A volume for assisting the reader to gain a general working background of Baptists, who they are, and what they are about.

Vocational Theological Education
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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**INTRODUCTION** ........................................... 7  
Steve Vernon

**HISTORY**
Baptists Before 1845 ........................................... 11  
H. Leon McBeth
The Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1945 .......... 19  
James H. Semple
Southern Baptists’ Second Century .................. 27  
Jess C. Fletcher

**DISTINCTIVES**
Doctrine .............................................................. 37  
Bert H. Dominy
The Local Church ................................................. 45  
Ron Lyles
Baptist Polity ......................................................... 61  
D. L. Lowrie
Baptist Perspectives on the Christian life ............ 67  
George H. Gaston, III
Financing Cooperative Baptist Work .................. 75  
Susan Ray and Roger W. Hall

**RELATIONSHIPS**
Baptists Relating Locally ....................................... 83  
Paul W. Stripling, Lynn Eckeberger and  
Lorenzo Peña
Baptists Relating within their State ................. 93  
E. Edward Schmeltekopf, Ken Camp,  
Amelia Bishop, Charles P. McLaughlin, and  
Mark Wingfield
Baptists Relating Nationally and Internationally ... 107  
Lloyd Elder, Bill Summers, Teresa Dickens,  
David R. Wilkinson, BJ/C Staff, and  
Jack Ridlehoover
Baptists and the Ministry ....................................... 125  
Gary Manning
Trends and Issues ................................................. 133  
William M. Pinson, Jr. with David Slover

**APPENDIX**
Where to Find Information ................................... 141  
Royce Rose
Executive Board Staff and  
Cooperating Organizations Chart ...................... 147  
BGCT Committees, Commissions  
and Boards ....................................................... 148

**TEACHING GUIDE** ........................................ 151  
Jeter Basden
Introduction

Dear Reader:

These words, from God’s Word, speak to Baptists in a unique way:

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ”
(1 Tim. 2:5 RSV).

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession”
(Heb. 4:14 RSV).

I believe you will find this volume is worth your time. It is written by many dedicated, trained and capable people. It speaks to the young student of Baptist life as well as to the most mature Baptist.

The story of Baptists and their history is inspirational. It is a story about real people responding to God through real life circumstances. You will see that Baptist distinctives are drawn from the Bible and as they are read and reread they tend to become all the more meaningful. Relationships that Baptists have toward each other are challenging and dynamic. The changing experiences and growing opportunities of Baptist life make a revision of this volume necessary every few years.

The section having to do with the financial support of Baptist work is helpful in understanding how money is received and budgeted.

I trust you will find this book helpful whether you are a student, pastor or layperson.

Prominent issues among Baptists will surface as you use this volume as a text or for general information. These issues will include:

- the authority of the Bible
- the principle of religious freedom
- the autonomy of a local congregation of Baptists
- the priesthood of the believer
- the missional implications of Baptist doctrines
- the significance and meaning of baptism and church membership
- the relationships and responsibilities of a state and national Baptist conventions and associations of Baptists with each other and with local churches.

You will join a great host of other students, researchers, non-Baptists, pastors and religious educators who seek to learn about these people called “Baptists.”

God bless you,

Steve Vernon

Steve Vernon
Acting Executive Director,
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Convention of Texas
Baptists Before 1845

I. Baptist Beginnings
   1. The Stage is Set
   2. Role of the Bible
   3. Two Kinds of Baptists
   4. Defining the Faith
   5. Recovery of Immersion
   6. Defending the Faith
   7. The Baptist Name

II. Baptists in Colonial America
   1. Baptists in New England
   2. Baptists in the Middle Colonies
   3. Baptists in the Southern Colonies
   4. The First Great Awakening

III. Struggle for Religious Freedom

IV. Baptists Organized for Missions
   1. Baptist Associations
   2. The Triennial Convention, 1814
   3. The Baptist Tract Society, 1824
   4. The Home Mission Society, 1832

V. Tensions Increase
   1. Anti-Missions
   2. The Campbell Movement
   3. The Slavery Controversy
Baptists Before 1845

Baptists, as we know them today, emerged as a separate denomination in England early in the seventeenth century. However, they did not regard their churches as something new. They felt they were recovering doctrines and practices that are rooted in the New Testament. The Baptist denomination dates from the early seventeenth century, but Baptists believe their faith comes directly from the Bible.

Baptist Beginnings
The seventeenth century was a revolutionary time, both in church and state. The Bible was available in English, and this transformed church life in England. New religious groups were emerging, and Baptists were among these.

The Stage is Set
During the Protestant Reformation, the Church of England split from Rome in 1534. However, the English reform was never complete, marked as much by political and economic issues as by religion. By the 1570s some earnest English churchmen, nicknamed “Puritans,” sought to reduce the authority of bishops, allow churches to elect their pastors, reduce the control of the government over the church, and adopt more Calvinist doctrinal beliefs. For two generations, the Puritans worked toward these goals, but with limited success.

Despairing of reform from within, some Puritans left the Church of England and formed separate churches where they could worship as they saw fit. They got the nickname of “Separatists.” It was from these Separatist groups that the first English Baptists emerged.

Role of the Bible
No account of Baptist beginnings should leave out the role of the Bible. From the first, Baptists sought to base their beliefs and behavior squarely upon Scripture. The translations of the Bible into English by John Wycliff (14th C.), William Tyndale (15th C.) and Miles Coverdale (16th C.) had made the Bible available to English people. As people read the Bible for themselves, they could not help but see that their official state church did not follow the Bible closely. This new wave of Bible reading, and hunger to follow the Bible carefully, helps explain the origin of Baptists.

Two Kinds of Baptists
In about 1609 a pastor named John Smyth became convinced that baptism should be for professed believers only, and should not be applied to infants. Smyth was a graduate, and for a time a teacher, at Cambridge University. From his own study of the Bible, Smyth began to emphasize personal conversion, religious freedom, and regenerate church membership. Because these ideas were not welcome in England, Smyth and his little group fled to Amsterdam, Holland, about 1607. In Amsterdam in about 1609 Smyth formed a new church, based upon personal conversion through faith in Christ, followed by baptism for believers. Historians regard this as the earliest Baptist church of modern history, though they did not yet use that name.

The Smyth group later came to be known as General Baptists. That is, they believed in a general atonement, that Christ died for all who would believe. They also believed that those who deliberately renounce Christ can lose their salvation. Theologians often call their views “Arminianism,” after the Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius. Within a year, the Smyth church split. Thomas Helwys, a devout layman, led a remnant of the church to return to England in 1611 where they set up the earliest Baptist church on English soil. Helwys prepared one of the earliest Baptist confessions of faith in 1611, and the next year published The Mystery of Iniquity appealing for complete religious freedom for all. By 1650 there were over forty General Baptist churches in England.

Another group, the Particular Baptists, emerged by 1638. They more nearly followed the theology of John Calvin, and thus are often called “Calvinists.” They believed in a particular atonement; that is, Christ died not for everyone but only for particular ones, the elect. Only those “predestined” or chosen for salvation before the world was created could be saved, but once saved they could never lose their salvation.

The earliest Particular Baptist church was formed in London in 1638. By 1644 there were at least seven such churches in and around London, and their leaders included William Kiffin, John Spilsbury, and Henry Jessey. In 1644 these seven churches jointly issued a confession of faith. Known as the First London Confession, this influential document has shaped the faith of Baptists in England and beyond.

Defining the Faith
Through short summaries of their doctrines (called confessions), by public debates, and by the printed word, Baptists worked out their beliefs and shared them with others. In a time before Sunday School, the confessions helped clarify beliefs, educate new members, and defend Baptists against unfair accusations.

Recovery of Immersion
In 1609 Smyth first practiced believer’s baptism by sprinkling or affusion (pouring or splashing water upon the new convert). However, as the Baptists continued to study the Bible, they came to believe that baptism in the New Testament was by total immersion.
In early 1640 one of the Particular Baptist churches became convinced that baptism should be performed “by dipping ye body in ye water, resembling Burial & rising again.”1 After discussion, and even sending one member to Holland to confer with some Anabaptists who practiced immersion, the church agreed to provide immersion for those who desired it. By 1644 immersion was customary among English Baptists. Their confession of 1644 specified that “The way and manner of the dispensing of this Ordinance [baptism] the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water.”2 From that time, most Baptists around the world have practiced baptism by total immersion.

The early Baptists accepted the authority of Scripture and believed in salvation by God’s grace through faith. They believed that a church should be made up only of converted people, that each church is free to call its own pastor, and that each member has freedom under God to pray, read the Bible, and interpret the faith. They believed in the second-coming of Christ, but set no timetables.

Defending the Faith

Early Baptists faced severe persecution both from the state church and from the government. English law required all citizens aged sixteen and over to attend the Church of England. They had to worship according to the liturgy set out in the Church’s Prayer Book, and believe the doctrines set out in the Thirty-nine Articles, which was the official creed. The Conventicle Act, a law passed in 1664, seemed aimed especially at Baptists. The law forbade any religious meetings of dissenters with more than four persons present outside of family members. This made Baptist meetings for worship illegal, and when caught the Baptists could be fined and/or sent to prison.

As a result, the jails and prisons in England were filled with Baptists.

John Bunyan, a Baptist pastor famous for writing Pilgrim’s Progress, spent twelve years in jail in Bedford for his refusal to stop preaching. At times the Baptists tried to meet secretly, or at least did not publicize their meetings. They sometimes set teenage boys to watch outside their meetings to warn the group if government officials came near. For a time the English government paid a reward to any citizen who reported on an illegal “conventicle.”

Baptists had to be on guard against spies and bounty hunters who tried to discover their meetings and turn them in to the authorities.

In response to this persecution, the Baptists set out a number of tracts and treatises on religious liberty. Drawing from Scripture, history, and logic the Baptists argued that the soul should be free to respond to God without coercion. From the Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30) the Baptists argued that only God has the right and the knowledge to judge what is true and false religion. From history they concluded that every attempt of human government or government-established church to control religion did damage to the faith. As to logic, they said that since each soul must stand before God, it seems right and fair that every soul be free to worship God by their own understanding.

The Baptists in England were among the first people in the world to teach a doctrine of complete religious liberty for all. John Smyth, founder of the earliest Baptist church in modern times, said:

“The way and manner of the dispensing of this Ordinance [baptism] the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water.”

The Baptist Name

The people called “Baptists” never chose that name for themselves. It was a nickname tagged on them by others, and it took almost a century for Baptists to accept it. At first their opponents called them “Separatists,” because they separated from the state church; or “Anabaptists,” because they baptized those who had received only infant sprinkling. However, they rejected all these names. At first they called themselves simply “the church” or “the church of Christ” (as in the confession of 1611). Local churches often called themselves “the church of Christ gathered at . . .,” naming their location. Sometimes they described themselves as “the baptizing churches” or “churches of the baptized way.”

In 1644, Baptists issued “The Confession of Faith of those Churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptist.” From the first,

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Baptists insisted they were not Anabaptists. A pamphlet issued in 1650 bears the title “the Churches of Christ in London, Baptized.”

So far as we know, the name “Baptist” was first applied to these immersing Christians about 1644. The name was given by their opponents as a term of ridicule. However, in time the new nickname caught on and was commonly used after about 1750.

**Baptists in Colonial America**

Baptists in early America were few and scattered. In their first hundred years in the new world they formed only a handful of churches, and these showed little promise of the future greatness that awaited them. Baptist growth followed the major geographical divisions: New England, Middle Colonies, and the South.

**Baptists in New England**

The earliest Baptist church in America was formed in 1639 in Providence, Rhode Island, by Roger Williams.

Among the new settlers who came to Providence were Richard and Catherine Scott, who may have become Baptists while still in England. Catherine’s witness apparently led to formation of the first Baptist church in America. On March 16, 1639, Governor John Winthrop of Boston wrote in his journal:

> At Providence things grew still worse; for a sister of Mrs. Hutchinson, the wife of one Scott, being infected with Anabaptistry, and going last year to live at Providence, Mr. Williams was taken (or rather emboldened) by her to make open profession thereof, and accordingly was rebaptized by one Holyman, a poor man late of Salem. Then Mr. Williams rebaptized him and some ten more.4

A bit later John Clarke formed a Baptist church at Newport, Rhode Island.5 A church had existed in Newport earlier, but Clarke led a group to make the church more distinctly Baptist at least by 1644, and perhaps earlier. A few years later, the earliest Seventh Day Baptist church in America grew out of the Newport church.

Thomas Gould led in forming the First Baptist Church of Boston in 1665. Gould and his wife refused to present their infants for baptism in the official state church of New England.

Baptists in the Middle Colonies

Unlike New England, the Middle Colonies had no state church. So many different churches were represented there that none had a majority and thus could not gain control. Besides, the strong Quaker influence from William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, spread the Quaker teaching on religious freedom. Thus, the few Baptists who came to the Middle Colonies had, with a few exceptions, religious freedom.

The first known Baptist pastor in the Middle Colonies was Thomas Dungan, who fled Ireland to escape religious persecution. In 1684 Dungan and his family, with a few others, formed a church at Cold Spring, not far from Philadelphia.

Baptist life in the Middle Colonies took a new turn with the arrival of Elias Keach in 1688. A son of Benjamin Keach, outstanding Baptist pastor in London, young Elias came to America to seek his fortune. Though not yet a professing Christian, the twenty-year-old Elias attended the

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4 Cited in McBeth, *Sourcebook*, 83. The “Holyman” is Ezekiel Holiman, a layman from Salem. Winthrop’s note also says the Williams group formed a church, denied infant baptism, and would not allow civil magistrates to control religious matters.

5 Giving the exact date for the formation of these early churches is not easy. The “Old Style” or “OS” dating made March 1 the beginning of the new year, while “New Style” or “NS” used January 1. Writing on March 16, Governor Winthrop says that Williams had “recently” formed his new church. How recently? If before March 1, it would fall in 1688 by old style dating. However, most historians use new style and date the church in early 1639. Dating Clarke’s church is further complicated by another factor: at what point did the church become distinctly Baptist? Most historians say at least by 1644, and perhaps by 1641.

Cold Spring church. Because he wore a black suit, the people took him for a preacher. The young man agreed to preach for them; after all, he could give one of his father’s sermons from memory. But during his sermon Keach confessed that he was not yet converted. The people prayed for him, and he was converted right there under his own preaching. He later received baptism from Pastor Dungan.

Young Keach brought a dynamic new energy to Baptists in America. In 1688 he established a church at Pennepek (now a suburb of Philadelphia), and within a short time had formed several other churches in that area. Keach brought a strong emphasis upon evangelism and Baptists grew rapidly, though Keach returned to England.

Baptist life in the Middle Colonies was flavored by the number of settlers who came from Wales. Unlike some Baptists in England, the Welch cared little for religious controversy. Instead, they emphasized warm fellowship, fervent preaching, and congregational singing. Also, unlike many Baptists in both Old and New England, the Welch Baptists had no fear of organization, so the first Baptist association in America was formed in Philadelphia in 1707. For a time, the Philadelphia Association almost became a national body, for it affiliated churches all the way from New England to the South. This early association adopted a confession of faith in 1742, helped establish the first Baptist college in America in 1764, and exerted a wholesome influence upon all Baptist life in America.

The Welch Baptists had no fear of organization, so the first Baptist association in America was formed in Philadelphia in 1707.

The First Great Awakening

The eighteenth century proved a turning point for Baptists in America. In 1700 they had only 24 churches with 839 members, but by the end of that century they had become the largest denomination in America. Perhaps the major factor in this growth was the revival movement which historians have dubbed the “First Great Awakening.” After a time of coldness and decline in religion, a great revival movement swept over the American colonies in the 1730s and 1740s. Though Baptists had little to do with its beginnings, they reaped much of the fruit of this awakening. The Sandy Creek church in North Carolina is typical of the explosive growth which resulted from the awakening. Sandy Creek church grew from 16 members to 606 members in only 17 years. That church sent out messengers, ordained and lay, who in 17 years formed 42 additional churches. Similar explosive growth occurred elsewhere among the Baptists.

One result of the Great Awakening was the Separate Baptists. Some Baptists in the urban areas looked down upon the revival because of its excessive emotionalism. Many churches split over the issue, and those who favored the revival were nicknamed “Separates,” or sometimes “New Lights.” The mainline Baptists were often called “Regular Baptists” or “Old Lights.” Many Separate Baptists opposed education for ministers, some practiced footwashing, and most of their churches chose both men and women as deacons. In fact, some women preached among the Separate Baptists, but they usually did not receive ordination. By 1800 most Regular and Separate Baptists in the South had reunited.

By 1800 most Regular and Separate Baptists in the South had reunited. Pastors were imprisoned for preaching. When Baptists formed churches without government permission, they suffered severely. Though they supported their own churches, Baptists were taxed heavily to help support the state church.

In New England, Isaac Backus led the Baptist struggle for religious liberty. In 1769 the Warren Baptist Association formed its “Grievance Committee,” whose task was to collect cases of unjust treatment of Baptists and file court cases for their relief. This ranks as the very first religious lobby in America. The present Baptist Joint Committee in Washington, D.C. continues the work of this early Baptist “watchdog” group to look out for Baptist religious freedom. In 1774 Backus appeared before a committee of the Continental Congress, using many of the same arguments for freedom which the colonists used against England.

In a bold move in 1773, Backus and the Grievance Committee led Baptists to stop paying taxes to the state church, and to stop applying for government permission to form their own Baptist churches. This “civil disobedience” alarmed some Baptists, but this policy did more to achieve freedom than all their other efforts.

John Leland led the Baptist struggle for freedom in the South. He traveled, preached and wrote on the basic idea of religious freedom for all. Like Baptists from their beginning, Leland believed that church and state should remain separate, and that government should not control religion. In his famous treatise, The Rights of Conscience Inalienable (1791), Leland advanced three basic ideas:

1. government has no right to control personal conscience and religious convictions,
2. government interference in religion always damages the church, and
3. in church-state entanglement, it is usually the state that seeks to use the church to advance its secular goals.9

Baptists participated loyally in the Revolutionary War against England. They felt they were fighting for religious as well as political freedom. At first many Baptists opposed the Federal Constitution because they felt it did not provide religious freedom. Indeed, the Constitution itself says practically nothing about religion, other than there can be no religious test for federal office. However, James Madison of Virginia apparently persuaded Baptist leaders to support the Constitution. In return, he promised to introduce a series of amendments that would address their concerns.

The Constitution was ratified in 1789. Two years later Madison introduced ten amendments, which are known collectively as the Bill of Rights. Madison said to the Congress, “It cannot be a secret to the gentlemen of this House that, . . . there is a great body of our constituents who are dissatisfied with [the Constitution],” but who will support the new government “if they are satisfied on this one point.”10 Historians generally agree that the “one point” was religious freedom, and that among the people who agitated for greater freedom were the Baptists. These amendments were ratified in 1791 and became a part of the Constitution.

The First Amendment of this Bill of Rights says: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” In these simple phrases, “no establishment” and “free exercise,” are found the legal guarantees of religious freedom in America. Though applying at first only to the federal government, the Fourteenth Amendment later applied the Bill of Rights also to the individual states.

In the period before the Federal Constitution (1789) and the Bill of Rights (1791) Baptists in America suffered severe persecution.

The united group became the nucleus of the Southern Baptist Convention, formed in 1845.

Struggle for Religious Freedom

Many people assume that America has always had religious freedom, but that is not the case. In the period before the Federal Constitution (1789) and the Bill of Rights (1791) Baptists in America suffered severe persecution.

In New England the Congregational Church (Church of the Pilgrim Fathers) was established by law. This meant that the church and government were united, and all citizens were expected to belong to and attend the official church. Baptists who formed their own churches suffered fines, imprisonments, and public whippings.

The Anglican Church (Church of England, or Episcopal) was established by law in much of the South. Baptists suffered severe persecution, especially in Virginia where a number of Baptist pastors were imprisoned for preaching.

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[5] For a copy of Leland’s treatise, see McBeth, Sourcebook, 178f.

Thomas Jefferson, commenting later upon the First Amendment, said that it erected “a wall of separation between the church and the State.” Many people think that President Jefferson first coined the phrase “separation of church and state,” but that is not the case. So far as we know, that famous metaphor was first used by the Baptist, Roger Williams, in a letter in 1644. While the exact phrase, “separation of church and state,” does not appear in the Constitution, the concept is certainly there.

**Baptists Organized for Missions**

Baptists in America were slow to organize. Their churches were few and scattered, and were caught up mostly in the struggle to survive. Some feared organization lest it endanger the freedom of local churches. But after a time, Baptists overcame their hesitation and began to draw the churches together into larger organizations.

**Baptist Associations**

The first organization among Baptists beyond the local church was the “association.” This body involved the cooperation of Baptist churches in a small region, like a county. The churches sent delegates, later called “messengers,” to discuss matters of common concern and to plan efforts to form new churches. The earliest Baptist associations in America were the Philadelphia (Middle Colonies, 1707); Charleston (South, 1751); and Warren (New England, 1767).

**The Triennial Convention, 1814**

The struggle for religious freedom and the rise of the foreign missions movement caused Baptists to become more aware of each other, and more interested in cooperation. In 1812 Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice, Congregational missionaries, were converted to Baptist views. Rice returned to America to “stir up” the Baptists in support of foreign missions. As a result, the Baptists immediately assumed support of the Judsons. As the mission interest grew, Luther Rice led in 1814 in forming the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States. Because the main body met only every three years, this was popularly known as the “Triennial Convention.”

The Triennial Convention at first did only foreign mission work, but in time branched out to include home missions, education, and Baptist publication ministry. Some preferred to hold to the single-cause “society” approach, so by 1826 the Convention dropped all effort except foreign missions. Baptists in the South did not participate much in the Triennial Convention after this “Great Reversion” to a single cause.

**Baptist Tract Society, 1824**

Baptists were convinced that the printed word could advance the gospel. By the 1820s America had developed a great “print hunger”; people were eager for reading material. The Sunday School movement was new in America, and the classes provided a ready market for printed lessons. Baptists mostly obtained their tracts and books from non-denominational sources, but in 1824 they decided to form their own printing house. This Baptist Tract Society (later called the American Baptist Publication Society) was located in Philadelphia. It provided tracts, books, hymnals and Sunday School materials for Baptist churches both North and South.

John Mason Peck, a great pioneer missionary, was sent to the western frontier by the Triennial Convention in 1817. He labored in the St. Louis area with good results; some say he baptized the first convert in the Mississippi River. However, when the Triennial Convention abandoned home mission efforts, Peck was left on his own. Peck, along with Jonathan Going of Massachusetts, led in forming the American Baptist Home Mission Society in 1832. The purpose of the new organization was to raise money to appoint missionaries to work in spiritually needy places in the United States, just as the Triennial Convention sponsored work overseas.

Like Baptists from their beginning, Leland believed that church and state should remain separate, and that government should not control religion.

The “Three Great Societies,” as they were called (for foreign missions, publication, and home missions) formed the heart of Baptist organized ministries in the first half of the nineteenth century. They followed the “society” approach in which each organization pursued only one kind of ministry. The societies were composed of interested individuals, and had no connection to the churches. Northern Baptists preferred the independent society approach, but Baptists in the South preferred a unified “convention” approach, with the convention composed of messengers from churches, and doing many kinds of ministry.

**Tensions Increase**

In the half century before 1845, Baptists faced increasing tensions. Three areas of controversy involved the anti-missions movement, Campbellism, and the slavery controversy.

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Anti-Missions

William Carey led in forming the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792. This awakening to the call of foreign missions spread to America. As we have seen, by 1814 Baptists in America had formed their first missionary convention.

However, not all Baptists favored missions. Some opposed because it was new, and they opposed anything new. Some feared that the missionary organizations might threaten or overshadow the churches. Others thought mission work was pointless; their Calvinist theology said that God had already chosen those who would be saved and damned, and no missionary effort could change that.

The struggle for religious freedom and the rise of the foreign missions movement caused Baptists to become more aware of each other, and more interested in cooperation.

The anti-mission Baptists also generally opposed Sunday Schools, colleges and seminaries, and even protracted meetings. The anti-mission movement was strongest on the frontier, where its main leader was Daniel Parker. From Parker’s movement grew the Primitive Baptists, sometimes nicknamed “Hardshells.”

The Campbell Movement

Alexander Campbell became a Baptist in 1813. He had been Presbyterian, but concluded that baptism should be applied to believers by immersion. Campbell and several others received immersion from a Baptist preacher in 1813 and formed an independent church. Baptists in that area assumed that, since the Campbells had received immersion, therefore they were Baptists. They invited, even pressured, the Campbells and their independent church to affiliate with the local Baptist association.

Time revealed that the similarities between Campbell and the Baptists were shallow, and the differences deep. They disagreed on the nature of the Bible (Campbell rejected the authority of the Old Testament); the nature of saving faith (Campbell believed that a rational “head belief” was adequate); the Lord’s Supper (Campbell believed it should be observed every Sunday); church music (Campbell believed there should be no instrumental music in church); and the role of baptism (Campbell taught that baptism brings salvation). After several years of controversy, Campbell and his followers withdrew from Baptist life in 1830 and formed the Disciples of Christ (sometimes called Church of Christ). Many Baptists followed Campbell; historians estimate that in important denominations, Presbyterians and Methodists, also split over slavery. This division of the churches in the 1840s probably prepared the way for the division of the nation over the same issue twenty years later.

Bibliography

Books


Pamphlet


The Southern Baptist Convention
1845-1945

I. Beginning a New Convention
1845-1860
1. The Foreign Mission Board
2. Domestic Mission Board
3. The Bible Board
4. Education
5. Black Southern Baptist Work
6. The Landmark Controversy

II. War and Reconstruction
1861-1877
1. Foreign Missions
2. Domestic Missions
3. The First Sunday School Board
4. Reconstruction
5. Black Baptist Work
6. The Domestic and Indian Mission Board
7. The Foreign Mission Board
8. Theological Education
9. Women’s Work

III. Renewal and Growth
1877-1900
1. The Home Mission Board
2. The Sunday School Board
3. Woman’s Missionary Union
4. Theological Education
5. Foreign Missions
6. Baptist Young People’s Union
7. Summary

IV. Efficiency and Cooperation
1900-1927
1. The Executive Committee
2. Theological Education
3. The Relief and Annuity Board
4. The Sunday School Board
5. The $75 Million Campaign
6. The Cooperative Program
7. Confession of Faith

V. Depression and War
1928-1945
1. Convention Representation
2. The Great Depression
3. Foreign Mission Board
4. The 100,000 Club
5. Evangelism and Growth
6. World War II

VI. Conclusion
The Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1945

Beginning a New Convention 1845-1860

In the beginning the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) faced multiple obstacles in launching the work of a new denomination.

(1) The Convention was charting a new course. Heretofore all Baptist missions, educational, and benevolent work had been done by independent societies established for a single purpose. Without hesitation and in spite of the problems the founding leaders moved immediately to establish the new convention.

The Foreign Mission Board

The first meeting of the Foreign Mission Board was held in Richmond, Virginia. In 1845 missionaries already on the field were free to choose the mission board with which they would serve, and J. Lewis Shuck and I. J. Roberts, both Southerners under appointment to China with the older General Missionary Convention, agreed to join the new Foreign Mission Board.

The first new appointees of the Foreign Mission Board were S. C. Clopton, his wife, and George Pearcy all of whom went to China in the fall of 1845.

In 1847 Matthew T. Yates and his wife Eliza went to Shanghai to begin a ministry which would span 41 years. Southern Baptists’ first single woman missionary was Harriet A. Baker from Powhatan, Virginia who received an appointment to China to begin a school for girls.

In 1847 John Day, serving in Liberia under the old Triennial Convention, became the first Black Southern Baptist missionary when he began work under the new Convention.

Domestic Mission Board

The new Domestic Mission Board faced serious difficulties:

(2) Although the fledgling Convention had been formed for the purpose of conducting both home and foreign missions, the task of enlisting the churches in such a missions enterprise was difficult.

(3) Furthermore, many Baptists, north and south, had a deep concern that the Convention form of denominational polity with more centralized organization could weaken the emphasis on the local church as the primary unit of Baptist life.

(4) This emphasis on “localism” also made it difficult to secure funds for “home missions” since the more established states preferred to work through associations and state conventions to meet the challenge of the spiritual destitution all across the south.

(5) Much of the south was in the pioneer stage of development and broad rivers, mountain ranges, primitive roads and long distances were formidable barriers to be overcome.

An educational convention met in May, 1857 and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary began in Greenville, South Carolina in the fall of 1859.

The Bible Board

A controversy between the American Bible Society and Baptists over the translation of the word “baptize” brought a division in 1850, and Southern Baptists organized their own Bible board in Nashville, Tennessee. However, this board never received strong support by the churches of the Convention. When Nashville was overrun in 1863 by the northern army, the board was abolished.

Education

Many local academies and preparatory schools had been started all across the south by individuals, associations, and state conventions, and nine colleges were started between 1845 and 1860.

Many of the Baptist educational institutions offered ministerial training through theological departments, but some leaders in the South saw the need for a seminary for the professional training of ministers. An educational convention met in May, 1857 and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary began in Greenville, South Carolina in the fall of 1859 with James P. Boyce as president and John A. Broadus, William Williams, and Basil Manly, Jr. as faculty members.
Black Southern Baptist Work

It has been estimated that there were as many as 400,000 Black Baptists in the south by 1860. Most were members of the same churches as whites, but there were some churches of all Black membership in the larger cities. A Black Baptist church was founded in Savannah, Georgia in 1788 under the preaching of Andrew Bryan. Today the Southern Baptist Convention has an ever-increasing number of Black members, churches, and leaders, and it is deeply regretted that there could ever have been a time when the practice of human slavery was justified or tolerated.

The Landmark Controversy

The Landmark movement had three principal emphases. (1) The authority of local and visible New Testament congregations were identified as Baptist churches. (2) The Kingdom of Christ was made up of local congregations which had an unbroken continuity from the days of the New Testament. (3) True churches must possess all the characteristics of the primitive churches which meant that Baptist churches alone were true churches.

J. R. Graves challenged the Foreign Mission Board’s authority in 1859, and there was such deep antagonism that the convention urged that personal controversies among pastors, editors, and brethren should ever afterward be avoided.

War and Reconstruction 1861-1877

After the Civil War began on April 9, 1861 nearly all of the Baptist state conventions in the south passed resolutions favoring the Confederate cause.

However, two years later, the Convention heard a report that colleges had suspended, Foreign Missions were paralyzed, Home Missions almost non-existent, and State organizations were unable to carry on their work. 2

Foreign Missions

When the war began, the U. S. Navy blockaded the south, and the Foreign Mission Board was unable to communicate with the missionaries in China and Africa. All during the war, Baptists in the border areas of Maryland, D.C., Kentucky, and Missouri assisted in communicating with Southern Baptist foreign missionaries.

Domestic Missions

Before the war there had been over 150 missionaries serving among the Black persons, Chinese, Germans, and Indians, but the work stopped when the war began.

As the tide of war began to turn against the south, military control by the north was extended across the territory of the Southern Baptist Convention. The American Baptist Home Mission Society was given authority to take charge of abandoned Baptist meeting houses in southern areas controlled by the northern armies. 3 This practice did not make for a good relationship between northern and southern Baptists.

The First Sunday School Board

In the dark days of the war the first Sunday School Board was organized in 1863 with headquarters in Greenville, South Carolina. A program was started to provide books and volunteer agents for the states. Hymnbooks and other printed helps were distributed in large numbers in the Sunday Schools of the south.

Reconstruction

When the Confederacy surrendered at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, the south was divided into military districts under the control of federal generals. The economic structure was destroyed, and the material loss was devastating. Educational institutions had been closed, many houses of worship had been destroyed, and confusion reigned.

As the Southern Baptist state conventions began to meet in 1865, they were practically unanimous in voting not to re-affiliate with the Home and Foreign Mission societies of the North.

The era of political reconstruction ended with the inauguration of

The Convention heard a report that colleges had suspended, Foreign Missions were paralyzed, Home Missions almost non-existent, and State organizations were unable to carry on their work.

Black Baptist Work

During twelve years following the war most Black Baptists in the south withdrew from the white churches in order to form their own congregations. State conventions urged that assistance be given to help the Black churches.

On the whole, the division was an amicable one. In some cases the white churches gave their buildings to the [Black congregations] and moved elsewhere to build their own; often the white churches provided financial aid to [Black] Baptists as they attempted to construct their church edifices. 4

The Domestic and Indian Mission Board

The work of the Domestic board flourished when the offerings were good, but unfortunately decreased funds caused reductions and the discouragement of indebtedness.

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3 Ibid., 52.
4 Ibid., 233.
The Home Mission Board faced declining financial support. Its receipts were less than half as much in 1877 as in 1867. The Domestic Mission Board ended the era of reconstruction with some Southern Baptists calling for the removal of the home board from the work of the Convention.

The Foreign Mission Board

During the war, the three mission stations in China continued despite hardships. The Black missionaries in Liberia and Sierra Leone had to cope with their own civil war, and the work in Brazil was stopped as T. J. Bowen returned home due to illness.

The Foreign Mission Board appointed a single woman, Edmonia Moon for missionary service in China. Edmonia’s sister, Lottie Moon, was later also appointed for service in China’s Shantung Province.

The Foreign Mission Board appointed a single woman, Edmonia Moon for missionary service in China. Edmonia’s sister, Lottie Moon, was later also appointed for service in China’s Shantung Province. The mission in Nigeria was kept alive by Sarah Harden who was the widow of a Black missionary from Liberia.

Theological Education

The Southern Baptist Seminary at Greenville, South Carolina, closed in 1862 and reopened on November 1, 1865 with only seven students and four faculty members. Because of the devastations of the war, it became evident that South Carolina could no longer support the school, and in 1877 the Seminary was moved to Louisville, Kentucky.

Women’s Work

Perhaps the first Convention-related women’s meeting occurred in 1868 during the SBC meeting in Baltimore. By 1874 the Foreign Mission Board recommended that a committee for women’s work be appointed in each state. In 1875 the SBC recognized the work of “these gentle and loving servants of Jesus,” and by 1877 the Convention urged that a female missionary society be organized in every church.

Renewal and Growth 1877-1900

The Home Mission Board

With the election of Isaac T. Tichenor as Corresponding Secretary of the Home Mission Board in 1882, a new day began to dawn in the SBC. The energetic and visionary Tichenor immediately began to awaken the Convention out of its lethargy and challenged the South to unite their energies. His vision included schools, hospitals, and homes for orphaned children.

Joe W. Burton has suggested ten significant contributions made by Tichenor: (1) saved the SBC through saving the Home Mission Board; (2) laid the foundations for the Cooperative Program through his plea for systematic giving; (3) established a church building department; (4) fostered and built up Sunday School work; (5) inaugurated the board’s work in Cuba; (6) actively promoted city missions; (7) assisted Black work through conducting institutes and training Black ministers; (8) inaugurated the chain of mountain mission schools; (9) promoted direct missions on the frontier among the indians and foreigners; (10) and led Baptists to see the south as a base for world missions.

The Sunday School Board

Since 1874 the Home Mission Board had been doing the work of Sunday School publications for the SBC. Tichenor wisely realized that the SBC needed literature that was southern in origin and would support the programs of the Convention.

Tichenor suggested to the 1885 Convention that a committee be formed to determine if the Home Mission Board should expand Sunday School publications or give the responsibility to others. The Convention left the decision about ways and means to meet the growing demands to the Home Mission Board.

The American Baptist Publication Society viewed this growing competition in its territory with great concern. The Society strengthened its organization in the south and contested the Convention’s Sunday School publications.

The conflict between the two became so heated that Tichenor called the contest, “the heaviest denominational conflict of the last century.” A conference was held between representatives of the Convention and the Society, but there was no agreement.

In May of 1890, J. M. Frost of Richmond, Virginia recommended that a Board of Publication be established. The Fort Worth Convention authorized a committee of nine to “…be entrusted with the management of our Sunday-school publications…”

When the 1891 convention met in Birmingham, Frost and J. B. Gambrell, who held opposing views, were appointed to bring recommendations on a proposed Sunday School Board. Frost wrote the report, Gambrell wrote the closing paragraph, and Frost wrote the last sentence.

In the last paragraph Gambrell acknowledged widely divergent views held by equally earnest brethren and recommended that freedom of choice be accorded without prejudice. Frost added the last sentence urging the
brethren to give the new board a fair consideration and not to obstruct it.

When the committee report was presented to the crowded Convention, many speakers were ready to voice opinions on both sides. When John A. Broadus, the beloved president of Southern Seminary, urged the Convention to vote without debate, his request was honored, and the report was adopted with only a few dissenting votes.

**Woman’s Missionary Union**

In Richmond on May 11, 1888 a group of women met to form a national organization. The first president was Martha McIntosh of South Carolina, and Annie Armstrong of Baltimore was elected Corresponding Secretary.

The name chosen for the new organization was “The Executive Committee of the Woman’s Mission Societies - (Auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention.” In 1890 the name of the organization was changed to “Woman’s Missionary Union, Auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention.” Missionary Lottie Moon wrote a series of letters in the *Foreign Mission Journal*, and other periodicals, stirring Baptist women in the South to greater interest in foreign missions. Miss Moon encouraged Southern Baptist women to institute a week of prayer and offering at Christmas time. The first offering goal in 1888 was $2,000 and $3,315.26 was received.

**Theological Education**

In 1888 John A. Broadus was elected president of Southern Seminary and served until his death in 1895. William H. Whitsitt, professor of church history at Southern, succeeded Broadus as president.

In 1896 Whitsitt published *A Question in Baptist History* which denied Baptist church succession, which was a central tenet of Landmarkism. Whitsitt was forced to resign as president and professor in May, 1898.

In 1899 E. Y. Mullins became president of Southern Seminary. Mullins was a product of Mississippi and Texas but came to the position from the pastorate in Newton Center, Massachusetts. Albert McClellan would later say that Mullins “burst into Southern Baptist life like a comet, to burn brightly for 28 years.”

**Foreign Missions**

A movement called “Gospel Missionism” began in China under the leadership of missionary T. P. Crawford. The “Gospel Missioners” contended that missionaries ought to be supported directly by individual churches entirely independent of any board.

In 1890 Crawford organized the “Gospel Mission Association in North China.” After he was removed from Baptist Convention, was formed with annual meetings to be held in connection with the Southern Baptist Convention.

**Summary**

As the Southern Baptist denomination came to the close of the nineteenth century, every area of life and work had been strengthened. The state conventions had united and expanded their work. The national body had three strong functioning Boards. The work was actively supported by a dedicated organization of women. Theological education was in the hands of the largest seminary in America. The storm of internal controversies had been successfully weathered. Southern Baptists faced

As the “unions” began to move south, the new Sunday School Board recognized the movement in 1893 and reported that many churches had provided “unions”...

the list of missionaries, the movement gained little further support.

With the aid of an extra offering promoted by Woman’s Missionary Union, the Foreign Mission Board’s indebtedness was retired in 1898.

**Baptist Young People’s Union**

Between 1881 and 1896 at least nine of the major Protestant denominations in America had formed organizations for their young people. The Baptist Young People’s Union of America was formed in 1891.

As the “unions” began to move south, the new Sunday School Board recognized the movement in 1893 and reported that many churches had provided “unions” to increase spirituality, stimulate Christian service, edify scriptural knowledge and instruction in Baptist doctrine and history among young people.

In 1895 the Baptist Young People’s Union, Auxiliary to the Southern

change in structure was needed for the Convention to have a functional existence between annual sessions.

The 1917 Convention authorized the formation of an Executive Committee to act for the Convention ad interim. This action ushered in a new era for the SBC. The Executive Committee gave the SBC an existence between sessions, acted as an advisor on questions arising between the Boards of the Convention, and eventually gave the Convention a means to direct the funding of its ministries.

**Theological Education**

In the first quarter of the 20th century two new theological schools for the training of ministers were founded. The Baptist General Convention of Institution was changed to the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

### The Relief and Annuity Board

In 1917 the Convention appointed a Commission to study the matter of ministerial relief, and in 1918 a board of Ministerial Relief and Annuities was created to be located in Dallas, Texas. The work of the new Board included relief for ministers who had made no retirement provisions and an annuity program by which ministers could make contributions to plan for future retirement.

### The Sunday School Board

The Cooperative Program became “a major factor in the growth of missions, evangelism, and Christian education among Southern Baptists.”

Texas secured a charter for The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary on March 14, 1908, and the Seminary graduated its first class June 24, 1908.

The new school was innovative in several ways: (1) Women were eligible for seminary study and degrees on the same terms as men. 26 women were enrolled in the first scholastic year of the Seminary. (2) Southwestern Seminary also led the way in offering training for laymen. (3) A full department of religious education was established with John M. Price as head. (4) A department of gospel music was begun with I. E. Reynolds as head. (5) A department of field evangelism was organized for students who would both study and serve as field evangelists.8

The formation of the Baptist Bible Institute in New Orleans was authorized by the Southern Baptist Convention in its 1917 annual meeting. In 1946 the name of the Baptist life through his book, *Building a Standard Sunday School*. At a time

### The $75 Million Campaign

In 1919 Southern Baptists began a campaign to raise $75 million for Baptist causes over a five-year period. At the end of the effort, pledges totaled an unbelievable $92,630,923. Most SBC agencies made the mistake of expanding their work on the basis of the pledges received and borrowed money to forge ahead.

An economic depression hit the south in 1920, and by the end of the campaign in 1924, $58,591,713.69 had actually been received. Southern Baptists gave more than three times as much from 1919 to 1924 as they had in the preceding five years.

In the course of the campaign, churches experienced spiritual renewal, baptized record number of converts, and called out thousands of young men and women for Christian service. Baptist schools received many new students, and these young pastors and ministers led a period of Baptist growth.

### The Cooperative Program

When the $75 Million Campaign came to a close in 1924, Southern Baptists were urged to continue to adopt the biblical principles of stewardship, tithing, and systematic giving week by week. In 1925 the “Co-Operative Program” was adopted, and J. E. Dillard was named chairman of the new Commission.

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9 Ibid., 649-50.

10 Ibid., 622.
The Cooperative Program became “a major factor in the growth of missions, evangelism, and Christian education among Southern Baptists.”10 McBeth lists the following benefits of the system:

(1) Only a fraction of collected funds are used for administration. (2) It allows less glamorous ministries to receive funding. (3) Churches participate in all of the denomination’s ministries. (4) Church services are not being continuously interrupted by traveling agents. (5) The agencies receive funds regularly and can better plan for the future.

Confession of Faith

In 1924 the SBC voted to produce a doctrinal statement. The old New Hampshire Confession of Faith of 1833 provided the basic framework with several articles being added on religious liberty, evangelism, and Baptist cooperation. The first Southern Baptist “confession of faith,” titled The Baptist Faith and Message, was adopted with little opposition in 1925.

Depression and War 1928-1945

Between 1921 and 1926 indebtedness of Southern Baptist agencies increased from a half million dollars to more than $6.5 million. The Executive Committee designated November 11, 1928 as “Baptist Honor Day.” Southern Baptists quickly and generously responded with a special offering of $397,444 to apply to the debt which saved the Home Mission Board from bankruptcy.

