

An Exposition from the Faculty of  
**The Southern Baptist  
Theological Seminary**  
on

*The Baptist Faith  
and Message 2000*

THE EPISTLE OF  
**JUDE**

1 JUDÉ, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved, and kept by God the Father, and kept by Jesus Christ:  
2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.  
3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints.  
4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long before-hand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.  
5 Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.  
6 And angels who did not keep their domain, but abandoned their domain, have kept in darkness, reserved for judgment.  
7 Undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.  
8 Yet in the same manner these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.  
9 But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"  
10 But these men revile things which they do not understand, and the things which know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.  
11 Woe to them! For they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, the error of the rebellion of Cain, who have not hesitated to kill the righteous who are in his faith, when they feast on hidden reefs.  
12 These men are like water without fear, caring for themselves only, loving the world, despising the Lord who brought them out of Egypt, and despising the Lord who destroyed the unbelievers, and keeping themselves unblemished, as if they were not defiled by their works.  
13 Wild waves of the sea, driven by winds, casting up their foam, like dead men whose lifeless bodies are tossed about.  
14 These men are like dead men, whose lifeless bodies are tossed about by the winds of doctrine, who are boasting of knowledge, but do not understand, and are proud of their own opinions, and do not submit to the Word of God, but are despising it, and are despising the Lord who brought them out of Egypt, and despising the Lord who destroyed the unbelievers, and keeping themselves unblemished, as if they were not defiled by their works.  
15 These men are like dead men, whose lifeless bodies are tossed about by the winds of doctrine, who are boasting of knowledge, but do not understand, and are proud of their own opinions, and do not submit to the Word of God, but are despising it, and are despising the Lord who brought them out of Egypt, and despising the Lord who destroyed the unbelievers, and keeping themselves unblemished, as if they were not defiled by their works.

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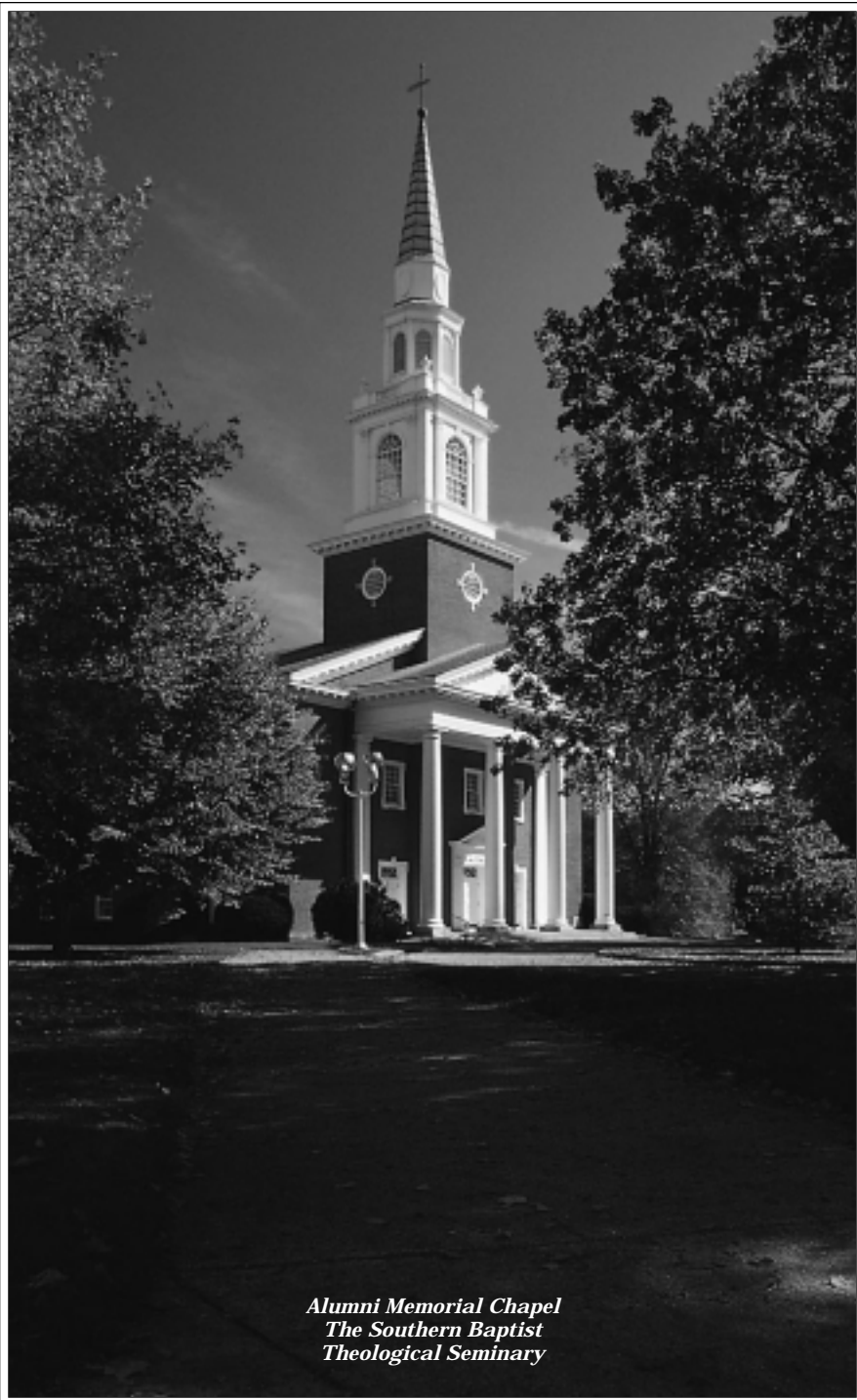
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*Alumni Memorial Chapel  
The Southern Baptist  
Theological Seminary*

An age that holds truth in antipathy will look at confessions of faith as antiquarian holdovers from an oppressive past. On the other hand, an institution determined to remain true to biblical truth must be honest about its boundaries.



For nearly 2000 years, Christians have expressed their faith and doctrine through confessions of faith. In many cases, the confession or creed emerged out of the defense of the faith against heresy and error. The believing church said “no” to doctrinal error and “yes” to the truth of the Gospel.

The major revision of the *Baptist Faith and Message* adopted in 2000 by the Southern Baptist Convention demonstrates that Southern Baptists remain serious about their confessional identity. I pray that the experience of this revision process will help us to learn even more about what it means to be a confessional people against anti-confessional pressure of the age.

There are few threats more perilous for the evangelical church than theological seminaries set adrift from theological accountability. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is unembarrassed in our commitment to require all professors to teach “in accordance with and not contrary to” our *Abstract of Principles* and the *Baptist Faith and Message*.

Furthermore, we expect our professors to hold these convictions as personal beliefs and commitments, not merely as contractual obligations for teaching. This model of robust confessionalism is a critical dimension of our accountability to the churches. Our confession represents a living tradition, and it is the structure of our theological integrity.

We have the wonderful privilege of introducing a new generation of young Christians to the full rush of biblical truth and to the full power of the authentic Gospel.

In the midst of theological confusion all around us, our prayerful determination is that The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary remain firmly established upon the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ — boundaries we dare not trespass.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is cursive and reads "R. Albert Mohler, Jr." The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent flourish at the end.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President

# *Table of Contents*

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The Scriptures, <i>R. Albert Mohler Jr.</i> .....                 | 1  |
| God, <i>Daniel Akin</i> .....                                     | 2  |
| God the Father, <i>Stephen Wellum</i> .....                       | 4  |
| God the Son, <i>Robert Stein</i> .....                            | 5  |
| God the Holy Spirit, <i>Bruce Ware</i> .....                      | 7  |
| Man, <i>Daniel Block</i> .....                                    | 8  |
| Salvation, <i>Mark Seifrid</i> .....                              | 10 |
| Regeneration, <i>David DeKlaven</i> .....                         | 11 |
| Justification, <i>Bruce Ware</i> .....                            | 12 |
| Sanctification, <i>Stephen Wellum</i> .....                       | 14 |
| Glorification, <i>Hal Ostrander</i> .....                         | 16 |
| God's Purpose of Grace, Election, <i>Thomas Nettles</i> .....     | 19 |
| God's Purpose of Grace, Perseverance, <i>Chad Brand</i> .....     | 20 |
| The Church, <i>Gregory Wills</i> .....                            | 22 |
| Baptism, <i>Brad Waggoner</i> .....                               | 23 |
| The Lord's Supper, <i>Peter Gentry</i> .....                      | 25 |
| The Lord's Day, <i>Hershael York</i> .....                        | 28 |
| The Kingdom, <i>John Polhill</i> .....                            | 30 |
| Last Things, <i>William Cook</i> .....                            | 31 |
| Evangelism and Missions, <i>Thom Rainer</i> .....                 | 33 |
| Education, <i>Dennis Williams</i> .....                           | 34 |
| Stewardship, <i>Douglas Walker</i> .....                          | 36 |
| Cooperation, <i>Mark Terry</i> .....                              | 37 |
| The Christian and the Social Order, <i>Russell D. Moore</i> ..... | 38 |
| Peace and War, <i>James Parker</i> .....                          | 40 |
| Religious Liberty, <i>Thomas Nettles</i> .....                    | 41 |
| The Family, <i>William Cutrer</i> .....                           | 43 |
| Appendix A – The Baptist Faith and Message .....                  | 45 |

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## **The Scriptures, *BF&M* Article 1**

*By R. Albert Mohler Jr.*

*President, Southern Seminary*

The Southern Baptist Convention made history as messengers overwhelmingly approved revisions to the *Baptist Faith and Message*, our confession of faith. In so doing, Southern Baptists linked our honored past with the promise of the future, and pledged to maintain doctrinal faithfulness as a new century dawns.

The *Baptist Faith and Message* is now 75 years old, and it is no coincidence that it shares a birthday with the Cooperative Program. Both came out of the historic 1925 Memphis session of the Southern Baptist Convention, and both have served Southern Baptists exceedingly well.

The Convention first revised the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1963 when storms of doctrinal controversy threatened to divide the denomination. In 2000, the Convention had its eyes on the future and a determination to fulfill the mandate given us by the Apostle Paul, who instructed Timothy: "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you" (2 Tim 1:13-14).

The debate on the floor of the Convention was very revealing. Proposed amendments were primarily directed at the Preamble and Article 1, "The Scriptures." The Convention sustained the recommendation from the special committee, but the statements made by those attempting to revise the report left an indelible impression on the Convention's memory.

The *Baptist Faith and Message* Study Committee released our report on May 18 in order to give the Convention ample time to read and review the proposal. The full report was available 24 hours-a-day on the Internet, and it received remarkable interest.

Considerable attention was focused on our revisions in Article 1, "The Scriptures." The 1963 version stated that the Bible "is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man." We removed the word "record" in order to remove confusion about the nature of God's revelation in the Bible.

The Bible is not merely a record of revelation. It is revelation itself. The Bible is not a fallible witness to the revelation of God. It is God's perfectly inspired Word. The written Word testifies of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, as our Lord himself explained.

