¹¹³ Conner, *The Gospel of Redemption*, 333; Russell Bradley Jones, *The Things That Shall Be Hereafter* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1947), 138-56; Edward Allison McDowell, *The Meaning and Message of the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), 188-200; Ray Summers, *Worthy Is the Lamb: An Interpretation of Revelation* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), 45-51, 197-208; Jesse Wilson Hodges, *Christ's Kingdom and Coming: With an Analysis of Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), 190-91; Herschel Harold Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), 154-61; idem, *The Cosmic Drama: Studies in Revelation* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1971).

Baptist Distinctives or Emphases Vis-À-Vis the Common Christian Tradition

Necessary to a proper understanding of the major emphases in Baptist theology is an awareness of those beliefs that set apart or differentiate the Baptists from the larger Christian tradition, either as distinctives or as major emphases which certain other confessional families also embrace. During the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries especially there were published numerous monographs concerning the distinctive or at least the emphatic teachings and practices of Baptists.¹¹⁴ Also efforts have been made to identify or posit a central Baptist principle, which would presumably imply or infer the other Baptist distinctives or emphases. Among those proposed have been the competency of the soul (human self) before God,¹¹⁵ loyalty to or the authority of the New Testament,¹¹⁶ the doctrine of the church,¹¹⁷ believer's baptism,¹¹⁸ and the lordship or sovereignty of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁹

Three major areas now call for specific interpretation.

¹¹⁴ James Madison Pendleton, *Distinctive Principles of Baptists* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, (1882); Thomas Treadwell Eaton, *The Faith of Baptists* (Louisville: Baptist Book Concern, 1895); *Baptist Why and Why Not* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1900); Jeremiah Bell Jeter et al., *Baptist Principles Reset* (Richmond, VA: Religious Herald Co., 1902); Edgar Young Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith* (Philadelphia: Griffith and Rowland, 1908); Philip L. Jones, *A Restatement of Baptist Principles* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1909); Benajah Harvey Carroll, *Baptists and Their Doctrines*, comp. J. B. Cranfill (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1913); George Edwin Horr, *The Baptist Heritage* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1923); Henry Wheeler Robinson, *Baptist Principles* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1925); James S. Kirtley, *The Baptist Distinctive and Objective* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1926); William Richardson White, *Baptist Distinctives* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1946); Henry Cook, *What Baptists Stand For* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1947); P. Lovene, *Distinctive Baptist Principles* 2d ed. (Chicago: Baptist Conference Press, 1950); Emlyn Davies, "Our Historic Baptist Distinctives," *The Chronicle* 16 (October 1953): 191-200; Herbert Gezork, "Our Baptist Faith in the World To-day," *Baptist World Alliance Golden Jubilee Congress, London, England, 16th-22nd July 1955: Official Report*, ed. Arnold T. Ohm (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1955), 40-46; James D. Mosteller, "Basic Baptist Principles and the Contemporary Scene," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 6 (April 1964): 60-81; Justice C. Anderson, "Old Baptist Principles Reset," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 31 (Spring 1989): 5-12; *What Are Baptists?*

¹¹⁵ Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*.

¹¹⁶ James Bruton Gambrell, "History and Heresy," *Texas Baptist Standard*, 11 June 1896, 1; Carroll, *Baptists and Their Doctrines*, 10; Cook, *What Baptists Stand For*, 13-15.

¹¹⁷ William Thomas Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* 2d ed. (London: Kingsgate Press, 1932), 4.

¹¹⁸ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 11-28.

¹¹⁹ William Cleaver Wilkinson, *The Baptist Principle in Application to Baptism and the Lord's Supper* New enl. ed. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1897), 23-29; J. D. Freeman, "The Place of Baptists in the Christian Church," in *The Baptist World Congress, London, July 11-19, 1905 Authorized Record of Proceedings* (London: Baptist Union Publication Department, 1905), 22-29, esp. 22.

Congregations Gathered around Believer's Baptism by Immersion

Congregational polity is the inheritance of Baptists from the English Separatists. According to such polity, each congregation has full authority to engage in worship, to receive, disciple, and/or dismiss its members, and to call, ordain, support, and/or dismiss its leaders. Each congregation has all the essential ecclesial elements.¹²⁰ Today there are two types of congregational polity among Baptists: independent congregationalism, in which the congregation has no relationship to any general body of Baptists (association, society, union, or convention), and cooperative congregationalism, in which the congregation does have a relationship with one or more than one general body of Baptists. Whereas in the United States the ordination of Baptist pastors tends to be authorized by the congregation in cooperation with the Baptist association, in Europe it tends to involve both the decision of the congregation and the concurrence of the Baptist union.