Convention Representation

Since the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention there had been tension over requirements for representation at Southern Baptist Convention meetings. Churches, Sunday Schools, Societies, associations, colleges, periodicals, and even business firms could be represented at the Convention if they met the financial requirements.

In 1931 a motion was passed that the Convention consist of “messengers” who were members of Missionary Baptist churches, cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention, on the basis of one messenger for every church contributing to the work of the Convention and one additional messenger for every $250 paid to the work of the Convention, with a limit of three messengers. Grassroots Baptists from the rural churches of the South with “the common bonds of hardship and adversity”11 passed the motion.

The Great Depression

In October of 1929 the country was plunged into one of the greatest economic catastrophes of its history. Within the next three years American industry had dropped to less than half of its 1929 volume, banks were failing, and the stock market temporarily closed. Southern Baptist institutions faced disaster.

Foreign Mission Board

Richmond banks were demanding payment from the Foreign Mission Board on over $1 million indebtedness. The Board promised to repay every cent of the debt, and the banks agreed to allow additional time. In 1932 the Foreign Mission Board reported the loss of nearly a quarter of its missionary force in the previous six years.

The 100,000 Club

When the Executive Committee met in April of 1933 they struggled with the awesome debt of the SBC agencies. Frank Edward Tripp, St. Joseph, Missouri pastor, devised the idea of a “Baptist 100,000 Club” to enlist 100,000 Southern Baptists to pay $1 per month above their regular subscription to the church budget. Within ten years $2,627,822.36 had been given and the debt was totally retired in 1943.

The Cooperative Program which had been struggling for Baptist support inherited the momentum of the Baptist 100,000 Club.

Evangelism and Growth

In spite of the despair caused by the Depression, Southern Baptists continued to experience dramatic growth. By 1941 1,839 new Sunday Schools and a half million new members had been added. The number of Training Unions had increased by 2,000 with a quarter of a million new members.

The storm of internal controversies had been successfully weathered. Southern Baptists faced the new century with confidence and the expectation of continued advancement.

Facing the severity of the Depression the Convention reaffirmed in 1930 “...we regard with sacred importance the primary place of Evangelism in the New Testament. If we would follow the New Testament, we must ever give the soul-winning propagation of the gospel first place in all our Baptist enterprises and work.”12

World War II

Just when coming out of the Depression, the nation was plunged into a world war on December 7, 1941. Every part of life was affected. Southern Baptists were scattered across the country and around the world. Men left their homes, and women went to work in defense plants. New Southern Baptist churches began to spring up in non-traditional territory, and many soldiers vowed to return to foreign fields as missionaries.

The Convention rejoiced in the retirement of its indebtedness in 1943. Between 1932 and the end of the war

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11 Fletcher, 152.
12 Barnes, 234.
in 1945 Southern Baptist membership had grown by nearly 50%!

**Conclusion**

Historian Robert A. Baker suggests some possible reasons for Southern Baptists’ remarkable growth:

1. The simple biblical emphasis and democratic ecclesiology which helped the South to become “The Bible Belt.”
2. A self-sustaining ministry with an emphasis on a divine calling for witnessing.
3. Identification with a culture-pattern of its environment which caused Southern Baptists to be viewed as a “peoples church.”
4. Evangelistic zeal.
5. Individual leadership. Every region and every organization of Baptists can boast of its giants.
6. The structure of the Convention which is capable of modification to encourage cooperation.
7. The absence of significant schism.
8. An emphasis on education.

As the first 100 years of Southern Baptist history came to a climax, and the war came to a close, Southern Baptists were ready to take a giant step forward in expansion and growth.

**Bibliography**


Southern Baptists’ Second Century

I. Postwar Advance 1946-1960

II. Stateside Expansion

III. Infrastructure

IV. Turmoil and Growth
   1. Segregation Pressures
   2. Theological Questions
   3. Missions Creativity/Initiatives
   4. New State Conventions
   5. Ordination of Women

V. Agency and Institutional Advance
   1. National Agencies
   2. Growing Home Base

VI. A New Round of Conflict
   1. Theological Disagreement
   2. Program Advance Thwarted
   3. Two Factions Surface
   4. Major Leadership Changes
   5. New Directions Emerge

VII. Conservative Momentum
   1. Agency Head Reaction
   2. Conservative Leadership Prevails

VIII. Southern Baptist Dissent
   1. Moderate Forces Take Shape
   2. Fracture and Politics

IX. Conclusion
Southern Baptists’ Second Century

As Southern Baptists began their second century in 1946, they seemed positioned for a great post-war advance. World War II had ended in August of 1945 following the awesome introduction of the nuclear age, but not before it had seriously eroded Southern Baptists’ long-entrenched regionalism.

A centennial celebration originally scheduled for the convention in 1945 fell victim to wartime restrictions related to the size of gatherings. Convention leadership dutifully canceled that annual meeting delaying their formal celebration until 1946 in Miami. That meeting featured an evangelistic crusade and included the adoption of a Statement of Principles which was almost overlooked in the celebration but which may have indicated the nearest thing to a doctrinal consensus that Southern Baptists had yet enjoyed. A resurgence of religion in America gave Southern Baptists additional momentum. Though they declined an invitation to join the newly organized World Council of Churches, their State of Principles included an expansive world view.

Further underscoring the transition to their Second Century were memorials noting the passing of such stalwarts as George Truett and L. R. Scarbrough since the last annual meeting in 1944. New leadership was on the horizon. Duke McCall, former president of the Baptist Bible Institute (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) became the second executive secretary of the Executive Committee as Austin Crouch retired. Truett was succeeded by a charismatic young preacher named W. A. Criswell. McCall and Criswell epitomized the new guard.

Postwar Advance 1946-1960

The Foreign Mission Board’s Charles Maddry who had led that depression-embattled agency out of debt in 1943 before stepping down had been succeeded by M. Theron Rankin. Rankin, a foreign missionary to China, and area secretary for the Orient under Maddry, immediately led that agency to plan a visionary "Advance Program" which the Southern Baptist Convention embraced in 1949. Calling for a previously undreamed of goal of 1750 missionaries to be supported by a ten million dollar budget, Rankin’s plan embraced the whole world and seemed to reflect the expansive vision inherent in the 1946 Statement of Principles, as well as a new spirit undergirding post-war Southern Baptists. Their experience in the armed forces and in industrialized America during World War II had broadened their horizon dramatically and even the martyrdom of medical missionary Bill Wallace at the hands of the Chinese communists in 1950 only strengthened their resolve.

When Rankin died of leukemia in 1953, he was replaced by Texas’ own Baker James Cauthen, who had also served in China and succeeded Rankin as secretary for the Orient. Battle-tested and widely celebrated, Cauthen picked up the torch from Rankin and pressed on with the advance program. By the time Cauthen would step down in 1979, he would have led the Foreign Mission Board to enter sixty-seven new countries and register a three hundred percent increase in missionaries under appointment.

Stateside Expansion

But an expanding home base was the platform for the remarkable Southern Baptist world outreach as their second century unfolded. According to an analysis by H. K. Neely, Southern Baptist expansion from their original Southern states augmented by southwestern expansion, had to overcome four barriers: competition by the Home Mission Society; their sectional name; the limits of their own by-laws and constitution; a fear of larger gatherings and the ability to function.

The post-war era which had been presaged by the 1942 San Antonio convention decision to admit a California Baptist Convention was to overcome all of those barriers. A Kansas Convention came into the Southern Baptist Convention in 1948, followed by an Oregon-Washington body in 1949.

In the years ahead, the only place the expanding Southern Baptist Convention would draw the line was at the national borders. Yet, as early as 1953, a messenger from Fairbanks, Alaska was seated, and the Home Mission Board reported extensive efforts there.

Infrastructure

As Southern Baptists began their Second Century, they listed 5,865,554 members worshiping in 26,134 churches. These churches were gathered in 923 associations and twenty state conventions. Their gifts reached $98,458,425 in 1945, and the SBC received a total of $22,490,751 of those gifts.

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2 Southern Baptist Convention Annual, 1949, 87.
6 Southern Baptist Convention Annual, 1946, 494.
With 256,699 baptisms that year, and Sunday School enrollment passing 3.5 million, they were a force to be reckoned with. As it turned out, they had not even begun to realize their potential.

A major development in the Southern Baptist Convention during this post-war advance period was an extensive expansion of SBC ministries. Led by the Executive Committee where Duke McCall, who had succeeded Austin Crouch in 1946, was himself succeeded by Porter Routh in 1951, Southern Baptists added a Historical Commission that same year to join a Southern Baptist Foundation which had been established in 1947 to seek and administer endowment funds for the Convention. This was followed by the creation of a Stewardship Commission in 1960 to pick up a role previously held by the Executive Committee.

Even more dramatic was an expansion of seminary ministries. Joining The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary were Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (which while created in 1945, joined the Convention in 1950), Southeastern Seminary (which came into the Convention in 1950 and began its work the following year), and Midwestern Seminary, (which was approved by the Convention in 1957 and began its work in 1958). 7

A Radio Committee which had been organized by the Convention in 1938 became the Radio and Television Commission in 1955, and moved its offices a year later to Fort Worth. It had been preceded by the Brotherhood Commission in 1950, which was a successor to the old Laymen’s Missionary Movement of 1907. It was headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee.

These programs joined the four basic agencies of Foreign Missions, Home Missions, the Baptist Sunday School Board, and the Annuity Board, all of which continued to grow and reflect an increasingly corporate demeanor in the post-war era.

Understanding this trend, the Executive Committee in 1955 began to study “the total program of Southern Baptists” which resulted in formalized program statements and added corporate nomenclature, planning, and efficiency. 8

As the post-war advance continued to develop, stronger women’s roles led by the Woman’s Missionary Union were evident. Mission boards were especially dependent on the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for the over and above funds for their advance. Alma Hunt of Roanoke, Virginia, succeeded Kathleen Mallory as head of Woman’s Missionary Union in 1948 and teamed with Marie Wiley Mathis who joined her as President of WMU in 1956, saw their organization which had reached the one million mark in 1950 in membership record their first million dollar Home Mission offering in 1953. 9 The Foreign Mission offering had passed that mark still earlier.

Highlighting the triumphalistic advance program of Southern Baptist’s post-war experience was a Sunday School promotion called “A Million More in ’54.”

The Christian Life Commission chipped away at Southern Baptist resistance to such changes. In 1961 the Woman’s Missionary Union promoted the study of a book by T. B. Maston, The Bible and Race, designed to help Baptists emerge from their segregated past.

Theological Questions

In 1960 Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor, Ralph Elliot, published a book through the Sunday School Board’s Broadman Press called The Message of Genesis. It quickly became the focus of a fire storm of criticism from Southern Baptist’s conservatives who felt the book undermined traditional views of scripture. Elliott’s stated purpose was to open the Old Testament to students who tended to dismiss it because of problems they couldn’t resolve. 10

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7 Fletcher, 194-96.

8 Southern Baptist Convention Annual, 1956, 33.


With this expanded demographic base, missionary appointments passed the initial goal of 1750 that had been a part of Rankin’s advance program. 

Adoniram Judson and colleagues which had introduced Baptist’s initial American connectionalism on a national basis. 12

missions
Creativity/Initiatives

Despite such unrest, Southern Baptists continued their advance during the ’60s led by their two mission boards. The Foreign Mission Board not only expanded the countries in which it served, but its categories for service. In 1964 it approved a missionary journeyman program for young college graduates who would serve overseas alongside career missionaries for two years. This program’s way had been paved by a national Peace Corps program under the Kennedy administration. An associate program had been opened up the year before for older missionaries. 13

Redford and then Arthur Rutledge who succeeded him in 1965. A long-range planning process looked toward the late ’70s and further defined the relationship the Home Mission Board would have to the state conventions by moving from a competitive missions environment with the state conventions to a cooperative missions environment. A program similar to the Foreign Mission Board’s Journeyman program, called US-2, signifying two years of service in the United States was implemented as well as a variety of social missions and innovations in evangelism. The latter was led first by C. E. Autry and then by Kenneth Chafin, former professor of evangelism at both Southwestern and Southern seminaries. 15

With this expanded demographic base, missionary appointments passed the initial goal of 1750 that had been a part of Rankin’s advance program.

New State Conventions

Southern Baptists also expanded throughout the ’60s and into the ’70s. The Arizona Baptist Convention spawned work throughout the west including the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention in October of 1964, the Northern Plains Baptist Convention in 1967, and the Nevada Baptist Convention in 1978. The year 1969 witnessed the birth of a Southern Baptist-related Convention in New York and the following year the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey came into being.

Ordination of Women

Almost unnoticed during the ’60s was an event which presaged a major source of conflict for Southern Baptists in years ahead. A young Virginia woman Addie Davis was ordained by the Watts Street Baptist Church of Durham, North Carolina, in August of 1964. Ordinations of women to deacon bodies and for various forms of ministry would grow slowly from that point on matching a national tendency toward expanded roles for women and leveling barriers perceived to have prevented their progress over the years. 16

Agency and Institutional Advance

National Agencies

Agency and institutional aggressiveness matched this geographical expansion step for step. Besides the advances of the four boards and the seminary expansion, the Convention structure now clearly led by the Executive Committee included eight commissions, though one, the Hospital Commission was phased out in 1971. They included the American Baptist Seminary Commission, the Brotherhood Commission, the Education Commission, the Historical Commission, and the Stewardship Commission.
The most aggressive commissions, however, during this period were the Christian Life Commission led by Foy D. Valentine and the Radio and Television Commission led by Paul M. Stevens. Valentine had succeeded A. C. Miller in 1960 and Stevens had followed S. F. Lowe in 1953.

The Christian Life Commission, as previously mentioned, took the lead in a more progressive approach to Civil Rights and women’s issues, while continuing such traditional emphases as temperance and family values.

The Radio and Television Commission riding the wave of a technological boom in communications with Paul Stevens at the helm fought some jurisdictional battles with the two mission boards and the Sunday School Board, but enjoyed a very high profile Southern Baptist ministry during this period.

Growing Home Base

But the structure worked and both the SBC and cooperating state conventions reached the 125th anniversary of their joint effort in 1970 with some dramatic statistics in place. The post war count of 26,134 churches had risen to 34,335, but membership had zoomed to 11,489,613 from the post war 5,865,554. Cooperating state conventions now numbered thirty with associations totaling 1,196. It was in the area of total gifts, however, that the most startling increases were evident. Southern Baptists gave $842,707,390 the year preceding their anniversary compared to $98,458,425 twenty-five years earlier. 17

A New Round of Conflict

Theological Disagreement

Despite such heady progress, Southern Baptists opened the ’70s with a new round of conflicts related to the publication of The Broadman Bible Commentary’s Genesis and Exodus volume just as it had opened the ’60s with conflict over the publication of The Message of Genesis. In a series of rancorous votes the Convention instructed the Sunday School Board to recall the commentary and have it rewritten. This action highlighted a coalition of conservatives suspicious of what they felt were liberal tendencies within Southern Baptist life. By the end of the ’70s, their power would be even more evident.

Program Advance Thwarted

Building on an increasingly cooperative relationship between its agencies, institutions, and commissions, Convention leadership in the mid seventies began to formulate a dramatic new plan for missions, evangelism, church growth, and stewardship. Their plans came together in 1978 under the title “Bold Mission Thrust.” 18 But “Bold Mission Thrust” was destined to take a minor role.

Two Factions Surface

The coalition of conservatives that had formed during the Elliot conflict and gained new strength during the commentary conflict organized a Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship in 1973 with a specific purpose of leading Southern Baptists back toward what they felt would be a more traditional and conservative position in matters of faith and practice. In Norfolk, Virginia, in 1976, Adrian Rodgers was nominated by this group convinced that the high profile pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis was just the man to accomplish the task. James Sullivan, the recent retired secretary of the Baptist Sunday School Board, was also nominated, however, and was elected on the first ballot after Rodgers withdrew.

Another innovation was a concept call “Partnership Missions” which began with the New Life Crusade in Japan in 1963.

Major Leadership Change

The early years of this conflict coincided with a major change of leadership in Southern Baptist life.


18 Fletcher, 264-65.


20 Fletcher, 253-55.
Porter Routh stepped aside to be replaced by Harold Bennett as secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee. The title of the position was later changed to president as were top positions at both mission boards. Arthur Rutledge was succeeded by William Tanner and in 1980 the Foreign Mission Board’s epitome of advance, Baker James Cauthen, was succeeded by FMB staffer and former missionary R. Keith Parks. Seminary leadership had also changed including the two oldest institutions as Duke McCall had been succeeded by Roy Honeycutt at Southern Seminary and Robert Naylor had stepped down in favor of Russell Dilday at Southwestern Seminary. The Sunday School Board’s Grady Cothen gave way to Lloyd Elder.

**Conservative Momentum**

**Agency Head Reaction**

In 1984, agency leadership, which at first tried to focus on Bold Mission Thrust, began to take issue with the increasing power of the leaders of the conservative resurgence. The battle was joined by Russell Dilday’s 1984 Southern Baptist Convention sermon challenging what he felt were disturbing tendencies to politicize the Convention and drag it down from “the higher ground” it had attained. 21 Agency and institution leadership was increasingly under fire. Randall Lolly resigned in protest at Southeastern Seminary to be replaced first by Lewis Drummond and later by Paige Patterson. William Tanner left the Home Mission Board to take over the Executive Secretary’s position in Oklahoma and was replaced by Larry Lewis, one of the key lieutenants of the conservative resurgence. Foy Valentine tried to set up his replacement with the election of a Midwestern Seminary professor Larry Baker in 1988. Baker’s electing vote was close, however, and reversed a little over a year later with the election of Richard Land, a former Criswell Bible Institute leader. 22 Conservatives also managed to reverse the convention’s increasingly progressive approach towards women’s roles in church life, and specifically the ordination of women to the deaconate and to ministry. Conservative leaders advocated more traditional family-oriented roles for women. Civil rights and other social concerns of the ’60s and ’70s were replaced by the highly emotional issues of abortion and homosexuality.

**New Directions Emerge**

A number of conflicting trends developed. Seminaries developed a rapid expansion of enrollment in the early ’80s only to see it fall off sharply later in the decade. Some attributed it to demographics, others to the toll of the conflict in Southern Baptist life.

Baptisms dropped off, though stewardship continued to go up. The mission boards continued to appoint more missionaries and expand their bases, not only around the world in the case of the Foreign Mission Board, but throughout the United States in the case of the Home Mission Board.

Economic reverses throughout the country in the late ’80s caused the Radio and Television Commission now led by Jimmy Allen, to lose much of its momentum though it was firmly lodged in the communications revolution and would continue to play a significant role in Southern Baptist life.

**Southern Baptist Dissent**

**Moderate Forces Take Shape**

Throughout the 1980s as the conservative resurgence successfully pursued its agenda and goals, moderate dissent took a variety of forms. Women who had felt the ire of the more conservative forces organized Women in Ministry in 1983. Then

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22 Fletcher, 295.
24Fletcher, 334ff.
moderate Baptists on the East Coast organized the Southern Baptist Alliance in 1986. A newspaper to highlight dissenting positions called SBC Today (later Baptists Today) was begun in 1983 and the Southern Baptist Alliance began a seminary in Richmond in 1989.

A publishing group named Smyth and Helwys organized in historic Greenville, South Carolina and then moved to Macon, Georgia, where they began to compete in a very small way with the giant Sunday School Board. Baylor University which had taken steps to assert its independence from Texas Baptists under the rationale it was trying to protect itself from the kind of takeovers that had been accomplished in Southern Baptist life announced the start of another seminary in the Southwest to be named for George W. Truett. 25

In 1990, moderate dissenters organized the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and began mission ministries and coordination with other dissenting groups to provide other services to SBC moderate churches. Texans Cecil Sherman and later Dan Vestal provided leadership to this group which also enjoyed the support of numerous Texas Baptist churches. The BGCT channeled designated funds for the CBF. The CBF gradually consolidated its role and was a significant dissent alternative by 2001. In contrast, the Alliance for Baptists became more an east coast enclave of churches with ties to the American Baptist Convention.

**Fracture and Politics**

In 1992, the fracture within Southern Baptist life blended with national politics as two Southern Baptists were nominated by the Democratic ticket to run for president and vice president. When Bill Clinton of Arkansas and Albert Gore of Tennessee were elected, their positions on abortion and homosexuality brought the full force of Southern Baptist conservative leaders to the ranks of administration opposition. Several independent Christian coalitions including Jerry Falwell’s fundamentalist group and Pat Robinson’s Christian coalition joined hands with Southern Baptist leadership as what the national press called “the religious right.” By the 2000 election, Texas governor George W. Bush, who narrowly defeated Al Gore in a bitterly fought struggle, found this group a potent ally.

Despite tensions with WMU over their willingness to provide literature for dissenting Baptist groups, and changes to the constitution to exclude any churches tolerating homosexuality, the Convention seemed to be achieving some degree of stability in the spring of 1994. Then the trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary fired Russell H. Dilday causing a major outcry throughout the Baptist Life. Despite efforts by Texas leaders to amend the constitution to exclude any churches tolerating homosexuality, the Convention seemed to be achieving some degree of stability in the spring of 1994. The convention had overcome earlier conflicts and a large part of its support seemed committed to riding out the storm in hopes of accommodation and cooperation yet to appear.

Yet the convention had overcome earlier conflicts and a large part of its support seemed committed to riding out the storm in hopes of accommodation and cooperation yet to appear. 26

25 Ibid., 349-50ff.

changes in 2000 and again in 2001 SBC meetings. This strain on relationships between the BGCT and the SBC was especially disappointing because over the course of the years numerous Texans had served both as SBC presidents and as heads of SBC agencies and institutions.

**Conclusion**

As they entered history’s third millennium it was obvious to Southern Baptists of all persuasions that its fellowship was being sorely tried by partisanship, suspicion, rumor mongering, misunderstanding and a hardening of mutually exclusive positions. Demands that SBC institutions and staffs sign off on the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 changes fueled some of this as did further tensions around the conservative social agenda.

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  - 1997.
Doctrine

Introduction

I. God as Trinitarian

II. Jesus Christ: His Person
   1. Christ’s Deity
   2. Christ’s Humanity

III. Jesus Christ: His Cross
   1. The cross as ransom
   2. The cross as sacrifice
   3. The cross as victory

IV. Jesus Christ: His Resurrection

V. Salvation
   1. The Ground of Salvation
   2. The Meaning of Salvation
   3. Pictures of Salvation
   4. Appropriating Salvation

VI. The Church
   1. An emphasis on the local congregation
   2. A regenerate membership
   3. Congregational polity (democratic structure)
   4. The priesthood of every believer

VII. Religious Liberty
Confession that God is trinitarian acknowledges that the way God has revealed himself corresponds with his innermost life.

Doctrine

Introduction

Baptists have often been called “a people of the Book.” This is because they believe that the authority for what they believe and practice should be based on the Bible. Baptists have not been hesitant to affirm that the Bible is the written Word of God. Whoever would understand Baptists, therefore, must understand their devotion to the Bible. Occasionally, critics have labeled this love for the Bible “bibliolatry.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Baptists are committed to the authority of Scripture because they are committed to the Lordship of Christ. The Bible means, therefore, that Baptists believe and practice grows out of their dedication, they attempt to believe and live in conformity with the teachings of the Bible, especially the New Testament.

Baptists are also a confessional, but not a creddal, people. W. R. Estep states that there are fundamental differences between creeds and confessions. “Credes are authoritative and often viewed as final, unalterable, and binding statements of faith.” Confessions, on the other hand, are “abstracts of biblical truth as the group formulating the confession perceived it.” The purpose of such statements is “to set forth before the world an accurate summary of the group’s faith and order.”

The nature, function, and limitations of confessional statements are clearly set forth in the introduction to The Baptist Faith and Message.3

Belief in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible means, therefore, that Baptists are dedicated to the gospel, the good news that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ. . . (2 Cor. 5:19). At the center of Baptist faith is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Commitment to this faith constitutes the very heart of what it means to be Christian. Everything else Baptists believe and practice grows out of their experience and interpretation of these fundamental realities. Thus, Baptists seek first and foremost to be a Christ-centered people. Because of this dedication, they attempt to believe

The Baptist Faith and Message.3

(1) That they constitute a consensus 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.

(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.

(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.

God as Trinitarian

With Christians of other denominations Baptists confess that God is trinitarian. The concept of the Trinity has often been mistaken to mean that Christians believe in three gods. Such tritheism is alien to the Bible. Properly understood, belief in God as Trinity expresses the primary pattern of divine revelation in history. It also distinguishes in a meaningful way Christianity from other religions (for example, Judaism and Islam).5

The word “trinity” does not occur in the Bible. Nevertheless, God’s trinitarian nature is evident from the way God has revealed himself. Both Old and New Testaments affirm that there is but one God (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29-30; 1 Cor. 8:4). The New Testament teaches that the God of Israel acted in Jesus Christ, his Son, to redeem the world (Luke 2:25-32; John 3:16; Gal. 4:4-7). The redemption accomplished by Christ is appropriated by humans through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11, 14-17). Thus, Christians confess that God is trinitian “because this way of speaking accords with the biblical witness and with the experience of the church rooted in this witness.” 6


3 Hobbs, 2-3.

4 The Baptist Faith and Message does not have a separate article on the Trinity. That it affirms the reality of God’s trinitarian nature can be inferred from Article II “God”. The three subsections of this article deal with A. God the Father, B. God the Son, and C. God the Holy Spirit. Hobbs, The Baptist Faith and Message, 31-33.


There are numerous indications in the New Testament of this threefold pattern of divine activity.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given to us (Rom. 5:15).

To God’s elect... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood... (1 Peter 1:1-2).

Other references are Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-16; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 1:1, 5-6, 13; 4:4-6; John 14:26; 15:26.

Confession that God is trinitarian acknowledges that the way God has revealed himself corresponds with his innermost life. In other words, since God has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he is in his eternal being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In expressing this faith Christians are not engaging in unwarranted speculation. Rather, they are confessing that “God’s own life cannot contradict what God is in relation to the world.”

The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a mystery to be received by faith rather than a mathematical puzzle to be solved by speculation. The infinite being of God cannot finally be reduced to a simple rationalistic formula. The proper approach to the Trinity, therefore, is one of wonder and praise (1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Peter 1:3).8

**Jesus Christ: His Person**

Classical Christian confessions designate Jesus as the God Man. This does not mean that he is half divine and half human. Rather, Jesus is fully God and fully man. As divine, he reveals the true nature of God. As human, Christ reveals what God intended when he created human beings.

**Christ’s Deity**

Numerous New Testament references affirm that Christ is divine:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning (John 1:1-2). I and the Father are one (John 10:30).

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped... (Phil. 2:6).

**Christ’s Humanity**

The gospel writers do not try to prove Jesus’ humanity. They simply assume it. That Jesus was truly human is evident from several facts:

1. He was born (Luke 2:5-7) conceived in a miraculous way (Luke 1:26-35). The fact of his birth is sufficient to establish his humanity.

2. He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (Luke 2:52).

Jesus’ preexistence means that he did not come into existence at Bethlehem. He is from everlasting to everlasting. Jesus came uniquely into the world for our salvation at Bethlehem. There he identified with us in our humanity. But the Word that became flesh (John 1:14) is from eternity (John 1:13). Christ came from God.9

3. He was tempted (Matt. 4:1-11). His temptations were real, but he never sinned (Heb. 4:15).

4. He experienced weariness and pain (John 4:6; Heb. 5:8).


The reality of Jesus’ humanity is important for several reasons. (1) His humanity grounds Christian faith in history. Doctrines, therefore, do not rest on speculative ideas. They are rooted in the historical person and work of Jesus. W. T. Conner states: “Jesus was born of a virgin, lived, died, rose from the dead. Those were not general truths of philosophy; they were facts of history.” (2) Jesus’ humanity establishes his identity with us. Since Jesus was not a stranger to human life, he is able “to sympathize with our weaknesses...” (Heb. 4:15; cf. Heb. 2:14-18). (3) His humanity was the divinely appointed basis for his saving work. The purpose of Jesus

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7 Migliore, 61.
8 Garrett, 288.
becoming human was to redeem sinful humanity (Matt. 1:21; Gal 1:4; 1 Tim 1:15).

**Jesus Christ: His Cross**

The focal point of Christ’s saving work is his death on the cross. The primacy of the cross is emphasized throughout the New Testament. Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29). His purpose was to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 1:45). The relation of the cross to the forgiveness of sin was implicit in the earliest Christian preaching (Acts 2:21; 3:6, 19; 4:13; 5:31; 8:35). Paul proclaimed that Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3) and that those who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13). The cross is grounded in the love of God for a lost world (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8-10; 1 John 4:10).

The New Testament does not give a “theory” of the cross. Rather, the writers describe the meaning of Jesus’ death by means of images drawn from different areas of experience. No one image tells the whole story, but taken together they give a holistic portrait. Three of these images are ransom, sacrifice, and victory.11

**The cross as ransom**

This picture is found in Mark 10:45, 1 Cor. 6:19-20, and 1 Peter 1:18-19. The main idea in this imagery is rescue from bondage through the costly self-giving of Jesus.

**The cross as sacrifice**

The meaning of Jesus’ death is often expressed in language drawn from Old Testament sacrificial practices. His death is a sacrifice for sins (Heb. 10:12) and a sacrifice to God (Eph. 5:2). Christ is identified with the Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), the sacrifice which initiated the new covenant (Luke 22:20), and the sin offering (Heb. 9:14, 25-28). Sacrificial imagery is another way of emphasizing the costliness of Christ’s saving work. It also points to the effectiveness of that work. Through his sacrifice, sin is forgiven (Eph. 1:7) and the conscience is cleansed (Heb. 9:14).

**The cross as victory**

That Christ defeated Satan and his evil powers is a theme that pervades the gospels (Matt. 4:1-11; 12:28; Mark 3:27; John 12:31). This imagery is also prominent in the epistles. Christ came that he might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). His purpose was to destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15). That Christ is the victor is clear: And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Col. 2:15).

Underlying all of these images is the thought that in his death Jesus did for human beings what they could never do for themselves (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24).

Leon Morris wrote:

> The value of this way of viewing the atonement is its flexibility combined with its adaptability to the different ways of stating our need. Was there a price to be paid? He paid it. Was there a victory to be won? He won it. Was there a judgment to be faced? He faced it. View man’s plight by the cross of Christ. Affirming the reality of the resurrection is crucial for the evangelistic mission of the church. The invitation to “follow Christ” and/or “trust Christ as personal Savior” is more than a summons to accept the truth of an idea or to follow the example of a great leader. It is a challenge to enter into a personal relationship with the living Lord.

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14 Hendricks, 69-85; Dominy, 96-117.
**Salvation**

**The Ground of Salvation**

Salvation is grounded in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. God’s saving activity in Christ is a result of his love for his creation.

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved (Eph. 2:4-5).

**The Meaning of Salvation**

Salvation means deliverance from the lostness caused by the sinful rebellion of humans against God. Two significant features of this deliverance should be emphasized.

1. Salvation is not only rescue from sin, it also involves a new way of living. Thus a person is saved from condemnation to eternal life (John 3:16), from slavery to freedom (Gal. 5:1), from guilt to forgiveness (Eph. 1:7), from being aliens to being citizens (Eph. 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:10).

2. Salvation involves three tenses. As a past event, salvation refers to the time when a person became a Christian (Eph. 2:8, Titus 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:9). As a present experience, salvation means that God continues to work in a Christian’s life to perfect his purpose (1 Cor. 1:18; Phil. 2:12-13). With reference to the future, salvation refers to the completion of God’s work in his people (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 9:28, 1 Peter 1:5, 9). At the risk of oversimplification, it can be said that Christians have been saved from the eternal penalty of sin, they are being saved from the power of sin, and they will be saved from the presence of sin.

**Pictures of Salvation**

The New Testament describes the reality of salvation by using many different pictures. These pictures have been taken from the diversities of life’s experiences. They are different ways of representing what God has done for humanity in salvation.

Pictures drawn from family life emphasize that Christians are children of God by adoption (Gal. 4:6). From the law court comes the metaphor of justification or being acquitted and thereby forgiven (Rom. 3:24, 4:25; 8:30). From the arena of personal relationships the term reconciliation is used to describe the restoration of friendship between people who have been estranged (Rom. 5:10f.; Eph. 2:16). The Christian, belonging to Christ, is set apart for God’s purpose. This relationship is described by the term sanctification. The status of Christians is also illustrated by the relation of husband and wife (Eph. 5:21-23) and of vine and branches (John 15:15). The picture of being born again or born from above (John 3:1-12) is one of the most dramatic in the New Testament. It is a vivid way of emphasizing the life-changing nature of salvation. Similar is the expression of a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

**Appropriating Salvation**

The appropriation of salvation by human beings is through repentance and faith.

Repentance is a divine requirement (Matt. 4:17; Acts 2:38; 3:19). Repentance denotes an act of turning around, a change of direction. It is a change of mind that leads to a change of life. The word repentance is closely related to the word conversion which means a reorientation of life.

Faith is the means by which God’s gift of salvation is received. Faith is a genuine human response, but it is evoked by God’s gracious initiative. In grace God gives himself to a person, in the response of faith a person commits himself or herself to God. Faith involves the response of the total person. It is intellectual, emotional, and volitional.

The church is not an optional extra for the Christian. It is indispensable for the redemptive purpose of God for the world. This is seen in the church’s relation to the cross.

**The Church**

Becoming a Christian is an individual affair. Salvation is not by proxy. The New Testament also interprets salvation in a corporate context. Christians are born again into an already existing family. Conversion is the door through which a person enters into the community of faith — the church. The very nature of Christian existence is communal as well as individual.

The church is not an optional extra for the Christian. It is indispensable for the redemptive purpose of God for the world. This is seen in the church’s relation to the cross. Paul urged the Ephesian elders to *Be shepherds to the church of God, which he bought with his own blood* (Acts 20:28). Furthermore, *Christ loved the church and gave himself for her* (Eph. 5:25). A host of metaphors also underline the significance of the church. The church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-27) with Christ as its head (Eph. 4:15-16). The church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25-26), God’s new creation (2 Cor.

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16 Conner, 140-45.


5:17), the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14), a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9). Such a body is more than a human organization or religious club. The church is a divinely created entity.19

Several distinctive emphases have characterized the Baptist understanding of the church.

An emphasis on the local congregation

While not denying that the church includes all of the redeemed of all ages, Baptists have focused their attention on the local congregation as the decisive grouping of God’s people. According to The Baptist Faith and Message:

Confess that God is trinitarian acknowledges that the way God has revealed himself corresponds with his innermost life.

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 teaching, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.20

Boyd Hunt suggests four reasons why emphasis on the local church is so important: (1) the local church is accessible, meeting where members live; (2) it meets frequently, providing opportunity for participation and spiritual nurture; (3) it offers possibility for a diversity which is not afforded by small groups; (4) it is more personal and flexible than afforded by small groups; (2) it meets frequently, providing opportunity for participation and spiritual nurture; (3) it offers possibility for a diversity which is not afforded by small groups; (4) it is more personal and flexible than general bodies such as state and national gatherings.21

A regenerate membership

Baptists believe that a local church is a congregation composed of people who have personally accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. This is why Baptists have consistently opposed infant baptism. It is not because of a lack of Christian concern for children. Rather, it is due to their conviction that the church should include only those who have made a conscious decision to follow Christ.

Emphasis on personal faith in Christ as prerequisite to church membership explains the Baptist insistence on believer’s baptism. Baptists do not believe that baptism in water conveys the reality of salvation. They do

various churches. New Testament churches acknowledged: (1) the sole authority of Christ, (2) the right of the local church to govern itself under the Lordship of Christ, and (3) the freedom of every Christian to respond to the authority of Christ in matters of conscience. Furthermore, most of Paul’s letters were addressed to churches, not just to the elected leadership. The whole congregation seems to have exercised responsibility in receiving, disciplining, and dismissing its members (1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 2:4-5). Polity in New Testament churches acknowledged that Christ dwells in all believers.23

Boyd Hunt contends that the democratic process is “the most effective means available to congregations for determining God’s guidance.” He explains:

Included in the process are careful Bible study, deliberation, and prayer with reference to the business at hand, followed by a vote of the congregation to determine the will of the majority. This is not to deny that the majority can be wrong. However, even though the democratic process is not infallible, it is still the best way for a congregation to seek God’s leadership in matters not specifically dealt with in scripture. If the church later decides that the majority vote had been wrong, it can repeat Bible study, deliberate, pray more and vote again.24

The priesthood of every believer

The biblical emphasis on the priesthood of the believer underlines the significance of every person within the body of Christ. The New Testament refers directly to the priesthood of believers five times: 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 20:6.

The priesthood of every believer involves both privilege and responsibility. Privileges include: (1) direct access to God (Heb. 4:16).

20 Hobbs, 74.
22 24 Hunt, 223.
24 Hunt, 223.
ecclesiastical hierarchy stands between the believer and God. For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, . . . (1 Tim. 2:5). (2) The right of interpretation of scripture. Since no churchly system bars the believer's access to the presence of God, no official teaching can deny the believer's approach to the Word of God. The right of interpretation means the privilege of the Christian to study and interpret the scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Privileges of priesthood are balanced by responsibilities. (1) The offering of "spiritual sacrifices" (1 Peter 2:5). According to Lavonn Brown, this involves four dimensions: "(a) a spiritual sacrifice of worship [Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15] (b) a spiritual sacrifice of witness [1 Peter 2:9]; (c) a spiritual sacrifice of stewardship [Phil. 4:18] and (d) a spiritual sacrifice of service [Heb. 13:16]. Singing, praying, giving, worshipping, sharing faith, holy living, and acts of service are all activities of the kingdom of priests which God has made of Christians."25

(2) Being priests to others. This means that Christians minister to one another in Christ's name. While Baptists set aside (ordain) certain persons for specific leadership functions in the church, they also believe that every believer is called to ministry. Conversion to Christ rather than formal ordination makes all Christians ministers. Baptist emphasis on the importance of the lay people is rooted in the priesthood of the believer.

**Religious Liberty**

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Baptists to Protestantism has been the principle of religious liberty.

Leo Pfeffer, a Jewish scholar, has called Baptists, "the denomination by far most vigorous in the struggle for religious freedom and separation of church and state."26 Because Christ alone is Lord of the conscience, Baptists have insisted that no civil or ecclesiastical authority should seek to coerce a person's will in matters of religion. James D. Mosteller writes: "Baptists hold that religion is and must be perfectly voluntary, and that nothing except a voluntary surrender to Christ, and a voluntary service for Him are acceptable."27

Religious freedom is not a privilege which Baptists claim for themselves alone. They believe that it is God's gift to all humanity, even to the unredeemed. Furthermore, freedom is not simply religious toleration. "Religious toleration is a concession; religious liberty is a right."28

The political corollary of religious freedom is the separation of church and state. God has given legitimate roles to both church and state. The primary functions of the state are to exercise civil authority, maintain law and order, and promote public welfare. The primary functions of the church are to witness to Jesus Christ and to build up Christians in their faith. Leon McBeth contends:

> It is far better that church and state keep to their own areas of work. The church can and should continue to preach a message of biblical morality that may influence government. Separation of church and state does not mean the church loses its moral voice. In fact, a church that is free can have a stronger moral voice.29

The historic Baptist position on this issue is stated clearly in *The Baptist Faith and Message*:

> The state owes to every 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 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.30

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26 Leo Pfeffer, Church, State and Freedom (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 90.

27 James D. Mosteller, “Basic Baptist Principles and the Contemporary Scene.” Southwestern Journal of Theology, 6, no. 2 (April, 1964), 78.


**Articles**


The Local Church

Introduction

I. The Identity of the New Testament Church
   1. The Biblical Terminology
      (1) The English word “church”
      (2) The Greek word *ekklesia*
         a. The Greek Background
         b. The Hebrew Background
   2. The New Testament Metaphors
      (1) The People of God
      (2) The Body of Christ
      (3) The Temple of the Holy Spirit
      (4) Other Metaphors
   3. The Relationship with Other Entities
      (1) The Church and Israel
      (2) The Church and the Kingdom of God
      (3) The Church and Parachurch Groups
      (4) The Church and the World

II. The Responsibility of the New Testament Church
   1. Worship
   2. Edification
   3. Proclamation
   4. Ministry

III. Authority of the New Testament Church
   1. Polity in the New Testament Church
   2. Leadership in the New Testament Church
      (1) Pastors
      (2) Deacons
      (3) Laity
   3. The Ordinances of the New Testament Church
      (1) Baptism
      (2) The Lord’s Supper

IV. Conclusion
The Local Church

Introduction

Christians have made significant progress in the twentieth century in spreading the gospel throughout the world. Literally hundreds of thousands of persons among many cultures have been positively impacted through a relationship with a church family. Africa south of the Sahara Desert has become a thriving center of Christianity with new churches, new denominations, and new mission stations. In Asia Koreans by the tens of thousands have been coming to Christ. In addition to receiving Christian missionaries, Korea is now a missionary-sending country. Believers in China report that the church is growing phenomenally in that vast nation. Non-Catholic churches are being begun in South America at the rate of more than 50,000 per year.1

The number of believers in the United States has also grown dramatically. Christian churches in America number 375,000 and play a major role in the lives of Americans. More than 90% of Americans surveyed say that they believe in God. On any given Sunday 43% of them will attend a church or synagogue service.2

It is exciting to note that the numbers of Christians and churches have been growing. Equally exciting is the fact that the interest within Christianity in defining what a church is and describing what it should do has also grown. In Christian history, ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) has lagged far behind other major New Testament doctrines in its full discussion and development. During the first five centuries of that period, church was taken for granted.3 In fact, the church was intensely personal. Luther thanked God that even a child of seven knew what the church is. He believed that Jesus Christ, not the church, should be the focal point of faith or how one received the salvation made possible by the atoning work of the cross.4

The New Testament asserts that the decision of a person to commit his life to Christ is an intensely personal one.

Christian history church councils and doctrinal statements focused much attention upon the person of Christ. The emphasis of the Middle Ages was upon the work of Christ, the nature of salvation made possible by the atoning work of the cross. During the Protestant Reformation, the form of the church received some attention, especially with regard to the sacraments (or ordinances). The intense scrutiny, however, was upon faith or how one received the salvation made possible by the work of Jesus. The existence and the nature of the church was taken for granted.5 In fact, one of the Reformation leaders Martin Luther thanked God that even a child of seven knew what the church is. He believed that Jesus Christ, not the church, should be the focal point of faith or how one received the salvation made possible by the atoning work of the cross.