We stated clearly that "all Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is himself the focus of divine revelation." This replaces the language stating that Jesus Christ is "the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted." Why? Simply put, because 30 years of abuses and attacks upon the integrity of the Bible made clear that some were using this language to deny the truthfulness and authority of the Word of God.

Some who have taught in our seminaries over the past several decades claimed

that this allowed them to deny the truthfulness of whatever biblical passages did not rise to their standard of Jesus' intention. Professors and pastors have denied that God ordered the conquest of Canaan, tested Abraham in the sacrifice of Isaac or inspired the Apostle Paul when he wrote about the family or roles in the church.

One messenger tragically stated that the Bible is "just a book." Mainstream Southern Baptists — and Christians of all denominations — know better.

Those who opposed the revisions adopted this year by the Convention are out of touch with Southern Baptists, out of step with the great tradition of faithful Christians through the centuries and out of line in their intemperate language.

Southern Baptists will not retreat from the high ground of biblical authority and theological integrity. In adopting the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message*, Southern Baptists are determined to face the future from the high ground of biblical faithfulness.



## God, *BF&M* Article 2 Summary

*By Daniel Akin*

*Vice President for Academic Administration;  
Dean, School of Theology*

When we think about God, two important questions naturally arise. First, does God exist? Second, what is God like?

Americans have been pretty consistent for some time when answering the first question. Atheism continues to bark loudly, but still it has not garnered all that many followers. Ninety-five percent of Americans believe God exists.

However, when we examine the second question, things become more complicated and confusing. Pluralism is the "in-thing" in contemporary culture, and the doctrine of God has not escaped its influence. Choices today include pantheism, finite theism, deism, polytheism (e.g. Mormonism and various varieties of New Ageism) and classic monotheism, just to name a few.

A veritable smorgasbord of options is available. "Step up to the plate and choose your god, gods or goddesses..."

Couple this with the present infatuation with tolerance and the democratization of truth, and the "God question" becomes problematic, if not insolvable.

It is at this point that Christianity must choose to swim against the currents of modernity. While recognizing different religions may share some common beliefs and values, basic and fundamental differences divide us when addressing some important issues. The nature of God is one.

The *Baptist Faith and Message* article affirms "there is one and only one living and true God." This cancels out atheism and polytheism.

This God is "intelligent, spiritual and personal. He is Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Ruler." This rules out pantheism, panentheism and deism.

Our God, the Scriptures testify, is “infinite in holiness and all other perfections.” He is omnipotent (all powerful) and omniscient (all knowing). “His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present and future, including the future decisions of his free creatures.” This sets aside finite and open theism.

The Bible reveals a God who rightly deserves our love and obedience.

Our God is also utterly unique from the theological conceptions of all other religions, for the Bible reveals him to be a Trinity of three eternal persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and yet still one — a unity.

Indeed the biblical witness is clear: whatever it is that constitutes God as God, the Father is all of this, the Son is all of this and the Holy Spirit is all of this. But, there is still only one God, distinct in person “but without division of nature, essence or being.”

The Christian God is personal and more (a tri-unity). In other world religions like Buddhism, God is less than personal. Islam views God as utterly transcendent and basically unapproachable. Mysticism and its New Age offspring see God as wholly immanent.

The Bible says the one true God is both. He is above us and separate from us, and yet he is also a God who can be known, truly and genuinely known, in a personal relationship.

What is the relevance of our theology of God? Does our thinking about and answer to the God question really make any difference in the day-to-day experience of life? I believe the answer is a resounding yes.

Ivan, in Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s novel, *The Brothers Karamozov*, got it exactly right — if God is dead, everything is permissible. To this we can add, if we are all gods, then anything goes, for by definition God (or gods) makes the rules.

Ultimately in this kind of world, there are no rules, no norms, no standard by which we can consistently measure truth from error, right from wrong. We do not live in a world where people believe nothing. We find ourselves drowning in a world that believes everything.

Genesis 1:1 teaches us, “In the beginning God ...” Southern Baptists speak with one voice in giving affirmation to this proposition and all others in Holy Scripture that reveal to us real and true truth about the God who has created us in his image, redeemed us through his Son and made us spiritually alive by his Spirit.

God in three persons, blessed Trinity.







## God the Father, *BF&M* Article 2a

By Stephen Wellum

*Assistant Professor of Christian Theology*

It almost seems too obvious to say that at the heart and center of Christian faith and practice is the great and glorious Triune God of Scripture. But sadly, I am afraid, we too often forget this “obvious” fact.

Living in a secular and pluralistic age has had more of an impact on us than we would like to believe. As David Wells has reminded us in his important work, *No Place for Truth*, what a secular and postmodern age often does to “God” is not to eliminate him, but rather to relocate him from the center of our lives to that which is periphery and inconsequential. Unfortunately, as Wells also demonstrates, this effect of living in a secular age is often true of the church as well.

But as Article 2 of the *Baptist Faith and Message* reminds us, this is something the God of the Bible will not allow. For when we turn to Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, we are presented with “the only one living and true God,” our Creator and Lord.

On every page, the God of majesty and glory confronts us as the one who will have no rivals, and as such, he rightly demands and deserves our “highest love, reverence and obedience.”

In this context, what a privilege it is to confess and affirm Article 2a of the *BF&M* — “God the Father.” For as the statement reminds us, the God of Scripture is a Triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — who may be distinguished by their personal properties.

But it is also a beautiful reminder that because of God’s gracious work of redemption in Christ, we may now “become children of God” and have the supreme joy of calling God our Father.

Think of it! We who were ruined by the Fall and we who rightly stood under God’s just condemnation are now, by grace “through faith in Jesus Christ,” able to address God as Father.

Of course, this incredible truth must be understood and appreciated within the context of a biblical understanding of God the Father. For if we make him less than he truly is and if we attempt to domesticate him in such a way that his authority, sovereign rule, knowledge and holiness are not what Scripture says they are, then I dare say that the truth that we are “children of God through faith in Jesus Christ” will ring hollow with us.

But if we keep before us the glorious God of Scripture, then the thought of being his children will move us today as it moved the Apostle John of old — “How great is the love the Father has lavished us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are” (1 John 3:1a).

But it must be quickly added that this great privilege of knowing God as our Father is only found “through faith in Jesus Christ.”

The *BF&M* correctly notes that God, as providential Lord, is “fatherly in his

attitude toward all men" (Matt 5:43-48; Acts 14:15-17; Rom 2:1-4). For in God's work of providence, he sustains and keeps the world that he has made, sending both rain and sunshine alike upon believer and unbeliever.

However, the great privilege of adoption is reserved only for those who have been joined to Jesus Christ by faith. Galatians 4:1-7 is very clear about this. For it is only when God the Son comes into the world and redeems us by his substitutionary work that we receive the blessing of adoption into the family of God as full sons and daughters of the King. On any other basis, there is no adoption into the family of God.

How should we live in light of this biblical teaching? I think there should be at least two responses. First, we need to recommit ourselves to knowing our great God and making him central in all of our thought and life. Our God deserves and demands nothing less. Second, we need to recommit ourselves to the faithful proclamation of the gospel, for it is only in Christ alone that people come to know God as Father.

What a privilege as well as an awesome task. May the Lord find us faithful in both.



## **God the Son, *BF&M* Article 2b**

*By Robert Stein*

*Ernest and Mildred Hogan Professor of  
New Testament*

The uniqueness of Jesus as God's Son is taught throughout the New Testament. We find this within the Gospels (John 1:14; 3:16, 18), as well as the rest of the New Testament (1 John 4:9; Heb 1:1-2).

Most importantly, Jesus himself both explicitly (Mark 12:1-12; 13:32; Matt 11:25-27) and implicitly (John 20:17) taught of his unique relationship as God's Son. During his ministry, he was recognized as the unique Son of God by demons (Mark 5:7), Satan (Matt 4:3, 6) and most importantly the voice from heaven at his baptism and transfiguration (Mark 1:11; 9:7).

During his ministry, he acted as one who possessed a unique authority over the temple by cleansing it (Mark 11:15-19, 27-33; John 2:13-21), over demons and Satan by his exorcisms, over disease by his healings, over the Sabbath by his actions (Mark 2:23-28), over death by his raising the dead and at times even over the Law by his teachings (Matt 5:21-48; Mark 7:18-19).

He assumed the divine prerogatives of forgiving sins (Mark 2:5-10; Luke 7:36-50), claiming that one's eternal destiny rotated around his relationship to him (Matt 10:32-33; 11:6) and claiming that he would ultimately judge of the world (Matt 9:28; John 5:22-29; Acts 10:42).

He also maintained that he was greater than all who have preceded him, whether Abraham (John 8:53-58), Jacob (John 4:12-15) or Moses (Matt 5:21-48).

In the New Testament Jesus is accorded such divine attributes as being the Creator (John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2) and possessing pre-existence (John 1:1-2; 1 John 1:1; Col 1:17). In a number of instances, he is specifically referred to as God (John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; cf. also Rom 9:5; 1 John 5:20).

It should be remembered that the use of this title for Jesus is found in passages written by Jewish-Christians whose Scriptures begin with "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Although the human nature of the Son was denied by the first Christological heresy (Doceticism), it is clearly taught throughout the New Testament. Alongside of statements of Jesus' uniqueness and deity are statements of his full humanity.

His virginal conception in no way minimizes this. The incarnation (John 1:14) involves experiencing a human birth (Gal 4:4), being circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21), possessing a true human nature (Heb 2:14), being tempted in all points like us (Heb 2:18; 4:15), experiencing sorrow and agony (John 11:35; Mark 14:34-42; Heb 5:7), hungering (Matt 4:2; Mark 11:12) and thirsting (John 19:28), becoming weary (John 4:6), possessing flesh and blood (Luke 24:39; John 19:34) and learning obedience (Heb 5:8).

He is the one mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5; Rom 5:15; Heb 9:15). Because of his sinless life (Heb 4:15; 2 Cor 5:21), he could bear the penalty of sin that all humanity deserves.

By grace he became a curse for those under the curse (Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 2:24) and satisfied the righteousness of God (Rom 3:24-26). Thus, by offering himself once for all time (Rom 6:10; 1 Pet 3:18; Heb 9:28; 10:12-14), he brought about for sinful humanity expiation of sin and propitiation from the divine wrath (Rom 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

In so doing, Jesus Christ brought a host of benefits such as justification (Rom 3:24; 8:33), peace (Rom 5:1), reconciliation (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18-19), forgiveness (Matt 26:28; Rom 4:7-8), adoption as sons (Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:4-5), being born again (1 Pet 1:23; John 3:1-8), dying to sin (Rom 6:1-2; Col 3:3), being raised in newness of life (Rom 6:4; 7:6; 2 Cor 5:17) and eternal life (John 3:16, 36; Rom 6:22).

In addition to these present benefits, there awaits for his followers the resurrection of the body (John 11:25-26; Rev 20:5-6), a joyous reunion with Christians who died (1 Thess 4:13-18), faith turning to sight (Rev 22:4), being no longer able to sin and participating with the Son of God in the judgment (1 Cor 6:2).