Believer's baptism, not infant baptism, or the baptism only of those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ prior to and as a condition of Christian baptism¹²¹ is the constituting factor for membership in Baptist churches. This is the inheritance of the Baptists from sixteenth-century Continental Anabaptism. Baptist churches have utilized and do utilize church covenants,¹²² in order to give specificity to the mutual commitment which members make to one another before God and to the continuing duties of church membership, but it is believer's baptism, rather than owning the covenant, which marks the entry into Baptist churches. Baptists continue to find no basis for the baptism of newborn infants in the New Testament or any practice of such prior to A.D. 200.¹²³ According to Baptists, regeneration is not instrumentally obtained through baptism as a sacrament but immediately wrought through the proclamation of the gospel by the Holy Spirit so

¹²⁰ First London Confession (1644), arts. 36-38, 42-45; Second London Confession (1677), art. 26, sects. 7-9, 12-13; An Orthodox Creed (1678), arts. 30-31, 34, in Lumpkin, 166-67, 168, 286-87, 288, 318-20, 322-23; Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, and Co., 1856), 165-71, 177-83.

¹²¹ Baptists stress the prevailing New Testament sequence: the preaching of the gospel, hearing, confessing one's faith, and water baptism.

¹²² Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants*.

¹²³ James Marion Frost, *Pedobaptism: Is It from Heaven or of Men?* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1875); William Joseph McGlothlin, *Infant Baptism Historically Considered* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1916).

that the ideal is a regenerate church membership.¹²⁴

Christian baptism, Baptists declare, ought to be by the mode of immersion and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the inheritance of the Baptists from the Rhynsburgers in the Netherlands, remotely from Polish Socinianism, and even more remotely from Eastern Orthodoxy. Baptists emphasize the meaning of the Greek verb *baptizein*, the accounts of baptism in the New Testament, the continuance of the practice of immersion, and the necessity of immersion for the representation of death, burial, and resurrection.¹²⁵ During the latter half of the twentieth century extensive research has led to major publications by Baptists on baptism in the New Testament¹²⁶ and also on baptism in the major Christian confessions.¹²⁷ Their insistence upon believer's baptism by immersion has led Baptists to the issue as to whether such a baptism is without exception to be required of every person entering the membership of a Baptist church. Most Baptist churches have answered affirmatively (closed membership), whereas a minority has answered negatively (open membership) so as to allow exceptions. Similarly, another issue has resulted from the relationship between believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper, namely, whether only persons so baptized should partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper when it is observed in a Baptist church (closed communion)¹²⁸ or all who confess Jesus as Lord, regardless of the condition or mode of their baptism, should be welcomed to partake of the elements in the Baptist setting (open communion).¹²⁹ For Baptists, the memorial (Zwinglian) aspect of the Lord's Supper has been primary, but, as in the Second

London Confession (1677),¹³⁰ the Calvinistic emphases of "spiritual nourishment" and the spiritual presence of Christ have also been affirmed.

Baptists, especially during the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries, have affirmed the priesthood of all Christians (1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:5b-6; 5:9-10), in the seventeenth as a corollary of Christ's priestly office¹³¹ and in the twentieth either as unhindered access to God's grace and throne or as universal ministry via the offering of spiritual sacrifices or the exercise of spiritual gifts.¹³²

Religious Freedom and the Separation of Church and State

A second area in which Baptists have historically borne a unique testimony has been that which connects the human conscience in matters of faith with the mandates and powers of civil government. From their very beginning Baptists, preceded by Anabaptist authors such as Balthasar Hubmaier¹³³ and Menno Simons,¹³⁴ have deplored as evil the persecution of human beings for the sake of religion and have boldly advocated the principle of religious freedom, often called "soul freedom," not for themselves only but for all human beings.¹³⁵ Not only many of the advocates of religious freedom but many other Baptists have

¹³⁰ Art. 30, sects. 1,7.

¹³¹ First London Confession (1644), art. 17, in Lumpkin, 160-61.

¹³² For the documentation, see Garrett, vol. 2, ch. 75, I, D. On the priesthood and spiritual gifts, see *Who Are Baptists?*, art. 8.

¹³³ "Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them" (1524), in *Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533) A Source Book*, ed. William R. Estep, Jr. (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1976), 47-53.

¹³⁴ *Foundation of Christian Doctrine* (1539), part 3; *Confession of the Distressed Christians* (1552); *A Pathetic Supplication to All Magistrates* (1552); *Brief Defense to All Theologians* (1552); *Reply to False Accusations* (1552), in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, c. 1496-1561, trans. Leonard Verduin and ed. John Christian Wenger (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 199-226, 499-577.