The twentieth century Christian community has expressed a much greater interest in the doctrine of the church than its historical forbearers. This greater interest is probably one of the results of the modern missionary enterprise. As various denominations and parachurch groups began to feel the need to cooperate (rather than to compete) in mission efforts around the world, they saw the need to engage in theological dialogue. The purpose of that dialogue was to discover the similarities and differences of theological emphases between their own understanding of God and the perspectives of those with whom they were cooperating. In order to engage in such dialogue each group was forced to do some self-discovery about what it believed about God, the person and work of Christ, and the nature of the church as the people of God.5

This modern interest in ecclesiology is evidenced by a meteoric rise in studies and books regarding the nature and work of the New Testament church. One author comments on this "building boom" declaring that “the publishing skyline is full of books about the church.”6 This renewed interest has been a healthy phenomenon. One respected author believes that “the recovery and elaboration of the doctrine of the nature of the Church is one of the chief aspects of Protestant theology in this century.”7

Twentieth century Christian scholarship is to be commended for its emphasis upon ecclesiology. The importance of an inclusion of a discussion of the church in any theological construct is unquestioned. The New Testament asserts that the decision to commit one’s life to Christ is an intensely personal one. Faith is a personal affair as purely personal a matter as are birth and death.8 At the same time, the New Testament is clear that this intensely individual conversion faith is the gateway into a wider fellowship that one experiences with others who share a faith commitment to Jesus Christ. The decidedly personal, new life in Christ requires a social or community context for its maintenance and maturity.9

The Christian life is possible—in all but extraordinary circumstances—only within a network of interpersonal relationships that both lay their claims upon us and invite us to contribute our best. In a word, ‘being a Christian’ includes both the individual response each must make to the offer and demand of the good

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2 Ibid.
5 Williams, 11-13.
6 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 15.
news that came with Jesus Christ and the entry into a new sphere of social patterns, a community of our fellow believers without whom we fail to achieve our full stature as men and women in Christ (Eph. 4:13). To reach that conclusion is to tread on the threshold of the idea of the church.  

John Wesley was correct when he characterized Christianity as essentially a “social” religion and warned that if one attempted to turn it into a “solitary” religion, it would be destroyed. Wesley did not deny the individual aspects of personal salvation; rather, he affirmed that the church lies at the center of God’s purpose. That importance of the church is recognized in the simple definition offered by Millard Erickson at the beginning of his insightful discussion of the church. He described the church as the “collective dimension of the Christian life.”

Everything that has been written in this century about the church has not been positive. The Christian church is a 2000 year-old institution. As one would expect with regard to any institution of that age, the church has been criticized for being irrelevant in a modern world. Some have declared that the church needs to be significantly altered or changed in order to meet the needs of a complex and rapidly changing world.

One respected evangelical pastor Gordon MacDonald recently argued for a “re-engineering” of the church as she faces the twenty-first century. He defines a re-engineering as asking the same questions that one would ask if he wanted to start this organization all over again. He has determined that the church needs to be re-engineered in three areas: structure, theology, and spirituality.

This writer admires MacDonald and is somewhat in sympathy with his desire to think creatively; however, “re-engineering the church” by asking what would be the process if the church were started today is not the best option. It would be more valuable to study the New Testament and determine what Jesus did and the biblical authors said in starting the church the first time. The intent of this article is to examine the relevant passages in the New Testament that describe the founding and functioning of a local New Testament church. The thoughts expressed are an amplification of the summary statement in article seven of The Baptist Faith and Message Statement entitled “The Church.”

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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.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages.

The Identity of the New Testament Church

The first tension that one feels in discussing the identity or nature of the New Testament church is the tension between describing the ideal or the actual. Do you define the church by asserting what the church was designed to be or should be or by admitting what the church is in reality? The New Testament declares the wonder and beauty of the church as the chosen of God, the people to whom he has committed himself forever, a people related to Christ and to each other through strong bonds of love and faithfulness. No one can deny, however, the obvious difference between what the New Testament says the church is and what human experience says the church is. It is painful but necessary to hear John Stott’s critique of the Christian community.

But in reality we who claim to be the church are often a motley rabble of rather scruffy individuals, half-educated and half-saved, uninspired in our worship, constantly bickering with each other, concerned more for our maintenance than our mission, struggling and stumbling along the road, needing constant rebuke and exhortation, which are readily available from both Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles.

In his two major categories of the way that people define the church, Erickson recognizes this tension between the church as it should be and as it actually is. He declares that his “empirical-dynamic” definitions of
the church are the definition of choice among many modern authors. They choose to define the church not in terms of essence but of existence. He believes that this preference is due to the modern aversion to speculative or philosophical matters. This decidedly pragmatic approach defines the church more in terms of how it is experienced in life.16

Erickson is not satisfied with such an approach, however. Asserting that the church is more than merely a social institution and deserves more than a sociological analysis, he opts for “biblical-philological” definitions of the church. This approach is the search for the description of the church in terms of what the Scripture states it should be.17 This writer concurs with Erickson’s view. The best understanding of the church is the one that results from studying what the Bible intended it to be. This article will, therefore, examine the biblical terms and metaphors (picture images) of the church. A discussion following this search for the description of the church demonstrates that the church is more than merely a social institution and deserves more than a sociological analysis. This kind of assembly was a completely secular gathering. No compelling evidence from classical Greek exists that suggests that any religious gathering was described with this term. The interesting thing about this phenomenon is that the early Christians had a number of religious terms that they could have chosen to describe themselves. The pagan religions could have supplied them with any number of words to serve their terminological needs. They rejected each of these Greek terms with an already acquired religious association in favor of a term with only a secular history. On the other hand, this term was the one used by the translators of the Greek Old Testament to render a Hebrew word with quite a rich religious heritage.

The Biblical Terminology

The English word “church”

The English word “church” is used in many ways. It is used to refer to a structure or building: “I will be home in a minute. I am going to the church,” one might say to a friend. The term is used to refer to a worship service held by a congregation such as “I am not going to church today because the sermons have been boring lately.” Again, the term is commonly used to refer to a particular group of Christians in one place as “I am so glad that I belong to this church because this church is so friendly.” Some use that term to describe a much larger group of Christians that meet in many places. “Since I was a child, I have belonged to the Methodist church.”

The Greek Background

Ekklesia was used to describe the assembling of the citizens of a city in order to discuss a matter important to the whole community. A herald summoned or called out the citizens to meet together. Ekklesia bears this meaning in at least one New Testament reference. During Paul’s third missionary tour he proclaimed the gospel of Christ in the Asian city of Ephesus. Paul created a religious and economic problem for the Ephesians, and the city was called into an assembly to deal with these issues. The word assembly (Acts 19:32, 39, 40) is the Greek word ekklesia describing a Greco-Roman city that was summoned or called out to discuss a significant problem.

This kind of assembly was a completely secular gathering. No compelling evidence from classical Greek exists that suggests that any religious gathering was described with this term. The interesting thing about this phenomenon is that the early Christians had a number of religious terms that they could have chosen to describe themselves. The pagan religions could have supplied them with any number of words to serve their terminological needs. They rejected each of these Greek terms with an already acquired religious association in favor of a term with only a secular history. On the other hand, this term was the one used by the translators of the Greek Old Testament to render a Hebrew word with quite a rich religious heritage.

The Hebrew Background

The Hebrew verb gabal carries the idea of a group assembling themselves or a group being caused to assemble together. In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), the Hebrew verb ekkaleo is the translated equivalent of the Hebrew gabal.22 The corresponding

16 Erickson, 1028-29.
17 Ibid., 1030.
Hebrew noun means an assembly, a company, or a congregation gathered and may be derived itself from the verb “to speak.”

Qahal was used to denote assemblies of many types including ones for evil counsel or deeds (Gen. 49:6; Ps. 26:5), for conducting civil affairs (1 Kings 2:3; Prov. 5:14; 26:26; Job 30:28) or for preparing for war (Num. 22:4; Judg. 20:2). Nations are assembled (Gen. 35:11; 48:4), and even the dead are gathered (Prov. 21:16). Although many assemblies are noted in the Old Testament, a specialized use of this word involves the assembly for religious pur-pose. In this context the phrase the qahal of the Lord (Num. 16:3; 20:4; Deut. 23:2-4; Micah 2:5; 1 Charon. 28:8) should be mentioned. This phrase denotes the congregation of Israel summoned to appear before God as His people.

By way of conclusion, it should be reiterated that the Christians chose a Greek designation with no previous unseemly pagan associations but rather with an association with a Hebrew word that described the people as the people of God. The New Testament church or ekklesia then has both continuity and discontinuity with the Old Testament. This writer believes that Kung is right when he declares that the primitive community’s choice of ekklesia was a deliberate laying claim to be the true people of God continuing his purpose of the gathered people in the Old Testament.

Others are also correct when they emphasize the new qualitative nature of the Christian church. This writer agrees with the argument of the respected W. T. Conner that the church is not a pre-Christian institution or an extra-Christian one. It indeed grew out of the redemptive mission and message of Jesus. The ekklesia pre-eminently is a New Testament institution. In that document is found its origin, pattern, and early history.

**Ekklesia in the New Testament**

This Greek word is found some 110-115 times distributed through 17 of the 27 New Testament books. The concordances reveal that ekklesia does not occur in Mark, Luke, John, 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 and 2 Peter, 1 and 2 John or Jude. As has been noted, in three of those 100 plus occurrences, it refers to a general assembly of citizens in a city (Acts 19:32,39,41). Twice it refers to Israel as the Old Testament community of faith (Acts 7:38; Heb. 12:22). It is, therefore, used in the overwhelming majority of these times by way of conclusion, it should be reiterated that the Christians chose a Greek designation with no previous unseemly pagan associations but rather with an association with a Hebrew word that described the people as the people of God.

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The word is found most often in the book of Acts and in the writings of Paul. Luke (in Acts) and Paul use the word in contexts of specific groups of Christians who occupy a single household or house-church congregation (Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15; Phil. 2), a single city (Acts 8:1; 11:22; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2), or a province (Gal. 1:2,22; 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Cor. 8:1; 1 Cor. 16:19). Sometimes the phrase of God follows ekklesia (1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:16; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:14; Titus 3:5 and others). Even when this phrase is absent, the concept “the church of God” that is, the church as the group that God has called into existence is implied. The church uniquely belongs to God in contrast to every other organization in society. This is true because the church consists of individuals who have committed their lives to God through the expression of their faith in Jesus His Son.

In his letters to the Ephesian and Colossian congregations, Paul used ekklesia in the sense of the larger concept of the redeemed of all of the ages. Paul declared happily that God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church [Writer’s boldface], which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (Eph. 1:22-23). He went on to say to him [Christ] be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Eph. 3:21). Then Paul encouraged the Ephesian men to love their wives “just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25).

In Ephesians ekklesia is not confined to the local assembly meaning but is given its most comprehensive and general sense to denote “a great spiritual fellowship including all of the redeemed.”

### 28 Ibid., 8.

23 Ibid., 2:790. It would of course have the sense of calling a group to gather for a specific purpose.

24 Ibid. Qahal had a synonym in the word ida, a word also used to describe a gathering or an assembly. In the Greek Old Testament, qahal is translated predominantly by ekklesia and sometimes by the Greek sunagoge. On the other hand, ida is always rendered by sunagoge and never ekklesia. Interestingly enough the Christian community used sunagoge to denote the gathering of Jews for worship (and then their building in which they gathered) and used ekklesia to describe themselves as the assembled people of God.

25 Kung, 479.


28 Ibid., 8.
This understanding of the church as the entire body of believers in Jesus Christ from all time is the very one that Jesus meant in one of the two important passages in Matthew’s gospel. Matthew 16:18 and 18:17 (two occurrences) contain the only three occurrences of ekklesia in any of the four gospels. When Jesus said, I will build my church (Matt. 16:18), he used ekklesia to refer in a general sense to all who would entrust their lives to him in every generation. Interestingly enough, the only other time that Jesus used that word, he used it in reference to a local group of believers or a specific congregation (Matt. 18:17).31

Both meanings of the word, therefore, have their justification in the teaching of Jesus.

The church consists of individuals who have committed their lives to God through the expression of their faith in Jesus His Son.

The People of God

The fact that the church has a relationship to God is made clear by the phrase the church of God (1 Cor. 1.2; 10:32; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 3:5, 15) and the churches of God (1 Thess. 2:14; 1 Cor. 11:6). The New Testament also depicts the church frequently as the people of God (Matt. 1:21; 2:6; 4:16; John 11:50; 18:14; Acts 3:23; 7:34; 13:17-31; Rom. 9:25-26; 15:10; 2 Cor. 6:16; Titus 2:14; and Heb. 2:17; 8:10; 13:12). Its importance to a complete understanding of New Testament ecclesiology is seen in the fact that this figure is found in more than half of the New Testament books (14 of 27), while in 7 other books related terms such as Israel, the circumcision, the household of God are used to describe the church.36

One’s proper appreciation of this picture of the church as the people of God cannot be attained without understanding the biblical meaning of the concept “people.” Popularly, “people” is used to indicate human beings in general. For example, one may inquire about how many people were in Bible study last Sunday with the view of knowing how many individuals or persons were in attendance. In biblical categories the population of the world does not consist of the sum of individuals; rather, it consists of the sum of peoples. Each “people” is a group set apart from other “peoples” and possesses a cohesive character of its own.37 Persons do not define the group; rather, the group defines the persons who belong to that people.

The church consists of the people of God. Individuals who belong to this people are defined by relationship to God. To call the church the people of God emphasizes that the church is a result of the initiative and choice of God. Paul quotes God as declaring, I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people (2 Cor. 6:16). Since God is the God of the entire Bible, the Old and the New Testaments together, this is the picture of the church that relates the local New Testament.

The church of Jesus Christ can denote the church universal or the church without qualification. “It is the church as God alone can see it, the whole company of those who have been, are now, or ever will be gathered to God in Christ.”32 The church of Jesus Christ also denotes an actual assembled gathering of believers in a specific place at a definite time in history. Baptists generally believe that both the local expression and the universal expression are the church. Erickson summarizes it well when he tentatively defines the church as “the whole body of those who through Christ’s death have been safely reconciled to God and have received new life. It includes all such persons, whether in heaven or on earth. While it is universal in nature, it finds expression in local groupings of believers which display the same qualities as does the body of Christ as a whole.”33 Each local church is not just “part” of the universal church; rather, each local church is somehow the universal church in its entirety in its location.

The New Testament Metaphors

The teaching about the church in the New Testament is not limited to the times that one finds the word ekklesia. The biblical authors used many other expressions and metaphors or illustrations to describe important features and functions of a New Testament church. Paul Minear has contributed immensely to an appreciation of that fact in his book Images of the Church in the New Testament. He concludes one can conservatively state that the New Testament contains more than 80 (and maybe more than 100 if each Greek word is counted separately) images or descriptions of the church.34 These images or metaphors of the church help to explain the nature of that group that has been called out by God and that uniquely belong to Him.

Three groups of major metaphors of the church are related to the three persons of the Godhead. The New Testament pictures the church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. If one holds a high view of God, one should also possess a high view of the church. Dale Moody has expressed the implication of this truth well: “The highest point in our understanding of God is reached in the formulation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and it is from this perspective that the true nature of the church is revealed.”35

31 Herschel H. Hobbs, An Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1965), 219. Hobbs believes that the local, democratic sense came from the Greek sense of Ekklesia, while the general, theocratic sense resulted from the Hebrew qahal.
32 Clowney, 22-23.

33 Erickson, 1034.
36 Minear, Images, 272.
37 Ibid., 68.
Testament church to the work of God that preceded her existence.

The Old Testament relates the events through which God began his redemptive purpose. Instead of using one of the existing peoples, God chose to create a people for himself. God began the creating of that people through a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12-50). He continued that creating work of a people through delivering a group of slaves and transforming them into a people for himself (Exodus through Deuteronomy). Israel was thus declared to be God’s special people or the people of God, created by him and chosen by him to carry out his purpose in the world (Exod. 15:13; 16; Num. 14:8; Deut. 32:9-10; Isa. 32:4; Jer. 12:7-10; Hosea 1:9-10; et al.).

Although a continuity exists between the two Testaments, New Testament writers clearly assert that the church is a result of a new work of God in Christ. In a passage rich with Old Testament imagery, Peter states, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10). The Old Testament people of God was an entity called into existence by the grace and power of God. In the same way the New Testament people of God, the church, was created by the grace and power of God in the work of Jesus Christ benefiting both Jew and Gentile.

This concept of the church as the people of God contains several implications. It suggests that the church belongs to God by right of creation. It reminds one that God takes pride in his people and provides care and protection for them. It also means that God expects his people to respond to him by offering their exclusive loyalty to him.38

In addition to the phrase the people of God, the New Testament also reveals a prolific use of a number of other images and metaphors that supplement the truth that the church belongs to God because of his unfolding purpose. The images with a political/national slant include Israel, a holy nation, the twelve tribes, the circumcision, sons of Abraham, the exodus pilgrims, the house of David, the remnant, and the elect. The images with a pastoral orientation include lambs or a part of the flock of God. The images related to worship include the Holy City, priesthood, and sacrifice.39

The Body of Christ

While the people of God is the image that relates the church to the Old Testament work of God, the body of Christ is a metaphor for the New Testament church that has no Old Testament equivalent. Christians are indebted to Paul for the beautiful truths communicated through this picture of the church, as he is the only New Testament author to use the phrase “the body of Christ.” He developed the major themes of this metaphor in Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Corinthians. Though Paul is the only author to use this phrase to describe the church, echoes of this thought are found in other writings.40

New Testament writers used the Greek word soma or “body” in a variety of ways. It was of course used to denote the physical bodies of men and animals, living or dead. They also utilized it metaphorically to convey religious or spiritual meanings. Paul talked about a body of sin and death (Rom. 6:6; 7:24-25) and a redeemed body (1 Cor. 6:13). He declared that Christians will receive a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:42-44). The bread of the Lord’s Supper represented the body of Jesus (1 Cor. 11:23-24). The most interesting use, however, is in the phrase “the body of Christ.”41

New Testament scholarship has posed the question regarding what served as the source of this Pauline concept as the church being the body of Christ. The Greeks used the word “body” to describe any kind of organization or group of people united to accomplish a common purpose.42 The English term “corporation” coming from the Latin corpus or body is a remnant of that kind of thinking. It defines a group that works to reach an aim common to each individual.

This writer feels that Paul’s own unique experience was the basis of his

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38 Erickson, 1035.
39 For a detailed discussion of each of these pictures, see Minear, Images, 71-104.
42 Clowney, 51.
that this metaphor was used by Paul to denote the church both in her universal nature (Eph. 1:22-23) and in her local expression (1 Cor. 12:27). The truth communicated by this powerful image of the church concerns relational connectedness between Jesus and his followers and between these followers with each other. The body of Christ is associated with the believer’s being in Christ and in the believer (Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20).

One of the most significant things about the church as the body of Christ is the corresponding reality of Christ as the Head of the body (Col. 1:18; 2:19). Jesus Christ as the Head is the source of life for the body which the whole body must obey (Col. 2:10). As the Head he is the channel through which divine life and glory flow into the body (Eph. 1:22-25). The growth in love experienced by the body springs from and moves toward the Head (Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19).

Headship and Lordship are inseparable ideas concerning the guidance and control that Jesus desires to maintain. The body of Christ, however, is a metaphor that does not only emphasize the inseparable connection between Christ and His followers. It also describes the strong bonding that should occur between his followers. The classical statement reflecting this emphasis is 1 Corinthians 12:12-13a where Paul states, The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts, and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body. Even as the physical body is an organism that requires the cooperation of systems and bodily parts, the church is a living organism that requires the individual members to admit their interdependence upon each other.

The Holy Spirit is the one whose supernatural power began the church. The indwelling power of the Spirit was given to the disciples in response to the proclamation of the Old Testament prophet and the promise of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2). The experience on that famous day of Pentecost marked both a continuity with the ongoing purpose of God in the Old Testament and a new thing brought about by God.

That “old yet new” thing regarded the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. During the Old Testament period the Holy Spirit indwelled various people (priests, prophets, kings) at various times (not permanently) for the carrying out of various responsibilities. The common Israelite did not have the privilege of being indwelled by the Spirit of God. That fact made the promise of Joel 2:28-32 all the more precious. God was going to send his Spirit upon all flesh, the old and the young, the rich and the poor. Peter understood that on that day in Jerusalem God fulfilled that prophetic promise (Acts 2:14-21).

God baptized those believers by the Holy Spirit, that is he identified those followers of Christ as belonging to Christ. The reality of a follower of Christ being permanently indwelled by the Holy Spirit was a new thing; therefore, biblical interpreters declare that the day of Pentecost was the time in which the church was birthed. After that momentous beginning, individuals were added to the church when they accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour and were baptized by the Spirit into the one body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is both an individual and a collective reality. Individual Christians are depicted as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20), and collectively the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit being inhabited by Him (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the church is a significant statement about how the church functions. The Holy Spirit influences the church by filling her with the presence of God (Eph. 5:18). The Holy Spirit empowers the church to witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8) and then...
Minear, “Church,” 612.

through more than two-thirds of the New Testament passages scattered designated as saints in more than 100 (holy, saints, sanctified). In fact equivalent to number of cases, “the saints” is moreover, when the verb God in sanctifying is understood; noun “saints” appears, the action of 45 Ibid. Minear declares that no less than seven different authors used “saints” in this way.

connection between Paul’s addresses demonstrate a close evidenced in the way that Paul addressed his various letters in the New Testament addressed to churches: 44 Minear, Images

★ To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints (Rom. 1:7)
★ To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy...(1 Cor. 1:2)
★ To the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia (2 Cor. 1:2)
★ To the churches in Galatia (Gal. 1:2)
★ To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:2)
★ To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi (Phil. 1:1)
★ To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse (Col. 1:2)
★ To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1 and 2 Thess. 1:1)

Paul’s addresses demonstrate a close connection between εκκλησία and ἅγιος (holy, saints, sanctified). In fact members of the churches are designated as saints in more than 100 New Testament passages scattered through more than two-thirds of the New Testament books. 44 In a large number of cases, “the saints” is equivalent to εκκλησία. 45 Whenever the noun “saints” appears, the action of God in sanctifying is understood; moreover, when the verb “sanctified” is used, the result of that work being the creation of saints is implied or assumed.

The inherent relationship between God the Holy One and his people as saint is obscured by the unfortunate circumstance of using two English words, holy and saint, to translate one Greek root, ἅγιος. God is the Holy One (Lev. 19:2; Isa. 45:11; 47:4; Jer. 50:29) who demands holiness as a characteristic of his people. Jesus is declared to be the Holy One (Acts 2:27; 4:30), and through his work believers become holy ones or saints. By the act of his death Jesus became the Christian’s sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11). The application of the sanctifying work of Jesus to the believer is the work of the Holy Spirit. Minear summarizes this beautiful truth well:

The church is a living organism that requires the individual members to admit their interdependence upon each other.

Consequently, wherever the church is spoken of as the saints, the power of the Holy Spirit is assumed to be at work within it. The community of saints has been born of the Spirit and baptized into this one Spirit. On this community the Spirit is poured out; within this community as a temple the Spirit dwells. Thus the life of the saints is at every point circumscribed by the Holy Spirit, and determined and empowered by it. In this holiness lies the unity and power of the church. 46

Other Metaphors

The New Testament frequently depicts the church in the terms of the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit; however, those are not the only images of the church used by the biblical writers. As has already been noted, the Scripture contains many different illustrations or metaphors that communicate the nature and function of the church. Even as Israel is spoken of as a house in the Old Testament, the church is described as the house of Israel or Jacob, of Moses, of David, and also as the house (household) of God (Luke 1:33,69; Heb. 3:2-6; 1 Peter 4:17). God is the owner of this house, while his people are house servants or stewards (Luke 12:42; Acts 7:47-49; 1 Cor. 3:9; 4:1-2; Eph. 2:21; 1 Peter 4:10).

The fact that the church is the household of God produced thoughts of family relationships. The church’s total dependence upon God is seen in the figure of the church as the sons of God (Rom. 9:26; 2 Cor. 6:16-18; Heb. 2:10). As sons of God, believers are brothers (1 Cor. 6:6; 1 John 3:10-17). The book of Acts alone contains some 30 references to the brotherhood known in the church. 47

A well-known image in the area of family is the church understood as the bride of Christ. Like other images, this one is a continuation of an Old Testament theme. Israel had been the bride or wife of her God in spite of her constant unfaithfulness or adultery (Jer. 2:1; Ezek. 16:23-29; Hos. 8:1-3). Jesus is presented as the bridegroom (Matt. 9:15), and his coming is symbolized as a wedding feast (Matt. 22:10; 25:1-13). The strongest statement containing this image is the one of Paul in Ephesians 5:21-33. As the groom Jesus gives Himself sacrificially and nurtures the church. As the bride the church is to renounce other loyalties and to seek to attain holiness.

The church is also pictured in several agricultural metaphors. These illustrations underscore the reality of God’s desire for His disciples to be productive and the reality of judgment upon fruitlessness. 48 Many of Jesus’ parables concerned a vineyard with its

44 Minear, Images, 136.
45 Ibid. Minear declares that no less than seven different authors used “saints” in this way.
46 Ibid., 137.
47 Minear, “Church,” 612.
The fact that the church is the household of God produced thoughts of family relationships. The church’s total dependence upon God is seen in the figure of the church as the sons of God.

The Relationship with Other Entities

One works toward a complete understanding of the church by seeking to discover the meaning of the term *ekklesia*. In addition one must seek to elicit the meanings in the many metaphors or illustrations the New Testament offers. The third helpful component in discovering the identity of a New Testament church is to contrast it with other entities.

The Church and Israel

The Christian community is agreed that the Israel of the Old Testament and the church of the New Testament are separate entities. That same community is far from a consensus, however, on the way that these two separate entities are related to each other. Some Christians believe that the church succeeded Israel as the people of God, while other Christians believe that they are two completely separate realities, each responding to God’s promises made to each one respectively.

Certain passages of the New Testament assert that the church is the new Israel (a spiritual entity) replacing the old Israel (a physical or national entity). Paul argues this position in the books of Galatians and Romans. He declared *For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal* (Rom. 2:28-29). He wrote to the Galatians that as Christians they were true sons of Abraham because they exhibited the faith of Abraham (Gal. 3:6,16,29).

It is also true that in several instances promises made to Israel in the Old Testament find their fulfillment in the church in the New Testament (Hos. 2:23; 1:6-11/Rom. 9:24-25; Joel 2:28/Acts 2:17). It is hard to see any other meaning to the presentation of Jesus as the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16) and as the Son of David (Luke 1:33) than that he (Jesus) is the ultimate fulfillment to these covenants that concerned the physical Israel in the Old Testament. In some way then, the church is the new Israel, serving as God’s people in the same way that the nation of Israel was the people of God in the Old Testament.

On the other hand, a very popular interpretation understands the Scripture to teach that Israel and the church are eternally separate realities. God made promises to Israel in the Old Testament that he will one day keep to the nation of Israel. He also made promises to the church that he will keep to the church. Although God loves the church, he still considers Israel to be his special people and has plans to save them (Rom. 9-11).

The Church and the Kingdom of God

The “kingdom of God” (synonymous with the kingdom of heaven) is a concept deeply embedded in the fabric of biblical theology. The basic meaning of this phrase has to do with the kingly rule of God or his sovereignty in the lives of humanity. It concerns chiefly the fact of the rule of God rather than the realm in which that rule is experienced. This rule is presented as an eternal fact, as manifested on earth in acceptance by people, and as a hope for the future.

Jesus stood on the shoulders of the Old Testament prophets when he centered his preaching upon the kingdom of God (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Luke 8:1; 9:11). Jesus began his public ministry by declaring, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel* (Mark 1:14-15). His parables concerned the kingdom of God. Jesus initiated the establishment of the kingdom in a fuller sense than it had ever been before; yet, its final...

It is logical to assume that the kingdom cannot be established in a vacuum. Persons are invited to enter the kingdom of God and to participate in its life. That fact implies the further idea of a realm or community in which the kingly rule is established. This community of individuals who have submitted their lives to the lordship or kingly rule of God made manifest in Jesus is none other than the church.51

The church and the kingdom are inseparably related but are not identical. The church is not the kingdom but is created by the kingdom. The church witnesses to the presence of the kingdom, is the instrument of the kingdom, and is the custodian of the kingdom.52 The church is a manifestation of the kingdom or reign of God, the form which the kingdom takes in human history.53

The Church and Parachurch Groups

Parachurch groups are defined as groups or ministries that serve “alongside” (the meaning of the Greek preposition para) the church in extending the kingdom of God. These parachurch groups are organizations such as Baptist Student Ministries on college campuses, Campus Crusade, the Navigators, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (and those of other vocational evangelists). Each of these groups performs some of the functions of the body of Christ, but none of them claims to fulfill the needs of all individuals who comprise the church. Each parachurch group exists to minister to a particular special interest group (college students, athletes, etc.) according to their specific needs.

Although some people believe that the church and parachurch groups are competitive, it is best to understand them as complementary. Parachurch groups can in many ways supplement and enhance the ministry of the church. God’s eternal purpose is to be accomplished through the church (Eph. 3:10-11). Although many worthy Christian organizations exist, the center of the Christian’s love and loyalty should be through the local church fellowship of which he or she is a part.54

The Church and the World

The different meanings assigned to the “world” in the New Testament cannot be discussed in this chapter. The intention here is to use the word “world” simply to refer to the context in which the church is assigned by God to do her work. The church is to be in the world but not of the world (John 17:12-18). This means that the claims of Christ must be presented to all people without being influenced by that world. The church must remain holy and distinct in character from that world. It is a balancing act, that of communicating to the world in terms relational enough that the world responds without compromising the standards of faith.

Communicating to the world without being compromised by the world is a challenge to the church. As Lyle Schaller, an innovator and pioneer in the area of the local church, has told his readers for years, the church age of the 1950s is no longer in existence. In his book It’s a Different World, he details the terrain of modern church life with the many socio-economic changes that affect church life.55 A successful pastor has encouraged modern Christian leaders that one of their major tasks is to lead churches to overcome “the fortress mentality” and go forth into the world to touch persons for Christ.56 No generation of believers has been confronted with such rapid change and technology as has the present generation. George Barna has functioned in a prophetic role confronting the modern church with rethinking her nature and strategy. He concluded that “the evangelical church in America is losing the battle to bring Jesus Christ effectively into the lives of the unsaved population.”57 He suggested that a new approach had to be considered. This new way of thinking that he believed was absolutely necessary for survival was accompanied by a new terminology. He began to talk about “marketing” the church and making the church more “user-friendly.” Barna’s terms argue for a more enlightened church, more aware of the perceptions and desires of persons in modern culture and more intentional about devising strategies that will be bridge-builders across which modern persons might walk in order to become believers in Christ. He believes that churches that are flourishing are those that accomplish that without losing their distinctive nature or sense of purpose.58

Ministers need help in knowing how to reach persons who live in a scientific world and function in a technological society, for sometimes they know it to be an almost impossible, frightening task. Leith Anderson commented on a pastor who attended one of his seminars concerning “Changes and the Church” and declared, “After listening to all you’ve had to say, I feel like

The church is totally dependent upon God, depending upon the purpose of God for her existence, depending upon the passion of Christ for her life, and depending upon the power of the Holy Spirit for her effectiveness.

51 Ibid., 24.
53 Erickson, 1042.
54 Hobbs, The Baptist Faith and Message, 81.
55 Lyle E. Schaller, It’s a Different World (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987).
56 Frank R. Tillapaugh, Unleashing the Church (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1982).
No generation of believers has been confronted with such rapid change and technology as has the present generation. No generation of believers has been confronted with such rapid change and technology as has the present generation. act or choice of will. lawn.

In a time of so much spiritual thirst, the current philosophy of reaching people where they are is both "wonderful and dangerous." The church can only accomplish her mission to the world by performing all of the responsibilities assigned to her by God.

The Responsibility of the New Testament Church

As the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit, the church is charged with the responsibility of carrying out the ministry and the commands of Jesus Christ. Following is a brief examination of the major functions of the local church in the New Testament.

Worship

The function of worship concerns the church in her relationship to her God. Worship or the expression of adoration to God is a recognition of His supreme position of worth. It is a response to what God has done for people in Christ. It is a celebration of the coming, the dying, the rising, and the coming again of Our Lord. The Bible is filled with requests to worship God, to recognize and to declare His worthiness to receive praise and adoration. An entire book (Psalms) is one that encourages and models praise to God. Paul invited the Corinthians to bring their offerings on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2). He expected them on that day to be gathered together for worship. Hebrews 10:25 defines the importance of the church gathered to worship. The book of Revelation is filled with celebration and praise in recognition of the redeeming work of Jesus as the Lamb of God.

It is appropriate for the church that belongs to God to focus attention upon him and not herself, that is to praise and glorify God. It may even be said that "worship is the most important work of the church. The people of God exist to serve God. No higher service to God is possible than the worship of God." Although worship is designed to focus attention upon God, it is also of benefit to Christian worshippers. It connects them with the past, gives meaning to the present, and inspires hope for the future as their hearts are blended into the memory of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Worship devoted to God is a spiritual reality (John 4:21-24), but it is expressed in ritual or practical forms. Christian churches worship through musical praise, prayer, the reading of Scripture, and the proclamation of the word and will of God. (A specialized element of worship, the Lord’s Supper, will be discussed later in this chapter.) Early Christian worship drew upon the forms utilized by the Jews in their synagogues. Though Christians inherited the pattern of synagogue worship, the content of Christian faith changed the worship dramatically.

Edification

The church’s most important responsibility is to offer worship to her God; however, believers also have a major responsibility to instruct each other in the truths of God and to enjoy the fellowship of the church. In essence this strengthening function is "body-building" or edifying each other.

Individually, Christians have the responsibility of growing in grace and in understanding the nature of their faith in Christ. Collectively, Christians have the responsibility of encouraging each other in that process. Paul stated that truth most clearly in Ephesians 4:16: From him [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. In the immediately preceding verses he declared that leaders in the local church should be at the center of insuring that the growth he described is taking place. Elsewhere in his discussion of spiritual gifts, Paul asserted that one of the major purposes of these gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit was for the purpose of mutual edification (1 Cor. 14:4-5, 12, 17, 26).

Church members edify or build each other up in various ways. One way is through the New Testament concept of koinonia, the spirit of total sharing in life experiences and possessions. When one member of the body of Christ is hurting, this sharing attitude means that all of the members hurt in sympathy (1 Cor. 12:26). When one member of the body of Christ is shouldering a large burden, this sharing attitude means that all of the members should be interested in sharing that burden (Gal. 6:2).

59 Anderson, 11.
61 Anderson, 21.
63 Webber, 29.
Another way that the church is edified is through the teaching ministry or the process of instruction in the doctrines of the church. Jesus commanded that his followers be at the task of teaching new converts (Matt. 28:20). Gifted leaders are assigned the responsibility of equipping God’s people for service. That is a teaching or instructing function (Eph. 4:11).

The value of this function is seen in Acts 18 when Apollos was mentored by Priscilla and Aquila and experienced greater effectiveness in ministry as a result. The local church, thus, has the awesome task of teaching the truths of the Bible so that each member matures and contributes to the ministries of the church. This discipleship function of the church cannot be overestimated in its significance with regard to the healthy state of any congregation.

**Proclamation**

Someone once said that the New Testament church was the only organization in the world that existed for the sake of non-members of the organization. It is indeed true that one of the most important functions of the local church is to proclaim the news that God has come in Jesus Christ with power to save and transform individuals. The New Testament is unambiguous on that point. Jesus announced to His followers that they were to go and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them (Matt. 28:19-20). He declared that He would provide the Holy Spirit as the empowerment to bear witness of his acts of redemption (Acts 1:8).

The New Testament teaches that human beings are sinners and cannot save themselves. It teaches that Christ is the answer to the spiritual needs of human beings. It then declares that the church is the instrument of God in bringing together those in need and the One who can meet that need.

Evangelism and missions are the two key terms that depict this most important assignment to the church. Although sometimes these terms are used with geographical implications, (evangelism for local gospel proclamation and missions for global gospel proclamation), they are identical service. Geographical and cultural matters seem to be more significant boundaries to people than to God. Erickson’s insight should be noted as appropriate in this regard.

Therefore, if the church is to be faithful to its Lord and bring joy to his heart, it must be engaged in bringing the gospel to all people. This involves going to people whom we like and people whom we may by nature tend to dislike. It extends to those who are unlike us. And it goes beyond our immediate sphere of contact and influence. In a very real sense, local evangelism, church extension or church planning, and world missions are all the same thing. The only difference lies in the length of the radius. The church must work in all of these areas. If it does not, it will become spiritually ill, for it will be attempting to function in a way its Lord never intended.65

**Ministry**

Finally, the church functions not only to worship God, to edify each other, to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers, but it also exists to minister to the total needs of persons in the name and the love of Jesus Christ. The church serves to extend the ministry of Jesus. The fact that Jesus was interested in meeting the physical, social, and spiritual needs of people is unquestioned. He healed the sick. He fed the hungry. He gave hope to those ignored and neglected by all others. He then declared in one of his parables that when his followers did any of these things to another human being, in reality they were doing those things for him (Matt. 25:31-46). In another parable he identified the true neighbor as the one who assisted in deeds of kindness and ministry (Luke 10:25-37).

James understood this dimension of Christian obligation. He asserted that faith in its purest form concerned meeting the needs of people without hope (1:27) and that ministry was himself demonstrative of the possession of genuine faith (2:15-17). The church must work to help those who are hurting and at the same time work to prevent the circumstances that produce that hurt.

**Authority of the New Testament Church**

It is appropriate for the church that belongs to God to focus attention upon him and not herself, that is to praise and glorify God.

The final section of this chapter will deal with how the local church should be governed. The church belongs to God and receives her assignment from God. She receives her authority from God and should administer that authority according to his biblical guidelines.

**Polity in the New Testament Church**

The discussion of polity in this chapter will be quite brief since another chapter in this volume is devoted to it. It is sufficient in this context to say that church polity concerns how the church functions in governance. This governance style or polity is the result of the application of New Testament principles, such as the lordship of Jesus Christ, the principle of equality, and the priesthood of the believer. These principles seem to be best applied through the congregational or democratic form of church polity. The authority resides in each member under the lordship of Christ.

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65 Erickson, 1054.
Leadership in a New Testament Church

The New Testament does not provide full information about church officers in the first century. While it mentions gifted persons to the church such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers (Eph. 4:11), it never refers to them as officers of a local church. The New Testament does describe two categories of church officers, pastors and deacons. Although these are the only officers mentioned in the New Testament, it is not certain that others did not exist. In the course of Christian history, other officers were added “on the ground of necessity.”

The church’s most important responsibility is to offer worship to her God; however, she also has a major responsibility to instruct each other in the truths of God and to enjoy the fellowship of the church.

Pastors

Although some interpreters believe that the New Testament church contained three categories of officeholders—pastors, elders, and deacons, it is generally recognized that the New Testament uses three terms—pastor, elder, bishop—to describe only one office. This identification is warranted by the evidence both from the book of Acts and in some of the epistles of Paul and Peter.

As Paul concluded his third and final missionary journey, he requested that the elders of the Ephesian church come to meet with him at Miletus (Acts 20:17). When Paul spoke with them, he addressed them as bishops (Acts 20:28) and reminded them that part of their task was to shepherd (or pastor) the flock of God (Acts 20:28). Elders and overseers (bishops) are described an office held, it defined the idea of authority and rule. “Pastor” contains the idea of personal and spiritual concern that a church leader has for members of the church. Although as a noun “pastor” is found only in one verse (Eph. 4:11), the verb “to pastor” or “to shepherd” is found many times.

Pastors are given the responsibility of providing spiritual leadership and guidance for the church (Titus 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-7). Pastors are to have moral integrity, possess leadership qualities, and set a spiritual example for others. They are granted authority not for the exercise of tyrannical or absolute lordship but for the privilege of service. They are to be servant leaders in the community of faith.

Deacons

The only other permanent office in the local church that the New Testament mentions is that of deacon. The Greek word ἀρτέπιστος conveys the idea of ministry or service. Before it described an office held, it defined the activity that the office was created to do. Although the word “deacon” does not occur in Acts 6:1-7, that context contains the origin of the deacon office. Seven men were selected to do practical tasks of service in order to allow the apostles to continue their spiritual tasks of prayer and teaching the word of God. The qualifications for a deacon are similar to those of a pastor (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Some evidence exists that women served in this capacity in some of the New Testament congregations (Rom. 16:1 where “servant” is the feminine form of διάκονος).

Local churches ordain persons to serve as pastors and deacons. The purpose of ordination is not to convey a special sense of authority or privilege; rather, it recognizes that these persons have been gifted by God to serve. The New Testament is not aware of a rigid distinction between ordained persons as more important than other members of a local church.

Laity

“Laity” is derived from the New Testament word λαός meaning “people.” It recognizes the value of each and every person that belongs to the people of God or the church. Baptists have long been noted as a group that emphasized the importance of every member of the body of Christ. Baptists not only believe that every member (or layperson) is important but is a minister.

The major Baptist doctrine, that of the priesthood of the believer, is the foundation of this emphasis upon the laity. This doctrine affirms that every believer has a direct access to God. It also affirms that every believer has a ministry to perform. Pastors are not asked to do all of the ministry. Their task is to equip the laity so that they (the laity) can perform ministry. A noted Southern Baptist professor and author believes that if Southern Baptists (and other Christians) could come to understand this doctrine in the fullness of its meaning and if we were to express it in our lives, this...
doctrine would revolutionize the life and ministry of our churches.70

The Ordinances of the New Testament Church

Local Baptist congregations are authorized by Christ to perform two special observances or ordinances. The English word “ordinance” is derived from the Latin verb *ordinare* meaning to place in a right row or order or to do what has been established or commanded.71 Baptists believe that Jesus established two things for churches to do to proclaim the essence of the salvation available through Him. Participation in these two realities is only meaningful for believers in Jesus Christ, those who have accepted Jesus as Lord of their lives.

Baptism

Baptism is one of the two ordinances. It is the way that one becomes a member of a local Baptist church. The importance of baptism is seen in the fact that the name Baptist comes from the act of baptism. Baptists understand baptism in water to be a symbolic event that proclaims the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It also symbolizes the fact that a Christian is one who is identified with Christ and has died with regard to an old life with Christ. He has welcomed Jesus into his life and enjoys a new kind or quality of life.

The Greek word *baptizo* means to dip, plunge, or immerse in something.72 Baptists believe that baptism by complete immersion (or submersion) in water is the way that Jesus was baptized and is the best picture of what baptism symbolizes.

Since baptism is a powerful, visible proclamation of one’s new life in Christ, it logically follows that the only proper subject for baptism is a believer who has trusted Jesus Christ by faith and has thereby received God’s gift of eternal life. It is important to Baptist churches that those who present themselves for baptism and church membership give evidence or testimony that he or she has accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour. That was certainly the New Testament pattern (Acts 8:12; 18:8; 19:1-7). This means that church membership is a fellowship of only those who belong to God through an act of faith in Jesus.