## God the Holy Spirit, *BF&M* Article 2c

By Bruce Ware

*Senior Associate Dean, School of Theology;*

*Professor of Christian Theology*

This article begins where it must, by affirming that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and as such is fully divine. He possesses with the Father and Son the one undivided divine nature. Only because he is himself divine, yet the third member of the Trinity, can we understand the string of activities he is said to perform.

Notice the verbs. This article says of the Holy Spirit that he “inspired,” “enables,” “exalts,” “convicts,” “calls,” “effects regeneration,” “baptizes,” “cultivates,” “seals,” “enlightens” and “empowers.” One thing is clear — the Holy Spirit is intent on and active in carrying out the will and purposes of God.

Consider four main areas of his work noted in this article.

The Holy Spirit inspired the *Scriptures*. He worked in the minds of biblical writers and so moved in them (2 Pet 1:20-21) that what they wrote as their own words was concurrently the fully authoritative, reliable and inerrant Word of God (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Further, the Holy Spirit illumines the minds and hearts of believers to help them understand and apply that divine word to their own lives (1 Cor 2:14). The Spirit inspired the Bible so that he might use it mightily in transforming us by its truth.

The Holy Spirit brings sinners to *salvation*. He comes most fundamentally to exalt Jesus Christ (John 16:14). The primary way he accomplishes this is as he convicts us of our sin, calls us to behold the beauty of Christ’s saving work and regenerates us so that we respond now to God in hope and love, through faith in Christ Jesus.

On our own, we consider the cross of Christ foolishness and weakness (1 Cor 1:18-25); but because the Spirit opens our blind eyes and enlivens our hearts (2 Cor 4:4-6), we come to faith in Christ and begin the sure and certain path to our ultimate and complete transformation in Christlikeness, which is the Spirit’s goal (2 Cor 3:18).

The Holy Spirit transforms believers through empowering their ever-increasing *sanctification*. So many today rush directly to the empowering work of the Spirit in his supernatural gifting for service. While this is a vital ministry of the Spirit, this article is correct to stress first the Spirit’s empowering work to bring about character transformation.

He cares more about Christlike character and conduct in God’s people than any service they might render apart from these qualities. To be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18) and to walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16) and to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) express the internal work of the Spirit in making us wholly new people in Christ.

The Spirit is God’s seal and guarantee (Eph 1:13-14) that this internal work

will continue until we are fully glorified. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, we are assured the certainty of our full and final sanctification.

The Holy Spirit equips us for meaningful and fruitful *service* in the church. One of the ways in which God brings about his transforming work in our lives is through the ministry of the Body of Christ. Each member is gifted by the Spirit as he so wills (1 Cor. 12:11) so that the Body may be edified. Our worship of the true and living God, our love for one another and our service in the name of Christ — all done in the power of the Spirit — fulfill the goal God set for us to grow into Christlikeness.

Through Scripture, salvation, sanctification and service, then, the Spirit works to honor Christ in making us like him, to the glory of God forevermore.



### **Man, *BF&M* Article 3**

*By Daniel Block*

*John R. Sampey Professor of Old Testament Interpretation; Associate Dean, Scripture and Interpretation, School of Theology*

The *Baptist Faith and Message* statement on man highlights two aspects of the human condition that set this species of creation apart from all others: man's noble status and man's ignoble state.

In its celebration of the creative power of God, Genesis 1:1-2:4a also celebrates the distinctive nobility of man.

There is no doubt that in the mind of the author of this text the creation of Adam represents the climax of creation: 1. Adam is created last; 2. Adam is presented as the product of divine deliberation; 3. The description of the creation of Adam is more intensive and extensive than any aspect of creation; 4. The account uses a special verb to describe the creation of Adam, which always involves a special creative act of God; 5. Once Adam is on the scene the Lord can pronounce the created world "extremely good" (v. 31); 6. Adam is expressly created as "the image of God."

The last point is especially significant, for, according to the Scriptures, what separates man from other creatures is not fundamentally his superior intelligence or more complex evolutionary development, but his status as the image of God.

Theologians today interpret our "image-ness" in terms of human rationality, spirituality, intellectual freedom, relationality (to God and fellow human beings) or triunity (body, soul, spirit). But within the biblical literary context and the ancient Near Eastern cultural context, "imageness" had more to do with the role played by man than with an ontological quality about man.

As the image of God, man is divinely authorized to serve as his representative (not representation) and charged to function as his deputy (cf. Gen 1:26-28; Ps 8). According to Genesis 1 and 2, man was endowed with the needed qualities

to govern creation on God's behalf as he would were he personally and physically present.

In this regard the Israelites' view of man differed fundamentally from that of the world in which they lived. Whereas in Babylon the status of "image of divinity" was reserved for kings and priests, the Bible democratizes the notion — the children of Adam as a race in general and individual members of the race in particular, are all invested with this status. This revolutionary idea has extremely significant anthropological and ethical implications.

First, in accordance with the biblical perspective that all humankind originates in a single pair of parents, all human beings inherit equal nobility in the sight of God. Therefore, any view of the human species that diminishes the dignity of any member on any grounds (gender, race, intelligence, physical form, circumstances of conception) is to be repudiated.

Second, in accordance with the biblical perspective that Adam as a race was created male and female, any view of the human species that blurs the fundamental distinction between male and female is to be repudiated.

Third, in accordance with the biblical perspective that each person is an image of God, parenthood is elevated from a merely procreative act to a co-creative act — God involving a man and a woman in the creation of new images of himself.

As a corollary, willful abortion represents arrogant interference in a divine creative act, and it is to be repudiated.

Fourth, in accordance with the biblical view that all human beings serve as representatives of God, any act directed at another person, whether for good or evil, is an act directed at God (Prov 14:31; 17:5; Matt 25:31-46; James 3:8-10). All pious professions aside, our disposition toward God is most graphically expressed in our treatment of fellow human beings, especially those deemed socially inferior.

But the Scriptures also present another, sadder side to the picture. If they are clear in portraying humankind as uniquely endowed with divine dignity, they are equally clear in emphasizing humankind's unique and utter depravity.

Because of sin, which may be understood fundamentally as rebellion against God, we all come under the curse of God. In accordance with the biblical perspective of the entire human race as united in descent from Adam, the guilt of Adam's sin falls on all, and estrangement from God in whose image we are made extends to all.

But thanks be to God, the biblical story does not end here. Through God's Son, Jesus Christ, the perfect image of God, the redeemed enjoy the removal of that guilt and are restored to fellowship and communion with their Maker.





## Salvation, *BF&M* Article 4 Summary

*By Mark Seifrid*

*Associate Professor of New Testament*

No article of any confession compares in significance with that concerning salvation. The whole of theology is bound up with it: our understanding God, the world and our very selves. The manner in which we understand salvation decides and reveals the way in which we think about God, and vice versa.

According to the Scriptures, and as formulated by one saint, the true subject of theology is the human being, guilty of sin and condemned before God, the Justifier and Savior of the sinner.

This biblical understanding of salvation is a two-edged sword which must be all-determining for our thought: any theological statement which does not conform to it and cannot trace its way back to it must be severed and discarded as error.

It is of great importance, and entirely biblical, that this article concerning salvation begins with the emphatic statement that "salvation involves the redemption of the whole man." On the one hand, this affirmation guards us against supposing that only our lower, physical desires are in need of remedy.

The Scriptures teach us that our fallenness extends to the whole of our person and infects even our highest religious aspirations (Gal 2:16; Ps 143:2). Once we assume that part of us is free from corruption, we necessarily fall into various forms of legalism or asceticism (e.g. Col 2:16-23).

The Son of God in his incarnation, death and resurrection took upon himself *all* that we are in order to redeem us.

This means, on the other hand, that salvation includes the resurrection of the body. The Christian hope is not that of an ethereal, disembodied existence, but the eternal life of the resurrected and transformed body (Rom 8:23).

Jesus Christ is the risen Lord, who has triumphed over sin, death and the devil. To have him as Lord means that we reign with him over all such things in the hope and faith which has already dawned and shall be consummated at his coming again (Heb 2:5-9).

As this article makes quite clear, salvation is found in Jesus Christ and in him *alone*. The good news of salvation in Jesus Christ is to be proclaimed freely to all persons everywhere. In this proclamation the Church shares in God's work in the world and bears great responsibility before him. Nevertheless, salvation is to be found only in Jesus Christ, whom one must know by name and call upon as Lord in order to be saved (Acts 4:12; Rom 10:14-17).

The saints prior to his coming perceived these things only dimly and partially, as they believed in the Christ who was coming (1 Pet 1:10-12). Apart from those such as Abraham, Moses, David and others named in the Scriptures, we shall never know precisely how the Spirit of God imparted faith in God and his promises to them.

Now, however, the promise of God has come to fulfillment in the resurrection of the crucified Christ. It is this gospel of the Christ who has come which God has sent forth to the nations, and nothing else: “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the message of Christ” (Rom 10:17).

The Scriptures speak with varying perspectives on the salvation which God has wrought for us in Christ.

“Regeneration” has to do with God’s having made us entirely new creatures in Christ: all that we are in ourselves was put to death with him (2 Cor 5:17-21).

“Justification” has to do with the forgiveness of our sins and our acknowledgement of God’s just claim against us that we are liars and transgressors (Rom 3:5-8, 21-26).

“Sanctification” has to do with God’s possessing us as his own and setting us apart from the world which is condemned and defiled (1 Cor 3:16-17).

“Glorification” has to do with our instatement as “sons of God” at the resurrection from the dead, when God’s triumph in us shall be complete (Rom 8:28-30).



### **Regeneration, *BF&M* Article 4a**

*By David DeKlaven*

*Associate Dean, Associate Professor of  
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The basis for salvation is under attack today. The questions that many ask in response to the presentation of the gospel (“I’m a good person — isn’t that enough to be right with God?” “How can you say that Jesus is the only way to God?”) mirror their confusion or disdain.

Somehow, they believe, the “God” of whom they conceive will be satisfied with their sincerity or with their good works.

Scripture makes it clear, though, that salvation does not begin with us. We are “dead in sin” (Eph 2:1) and thus unable to save ourselves.

Instead, God begins the work that allows us to become new creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). We call this work “regeneration” or “new birth” — that is, it is the act of God by which he imparts spiritual life resulting in salvation.

We first encounter the phrase “born again” in Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus (John 3). This phrase is so very descriptive of the work done in us in salvation. As we had no part in imparting life to ourselves at the time of our physical birth, likewise we have no part in imparting spiritual life to ourselves at the time of our new birth.

John 1:13 underscores this truth by stating that this birth is not due to “the will of man, but of God.”

Scripture speaks often of this new birth. It is described as made effectual not only through the Word of God (Jas 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23), but also through the work of Christ on the cross (Eph 2:5; Col 2:13; 1 Pet 1:3) and through the work of the



Holy Spirit (John 3:8; Titus 3:5). The evidence of the new birth is seen in the changed life of the one who experiences it (2 Cor 5:17; 1 John 2:29; 5:4).