¹³⁵ Thomas Helwys, *The Mystery of Iniquity* (1612), (replication: London: Kingsgate Press, 1935); Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenent, of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience, Discussed, in a Conference between Truth and Peace* (1644), ed. Samuel L. Caldwell, in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, 7 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), 3:1-425; idem, *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody* (1652), ed. Samuel L. Caldwell, in *ibid.*, 4:1-501; E. Y. Mullins, "The Baptist Conception of Religious Liberty": in *Third Baptist World Congress, Stockholm, July 21-27, 1923 Record of Proceedings*, ed. W. T. Whitley (London: Kingsgate Press, 1923), 66-72; Cook, 129-72; Culbert G. Rutenber, "The Totalitarian State and the Individual Conscience," in *Eighth World Congress, Cleveland, Ohio U S A, July 22-27, 1950 Official Report*, ed. Arnold T. Ohrn (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1950), 139-45; Gunnar Westin, "Why Fight for Religious Liberty?" in *Golden Jubilee Congress, London, England, 16th-22nd July 1955*, 321-26; Joseph Martin Dawson, *Baptists and the American Republic* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1956); John David Hughey, "Religious Liberty in the Light of Creation and Redemption," in *Tenth Baptist World Congress, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 26 - July 3, 1960 Official Report*, ed. Arnold T. Ohrn (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961), 258-63; idem, *Religious Liberty Its Meaning and Practice* (Greenville, SC: Furman University, 1963); Garrett, "The Biblical Basis of Religious Liberty," in *The Truth That Makes Men Free Official Report of the Eleventh*

¹²⁴ Archibald Thomas Robertson, "The Spiritual Interpretation of the Ordinances," in *The Baptist World Alliance Second Congress, Philadelphia, June 19-25, 1911 Record of Proceedings* (Philadelphia: Harper and Brothers, 1911), 120-24.

¹²⁵ Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, ch. 73, V, C.

¹²⁶ Cook, 88-128; Johannes Schneider, *Baptism and Church in the New Testament*, trans. Ernest A. Payne (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1957); Alec Gilmore, ed., *Christian Baptism A Fresh Attempt to Understand the Rite in Terms of Scripture, History and Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959); Reginald E. O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation A Theology of Baptism and Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960); G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962); Oscar Stephenson Brooks, *The Drama of Decision. Baptism in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987).

¹²⁷ Dale Moody, *Baptism Foundation for Christian Unity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967).

¹²⁸ This position derived from William Kiffin and other Particular Baptists in seventeenth-century England.

¹²⁹ This position derived from John Bunyan, who was both Particular Baptist and Independent (or Congregationalist).

endured persecution from seventeenth-century England, New England, and Virginia to twentieth-century U. S. S. R., Eastern Europe, and China. Baptists have denied that civil magistrates ought to administer the first table of the Ten Commandments or interfere with the internal life of Christian churches.

Baptists have sought, wherever possible, to obtain or to retain the institutional separation of civil government and churches, often with constitutional guarantees, so as to provide a safeguard for religious freedom. Such separation does not normally prevent either churches or individual Christian citizens from active involvement in moral and social issues confronting their societies so as to contend for or persuade to a given political stance.

Evangelization and Missions as the Task of All Churches and of All Christians

Baptists only slowly came to conscious awareness of and obedience to the Great Commission¹³⁶ given to Christ's *ekklesia*. Although the Somerset Confession (1656) asserted that "it is the duty of his church in his authority, to send forth such brethren as are fully gifted and qualified through the Spirit of Christ to preach the gospel to the world,"¹³⁷ it was 136 years from that time until the first Baptist foreign mission society was organized.¹³⁸ Baptist missionary activity both within nations and between nations has greatly increased during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the missionary task has been a major contributing factor in the constituting of the numerous Baptist conventions and unions by churches that would also assert their independence. The Christian obligation and privilege to share or witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ has been expressed in recent

confessions of faith.¹³⁹ Evangelization and worldwide missions have become during the twentieth century an integral part of Baptist theological education. In addition to and alongside the work of career missionaries there have now come to be numerous forms of short-term missionary service. Not only the mandate of the risen Christ but also the sinful brokenness of humanity, the expectancy of Christ's *parousia*, and the joy of Christian service motivate Baptists to participate in the evangelization of the burgeoning world population on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

Baptists, who share with other Christian confessions a considerable body of Christian doctrines and yet affirm and cherish certain distinctive or emphatic beliefs, seek no special privileges or favors at the hands of civil governments or from church bodies that represent population majorities. They only ask for and labor to obtain for themselves, as for others, the right and freedom to "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29, RSV), to seek to declare "the whole will of God" (Acts 20:27), and to preach "the gospel of the kingdom" as "a testimony to all nations" before the end of the age (Matt. 24:14).

¹³⁹ Doctrinal Statement of the American Baptist Association (1905), arts. 10-12; Goodchild Confession (1921), art. 6; Articles of Faith Put Forth by the Baptist Bible Union of America (1923), art. 13; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925), art. 23; Doctrinal Statement of the North American Baptist Association (1950), art. 16, in Lumpkin, 1959 ed., 379, 383, 388, 397-98, 380; Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1963), art. 11, in Lumpkin, 1969 ed., 397-98; Confession of the Finnish Baptist Union (1891), art. 8, in Parker, 108.

James Leo Garrett, Jr. is Distinguished Professor of Theology, teaching 1949-59 and since 1979. This convocation speech was presented during the preliminary Baptist World Alliance-Eastern Orthodox Conversations at the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Istanbul, Turkey, 22 October 1994.

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¹³⁶ Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20, Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8.

¹³⁷ Art. 34, in Lumpkin, 212-13.

¹³⁸ That is, the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen (1792), which sent William Carey and others to India.

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