The Lord’s Supper

The other ordinance or observance established by the command of Christ is communion or the Lord’s Supper. While baptism is something done once as an entrance into church membership, the Lord’s Supper is done repeatedly. Participation in the Lord’s Supper (as baptism) involves the proclamation of the life, death, and resurrection (1 Cor. 11:26). Also as with baptism, it is a celebration that has a symbolic meaning and is participant to the present by one’s recognition of the presence of Christ and the fellowship of his body, the church. The Lord’s Supper links the participant to the future by one’s rejoicing in the future consummation of the kingdom of God and the coming of Christ.73

The New Testament does not offer clear directions concerning how frequently to observe the Lord’s Supper. Many Baptist churches have this kind of celebration quarterly or once every three months. This tradition is probably an attempt to maintain a balance between observing it so often that it becomes an empty ritualism or routine and between observing it so infrequently that it cannot regularly benefit believers in

Finally, the church functions not only to worship God, to edify each other, to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers, but it also exists to minister to the total needs of persons in the name and the love of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

The local church is both a supernatural organism created by the miraculous intervention of God and a human institution (since it is composed of human beings). A prayer of this writer for the church of the twenty-first century is that it may have a transfiguration experience (Matt. 17:1-9). In his transfiguration the deity of Jesus shined through his humanity revealing the majesty and glory of God. May the body of Christ allow her radiant love and intimate relationship with God to shine through her human structures and relationships so impressively that the majesty and the glory of God may be revealed through the church.

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71 Stevens, 323.
72 Erickson, 1104.
73 Moody, 470-71.
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Articles


Baptist Polity

Introduction

I. New Testament Principles
1. Lordship of Christ
2. Church as Family
3. Gifted Leadership
4. Priesthood of the Believer
5. Autonomous Congregations
6. Voluntary Cooperation

II. Local Church Applications
1. Congregational Government
2. Responsible Membership
3. Authority to Select Leaders
4. Responsible Entity
5. Cooperative Relationships

III. Denominational Implications
1. Servant Posture Toward the Churches
2. Cooperative Posture Toward Other Denominational Entities
The Church living under his Lordship will want its decisions and actions to be consistent with the character of Christ.
The priesthood of the believer teaches that each believer is spiritually capable of studying the scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Since each believer is capable of studying the scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, each believer is capable of determining the will of God for that believer’s personal life. This believer is also capable of making a spiritual contribution to the life of the Church, and is responsible for making this contribution. This makes it imperative that all believer’s grow toward their full potential in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:28).

**Autonomous Congregations**

It is clear from the New Testament that local churches enjoyed autonomy and freedom under the Lordship of Christ. There is no hint that any of the churches were subject to other churches, even the church in Jerusalem did not exercise authority over other congregations. When questions of teaching and practice arose, they were settled by the leaders of all the churches coming together (Acts 15). These leaders met in a spirit of prayer under the Lordship of Christ to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Once they had found the mind of the Lord through the guidance of the Holy Spirit they communicated this to all of the churches. Then, each local assembly became responsible for its living out the practice of the truth. When the risen Lord had a message for a church, he sent a letter directly to the congregation through his servant John (Rev. 2:3).

**Voluntary Cooperation**

Texas Baptists have been greatly influenced by this principle of cooperation. They have found this principle throughout the New Testament. While each local assembly was obviously independent and autonomous, all of the congregations were under the Lordship of the same Lord. The Lord of the churches is the one who prayed, *My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me* (John 17:20-21). This earnest prayer of our Lord for unity had as its practical end world missions and evangelism. One finds the Apostle Paul rallying all the churches that he had established in the Gentile world to receive an offering for the suffering saints in Jerusalem. In order to meet this pressing physical need in the life of that church they cooperated together in an offering (2 Cor. 8:9).

**Local Church Applications**

How have the Baptist congregations applied these biblical principles to the local church? Generally, they have reached some common convictions and have sought to live by these in the practice of church life.

**Congregational Government**

They have adopted a congregational form of church government. By this is meant that all matters of business that affect the life of the church are decided by the church itself. Such matters are submitted to the congregation at an appointed time to be discussed in a spirit of prayer and an atmosphere of mutual respect. They do so with the objective in mind of determining as a congregation the will of the Lord in this matter. These matters are decided when a consensus is developed in the membership of the church and has been expressed in a majority approval. It is assumed that all of the members are capable of contributing to the discussion of the matter and are responsible for participating in the decisions of the church.

**Responsible Membership**

The congregational approach does not prevent the body from delegating some matters to committees, staff, deacons, or some other group within the church. However, the church will set forth the guidelines unto which such a group will carry out the work of the church. While the church may consult with someone from with-out or may receive counsel from some denominational representative, it will not surrender the control of the affairs of the church to anyone outside of the church.

The congregational approach is commonly described as being democratic, but this is not really an appropriate word for this process. The congregational government does not empower the members of the church to act as a political entity. Rather, it empowers them to make decisions under the Lordship of Christ, knowing and doing his will in all matters will be the first concern of each member of the body. It is understood that the will of God is most likely to be known and done when a group acting prayerfully under his Lordship makes the decision. This will protect the congregation from the misguided counsel of one member.

**Authority to Select Leaders**

Closely related to this form of government is the authority to select its own spiritual leaders. Baptists have commonly believed that the church needs two types of spiritual leaders. They have depended upon pastor and deacons to guide the affairs of the church. They have understood the terms of pastor, elder, and bishop to be different ways of looking at the same office in the New Testament.
(1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28). They have also recognized that a local congregation may have multiple pastors. The churches retain to themselves the right to determine the qualification for those who are to serve them. They have insisted that each congregation should be able to prayerfully search out the person that they desire to fill the pastoral leadership position in their church.

The same principle holds true to the selection and ordination of deacons. The deacons are seen as lay leaders in the congregation with a primary assignment of serving the needs of the body. The churches have insisted that they are free to determine the qualifications of their deacons and to define their responsibilities. They have consistently turned to the New Testament to help set up these qualifications and responsibilities for these lay servants. While they are not bound to accept persons that other congregations have set apart to deaconship, they have often done so. All questions relating to the officers of the congregation have been settled by the local congregation itself. However, it is customary for local churches to invite other local congregations to participate with them in the ordination of persons to ministry.

**Responsible Entity**

The application of this principle also means that the local church will retain ownership of its own property and will manage its own finances. The local church will put itself under the Lordship of Christ and will prayerfully seek his will when making decisions that relate to property or finances. While the local church may profit from the assistance of a denominational representative in such matters, and may seek their counsel, it will retain the responsibility for these matters. The congregation alone will be responsible for any indebtedness of the congregation. Ordinarily local churches seek incorporation from the state to protect the leaders and the individual members of the congregation. It is understood, however, that except under some unusual circumstance such as a young mission congregation that needed denominational support, the denomination does not have any responsibility for the debts incurred by a local church. The local church is responsible for its own finances. The local church is also responsible for the discipline for its own members. It will seek to protect the doctrinal and moral integrity of the local church by excluding any member from the body that by what they teach or what they practice has become a threat to the health, and the witness of the church. They will be careful to follow the principles that are set down by the Lord and his apostles to first seek the spiritual good of the person involved (Matt. 18:15-20; 2 Thess. 3:11-15). The radical action of exclusion will be taken only when the person has refused to listen to the appeal of love for repentance by the congregation. Even then the action will be taken in a way that will be redemptive. In most cases other local churches will want to respect the discipline exercised by a congregation. Unless they discover that an injustice has been done, they should not receive into their membership a person who has been excluded from another congregation. Rather, they should work to bring about reconciliation between the person and the church from which they have been excluded so that both may profit.

Many churches have adopted a church covenant to help the membership be clear about their expectations of each other. This covenant gives the church guidance in practical matters when discipline is required. Usually, submission to the loving discipline of the congregation is one of the things agreed to in the covenant. The covenant should avoid a legalistic approach to church life, but should rather be received as a voluntary agreement between brethren in the Lord to assist each other in reaching for God’s highest in discipleship.

The application of the biblical principles also makes the local congregation responsible for the administration of the two ordinances of the church. These are understood to be baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-24). The local church is obligated to protect the ordinances and insure that they are observed in a matter that is consistent with the pattern found in the New Testament. While individual members of the churches may be authorized to administer the ordinance of baptism, the person will do so within the guidelines set forth by the local congregation. Baptists have discouraged individuals from administering the ordinances without authority from the local church. But neither have local churches thought it necessary to seek any authority from any denominational group to administer the ordinances. They are to be administered under the authority of the local church as the congregation lives under the Lordship of Christ. The local congregation is also responsible for deciding its own statement of faith. Different groups of Baptists have set forth their understanding of vital biblical doctrines in statements of faith from time to time. These have been viewed by Baptists as prayerful and helpful attempts to get into writing their understanding of what the Bible teaches on that particular point of doctrine, but they have never been seen as having the same authority as scripture. A local church may choose to adopt one of these statements of faith as their statement of faith, but it is something they do voluntarily after giving themselves to prayerful study of the scriptures. No human document should ever be used to replace the Bible as the basis for faith and practice of the people. Nor should any
denominational entity seek to force such a document upon a local church.

Cooperative Relationships

Baptists have been strong in their emphasis upon the principle of cooperation. This principle is the cornerstone of the denominational efforts of Baptists. This principle allows a congregation to participate with other congregations in the work of the kingdom of God without surrendering its own freedom or independence. All such participation is voluntary. Baptists depend upon the importance of the work being done cooperatively and the leadership of the Lord of the churches to keep them working together on the work of the kingdom of God that extends beyond the local church. Their understanding of the autonomy of the local church has kept them from joining any movement that required any surrender of that autonomy. This principle gives each local church the freedom to develop its own approach to ministry under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. It lends itself to the development of churches that have much diversity in their approach to ministry, but yet a wonderful unity in the Lord.

Denominational Implications

Servant Posture toward the Church

Baptists’ polity has not prevented them from developing strong denominational entities to which the churches have given much loyalty. Rather, the churches have chosen to create the denominational entities in order to assist local churches in their attempts to carry out the Great Commission. The churches pre-date the denomination and thus the denomination serves the churches rather than the churches serving the denomination. The churches felt compelled to form denominational units out of a realization that the task given in the Great Commission is greater than any one church. There must be a way for a local church to bond with other local churches in order to carry out this assignment. Baptists use their denominational entities for this purpose.

Generally, the churches have been pleased to grant to the denominational entities, such as the association, state conventions and national convention, autonomy. The churches do not surrender their autonomy in this process in order to participate in either the association, state convention, or national convention. Nor do the denominational entities act in a way that usurps the autonomy of the churches. The denominational entity cannot speak for the churches. It can speak only for itself, even though it is made up of messengers from the churches. It can send a message of concern or encouragement to the churches and can challenge the churches toward a worthy goal, but it cannot force the churches to do anything. The churches are still independent under the Lordship of Christ even while they are interdependent in carrying out the Great Commission. The churches reserve the right to prayerfully seek the mind of the Lord on all matters that relate to their work and ministry.

Cooperative Posture toward other Denominational Entities

The autonomy factor extends to the way the denominational entities relate to each other. No Baptist body has the freedom to speak for another Baptist body. They also depend upon the principles of trust and cooperation to keep them together as they seek to assist the churches in carrying the Great Commission. As an illustration of this in practice, even though it is larger and has more resources usually, the state convention does not seek to force its will upon the local Baptist associations. Rather, the state convention depends upon the principle of cooperation to keep both groups working for the good of the churches. The same is true in the relationship between the state convention and the national convention. Each of them is autonomous, yet they choose to cooperate with each other for the good of the churches and the work of the kingdom of God. All of this is deliberately designed in an attempt to be obedient to the biblical principles and to protect the autonomy of the churches. The local church is viewed as the basic unit in God’s kingdom strategy. However, Baptists have been very practical when it comes to the implementation of their polity into relationships. Because their common commitment to Christ has nurtured a high degree of trust and commitment, the different entities have been able to relate to each other with a remarkable amount of cooperation.

Bibliography


Baptist Perspectives on the Christian Life

I. The Christian Life: Grace in Motion
   1. Grace as point of beginning for Christian life
   2. A description of the grace process
   3. Baptism as a sign of new life
   4. The grace journey of sanctification

II. The Christian Life: Riding the Wave
   1. The essential role of the Holy Spirit
   2. Baptists and the “Second Blessing”
   3. The Promise of the Spirit and Pentecost
   4. The work of the Spirit
   5. Filling of the Spirit

III. The Christian Life: A Pilgrimage of Becoming
   1. Individual Christian growth as process
   2. Christian growth and the character of God
   3. Christian growth and the human life cycle

IV. The Christian Life: Life Together
   1. Imperative of the church for Christian nurture
   2. Community as God’s design
   3. Jesus calls humanity to loving relationships
   4. The role of Christian leaders in the church
   5. The privilege of life within the church

V. The Christian Life: A Journey Outward
   1. The assignment of all Christians
   2. The witness of a life of holy devotion
   3. The witness of kindness, mercy, servanthood, and sacrifice
   4. The witness of words
   5. The witness of stewardship

VI. The Christian Life: The Disciplined Life
   1. The necessity of Christian discipline
   2. The disciplines of the faith
   3. Jesus’ example of devotion
   4. The Bible as source of strength
   5. Resurgence of interest in spiritual life
Baptist Perspectives on the Christian Life

Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s oft-quoted line has captured the imagination of Christians in six decades: “When God calls a man, He bids him come and die.” In stirring words of committing, Bonhoeffer declared, “To deny oneself is to be aware of Christ and no more of self, to see only Him who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us.” For the sake of the Gospel, Bonhoeffer himself was executed by his countrymen in 1944 as an enemy of the state. The words of Jesus are the backdrop for such stirring human commitment: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke 9:23).

To be a Christian is to embrace a grace relationship with the risen Lord, accept his teaching and discipline, obey his truth, and gratefully serve him daily for a lifetime. Human nature hungers after the satisfaction of such an experience and, at the same time, resists it. Paul the Apostle said it well: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15). Being a Christian is a costly struggle. And yet, the Christian life is God’s intention for his creation and it is the way of abundant, eternal joy (John 10:10b; Phil. 3:7-14).

Christians have always sought to delineate the life they are to live. In many respects, the entire New Testament, especially the letters and writings of Paul, John, James, and Simon Peter, is a description of “The Way.” New Testament writers taught both doctrine and the offspring of believers has been faced with the challenge of clarifying faithfulness. Theological distortions, cultural shifts, and the growth of human knowledge have always demanded a clarification of the Christian worldview and its ensuing ethical and practical consequences in an ever-changing world. Baptists have added their efforts and insights to the never-ending work of theologizing about Christian living.

The Baptist bias is anchored firmly in the principle of grace and the offspring of the Christian worldview and its mission of sharing Good News with the whole world.5

The Christian Life: Grace in Motion

Grace as Point of Beginning for Christian Life

Paul, the Apostle, declared: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:8-9). Such is the beginning place for an indepth understanding of the Christian Life. The unmerited favor of God is the initiator and ongoing life source of the Christian experience. Baptists have faithfully championed this principle of redemption.

The principle of grace unfolds in the following fashion. In the beginning of creation, humanity walked in freedom and shamelessness in fellowship with God the Creator (Gen. 2:1-25). Following the lead of Eden’s first residents (who resisted God and lived for themselves) all have sinned by turning away from God’s love and falling short of his purpose for human beings (Rom. 3:23; 5:12-21). The consequence of human sin is spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). God’s loving and holy nature caused him to intervene in the human dilemma of sin. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God, the penalty of mankind’s sin was atoned (Rom. 5:1-11). His death paid the necessary toll certainly for Baptists, it is about following the authoritative, written Word of God. Likewise, Baptists have historically approached their description of the faithful life through an unwavering commitment to the priesthood of every believer. The Holy Spirit is the believer’s guide to knowing the mind and way of Christ. Finally, Baptist theology has given birth to a doctrine of Christian living which flows out of a belief in the importance of the local church and its mission of sharing Good News with the whole world.


3 See Boyd Hunt, Redeemed! Eschatological Redemption and the Kingdom of God (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995) 18-68, for excellent bibliographic references on the doctrine of the Christian Life.


for human sin, conquered death, and opened the door for eternal life with the Father (John 3:16-18).

God, through his Holy Spirit, initiates the possibility of a saving relationship with human beings by witnessing (1) of his love and holiness, and (2) the sinfulness of humanity, in the heart and conscience of the unredeemed (John 3:5-6; 16:8-11). God’s desire is that no person should perish apart from his love (2 Peter 3:9). Those who believe in their heart and confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord move into the experience of salvation (Rom. 10:9-10). In coming to salvation, one must recognize that even the faith necessary for redemption is made possible by God’s grace (Eph. 2:8).

**A Description of the Grace Process**

The writings of the Apostle Paul describe the experience of salvation as a predetermined, deliberate action by God. That is, believers are elected (chosen) by the Father for a salvation relationship (Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:4, 11). The exact meaning of Paul’s concept of election has been an ongoing discussion with Baptists. Largely, Baptist believers have accepted the notion that election does not negate the necessity of individuals willfully choosing to enter a saving relationship with God. The matter of election is a paradox that is not resolved biblically. Election simply points toward the theme of God’s grace as the central reality of the salvation experience.

**Baptism as a Sign of New Life**

Once the believer moves into a relationship of justification with God, the initial sign of the new life in Christ is water baptism. Following the biblical pattern of baptism by total immersion, baptism, as practiced by Baptists, witnesses to the utter grace of salvation. Plunged under the water, the new Christian is proclaiming the cleansing power of Jesus’ atoning life, death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism is a symbolic act of obedience and not a necessary work for salvation.

Once the reality of salvation has dawned in the recipient of grace, a journey begins. The believer’s whole life becomes a death, burial, and resurrection experience (2 Cor. 4:10-12). Everyday there is a dying to rise again (Matt. 10:38-39). The span of a person’s life becomes the crucible where God in Christ, through the transforming ministry of the Holy Spirit, changes the believer into the full likeness of Christ. When eternity dawns for all believers, they will stand before eternity’s throne as perfect witnesses of praise to the grace of God (1 Peter 1:3-9).

The span of a person’s life becomes the crucible where God in Christ, through the transforming ministry of the Holy Spirit, changes the believer into the full likeness of Christ.

**The Grace Journey of Sanctification**

The journey of salvation is known in theological terms as sanctification. Just as the initial act of salvation is a product of grace, so the development and growth of the Christian life is the work of God’s unmerited favor. The Christian is lifted out of the unregenerate world to do good works. Every good work accomplished is the result of God supplying the believer with the ability, motivation, and power to perform loving deeds (Eph. 2:10).

From beginning to end, salvation is God’s grace in motion.

**The Christian Life: Riding the Wave**

The Essential Role of the Holy Spirit

An accurate understanding of the Christian life demands an awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit. Bruce Larson has likened the life of the Christian to that of a surfer on the ocean riding the powerful ocean waves. “The wave that carries us along, as the church of Jesus Christ, is the Holy Spirit. Our job is to ride that wave the best we know how.”

The person and ministry of the Holy Spirit is the means by which God provides his grace for the development of individual Christians and his church.

**Baptists and the “Second Blessing”**

Some Christian groups believe the Spirit comes into the life of a Christian in an experience subsequent to the initial act of conversion. Baptists, along with the historic mainstream of Christendom, affirm the redeeming presence of the Spirit in the life of the believer at the moment of spiritual conversion (John 14:17; 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 John 2:27). Herschel Hobbs, a long-respected Baptist pastor, author, and interpreter of the Bible, demonstrated the traditional Baptist perspective on the Spirit: “When man turns in faith to Jesus, by the mysterious process of regeneration he is born of the Holy Spirit. . . . When one becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit takes up his abode in that person’s life. The New Testament knows nothing of the so-called second blessing.”

**The Promise of the Spirit of Pentecost**

Jesus comforted his disciples only hours before his crucifixion with the promise of the Holy Spirit’s ministry

6 For an excellent discussion of the Baptist dialogue concerning election, see Hunt, 126-33.
7 Ibid., 132.
8 Hobbs, 115-22.
9 Hull, 131-38.
11 Hobbs, 60.
in their lives: unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you” (John 16:7b). Jesus’ promise concerning the gift of the Spirit in the lives of his followers does not indicate the absence of the Spirit prior to Pentecost.12 Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41) simply ushered in God’s witness to his grace through the Spirit’s testimony of the historic Gospel story.

The Work of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit works in the life of a Christian to accomplish sanctification, the gradual process of growth throughout one’s lifetime (Romans 15:16). God’s Spirit is the source of empowerment for God’s people (Acts 1:7-8). He is the “Counselor/Comforter” (paraclete is the Greek word, meaning “advocate”). As such, he serves as the Spirit of truth, bringing to the Christian’s mind the teachings of Jesus (John 14:16-17, 26; 16:13-15). Likewise, he guides the faithful into fields of service for the work of the Kingdom (Acts 16:6-10).

As the Spirit of God leads, he causes the people of God to have the ability to grow in understanding the deep wisdom of eternity (Eph. 3:14-19). Christians develop the capacity to see God’s reality in a world that is muddled by the pervasive sickness of sin. Not only that, but the Spirit also produces God’s qualities of life in the believer (Gal. 5:22-23).

Confident assurance of personal security and heaven’s reality are nurtured through the Spirit’s indwelling presence (Eph. 1:13-14). In the midst of life’s transience and suffering a Christian can live and serve with radiant hope. Through the provision of specific spiritual gifts, God’s people fulfill the high calling of God to be a blessing in his world (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:14).

Filling of the Spirit

In order for the Spirit to accomplish his many ministries on behalf of believers, they must be continually filled with his powerful reality (Eph. 5:18). Prayerful worship and loving service seem to be the vehicles used by the Father to produce a pervasive sense of the Spirit in one’s life (Eph. 5:8-20). Jesse C. Fletcher has written: “The principle, power, and purpose inherent in Christlikeness is made possible by His indwelling Spirit through the application of His example in daily cross-bearing. But it is a process, an ongoing discipleship under the instruction of that Spirit.”13

Indeed, the Christian life is a process. Even though it is ignited by grace and empowered by the Spirit, the Christ life is not accomplished instantaneously.

Christian Growth and the Character of God

Essentially, the Christian grows into the character of God. John, the beloved disciple, put it this way: ...now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). Those who plumb the depths of the scriptures discover the character of God to be anchored in two eternal realities: holiness and love. God is holy and God is love. Those who know him are becoming persons of holiness and love (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 4:7-8; John 13:34-35). Christian lives are no longer governed by the principles of this world. Along the way, Christians are tempted, falter, and sin, but Christ forgives, restores, and refocuses life. In this lifetime we shall not attain a state of perfection, but we will move in that direction (Matt. 5:48). Clark Pinnock has expressed the high ideal of the Christian journey toward God in writing:

Freed from egocentrism and reoriented to God and our neighbors, we are now enabled by grace to move in the direction of holiness. Free of anxiety because of what God has done for us, free of preoccupation with ourselves, we can yield up our members to God as instruments of righteousness. There is freedom and love, dying and

12 Mullins, 203ff.

13 Jesse C. Fletcher, Practical Discipleship (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 140.
The Christian Life: Life Together

Imperative of the Church for Christian nurture

The journey of faith is not to be traveled in isolation. Faith people are people of community. Therefore, to understand the Christian life, one must sense the imperative of being related to other people of faith. For the Christian, the church is the arena in which one finds the nurture of an eternal family.

Community as God’s Design

God created humankind for the purpose of relationships. The very nature of God himself is unified. We know the loving and Holy One as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In perfect harmony, the triune nature of God has always existed. In his loving desire to share the goodness of his harmonious life, God created. He proclaimed to the first man, “It is not good to be alone.” And so, he created another in his image (Gen. 2:18-25).

Sin spoiled God’s harmonious community of creation. The heart of sin is self-centered human nature, a nature that proclaims, “I know better than God about life and I will be the focus of my world.” Living in that fashion always destroys human community. The result of sin is disastrous to God’s human family (Rom. 1:18-32). Sin placed divisive barriers between the first man and woman of creation; their relationship was never the same (Gen. 3:1-24).

The Bible’s perspective on the history of the world is a record of God’s mission to redeem his creation and restore unity. His people, Israel, were to be a witness to the world of God’s redeeming, unifying power. The Lord God taught Israel to love God and neighbor (Deut. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18).

Jesus Calls Humanity to Loving Relationships

Jesus, likewise, called men and women to that same love, and he challenged his hearers to live by the depth of God’s law. For instance, according to Jesus, God’s people are not to commit murder, and, more than that, they are to avoid an anger that passes judgment on others (Matt. 5:21-26). Jesus also said those who love God are not to commit adultery and, more than that, they are not to lust in their hearts after other persons (Matt. 5:27-30). The Lord led his followers and called the world to return to the Father’s ideal of loving unity.

As Jesus lifted persons out of the sinfulness of this world, he placed them in the fellowship of his church (Matt. 16:13-20). Paul the Apostle described the church as the place where God restores unity (Eph. 2:11-22). For Paul, the image of the human body depicted the unity of the church. The Corinthian Christians of the first century suffered in disunity, and the Apostle wrote to remind them of the essential unity of the Lord’s church (1 Cor. 12:12-31). Unable to accomplish Christ’s eternal mission as individual believers, God has joined his people together with complementary spiritual gifts for the shared work of his kingdom (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

Those who plumb the depths of the scriptures discover the character of God to be anchored in two eternal realities: holiness and love. God is holy and God is love.

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The Role of Christian Leaders in the Church

The Lord has structured His church so that it progresses through the equipping ministry of selected persons. Christ has given the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers. In the pastoral epistles, the Apostle Paul speaks also of deacons who serve (1 Tim. 3:8-12). Church leaders labor for the express purpose of preparing God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up... (Eph. 4:11-12). These persons are to serve in the spirit of servanthood as did Jesus. According to Simon Peter these individuals are to be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:2-3). No hierarchy of power exists in the Lord’s church. Baptists have championed correctly the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. As priests unto God, all of the Lord’s people serve under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, respecting leaders, but following the Lord’s leadership for each life.18

The Privilege of Life within the Church

What a privilege it is to belong to the Lord’s church, to share life with his people (1 Peter 2:9-10)! The church has the mission of living in love and communicating to the world God’s redemption in Christ. To follow Christ is to share in the unity of His people, work for the success of His church, and live faithfully as people involved in mission.

The Witness of Kindness, Mercy, Servanthood and Sacrifice

The work of witness finds further expression in the many acts of kindness, mercy, servanthood, and sacrifice which Christ calls forth from hearts of devotion. The example of Jesus points the way. In His inaugural address, Jesus set forth His intentions to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah by identifying with the neglected needy ones of life. The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus went around healing every disease while he taught. Always, he looked with compassion upon the throngs who came to Him (Matt. 9:35-36).

The Lord reminded his disciples that when the nations stand at the throne of eternal judgment, God will measure our relationship to Jesus by our acts of mercy. God will announce at the judgment, “...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” H. Richard Niebuhr has reminded Christians, “When men know that they stand before an infinite judge and creator the content of their obligation becomes infinite.”20 Perhaps James, the Lord’s own brother put it best, faith without deeds is dead (see James 2:14-26).
The Witness of Words

The witness of words apart from a life of Christian character and acts of goodness can be profoundly hollow and unproductive. Even so, words must be spoken. And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? Paul queried (Rom. 10:14). When a cure has been discovered, the truth must be shared with others. The power of words is awesome and creative. When the Gospel story is shared, the Holy Spirit is given opportunity to work specifically in the hearts of the faithless.

The Witness of Stewardship

Finally, the journey outward in witness is performed through the stewardship of human resources. Life’s material possessions must be managed well and shared generously for the sake of sending forth the Gospel. The work of the Lord’s church flourishes through the loving gifts of God’s people. Paul was able to bring relief to the saints of Jerusalem because of the generosity of the Macedonian believers (1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8-9). Paul’s own ministry was sustained by the superlative generosity of the Church at Philippi (Phil. 4:10-20). Jesus places resources in all of our lives and expects us to manage them well for the mission of the Gospel (Matt. 25:14-30).

The Christian Life: The Disciplined Life

The Necessity of Christian Discipline

The high calling of the Christian life demands a well-spring of strength from the Father. To live in the joy of grace and follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit, God’s people must be infused with the life-giving Word. The Lord has promised sufficient resources for following in His servant way. Failure to draw forth the resources of God results in spiritual impotence (John 15:1-8). In his classic work, Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster declared, “The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people. The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths... We must not be led to believe that the Disciplines are only for spiritual giants and hence beyond our reach. God intends the Disciplines of the spiritual life to be for ordinary human beings.”

The Disciplines of the Faith

What are the disciplines that feed the soul? Foster wrote of (1) the “inward disciplines” of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study, (2) the “outward disciplines” of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service, and (3) the corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration.

Jesus’ Example of Devotion

Jesus taught His disciples the ways of devotion (Matthew 6:1-18). By example, He worshiped corporately (Luke 4:16). Consistently, He pulled away from the crowds for times of prayerful communion (Matt. 26:36-45). Fasting marked his life (Luke 4:1-2). Surely, his was a life of utter simplicity (Luke 9:58). Once, when the disciples were powerless to help a boy possessed of an evil spirit, Jesus told his loved ones, this kind can come out only by prayer (Mark 9:29). Those who hunger for the power lived out in the life of the Lord must learn his ways of prayerfulness.

The Bible as a Source of Strength

The Psalmist would remind the People of God concerning the importance of drawing also from the written Word of God: I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you (Psalm 119:11). As the believer rehearses the mighty acts of God in history, preserved for the benefit of God’s people through the scriptures, the stories of faith pierce to the depth of the human heart, teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

Resurgence of Interest in Spiritual Life

A surge of interest in the pathway of spiritual development has emerged throughout Baptist life as the twentieth century draws to conclusion. E. Glenn Hinson’s book, A Serious Call to a Contemplative Life-style, and Henry Blackaby’s workbook, Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God, are witness to the vast, renewed interest in the way of devotion among Baptists. Such works as these are helpful in guiding the Christian toward a deeper awareness of the power and presence of God in daily life.

Choosing to set aside a daily time for prayer and study of the scriptures would be a great benefit to any and all of God’s people. Actively participating in the corporate avenues of worship will deepen one’s sense of the transcendent and the immanent reality of God. Without the disciplines of faith, the light grows dim. On the other hand, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours (Mark 11:24).

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Financing Cooperative Baptist Work*

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   1. How It Started and Why It Spread
   2. A Paragon of Success
   3. A Changing Scene
   4. The Texas Plan
   5. Strengths of the Texas Plan

II. Earned and Interest Income
   1. Sales and Fees
   2. Interest on Invested Funds

III. Development Income

IV. Designated Gifts

V. Association Mission Gifts

VI. Special Mission Offerings

VII. Conclusion

Financing Cooperative Baptist Work

Because Baptists take seriously the demands of Christ’s Great Commission, they have worked together to implement it. Baptist plans of financing Kingdom work are based on belief in local church autonomy and on the concept of doing denominational work through separate, self-governing associations, conventions, and organizations. So, to support the total mission effort adequately, many separate Baptist bodies work in voluntary financial cooperation.

Baptists have sought to teach church members the biblical principles of stewardship - which begin with the truth that God is the owner and people the trustee of all things. People’s trusteeship includes wise personal money management, integrity in work and business dealings, and certainly the support of the Lord’s work.

Most money for Baptist causes flows from the individual Baptist to and then through the local church. On the average, $.82 of each dollar is retained for the support of the church and the remaining $.18 finds its way to various state, home and foreign mission fields. About $.08 of what goes for missions is channeled through the Cooperative Program.

It is disturbing to note that Southern Baptists rank low among American denominations in per capita giving. It has long been said that 20% of church members give 80% of the average church’s budget, and half of them give nothing. Today (2001) these percentages may be worse!

Such figures should be a cause of great concern to Baptist leaders. They indicate a lack of proper discipleship in both stewardship and missions. People will give no more than is expected of them. Have churches been negligent in expecting their members to give a worthy portion of their incomes? Christians will respond to challenging ministries, but church leaders must teach biblical truths and provide opportunities for members to fully realize their Christian privileges and responsibilities.

The system’s simplicity has allowed a church member to give a gift to his church’s budget and know that a church-set percentage will go to the state convention treasurer for distribution throughout that state’s work according to the budget approved by messengers to its annual convention.

In order to help believers grow in their knowledge and commitment, church leaders need to help them understand the financial systems through which Baptists support their cooperative work.

The Cooperative Program

How It Started and Why It Spread

For the first 80 years of their history, Southern Baptists supported their work in a haphazard fashion. Each agency had its representatives on the road visiting churches to plead for support. It was not unusual for some churches to be called upon for a dozen or more special offerings, pledge campaigns, and emergency drives each year. Mission boards and agencies were in debt most of the time with little prospect for relief. Matters were reaching a crisis in 1918 when SBC President J. B. Gambrell and L. R. Scarbrough of Texas launched a massive campaign to raise $75 million in a five-year period. It was an unprecedented pledge campaign in that it included all Baptist work, with the state and national conventions as partners.

Although $92 million was initially pledged, economic problems caused only $58 million to be received. Still, in 1924, at the end of the $75 million Campaign, there was great rejoicing. Even more important than the money raised was the discovery that Baptists would respond to a unified, coordinated plan of mission support.

The first annual budget the Southern Baptist Convention had ever had was presented and adopted, and the next year this “future program” was named the Cooperative Program.

A Paragon of Success

This financial system has been one of the keys to Southern Baptists’ tremendous growth since 1925. In 2000, Texas Baptists gave $25.9 million of the total given by all Southern Baptists through the Cooperative Program, close to 15%.

The system has been wonderfully simple and efficient. At its peak of efficiency, the costs of promoting, handling, and accounting for Cooperative Program funds has been five percent - far below the costs of other fund-raising systems. This efficiency was made possible by the voluntary cooperation of the various denominational bodies and the widespread promotion of the system by pastors and church members, to the point that it truly was regarded as the Baptist way to support missions.

The system’s simplicity allowed a church member to give a gift to the church’s budget and know that a church-set percentage would go to the state convention treasurer for distribution throughout that state’s work according to the budget approved by messengers to its annual convention. That state budget also set a percentage of Cooperative Program funds to be forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention for distribution among its ministries according to the
annual budget approved by its messengers.

A Changing Scene

That is how the system worked in the past. Today the controversy and division in Southern Baptist life are changing the Cooperative Program in ways that make it less simple.

Of course, the Cooperative Program has been changed many times since 1925. It was never meant to be a static thing. New and different ministries have been included in it as needs and priorities have changed. And more basic changes have also been made. For example, in its early years, both designated and undesignated gifts to Baptist-sponsored work were counted as Cooperative Program. By the 1960’s most states counted only undesignated gifts.

At its beginning, it was clearly stated that the fund-sharing partnership between each state convention and the national convention was strictly voluntary. "This arrangement...is made simply as a matter of convenience and economy, and may be changed at any time." Now the Southern Baptist Convention and several state conventions have begun accepting as Cooperative Program funds those gifts that bypass one partner or the other. In addition, numerous states offer cooperative giving plans that channel gifts to causes outside Cooperative Program budgets or divide gifts by different percentages.

The Texas Plan

The Baptist General Convention of Texas meeting in Amarillo in 1994 adopted a plan that allows churches to give to the Texas and SBC budget at a percentage adopted by the BGCT at the annual meeting or to the Texas Cooperative Program and Baptist causes beyond Texas, following either the Convention’s adopted percentage division or their own specified division. All such gifts sent to the BGCT under this plan are distributed according to the churches’ directions. As always, these church directions are given to the convention treasurer on a form regularly sent in with the church’s gifts. All gifts under this plan will be recognized as cooperative giving. Special mission offerings and designated gifts will be handled as always and reported as designated.

Strength of the Texas Plan

These changes are designed to put breathing room in the Cooperative Program - to give Baptists room to differ without breaking their most important channel of cooperation. Whatever changes may come in the system itself, some aspects of cooperative mission support are vital.

First, regular, planned giving by churches to missions in place of seasonal and sporadic giving is vital. At the time the Cooperative Program was beginning, the concept of a unified church budget was also beginning to take hold. This and the laymen’s tithing movement encouraged regular, proportionate giving by church members.

Second, regular, planned spending by denominational agencies and the elimination of constant borrowing is vital. When agencies’ money came in irregularly, they often had to take out loans in order to pay operating expenses. With a more steady flow of income, they can avoid debt and realistically plan their work, which makes an important difference. Unified church budgets made a similar difference for local churches.

Third, it is vital to assure Baptists that their gifts are always properly accounted for and used as specified in convention budgets that are publicly approved and widely distributed in Annuals, pamphlets, and other materials.

These vital aspects of cooperative mission support are also incorporated into the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s plan and into the alternate giving plans being adopted by some state conventions.

The Cooperative Program made the Southern Baptist Convention in reality the united body it had been in theory. Southern Baptists, unlike their northern counterpart chose to build a convention to sponsor multiple ministries rather than developing multiple societies to carry out individual ministries.

Earned And Interest Income

Most Baptists are not aware of the Baptist plans of financing Kingdom work are based on our belief in local church autonomy and on our concept of doing denominational work through separate, self-governing associations, conventions, and organizations. Increasingly significant amounts of money supplied to Baptist causes through earned income. This includes earning from (1) sales and fees and (2) interest on funds invested.

Sales and Fees

LifeWay Christian Resources (formally Baptist Sunday School Board) earns all of its income from the sale of literature and other materials. Contrary to what many Baptists believe, LifeWay receives no money through the Cooperative Program.

In addition to producing materials Sunday School Board earnings operate the two national conference centers at Glorieta, New Mexico and Ridgecrest, North Carolina; provide some of the funding for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee; and help fund many state convention programs in Sunday School work and other areas.

Woman's Missionary Union supports itself from the sale of magazines and books, along with some direct

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1 Southern Baptist Convention, Annual, 1928, 33.
contributions. Along with some Cooperative Program support, Baptist men’s work and stewardship (now part of the SBC Executive Committee) rely on earnings from the sale of materials and from consultant fees for building fund campaigns.

Baptist colleges and universities receive a large part of their income from tuition, fees, and dormitory rentals. Baptist hospitals get most of their income from patient charges. While homes for children and the elderly depend less on actual earnings, they do receive pay from residents or their families for the care provided. State agencies who place children in our Baptist homes reimburse some of the costs and homes for the aging accept Medicaid funds.

Probably development programs provide the largest single source of financial support for Baptist institutions.

**Interest on Invested Funds**

Income from interest on invested funds is also important but, often misunderstood. Baptists’ invested money consists of: (1) Endowment and trust funds handled by the Baptist Foundation of Texas and other Baptist foundations, (2) Retirement and insurance funds handled by the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board, (3) Reserve funds, and (4) Short-term investments.

Before considering each of these, it is important to stress that these monies are used only for the purposes approved by convention messengers and agency trustees or specified by the donors of individual gifts. No mission money ever is diverted from its intended use. Yearly audits by independent, reputable accounting firms verify how all Baptist money is spent, with their reports published in the conventions’ Annuals.

(1) The Baptist Foundation of Texas, the largest Baptist foundation, is trustee of more than $2 billion (up from $270 million in 1983).

In addition to the endowment funds of Baptist institutions, this includes money given by individuals who specify the Baptist causes to which the annual earnings are to be given. By carefully investing the funds entrusted to it, the Foundation earns dollars for support of Baptist causes.

It should be noted that this Foundation, like other Baptist foundations and the Annuity Board, takes great care to avoid investing in businesses contrary to Christian principles. And it is interesting to note that the Baptist Foundation of Texas, unlike the others, receives no Cooperative Program money for operating expenses. It operates instead on a very small percentage of the earnings from the funds it manages.

(2) The Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board handles retirement and insurance funds amounting to more than $8 billion. As with any good retirement or insurance fund, the money is invested so that the promised benefits can be paid to all participating church and denominational employees. The Board is controlled by both the adopted purposes of Southern Baptists and the laws of the United States.

Through contracts between the Annuity Board and each state convention, ministerial protection/retirement funds for pastors and church staff workers come from participating churches and the state’s Cooperative Program, plus optional extra amounts from the individuals covered. In order to receive the state convention’s matching funds of up to $420 annually for ministers, a cooperating church must give at least an equivalent amount through the Cooperative Program.

The 2001 Texas Cooperative Program budget included $1.6 million for this purpose. The Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program included over $1 million for the relief of needy ministers or their widows through the Annuity Board. And, of course, each convention pays for a portion of its employees’ retirement and insurance out of Cooperative Program funds.

(3) Reserve funds are usually invested. After Baptists finally became debt-free in the early 1940’s, the Southern Baptist Convention instructed its agencies and institutions to set aside reserve funds (1-3 months) for an emergency. Likewise, the Texas Convention instructed the Executive Board to build and maintain an emergency reserve fund equal to the cost of two months’ operation. Reserve money can be spent only by the Executive Board or the Convention in annual session, and the status of reserve funds is reported in convention annuals.

(4) Short-term investments are commonly made today by all businesses. If funds for a planned project must wait a few days or weeks before being spent, most Baptist agencies place them in short-term savings or other investments according to approved policies. No programs are delayed or deprived of funds approved for them. Actually this wise practice provides additional money from the interest earned.

**Development Income**

Development programs provide one of the largest single sources of financial support for Baptist institutions. This vital channel of support is relatively new in Baptist life. Until about 1960 only a few institutions were
aggressively involved in seeking large, estate-type gifts. However, with the ever-increasing costs of operating schools, hospitals and homes, Baptist institutions were compelled to initiate development programs to seek special gifts from private donors.

Development gifts are received mainly from individuals and private foundations. (Some come unsolicited from churches, but Convention policies do not allow institutions to seek direct gifts from churches.) Development programs encourage individuals to make gifts of cash, property, stocks and bonds, or businesses either during their lifetime or at death through their wills.

Small cash gifts may be used for immediate operating expenses or for services such as scholarships. Large gifts are usually invested to provide continuing income, unless they are designated for some specific project. The investment of gifts may be handled by the institution itself or by a Baptist foundation. The endowment funds of Texas Baptist institutions are generally managed by the Baptist Foundation of Texas.

**Designated Gifts**

Baptists always have given designated gifts to causes they chose, and always will. For the 80 years before the Cooperative Program, virtually all Baptist giving was designated giving. Today it still includes support for volunteer missionaries, providing "extras" for children in child-care homes, and many other ministries.

**Associational Mission Gifts**

The work of a Baptist association is supported by direct gifts from its cooperating churches. They are usually encouraged to give 3% to 5% of their budget for all the training, church-starting, and missions work that associations do today. However, some of this work is done with shared funding from the state convention or national convention agencies. Two prime examples are the training of church leaders and the starting of new churches.

**Special Missions Offerings**

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, and the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas state missions are the three special missions offerings promoted by the Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas.

The IMB and NAMB receive almost half their income from the two nationwide offerings. In addition to paying the salaries of the Texas Woman’s Missionary Union staff, the state missions offering augments support for some ministries and provides additional ones. This offering is promoted by Woman’s Missionary Union and Convention leadership.