But how is this new birth appropriated? Jesus told Nicodemus, “You must be born again.” If that same statement was made to someone today, what would he or she be expected to do?

In Scripture, the response needed is expressed in terms of repentance and faith. These two actions are often spoken of together under the heading of “conversion,” and both are needed for salvation.

Repentance involves more than just remorse or a feeling of guilt over getting caught in sin. Rather, it refers to a genuine sorrow for sin accompanied by a desire and commitment to leave it behind. Or, as is often stated, it is “a change of mind that leads to a change of action.”

The awareness of the need to repent is brought about by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11). Its importance is evidenced by its inclusion as a key element in the preaching of Jesus (Mark 1:15), John the Baptist (Matt 3:2) and the early church (Acts 2:38).

The noun “faith” comes from the same root word as the verb “I believe” in the Greek language of the New Testament. More than just acknowledging intellectually that something is true, biblical faith requires a personal trust in and commitment to Jesus based on the knowledge of who he is and what he has done in providing forgiveness for sin.

Often in the New Testament, the word “believe” is followed by the word “in” to express this idea. Most noticeably, John 3:16 states that whoever “believes in” Jesus will have everlasting life.

Paul also reminds us that it is because of God’s grace that we are saved through faith and not by our own works (Eph 2:8-9). Which one of us could ever do enough “good deeds” to earn God’s salvation?

Taken together, regeneration and conversion are both foundational to the biblical teaching of salvation. God has graciously given us his spiritual life which we experience as we respond to him in repentance and faith.

We declare with the author of Hebrews (2:3), “How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”



### **Justification, *BF&M* Article 4b**

*By Bruce Ware*

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Professor of Christian Theology*

One of the most shocking, morally outrageous and utterly preposterous statements in the Bible occurs in Romans 4:5. Here, Paul instructs his readers that God, the possessor of infinite righteousness and the standard bearer of perfect justice, actually “justifies the ungodly.”

What! How can God justify (i.e., declare righteous) the ungodly (i.e., those who by nature, thought, word and deed are thoroughly unrighteous)?

As it stands, this phrase seems to represent a travesty of justice at the highest possible level. Allowing Stalin or Hitler or Pol Pot to stand before a court of international justice and be declared fully and totally innocent in the face of genocide and despicable war crimes would pale in comparison to the horrid betrayal of justice indicated by this phrase — perpetrated by none less than God the Almighty.

And the *Baptist Faith and Message* article on justification urges readers to embrace, not deny, this same apparent infinite injustice, when it affirms that “justification” is God’s “full acquittal” of “sinners.”

We realize on pondering this claim that while we might earlier have thought the “problem of evil” to be the major theological difficulty facing Christian theology, in fact the “problem of acquittal” threatens to bring the holiness, righteousness, justice and very moral nature of God and his ways cascading down the perilous cliffs of moral dissolution and anarchy.

But herein lies the gospel! While it would be entirely just for God to justify the righteous (of which, however, there is none — Rom 3:23), or to condemn the ungodly (which we all, without exception, deserve — Rom 6:23a; Gal 3:10); in fact God has designed the means by which he can legally, morally and righteously justify the ungodly.

But our understanding of God’s uncompromising holiness and our own moral sensibilities require us to ask, “On what basis can he do this?” The Bible and this article of faith give three facets of this answer.

First, the ground of sinners’ justification is the “redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24), or as our article puts it, God justifies “upon principles of His righteousness.” Romans 3:25-26 explains how this can be. In the shed blood of Christ, God “demonstrated His righteousness” because in his purposes he had passed over all sin previously committed.

But since God had passed over them, not judged them, he now in Christ satisfies his just demands against our sin by judging our sin in and through the substitutionary death of Christ. God, then, is just to justify sinners insofar as their sin is fully judged and paid for in his Son.

Second, the condition of sinners’ justification is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Since the sinner’s offense (sin) against God requires an infinite payment to an infinitely holy God, no amount of human works could ever satisfy God’s demands against us.

Salvation by works is laughable in light of the infinite weight of our guilt and the infinite payment required to remove it.

But, since God in his purposes has sent his Son to take the sinner’s place and pay the sinner’s penalty, God now requires only that the sinner put faith in Christ to receive the benefits of Christ’s payment, credited to him as righteousness (i.e., justification).

God, then, is just to justify sinners as they believe in Christ alone for their salvation, forsaking any pretense to works righteousness and turning from their

sin as they flee gladly to Christ.

Third, the dual motivation of sinners' justification is God's abundant grace toward sinners and God's longing to bring glory to his name through their salvation.

The sobering truth is this: God could be just, and only just, by requiring all sinners to pay the penalty of their own sin. If so, eternal, never-ending, conscious, despairing torment would rightly be meted out to all without exception and with no appeal nor basis for complaint.

But, Romans 3:26 tells us that God sought to be "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." That is, God chose to be just, but he chose a path of justice by which he would also be gracious, declaring us righteous by faith in Christ and his substitutionary death on our behalf.

Such grace yields endless glory to God. ("Where is the boasting?" Paul continues in Rom 3:27.) And such grace yields endless goodness to acquitted sinners.

Our goodness, God's grace and God's glory are inextricably tied together in this marvelously wise, just and merciful plan of salvation. Praise be to God alone!



### **Sanctification, *BF&M* Article 4c**

*By Stephen Wellum*

*Assistant Professor of Christian Theology*

I am sure that many of us have played word-association games. A person throws out a word to you, and you respond by stating the first word that pops into your head. The purpose of such a game is not only to generate a lot of laughter but also to tell us something about the person who responds. Without giving that person much time

for reflection, one's quick response may divulge a considerable amount of information about that person as to who they truly are.

If we were to play such a game with Christians and the word "sanctification" was the word thrown out for our immediate response, I wonder what our reply would be? In fact, I have done this on a number of occasions in various church settings and, sadly, some of the responses that I have received were often very negative in outlook.

For some, "sanctification" was associated with abstaining from certain kinds of behavior or practices. For others, especially young people, it was associated with a lack of enjoyment or fun. But this is certainly a misguided and distorted notion of sanctification.

Biblically speaking, sanctification is hardly a negative thing. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Sanctification, at its heart, not only means that we are "set apart" from sin and the disastrous results that it brings, but sanctification also entails that we are "set apart" and "consecrated" unto the Lord — a very positive action indeed!

It is hard to conceive of a greater privilege we enjoy as Christians than the reality of being united to our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and as justified believers, being renewed and conformed to the likeness and image of our glorious Redeemer (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:9-10).

In fact, the wonder of salvation and, in particular, sanctification must be viewed from the whole story line of Scripture. We, who were made in God's image to glorify and enjoy him forever, defaced that image in the Fall.

But Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory and the last Adam, rescued us from our helpless estate by his own representative and substitutionary work for us. And as a result, we are no longer under the headship of Adam and the power of sin and death; but instead, by grace we have been transferred into the kingdom of God's own dear Son, set apart as holy unto the Lord (Rom 5:12-6:23; Col 1:13-14; 1 Pet 1:15-16). What an incredible privilege indeed!

When does sanctification begin? When does it end? The *Baptist Faith and Message* correctly notes that it begins in regeneration. In regeneration, God brings about new life in us.

We who were dead in our sins, Scripture states, were made alive, in Christ, by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in us (Eph 2:1-10). And as a result of this new life in Christ, we begin actively, empowered by the Spirit of God, to live a new life unto God "toward moral and spiritual maturity" such that, as the *BF&M* reminds us, "growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life."

This is not to say that this side of glory sin and its effects on us will be totally eradicated. As certain as our break with sin and death has been in Christ, we still bring with us many of the impulses, habits and tendencies of the old life.

Ultimately it is not until glory that the sanctification process finally comes to an end. For it is only then that we will be severed completely from all contact with the Adamic dominion.

But until then, we continue to press on with an active dependence upon the Lord (Phil 2:12-13). We continue to grow in grace, being ever conformed to the image of our Redeemer and looking with eager anticipation for that blessed appearing of our Lord when "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

In this sense, then, sanctification, if rightly understood, has a threefold meaning to it: a present possession by virtue of our union with our Lord Jesus Christ, a progressive life-long process of God-dependent effort on our part and a future anticipated completion which will result in our glorification.

How, then, do we view sanctification? In scriptural terms, sanctification is a glorious and necessary part of God's great work of salvation for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. May we not think lightly of it, but instead, in active dependence upon the Lord, pursue holiness and godliness, ever being transformed into the likeness of our great Lord and Savior. What a privilege! What a calling!





## **Glorification, *BF&M* Article 4d**

*By Hal Ostrander*

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Often a doctrine related to God's overall redemptive plan in Christ receives relatively little attention. The doctrine of glorification seems to reflect this scenario.

Even the *Baptist Faith and Message* itself devotes only a scant 17 words to its explanation. With these few words, however, our predecessors in faith knowingly submitted for our benefit a doctrine replete with applications still to be explored by most.

For those of us who lived in Texas when the oil boom went bust back in the 80s, the perfect sermon illustration — the “divine pipeline” of Romans 8:28-30 — often welled up from the pulpits of West Texas.

This particular text essentially told us, then as now, that it is impossible for those foreknown, predestined, called and justified by Christ's person and his work to ever slip out of the life-flowing pipeline without also finally being glorified. Once having entered the costly pipeline of salvation, Christians should look forward to when they will not only be raised from the dead ultimately but will be raised to everlasting life at Christ's return as well.

The Apostle Paul describes the process: “For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:52-53).

Here the devil can hardly be said to be in the details, but rather a God-ordained justification/sanctification/glorification procedure is seen as working itself out for the sake of God's people. But what exactly are the details?

It is difficult to argue with Wayne Grudem's assessment of glorification as “... the final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own.”

From this we gather that the doctrine of glorification ultimately has to do not only with the perfecting of our material bodies but with the immaterial aspects of our having been made in God's image as well.

Whatever erroneous conclusions may be drawn by folks who believe that salvation applies only to the soul, Grudem's definition reveals here a more holistic approach to the matter.

While we must grant that it is proper to take care of our physical selves, by the same token our efforts will prove in the end to be a losing battle.

The Apostle Paul speaks to the issue by saying “our outer man is decaying” (2 Cor 4:16). Physical death comes to everyone as a result of sin's entrance into the world.

But for Christians, death is not the only thing waiting for us at life's end, but the Lord Jesus Christ himself awaits us as well.

An obvious two-fold aspect is at work here: either we are going to die and immediately be received into his presence, or we will be among the few who will graciously be allowed to welcome him at his return.

Hence, Christ alone is our true hope (Phil 3:20-21). From this it is easy to conclude that not only will we someday be with the Lord of the universe himself, but we are also going to be just like him (Matt 13:43).

By way of further definition, glorification is the final phase of our total redemption as believers in Christ. Nevertheless, for the moment we live between the first and second comings of Christ.

There is a sense, then, in which we are between "the already and the not yet." While there is no denying the fact that Christ's person and his work on the cross have conquered both death and sin on our behalf, sin has yet to be eradicated entirely from the existent earthly economy.