Allocations for these three special mission offerings are set through consultation between leaders of Woman’s Missionary Union and state or national missions work. Gifts for all three from Texas churches are sent through the state convention office. In 2000 these gifts exceeded $25 million.

Other special offerings supported by Baptists include the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s Global Missions Offering and offerings for world hunger relief.

**Conclusion**

The Cooperative Program has also been the tie connecting all the separate, self-governing bodies of the denomination in a working cooperation. For example, most home missions work has been done through partnership agreements between each state convention and the NAMB. Much of this work then also involves associations and local churches.

Even more important than the money raised was the discovery that Baptists would respond to a unified, coordinated plan of mission support.

**Bibliography**


Southern Baptist Convention Annual, 1928.
Baptists Relating Locally

I. Traditional Associations
   1. New Testament Patterns for Associations
   2. An Overview of Associational History
      (1) English Origins (1650-1707)
      (2) The Association as the Only Denominational Body (1707-1800)
      (3) Discovery of New Forms of Denominational Life (1800-1848)
   3. Nature and Definition of Associations
      (1) Terms Used for Associations
      (2) Definitions Regarding Associations
      (3) Summary of Usages and Definitions
   4. Functions of Associations
   5. Basic Purpose and Tasks of the Association
   6. Informing and Educating the Ministers of the Association
   7. A Focus on Role Change for the Association
   8. Possible Changes of Associationalism in the Future

II. Non-Traditional Associations

III. Role of the Director of Missions (DOM)

IV. Summary
Baptists Relating Locally

Traditional Associations

A picture of the association necessitates a glance at certain areas. These areas include New Testament patterns; an overview of history; nature and definition; functions; leadership; director of missions; and, changes for the future.

New Testament Patterns For Associations

J. W. Ousley indicated that actual justification for Baptist associations dates back to patterns discovered in the New Testament. When news was brought to Jerusalem that the “gospel had been taken to Antioch of Syria and that there were many believers there, the Jerusalem church immediately sent Barnabas to their aid.”

An additional account is the Christians in Antioch who were being told that they could not find salvation unless they were circumcised. The frustrated congregation of Antioch sent messengers to Jerusalem for the purpose of consultation. After discussion, the decision was reached that the gospel was one of grace and that the means of receiving salvation was strictly faith. Such spirit of mutual helpfulness and cooperation between individuals and groups is prevalent throughout the New Testament (Note Acts 11:1-8; Gal. 2:1-10).

In these biblical accounts, there is not evidence of coercion or control of one church over another. Actually, there is a beautiful picture of love, concern, and interest of one group for another. . . active cooperative endeavors to assist one another. Most important is that among these believers, as individuals and as corporate bodies, there was an immediate and voluntary association with others and a sense of desire and obligation to aid others of whom, in a larger sense, they were a part.

An Overview Of Associational History

English Origins (1650-1707)

The development of the associations among Baptists was one of the “unique features of English Baptist life in the seventeenth century.” Naturally, because of the “inherent nature of an association, there had to be Baptist churches before there were Baptist Associations.” Apparently, both General and Particular Baptists experimented with Associational relations. Particular Baptists followed John Calvin, believing that the atonement of Jesus Christ was for the elect. General Baptists placed their emphasis on human freedom, “contending that the cross was forgiveness for all who would believe.”

Five General Baptist churches most likely organized into a union. Subsequently, they sought fellowship with the Waterlanders in 1626. The earliest experiment in formal cooperation among the Particular Baptists was the issuance of the confession of 1644. Walter Shurden observes that seven churches in London were seeking to distinguish themselves, in the public eye, from the Arminian theology of General Baptists and more radical elements of the Anabaptists. However, in 1651 at least thirty General Baptist churches in the Midlands published a confession known as “The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations.” Thus, interchurch relationships existed among General and Particular Baptists prior to any formal associational structure.

Apparently, formal expressions of connectionalism emerged among British Baptists in the 1650s. Constitutions and statements of purpose were adopted. By 1660 associations had become “common Baptist institutions among both General and Particular Baptists.”

Associations originally rose primarily for functional reasons to provide mutual assistance to meet whatever needs the churches had. J. C. Bradley reflected that both General and Particular Baptists found that successful associationalism was “impossible without basic agreement in theology and ecclesiology.”

Essential agreement in faith and order was indispensable. The essence of the association was fellowship. This was an expression of the basic unity and interdependence of believers in Jesus Christ.

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
5 Ousley, 69.
The Association as the Only Denominational Body (1707 - 1800)

Many historians agree that the Philadelphia Association, organized in 1707, was the first Baptist association in America. This association provided a model of Baptist associationalism. It became a pattern for the Charleston Association (1751), the oldest Baptist association in the south. According to Ousley, before the actual formation of the Philadelphia Association, Baptist churches had been meeting periodically in the greater Philadelphia area. From these gatherings, messengers from five churches assembled in 1707, and the Philadelphia Association was organized. By 1868, the total number of affiliated churches had grown to sixty-six.

Sandy Creek Association (1758) provided another stream of Southern Baptist associational growth. Preaching, evangelism, and fellowship were primary for them. Shurden noted that the “Charleston association gave us order; the Sandy Creek Association gave us ardor.”

Like British Baptists, Baptists in America found the theological justification of associations in their unique view of the church as “both universal and particular.” Most important: Baptist churches were “independent” in power but “interdependent” in Christian fellowship. The joy of self-government did not provide a setting for living in isolation from other like-minded churches.

Associations in this period held the following objectives:

1. To promote fellowship among the churches,
2. To maintain uniformity in faith and practice among churches,
3. To give counsel and assistance to churches, and
4. To provide a means through which churches could work together.

At the conclusion of the eighteenth century, the major purpose of associations had shifted “from providing fellowship to providing an organization through which churches could cooperate in missions, education, and other endeavors too large for individual churches.” In addition, associations also proved their value in “securing religious liberty, reducing doctrinal deviations, securing preaching for churches, encouraging ministers, and rallying the denomination to missions and education,” according to Bradley.

The essence of the association was fellowship. This was an expression of the basic unity and interdependence of believers in Jesus Christ.

Discovery of New Forms of Denominational Life (1800-1848)

In the early nineteenth century, Baptists discovered new forms of denominational life. Up to this time, for almost a hundred years, the association had been the only form of Baptist interchurch connectionalism. During this period, societies, national conventions and state conventions emerged.

In carving out an understanding of the association during this period of time, what type of reception did the Associational concept have in Texas? According to Ousley, the “initial endeavor to organize an association failed because of anti-missionary leaders on one side and pro-missionary leaders on the other.” The anti-missionary sentiment was shared by Abner Smith and Asiel Dancer; whereas, the pro-missionary leaders were T. W. Cox and R. E. B. Baylor. The twenty-five messengers who had assembled at the Independence Church adjourned in complete disarray. They were unable to agree on the Articles of Faith and a Constitution. However, the missionary-minded group arranged for another meeting to be held October 8, 1840, with the Travis Church near Brenham. The church at Independence sent three of its seventeen members; the LaGrange church, four of its fifteen members; and, the Travis church sent three of its thirteen members. All three of these churches were served by the same pastor, T. W. Cox. Apparently, there was no difficulty. Result: the first Baptist association in Texas came into existence in 1840. . . Union Baptist Association. This name was selected in hope of reflecting the harmonizing of various groups of Baptists in the Texas area. By 1842, the number of participating churches in Union Association had grown to twelve, with a total membership of 433.

According to some reports, in 1844 the second Texas Baptist association was organized, the Colorado Baptist Association. (Records provided by this association, indicate the starting date was November, 1847.) It is significant that at this meeting five churches from Union association were given letters commending their messengers to become a part of the new Associational body. Black churches providing for their needs became factors during the embryonic stages of these two associations. The Colorado Baptist Association gladly received a black church which had petitioned membership, 1854, by providing the “right hand of fellowship.” Whereas, in 1855, the Union Association

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12 Ibid.
13 Ousley, 70.
15 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ousley, 71.
recommended the “rejection of the petition of the Colored Church at Anderson” because of their condition as “servants.” This association recommended “separate meetings” for this Black congregation.

In 1843, effort was made to organize another association to be called Sabine Baptist Association. After disagreements and the failure to form this association, 1847, the Sabine Association dissolved. Most of the messengers organized into the Eastern Missionary Baptist Association. The next year the group changed its name to Soda Lake Baptist Association, often referred to as the third Baptist association in Texas.23 Texas Baptists have 110 associations in 2006.24 The total number of associations throughout the Southern Baptist Convention exceeds twelve hundred.25

The main thrust, just as a local church is a fellowship of worshipping and serving individuals, is that an association is a koinonia of worshipping and serving churches.

Nature And Definition Of Associations

Terms used for associations

Terms used for associations help one to understand their basic nature and definition:26

1. Often the term is used in a geographical sense to describe an association. The basic territory in which the participating churches are located is referred to as the “association.” Though this may be a correct way of describing boundaries and designated areas of churches, historically this was not necessarily true. For the emphasis in the past was more on “doctrinal” agreement regardless of the size and boundaries in which a given association was located.

2. A popular usage is that the association refers only to the annual meeting. According to Ousley, “the fact that the messengers meet and vote, constitute their meeting, is interpreted by some to mean that the association is no longer truly in existence and neither will it be in existence until it is reconstituted the following year.”

3. Another interpretation is the way the term “association” is used — a continuing interchurch organization. Later, in examining several definitions, the term “interchurch fellowship” is used by Allen Graves to denote some of the performing tasks of the Associational missionary, also called the director of missions, as he or she leads an association.27

4. The association is a doctrinal and cooperative fellowship. The main thrust, just as a local church is a fellowship of worshipping and serving individuals, is that an association is a koinonia of worshipping and serving churches.

Definitions Regarding Associations

A review of some current usages of the term “association,” substantiates the fact that there is not complete agreement as to the definition of an association.

1. Lloyd Corder defined an association as:
   “a fellowship of churches on mission in their setting.”28

2. One of the more popular definitions is provided by E. C. Watson:
   The Baptist association is a self-determining Baptist interchurch community created and sustained by the churches affiliated with her and responsible to them through their messengers, in which the churches foster their fellowships, their unity in faith and practice, and give and receive assistance in achieving their purpose.29

3. Another definition of an association was born out of a conventionwide historic conference on Associational missions attended by over 600 Associational directors and other Baptist leaders, 1963:
   A Baptist association is a self-determining spiritual body of messengers from churches which are in voluntary basic agreement as to faith and practice providing a program of assistance that aids cooperating churches desiring to reach their full potential of spiritual growth and service in keeping with the commission of Christ.30

A pivotal point of difference in the above definition is this: some would contend an association is composed of churches rather than messengers. (Note later discussion.)

4. One of the most innovative Associational missiologists in Southern Baptist life, J. C. Bradley, provides the following: A Baptist association is a self-governing fellowship of autonomous churches sharing a common faith and active on

24 Lorenzo Peña, Association Missions, Baptist General Convention of Texas
26 Ousley, 72.
27 Bradley, Churches on Mission, 53.
28 F. Russell Bennett, Jr., “Focus on Associations,” Baptist History and Heritage Vol. XVII, No. 2 (1 April 1982), 2.
mission in their setting.\textsuperscript{31} Bradley’s definition provides a broad base of understanding of an association: churches that comprise an association are “free, independent, and self-governing, autonomous churches” that decide to associate themselves to do certain things together. Such a fellowship of churches involves “oneness, shared life, mutuality and koinonia.”

Important: An association is created by the churches and is accountable to those churches through their messengers. An association, like other general bodies of Baptists, state conventions, and the Southern Baptist Convention, is self-governing.

W. W. Barnes likewise validated the principle that an association is sovereign, independent and self-governing.\textsuperscript{32}

One may conclude that associations are not composed of churches, but of messengers and that churches are in the cooperating fellowship of an association as their messengers comprise the membership, according to Ousley. Others acknowledge that churches are members of an Associational family. They comprise a unit called an association — and thereby are designated by a certain name such as “Austin Baptist Association,” and meet the needs of fellowship, financial support, doctrinal and other areas under the term “cooperating.”

A local church has no authority over an association, neither does an association have authority over a local church. Churches and associations then can cooperate with each other. Historically, the independence and sovereignty of the local churches has always been recognized.

**Summary of Usages and Definitions**

Some concluding statements relating to nature and definition:

An association is normally characterized by similar doctrinal beliefs and by spiritual harmony.

Associations are usually located in a particular geographical area.

There is an annual meeting of messengers from cooperating congregations.

There is adherence to similar polity observed by local churches, with associations having the right to accept or reject messengers, as well as petitioning churches (the procedure most churches follow in seeking membership in an association).

Recognizing that without Baptist churches there would be no Baptist associations, under the Lordship of Christ, the association is to be looked upon as autonomous, independent, and yet interdependent and cooperative in relationship with local churches and agencies and bodies of other Baptist groups.

**Function Of Associations**

As the student reflects on the history as it relates to the emergence of the association, several factors become evident as to how associations help churches. As a matter of fact, the association, the nearest “unit” to the local church, helps the churches in ways no other general Baptist body can accomplish. Why? Because the association is concerned with the whole life of its members, reflects Bradley.\textsuperscript{33} The association is basically “a network of relationships through which churches give and receive assistance in the fulfillment of their mission.”\textsuperscript{34}

1. Associations help churches fulfill their missions by providing a mutually supportive fellowship of churches, encouraging agreement on doctrinal and practical issues basic to fellowship and consistent with mission . . . and building a base for mission strategy.\textsuperscript{35}

2. Associations are missionary “to the core” — like the church, the association is missionary by nature.

3. Associations are crucial to denominational loyalty: the first line of denominational life. The way most Southern Baptists gain first-hand experience with the denomination is through an association.

The Baptist association is a self-determining Baptist interchurch community created and sustained by the churches affiliated with her and responsible to them through their messengers.

**Basic Purpose and Tasks of the Association**

The basic purpose of the association is to enable churches to be in fellowship and to be on mission together.\textsuperscript{36}

Everything . . . such as motivation, organizational structure, budget, calendar, goals and activities are all interrelated to the purpose.

What then do associations do . . . or, what are the tasks of an association?\textsuperscript{37}

Fellowship - Nurture harmony, faith, practice, as well as fellowship among churches.

Mission Performance - Call the churches to be on mission by providing resources and services to churches.

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\textsuperscript{31} Bradley, *Churches on Mission*, 15.


\textsuperscript{33} Bradley, *Churches on Mission*, 19.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 22-23.
Informing and Educating the Ministers of the Association

Informing and educating ministers in the association: Since 1707, Associational activities have included a strong emphasis on doctrinal sermons, discussions by churches about their “faith and practice” and other such emphases on informing the minister. An interest in the training of ministers became quite apparent in the Philadelphia Association on October 5, 1756, when Isaac Newton proposed that an academy be established at Hopewell, New Jersey. Later, in 1762, the Philadelphia Association led in the establishment of Rhode Island College, (Brown University).38

Charleston Association, 1756, promoted offerings in churches for ministerial education. In 1826, during the “State Convention of the Baptist Denomination in South Carolina, action was taken leading to Furman University.”39

Texas Baptists have, historically, also demonstrated a great concern about education. Ousley proudly noted that at the second meeting of the Union Baptist Association, 1841, William M. Tryon led in the establishment of a Baptist Educational Society. He was assisted by James Huckins, Judge R. E. B. Baylor, and others. The intention was expressed to begin a Baptist University “capable of enlargement to meet the demands of all ages to come.”40 This action precipitated the beginnings of both Baylor University and The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.

A Focus on Role Change for the Association

A focus on role change for the association.

Already the reader has observed changes in the denominational life at the emergence of state conventions, as well as the Southern Baptist Convention. As these denominational entities began to grow, there never appeared to be a deliberate attempt to undermine associationalism. Yet, some felt that associations began to make some philosophical changes. However, the Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, provided the 1963 conference on Associational missions to provide a forum for Associational work for the future. The “summation committee” presented a report that reflects an interest for the association, if need be, to return to its original role, or nature. The following is a part of their report:

1. The Associational unit of the missionary enterprise in Southern Baptist life is a constituent part of their total task force for world missions, rather than a tool, a channel, or a sub-division of any other portion of the missionary emphasis of the denomination.

2. We concluded that while completely separate from each other, there exists a vital interdependence of the association, the state conventions, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Baptist World Alliance. They each serve a distinct purpose, they each have a special work to do.

3. We suggest that in thinking and in fact the Associational mission program be considered a part of the total world mission program and that in every respect the Associational missionary will be considered as belonging fully to the Southern Baptist family of missionaries. We affirm that the association as a vital link in Baptist life exists for fellowship, cooperation, and service; and that one of its major tasks is missions.41

In the light of the above, associations have cooperated with state conventions and the national bodies, yet maintaining their “autonomous” nature. There is a “particular” relationship enjoyed daily between associations and state conventions because of geographical and philosophical opportunities. An “interdependence” with all Southern Baptist entities is needed by associations. In Texas, a number of associations are assisted substantially in financial support by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

While churches, associations, and state conventions are autonomous, they are at the same time interdependent. There is a most prominent inter-relationship among each of them. In the case of the associations, they serve the needs of the churches; the same can be said of the state conventions. The Constitution of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Article II-Object, in part reads: “to awaken and stimulate the churches to the greatest possible activity in evangelism, missions, Christian education and benevolent work and enterprises. . .”42 The Baptist General Convention of Texas goes about this principally by working with and through the associations. Extensive orientation and planning meetings are carried on throughout the year. The “substantial financial” support referred to above makes it possible for a number of associations in Texas to have a Director of Missions on the field as well as other associational staff members.

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39 Joe M. King, A History of South Carolina Baptists (Columbia: General Board of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, 1964), 187.

40 Ousley, 75.


42 Baptist General Convention of Texas Annual, 1994, 38.
A Summary of the relationship of the local church and association is most important, particularly in light of Ousley’s observations:

1. A local church, a spiritual fellowship, determines who can be received as members . . . so does an association.
2. The membership is voluntary in a local church . . . so is it in the association.
3. A local church decides on its budget . . . so does the association.
4. A church is independent in spirit and diversity . . . so is the association.
5. A church is interdependent . . . so is the association.
6. A church could exist without the association, but, its service for Christ would be hampered.
7. The association could not exist without the local church.
8. Local churches determine their participation in the associational programs.
9. Local churches send messengers to the association. Without going through the association, churches send messengers directly to state conventions, as well as national conventions.
10. Though motions have been made that messengers be chosen other than by the local church, such motions never have been passed, and such polity has not often, if ever, been practiced.

Possible Changes Of Associationalism In The Future

A focus, on some of the more salient areas reflected by Bradley in a speech at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center, 1994, can be seen in the following:

1. Many associations will continue to be essentially as they are now — basically, territorial.
2. “Parent-offspring” and base-satellite associations will be easily identifiable — a model that will help associations do some reconfigurations appears to be on the horizon.
3. Associations will be affected by the growing movement to form compatibility-group fellowships — such as ethnic fellowships, black fellowships, bivocational fellowships, etc.
4. There will probably be an increase in the number of associations of similar kinds of churches — based on doctrine, program style, and other factors. New associations most likely will follow nontraditional lines. Thus, the traditional associations may be reduced in numbers.
5. Associations will increasingly take on a role in world missions.
6. The role of the Associational director of missions will shift to reflect changes in churches and associations — such as church-responsive rather than convention-responsive. Many directors, as now, will serve more than one association. There will be a deep desire to restore the title, “Associational missionary.”
7. Associations will find their existence dependent upon the effectiveness with which they deliver the desired benefits to the churches — originally, associations were “invented” by churches to meet their needs . . . they were “reinvented” as needs changed.

Non-Traditional Associations

Associations have enjoyed a long and enriching relationship in Baptist life. The two sources most often referenced regarding the Baptist Association are the biblical account of the early churches and the historical experiences of Baptists and similar ecclesiastical bodies. The Baptist sense of association would seem to call for a self-determined group of self-governing congregations agreeing to a commonly held purpose in order to mutually extend a biblically-sound accomplishment of the Great Commission by way of cooperative ministry and missions. Among a variety of Baptists, and with regard to specific generations of Baptists, to speak of anything less or anything more might not meet the persistent definition of a Baptist association. Anything less would seem not to be a Baptist association. Anything more might bring undo requirements, whether beneficial or not. When it comes to Baptist associations, it’s the “anything more” that seems to declare the distinction of "traditional" or "non-traditional."

The Baptist association has experienced several shifts in organization, expression, and usefulness. Undoubtedly, in their time, the associations that initiated the shifts were called "non-traditional." To the credit of Baptists, if the "non-traditional" became "traditional" it did so by remaining biblically-sound and mutually practical to its member congregations, that is encouraging.

Among Texas Baptists the issue of "non-traditional" forms of association resulted in a motion to study the basis of association formation at the BGCT annual meeting in El Paso on November 8, 1999. A convention appointed committee was charged with bringing a report to the annual meeting in Corpus Christi on October 31, 2000. The adopted report affirmed the right of any group of...
Baptist churches to form an association, whether it be based upon geography, affinity, ethnicity, or other compatible grouping. The report recognized the geographically defined association as a proven means for effective and efficient partnering to win the State of Texas to Christ; to encourage unity among the churches; and to allow for the development of a strategy to reach every person in a particular geographic area. However, guidelines and requirements to the access or delivery of the BGCT resources provided to local congregations traditionally were not established to accommodate non-geographic associations.

Realizing that any change in the relationship to non-traditional associations would affect directly the financial support from the BGCT to all associations, special care was given in the report to both protect and recognize the autonomy of the local church and the local association. Speaking specifically to the process of offering financial assistance and church services to local congregations, the report said, "Churches who make up the membership of non-geographic associations must be uniquely aligned with that association and not also related to a geographic association." In addition, the adopted report provided a means of direct church access to state convention assistance and services as long as the church "positively supports the ministry, missions and budget of the BGCT but believes that the geographic association in which it is located is unable to meet its needs."

Admitting that the full implications of these changes were not yet known, the report recommended that a recently formed Hispanic association serve as a pilot project and that for a two-year period churches considering the formation of non-geographic associations allow for the development of new BGCT funding guidelines. The report concluded by saying, "Although the committee recommends the recognition of non-geographic associations, we believe at this time geographic associations remain the preferred method of organizing on a local level."

Through the years churches outside the state of Texas who desired to be more closely related to the BGCT were encouraged to seek affiliation with an existing association in Texas.

The Baptist sense of association would seem to call for a self-determined group of self-selecting congregations agreeing to a commonly held purpose in order to mutually extend a biblically-sound accomplishment of the Great Commission by way of cooperative ministry and missions.

**Role of the Director of Missions (DOM)**

What does a director of missions do? One thing is certain, it is hard for a director of missions to do anything if there are conflicting ideas about what the role is supposed to be. On the other hand, where there is substantial agreement in an association about what the director's job is, great benefits result. J. C. Bradley states, "The director of missions provides general leadership and services to the total life and work of the association. The nature of the role is determined by the nature of the association (which is based on the nature of the church) and by the nature of the Christian ministry." 44

Allen Graves, in Principles of Administration for a Baptist Association, provided his understanding of the role of directors of mission by stating, "the ultimate evidence of effectiveness on the part of the director of missions is his ability to lead the association in performing her tasks." Graves' "principles" are detailed, also by Bradley: 45

1. Leading the association to “be a Baptist interchurch fellowship where there is open communication, mutual trust, and mutual support;”
2. Providing pastoral care and counsel for the pastors, church staff members, and their families.
3. Administering the mission work the churches do cooperatively through the association; and
4. Directing the program of church development.

In the continuing desire to define the role of the DOM, one would be wise

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44 Bradley, Churches on Mission, 52.
45 Ibid., 53.
to examine Bradley’s three-dimensional ministry (role): mission strategist, ministry to the churches and church leaders, and general leader of the association. Thus, the balance in ministry is seen in the mission strategist-minister-leader model of the director of missions, a role covering the entire life of the association (See illustration below). 46

Bradley affirms each dimension: 47

Mission Strategist—churches in relation to communities constituting the association’s area;

Minister—individual churches, pastors and other leaders; and

Leader—of the association as a general body of Baptist.

In recent years, church leaders have been asked what they consider to be the most important tasks that a director of missions should carry out. Some of those suggestions are:

1. New Work Strategist: Churches see that an important reason to cooperate is to start new congregations. In some associations the DOM is a church planter, in others, helps churches start churches.

2. Church health/growth strategist: Churches across the land are plateaued, declining and looking to the associations for help. Others need to become healthier. Helping them can be difficult because effective church health requires customized help.

3. Mentor/Guide/Confidant to the Pastors: This used to be called “pastor to the pastors.” Today the Director of Missions’ role is more appropriately described as a mentor or coach. For other pastors, the DOM may serve as a collaborator with whom ideas can be shared.

4. Source of missional opportunity: The need for the individual Christian to be on mission is undeniable. It is inscribed on their DNA. Unfortunately, some churches do not have the resources to provide mission opportunities, whether mission trips or starting new churches. The association must provide missional opportunities for their constituents. For larger churches that can do this on their own, the associations can serve as one of their local expressions, their "Jerusalem" in the Acts 1:8 sense.

5. Network Facilitator: Directors of Missions frequently serve as facilitator or broker for churches receiving denominational services. Today, this task has been broadened and complicated with improved technology, communications and a significant increase in the number of organizations that offer help to the local church. The need remains, the solution is just more complex.

**Summary**

- Associations are doctrinally-based fellowships of churches on mission — both individually and together — in their unique setting.

- Associations, as self-governing Baptist bodies created by the churches, have an inherent responsibility for developing a comprehensive strategy for mission to their particular areas.

- The denomination cannot hope to involve all churches in anything without the active participation of associations.

- While self-governing is an indisputable right of every Baptist body, it is tempered by the necessity for, the spirit of, and the duty to practice inter-dependence and cooperation.

A Baptist association is a self-
governing fellowship of autonomous churches sharing a common faith and active on mission in their setting.48

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Books


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Articles


Speeches

Dissertations
Baptists Relating Within Their State

I. Baptist General Convention of Texas
   1. How it developed
   2. What it is
   3. Why it exists
   4. How it functions in Annual Meeting
   5. How it is organized
      (1) Committees
      (2) Boards of Directors
         a. Institution Boards
         b. Agency Boards
         c. The Executive Board

II. Affiliated Entities
   1. Texas Baptist Men
   2. Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas

III. Related Entities
   Introduction
   1. Hispanic Baptist Convention
   2. Korean Baptist Fellowship of Texas
   3. Other Language Groups
   4. Black Baptist Churches
   5. The Face of Texas

IV. Offspring Conventions
   1. Born out of Cooperation: Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention
   2. Born out of Controversy
      (1) Baptist Missionary Association
      (2) Southern Baptists of Texas Convention
Baptists Relating Within Their State

Baptist General Convention of Texas

This chapter identifies the role of state conventions in the United States by focusing on the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). The first state convention was organized in South Carolina in 1821, about 170 years after the emergence of the first Baptist Association in England. “Basically the same needs which had earlier resulted in the formation of the Baptist General Convention of Texas will inform the reader regarding the role of one state convention.

How It Developed

Baptist ministry and witness, which eventually led to organizing the Baptist General Convention of Texas, began in the early part of the 19th century. Church historian Robert A. Baker dates the first Baptist sermon preached in Texas in 1820 by Joseph Bays. Another historian indicates that the first Baptist sermon preached in Texas was by Freeman Smalley at Pecan Point on the Red River in the home of William Newman in 1823.

Opposition by Roman Catholics and Indians made progress difficult for Baptists. Never-the-less, the Baptist witness in Texas developed deep roots in the early years and it was strengthened by the influx of Baptists from other states, especially those east of the Mississippi:

During the early 1830s, all kinds of people came to Texas - the poor and the well-to-do, the illiterate and the educated, the slave and the free, the vulgar and the cultured, the irreligious and the Christian. All major denominations of Christianity were represented. Among these was a handful of Baptists. Some were missionary, others were antimissionary. Some were uneducated, others were well educated. A few had a little wealth while the many were poor. But they all had one thing in common: they believed in a spiritual, democratic Christianity instead of the sacramental and autocratic types.

These characteristics suited Baptists well for life on the frontier. They prospered and soon began organizing their work. The first regular missionary church was constituted at Washington-on-the-Brazos in 1837. Other churches soon followed: Independence Church, 1839; First, Galveston, 1840; and First Houston, 1840. Later in 1840 the first Baptist association was formed. Trammell states that, “With the annexation of Texas and the war with Mexico, there came a large number of ordained ministers from other states. Growing churches developed in Huntsville, Austin, Marshall, Tyler, Matagorda and other communities.”

Also in 1840 James Huckins, a missionary appointed by the American Baptist Home Missions Society arrived in Texas. The following year another missionary, William Tryon, came. In 1845, Baylor University was chartered by Huckins, Tryon and R. E. B. Baylor in behalf of the Texas Baptist Education Society. On September 8, 1848, The Baptist State Convention was organized at Anderson in Grimes County. Four associations had been formed by this time and 35 churches contributed. Twenty-five churches sent messengers to that first state convention.

In 1853, Baptists of eastern and northern Texas withdrew from the State Convention because they felt neglected insofar as mission work in those sections of Texas was concerned. They later named a new convention the Baptist General Association of Texas. Three other conventions of Baptists emerged: North Texas Convention (1879-1883), The East Texas Convention (1877-1884) and The Central Texas Convention (1880-1884). All these groups merged into the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 1886.

district associations produced a cry for help on a statewide basis.”1

State Baptist conventions engage in many worthwhile causes. They assist in starting new, in eliciting support from older churches for the missionary causes already underway. They operate state Baptist papers, promote missions in the state, the nation and the world, and operate schools and academies, homes for children and the aged, and hospitals. They receive and distribute funds in state convention ministries and elicit funds for national convention ministries. They give a full accounting of all funds that come through the Convention offices. They have a vital role to fill in the organized work of Baptists.

State Baptist conventions structure themselves in many different ways because they vary greatly in age, size, organization and resources. An examination of the history, nature, purpose and function of the Baptist General Convention of Texas will

4 L.R. Elliott, ed., Centennial Story of Texas Baptists (Dallas: The Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas), 1926.
The second Article of the first Constitution adopted by the Convention stated that “The objects of the Convention shall be missionary and educational, the promotion of Harmony of feeling and concern of action in our denomination, and the organization of a system of operative measures to promote the interest general of the Redeemer’s Kingdom within the state.” Further into the Constitution, a part of Article XII reads, “The Convention shall never possess a single attribute of power or authority over any church or association. It absolutely and forever disclaims any right of this kind hereby avowing the cardinal principle that every church is sovereign and independent.”

There was significant growth during the first 50 years of Baptist witness in Texas. By 1860, there were 500 Baptist churches and 24 associations. When the Baptist General Convention of Texas was founded in 1886, there were 1,500 churches, 100,000 members and 60 associations.

Since 1886, the witness and ministry of Texas Baptists has grown and prospered. The total membership of churches affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 2005 was over 2.3 million with over 4,300 churches and over 1300 missions in 111 associations. The Convention has a direct relationship with numerous institutions, including universities, hospitals, children’s homes and geriatric centers for the elderly. These 23 institutions operate in over 100 locations around the state and are involved in a score of countries around the world. There are at least 26 different language groups that make up the 4,700 churches with the largest growth in membership currently among ethnic populations.

Texas Baptists have always had a sensitivity toward ethnic groups in the state. Work among Germans was strongly emphasized in the 1860s and work among the Hispanics started in the 1870s. In 1883 the first Mexican Baptist church of Laredo was organized. The Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas was formed in 1910. In 1960 an agreement was approved by both the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas and the Baptist General Convention of Texas to unite these two bodies for the purpose of inspiration and fellowship. Since that time, Hispanic Baptists have been a significant and growing segment of Baptist life in Texas.

Black Baptists have been a part of Baptist Convention life for many years. A few Blacks have been members of regular Anglo churches, but more and more Black congregations are now becoming a part of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Currently there are over 400 Black Baptist churches that are part of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. The Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas has an office of Black Church Relations. The Director of that Department works with five or six national Baptist state conventions in Texas and seeks to maintain harmonious relationships with Baptist congregations among the Blacks who are not a part of the Baptist General Convention of Texas as well as encouraging those who are part of the Convention.

Texas Baptists have been responsible for many “firsts” in Baptist life. In 1920, Baptist Student Work was begun in Texas. In 1931, the first endowment and trust foundation was begun. In 1945, a church Music Department was created. In 1946, the Department of Evangelism was birthed. In 1950, the Christian Life Commission was created. In 1952 an organization dealing with church loans and a Public Relations Department were started.

There are several basic concepts regarding the nature and function of state conventions.

1. The worth and importance of the individual. This idea is often called or is at least based upon the doctrine of “the priesthood of the believer.” Baptist state conventions consider the worth of every individual Baptist as paramount.

2. Baptists hold firmly to the concept that cooperation is voluntary, never demanded or coerced. Motions and resolutions passed by the state convention are not authoritative for individual Baptists or churches. They are authoritative only for the Convention, its officers, committees, boards, agencies, institutions, etc.

3. The autonomy of the local congregation is magnified in Baptist life. Every church is free and self-governing.

4. Baptist conventions are dissimilar. They, too, are autonomous and consequently self-governing. Just as churches differ, state conventions differ.

5. Baptist structure has two levels — the church and denominational life. It is inappropriate to speak of the associational level, the state convention level and the Southern Baptist Convention level. All three denominational structures — the association, the state convention and the national convention - are on the same level. The local church is the highest authority in Baptist ecclesiology and the denominational entities are next.

What It Is

Understanding what a state convention is may be more difficult

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 1995 Texas Baptist Calendar and Directory (Dallas: Executive Board, Baptist General Convention of Texas).

9 Timothy Trammell has provided the basic ideas discussed in concepts one through four. Baptists, 84.
than one thinks. Several ideas emerge which help one to understand. It seems helpful first to discredit a perception held by many. The state convention is not the Baptist Building where a group of people work to help carry out the ministry of the Convention. Some err by referring to the state Baptist Building or office as "Baptist Headquarters."

Baptist headquarters are located at the meeting place of every local church. The gathered church (Greek ekklesia) is headquarters for every Baptist church member.

What then is a state convention? Four ideas help one's understanding.

1. Most importantly, the state convention is a meeting composed of messengers (not delegates) from churches who attend the annual meeting of the group. In one sense, the convention exists only for two, three or four days each year to hear reports from different committees, boards, commissions, etc.; to elect officers and other personnel to carry on the work throughout the year; to adopt a budget for missionary, educational, benevolent work and promotional work; to pass resolutions regarding issues deemed important to the body; and to hear doctrinal and inspirational messages. The state convention is a meeting.

2. In quite another sense, the state convention is the on-going work of the body between annual meetings. This work is carried out by the officers, committees, boards and commissions elected during the annual meeting or during a board meeting authorized by the Convention. The Baptist General Convention of Texas has an Executive Board and institutional boards. These boards employ personnel to carry out the assigned ministries of the Convention.

3. In yet another sense, the state convention is a chartered non-profit religious corporation. The Convention meets under its Constitution and Bylaws and the Texas Non-profit Corporation Act.

4. Finally, the state convention is the ultimate authority for all the ministry under its jurisdiction. As stated before, the jurisdiction of the convention does not include churches, associations of churches or other Baptist conventions.

Why It Exists

According to the Constitution of the Baptist General Convention of Texas under Article II - Object, the following purpose is stated:

The object of this body shall be to awaken and stimulate among the churches the greatest possible activity in evangelism, missions, Christian education and benevolent work and enterprises; to cultivate a closer cooperation among the churches and promote harmony of feeling and concert of action in advancing all the interests of the Redeemer’s Kingdom.

The Strategic Plan, adopted by the convention in 2004 states the convention’s mission as, “The Baptist General Convention of Texas encourages, facilitates and connects churches in their work to fulfill God’s mission of reconciling the world to himself.”

A clear understanding of why a convention exists is that it exists for the churches; churches do not exist for the Convention. In a sense the Convention’s only purpose is to help churches, associations, institutions and other Baptist entities fulfill the Great Commission.

How It Functions in Annual Meeting

The state convention functions through an annual meeting, committees, boards and cooperating affiliated entities.

Churches elect messengers who attend the annual meeting and participate in making decisions that help accomplish the work of the Convention. The Constitution of the Baptist General Convention of Texas states in Article III about membership of the body:

Section 1. This Convention in session in all its meetings shall be composed of messengers elected by Baptist churches that shall voluntarily cooperate with the Convention. All messengers must be members of the church by which they are elected. A messenger must be enrolled at the Convention in session to be qualified to vote. The messengers have no right to act except for annual or special meetings constituting the Convention in session for which they have been elected by their cooperating church.

Section 2. Each church cooperating with this Convention shall be entitled to: (a) Two messengers for the first one hundred (100) members or fractional part thereof. Two additional messengers for the first $250 given during the previous fiscal year to the Texas budget as adopted by the Convention in annual session, and (b) One additional messenger for each additional $1000 dollars given during the previous fiscal year to the Texas budget as adopted by the Convention in annual session, provided however, that (c) No church shall be entitled to more than 25 messengers.

All agencies and institutions make reports on their work in a Book of Reports available at the annual session.

A major action of the Convention is the adoption of a budget which becomes the plan for spending for the ensuing year. The annual proposed budget is prepared by the Executive
Leadership Team of the Executive Board Staff. The Executive Board must approve the proposed budget in its September meeting each year. The Board then presents the proposed budget to the messengers at the annual meeting of the Convention for their consideration and approval. No Convention budget is official until it is approved by the messengers at the annual meeting.

The Convention’s annual meeting determines the future course of ministry for its boards, committees, agencies and institutions. The Convention adopts an overall plan or strategy and asks the different entities of the Convention to do their specific, detailed planning based on the overall strategy. Churches, associations of churches, institutions and other Baptist entities affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas are challenged to utilize the adopted strategies but no affiliated entity is required to do so. Churches have advantages when they embrace the adopted strategies but they remain free to plan differently if they choose.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas elects six officers and many other persons to carry on the work of the Convention throughout the year. The six officers elected are President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Registration Secretary, Recording Secretary and Secretary of the Corporation. In addition, the Executive Board, institution boards, agency boards and two nominating committees are elected.

Resolutions are presented by the Committee on Resolutions for consideration. The resolutions usually include expressions of gratitude to Convention officers, the host city and other groups who helped make the meeting effective. Resolutions on current social, political, moral and spiritual issues are frequently presented and adopted by the messengers. It should be noted that resolutions passed by vote of the messengers are not binding on individual Baptists, churches, associations or other entities. They are useful statements expressing the will or the opinions of the messengers present. Resolutions do not carry the authority of policy although they may influence the policy makers of the Executive Board, institutions and other affiliated Baptist entities.

One additional function of the annual meeting is to inspire and challenge the persons present, messengers and guests, to be the kind of Christians God desires. A regular emphasis at the state convention meetings is missionary work in the state, the nation and the world.

**How It Is Organized**

**Committees**

Much of the work of the Baptist General Convention of Texas is accomplished by volunteers who serve on a variety of committees. The president and two vice presidents of the Convention jointly appoint five committees: Committee on Committees, Committee on Convention Business, Committee on Credentials, Committee on Resolutions, and Committee on Memorials. The Committee to Nominate Executive Board directors and the Committee on Nominations for Boards of Affiliated Ministries are nominated by the Committee on Committees and elected by the Convention. In addition to these standing committees, the Convention or the Executive Board may create committees that are temporary in nature. These committees, appointed by the officers or elected by the Convention or the Executive Board generally are formed to accomplish a specific task and are disbanded after bringing a committee report and recommendations either to the Executive Board or Convention.

**Boards of Directors**

Boards of Directors (or Trustees) fall into three categories; Executive, Institution and Agency. These boards govern the work of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

**Institution Boards**

Each institution is under the governance of their board of directors, often called trustees or regents. These boards carry legal and fiduciary responsibility for the institution. The president of each institution is accountable to the board for carrying out the mission of the institution and the decisions of the board.

There are 11 educational institutions; eight liberal-arts universities, a theological university, one academy and one mission and education center. They are Baylor University in Waco, Dallas Baptist University, East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Houston Baptist University, Howard Payne University in Brownwood, the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Baptist University of the Americas in San Antonio, San Marcos Baptist Academy, and Valley Baptist Missions/Education Center in Harlingen.

There is a complex network of child care, elder care and health care institutions affiliated in various ways with the BGCT. The child care institutions are Baptist Child and Family Services of San Antonio, Buckner Baptist Benevolences of Dallas, South Texas Children’s Home of Beeville and Children at Heart Ministries of Round Rock. Each facility at multiple locations beyond its headquarters city. Baptist Memorials of San Angelo and Golden Palms Retirement and Health center of Harlingen provide elder care, as do entities related to Baptist Community Services of Amarillo, Buckner Retirement Services and Hendrick Health System. Hospitals and medical centers affiliated with the BGCT are
Baptist Health System of San Antonio, Baylor Health Care System of Dallas, Hendrick Health System of Abilene, Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center of Waco, Memorial Hermann Baptist Hospitals of Beaumont and Orange and Valley Baptist Health System of Harlingen.

Historically, boards of trustees elected by messengers to the Convention govern every institution affiliated with the BGCT, and a significant number of related institutions continue that system of governance. The process of selecting these board members, as defined in the BGCT Constitution, begins with the Committee on Nominations for Boards of Affiliated Ministries. That committee selects a five-member nominating subcommittee for each BGCT-affiliated institution. These subcommittees find an appropriate number of qualified individuals whom they nominate to fill each institutional board vacancy. The subcommittees present their nominations to the full 15-member Committee on Nominations for Boards of Affiliated Ministries. The committee examines the list of nominees to determine if they meet the necessary qualifications. Once the committee arrives at a final list of nominees, these individuals are presented for approval to the Convention in annual session.

The manner in which directors are approved for institutional boards has changed dramatically in recent years. Some of the changes have been initiated by the convention and others by the institutions.

In recent years, the convention has given the institutional boards the freedom to elect 25% of their trustees, asking only that all trustees be Baptist and supportive of the ministries of the BGCT. Baylor University revised its charter in 1990 to create its own Board of Regents. Baylor and the BGCT adopted in 1991 a special agreement that allows the university to elect 75 percent of its own board and permits the Convention to elect the remaining 25 percent through the established trustee selection processes. In 2000, Houston Baptist University also changed its charter to allow the university to elect directly a majority of its governing board. The Convention named a committee to work with representatives of Houston Baptist University in seeking a mutually satisfactory agreement. In both these cases, substantial reduction in funding from the BGCT resulted.

In more recent years, several Human Welfare institutions have requested greater flexibility in the composition of their governing boards to allow greater local or minority representation. In 2006, the convention agreed to permit one hospital system to have a small portion of their board made up of non-Baptist Christians. It is difficult to tell what new relationships will be introduced in coming years.

Agency Boards

The Baptist Standard, the Baptist Foundation of Texas, the Baptist Church Loan Corporation and WorldconneX each play a unique role in Texas Baptist life. Messengers to the BGCT annual session elect these agencies' boards just as they do with the institutions. These entities do not report directly to the BGCT Executive Board, and all but WorldconneX are not included in the BGCT Cooperative Program unified budget. Only in unusual circumstances would business related to any of these agencies be considered by the Executive Board.

Much of the work of the Baptist General Convention of Texas is accomplished by volunteers who serve on a variety of committees.
Executive Board

The volunteer BGCT Executive Board and its employed staff carry out the ongoing tasks of the Convention. Article VII of the BGCT Constitution states that "The Executive Board speaks for the interest of the Convention and the authority and accountability over the work of the Convention in the interim between annual meetings. The BGCT Executive Board staff is assigned the task of implementing the directives given by the Executive Board and the Convention, it fulfills its stated mission of assisting churches and related Baptist ministries.

The Executive Board has a variety of general administrative tasks related to the institutions. The board suggests allocations of BGCT Cooperative Program budget funds for the institutions to which it relates. The board holds the authority to disburse or withhold funds depending on an institution's fulfillment or failure to fulfill Convention directives. The board also participates in a process of approving increased indebtedness for related educational institutions and approving requests from institutions that wish to initiate new programs. The Executive Board also monitors the work of Baptist Student Ministries on 137 college and university campuses throughout Texas.

Membership

The BGCT Executive Board consists of 90 directors from 30 geographic sectors in the Convention. The sectors are based on resident church membership in counties and such sector criteria is defined in the Bylaws of the Convention. Each section has 3 directors. The ex-officio directors, who have voting privileges, are the three Convention presidential officers (president and first and second vice presidents). Non-voting directors include the executive director, recording secretary, and the presidents of Woman's Missionary Union of Texas, Texas Baptist Men, Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas, Texas Baptist Student Ministries and any other Convention-recognized fellowship. The total number of elected board directors must be divisible by three since one-third of the board's membership is elected or re-elected each year. Executive Board directors may serve two consecutive three-year terms before rotating off the board for at least one year.

Functions

As the entity that has the authority for conducting the business and accomplishing the tasks of the Convention between annual sessions, the Executive Board has several key functions. The Executive Board has full authority to elect the Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer, and Associate Executive Director. The board provides the Convention each year a complete financial accounting of all funds received and disbursed, including properties, trusts and invested funds which the board administers. The board determines the organization, functions, responsibilities and working relationships of the Executive Board committees. The Executive Board also maintains official organizational and policy manuals that set forth the Convention’s organizational plan and its program, business, financial and personnel policies as adopted by the Convention and the board.

Organization of Ongoing Work

The Executive Board assigns its ongoing ministries to the employed Executive Board staff under the leadership of the Executive Director. The Executive Director gives direction to the entire scope of Executive Board ministries as chief executive officer. The Executive Director has ultimate responsibility for seeing that major emphases are implemented and for overseeing the functioning of the boards and agencies related to the Executive Board.

In 2009, the Executive Director instituted a realignment of the

The BGCT Executive Board consists of 90 directors elected from 30 sectors within the Convention.

Executive Board staff to more accurately reflect the 75 year old object of the convention:

...to awaken and stimulate among the churches the greatest possible activity in evangelism, missions, Christian education, and benevolent work and enterprises; to cultivate a closer cooperation among the churches and promote harmony of feeling and concert of action in advancing all the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom. 1

Three main emphases were identified and are reflected in the realignment: “evangelism, missions” - Evangelism / Missions, “Christian education” - Education / Discipleship, and “benevolent work and enterprises” – Advocacy / Care.

The first level of strategic leadership, the Coordinating Council, consists of the three executive officers (Executive Director, Associate Executive Director, and Treasurer) and the three center directors responsible for the three main emphases of the convention’s work.

Staff assignments under the executive officers generally relate to all three ministry centers or broader convention relationships; or they provide support for the entire staff.

The Executive Director relates directly to Disaster Response, the Texas Baptist Missions Foundation, Decision Support (research), the Theologian in Residence, and several BGCT partner organizations: Baptist Standard (newsmagazine of the BGCT), Baptist Foundation of Texas, Baptist Church Loan Corporation, Texas Baptist Men, and the Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas.

1 Baptist General Convention of Texas Annual, 1934, 11.
The Executive Board assigns its ongoing ministries to the employed Executive Board staff under the leadership of the Executive Director.

The Treasurer’s office provides leadership to functions that support the staff and the overall work of the convention: Building and Facilities, Finance and Accounting, Support Services, Human Resources, and Information Technology.

The primary program ministries of the convention are the responsibility of the three ministry emphasis center directors. The focus of these centers is on strengthening churches and helping churches find ways to work together to transform their communities and the world.

The Evangelism / Missions center provides resources and services for helping churches work together to reach the world through Church Starting, Collegiate Ministry (in churches and on college campuses across the state), Western Heritage Churches, Evangelization, and Missions Mobilization. This center includes special areas such as resort and leisure evangelism, partnerships, global connections, river ministry, endeavors in Mexico, and a dozen others.

The Education / Discipleship center provides resources and services for helping strengthen churches by equipping their lay and staff leadership through the ministries of Bible Study, Discipleship, Church Architecture, Congregational Leadership, and Music and Worship. This center includes special resources for strategic planning, stewardship, interim pastor training, and smaller church/bivocational ministry. BaptistWay Press, the publishing arm of the convention, publishes quality curriculum and resources for the churches.

The Advocacy / Care center provides resources and services for helping churches care for the hurting in their congregations and communities and for helping churches understand the issues that face Christians in this culture: Chaplaincy, Counseling, and Community Ministries. This is the center that continues the work of the Texas Christian Life Commission speaking to Texas Baptists about ethics, public policy, religious liberty, substance abuse, and hunger and helping the churches become salt and light in their community and world.

**Affiliated Entities**

Two organizations devoted exclusively to missions education and missions involvement are affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Texas Baptist Men and Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas are separately incorporated entities, apart from the BGCT. However, both organizations are vital partners in the work of the BGCT. The executive director-treasurer of each group serves on the BGCT Leadership Council, and the president of each organization serves on the BGCT Executive Board.

**Texas Baptist Men**

For 30 years, Baptist men’s mission work was organizationally linked to the BGCT as a Brotherhood department within the convention’s State Missions Commission. In 1967, Texas Baptist Men became an affiliate of the BGCT. Its adopted mission statement said: “The purpose of Texas Baptist Men in support of the Baptist General Convention of Texas is to help the church family involve their members, primarily men and boys, in missions by promoting and interpreting mission programs that will help lead to a deeper commitment to missions, and to more personal and family involvement in missions.” In 1999, the mission was restated: "The mission of Texas Baptist Men is to assist Texas Baptist churches as they lead men into a love relationship with Jesus Christ that will thrust them and their families into a lifestyle of missions and ministry that fulfills the Great Commission." In practice, this sense of mission led to the development of ministries such as disaster relief and Retiree Builders and to a program of spiritual renewal, along with ongoing programs of age-appropriate missions organizations for men and boys.

The organizational relationship between Texas Baptist Men and the BGCT changed again in 2000. For 33 years, the organization had been guided by its own elected executive board, but was not incorporated separately from the BGCT. In 2000, Texas Baptist Men’s board voted to establish the missions organization as a non-profit corporation to enhance its ability to minister nationally and internationally, and to seek status as a recognized non-governmental organization for humanitarian relief. The board approved articles of incorporation for Texas Baptist Men, Inc., a non-profit corporation “organized exclusively for charitable, religious and educational purposes.” Although it is separately incorporated, Texas Baptist Men continues to receive funding through the BGCT Cooperative Program unified budget.

**Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas**

Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas is historically and uniquely related to the BGCT. Texas WMU actually predates the BGCT, having been organized in...
1880, six years before the regional Baptist State Convention and Baptist General Association consolidated to form the statewide BGCT. Texas WMU always has been a separate entity from the BGCT, but the group has been closely related to the state convention-first as an "auxiliary" and more recently as "affiliate" to the BGCT. As a non-profit corporation, Texas WMU is governed by a 24-member board of directors composed of area representatives, leaders of language fellowships, associational team equippers, one representative each from the group's Language Advisory Council and African American Advisory Council, officers elected at the Texas WMU Annual Meeting, and the executive director-treasurer.

The program tasks of Texas WMU are to lead each church and WMU members to:

- Pray for and give to missions
- Do missions
- Learn about missions
- Develop spiritually toward a missions lifestyle
- Participate in the work of the church and the denomination.

Texas WMU is a strong supporter of the Cooperative Program and an advocate for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. However, the missions organization for women never has been a line item in the Cooperative Program budget. The operating budget for Texas WMU comes from the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions. One of the key tasks of Texas WMU is preparing missions curriculum and promotional materials for the Week of Prayer for Texas Missions and determining allocations for the Mary Hill Davis Offering, collected each fall in BGCT-related churches.

Both Texas Baptist Men and Woman's Missionary Union enhance the missions priority of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Baptist work in Texas began with a very small band of believers. Their spirit fits the times in this state. Missions and evangelism were twin thrusts of Baptists. Simultaneously, evangelists and pastors called for an educated clergy and Baptist laity called for a liberal arts education with Christian presuppositions. Together, Baptist leaders forged out a place for Baptists to prosper.

It is obvious when studying the beginning of Baptist work in Texas and following the development of organized Baptist work through the years that God's blessings have accompanied the efforts of His people. The carefully developed state convention structure and the carefully designed procedures have provided the opportunity for Texas Baptists to be the strongest evangelical Christian group in the state.

## Related Entities
### Introduction

Two organizations devoted exclusively to missions education and missions involvement are affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Texas Baptist Men and Woman's Missionary Union of Texas are separately incorporated entities, apart from the BGCT.

Increasingly, as we enter the twenty-first century, Texas has become multi-ethnic. There is no longer a majority population and it is projected that by 2020, Hispanics will be the majority minority in the state. Increasingly, the Baptist General Convention of Texas has become multi-ethnic.

But the work among language groups in the Lone Star State assuredly precedes the current and past century. Among the Mexican-Americans, for example, work began following a plea in the 1830s for assistance. That plea was answered.

This section surveys the history and relationship between the BGCT and (1) many of the language groups that make up the fabric we call "Texas"; (2) The Black Baptists; and (3) the Black Baptists; and (3) conventions which were birthed from the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

### Hispanic Baptist Convention

“From its inception as an integral component of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the purpose of the Mexican Baptist Convention has been and continues to be the general promotion of Baptist work in Texas among the Spanish-speaking.”

“Promotion of Baptist work in Texas among Spanish-speaking” began long before the unification of the two bodies during 1961-64. According to Joshua Grijalva’s book, *A History of Mexican Baptists in Texas*, a call went out as early as 1837 from Washington, Texas, “To come over into Macedonia and help us.” A few years later, James Hickey, an Irishman who had been a priest, came to this country, became a Baptist, and did mission work for thirty years in four states, including Texas (exact dates unknown).

With the organization of the Baptist church at Independence in 1839, a foundation was laid for work among the Mexicans. In 1861, First Baptist Church was organized in San Antonio; later that year, the convention, meeting in that same church, elected J.W.D. Creath to work among the Mexicans. In 1880, John Westrup was appointed to Mexican work. He began a Baptist work in Laredo, Texas. Subsequently, he was murdered, and

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10 Operation and Program Promotion Funding Guidelines for the Elected Officers of the Mexican Baptist Convention and Executive Board Staff, Baptist General Convention of Texas, State Missions Commission meeting, April, 28, 1977.

the work continued by his brother, Thomas. The first convert was baptized in 1881.

According to the Centennial Story of Texas Baptists the First Mexican Baptist Church of Laredo became the first Hispanic congregation in Texas in 1883.

When the convention met in Belton in 1888, the State Board reported that 130 missionaries were employed; two of these, Manuel Treviño and Mina Everett, worked with Mexicans in San Antonio. Other names appearing often in the opening annals of Mexican work in Texas were W. D. Powell and C. D. Daniel.

Early Mexican churches included Primera, San Marcos, 1889; Primera, Bastrop, 1892; Primera, Austin, 1899; Primera, Beeville, 1900; Primera, Bastrop, 1903; Primera, Corpus Christi, 1911; and Primera, Dallas, 1918.

During this era, one of the best investments of the Home Mission Board was the establishment of schools for boys and girls in connection with church buildings. The one in El Paso, Texas cared for over 100 children in 1911. Through the years, the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) has been a partner with Texas in some phases of the work among Hispanics.

The Mexican Baptist Convention was organized in 1910 when 36 messengers from 24 churches met in San Antonio. Concerns that surfaced at the meeting included the need for theological education as well as the need to care for orphaned children.

In the “Roaring Twenties,” the gospel continued its onward march among the Mexicans. In some ways, life was difficult because of the change in immigration laws and the influx of undocumented numbers crossing into Texas. The Convention, however, prospered.

The thirties were called “Lean years.” The forties brought World War II, and an emphasis on institutions and Christian education.

Even before the organization of the Mexican Baptist Convention, Bible institutes were held in San Antonio and Bastrop. A permanent Bible Institute was begun in 1922 by Paul C. Bell and F.M. McConnell with the assistance of J. B. Gambrell. Mrs. Gambrell was also one who was a strong supporter of early-day Bible institutes, and worked for better educational conditions for Mexicans. Early efforts bore fruit when the Valley Baptist Academy was founded by the Lower Rio Grande Baptist Association to train Latin American young people. Paul J. Siebenmann brought the recommendation in 1946; classes began in 1947. Siebenmann’s name was often mentioned during this era, as was that of Hiram Duffer.

In 1936, an early-day Mexican Baptist Seminary was located in San Antonio for two years; it later moved to El Paso, and then to Mexico, leaving no permanent school in Texas for training Mexican theological students. A “School of the Prophets” flourished in San Antonio in the early 1940’s.

The Mexican Baptist Bible Institute (now Baptist University of the Americas) filled the gap in 1947 with Siebenmann and Matías García providing leadership. For 15 years the school was owned and operated by the San Antonio Baptist Association. The Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) accepted responsibility in 1962. In 1984 the Seminary became affiliated with Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and was renamed the Hispanic Baptist Theological Seminary. In 1989 it resumed its original relationship with the BGCT family.

The Mexican Baptist Orphan’s Home in San Antonio came into being in 1944; previously Paul C. Bell’s Bible Institute in Bastrop had been the haven for orphaned children until it closed in 1941. The San Antonio institution was later known as Mexican Baptist Children’s Home, in 1980 became the Baptist Children’s Home at San Antonio and is now Baptist Child and Family Services.

The 1940’s also brought a shadow in Baptist life with the home-going of J. W. Beagle and J. L. Moye, both of whom had made vital and ongoing contributions to Mexican Baptist work in Texas.

The fifties were considered “Quiet,” and the sixties a time of awakening for Mexican Baptists.

Unification of the Mexican Convention with the BGCT came into being in 1961 following a period of discussion. In addition to being a part of the BGCT by election of messengers from the churches to the annual convention, they also maintain their own identity by having their annual Mexican Baptist convention and associated gatherings, and to publish their own newspaper, El Bautista Mexicano. A three-year trial period followed before unification was complete in 1964.

Joshua Grijalva refers to the decades following unification as “Continuing Aspiration,” striving for “better plans and programs, more efficient and envisioned leaders, greater participation of Mexican-American Baptists in Baptist life.” A highlight of these years was the Centennial Celebration in 1981 which began with a giant evangelistic rally in front of the Alamo in San Antonio led by Rudy Hernandez.

More than 40 men have served as president of the Mexican Baptist...
Convention through the years, and, since 1949, six have served as Language Missions Coordinator, a part of the State Missions Commission team: Carlos Paredes, L. D. Wood, Dallas Lee, Leobardo Estrada, Robert Garcia, and Jimmy Garcia III. Early Coordinators, beginning in 1899, were C. D. Daniel, J. W. Beagle, John L. Moye, Loyd Corder, A. C. Miller, and Pascual Hurtiz. In 2000, the Ethnic Missions Coordinator responsibility was divided to give a greater emphasis to Hispanic work. Jimmy Garcia III became the first Director of Hispanic Work.

In an effort to become more inclusive of all Hispanic groups in Texas, the Mexican Baptist Convention changed their name in 1996 to the Hispanic Baptist Convention. During this same period, the Hispanic Convention launched Vision 2000, a companion to Texas 2000, an effort by all Texas Baptists to introduce every person in the state to Christ by the end of 2000. Additional leaders who have worked in the spirit of “A continuing aspiration,” according to author Joshua Grijalva, are Isaac Perez, Jose Rivas, Oscar Romo, and Paul Siebenmann. Grijalva does not mention himself in this list; he deservedly should be included.

An important segment of Mexican Baptist work in Texas has been that of the Hispanic Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU) organized in 1917. Some names frequently mentioned in the first five decades include Hattie Amelia Greenlaw Pierson, Adelina Garcia, Esther Moye, Martha Thomas Ellis, Esperanza Ramirez, Noemi Cuevas (Jimenez), Frances Salazar, Irene Paredes, and others.

Today the women are not only an integral part of the Mexican Convention, but also are organized into the Hispanic WMU Fellowship, working with Texas WMU. The elected leader of the Fellowship serves on the Texas WMU Executive Board. Assistance is also offered in promotion, training, and publication of language materials.

Within the BGCT, other areas of work also have specialists in Hispanic work.

In summary, Hispanic work in Texas has been for more than 100 years an integral part of the Lord’s work among Texas Baptists.

The first decade of the twenty-first century brought great strides to the Baptist General Convention of Texas when Rudy Sanchez was elected the first Hispanic to chair the Executive Board in 2005 and Albert Reyes became the first Hispanic to be elected president of the BGCT.

**Korean Baptist Fellowship Of Texas**

The Korean Baptist Fellowship of Texas (KBFT), created in 1982, is an organization of the Korean Baptist churches that are in fellowship with the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the associations of the convention of the BGCT, with messengers elected by Korean Baptist churches comprising the body.

Officers of the Fellowship include a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and liaison from the BGCT. Work of the organization is carried on by standing committees. Included are Sunday School, Discipleship, Church Music, Missions, Baptist Men, and Woman’s Missionary Union.

The Korean Woman’s Missionary Union has been active, working under guidelines suggested by the Korean Woman’s Missionary Union Fellowship and Texas Woman’s Missionary Union. The guidelines set forth the purpose of the Korean Woman’s Missionary Union being to promote the teaching of and participation in missions through the organizations of Woman’s Missionary Union and to assist the churches in fulfilling their missions tasks.

Today, to say that Texas is a vast mission field tells only part of the story,” says William M. Pinson, Jr., Executive Director Emeritus of the BGCT. “It is actually a number of mission fields within one huge mission field.”

**“Today, to say that Texas is a vast mission field tells only part of the story,” says William M. Pinson, Jr., Executive Director Emeritus of the BGCT. “It is actually a number of mission fields within one huge mission field.”**

21 Minutes, State Missions Commission, Baptist Executive Board, January 30, 1986.

22 Constitution, Korean Baptist Fellowship of Texas, State Missions Commission meeting, April 28, 1983.

23 Funding and Programming Relationships with the Korean Baptist Fellowship of Texas, State Missions Commission, October 13, 1988.
Other Language Groups

The Intercultural Initiatives Office includes work with other language groups, in addition to those already mentioned. Fellowships include the African, Brazilian, Cambodian, Chinese, Japanese, Laotian, and Vietnamese. Additionally, "We work with many other language groups who have churches, but are not yet organized into fellowships," stated Patty Lane, Intercultural Initiatives Director. These seven fellowships, along with the Korean, already mentioned, only represent eight of the thirty language groups in 219 congregations. In 2005, the three largest language groups by number of congregations were the Koreans, Chinese, and Vietnamese.

Hispanic work in Texas has been for more than 100 years an integral part of the Lord's work among Texas Baptists.

Ministries find many outlets, depending on the needs of the particular group: retreats for pastors, wives, or perhaps youth; conferences, including information on how and where to locate materials, workshops, missions trips, etc. One of the most successful ministries in recent years is “Take Out,” an inter-Asian youth conference. BGCT staff work closely with ethnic leadership to provide for the diverse needs of these Texas Baptist churches.

An integral part of this program is work among the hearing impaired. A pioneer in this work was the Columbus Avenue Baptist Church in Waco, which began its program in 1912. In 1967, BGCT employed the first missionary to the deaf. Robert E. Parrish, assumed the work in 1980, working with churches and associations in partnership with the Texas Baptist Conference for the Deaf. Parrish retired in 2001, but the work continues as part of the Community Missions team of the BGCT. In 2006 there are 20 BGCT related churches and missions for the deaf in Texas, along with over 100 interpreted ministries across the state. Ministries in support of the Deaf take the form of regional interpreter workshops, a youth summer camp, Bible conferences, athletic programs, and the annual convention of the Texas Baptist Conference for the Deaf. Meetings with churches interested in starting a deaf ministry are also included.

Missions education is stressed among ethnic groups and WMU of Texas helps facilitate missions awareness and involvement among Hispanic, Korean, Chinese, Cambodian, Laotian, Hmong, Thai, and Vietnamese congregations. The work is directed by the Language Advisory Council which works with two volunteer coordinators and the staff of WMU of Texas.

In pursuit of its overall objectives, the office works directly with both churches and associations. Additionally, the office partners with other programs of BGCT as their ministries relate to strengthening Black Baptist churches. Conferences between BGCT program leaders and Black Baptist National program leaders provide input and sharing in pursuit of mutual goals.

The office also relates to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) agencies that work with Black Baptists in areas served by the BGCT.

Significant input for programming is provided by a continuing study of the economic and religious trends of the Black population in areas served by BGCT.

Focusing on the ongoing emphasis of BGCT to establish new churches and missions, the Office of African American Ministries seeks to discover and evaluate the mission opportunities which BGCT has with Black Baptist churches, associations, and conventions.

As a result of the work of Culp and Evans, Black churches affiliated with the BGCT now number over 900. This has meant that the role of liaison with other Black Baptist groups is becoming less critical in the face of the needs of this growing number of predominantly African American BGCT churches.

The middle of the first decade of the BGCT saw the election of the first African America as first-vice president of the Executive Board, the election of the first African American as chair of the BGCT, pastor Michael Bell of Fort Worth.

The Face of Texas

The growth of leadership and churches from multiple ethnic and racial congregations has brought to the BGCT a richness that builds on its heritage and gives vision for the future when the Baptist congregations affiliated with the BGCT and the leadership of the BGCT will look like...
the face of Texas

Considering this mushrooming ethnic population in Texas, multi-ethnic outreach also emerges a vital part of the BGCT program.

Beginning in the late 1950’s the Baptist General Convention of Texas began offering academic scholarships to qualified Hispanic youth planning to attend Texas Baptist universities. In recent years, students identified with African American and Asian churches/missions have also been included in the scholarship program. Scholarship funds are provided from the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions. Applicants are required to complete an application for consideration. Scholarships are provided to those students who are members of Texas Baptist Churches in cooperation with the BGCT, and maintain membership in churches that are recognized as “ethnic” congregations.25

Offspring Conventions

Born out of Cooperation: Minnesota/Wisconsin Baptist Convention

In 1956, seven Southern Baptist congregations in Minnesota and Wisconsin (M-W) invited the BGCT to join them in reaching persons for Christ.26

The invitation was accepted; Texas was joined by the Home Mission Board of the SBC in the overall endeavor. M-W became what some Texas Baptists smilingly called “our northern-most association.” The relationship, however, was quite different from that of BGCT and its associations in Texas.

A working structure involving M-W, the BGCT, and the HMB was set up in 1956, and underwent several changes in subsequent years. In 1974 the M-W churches organized themselves into a Fellowship, and in November 1983, into the Minnesota Wisconsin Southern Baptist Convention. In 1994 the convention became the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

During the early days of the relationship, M-W has related to BGCT through the State Missions Commission, and has been the recipient of both Mary Hill Davis Offering and BGCT Cooperative Program funds.

BGCT areas of work such as Bible Study/Discipleship Training, Stewardship and Evangelism have programmed special emphases with

25 Minutes, State Missions Commission, Baptist Executive Board, Dallas, Oct. 2, 1986; and “Proceedings of the Women’s Missionary Union of Texas,” Annual, Baptist General Convention of Texas 1956, 148


Ministries find many outlets, depending on the needs of the particular group: retreats for pastors, wives, or perhaps youth; conferences, including information on how and where to locate materials, workshops, missions trips, etc.

Ed Brooks Bowles, former pastor of Gaston Oaks Baptist Church, served for a period of time as liaison between M-W and BGCT. Carl Elder was subsequently named to this position, working as a Mission Service Corps volunteer. His assignment included partnering Texas churches and resources with those in the M-W area.

In 2001, the MWBC included 161 churches and approximately 14,000 members. Convention Offices are in Rochester, Minn., in a building erected in 1981. Volunteer crews organized through Texas Baptist Men headed the building project.

In the mid-seventies, the BGCT and M-W began a joint process whereby the administrative and financial responsibility of the BGCT was gradually transferred to M-W Fellowship, subsequently the convention. At the same time, a special relationship between the two entities has continued. As the 1986 relationship document emphasizes “It
is incumbent upon both the M-W Convention and the BGCT to implement plans which will help to insure that this new state convention and the BGCT will have the optimum relationship both with respect to Baptist polity as well as to maintain a mission support pattern.27

**Born out of Controversy**

While many Baptist groups in Texas have grown out of a sense of cultural or ethnic identity, at least two groups were created out of controversy within Baptist General Convention of Texas life.

**Baptist Missionary Association**

The first was the Baptist Missionary Association, which developed out of the dissent fomented by S. A. Hayden in the 1890s. In 1900, his followers created the East Texas Baptist Convention, and it soon became the Baptist Missionary Association.

Over the past 100 years, the once-bitter differences between the Baptist Missionary Association and the Baptist General Convention of Texas have subsided. A number of Baptist Missionary Association churches and their leaders have returned to the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Today, the Baptist Missionary Association continues to exist as a small fellowship of churches (400 nationwide) that support a school in Jacksonville, Texas and a children’s home in Waxahachie, Texas through designated offerings.

**Southern Baptists of Texas Convention**

The most recent group to break away from the Baptist General Convention of Texas is the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. After existing for several years as a dissenting voice within the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention declared itself a separate entity in November 1998.

While the new convention cited missions and evangelism as its priorities, it declared itself to be built on theological agreement. Currently, this agreement centers around affirmation of the Baptist Faith & Message as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000 and agreement to Biblical inerrancy. This reflects an historical change in convention polity which has been reflected as well in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention grew from 183 congregations at its formation to more than 1700 churches and missions listed on their website in 2006, though some of those congregations chose to be “dually aligned” with both the SBTC and the BGCT.

The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention does not support any children’s homes, elder care facilities, or hospitals through its cooperative budget. It does have a fraternal relationship or “partnership” with:

- Criswell College in Dallas, Texas
- Jacksonville College, a BMA junior college and seminary in Jacksonville, Texas and in that relationship, provides some funds.
- East Texas Baptist Family Ministries
- Houston Baptist University (HBU), a BGCT university. This relationship caused the BGCT to rethink and restructure their relationship and funding of HBU.
- Korean Baptist Fellowship of Texas

The convention’s mission work emphasizes a strategy directed exclusively by the Southern Baptist Convention’s North American Mission Board and International Mission Board.

**Bibliography**

**Books**


I. Southern Baptist Convention
   1. Introducing the Story
   2. SBC: Its Historical Beginnings
      (1) Moving Toward Division
      (2) Meeting in Augusta, Georgia - 1845
      (3) Leaving Augusta with a New Convention
   3. SBC: Its Organizational Structure
      (1) World Mission Ministries
      (2) Church Enrichment Ministries
      (3) Theological Education Ministries
      (4) Christian Ethics and Religious Liberty Ministries
      (5) Facilities Ministries
   4. SBC: Its Annual Operation
      (1) May - Electing Messengers to the Convention
      (2) June - Attending the Annual Convention
      (3) July/Aug. - Getting the Work Under Way
      (4) Sept./Oct. - Doing Business Ad Interim
      (5) Oct./Nov. - Gathering in Associations and State Conventions
      (6) Dec./June - Campaigning for SBC President
      (7) Feb. - Preparing for the Annual Meeting
      (8) April/May - Announcing Appointments/Nominations
      (9) June - Returning to the Annual Convention

II. Woman’s Missionary Union

III. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
   1. Beginnings
   2. Structure
   3. Primary Emphases

IV. Baptist Joint Committee

V. Baptist World Alliance
   1. “In the Beginning”
   2. “And It Came to Pass”
      (1) Objectives
      (2) Method of Operations
   3. “We Are Laborers Together”
   4. Ten Challenges for the BWA in its Second Century
   5. BWA Organizational Chart
Baptists Relating Nationally and Internationally

Southern Baptist Convention

Introducing the Story

At its organization in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) numbered 4,126 churches and 351,951 members. Baptisms totaled 23,223 that year. In 1993, almost a century and a half later, the Convention had grown to 38,741 churches with 15,404,621 members and reported baptisms of 349,073.2

As the SBC celebrated its sesquicentennial, its story spans the centuries and decades to include biblical rediscoveries of a separatists people, voluntary cooperation in a missionary movement, and painful changes within an aging denomination. Two crucial questions of relationships for this generation of Baptists are: (1) “Just where does the SBC story go from here, and how do we fit into the human/divine plot?” And, (2) “Is there not hope for spiritual and denominational renewal among those who are now stewards of such a grand heritage?” So, let’s look at the SBC beginnings, structures, functions, and relationships.

SBC: Its Historical Beginnings

Moving Toward Division

What were the factors leading up to a division in the Baptist denomination and the beginning of the SBC in 1845? Among those discussed by historians, only five are mentioned here, and not all of equal impact:

First, missionary passion had been developing among Baptists in America overoming a long heritage of fiercely independent spirit and fear of man-made general bodies of any kind. In 1812, Adoniram and Ann Judson and Luther Rice had gone as Congregationalist missionaries to India. In careful study of the New Testament, expecting to meet the Baptist influence of William Carey, they became persuaded of Baptist doctrine, were baptized, and wanted to continue as Baptist missionaries.

Second, sectionalism among Northern and Southern Baptists expressed itself in many aspects of life in the still-developing United States, such as: geographical boundaries and distances; national origins and races; economic commerce and industry; social environment and values; and religious practices among Baptists. This did not cause the schism, but it did contribute to other specific circumstances.

Third, methods of organization became a factor in separation. The North strongly favored the continuing society approach of its three separate bodies (since 1826). Both ecclesiology and circumstances caused the South to favor the convention method of mission support.

Fourth, by the 1830's Baptists in the South believed that their states had been neglected in the endeavors of the existing Home Mission Society. This “neglect” was compounded by a pattern that most missionaries under appointment came from the Northern States.

Fifth, historians largely concur that “slavery was the final and most decisive factor which led Southern Baptists to form their own convention.” As a test case, Georgia Baptists raised the money and put forward for appointment a slave owner which the board of the Home Mission Society failed to appoint. This was a “final straw.”

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3 J. Clyde Turner, Our Baptist Heritage (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the SBC, 1945), 84-89.
4 McBeth, 381.
Meeting in Augusta, Georgia - 1845

In March 1845, the Board of the Virginia Baptist Mission Society passed resolutions that included:

Resolved, That this Board are of the opinion that . . . those brethren who are aggrieved by the recent decision of the Board in Boston, should hold a Convention to confer on the best means of promoting the Foreign Mission Cause, and other interests of the Baptist denomination in the South.

Resolved, That in the judgment of this Board, Augusta, Geo., is a suitable place for holding such a Convention, and that Thursday before the 2nd Lord’s day in May next is a suitable time.

By 1845, not only had Baptists in the South provided vital leadership, but had grown to five thousand churches and over three hundred associations. Nine state bodies had been organized: South Carolina (1821), Georgia (1822), Virginia (1823) Alabama (1823), North Carolina (1830), Kentucky (1833), Missouri (1834), Maryland (1836), and Mississippi (1836). During the united period, Southern Baptists had entered wholeheartedly into the work of the three benevolent societies (foreign and home missions and publications).

Due to short notice, communications, and distance of travel, few representatives gathered from several of the state conventions. On May 8, 1845, however, 293 persons from nine state bodies and other mission groups attended the five-day session. The Convention elected as president W. B. Johnson of South Carolina, whose guiding hand had much to do with the outcome of the sessions.

Leaving Augusta with a New Convention

From the beginning, the SBC had a regional name, a national field of work, a convention plan of missions, and two areas of endeavor: Foreign Mission Board and Domestic Mission Board. Although there was follow-up work to be done, the consultative meeting had put in motion a new convention. Issues were discussed, alternatives considered, and directions set for what has been passed down to this generation.

The name of the Convention is the Southern Baptist Convention.

The purpose of the Convention is missionary:

From the Charter: . . . said corporation being created for the purpose of eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the Baptist denomination of Christians, for the propagation of the gospel.

From the Constitution: . . . to provide a general organization for Baptists in the United States and its territories for the promotion of Christian missions at home and abroad and any other objects such as Christian education, benevolent enterprises, and social services which it may deem proper and advisable for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God.

The nature of the SBC is to be a general body within “the Baptist denomination of Christians” (see Fig. 1). Other Baptist bodies existed (and exist) within the denomination:

The messengers from missionary societies, churches, and other religious bodies of the Baptist denomination in various parts of the United States met in Augusta, Georgia, May 8, 1845, for the purpose of carrying into effect the benevolent intention of our constituents by organizing a plan for eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the denomination for the propagation of the gospel.

The membership of the Convention consists of “messengers who are members of missionary Baptist churches cooperating with the Convention.” The number of messengers was originally based on contributions, but later also on church membership.

The authority of the SBC is limited, protecting its own autonomy but also the autonomy of every other Baptist body within the denomination:

While independent and sovereign in its own sphere, the Convention does not claim and will never attempt to exercise any authority over any other Baptist body, whether church, auxiliary organizations, associations, or convention.

SBC: Its Organizational Structure

The Southern Baptist Convention was organized in 1845 for the purpose of “eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the whole denomination for the Redeemer’s cause.” The SBC largely expresses its ongoing denominational missionary nature through its organizational structure developed and adjusted since 1845. The Covenant for a New Century, adopted by the SBC in 1995, eliminated several agencies and reassigned many ministries to other agencies. Five agencies, the Stewardship Commission, the Education Commission, the Southern Baptist Foundation, the Southern Baptist Commission on the American Baptist Seminary, and the Historical Commission were completely dissolved with certain of their ministries assigned to existing agencies. The Radio and Television Commission, Brotherhood Commission, and the Home Mission Board were merged into a new agency, the North American Mission Board, with their ministries reshaped into a coordinated and unified approach to evangelize North America.
The SBC is now broadly organized into the following ministries:

- World Missions Ministries (International Mission Board and North American Mission Board)
- Church Enrichment Ministries (LifeWay Christian Resources)
- Theological Education Ministries (the six SBC related seminaries)
- Christian Ethics and Religious Liberties Ministries (Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission)
- Facilitating Ministries (GuideStone Financial Resources and the Executive Committee)
- Woman's Missionary Union (auxiliary to the SBC)

The Executive Committee, housed in the Southern Baptist Convention Building in Nashville, began in 1917, with a major structure change in 1927 that is similar to its present organization.

World Missions Ministries

International Mission Board - 1845. The International Mission Board, formerly the Foreign Mission Board, located in Richmond, Virginia, was one of the two boards established at the beginning of the Southern Baptist Convention. It receives almost one-half of its funding from the Cooperative Program provided through the SBC; approximately one-half of its funding comes from the Cooperative Program and the other half from the Lottie Moon Offering. The IMB’s mission statement says:

The International Mission Board exists to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, start New Testament churches in the United States and Canada.

The International Mission Board supports a career, associate, and apprentice mission force of over 4100 and 1010 short term personnel working with 1193 of the world’s 5876 people groups and involves over 6,500 volunteers in international mission projects. The IMB relates to the churches as a channel for mission information, support, prayer, calling out, and nurturing missionaries.

North American Mission Board - 1845. The North American Mission Board, formerly the Home Mission Board, was first established in 1845 at Marion, Alabama, as the Domestic Mission Board. In 1882, it was renamed and relocated to Atlanta, Georgia. With the restructuring of the SBC in 1997, through the Covenant for a New Century, the ministries of the North American Mission Board.

The assigned ministries of the North American Mission Board are:

- Assist churches by the appointment and support of missionaries in the United States and Canada.
- Assist churches in the ministry of evangelism.
- Assist churches through Christian social ministries.
- Assist churches through the involvement and coordination of their members in volunteer missions throughout the United States and Canada.
- Assist churches by involving their members in missions and missions education.
- Assist churches by communicating the gospel throughout the United States and Canada through communication technologies.
- Assist churches by strengthening associations and providing services to associations.

The four assigned ministries of the International Mission Board include:

- Assist churches by evangelizing persons, planting Baptist churches, and nurturing church planting movements among all people groups outside the United States and Canada.
- Assist churches in sending and supporting Southern Baptist missionaries and volunteers by enlisting, equipping, and enabling them to fulfill their calling.
- Assist churches and partners to mobilize Southern Baptists to be involved in international missions through praying, giving, and going.
- Assist churches in fulfilling their international missions task by developing global strategies, including human needs based ministries, and providing leadership, administrative support, and financial accountability for implementation of these strategies.

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- Assist churches in fulfilling their international missions task by developing global strategies, including human needs based ministries, and providing leadership, administrative support, and financial accountability for implementation of these strategies.
★ Assist churches in relief ministries and victims of disaster.18

Eighty percent of the budget for the work of the North American Mission Board is supported by the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Offering. Most of the approximately 3,100 missionaries are also related to state conventions and/or associations. In addition there approximately 2000 Mission Service Corps volunteers serving for two years or more. The North American Mission Board is also involved in endorsing and supporting male chaplains, some social ministries, ethnic Baptist work, missions education, media ministry, and disaster relief.19

Church Enrichment Ministries

LifeWay Christian Resources - 1891. LifeWay Christian Resources, formerly Sunday School Board, is located in Nashville, Tennessee, and has sought to serve the churches and the denomination directly and in close relationship with the state conventions. The mission statement of LifeWay Christian Resources says:

LifeWay Christian Resources exists to assist churches and believers to evangelize the world to Christ, develop believers, and grow churches by being the best provider of relevant, high quality, high value Christian products and services.

Following the restructuring of the SBC in 1997, LifeWay has the following ministry assignments:

★ Assist churches in the development of ministries
★ Assist churches in ministries to college and university students
★ Assist churches with Christian schools and home school ministries
★ Assist churches in ministries to men and women
★ Assist churches through the operation of conference centers and camps.
★ Assist churches through the publication of books and Bibles.

★ Assist churches through the operation of LifeWay Christian Stores.
★ Assist churches in stewardship education.
★ Assist churches through church architecture consultation and services
★ Assist churches in capital fund raising20

Unlike the other SBC agencies, LifeWay receives no Cooperative Program support, but rather each year contributes significantly (over $4 million) to the national and state convention programs. Through the publication of books, manuals, periodicals, and curriculum materials, LifeWay (Sunday School Board) has done more to shape Baptist life and thought than any other entity. Southern Baptist churches, associations, and state conventions have supported this agency through the years by purchasing books, suppliers and most importantly, Sunday School curriculum materials. The programs of LifeWay touch the work of local churches more than any other agency in Southern Baptist life.

Theological Education Ministries

There are six Southern Baptist seminaries established through the years and scattered around the country. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, started in Greenville, South Carolina (1859) and moved to Louisville, Kentucky, 1877; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1908 (started in Waco at Baylor University); New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1917 (began as Baptist Bible Institute); Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California, 1944; Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina, 1951 and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri, 1957.

These six seminaries, with over 10,000 students (6788 full time equivalent), are supported by the Cooperative Program, direct contributions, endowment earnings, and student fees. The seminaries share a common purpose and mission statement.

Most of the approximately 5,000 missionaries are also related to state conventions and/or associations.

Some 1,761 of the missionaries are Mission Service Corps volunteers serving for two years or more.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminaries exist to prepare God called men and women for vocational service in Baptist churches and in other Christian ministries throughout the world through programs of spiritual development, theological studies, and practical preparation in ministry. The ministries of the seminaries include:

★ Assist churches by programs of pre-baccalaureate and baccalaureate theological education for ministers.
★ Assist churches by programs of masters level theological education for ministers.
★ Assist churches by programs of professional doctoral education for ministers.
★ Assist churches by programs of research doctoral education for ministers and theological educators.
★ Assist churches through the administration of the Southern

18 Ibid., p. 3-4.
20 The Organizational Manual, p. 5-6.
Southern Baptist Theological Seminaries exist to prepare God called men and women for vocational service in Baptist churches and in other Christian ministries throughout the world through programs of spiritual development, theological studies, and practical preparation in the public arena.

Facilitating Ministries
GuideStone Financial Resources-1918. Founded under the name, Relief and Annuity Board, this agency has been located in Dallas, Texas, since its beginning. Formerly the Annuity Board, GuideStone provides ministerial relief, planned annuity, insurance and retirement programs. It’s mission statement reads:

GuideStone Financial Resources exists to assist the churches, denominational entities, and other evangelical ministry organizations by making available retirement plan services, life and health coverage, risk management programs and personal and institutional investment programs.

GuideStone’s ministries are:
- Assist churches, denominational entities, and other evangelical ministry organizations by making available retirement plan programs for their ministers and employees.
- Assist churches, denominational entities, and other evangelical ministry organizations by making available life and health coverage and risk management programs.
- Assist churches and denominational entities through relief to Southern Baptist ministers and Southern Baptist denominational employees.
- Assist churches, denominational entities, and other evangelical ministry organizations by making available a personal investment program to their ministers and employees and their spouses.
- Assist churches and denominational entities by making available institutional investment services through cooperative agreements with state Baptist foundations (or state Baptist conventions where no foundation exists) and the Southern Baptist Foundation. Assist other evangelical ministry organizations by making available institutional investment services.

The Cooperative Program funds received by the Annuity Board provides financial assistance for retired ministers, other denominational workers, their spouses and widows. The operational funds for the Annuity Board are provided from administrative fees for managing and investing funds.

Executive Committee - 1917. The Executive Committee, housed in the Southern Baptist Convention Building in Nashville, began in 1917, with a major structure change in 1927 that is similar to its present organization. The restructuring of the SBC in 1995 gave the Executive Committee the responsibilities for Cooperative Program promotion and the administration of the Southern Baptist Foundation.


The Executive Committee exists to minister to the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention by acting for the Convention ad interim in all matters not otherwise provided for in a general manner that encourages the cooperation and confidence of the churches, associations, and state conventions and facilitates maximum support for worldwide missions and ministries. The Executive Committee is not a “super committee” and has no superior role as it relates to other agencies. Because of its role in programming, reporting, and budgeting, the Executive Committee does relate to all other SBC agencies and state conventions. The ministries of the Executive Committee include:

- Assist churches through conducting and administering the work of the convention not otherwise assigned.
- Assist churches by providing a convention news service.
- Assist churches by providing a convention public relations service.
- Assist churches, denominational agencies, and state conventions through estate planning consultation and investment management for funds designated for support of Southern Baptist causes.
- Assist churches through the promotion of cooperative giving.