We are justified in Christ, true, but we are still being conformed to his image by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. We still battle remaining sin. Even though the power of sin has been broken, we still suffer at the hands of the world.

The greater truth operating here is that God has initiated a good work in us — one which will at last be brought to fruition when Jesus returns. Only then will we finally be perfected in holiness. Our battle with sin will end, and we will be entirely conformed to the image of Jesus Christ himself. We will have put on the imperishable and been clothed with immortality.

And the glory that will someday be revealed in us will so overwhelmingly outweigh our present sufferings that no real comparison should be attempted (Rom 8:18-19).

When Jesus comes back, what will actually take place with regard to Christians who have died? "Behold, I tell you a mystery," Paul says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor 15:51-52).

This incredible transformation only takes place at Christ's Second Coming. All living Christians will also be suddenly and supernaturally changed physically, undergoing a transformation so profound that the term "resurrection body" only hints at what will actually take place at the time.

Scripture indicates that Jesus was raised in the same body in which he died, and apparently this will also be the case with Christians. In 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, Paul provides us with an analogy that seems to compare our glorified, resurrection bodies to the relationship existing between a seed and its plant; it is the same organism but naturally different.

John also tells us that when Christ returns "we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). This is a part of the "good news" that we as Christians often neglect — that our glorified bodies will be like Christ's, impervious to death and sickness, with our souls filled to the brim with righteousness and truth.

The grief and burdens that life can bring will trouble us no longer. Even the very presence of sin will be eradicated, and the sanctification process will be completed.

If there is one overarching application that illustrates the doctrine of glorification's vitality, it would be this: Jesus is coming back to receive us to himself and to change us gloriously.

This truth should serve to strengthen and inspire us even as it has already throughout the history of God's people, many of whom have willingly suffered for Christ's sake as a result of the spiritual fortitude the doctrine produces.

This is not to say that other applications should not be attempted. For example, the doctrine of glorification should also promote holiness of life. If we continually keep in mind the idea that we will soon be like him, we will be motivated beyond the norm to "work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12), to cooperate with him in the sanctification.

If we continually place before us the idea that glorification is the logical conclusion to the drama of God's redemptive plan, a renewed spiritual pilgrimage will result.

In summary, Christians have been regenerated and justified by grace through faith. But on this side of the grave, we will never be thoroughly free from either the taint of sin's effects or the creeping deterioration of our mortal bodies. Christ's salvation, however, is holistic in nature, and in him all things are truly made new.

Through a providentially wrought sanctification, we become, step by painstaking step, in our experience what we already are judicially. At long last, when we are clothed with a glorified body, our justification and sanctification will merge as one.

From the very first moment of being in Christ's presence, we will never have occasion to sin again. Every aspect of our God-imaged essence will have been redeemed and glorified, and we will enjoy God's presence and each other's company for all eternity in a physically and morally perfect environment.

As for God's redeemed people as a whole, the glorified state will entail nothing less than a perfect deliverance from everything once entailed by the curse of Genesis 3 itself.

As for our individually resurrected, glorified bodies, they will never be corrupted. As for our individually glorified souls, they will love God wholeheartedly without reserve or qualification.

This is where Christians desire to be; but if remaining on in mortal flesh is necessary, it will mean fruitful labor for us as servants of Christ. Either way, God's people win out in the glorified end.





## God's Purpose of Grace, Election *BF&M Article 5a*

*By Thomas Nettles*

*Professor of Historical Theology*

This article of the *Baptist Faith and Message* is a noble condensation of a beautiful biblical and historically Baptist doctrine. "Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners."

The four elements of salvation discussed in Article 4 of the *BF&M* arise from God's purpose of grace in election. Election pulsates with the infinite grace of God.

Sinners, justly condemned and God's enemies, when left to themselves persevere in their hostile ways all the way to hell. In pursuance of his gracious purpose, however, God's particular love rests on certain ones to bring them to salvation (Eph 1:4, 5; 2:4, 5). "Whom he foreknew (that is 'loved beforehand'), he also predestined" (Rom 8:29).

The confession rightly calls God's saving choice "gracious," for it operates for the good of sinners in spite of their infinite demerit. God's election cannot fail. He administers his decree all the way to the glorification of sinners and to the glory of his beloved Son.

"Just as He chose us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him." What more glorious end can be imagined than a predestination "to be conformed to the image of his Son?"

Election does not contradict the "free agency of man." When a person acts, he acts freely — or exactly as he is disposed to act. While dead in trespasses and sins, he is a slave to sin. Sin reigns in his mortal body, and he has no desire for righteousness.

Regeneration by the Spirit of God shatters the shackles of sin and its tyrannical power by creating such distaste for sin that the sinner repents. The Spirit implants such a desire for righteousness that the sinner turns to Christ, by whose blood and righteousness sinners may justly be accepted.

Thus, the elect person acts freely and in accord with a spiritual sight sovereignly induced by God's Spirit in accordance with God's electing purpose, when God's choice is manifest in the coming of the gospel with power. In this way, election "comprehends all means in connection with the end" (Eph 2:1-8; Rom 6:12, 18, 20; 1 Thess 1:4, 5).

Election manifests God's "sovereign goodness" by displaying his mercy and his justice. Since election results in eternal praise to his glory (Eph 1:14), it is infinitely wise.

Because election marks out the beloved Son as the only acceptable propitiation, it is infinitely holy. In that all those eternally given to the Son will come, while not one fails, it is unchangeable (John 6:37-40).

Such a display of sovereign goodness humbles its recipient to the dust and



absolutely excludes any synergy in this salvation, and renders boasting of any sort an utter nullity.

F. H. Kerfoot, a Southern Baptist theologian and pastor at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, highlighted this doctrine when he wrote, “Nearly all Baptists believe what are usually termed the ‘doctrines of grace’: the absolute sovereignty and foreknowledge of God; His eternal and unchangeable purposes or decrees; that salvation in its beginning, continuance and completion, is God’s free gift; that, in Christ, we are elected or chosen, personally or individually, from eternity, saved and called out from the world, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; ... Read Rom 8, 9, 10, 11; Acts 13:48; Eph 1:4-5; 2:1-10; 1 Pet 1:2-5; Jude 24; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5.”



### **God’s Purpose of Grace, Perseverance, BF&M Article 5b**

*By Chad Brand*

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In Alfred Hitchcock’s famous movie, “The Man Who Knew Too Much,” Doris Day croons, “When I was just a little girl, I asked my mother, what would I be? Would I be pretty; would I be rich? Here’s what she said to me. ...”

The answer of this supposedly wise mother, designed somehow to bring comfort is, “Que sera, sera; whatever will be, will be,” or, “It is all in the hands of blind fate.”

For the serious Christian, of all the questions that might cause us concern, none is so important as the question, “What will the outcome of my Christian life be? Will God be pleased with me to the end of my days and so finally save me?” Needless to say, “whatever will be, will be” is not adequate for most of us as an answer to that question.

There are really two questions here. First, will all of those who have placed genuine faith in Jesus be finally saved? Second, how can I be sure that I have placed genuine faith in him? While the second question is of vital importance, we can only examine the first one here.

Two answers have been given to this question because there are two kinds of passages that address the issue. First, there are passages that warn us of the danger of falling. These include texts such as Hebrews 6:4-6, 1 Timothy 1:19 and 2 Peter 2:20-22 — passages which, read in one way, might be taken to teach that Christians may fall away from salvation and so be finally lost.

Those who give these texts preeminence in answering the question conclude that real believers, those born again of the Holy Spirit, might yet repudiate their faith, so becoming unbelievers and finally be lost to eternal damnation. This inter-

pretation seems to have intuitive support as well, since most of us have known people who started in the faith, but who eventually fell away.

Before we react too strongly against this view, we must first recognize that these warning verses are real texts which are actually in the Bible, and so it is important for us to take them seriously as we attempt to develop our understanding of perseverance.

Bible students also discover texts that make it abundantly clear that genuine believers will prevail to the end. These include Romans 8:31-39, 2 Timothy 1:12, John 10:27-30 and John 6:37-40.

Anyone reading these passages will be struck by the fact that they warrant that those who belong to the Lord will certainly endure to the end and that that endurance is due not to their ability, but to God's power to keep them.

Note Jesus' words in John 6:37-40: "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day."

The sequence here is clear: All that the Father gives to Jesus come to him; all who come to him are received by him; all who are received by him will be genuinely saved; those who are truly saved will all be raised on the last day. The passages in Romans 8 and John 10 are equally forceful, as are many other texts in Scripture.

What are we to do then with the warning passages? Since they are in the Bible, we must take their message seriously. What is the point they are making? Just how do these apparently disparate texts fit together? Or do they? Perhaps there is simply an "irreconcilable difference" between the two kinds of passages. Bible-believing Christians do not believe that is so.

First John 2:19 provides a clue: "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us." John is talking about some people who seemed to be genuine Christians, persons who were even teachers in the church.

Yet, they finally fell away, showing that their "faith" and their "profession" were not genuine. That means that not everyone in the church who claims to be a Christian disciple is in fact genuinely saved. There are tares among the wheat, and at some point that will become obvious.

The *BF&M* states that genuine believers may "fall into sin through neglect and temptation," but they will finally persevere, since "they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

You may call this eternal security or "once saved, always saved" or even "perseverance of the saints," but we might better call it "the perseverance of God," since he is the one who keeps us by his power unto final salvation and eternal glory.

The hope of the believer is not, "Que sera, sera," but "What God has said will be." He has said that all whom he has given to Jesus, all who truly come to him, he will never cast out. That is a promise on which we can construct all our hopes and expectations.





## **The Church, *BF&M* Article 6**

*By Gregory Wills*

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The article on the church in the recently adopted *Baptist Faith and Message* affirms that God has revealed the doctrine of the church in Scripture. It teaches that the church's form of government, its officers, its ordinances, its mission and its laws are those of the churches of the New Testament.

Baptists in the past generally held that the doctrine of the church was a revealed doctrine. Many still do. Others are returning to this conviction. Ecclesiology, in its fundamental aspects, is a matter of revelation.

Christ commissioned his apostles to establish his churches. Their practices in all areas essential to the churches are normative.

The New Testament teaches congregational church government. Such verses as Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13; 2 Corinthians 2:6; Acts 2:15-23; 6:2-6; 15:22; and Revelation 2:2, 14-16, 20 place the authority for discipline, doctrine and government in the members jointly.

Each church is a democracy operating under a constitution established by Jesus Christ. It is an "autonomous local congregation." All the members jointly have responsibility to do everything that Christ commanded the churches to do and should govern the church by his laws.

The New Testament requires that the churches admit those alone who are qualified. Belief in Christ and scriptural baptism are prerequisites to membership.

Believers become a church of Jesus Christ when they jointly pledge to be a church of Jesus Christ. Implicitly or explicitly (it ought to be explicit), they covenant together in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. To covenant in the faith includes teaching and upholding the truths of the gospel.

Each congregation is responsible under Christ to interpret Bible truth, proclaim it and defend it. This is not possible unless they agree together on the central truths of Scripture and gather these truths into a confession of faith.