Members of the Executive Committee are elected by the Convention in session from a slate presented by the Committee on Nominations. The membership consists of both ministerial related and non-ministerial related individuals.

**SBC: Its Annual Operation**

Beyond its organizational structure, what does the Convention look like and how does it behave when it functions in its many parts throughout each year? Especially from the viewpoint of the individual, major elements of its annual operation are summarized as follows:

**May—E lecting Messengers to the Convention**

An annual cycle begins when local Baptist churches all across the Southern Baptist Convention elect representatives to the annual meeting of the SBC. Originally they were called “delegates” but now called “messengers” because they are sent to the Convention meeting without binding instructions and return to the churches without binding actions. Historically, messengers go to the Convention sessions, debate the issues, consider the recommendations, vote, and return to their churches with viewpoints and reports.

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**June - Attending the Annual Convention**

Messengers elected by the churches converge on the host city for the annual SBC session. Preparation has been made under the leadership of the SBC president, the Committee on Order of Business, the Executive Committee, and a vast number of other Baptists.

The first responsibility of the messenger is to register for the Convention. Registration is under the direction of the Registration Secretary and the Credentials Committee. Upon registration, each messenger receives a badge, a packet of computer card ballots, and a Book of Reports.

As messengers make their way to the Convention meeting hall, the SBC Bulletin is available, publishing the most recent business items, committee reports, nominations, and appointments.

The exhibit hall, including the LifeWay store, provides extensive information about the entities and operation of the total denomination.

As soon as possible following the conclusion of the Convention, a Convention Annual is published providing a complete report of the proceedings of the Convention as well as a listing of all Convention actions, reports, appointments, elections, information regarding state conventions, and extensive directories of denominational and church life. The Report Book, SBC Bulletin, and Annual together become significant resources for understanding the functions of the Southern Baptist Convention.

- One of the first orders of business is a motion to seat the messengers, those registered and those yet to be duly recognized. Following this action, the chairman of the Committee on Order of Business moves that the order of business be adopted by the Convention.

  - The president of the Convention announces the appointment of committees as listed in the SBC Bulletin for that day. Of these committees (Tellers Committee, Committee on Resolutions, Credentials Committee, and Committee on Committees), the one having most to do with the governance of the agencies and institutions of the SBC is the Committee on Committees. When those appointments are made, the course is set for other leadership nominations and selections.

- During the opening day session of the Convention, an opportunity is given for messengers to present miscellaneous resolutions or motions. Motions are referred to the Committee on Order of Business which assigns a place in the order of business or makes
other dispositions; resolutions are referred to the Committee on Resolutions. It is the requirement of the Convention Bylaws that motions regarding the operation of any or all of the agencies and institutions of the SBC be referred to those boards of trustees for their own responses back to the Convention. Other types of motions are dealt with by the body in session.

The SBC Executive Committee begins its report to the Convention on the first day. Business items coming from the Executive Committee include recommendations from its work between annual sessions of the Convention, such as: program statements, Cooperative Program Budgeting, and special financial campaigns.

The work of the Convention is pursued throughout the year through the boards, institutions, commissions, and committees.

statement changes, charter changes, constitution changes, resolutions of appreciation, action on referred motions, forthcoming site locations, etc.

The Committee on Nominations, working during the months previous to the annual meeting, also makes its report to the Convention. Growing out of this report, there is set in place the trustee bodies for all boards, institutions, and commission; hundreds of names are included in the recommendation. If a messenger wants to amend the report, this may be done one position at a time; a messenger may not present an alternate slate of nominees for consideration.

The Committee on Committees presents its report, including the Committee on Nominations to serve during the forthcoming year. Its report includes a layperson and a church or denominational employee from each qualified state convention. This Committee on Nominations will do its work and report to the subsequent Convention meeting.

Another major action on the first day of the Convention is the election of the Southern Baptist Convention president. If there is an incumbent president eligible for reelection (2 one-year terms), his election may be challenged. Subsequently, other officers are elected: 1st V.P., 2nd V.P., Recording Secretary, Registration Secretary, and Treasurer.

Throughout the Convention, other business items as well as preaching and music unfold. Reports are given by all standing committees as well as boards, institutions, commission, and associated organizations. As the meeting comes to a close, it has in recent years been difficult to sustain a quorum in order to act upon the business of the Convention. Voting is normally done on all actions by the uplifted packet of ballots. The election of officers, where more than one is nominated, is voted on by secret ballot.

July/August—Getting the Work Under Way

The work of the Convention is pursued throughout the year through the boards, institutions, commissions, and committees. At the close of the Convention, all the newly-elected Southern Baptist Convention officers, trustees, commissioners, and committee members take up their work. Most often, approximately one-fourth of the membership of each board or commission is elected at one time. These newly-elected members join in the trustee process with those already serving. These governing bodies meet on their own schedule throughout the year, elect their own officers, and organize into working structures. The primary responsibility is oversight of the work as assigned by the Convention, including policy making, fiduciary, and directional activity. It also includes responding to any referred motions or resolutions from the Convention. Trustees are responsible for the election of the chief executive officer of that particular Baptist organization and of other employees as designated by their own guidelines. The trustees are responsible to maintain a charter, constitution and bylaws appropriate to the work for which they are charged. Reports for the work of the entity are developed and made to the Convention at its next annual session. In certain areas of Convention life, each entity works in concert with the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, such as: program statements, Cooperative Program budgeting, and special financial campaigns.

September/October — Doing Business Ad Interim

The SBC Executive Committee meets three times each year: September, February, and June “to act for the Convention ad interim in all matters not otherwise provided for.”25 The Executive Committee does not oversee all the work of the Convention, but it does have a coordinating responsibility and a collection of items not assigned to any one of the other boards or commissions. In doing so, it acts in behalf of the Convention between its annual sessions. In recent years, it has set the pace in redirecting the SBC focus.

The Cooperative Program Budget, adopted at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, begins October 1. Based on actions of the Convention, contributions are received throughout the state conventions and on to the SBC Executive Committee and disbursed to the agencies and other causes included in the SBC allocation budget. The process goes on throughout the full twelve-month period of the fiscal year, October 1—September 30. In addition to the undesignated Cooperative Program funds, most SBC designated missions

25 Ibid, 12.
offers are received by the Executive Committee and disbursed to the mission boards or other causes as received. This procedure allows for coordination, accounting, and reporting of all funds given by the churches through the state convention and to the SBC causes; it also allows for redirecting the priorities of the SBC.

October/November — Gathering in Associations and State Conventions

Practically and historically, more than 1,200 associations form the front line of denominational missionary activity in Southern Baptist life. Although the association is not in the channel of Cooperative Program funding nor representation on Southern Baptist Convention boards or agencies, the Baptist associations work with the Southern Baptist Convention in numerous ways: “leadership training, promotion, information, coordination, shared mission projects, and a host of other significant concerns.”

Each state or regional convention is autonomous in its own right but has a cooperative and functional relationship to the Southern Baptist Convention. For purposes of reviewing a full year of the operation of the Southern Baptist Convention, consider three: (1) Trustee representation—in the Constitution and Bylaws of the SBC, representation on boards, commissions, and committees is specifically selected from within the state/regional conventions. Although the nomination does not come through action by that state convention, it has been the historic intention that the state conventions have representation on the national governing bodies. The spirit of the SBC Constitution and Bylaws is carried out to the extent that those elected from cooperating state conventions are actually representative of the people and churches in that state. (2) Financial relationship—normally, churches send Cooperative Program monies to the state convention. At the annual meeting of each state convention, a budget is adopted. That budget includes an amount that supports state convention programs and ministries. It also includes an amount that is sent to the SBC Cooperative Program for distribution through the allocation budget adopted by the SBC. To this extent, there is a functional tie between the Southern Baptist Convention and each one of the cooperating state conventions.

(3) Ministries—many programs and ministries of SBC agencies are implemented in close coordination with the state conventions.

No action taken at the Southern Baptist Convention is absolutely binding on the state convention; neither can the state conventions, individually or collectively, take action that is absolutely binding on the Southern Baptist Convention.

December to June—Campaigning for SBC President

Beyond any question, there has been a significant focus in recent years on the election of the SBC president. Though some indicate it has always been this way, others have viewed the campaigns for the presidency in recent years (since 1979) as being a major change. There have always been worthy leaders within the Southern Baptist family “running for president of the Convention,” but in elections since 1979, there has been a well-publicized intention to elect a president of the Convention who, in turn, would appoint like-minded people to the Committee on Committees who, in turn, would nominate like-minded people to the Committee on Nominations, and they, in turn, nominate such people to the SBC boards and commissions. The effort in electing the president has been to change the direction and focus of the Convention from historical Baptist pluralism toward a narrow fundamentalist stance. Whether that premise is accurate or not, for the past few years, campaigns for the presidency have become less dramatic, with a few exceptions, as the fundamentalist takeover has succeeded, and usually only one candidate is nominated.

February - Preparing for the Annual Meeting

In February, the Executive Committee meets for major preparation for the forthcoming June Convention; other matters for the operation of the Convention are determined. The president of the Convention often makes a report, setting the tone or the direction as he sees the forthcoming Convention. Any program statements or foundational document changes are reviewed and decided for recommendation. All logistic matters concerning the Convention site are cared for by the Executive Committee and its staff.

April/May — Announcing Appointments/Nominations

Therefore, it matters crucially what the messengers decide, who they elect as SBC officers, and who they put in governance positions as trustees.

The SBC Bylaws require that the president release to Baptist Press in writing—at least 45 days before the meeting of the Convention—those he appoints to the Committee on Committees and Committee on Resolutions. To the extent that those appointed represent only the winning majority, then a vast minority is not represented in the process leading to governance of the agencies and institutions. The Committee on Nominations releases its report through Baptist Press at least 45 days before the Convention meeting. Through the year, the report is prepared recommending as many as 900 governing representatives, on a rotating basis, for Convention election. Again, churches elect messengers to the Convention, up to 10 based on Southern Baptist Convention requirements.

June - Returning to the Annual Convention

Each year as the elected messengers return to the SBC, something like this annual cycle of operation takes place.
In a sense, the SBC exists only when its messengers have been seated as an assembled body. Therefore, it matters crucially what the messengers decide, who they elect as SBC officers, and who they put in governance positions as trustees.

**Woman's Missionary Union**

In May 1888, a few women dedicated to missions founded Woman's Missionary Union. WMU has become the largest Protestant organization for women in the world, with a membership of approximately 1 million. WMU also was the first and remains the largest body of organized laity in the Southern Baptist Convention.

WMU’s main purpose always has been to educate and involve women, girls, and preschoolers in the cause of Christian missions. Primarily it accomplishes these purposes through age-level organizations, including Women on Mission; Acteens, for girls 12-17; Girls in Action, for girls 6-11; and Mission Friends, for preschool girls and boys. WMU also has coed organizations including Adults on Mission, Youth on Mission and Children in Action.

Age-appropriate magazines of WMU and their products are provided in several languages, including Spanish, Korean, Chinese, French, Lao, Vietnamese and Basic English.

Throughout its history, WMU has been an auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, which means that it acts as a “helper” to the SBC. The auxiliary status also means that WMU is self-governing and self-supporting.

State WMU presidents constitute the WMU governing body. Members of church WMU organizations, gathered for their state’s WMU annual meeting, elect the state presidents. The state presidents become vice presidents on the national level and function as the organization’s Executive Board. The WMU national president, elected annually by WMU members attending the national WMU Annual Meeting, serves as chair of the board.

Financially, WMU supports its work through the sale of magazines and products and from investments. National WMU receives no allocation from the Southern Baptist Convention’s unified budget, the Cooperative Program.

Financial support of missionaries has always been a priority for women involved in WMU. When the women founded the national organization in 1888, one of their first items of business was to accept the request to raise money for the two mission boards. Within the first year, the women contributed over $30,700 to the two entities.

WMU’s efforts to raise money for the two mission boards are known as the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

The two offerings remained women’s offerings until 1956, when WMU agreed to promote the offerings church wide. By the end of 2000, WMU had helped lead Southern Baptists to contribute more than $3 billion to the two offerings. WMU is not a recipient of these funds. Despite this stellar record of cooperation and support, the SBC in recent years has made several attempts to bring the WMU under its control of governance. In each attempt, the WMU has maintained its determination to be independent but cooperative.

In the 1990s, WMU developed many ministries that seek to involve women in making an impact on the
communities in which they reside. These ministries include:

Project HELP 1994. Each project seeks to involve all members of a local congregation in addressing a social issue that impacts the world as well as their community. Projects have covered hunger, AIDS, child advocacy, cultural diversity, violence, literacy, and restorative justice.

Christian Women’s Job Corps, 1995. A job-training program for women in need based on Christian principles. More than 150 sites currently operate in 26 states. The pilot projects vary in format, but the objective is the same: to provide a Christian context in which women in need are equipped for life and employment; and a missions context in which women help women.

WMU’s other ministries include Baptist Nursing Fellowship, Missionary Housing, Pure Water- Pure Love, Volunteer Connection (including MissionsFEST) and WorldCrafts.

WMU’s work is guided by its vision statement and nine core values. The vision statement reads: Woman’s Missionary Union challenges Christian believers to understand and be radically involved in the mission of God.

Woman’s Missionary Union has gone through many changes in her 112-year history, but her focus remains the same, to involve women of all ages in the study of and doing of Christian missions.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Beginnings

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) began as a grassroots movement of free and faithful Baptists in May 1991. The purpose of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is to serve Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given mission. The Fellowship shall fulfill its purpose in keeping with its commitments to the historic Baptist principles of soul freedom, Bible freedom, church freedom, and religious freedom; to biblically-based global missions; to a resource model for serving churches; to justice and reconciliation; to lifelong learning and ministry; to trustworthiness; and to effectiveness.

Structure

Support: Financial support for the Fellowship comes from Baptist individuals and churches with an interest in global missions, theological education and other shared ministries.

Membership: Members, as defined by CBF’s bylaws, shall be Baptist churches and the members thereof and individual Baptists who contribute annually to the ministries and operations of the Fellowship. All members with the exception of churches shall be entitled to vote at meetings of the General Assembly.

CBF is a fellowship of Baptist Christians and churches who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice.

Primary Emphases

- Global missions and ministries that focus primarily on partnerships with local congregations and other mission groups, planting the gospel among the world’s un-evangelized peoples (ethno-linguistic people groups, comprising nearly one-fourth of the world’s population, who have little or no exposure to the Christian message), and ministries among the urban poor and other marginalized peoples in America’s inner cities. Global Missions Field Personnel: 163, including career personnel and persons serving two- to three-year assignments. CBF seeks to be a catalyst for the Holy Spirit’s conversion of individuals who then will join together to form new churches or strengthen existing ones. The Fellowship affirms the right of such churches to develop in keeping with their own cultural heritage. CBF partners with over two dozen world missions partners in the US and around the globe.

- Advocacy of historic Baptist values such as local church autonomy, priesthood of all believers and religious liberty. Through partnerships with the Baptist Center for Ethics, Baptist Joint Committee, Baptist Women in Ministry, Baptist World Alliance, Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, Bread for the World, The Center for Baptist Studies at Mercer University, Passport Youth Camping, Seeds of
Hope Publishers, and Smyth and Helwys Publishers, the Fellowship has sought to keep these critical Baptist principles alive for Baptists.

* Partnerships with seminaries and theology schools and with other organizations that identify with the Fellowship’s mission and vision. The Fellowship is committed to Baptist theological education that affords intellectual and spiritual freedom to both students and professors in an atmosphere of reverence for biblical authority and respect for open inquiry and responsible scholarship. CBF’s commitment to theological education and strategic partnerships is reflected in its relationship with partner schools. CBF has encouraged traditional Baptist Theological Education in broader settings. Their theological education partners include new

1989
★Christopher White School of Divinity, Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Spring, North Carolina, 1992
★George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 1994
★McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, Georgia, 1994
★Campbell University School of Divinity, Buies Creek, North Carolina, 1996
★Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, 2002
★Baptist University of the Americas, San Antonio, Texas, 1947 (2003 degree granting certification)
Non-Baptist partners include Brite divinity School at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas; Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia; and Duke University Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina.

In this partnership, CBF does not own or operate any school; nor does it appoint trustees to any of these institutions through institutional support and student scholarships. Scholarships are available in two forms: block grants given to Baptists students in schools supported by CBF and CBF Leadership Scholarships for students specifically supportive of the Baptist principles that CBF advocates. Since 1991, CBF has contributed more than $10 million to these programs.

* Connecting churches and their leaders to resources that will help them fulfill the mission God has given them. CBF is committed to providing creative and innovative resources that meet the needs of individual members and congregations. The Fellowship works with churches to identify and address their needs rather than duplicate existing resources that are already effective or can be easily adapted for particular contexts. When adequate resources are not available, CBF will find ways to create and provide them on a cost-recovery basis. Cooperating through new ventures that encourage innovative and creative approaches to missions and ministry for the 21st century. CBF encourages new ideas for activating our shared commitment to carrying out the Great Commission. The Fellowship is committed to innovative approaches to helping churches minister effectively in a changing world.

* Networking with other groups that share the Fellowship’s commitment to the Great Commission

BJC mission — “to defend and extend religious liberty for all, bringing a uniquely Baptist witness to the principle that religion must be freely exercised, neither advanced nor inhibited by government.”

young stand-alone seminaries, university related seminaries, schools of theology, and Baptist Centers within schools of other faith traditions. Baptist school partners include:
★Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kansas, 1901
★International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, Czech Republic, 1994
★Logsdon School of Theology, Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas, 1983
★Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Richmond, Virginia, 1989
★The Divinity School at Wake Forest, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina,

Baptist Joint Committee

On a Sunday afternoon in May 1920, a 53-year-old Baptist preacher from Dallas, Texas, climbed the east steps of the U.S. Capitol to address a throng of some 10,000 onlookers. His purpose — to rally support for religious liberty and its constitutional corollary, the separation of church and state. The crowd heard a masterful call for true religious liberty, not the veiled contempt expressed in the “mere toleration” of others’ religious views. “Toleration is a concession, while liberty is a right,” the speaker said.

In the decade following George W. Truett’s historic address, plans were laid for what would eventually become the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. Since its inception in 1936, the overarching aim of the agency has been to preserve religious freedom in this country and extend it throughout the world.
Texas Baptist icon J.M. Dawson became the agency’s first full-time executive director in 1946. He was followed by C. Emanuel Carlson, and in 1972, by James Wood, then director of the J.M. Dawson Institute Church-State Studies at Baylor University. In 1981 the BJC tapped the director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, James M. Dunn, to become its fourth executive director. At Dunn’s retirement from that position in 1999, Brent Walker, then BJC general counsel, was named executive director.

For nearly 65 years, the BJC’s mission has changed very little. The mission—“to defend and extend religious liberty for all, bringing a uniquely Baptist witness to the principle that religion must be freely exercised, neither advanced nor inhibited by government.”

The BJC is composed of representatives of various national, state and regional bodies in the United States, and it works with a wide range of religious organizations on issues pertaining to religious liberty and the separation of church and state.

At its October 2000 board meeting, the BJC approved the formal participation of the Baptist General Convention of Texas a member body. Joining the BJC board of directors at the meeting were Charles Wade, executive director of the BGCT, Phil Strickland, director of the BGCT’s Christian Life Commission; and Albert Reyes, president of the Hispanic Baptist Theological School in San Antonio.

A proven bridge-builder, the BJC provides reliable leadership on church-state issues as it leads key coalitions of religious and civil liberties groups striving to protect both the free exercise of religion and the separation of church and state.

The Coalition for the Free Exercise of Religion, a diverse coalition of more than 50 organizations, has been praised for working across “all political bents and faiths” for a common purpose. Its members include American Jewish Congress, the Family Research Council, American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Leadership of this coalition is but one example of ways the organization works to shape solutions that build consensus rather than division about religious liberty issues.

The BJC also takes seriously its role as educator. In 2001, the agency played a key role in two joint publications on portions of President George W. Bush’s faith-based initiative. *In Good Faith: A Dialogue on Government Funding of Faith-based Social Services* and *Keeping the Faith: The Promise of Cooperation, the Perils of Government Funding: A Guide for Houses of Worship* were printed and made available to the public.

The purpose of this Congress is united fellowship, cooperative sharing, and discussions centering around common Baptist goals for ministry.

The Baptist World Alliance Congress met in 1990 in Seoul, Korea. It met in 1995 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and in 2000 in Melbourne, Australia. The Centennial Congress was held in Birmingham, England, in 2005. This was a significant event for Texas Baptists as the BGCT and the Baptist General Association of Virginia became the first state conventions to join the Alliance after the departure of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In addition to the Congress meetings, leaders of different Baptist groups from all over the world meet annually to discuss the work of the Baptist World Alliance. There is also continuous communication coordinated through the Baptist World Alliance office with all the membership bodies and organizations of the Alliance.

“*In The Beginning*”

Dr. W.W. Barnes says, “From the earliest years of the history of English-speaking Baptists there seems to have been a yearning for world fellowship. At least once each century of that history the yearning has been
expressed. Thomas Grantham, leader of the General Baptists of England, is quoted as saying about 1678: ‘For my part, I could wish that all congregations of Christians of the world, that are baptized according to the appointment of Christ, would make one consistory at least sometimes, to consider matters of differences among them.’”27

Credit is given to John Rippon, an English Baptist in the eighteenth century for having the initial idea and dream for an organized worldwide Baptist fellowship. In 1790, as editor of The Baptist Annual Register, he wrote:

The Baptist World Alliance, extending over every part of the world, exists as an expression of the essential oneness of Baptist people in the Lord Jesus Christ.

To all the Baptized ministers and people, the United Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Poland, Russia and elsewhere, especially to those whose names adorn the following sheets, with a desire of promoting a universal interchange of kind offices among them, and in serious expectation that before many years lapse (in imitation of other wise men) a deputation from all these climes will meet probably in London to consult the ecclesiastical good of the whole. By the unworthiest of all their brethren, and author.28

Rippon’s dream took over a hundred years to be realized. His dream was also shared by several American Baptists such as J. H. Prestridge, W. W. Landrum, R. H. Pitt, and A. T. Robertson.

As editor of The Baptist World, J. H. Prestridge promoted the dream.

As a professor at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, A. T. Robertson urged Prestridge to pursue his dream by adopting a world outlook in his publications. Robertson also wrote a manuscript calling for a conference to discuss the possibility of a worldwide fellowship.

W. W. Landrum and R. H. Pitt also supported and promoted the idea in America.

In 1904 several significant Baptist voices in America and England were raising the call for a worldwide fellowship meeting among Baptists.

J. H. Prestridge introduced a resolution at the Southern Baptist Convention to that end. A committee was appointed to invite other Baptist bodies to cooperate toward such a meeting.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland also passed a resolution inviting a Congress to meet in London in July 1905. Though playing a significant role in its founding and development, the Southern Baptist Convention began to have disagreements with the Alliance over doctrinal uniformity and acceptance of the CBM as a member of the Alliance. Early in this century, they withdrew fellowship from the BWA and are now seeking to form their own “world” body of Baptists.

A constitution was adopted and set the basics of organization, purpose, and officers. A President, a Vice-President from each country represented, a British Secretary, and an American Secretary were approved. An Executive Committee was also established. The Baptist World Alliance was born.

**“And It Came To Pass”**

The Constitution of the Baptist World Alliance which was adopted at the 16th Baptist World Congress in Seoul, Korea, in 1990 gives a picture of the purpose and objectives of the alliance.

The preamble reads:

The Baptist World Alliance, extending over every part of the world, exists as an expression of the essential oneness of Baptist people in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The objectives and methods of operation of the Baptist World Alliance were also reaffirmed in Seoul, Korea, in 1990:

**Objectives**

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the objectives of the Alliance shall be to:

1. Promote Christian fellowship and cooperation among Baptists throughout the world.
2. Bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and assist unions and conventions in their divine task of bringing all people to God through Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
3. Promote understanding and cooperation among Baptist bodies and with other Christian groups, in keeping with our unity in Christ.
4. Act as an agency for the expression of Biblical faith and historically distinctive Baptist principles and practices.
5. Act as an agency of reconciliation seeking peace for all persons, and uphold the claims of fundamental human rights, including full religious liberty.
6. Serve as a channel for expressing Christian social concern and alleviating human need.
7. Serve in cooperation with member bodies as a resource for the development of plans for evangelism, education, church growth, and other forms of mission.
8. Provide channels of communication dealing with work related to these objectives through all possible media.
Method of Operations
The Alliance shall operate throughout the World through:

1. The General Meeting (Congress)
2. The General Council
3. The Executive Committee
4. Its Officers
5. Such committees and organizational structures as are provided for in the Bylaws or as authorized by the General Council
6. Regional Fellowships (Federations)

Any organized Baptist body such as a union or convention desires to cooperate in the work of the Alliance is eligible for membership, subject to the approval of the General Council. Any Baptist body which accepts membership also is required to assist in the support and furtherance of the purposes and work of the Alliance.

The Congress meeting every five years is for the purpose of hearing reports, making comments, approving resolutions, and referring recommendations to appropriate committees and commissions.

The General Council meets annually. The General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, Denton Lotz, explains the reason for this annual meeting:

“This is an annual meeting of Baptist leaders from around the world. Every year we meet in a different geographical area of the world so that during each quinquennium Baptist leaders, no matter where they live, can attend at least one or two meetings.”

Secretary Denton Lotz further explains the annual General Council as a time when committees and commissions meet in significant avenues of fellowship networking. He says the networking that takes place in the halls and at the meal table is astounding. He is convinced the delegates leave with a far greater sense of what God is doing through Baptists around the world.

“We Are Laborers Together”
Please note the organization of the Baptist World Alliance committee and commission system on the last page of this chapter. The name of each committee, commission, or department pretty well describes their work.

Each committee, commission, or work group is usually very large, containing as many as 50 members from all different parts of the world.

The work of the Alliance is grouped into seven sections or parts of the world as shown below.

As of 2006, the following churches and members were in each part of the world totaling 149,917 churches and 34,737,897 members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Churches</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>27,123</td>
<td>6,638,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>26,517</td>
<td>4,509,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean Islands</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>256,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>2,540</td>
<td>211,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>13,057</td>
<td>802,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>5,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>68,673</td>
<td>20,859,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>10,176</td>
<td>1,454,745</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Baptist World Alliance relates to Baptist groups in all parts of the world through the cooperative work and direction of the Regional Secretaries as shown on the organizational chart on the last page of this chapter. These secretaries are appointed by their regions.

The Alliance exercises no power over any Baptist body. All of its plans, dreams, aims, programs, and participation is strictly voluntary.

The Alliance does not allow membership to groups other than Baptists and does not allow membership to individual churches not in cooperation with a Baptist body or organization.

The Alliance does have a close fraternal relationship with other denominational bodies and Christian organized groups such as the World Council of Churches and Interdenominational Agencies. It seeks to establish and maintain close communication and dialogue with these ecumenical bodies. Fraternal delegates are welcomed and recognized at the meetings of the Congress.

Since the Baptist World Alliance is so organized, it does not have any official representation with national governments. It does seek to make its resolutions known to representatives of governments through the General Secretary and Regional Secretaries.

Ten Challenges for the BWA in its second Century
At the centennial World Congress in 2005, the General Secretary presented “Ten Challenges for the BWA in this our new Century:

1. Unity: From Genesis to Revelation, from the Garden of Eden in Genesis till the Holy City in the Book of Revelation, God is calling humanity and the Church to unity. Unity is not a peripheral doctrine of the Christian faith. It is central! Jesus’ prayer in John 17 is a missiological prayer … “so that the world might believe.” For one hundred years the BWA has brought unity to a diverse group of Baptists, representing the whole spectrum of Christian life and thought.

2. Youth and Emerging Leaders: Never before in history have young Christians been confronted with so many challenges to the Christian faith and so many temptations that lure them from faith in Christ! For that reason we place great emphasis on the importance of involving young leaders in the life of the BWA. We are grateful for the past leadership, for their sacrifice and vision. But now is the time for a new generation of young Baptists to lead our Baptist conventions and unions worldwide.

3. Theological Education for the Masses: In the Great Commission the resurrected Christ commands the Church, “Go and teach all nations.” The Greek word for teach is the same as the word for disciple. A disciple is a student, one who is trained and instructed. A whole generation of new Christians has arisen that has not been instructed, or disciplined. They are
That Baptists, as members of the body of Christ, will seek to stand as a prophetic presence that exposes and challenges the sin of racism wherever it presents itself.  

fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel.” In 1905 when the BWA was founded it was the more liberal wing of the church that emphasized the Kingdom of God. The German Baptist immigrant to America and the leader of the social gospel movement, Walter Rauschenbusch, wrote that the Kingdom of God was “the marrow of the Gospel.” More recently Southern Baptists have adopted a program entitled, “Empowering Kingdom Growth,” which also emphasizes the Kingdom of God.

The Baptist World Alliance is now one of the largest Christian organizations in the world. Even so, it is a totally voluntary fellowship which seeks the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in confronting the issues of our modern culture.

H. H. Hobbs stated that “while each church (in the New Testament) maintained its individuality, the churches cooperated in matters of common interest without compromise of beliefs.” This is indicated in the theological programs worked out in the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15, Gal. 2). The churches cooperated in matters of helping and aiding the needy (Rom. 15:25-29; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8, 9) and in circulating the scripture (Col. 4:16).

The Baptist World Alliance believes that unity is a gift from God. Its work is an effort to achieve this high and holy purpose among Baptists.

Bibliography

The following publications include those cited in this article and other reading resources.

- **Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention**: Executive Committee of the SBC, Nashville, 1994.

Books


Articles


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Baptists and the Ministry

Introduction

I. Ministry In the Bible

II. Laity and Clergy

III. The Call Within the Call

IV. Certification of Ministers

V. Preparation, Duties, Expectations

VI. Issues of Tenure, Bivocationalism, Gender

Gary Manning
Wayland Baptist University, Plainview, Texas
Baptists and the Ministry

Introduction

Baptists have long been described as “people of the book.” As such, Baptists have always tried to bind their practices to the Bible. But as George Peck reflects, “If anything is clear it is the Bible provides us with no absolute blueprints for the structuring of ministry in the church today.”1 One can only describe ministry in terms of what was, what is, and what might be in Baptist churches.

Several issues interject themselves into any discussion of Baptists and the Ministry. What does the Bible say about ministry in general and ministry as a vocation? What is the difference in a call to the laity to be servant ministers and a call to enter the ranks of the clergy? What are the components of a call? How have Baptists understood call? What about ordination? What does ordination mean? Once a person experiences a call into a ministry vocation, what is expected in terms of preparation, personal qualities, role, leadership styles and ministerial authority? How does a minister find a place to serve? Is bivocational ministry a contemporary need? What about tenure among Baptists? And, what about women in ministry?

Ministry in the Bible

The scriptures indicate an attitude and philosophy toward ministry. The church of Jesus Christ is the Body of Christ. Therefore, any discussion of ministry must affirm the idea that the church’s ministry is Christ’s ministry.2 “The Body exists to express and implement Christ’s ministry. When one accepts that ministry is an integral activity of the Body, then, in practice, it is the entire people of God who minister in the world and within the fellowship of the church.”3 When ministry is carried out through the paid, professional staff, it is done: “in the light of the ministry of the whole people of God.”4 The entire church is ordained as His servants, His ministers, “to participate in His own continuing ministry in the world.”5 Scriptures such as Ro. 1:1-7; Eph. 4:1-6; and 1 Peter 2:9-10 teach the call of God to all His people to be participants in ministry to His world.

So primarily, any discussion of ministry today must reflect the fact that in the New Testament “ministry” was a lifestyle of every believer and not a position of a few.

Laity and Clergy

The Church of Jesus Christ is a “nation of priests” (1 Peter 2:9). Every member of the Body is to carry out the tasks of priesthood. A priest has been described as humanity’s representative in the presence of God as well as God’s representative in the presence of humanity. Baptists have been strong on the first of that description and weak on the latter.

By the second century A.D., Christian churches began to develop an office similar to the Old Testament Jewish priest. The first instance of an individual Christian being called a priest is about 215 A.D.6 Christian priests replaced Jewish ones. Early in church history a hierarchy developed. The Catholic church of Rome carried the separation of clergy from laity to its ultimate end with different clothes, language, and rights.

Martin Luther pushed all Christendom to reexamine this practice of separation of clergy from laity and its attendant abuses. Early Baptists also rejected the distinction between clergy and laity so evident in Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and even Presbyterianism.7 Luther was motivated by the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The companion doctrine, soul competency, has motivated Baptist stances through history. Herschel Hobbs said, “The one distinctive contribution of Baptists to the religious thought of mankind is the competency of the soul in religion.”8 John Clarke and Roger Williams believed freedom “to be inherent in the dignity with which they were endowed by their creator.”9 Soul competency can be found in three areas.

1. It makes possible the initial response of the sinner to the Holy Spirit as He draws us to God.
2. Baptists cherish the right of free access to God in prayer.
3. A third area in which soul competency operates is that of reading and interpreting the scriptures.10

Soul competency, then, is integral to the issue at hand. Frank Stagg said,

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2 Ibid., 320.
3 Ibid., 321.
4 Ibid., 322.
7 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 21-22.
“There are different ministries among Christians, but all are ministers.”

Findley Edge affirmed the same idea when he said, “The call to salvation and the call to the ministry are one and the same call.”

Many Baptists, however, believe that lay persons are already committed to a “full-time” vocation in the secular world, they do not have time—at least much time—to do God’s work. Therefore, the laity contribute money to “free up” the clergy to have the time needed to fulfill God’s ministry.

The genius of the Baptist witness however, has been the belief that every Baptist is a minister or missionary.

Isaac Backus favored a very “weak” clergy with the real power lying in the church members themselves. But, as the Baptist clergy became increasingly professionalized and as churches became increasingly structured, less and less emphasis was placed on the informal working of the Spirit through individuals without some official title. One unfortunate result from such an attitude was that young persons felt “called” to church-related vocations since that was the natural place for someone really fully committed. It may have been better for those youth to serve as laity instead of clergy.

Most Baptists believe that within the universal and primary call of God given to all, there are those who serve in special religious positions according to their gifts and competence. Conceptually, then, Baptists “draw no sharp distinction between clergy and laity. Practically, they recognize the need for a special ministry, often defined in functional terms.”

The Call Within the Call

Most Baptists believe all Christians are called but within the call to all is the call to the few to function in a special way. Niebuhr described four elements of call: the call to be a Christian, the secret call, the providential call and the ecclesiastical call.

It is the secret, providential and ecclesiastical calls that occupy the thrust of this chapter.

Persons who are seeking affirmation of God’s calling can begin to discern call by initially and periodically writing down why one wants to be in ministry, what are one’s gifts and the ministry role envisioned. One should not be overly concerned with how the call came but that one possesses an “inner conviction that God has summoned one personally for the ministry of the gospel.”

It is this “inner call” that has been viewed as essential for anyone in a ministry vocation.

How does one describe the secret call? Kesner describes it as “that mystical aspect of calling in which we sense that God has set us apart for some particular ministry.” Spurgeon said, “the first sign of the heavenly call is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work ..., an aptness to teach ..., a measure of conversion work going on under his efforts ..., and acceptableness of the people of God.”

Dobbins said it was unique among God’s dealings with man. It is unique because it is to a vocation which deals mainly with the human spirit, because it seeks to unite people with God, and because it conserves all other values.

Various feelings and concerns often accompany the “secret call.” Feelings such as joy, relief, apprehension and uncertainty are sometimes present. The “secret call” may also be experienced by the presence of a burning desire to meet the needs of others as well as an intense compassion for the disturbed, sick, hungry, poor or spiritually aimless.

Reflection by those called reveals that there are many ways of call. The secret call could be the maturing of a childhood dream. It may simply be a growing awareness. The call may be as dramatic as Paul’s on his way to Damascus. It may come later in life. Or the secret call may be initiated by the church itself as it “calls out the called.”

Is the “secret call” given to all ministers? Some Baptists believe only the pastor is called to a vocation of ministry. Others believe that everyone in a vocation of ministry is called but that a pastor’s calling or a foreign missionary’s calling is much higher. Still others see no particular ranking of calls within ministry or vocation.

How can one ascertain the validity of God’s call to the vocational ministry? How does one test one’s motivations and attitudes concerning the ministry

13 Ibid., 43.
21 Howe, 95.
22 Kesner, 55.
25 Ibid.
27 Gandy, 9.
28 Segler, 49.
The final dimension of “call” is the confirmation of call by a congregation that issues an “ecclesiastical call” to a person to become its minister.

Throughout one’s search for the validity of call, one must ask if servanthood is the main motivation for vocational choice.

A fascinating dimension of call is what has been termed the providential call. Beyond the sense of God’s urging are life events, interests, natural abilities and grace gifts that have been bestowed on the believer. The abilities, gifts, or interests may be latent, “but if it is not there you may well question the validity of the call.” Unfortunately, the community of faith has not been as actively involved in this aspect of call.

Churches have hesitated encouraging individuals with gifts for ministry to strongly consider ministry as a vocation. Barnette said, “it is imperative that churches take more seriously their role of cooperating with the Spirit who calls some to specific religious tasks.” Churches should become conscious and active in creating an environment to call out the called.

The importance of the church’s help in calling was explained by Spurgeon in one of his lectures. He said,

Churches are not all wise, neither do they all judge in the power of the Holy Ghost, but many of them judge after the flesh; yet I had sooner accept the opinion of a company of the Lord’s people than my own upon so personal a subject as my own gifts and graces.

The final dimension of “call” is the confirmation of call by a congregation that issues an “ecclesiastical call” to a person to become its minister. The assurance of being called to a specific church has kept some ministers in their places of service even when it was difficult.” Self-authentication of one’s call is important but church authentication is necessary. The process of the ecclesiastical call has changed through the years. As far back as the seventeenth century the decision to enter the ministry, the choice of pastorate, and the acceptance of some other office was a matter for the church, not simply an individual. If a pastor of a church was approached by another church, both churches were brought into the negotiations. This is usually not the practice today. The church looking for a minister and the prospective minister pray and dialogue until a decision is made to present or not present the person to the church.

Baptists have long believed in a God-placed ministry. Most selection committees will seriously question one’s motives if they are contacted directly by one seeking a position of ministry. One’s name and or resume is usually given or sent to a committee by another person or educational institution. This way of connecting ministers with churches has its strengths and weaknesses. Positively, it is democratic, fosters close relationships, seems to parallel New Testament practice, and encourages longer pastorates. Negatively, it provides opportunities for church politics, pastorless churches for long periods, bargaining temptations, divisions over pastoral loyalties, and difficulty for younger and older ministers to find a ministry position. The weaknesses of a God-placed ministry have spawned attempts to assist in placement.

A promising development has been the establishment by several state conventions of an office of church/minister relations. The offices deal with a variety of issues. Placement information, resumes, and assistance are provided to churches without enroaching upon the rights of churches or ministers.

**Certification of Ministers**

Baptists have also gone through several stages in certifying ministers. The present student application for Ministerial Tuition Aid reflects the most recent stage. Students can receive the tuition aid if they are ordained, licensed, or simply certified as one who has given evidence of gifts and commitment for church-related ministry. Certification by a church simply requires a congregation to vote

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31 Kesner, 56.
33 Barnette, 75.
35 Conner, 29.
37 Ibid., 142.
38 Howe, 99.
in favor of a statement affirming a student’s desire to enter the vocational church-related ministry. A motion properly made, seconded, and adopted by a church in conference is all that is essential to licensing a person to the church-related vocational ministry. Ordination is quite another matter.

Baptists have approached ordination from a variety of perspectives through history. During the seventeenth century, with the exception of a few, the ministry was unpaid and unprofessional. Lay preachers canvassed the English countryside with no official certification except their effectiveness. Behind this practice was the early Baptist rejection of the concept of a special “religious class.” Influenced by the Reformation, Baptists rejected a “sacramental view of ministry and for a time there were disputes as to whether or not ordination was necessary or appropriate.” C.H. Spurgeon, for example, totally rejected ordination. Yet, due to a free public school system, technological advances, and general population growth, “voluntary leadership in the ministry became inadequate.” Salaries were provided and the Baptist ministry took its first steps toward profession.

Ordination of ministers began mainly as a way to keep order in the church. “Ordination was usually performed within local congregations who set apart suitably gifted men or women.” Ordination, however, was not believed to confer special rights or status of any kind. Gaines S. Dobbins stated, “according to the plain teaching of the New Testament, ordination does not make a man a minister.” Then what is ordination? What does it mean?

Some denominations see ordination as the transferring of power, class, or authority but not so with Baptists.

“Ordination is the recognition on the part of the church of the gifts of the Spirit already endowed.” There is no significant difference between ordained and unordained. Ordination mainly delineates function.

Preparation, Duties, Expectations

“A divine call to the ministry includes a call to preparation.” Preparation for vocational ministry falls into four categories; character development, culture, professional knowledge and skill, and emotional and attitudinal development. “God will give us wisdom if we ask for it, but He will not give us knowledge. We must sweat for it.” Dobbin’s last qualification for ministerial leadership was, “willingness to make the best possible preparation.”

Historically, Baptists have been late-comers to education. In the American colonies only one school existed for the training of Baptist leaders until 1813. By 1900 eighty colleges and seminaries were established but most Baptist ministers lacked much formal education. And even though twenty-five new seminaries were opened in the last fifty years, it has been estimated that one-third to one-half of the Baptist pastors lack a college degree or any seminary studies.

“With the Baptist distinctive of free polity and the sole authority for ordination resting with the local church, Baptists have never been able to require education before ordination.” Yet, today, the Baptist minister is expected to pursue a full education. That educational preparation includes a degree in the liberal arts from a college or university and studies in a seminary.

Education is vital but not solely determinative in assessing one’s ministerial effectiveness. Segler well said, “Devotion precedes theology.” Every minister needs to develop their devotion through prayer, devotional Bible reading, awareness of the relationship of the Bible and life, meditation on the meanings of life, sensitivity to God’s leadership, and reading contemporary spiritual writings.

Preparation for vocational ministry falls into four categories; character development, culture, professional knowledge and skill, and emotional and attitudinal development.

Preparation can refine, devotion can inspire, but ultimately the minister must get about the task of ministering. In the earliest days of Baptists, the churches were small. The attitude was all too often: “we pay you to do the work of the ministry; don’t rely on us.” As churches grew, so did the responsibilities of the minister. Today the minister is involved in pastoral care, preaching, teaching, administration, and worship leadership. Crucial to the life and fervor of any congregation is the ministerial task of hearing, interpreting and applying the Bible. His task is to link human sin to divine forgiveness, human need to divine omnipotence, human search to divine revelation.”