To covenant together in the fellowship of the gospel implies agreement to maintain the discipline by which Christ intended the preservation of fellowship. The discipline includes admitting those only who credibly profess faith in Christ; correcting, warning and rebuking those who stray from truth or righteousness; excluding those who refuse the church's loving entreaties to return to the path of truth and righteousness; and restoring the repentant to fellowship.

Other church duties include maintaining the two church observances ordained by Christ — baptism and the Lord's Supper (see Article 7) — and exercising spiritual gifts in the congregation for mutual edification.

Christ has also given the churches their mission. They are to seek to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth (see Article 11). Christ gave this mission to the churches, not to boards, conventions and agencies.

Churches can better fulfill this mission by cooperating together and establishing such efficient channels as boards and conventions. But each congregation bears the responsibility to advance the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Boards and conventions are not the church; they are merely means to accomplish the church's mission. There is no Southern Baptist Church or Kentucky Baptist Church. Conventions are the creation of the churches and subject to them. They are large committees appointed by the churches (see Article 14).

Christ has ordained deacons and pastors as the officers of his churches. The churches democratically elect and appoint persons who fulfill the scriptural qualifications for these offices.

Ordination consists in this election and appointment. The Bible uses three synonyms to refer to the pastoral office: pastor, elder and bishop. Qualified men alone may serve in this office. Ordination councils, when taken seriously, are excellent means for assisting a church to determine if a man possesses the scriptural qualifications.



### **Baptism, *BF&M* Article 7a**

*By Brad Waggoner*

*Dean, School of Christian Education and Leadership*

Like most believers who have been baptized following a profession of faith, I have a distinct recollection of my baptism. I was baptized in a small stream on a cattle ranch in Wyoming.

At nine years of age my theological understanding of baptism was simple. Nonetheless, the experience of publicly professing Christ is vivid in my memory.

What is it about this event that makes it one of the most memorable experiences in the life of the believer? What does it mean? What actually takes place in a person's life at his or her baptism? Followers of Christ have pondered questions like these for generations.

One clear truism regarding baptism is that virtually all Christian churches or groups since the time of Christ have practiced this ritual. Southern Baptists from the very onset have joined the tradition of many other Christian groups by practicing and teaching about baptism.

In our recent revision of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, not one word pertaining to the ordinance of baptism was altered. We have enjoyed a high level of agreement for several reasons.

To begin with, we are in strong agreement regarding the importance of baptism. The most substantive source regarding the significance of baptism comes from Jesus himself — “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:20).

Even if this were the only instruction regarding baptism, it would be more than adequate for our faithful practice of this rite. However, the Apostle Paul provides the church with much additional insight into the importance and meaning of baptism.

For instance, Romans 6:3-4 states: "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

Based on this and other passages, Southern Baptist scholars have strongly held that baptism is a public expression of an inward reality of having been unified with Christ. His death represents our death to self, and his resurrection represents our having been raised new creatures who are no longer under the curse and enslavement of sin (Col 2:12). In other words, we have viewed baptism as an act of obedience (which is why we refer to it as an ordinance) and as a symbolic event (which is why we have rejected the term sacrament).

The Southern Baptist understanding of baptism stands in conflict with the official doctrine of traditional Roman Catholicism and even some Protestant groups who teach that in the act of baptism there is the impartation of grace *ex opere operato*, without preexisting faith. This belief that grace is imparted to the subject of baptism is why it is called a sacrament.

As Southern Baptists we have historically rejected any notion of sacramental grace in baptism as this idea runs counter to the clear doctrine of salvation in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.

Southern Baptists also believe that the proper subjects of baptism are those who have previously entered into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

The idea of "faith" or "belief" presupposes sufficient cognitive ability and maturation so as to reject any possibility of infants being appropriate candidates for baptism. This has historically been true of all Baptists.

For instance, *The Schleithem Confession* of AD 1527 states: "Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ, and to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with Him in death, so that they may be resurrected with Him, and to all those who with this significance request it [baptism] of us and demand it for themselves. This excludes all infant baptism..."

In support of this position, one only has to look at various baptism narratives in the Book of Acts where the contexts clearly demonstrate that believers were baptized following a response of faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:44-48; 16:14-15, 32-33).

Southern Baptists have also had a long history of practicing baptism by immersion. Baptist scholars point to the meaning of the Greek word for baptism, which properly interpreted means to "dip" or "plunge." Additional evidence can be found from baptism narratives such as the baptism of Christ where the biblical text says, "He came up out of the water" (Mark 1:10). The most convincing teach-

ing is that of Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12, where the symbolism of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ clearly points to submersion and emersion.

It would seem evident that even those who believe that baptism represents “purification from sin” would have to admit that any mode other than immersion does not do justice to the symbolism described here by the Apostle Paul.

What a privilege it is for any person to stand in the waters of baptism and proclaim with the angels that “Jesus Christ is Lord.” I am proud that Southern Baptists have taken the command of Christ seriously, “... baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”



## **The Lord's Supper, *BF&M* Article 7b**

*By Peter Gentry*

*Associate Professor of Old Testament Interpretation*

The *Baptist Faith and Message* speaks of baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances. As we consider Article 7 on the Lord's Supper, we do well to begin by asking what is an ordinance? Why do Christians celebrate and perform these — and only these — two ceremonies?

An ordinance is an act: 1. commanded by the Lord Jesus in the Gospels and given by him for his followers to practice (Matt 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23); 2. passed on as a tradition by Jesus' authorized agents, the apostles, in the letters to the churches (1 Cor 10:14-22; 11:17-34); and 3. practiced by the early church in the history of the church recorded in Acts (2:42, 46; 20:7, 11). Thus only baptism and the Lord's Supper can be considered ordinances of the Christian church.

Ordinances are symbolic acts which set forth primary facts of the Christian faith and are obligatory for all who believe in Jesus Christ. Baptism dramatically pictures our entering into covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ by faith, and the Lord's Supper portrays our continuing in this relationship.

Various designations have been used for the Lord's Supper by different churches due to the fact that the act is referred to in a variety of ways in the New Testament. These designations include: 1. breaking of bread (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16); 2. communion (1 Cor 10:16); 3. Eucharist (from the Greek word for giving thanks, cf. Matt 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17, 19; 1 Cor 11:24); 4. the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20); and 5. the Lord's table (1 Cor 10:20).

The accounts in the Gospels show that the Christian ceremony of the Lord's Supper has its roots in the Jewish Passover festival. This festival was a ceremony observed by the Jewish people to remind them of the Exodus — that awesome event when the Lord rescued them from 400 years of degradation and slavery in Egypt.

Through great miracles and displays of power, Yahweh brought them out of Egypt, rescued them from the cruel oppression of Pharaoh and brought them into

a beautiful land they could call their own. Although by definition the Exodus was a non-repeatable event, its significance was preserved for future generations of Israelites by the institution of the ceremony of the Feast of Passover (Exod 12:24-27), celebrated every year at the Spring Equinox.

Just before Jesus was betrayed and handed over to the rulers to be crucified, he celebrated this “freedom meal” with his 12 disciples. As he did so, he turned the symbolism of the meal in a new direction.

He used the Passover festival to act out in symbolic drama the meaning of his coming death at the hands of the Jewish and Roman rulers. The unleavened bread and the wine were no longer symbols of deliverance from slavery in Egypt, but pictured him as the Passover Lamb sacrificed so that his people might be delivered from slavery to sin and death. As the leader of a new exodus, he instituted a new ceremony to commemorate it.

The explanation given by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians (11:17-34) helps us to understand the meaning of the Lord’s Supper. His explanation of the Lord’s Supper reveals six major themes.

#### 1. Saving Sacrifice (This is my body):

On the night Jesus was arrested and betrayed by one of his close followers to the Jewish and Roman authorities, he broke bread. And as he was doing so, he said, “This is my body which is being given for you.”

In the Jewish Passover feast, bread was eaten that was made without yeast. It had been made in haste because they were leaving Egypt in a hurry. In addition, a lamb was slaughtered to avert the angel of death.

The symbolism is now turned in a different direction. The bread represents the death of Jesus for his people. The Apostle Peter says, “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Pet 3:18). God was justly outraged by our moral rebellion against him. We were under the sentence of death.

Christ died in our place. He was the Passover Lamb who was sacrificed to avert the messenger of death so that we might have life. This is the tradition handed down by Paul in the words, “This is my body which is for you.”

#### 2. Covenant (This is my blood):

God had made a covenant with his people at Mount Sinai when he brought them out of Egypt. A relationship of love, loyalty and trust had been established. He would be their God, and they would be his people.

This covenant relationship, initiated by sacrifice, had been broken by the people. They had not been faithful to the agreement; they had not followed God’s standards for the relationship.

The death of Jesus initiates a new covenant by a better sacrifice — one that does not need to be repeated. The New Covenant is a better agreement because now not only God, but also his people will be able to keep the agreement.

The cup represents the fact that Jesus died to pay the penalty due unto us for our sins and that through trust in him and in his death for us, we are forgiven and completely pardoned. It speaks of a covenant relationship with God in which he says, “I will be your God, and you shall be my people.”

### 3. Commemoration (Do this in remembrance of me):

Some Christians believe that when the minister or priest pronounces the words, “This is my body” and “This is my blood,” the bread actually becomes the literal body of Christ, and the wine actually becomes the literal blood of Christ. This teaching, known as transubstantiation, is a misunderstanding of the text for four reasons:

a. The words “this is my body” and “this is my blood” are to be understood figuratively. When King David says, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” he is using a figure of speech, a metaphor. He does not mean that he is literally an animal or a sheep and that the Lord is a shepherd. He means that his relationship to the Lord is like that between a sheep and the shepherd. If Jesus had meant that the wine becomes his blood, why didn’t he use the word “become”? This is exactly what we have in John 2 when Jesus and his mother were at the wedding in Cana, and the text says that the water became wine.

b. Second, the Lord’s Supper has its origins in the Jewish Passover. This feast was a memorial — a reminder of the Exodus by the use of symbols.

c. Third, the festivals in the pagan religions at this time were also symbolic. It would have required a clear explanation if the Lord’s Supper was to be taken literally.

d. Fourth, Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” He said this carefully. He said it twice. We eat bread and drink wine as a reminder, not as the literal or real thing.

This clearly disproves erroneous thinking. The Lord’s Supper is not a new offering of Christ’s sacrifice. It is a remembering of the one sacrifice for sin, done once for all.

Furthermore, there is no idea presented that by a physical participation of the bread and the wine a person receives saving grace from God. We receive saving grace by faith, by putting our trust in Jesus Christ. John wrote his Gospel that we might believe, and that by believing we might have life (John 20:31).

### 4. Participation (Community):

Paul says that the Lord’s Supper is teaching given by Christ and handed on to you (v. 23 plural). The commands “to eat” and “to drink” are in the plural (v. 26). So, this instruction is given to a community, a community of believers, those who are the followers of Jesus.

The covenant binding us to God through the death of Jesus creates a community. By participating in the communal meal, we are bound not only to the Lord Jesus, but also to one another. We have fellowship with Christ in a deep and mysterious way (1 Cor 10:14-21).

### 5. Expectation (Future hope):

Paul commands the Corinthians to continue this ceremony until the Lord Jesus comes. The celebration is one of hope — certain hope. Jesus Christ will return to this earth bodily and physically.

When he returns, he will judge the earth. He will reward the righteous and punish the wicked. Wrongs will be set right. We will no longer need this reminder then.



## 6. Proclamation (Evangelism):

Finally, Paul says that by performing this ceremony, we proclaim the death of the Lord Jesus. The Lord's Supper dramatizes in symbolic fashion the central facts of the Christian faith and announces these facts to all who observe. In a very simple way, those who do not belong to Jesus can see and understand through these simple actions that the Lord Jesus gave his life for us.

Since the Lord's Supper is an expression of continuing in the faith, it follows logically that only baptized believers should participate. By eating the bread and drinking the cup, we are identifying with Jesus Christ as Lord. We are saying that when he died, he died for my sins. When he poured out his blood, it was the sacrificial death which initiated a new covenant — a new relationship between us and the Creator God.

We must recognize or distinguish the body of the Lord. By participating in this celebration, we enjoy deep fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Paul says that just as those who participate in pagan religious festivals are actually participating with demonic spirits, so those who belong to Jesus and who participate are actually involved in deep spiritual participation with Jesus Christ.

We must examine and judge ourselves. The ceremony is a way of saying, "I am continuing in my relationship with Jesus Christ." If our behavior is contrary to our confession, we are lying.

If we don't examine our lives, acknowledge our sins and turn from them, we will be disciplined by the Lord. But, we should not abstain from the Supper. We must examine ourselves and then participate (v. 28).



### **The Lord's Day, *BF&M* Article 8**

*By Hershael York*

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Because God is our Creator and Redeemer, he deserves and demands the first of all that we possess. This principle is given and reiterated throughout Scripture. We are to give the Lord the firstfruits of our increase. We should give him the first minutes of our day. We should seek first his reign and rule in our lives.

When the children of Israel moved into the land of Canaan, they were not allowed to keep any of the spoils from their conquest of Jericho. Because Jericho was their first conquest, it was to be totally devoted to the Lord. Is it any wonder, then, that New Testament believers have dedicated the first day of the week to commemorate the resurrection of our Lord?

Some Christians have erroneously called Sunday the Sabbath, but the Sabbath is, by definition, the seventh day of the week. Furthermore, some Christians sug-

gest that the Bible teaches that Sunday has replaced Saturday and serves as a “Christian Sabbath.” But admittedly, this is nowhere clearly taught in the Bible.

So why do Christians speak of “the Lord’s Day” and worship on Sunday rather than on Saturday? The answer to this important question lies in several biblical principles and practices rather than in any clear teaching or mandate of Scripture.

First, Christians need to understand that the principle of a day of rest after six days of work is rooted not in the law of Moses, but in creation. God was not tired. He needed no rest, yet he rested on the seventh day to provide a model for mankind. Jesus verified this when he taught that the Sabbath is a gracious gift of God given for the benefit of man (Mark 2:27). Since a day of rest is taught in creation and by Jesus, Christians should embrace the principle and observe a day of rest each week.

Second, even though we should observe a day of rest, we are not bound by the legal qualifications of the Sabbath as given in the law of Moses. That law was for national Israel and included precise definitions of just how much work could be allowed. The ancient Jews debated such matters as whether they could eat an egg that was laid on the Sabbath, or whether they could break a dead twig off a rose bush. Jesus ran up against this legalistic view of the Sabbath in his ministry.

Third, even though there is no clear teaching in Scripture that changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, there is unambiguous evidence that the early church met to worship on the first day of the week. Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday, which was the first work day of the Jewish week, and almost immediately thereafter the Bible records the church meeting on the evening of the first day of the week (John 20:19; Acts 20:7). In his teaching on giving, Paul instructs the Corinthians to receive the offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem on the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:2). Many scholars believe that John’s phrase, “the Lord’s Day,” in Revelation 1:10 refers to the first day of the week as well.

Finally, since, like the early church, we commemorate the resurrection of Christ by engaging in corporate worship on the first day of the week, it is right and reasonable to also use this day for the day of rest in which we cease from labor that is not a work of necessity or of mercy. Individual issues and questions about whether or not we should engage in a game of touch football or watch television, etc., are best left to the individual conscience with the admonition that we strive for maximum conformity to the will and intention of God and not the minimum.

That is why Article 8 of the *Baptist Faith and Message* states simply and clearly, “The first day of the week is the Lord’s Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord’s Day should be commensurate with the Christian’s conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.”





## **The Kingdom, *BF&M* Article 9**

*By John Polhill*

*J. B. Harrison Professor of New Testament*

The 1963 and 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* statements on the kingdom of God are identical. Upon a cursory glance, the Biblical passages which are listed along with the statement reveal much detail about the kingdom of God.

The greatest concentration of references is from the Gospels, including seven consecutive chapters of Matthew alone (chapters 4-10). The references from the remainder of the New Testament are less numerous, many dealing with the consummation of the kingdom.

The Old Testament references are sparse because the phrase “kingdom of God” does not occur there as such. The greatest concentration occurs in the Gospels because the kingdom of God was the favorite theme of Jesus, occurring over 100 times in his teachings.

The *BF&M* statement is a succinct summary of the major Biblical teachings on God’s kingdom. Let’s examine it line by line along with some of the texts which are applicable to each.

“The kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe...”

As Creator, God is absolute ruler over his universe (Gen 1:1). Many Old Testament passages speak of this sovereignty in terms of God’s being King (Pss 47:2; 103:19). The New Testament likewise often refers to the dominion of God as Creator (cp. Acts 17:22-31).

“...and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King.”

In the Bible, God’s “kingdom” does not refer so much to a place as it does to a rule — God’s dominion over the lives of individuals. It is not a worldly kingdom (John 18:36). Hence, for Matthew the terms “kingdom of Heaven” and “kingdom of God” are synonymous.

The rule of God in people’s lives was a favorite theme of Jesus’ teaching (Luke 4:43; 8:1; 12:31). He taught that it is near — as near as the individual’s response to his message (Matt 3:2; 12:28). He emphasized how it was “within” the hearts of individuals and the community of disciples who embraced God’s rule over their lives (Luke 17:20-21).

The kingdom was Jesus’ favorite subject for his parables; and through them, he taught its many aspects (cp. Matt 13:1-52). Later New Testament writers emphasized that the kingdom consists of believers who accept the rule of God in their lives through the atoning work of Christ (Rom 5:17; Col 1:13; Rev 1:9).

“Particularly the kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.”

The connection between the kingdom and salvation is already present in the teachings of Jesus (John 3:3). It is found throughout the New Testament, though often not in explicit “kingdom language.” Believers constitute a special kind of

kingdom subject. They are a kingdom of priests (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10).

“Christians ought to pray and to labor that the kingdom may come and God’s will be done on earth.”

This statement obviously alludes to the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:10). One must be careful not to misinterpret it. We do not bring the kingdom by our own effort. God’s sovereignty is eternal, and he brings his kingdom to us as he draws near us in mercy and love through our response to Christ (Mark 1:14-15). On the other hand, a life of committed Christian service is the sure sign that one belongs to the kingdom’s “flock” (Matt 25:31-46).

“The full consummation of the kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.”

The kingdom of God is eternal. It manifests itself at present in the lives of believers. It will be fully consummated in the future.

The future dimension of the kingdom is already implicit in the Old Testament promises of an eternal reign of the Messianic King (Isa 9:6-7; Jer 23:5-6). Jesus also spoke of that future time when he would sit at a table in the Father’s kingdom with all his disciples (Matt 26:29).

At the end of time, all God’s enemies will be vanquished, and the reign of the Lord Christ and God the Father will be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:24-28; Acts 1:6-7; Rev 11:15). This future kingdom will be an abiding city for all believers — a new heaven and a new earth, where all the sorrows and imperfections of this life have disappeared (Rom 8:18-21; Heb 11:10, 16; Rev 21-22).



### **Last Things, *BF&M* Article 10**

*By William F. Cook*

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Interpretation*

People have an intense interest in the future. Psychic hotlines have become big business as hurting people seek a glimpse of potential hope in their coming destiny.

Evangelical Christianity is not immune to this desire to know the future. Hal Lindsey’s book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, made him one of the 70s’ most popular authors. Even today Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye’s fictional series, *Left Behind*, hovers near the top of the New York Times best sellers’ list.

A “feeling” pervades many evangelicals that we indeed are the “terminal generation.” The 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* statement on “Last Things” is a judiciously written statement that provides insight into some of the most significant events in the future and at the same time can be embraced by believers from various millennial perspectives.

The initial sentence affirms God’s sovereign control of history. Christians are confident in the final outcome of history because we believe that God is

sovereignly directing history toward its God-ordained conclusion.

The next sentence affirms Jesus Christ's return. Significant areas of agreement exist among evangelicals in regards to Christ's Second Coming. First, evangelicals believe that Jesus Christ's return will be sudden, personal, visible and bodily. Second, believers should anxiously await Christ's return (Titus 2:12; Phil 3:20).

Unfortunately, many Western Christians are so consumed with the things of this world that they seldom contemplate the glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

A third area of agreement is that we cannot know the time of his return; however, Jesus encouraged his followers to be vigilant as we await his coming.

Finally, evangelicals agree that believers will live with Jesus Christ in a new heaven and a new earth.

While Christians differ in their understanding of the nature and chronology of Christ's Second Coming, there is much agreement on the events following his return. All agree that his return will be followed by the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment and the eternal state.

The Bible teaches that at Christ's return the dead will be raised (Dan 12.2; John 11:24-25; 1 Cor 15). Both the righteous and the wicked will be raised; however, the chronology of this event is set forth differently by various millennial perspectives.

The statement on the resurrection of the dead is followed by the theme of final judgment. Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead (John 12:47ff; Acts 17:31). We must be careful, as believers, not to misunderstand the nature of this judgment or fear the possibility that a true believer could be eternally condemned. The judgment of believers is for the purpose of bestowing degrees of reward (1 Cor 3:12-15).

The last judgment involves also the eternal state of unbelievers. Those who do not know God through his Son will enter into eternal punishment. Hell is a place where the unsaved will experience eternal conscious punishment.

In recent years some evangelical theologians have denied that there will be eternal conscious punishment of unbelievers; however, the scriptural evidence for eternal punishment is overwhelming. The doctrine of hell is a "tough" doctrine that should fill our hearts with pain and compassion for the multitudes that do not know our Lord. The contemplation of eternal punishment should be an incentive to aggressive evangelism and world missions.

The confession concludes with a pronouncement of the glories of heaven. Believers will live eternally with God in a new heaven and a new earth. John put it this way — "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Rev 21:1).

We believe that Jesus Christ will return because he promised that he would. At the time of his return, every sacrifice we may have made for his kingdom will melt into insignificance as we enter into eternity with our Savior. Every longing that we as believers have had to see our Lord's face will be realized.