Ministers can prepare, devote
themselves to Christ, and become skilled practitioners of ministerial duties, but there must also be attention given to “being” as well as “doing.” Some of the qualities of being are moral integrity, intellectual honesty, self-awareness, independence, self-confidence, sexual identity, appropriate emotional expression, goal-orientation, tolerance, energetic, relational competence, good character, active faith, concern for others, maturity, and a willingness to work. Every minister, of course, should be in a constant and deliberate pursuit of allowing the Spirit to reproduce the fruit of the Spirit in and through a yielded life. (Gal. 5:22ff)

Baptist ministers are leaders in the church and the community. Ministers can prepare, devote themselves to Christ, and become skilled practitioners of ministerial duties, but there must also be attention given to “being” as well as “doing.”

Leadership is such a complex term and ability that everyone has an idea about it. “The earliest Baptists were convinced that one of the most vividly corrupt aspects of the Established Church was the ministry.”60 They saw leadership as manipulating and controlling. Samuel Hill wrote “the pastoral office has been one of the most direct paths to fame and power in southern society.”61 Some see leadership as a means to an end. A prominent pastor in Southern Baptist circles said, “A laity-led, laymen-led, deacon-led church will be a weak church anywhere on God’s earth. The pastor is the ruler of the church. There is no other thing than that in the Bible.”62

Others in Baptist life see leadership and authority and the pastorate in a different light. Walton indicates that ministerial authority comes from Christ but through the community of faith.63 This authority is not an ecclesiastical authority or an assumed authority. Rather than an authority of office, it is an authority of influence. To see pastoral leadership as an excuse for authoritarian ministry is foreign to the principles of evangelical Christianity. If the Spirit of Christ is evident in the life, people are drawn willingly to the minister’s leadership.64 The servant-leader seems to fit the Christ model of leadership. Christ won His followship through and because of His personal winsomeness and servanthood. Baptist ministers are to do the same.

Issues of Tenure, Bivocationalism, and Gender

Many contemporary issues confront Baptists and ministers today. Three of those are length of service, bivocational ministry, and women in ministry. First, Baptists believe in a God-called, a God-placed, and a God-tended ministry.65 God is in charge of the whole process. Through history, churches and practices have made various interpretations of God’s control. For instance, “in the early church and in the early days of this nation, a call to a pastorate was usually for a lifetime.”66 A man was called to one church, ordained by that church, and served that church until he died, unless unusual circumstances interrupted the relationship. This practice was accepted by nearly all the churches and to entice a minister to another church was to commit a grievous sin.67 Unfortunately, the success standards of American economics have altered the length of ministerial tenure. But as Conner says,

If the conviction that God has called and placed pastoral leaders in the church where they are serving is supplanted by the values of the business corporation with its hiring and firing processes, then the health and vitality of Southern Baptist churches will suffer greatly....68

Statistics vary from region to region as to average tenure for ministers. In 1790 the average tenure of New Hampshire pastors was thirty years. The average tenure of Baptist pastors today is sixty-five months.69 Today, most Baptist churches extend an “open” call that is indefinite in time. Yet, a practice is still in place in thousands of churches where an annual call is extended — “a kind of vote of confidence, or lacking such, a termination of the call.”70 Overwhelmingly the greater preference is with longer tenured ministers. Lyle Schaller indicates that the most productive years for the typical minister from the congregational perspective are years five through eight.71

Another reality faces Baptist ministers today. The belief that every minister who graduates from a Baptist institution of higher learning will have a full-time paid church position awaiting him or her is naive. The belief is even more ludicrous if one limits the field of possible service to the Bible belt of Texas and the Southeast. There are simply not enough churches of sufficient size to call every Baptist minister to a full-time position. And, there is a need to start hundreds of churches in America that for a time cannot afford a full-time minister without assistance. The

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62 Ibid., 103.

63 Walton, 142.
64 Segler, 79, 73.
65 Conner, 30.
66 Ibid., 8.
67 Walton, 94.
68 Conner, 30.
69 Information received from Research Services Department of Sunday School Board, SBC, 1991.
70 Hastings, 49.
answer for many is the bivocational ministry. Many churches must depend on a minister who can work another job for main financial support and yet perform the necessary tasks of ministry as well. A look at the past and the present sheds some light on bivocationalism.

“From the early days of the first century church until the founding days of our nation practically all ministers earned their livelihood from a skilled vocation.”72 In fact, research indicates that bivocationalism was the normal practice in the early church rather than the exception. Men in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the frontier “preached sermons, pastored churches, and performed weddings and funerals while earning their living in some secular vocation.”73 Many famous Baptist frontier preachers had other means of financial support. John Leland was a shoemaker and farmer. William Screven was a farmer.74 Isaac Backus lived off an inheritance. R.E.B. Baylor was a judge and a congressman. Isaac McCoy was a schoolteacher, a weaver, a surveyor, and a farmer. Today, “about one-quarter of Southern Baptist pastors are bivocational.”75

Every minister should examine God’s call to see if God is leading one to develop some ability or interest that could support one while involved in ministry.

One final issue among Baptists and the Ministry is the issue of gender, specifically women in the ministry. Though an issue for a few decades, the issue came to the forefront in 1984 at the Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City. Through a vote, messengers agreed that women should be allowed to serve in all but those pastoral and leadership roles that require ordination. The reason given was to “preserve a submission God requires because the man was first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall.”76 The response to that resolution has been deep and wide. Some have felt deeply about it and some have seen it as unimportant. Some have affirmed the resolution and some have violently opposed it. Whatever one’s reaction, there are some facts that must be faced. First, “the forbearers of Southern Baptists, the Separate Baptists, were notorious for their women preachers.”77 In Southern Baptist history, when churches were less affluent, women were often the directors of education and music.78 Many Southern Baptist churches refuse to recognize that God calls women to function in any office that requires ordination.79 Yet, over twenty percent of the students in the six Southern Baptist Seminaries are women.80 Over forty percent of the ministerial students in Texas Baptist Universities are female. Attitudes are varied, emotional, and may never find commonality. Yet, as Leon McBeth said after quoting Joel 2:28, “if the sovereign God of the universe decides to call our daughters as well as our sons into his service, who will forbid that they answer that call?”81

Every minister should examine God’s call to see if God is leading one to develop some ability or interest that could support one while involved in ministry.

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**Books**

- Segler, Franklin M. *A Theology of Church and...*


**Articles**


Honeycutt, Roy. The Tie. Louisville: Southern Baptist Seminary, (July/August 1984).


**Speeches**

Trends and Issues

I. Related to Churches  
II. Related to Associations of Baptist Churches  
III. Related to State and Nation-wide Baptist Bodies  
IV. Related to Baptist Institutions  
V. Related to the Baptist Denomination  
VI. Conclusion

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Trends and Issues

Baptists differ on which trends and issues are important in Baptist life. What one person may view as a major trend another may shrug off as insignificant. Furthermore, no description of trends is ever comprehensive. Also, most major trends are accompanied by counter trends. When a tide is going out or coming in it may appear that all of the water is flowing in the same direction. It never is; eddies, swirls, and barely discernible currents move throughout the mass of water. So with trends. In this discussion some of these counter or sub trends will be noted.

A “trend” is usually thought of as a movement or development that may or may not have controversy associated with it. On the other hand, an "issue" is generally associated with controversy.

No careful distinction is attempted in this chapter between a “trend” and an “issue.” A "trend" is usually thought of as a movement or development that may or may not have controversy associated with it. On the other hand, an “issue” is generally associated with controversy.

Predicting the future on the basis of trends and issues is a precarious venture. Only God knows the future. However, to identify possible future scenarios is not without merit as it helps to prepare for the probable, although sometimes even knowing what is coming does not enable us to do much about it. In this chapter description rather than prescription is the approach.

Of course, Baptists do not live in isolation but in relation to the entire society in which they abide. Often Baptist trends can be identified by trends in society.

The following discussion does not list trends and issues in any order of importance. Who knows which will prove the most important? Rather they are grouped around similar themes or relationships.

Related to Churches

Church life among Baptists is in continual change. It always has been. Certain major trends today that seem new and even radical will one day likely be regarded as traditional and routine

One major trend, sometimes accompanied by controversy, focuses on diversity. Churches are becoming increasingly diverse in several ways, including size, ethnicity, worship style, organization, and relation to denominational entities. This trend is closely related to another trend—that of starting more and more churches of various kinds. In fact the number as well as the diversity of churches is increasing.

Churches have always been diverse in regard to size of membership but the differences are becoming more and more pronounced. A major trend is the development of the “mega” church, a church that is large enough to carry out many functions that were once carried out only by voluntary cooperation among many churches through associations or state or national Baptist entities. Although the number of such churches remains small in proportion to the total number of churches, their influence is huge.

An increasing number of Baptist churches of various sizes and locations now sponsor private schools. Perhaps this trend is one reason for more openness by Baptists to vouchers from tax funds for students to attend private schools, a practice Baptists were at one time almost unanimous in opposing. However a look at the growth of Baptist primary and secondary schools accelerated first by desegregation of public schools through busing in the latter half the 20th century and more recently by anti public school sentiment in the religious right movement, shows that many Baptists have changed their stance on this issue. Even LifeWay Christian Resources, SBC, now carries an assignment to address home and Christian schooling.

Hopefully the days of forced segregation according to race and ethnicity are long gone, but the trend toward homogeneous congregationalizing means that most churches’ membership is composed of persons who are similar racially and ethnically. More and more of these churches are an integral part of associational, state, and national denominational entities. Persons from various cultures working together provide a worthwhile but challenging trend. Where new Charismatic and independent churches are accomplishing multi-racial congregationalizing, it is still an exception in Baptist life in America.

So-called “non-traditional” or "innovative" worship styles have become more and more common in churches. Interestingly enough, these "innovative approaches" have now become almost traditional and the format is about the same in any church that practices them. However, in many churches controversy has surrounded the introduction of this worship style, especially in regard to the music. Terms for these forms have become less and less defined; contemporary, traditional, blended, gospel, western, ancient future, etc all have their own definition depending on where the speaker stands on the issues.

The times for worship services in Baptist churches are also changing. More and more churches are not only offering early Sunday worship but also Saturday night worship. An increasing number have eliminated Sunday
evening worship, some substituting various kinds of studies in Christian discipleship.

Many churches have abandoned the traditional mission study programs of Southern Baptists as promoted by Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood and instituted AWANA. Although the AWANA program attracts large numbers of children and young people, it offers little or no Baptist mission education. Therefore concern exists that this will ultimately undercut the number of mission volunteers, many of whom have come from traditional Royal Ambassador and Boys in Action programs. A similar shift of ministry focus away from missions has become common as churches start Women's Ministry programs.

Another trend and point of controversy in a number of churches is for the church to move from congregational church governance to a pattern whereby the pastor assumes great authority, often with a group of "ruling elders." Churches embroiled in controversy over this issue need solid Biblical study to understand the basis of congregational government under the Lordship of Christ. This "theo-democratic" style of church governance is basic to Baptists. Recent books published on Baptist polity have been more likely to promote a "single elder" approach which emphasizes the authority of the pastor. This too undermines the traditional congregational polity of Baptists.

A trend among Baptists (and other) churches is away from denominational loyalty. This is seen in numbers of ways: not including "Baptist" in the name of the church or denominational agency; not utilizing denominational literature for Bible study and other functions; not participating in denominational meetings and conventions. A growing practical "ecumenicity" exists among many churches as they utilize the resources of other denominations and of para-church organizations. A counter trend is a growing interest among Baptists in their history, roots, and polity. The trend from denominational loyalty is also being manifest in a trend from church loyalty. The emerging generation may find their worship, fellowship, and education needs met in different congregations rather than one.

**Related to Associations of Baptist Churches**

Several trends are evident in a number of associations, but not necessarily in all. More and more associations place greater emphasis on leadership development and customized resourcing of churches than on passing to churches the denominational programs and emphases provided by state and national Baptist organizations. These associations stress that they are resources for churches more than promoters of denominational programs. A number of associations promote and utilize resources not directly related to Baptist denominational entities. In the process, many are losing their historic understanding of an association as a doctrinal fellowship.

The nature of associations is changing in other ways. For example, at one time most associations related to a geographical area, such as a county or contiguous counties. Most still do. However, a few associations are being formed around other factors, such as theology, relationship to state or national Baptist entities, or ethnicity. Another trend is larger staffs, budgets, and associational office buildings. Associations also more and more are asserting their autonomy, insisting that they are not mere parts of a state or national body but vital organizations on their own.

**Related to State and Nation-wide Baptist Bodies**

Nation-wide Baptist entities and state conventions engage increasingly in reorganization. Change has always been part of these entities, but recent trends indicate an emphasis more on radical and rapid change.

These denominational entities focus increasingly on resourcing churches, often on a customized basis, rather than on providing one-size-fits-all programs. In Texas this has been termed the "church-first" emphasis. Though this has helped the conventions refocus on the needs of churches, it has also allowed churches to lose sight of their early purposes of doing things together that they couldn’t do alone. Examples would be Christian higher education, benevolent ministries, health care, and chaplaincy. These often require institutions to offer the level of ministry needed.

Collaboration among state conventions marks another trend. Along with an increased emphasis on the autonomy of state conventions has come this trend to doing more things together. State conventions with similarities, such as those with large "minority" populations, are endeavoring to cooperate in meeting the needs of these groups without duplication of effort. For a number of years older, larger state conventions have partnered with newer, smaller state conventions. A recent development is for several larger state conventions to collaborate in assisting a group of newer, smaller state conventions in a section of the nation. The Impact Northeast
Related to Baptist Institutions

From the earliest years of Baptist life in Texas institutions have played a major role and still do. Schools, medical centers, child and aging care institutions, publishing organizations, and a foundation continue to contribute greatly. In the case of each of these many trends and issues are shaping the future not only of the institution but also its relationship to the fostering body, the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Churches, associations, state and national conventions, and institutions are organized expressions of the Baptist denomination.

Related to the Baptist Denomination

Although they are closely related, the Baptist denomination is distinct from Baptist organizations and institutions. The "Baptist denomination" is the collective set of beliefs, practices, and history that set it apart from other denominations. Churches, associations, state and national conventions, and institutions are organized expressions of the Baptist denomination. Certain trends and issues in the denomination therefore are closely related to those of these various entities but also to some degree and in some instances are different.

For example, the Baptist denomination is increasingly diverse because the churches, conventions, and institutions related to the denomination are increasingly diverse. Other trends are similarly interrelated. The growth of the number of Baptists and of overall Baptist financial resources in the denomination relates to the growth in the number and size of churches and the increased financial resources of Baptist people.

The heightened emphasis on autonomy in the denomination is reflected in the increased expressions of autonomy in various entities. Associations and state conventions are asserting their autonomy. Baptist institutions are increasingly distancing themselves from their fostering bodies. Often these institutions express their desire to remain strongly Baptist while achieving more autonomy. A counter trend is the pressure for more conformity, especially doctrinal, from a fostering convention, such as with the Southern Baptist Convention and its institutions and boards.

A shift from denominational loyalty to a practical "ecumenism" is gaining momentum. Para-church organizations and their resources increasingly are touted and utilized by denominational agencies. Some Baptist institutions are moving from all-Baptist governing boards to include other than Baptists. A counter trend surfaces in the growing emphasis on Baptist history, heritage, polity, and doctrine.

The increased use of technology, such as computers and the Internet, pervade denominational entities. Such use enhances communication but also loads these entities with vast amounts of information. A trend exists to learn how to utilize technology more effectively.

The trend toward a "society" approach in supporting denominational efforts in contrast to a "convention" approach is evident. For example, when the Southern Baptist Convention eliminated the Historical Commission in its re-organization plan, the Baptist History and Heritage Society took its place. While the Historical Commission received funds through the Cooperative Program and the commission members were elected by the SBC, The History and Heritage Society receives no Cooperative Program funds and its leadership is elected by those who support it. This same kind of changes have taken place in publications, communications, news services, ethics, and higher education.

The trend of increased participation of "lay" persons shows signs of accelerating. Based on basic Baptist beliefs such as the priesthood of all believers, soul competency, and volunteerism the number of unordained persons carrying out servant leadership functions has swelled. Baptist churches have always depended on such leadership but more and more associations, state
conventions, and national bodies are also utilizing the services of so-called “lay” persons. Partnership missions, the lay envoy program of the BGCT, LifeCall Missions®, and the vast ministries of Texas Baptist Men and Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas are examples of this trend. The newly created Texas Baptist Laity Institute of the Baptist General Convention of Texas demonstrates the effort to provide high caliber theological education and leadership development for lay persons.

Continuing issues in Baptist denominational life stir controversy, such as the nature of the Bible, credalism and the place of Baptist "confessions," the role of women in church leadership, and the authority of pastors. Old controversies increasingly resurface, such as hyper-Calvinism and fundamentalism. Disputes over basic beliefs are increasing, such as the meaning of soul competency, the priesthood of all believers, the form of church governance, and the relationship of believer’s baptism (immersion) to church membership. The struggle for control of denominational organizations continues and shows little signs of abating with the major arena of conflict passing from the national scene to the state conventions, associations, and churches.

**Conclusion**

Space provided for this chapter does not allow a full development of any of these trends and issues. Hopefully you and others, perhaps in group discussions, will flesh out the skeleton of trends and issues that have been set forth. In so doing you will help to deal in a positive and creative way with trends and issues of today and also to shape the future of Baptist life and ministry.
BAPTISTS

HISTORY ★ DISTINCTIVES ★ RELATIONSHIPS

THE APPENDIX
Where to Find Information

I. Where to Find Information

II. Directory of State Convention Executive Board and Related Ministries

III. Directory of Texas Baptist Ministry Institutions

IV. Directory of Texas Baptist Encampments

V. Directory of Related Baptist Organizations
Where To Find Information

About What Baptists Believe

Print: Baptist Faith and Message, by Hershel Hobbs, are also available from the BGCT. Ask for Baptist Distinctives or call 214-370-9471.

Web: Download the pamphlet free, order printed copies in English or Spanish, or view a comparison of the 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statements on the BGCT website. www.bgct.org

Baptist General Convention of Texas

333 N. Washington St.
Dallas TX 75246
214-828-5100

Print: The convention's constitution, by-laws, minutes of the annual session, resolutions, reports, budgets, personnel, institutions, names and addresses of Texas Baptist pastors, and church statistical data are located in Texas Baptist Annual. Each church receives one each year. The Pocket Planner and Directory contains some of this information and is sent to each pastor each year.

Web: Information about the BGCT and coming events may be found at: www.bgct.org.

Texas Baptist Associations

Print: Texas associations are listed in the Texas Baptist Annual and the Pocket Planner. You will find names, addresses and phone numbers for each Director of Missions.

Web: A list of associations, addresses, phone numbers, and directors of missions may be found at: www.bgct.org

Texas Baptist Churches

Print: Information and statistics on Texas Baptist Churches are listed by association in the Texas Baptist Annual.

Web: Search for the name, address, pastor and phone for any BGCT church or a list of churches in a given association at: www.bgct.org

Texas Baptist Agencies, Institutions and Encampments

Print: A list of all agencies, educational institutions, human care institutions and Baptist encampments is found in the Pocket Planner and the Texas Baptist Annual.

Web: All BGCT affiliated institutions, agencies, and encampments are listed under “Partners” at www.bgct.org

Baptists in America

American Baptist Churches in the USA
P.O. Box 851
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851
610-768-2000
www.abc-usa.org

Baptist General Conference
2002 S Arlington Heights Rd.
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
847-228-0200
www.bgcworld.org

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
P.O. Box 450329
Atlanta GA 30329-0329
770-220-1600
www.thefellowship.info

General Baptist Ministries
100 Stinson Drive
Poplar Bluff, MO 63901
573-785-7746
www.generalbaptist.com

Lott Carey International
220 I Street, NE, Suite 220
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 543-3200
www.lottcarey.org

National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.
World Center Headquarters
1700 Baptist World Center Dr.
Nashville, TN 37207
615.228.6292
www.nationalbaptist.com

National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.
777 S. R. L. Thornton Frwy
Suite 210
Dallas, TX 75203
214-942-3311
www.nbca-inc.com

National Baptist Missionary Convention of America
Office of the President
2018 South Marsalis Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75216
(214) 943-3579
www.nmbca.com

North American Baptist Conference
1 South 210 Summit Avenue
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
630-495-2000
www.nabconference.org

Progressive National Baptist Convention
601 50th Street, N. E.
Washington, D. C. 20019
202-396-0558
www.pnbc.org

Seventh Day Baptist General Conference
Post Office Box 1678
Janesville, WI 53547-1678
608-752-5055
www.seventhdaybaptist.org

Southern Baptist Convention
Executive Committee
901 Commerce St.
Nashville, TN 37203
615-244-1495
www.sbc.net

Baptists Around the World

Baptist World Alliance
405 North Washington Street
Falls Church VA 22046
703-790-8980
www.bwanet.org

Baptist History

Texas Baptist Historical Society
4144 N. Central Expressway
Suite #110
Dallas TX 75204
972-331-2235
www.bgct.org/tbhc

Texas Baptist Historical Center and Museum
Independence Baptist Church
10405 FM 50
Brenham, Texas 77833
409-836-5117
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Baptist History and Heritage Society
3001 Mercer University Drive
Atlanta, GA 30341
678-547-6093
www.baptisthistory.org

Baptist News Sources
The Baptist Standard
2343 Lone Star Drive
Dallas TX 75212
214-630-4571
www.baptiststandard.com

Associated Baptist Press
P.O. Box 23769
Jacksonville, FL 32241
800-340-6626
www.abpnews.com

Directory of State Convention Executive Board and Related Ministries

Unless otherwise noted, all offices at: Baptist General Convention of Texas
333 N. Washington
Dallas TX 75246
214-828-5100
www.bgct.org

A. Executive Board Staff

1. Executive Director
   a. Disaster Response
   b. Decision Support
   c. Texas Baptist Missions Foundation
   d. Theologian in Residence

2. Associate Executive Director
   a. Affinity Ministries
   b. Associations & Camps
   c. Committees
   d. Executive Board
   e. Hispanic Education Initiative
   f. Institutional Relations
      i. Baptist Distinctives
      ii. Historical Collection
      4144 N. Central Expressway Suite #110
      Dallas TX 75204
      972-331-2235
      iii. Theological Education

3. Treasurer
   a. Building & Facilities
   b. Finance & Accounting
   c. Human Resources
   d. Information Technology
   e. Support Services

4. Advocacy/Care Center
   a. Chaplaincy
   b. Christian Life Commission
      i. Ethical Issues
      ii. ISAAC Project
      iii. Public Policy
      CTC Austin Office
      221 E. 9th St., Ste 410
      Austin, TX 78701
      512-479-2288
   iv. Religious Liberty
   v. Substance Abuse Ministry
   vi. World Hunger

c. Community Care
   i. Community Development
   ii. Community & Restorative Justice
   d. Counseling
   e. Human Care Institutions
      i. Child & Family Care
      ii. Medical Centers
      iii. Retirement & Aging Care

5. Education/Discipleship Center
   a. BaptistWay Press
   b. Bible Study/Discipleship
      i. Adult
      ii. Church Growth
      iii. Preschool/Children
      iv. Single Adult/Family/Senior Adult
      v. Youth
   c. Church Architecture
   d. Congregational Leadership
      i. Interim/Pastorless
      ii. Leader/Leadership
      iii. SmallerChurch/Bivocational
      iv. Stewardship
      v. Strategists
   e. Educational Institutions
      i. Universities & Schools
      ii. Seminaries
   f. Music and Worship

6. Evangelism/Missions Center
   a. Church Starting
   b. Collegiate Ministry
   c. Evangelization
      i. Church Evangelism
      ii. Hispanic Evangelism
      iii. Ministry Evangelism
      iv. Personal Evangelism
      v. Resort/Leisure/Sport Evangelism
      vi. Youth Evangelism
   d. Missions Mobilization
      i. Baptist Partners
      ii. Church-Based
   e. Western Heritage

B. Agencies

1. Baptist Foundation of Texas
   1601 Elm Street, Ste. 1700
   Dallas TX 75201
   214-922-0125
   www.bftx.org

2. Baptist Standard
   2343 Lone Star Drive
   Dallas TX 75212
   214-630-4571
   www.baptiststandard.com

3. Baptist Church Loan Corporation
   333 North Washington
   Dallas TX 75246
   214-828-5140
   www.baptistchurchloan.org

C. Affiliated Entities

1. Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas
   333 N. Washington Ave., Suite 160
   Dallas, TX 75248
   888-968-6389
   www.wmutx.org

2. Texas Baptist Men
   5351 Catron
   Dallas, TX 75227
   214-828-5350
   www.baptistmen.org

D. Ministry Institutions

1. Universities
   a. Baptist University of the Americas
      8019 S. Pan Am Expressway
      San Antonio, TX 78224
      210-924-4338
      www.bua.edu

   b. Baylor University
      P.O. Box 97096
      Waco, TX 76798
      800-BAYLOR-U
      www.baylor.edu

   c. Dallas Baptist University
      3000 Mountain Creek Pkwy.
      Dallas, TX 75211
**BAPTISTS: HISTORY, DISTINCTIVES, RELATIONSHIPS**

800-460-1DBU  
www.dbu.edu  
d. East Texas Baptist University  
1209 N. Grove  
Marshall, TX 75670  
800-804-ETBU  
www.etu.edu  
e. Hardin-Simmons University  
2200 Hickory  
Abilene, TX 79698  
800-568-2692  
www.hsutx.edu  
f. Houston Baptist University  
7502 Fondren Rd.  
Houston, TX 77074  
800-969-3210  
www.hbu.edu  
g. Howard Payne University  
1000 Fisk St.  
Brownwood, TX 76801  
800-880-4478  
www.hputx.edu  
h. University of Mary Hardin-Baylor  
UMHB Station  
900 College St.  
Belton, TX 76513  
800-588-1928  
www.umhb.edu  
i. Wayland Baptist University  
1900 W. 7th St.  
Plainview, TX 79072  
800-589-1928  
www.wbu.edu  

2. Seminaries  
a. Logsdon Seminary  
2200 Hickory St.  
PO Box 16235  
Abilene, TX 79698  
325-670-1287  
www.logsdonseminary.org  
b. Truett Seminary  
1100 S. 3rd St.  
One Bear Place #97126  
Waco, TX 76798-7126  
800-229-5678  
www.baylor.edu/truett  

3. Missions and Education Center  
a. Valley Baptist Missions and Education Center  
3700 E Harrison  
Harlingen, TX 78550  
956-423-0632  

4. Secondary Boarding School  
a. San Marcos Baptist Academy  
2801 Ranch Road 12  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
512-353-2400  
www.smba.org  

5. Health Care Institutions - Affiliated  
a. Baylor Health Care System  
3500 Gaston Ave.  
Dallas, TX 75246  
800-4BAYLOR  
www.baylorhealthcare.com  
b. Baptist Health Foundation of San Antonio  
750 East Mulberry Avenue, Suite 325  
San Antonio, Texas 78212-3107  
210-735-9009  
www.bhfssa.org  
c. Hendrick Health System  
1900 Pine St.  
Abilene, TX 79601  
325-670-2000  
www.hendrickhealth.org  
d. Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center  
3000 Herring Ave  
Waco, TX 76708  
254-202-2000  
www.hillcrest.net  

6. Health Care Institutions - Indirectly Related  
a. Baptist Health System  
1 Lexington Medical Building  
215 E. Quincy, Suite 200  
San Antonio, TX 78215  
210-297-1000  
www.mhbc.org  
b. Baptist St. Anthony’s Health System  
2101 Pease St.  
Harlingen, TX 78550  
956-389-1100  
www.valleybaptist.net  

7. Child and Family Ministries  
a. Buckner Children & Family Services  
5200 S. Buckner Blvd.  
Dallas, Texas 75227  
214-328-3141  
www.bucknerchildren.org  

b. Children at Heart Ministries  
1301 N. Mays  
Round Rock, TX 78664  
512-255-3668  
www.childrenatheartministries.org  

c. Baptist Child and Family Services  
1506 Bexar Crossing  
San Antonio, TX 78232  
800-830-2246  
www.bcf.org  

8. Retirement and Aging Care Ministries  
a. Baptist Community Services  
701 Park Place Avenue  
Amarillo, TX 79101  
806-337-5295  
www.bapmem.com  
b. Baptist Retirement Community  
P.O. Box 5661  
San Angelo, TX 79602  
325-655-7391  
www.bapmem.com  

c. Buckner Retirement Services, Dallas  
600 North Pearl Street Suite 2000  
Dallas, TX 75201  
800-381-4551  
www.bucknerretirement.org  

Austin - Buckner Villas,  
512-836-1515  

Beaumont - Calder Woods,  
409-861-1123  

Dallas - Buckner Retirement Village  
214-381-2171  

Houston - Parkway Place,  
281-556-9200  

Longview - Buckner Westminster Place,  
903-234-0000
d. Valley Baptist Health System
   Golden Palms Retirement
   and Health Center
   2101 Treasure Hills Blvd.
   Harlingen, TX 78550
   956-389-4653
   www.goldenpalmsrgv.com

Directory of
Texas Baptist
Encampments

Alto Frio
P. O. Box 468
Leakey, TX 78873
830-232-5271
www.altofrio.com

Aspendale Ranch
P. O. Box 287
Cloudcroft, NM 88317-0287
800-959-2605
www.aspendale.org

Big Country Assembly
Box 248
Lueders, TX 79533-0248
325-228-4542
www.bigcountrycamp.com

Camp Broadway
8400 Eagle Mountain Creek
Fort Worth, TX 76135
817-237-2936
www.camp.broadwaybc.org

Camp Buckner Hill Country Retreat
3835 FM 2342
Burnet, TX 78611
512-756-2162
www.campbuckner.org

Camp Copass
8200 E. McKinney
Denton, TX 76208
940-565-0050
www.campcopass.com

Camp Menard
P. O. Box 856
Menard, TX 76859
915-396-2162

Camp Tejas
1038 P. R. 2191
Giddings, TX 78942
979-366-2422
www.camptejas.org

Camp Chaparral
3784 Church Camp Rd.
Iowa Park, TX 76367
940-855-4182
www.campchaparral.org

Circle Six Ranch
P. O. Box 976
Stanton, TX 79782
432-458-3467
www.circle6ranch.net

Cone Oasis
23921 N. Parker
La Feria, TX 78559
956-797-2050

East Texas
178 Private Road 7005
Newton, TX 75966
409-379-5142
www.ctbe.org

Heart of Texas Baptist Camp & Conference Center
8025 N. F. M. 2125
Brownwood, TX 76801
325-784-5821
www.heartoftexascamp.com

High Plains Conference Center
18511 City Lake Rd.
Canyon, TX 79015
806-499-3429
abaji@arn.net

Highland Lakes Camp & Conference Center
5902 N. Pace Bend Rd.
Spicewood, TX 78669
888-222-3482
www.highlandlakescamp.org

Lake Lavon
8050 C. R. 735
Princeton, TX 75407
903-826-3331
www.lakelavoncamp.com

Lake Tomahawk
408 Lake Tomahawk
Livingston, TX 77351
936-563-4644
www.laketomahawk.org

Lakeview Assembly
Box 0130
Lone Star, TX 75668
903-656-4566

www.lakeview1948.org

Latham Springs
134 P. R. 223
Aquilla, TX 76622
254-694-3689
www.latham springs.com

Mt. Lebanon
P. O. Box 342
Cedar Hill, TX 75106
972-291-7156
www.mtlebanoncamp.com

Paisano
P. O. Box 973
Alpine, TX 79831
432-387-3074
www.paisanoencampment.org

Panfork
4530 C. R. 210
Wellington, TX 79095
806-447-2627
www.panfork.org

Pineywoods
P. O. Box 133
Woodlake, TX 75865
936-642-1723
www.pineywoodscamp.com

Plains Assembly
Route 3, Box 162
Floydada, TX 79235
806-983-3954
www.plbacamp.org

Riverbend Retreat Center
1232-C C. R. 411B
Glen Rose, TX 76043
888-269-2363
www.riverbendretreat.org

Texas Baptist Encampment
Palacios By The Sea
Box 1265
Palacios, TX 77465
361-972-2717
www.texasbaptistencapment.org

Timberline Camp & Conference Center
15363 F. M. 849
Lindale, TX 75771
903-882-3183
www.timberlinecamp.com

Trinity Pines Camp & Conference Center
Trinity, TX 75862
888-270-4003
www.trinitypines.org

Valley Baptist Retreat
1600 E. Business 83
Mission, TX 78572
956-585-4393

Zephyr
151 F. M. 31
Sandia, TX 78383
361-547-2480
www.campzephyr.org
Directory of Related Baptist Organizations

Baptist Center for Ethics
P.O. Box 150506
Nashville, TN 37215-0506
615-627-7766
www.baptists4ethics.com

Baptist History and Heritage Society
3001 Mercer University Drive
Atlanta, GA 30341
678-547-6093
www.baptisthistory.org

Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs
200 Maryland Ave. N.E.
Washington, DC 20002
202-544-4226
www.bjcpa.org

Baptist World Alliance
405 North Washington Street
Falls Church, VA 22046
703-790-8980
www.bwanet.org

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
P.O. Box 450329
Atlanta GA 31145-0329
770-220-1600
www.thefellowship.info

Southern Baptist Convention
Executive Committee
901 Commerce St.
Nashville, TN 37203
615-244-1495
www.sbccc.net

Woman’s Missionary Union
100 Missionary Ridge
P.O. Box 830010
Birmingham, AL 35283-0010
205-991-8100
www.wmuc.com
EXECUTIVE BOARD STAFF ORGANIZATION

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  - Texas Baptist Men
  - Women’s Missionary Union of Texas

TREASURER
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EDUCATION/DISCIPLESHIP
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- BaptistWay Press
- Church Architecture
  - United We Build
- Music & Worship
- Congregational Leadership
  - Bisvocational Smaller Church
  - Church Strategists
  - Inner/Outer Churches
  - Leader/Leadership Training
  - Stewardship
- Educational Institutions
  - Universities & Schools
  - Seminaries
- Christian Life Commission
  - Ethical Issues
  - ISAAC Project
  - Public Policy
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  - World Hunger

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- Community Ministry
  - Community Development
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- Chaplaincy
- Counseling
- Human Care Institutions
  - Child & Family Care
  - Medical Centers
  - Retirement & Aging Care
- Missions Mobilization
  - Baptist Partners
  - Church-Based Missions
  - Sending
  - Global Connections
  - Mexico Endeavors
  - Ministers of Missions
  - Multifamily/Organic Churches/LifeCall
  - River Ministry
  - Short-term Missions
- Church Starting

EVANGELISM/MISSIONS
- Evangelization
  - Church Evangelism
  - Hispanic Evangelism
  - Ministry Evangelism
  - Personal Evangelism
  - Resort/Leisure/Sports Evangelism
  - Youth Evangelism
- Collegiate Ministry
- Western Heritage
Teaching Guide

Introduction

This volume is produced with several readerships in mind:

- undergraduate college/university students preparing for vocational Christian ministry, especially in Baptist settings
- seminary/theology school/graduate students preparing for vocational Christian ministry, especially in Baptist settings
- directors of Baptist Student Ministry campus programs
- pastors and other church staff ministers
- Baptist denominational workers
- lay persons interested in learning more about Baptists.

This teaching guide, therefore, seeks to provide suggestions for faculty members who are using this volume as a text in courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, for persons who are using this volume as a text in small group settings, and for individuals who are using this text for personal study with a mentor.

I. A Sample Study Outline

The outline below is offered as a suggestion for a study of the text, whether in the setting of an academic classroom, a small study group, or an individual with a mentor. Please remember that the most effective study outline is one which addresses the unique needs of the learner(s) involved in the study. The questions are designed to help you begin discussion about the topic with the learners in your study setting:

1. Introduction
   What needs are to be met by your study? What learning goals do you have for this study?

2. Baptists—History
   a. Before 1845
      How does the early history of Baptists continue to influence your congregations?
   b. Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1945
      What factors contributed to the remarkable Southern Baptist growth from 1845 to 1945?

3. Baptists—Distinctives
   a. Doctrine
      Which of the Baptist doctrines need more focus in your congregation? What can you do to help your congregation understand and appreciate more fully these doctrines?
   b. The Local Church
      In the light of the teachings about the church in the New Testament, what vision or dream do you have for your local congregation as you seek to be God’s people at work at this time in your place?
   c. Baptist Polity
      What are the ways that Baptist polity helps your congregation accomplish her purpose?
   d. Baptist Perspectives on the Christian Life
      What disciplines of the Christian life need to be strengthened in your life? ...in the life of your congregation? What steps can you take to seek to strengthen these disciplines?
   e. Financing Cooperative Baptist Work
      How does your congregation participate in financing collaborative efforts among Baptists? How can your congregation make the most effective contribution in financially supporting cooperative Baptist work?

4. Baptists—Relationships
   a. Relating Locally
      In what aspects of your association’s work and ministry are you and others in your congregation involved? What new ministries are needed in the community served by your association? How can your congregation assist in starting these new ministries?
II. Suggestions for Academic Classroom Use of this Text

A. A Basic Course
Undergraduate students who are considering vocational Christian ministry have several needs that can be met by a study of this work:
1. A need to affirm and clarify one’s call to ministry as a vocation.
2. A need to understand what a church is and what is involved in local church ministry.
3. A need to understand the place of Baptists in Christian history.
4. A need to understand Baptist church polity.
5. A need to understand how the local church body relates to a denomination, and specifically how Baptists are organized beyond the local church.
6. A need to identify and begin to think about trends and issues that are affecting ministry and the churches.

B. Use in Advanced Studies
Many students at the seminary/theology school/graduate level have not had the opportunity to address the aforementioned needs at the undergraduate level and must address them at this advanced level of study. Some students at this level have dealt with the matters listed above at the undergraduate level and are ready to move on to meet other needs, including:
1. A need to develop specific skills in ministry.
2. A need to begin to find one’s place in ministry.

III. Suggestions for Using Various Resources

Courses may be structured around the meeting of the needs identified above, with learning goals related to each of the needs statements. Section I above provides a sample study outline for such a course, beginning with a history of Baptists. This section is followed by a focus on who Baptists are (distinctives), on doctrine, on the nature and work of the local church, on Baptist polity, on how Baptists seek to finance their work together. The relationships section deals with how Baptists are organized beyond the local church and how Baptist entities relate to each other. The concluding section on trends and issues is particularly useful as a springboard for discussion about ministry beyond the parameters of the typical classroom setting toward a practical application related to the matters discussed.

A. Learning Methods
Once the course outline has been set, with the needs of the learners being a strong determining factor in the shape of the course, then the instructor is ready to plan each class session. Assigned readings from the text to be read prior to the class session are extremely useful in giving the student a beginning understanding of the topic. Lectures, class discussions, guest speakers, and tests are useful in helping the students grasp a more complete understanding of the material. Perhaps the best study environment will include a combination of all these learning methods so as to enhance the student’s opportunities for full understanding of the material.

B. Outside Guests
Resources for guest speakers include local pastors and
other church staff ministers, association leaders, denominational staff members, and faculty members from disciplines specifically related to a topic — for example, a church historian for church history sessions, a New Testament scholar for sessions on the church and ministry, a sociologist on trends and issues facing the church and ministry. A varied schedule of class session formats, including lectures and class discussions, is a key to keeping the learning readiness level high among the students.

C. Personal “One-on-One” Instruction

If it is feasible, a supervised ministry experience can be most helpful as a component of such a course. Students can benefit from experiencing church and ministry first-hand under the careful guidance of a trained minister. As a minimum, a weekly conference with the supervising minister can address course topics as they are addressed in the classroom setting. This gives the student the benefit of exploring the topic or the issue in both the classroom setting and in a practical setting of everyday ministry. As the student can expand the supervised ministry experience beyond the weekly conference to include both observing and doing ministry, the experience can be invaluable in helping students come to more complete understandings and applications of the various topics of study.

Care must be taken to select and train experienced ministers as supervisors. Equally important is the matching of student and supervisor, seeking to ensure that the setting and the supervisor can meet the student’s learning needs. Ideally at the undergraduate level, the supervised ministry experience is primarily an observing and discussing kind of experience, while at the seminary/theology school/graduate level, the supervised ministry experience is much more a skill development focus that includes actual involvement as an associate in ministry with the supervisor. A valuable resource for those considering a supervised ministry experience is Experiencing Ministry Supervision, edited by William T. Pyle and Mary Alice Seals, available from Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee.

IV. Suggestions for Study in Small Group Settings

Local churches, associations of churches, and other groups of interested Baptists will find the volume useful. The learning needs will vary from setting to setting, but certain common needs include:

1. A need to understand what a church is and what the ministry (purpose and scope) of a church is to be.
2. A need to understand the role and responsibilities of vocational ministers in the local church.
3. A need to understand the place of Baptists in Christian history.
4. A need to understand Baptist church polity.
5. A need to understand how the local church body relates to a denomination, and specifically how Baptists are organized beyond the local church.
6. A need to identify and begin to think about trends and issues that are affecting ministry and the churches.

Appropriate settings for a study of this text in small groups, whether in a local church or among several churches, could include any short-term study module that fits the schedule of the church or the group. Appropriate leaders could include a pastor, other church staff ministers, Baptist denominational workers, and informed lay persons who have gifts for teaching.

The study may be structured around the meeting of the needs mentioned above and other needs as identified by the local setting. The text provides a basic outline for structuring such a study, following a pattern suggested earlier for the academic classroom use of the text. This basic outline could be supplemented by topics that grow out of the local setting — for example, a group may want to give particular focus to how Baptists in the association in the immediate region have chosen to work together, looking at the various ministries conducted by the association. Guest speakers representing these various ministries would be useful additions to the study sessions.

V. Suggestions for Individual Study with a Mentor

Many persons who sense a call to vocational Christian ministry are not enrolled in a Baptist college, university, or seminary and, consequently, are not able to enroll in an academic course of study with the focus of this text. Such persons can benefit from studying the text under the mentorship of an experienced minister, a college minister, a campus student minister, or another minister who is able to develop a Barnabas/Paul (Acts 9:27-28; 11:25-26) or a Paul/Timothy (2 Timothy 2:1-7) encourager-
type relationship with the student.

The needs of the learner in this student-mentor setting are quite similar to the needs of the learner in the formal academic setting, as described earlier. The benefit of this learning setting is that a study schedule and selection of topics can be formed with the unique needs of an individual, rather than those of a larger group, in mind.

The format for an individual study with a mentor could include a regular, perhaps weekly, meeting of the student and mentor, using the meeting session for a study of a particular topic in the text. Surely both mentor and student will want to have read the material prior to the session. For many of the sessions, an opportunity for practical application could be helpful, using the supervised ministry suggestions described earlier in this teaching guide.

Conclusion

This volume is written with the hope that all who give it serious attention will come to a fuller understanding of who Baptists are and how Baptists work cooperatively through local churches to carry out the ministry and the commands of Jesus Christ. This teaching guide is written with the hope that the suggestions included herein will be a starting point in developing a teaching plan for those who use this volume as a teaching resource. The best teaching plan will focus on the specific needs of the learner(s) and will seek to use the best available resources for meeting those needs. The desired outcome of a study of this nature is for persons to become equipped for more effective ministry and service to Christ and the church, so that God’s redemptive purpose for the world can be fulfilled.