When we see him, we shall be like him (1 John 3:2), and we will fall on our

faces to worship the one “who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood” (Rev 1:5b). At that time arguments over the millennium will be irrelevant as we cry out “to him be glory and power forever and ever” (Rev 1:6b).



## **Evangelism and Missions, *BF&M* Article 11**

*By Thom Rainer*

*Dean, Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth*

The major change in Article 11 of the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* is in the final sentence of the article: “It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with

the gospel of Christ.”

The words “verbal witness” were added to the 2000 statement. These two words were absolutely needed, and they added a component to the mandate of missions and evangelism that was conspicuously absent in previous statements.

Perhaps a current illustration can illuminate the importance of a verbal witness in the evangelistic mandate. I recently provided a brief consultation with a denominational group outside of the Southern Baptist Convention. My assignment was to offer counsel and provide insight into the reasons the regional denominational group was declining.

In the course of my research, I asked if the group provided any evangelistic training for their churches. The key leaders proudly showed me how they had developed a series of training modules which had been eagerly accepted and utilized by a majority of their churches.

My next step was to examine the evangelism training provided by the denominational group. The material was well done. Teaching units were available to the churches on CD or video cassette. The quality of the audio/video material was excellent.

But one aspect of the training concerned me. I could find no material which provided training on how to present a verbal witness for Christ. Thinking that I must have missed something, I asked the leaders what type of verbal witness training they provided. Their answer was a curt and succinct, “we don’t.”

Seeing the perplexed look on my face, they explained that it was their role to provide lifestyle evangelism training. But, they insisted that it was not their place to train others to tell about Jesus. Such an approach, they told me, presumed that Christians had a monopoly on truth.

And such a presumption from their point of view reeked of arrogance. They would be happy to train people in a Christian lifestyle. And if others inquired of their members, they could certainly tell them about Christ. But they would never be so narrow-minded as to insist that others hear the gospel message.

Such is the danger of speaking about missions and evangelism without explicitly mentioning the mandate to tell the good news. A Christian lifestyle witness is

imperative. It provides the foundation from which a verbal witness can be heard with credibility.

But a lifestyle witness alone is insufficient. The Apostle Paul was clear on this issue when he wrote the church at Rome: “How then will they believe in Him whom they have not heard” (Rom 10:14a). As Paul admonished Timothy, we are to do the work of an evangelist, clearly speaking the good news of Christ.

The key changes in Article 11 of the 2000 *BF&M* are the additions of “verbal witness” and “the preaching of the gospel to all nations.” Both changes rightly correct earlier statements’ omissions of any type of explicit verbal proclamation of Christ. And both changes are much more consistent with the biblical teachings which command us to *tell* the good news to everyone.



### **Education, *BF&M* Article 12**

*By Dennis Williams*

*Dean, Institutional Assessment; Professor of  
Christian Education and Leadership*

Throughout the Scriptures, education has been a major priority. This can be traced from the teachings in both the Old and New Testaments.

Deuteronomy — especially in chapters 4, 6 and 31 — repeats the words of “teach,” “taught” and “learn” as preparation for the people to go into the Promised Land.

The prophets were more “forth tellers” than “fore tellers” as they instructed the people of God. In Nehemiah, we see Ezra the scribe reading the Book of the Law of God, making it clear so people could understand (8:7).

Psalms 119 teaches us to hide the Word in our hearts and asks the Lord to teach us to follow his ways (119:11, 33). Proverbs refers to a father’s instruction and the importance of wisdom.

Jesus taught the people the truth of God. The believers “continued in the apostle’s teaching” in the book of Acts (2:42). The letters of the New Testament are actually teaching documents intended to build up the churches.

The biblical injunction to teach, along with the responsibility of the believer to learn, has been carried on throughout the centuries since the early church. At times, it was primarily for the clergy. And eventually, with the Reformation, it was expanded to the laity. The church was the center of education for many centuries.

The *Baptist Faith and Message* statement indicates that an adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ’s people. How then, is Christian education defined?

Perhaps the best way to answer this is to ask additional questions. Is Christian education only for Christians? How is Christian education different from “secular” education? What makes Christian education Christian? What is the purpose of Christian education? How are goals and values determined? What is the setting for Christian education?

Christian education means education for Christians, but it is much more. It

includes pre-conversion, conversion and post conversion learning experiences. People come to faith in Christ through the faithful teaching of God's Word and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. It is not a one-time learning experience, but a lifetime dedicated to learning more about God and his Word.

The difference between secular and Christian education is seen in the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian education, as well as in the content to be taught along with the different presuppositions regarding truth. Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, believers are shown the truth of God's Word. Both secular and Christian educators may use similar methodologies, but the basic issues related to truth make them quite different.

Christian education is Christian when teachers and learners are dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit in the learning environment. It is Christian when the purpose and goals are honoring to the Lord and his kingdom. It is Christian when the curriculum is developed from the teachings of the Word of God and from an understanding of biblical theology. It is Christian when there is an overall understanding and perspective that God is in control and that teachers and learners are sincerely seeking to fulfill God's will and purpose in all things.

The purpose of Christian education is to bring people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, to train them in a life of discipleship and to equip them for Christian service in the world today. It is to develop in believers a biblical worldview that will assist in making significant decisions from a Christian perspective.

The purpose, goals and values of Christian education are derived from a theological foundation that is biblically based. Worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship and service are all drawn from the Scriptures and are included in any purpose and value statement for Christian education. Goals are developed from these key functions of the church, and effective Christian education can be measured based upon the accomplishment of these functions.

The primary setting for Christian education is the church. Actually the educational ministry of the church is probably the largest educational endeavor in the world.

Christian education also takes place outside the walls of the church through Christian schools, Bible studies and other kinds of ministries. It is important to note that Christian education is not limited to just one organization or ministry and is found in many different venues.

Bible-based, theologically sound, Holy Spirit empowered, teaching-learning, growth, equipping, change, the church, evangelism and service are all elements to be included under the umbrella of Christian education.

Yes, the church is charged with the responsibility of providing adequate Christian education, and this is clearly stated as part of the *BF&M*.







## Stewardship, *BF&M* Article 13

*By Douglas Walker*

*Vice President for Institutional Advancement*

A full exegesis of Article 13 of the *Baptist Faith and Message* would consume a lengthy volume and yield fruitful discourse. At least three topics deserve our attention here.

First, God owns everything, and therefore we are to be stewards of all he gives us. A basic tenet of a Christian worldview holds that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. As Creator he thus owns all that is or ever will be. He owns our lives and bodies, our health and welfare, our goods and possessions and even the air we breathe.

In his wisdom and providence, he has placed in our hands and at our disposal certain blessings and gifts for our use for his glory. We, in turn, are thus responsible for using his blessings for his glory, our benefit and the welfare of others.

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 makes clear that our responsibility is to multiply the gifts given to us by God. A thoughtful stewardship of all that we have is part of our Christian discipleship.

A second topic for our consideration is the command given in Scripture for us to give “cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally ...” to the Lord’s work.

The command to tithe is clearly given in the Old Testament. Some have argued that since the tithe is not mentioned in a positive way in the New Testament, the tithing injunction does not apply to Christians.

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Paul says, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of the week each of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collection be made when I come.” And again in 2 Corinthians 9:6 he writes, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

The New Testament teaches that Christians should give even above the tithe as God so blesses. The tithe is not done away with in the New Testament, but a greater principle of giving is placed upon the disciple of Christ. Christians are to give sacrificially as God blesses them.

Jesus commends the widow in Mark 12:41-44 who had put into the treasury “more than all the contributors” because she “out of her poverty, put in all she owned.” May the Lord find us faithful in giving above and beyond the tithe.

A final topic mentioned in Article 13 is the motivation for our stewardship — the glory of God and the benefit of others. Stewardship obviously involves more than our income or possessions but refers to every aspect of our lives.

Giving of our means is part of true Christian worship. Taking care of our bodies likewise is part of our stewardship so that we can serve God with all of our might. We work in order to be able not only to provide for ourselves and our families, but so that we might give to the Lord’s work.

Southern Seminary has been blessed by those who were so motivated that, for God's glory and the benefit of the Kingdom, they have provided money to help train, educate and prepare God-called men and women for faithful service.

In our materialistic society we must challenge believers to work not for bigger houses and better cars, but so that they might give to the Lord's work around the world. God's glory should be the driving force behind how we use all the gifts and possessions that God has placed in our care.

At the end of our lives may we be found as faithful stewards of all that he has entrusted to us.



## **Cooperation, *BF&M* Article 14**

*By Mark Terry*

*A. P. and Faye Stone Professor of Christian Missions and Evangelism*

This article speaks to something near and dear to the heart of Southern Baptists — cooperation. A key concept in understanding Southern Baptists is voluntary cooperation.

Each Southern Baptist church is autonomous and self-governing under the Lordship of Christ. These churches, though, may decide to cooperate with other like-minded churches to provide for mutual encouragement and the advancement of God's kingdom through evangelism and missions.

Since the 1600s, Baptists have formed associations. An association is a group of churches that voluntarily join together for fellowship, encouragement and missions. Churches are the members of the association, but the association does not rule its member churches.

Churches may also choose to form a convention. In the United States, Southern Baptist churches have organized both state conventions and a national body, the Southern Baptist Convention.

Churches comprise the membership of state conventions and the SBC. They join voluntarily and may withdraw voluntarily.

Conventions exercise no control over the churches. Each level is autonomous. Thus, an association cannot dictate to a church or to the state convention. Of course, the reverse is true as well. A church might be a member of one body but not another, though that is unusual. Associations and conventions are governed by votes cast by messengers sent from member churches.

Southern Baptist churches formed state conventions and the SBC in order to conduct work on a wider geographical basis. State conventions operate on a state-wide basis, while the SBC is concerned with national and international ministry.

In 2000, the SBC celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cooperative Program. This program was adopted in 1925 at the SBC annual meeting with E. Y. Mullins, president of Southern Seminary, moderating as president of the SBC.

Through the Cooperative Program churches are able to pool their resources voluntarily in order to do missions, education and benevolent ministries. Before the Cooperative Program was adopted, Baptist institutions and agencies supported themselves by sending out agents to solicit money from the churches. This system did not work well, and many pastors called for a better system.

Under the Cooperative Program, each church decides to send a certain percentage (or amount) of its undesignated income to the Cooperative Program. These funds are remitted to the state convention where an approved percentage is retained for the state convention's use, and the remainder is sent to the treasurer of the Executive Committee of the SBC in Nashville, Tenn.

The Cooperative Program was a major step forward for the SBC. The program provided more funds for Baptist institutions and agencies, and it also made systematic budgeting possible. The support Southern Seminary receives from the program makes it possible for students to study at a modest cost compared to independent seminaries.

One might well ask two questions of this system of cooperation. Is it biblical? And does it work?

In 2 Corinthians 8-9, the Apostle Paul discusses the offering he was gathering for the Christians in Jerusalem who were suffering because of a famine. Paul encouraged all the churches of Macedonia and Achaia to join together in giving to meet this need. This is an excellent example of how churches of the New Testament era combined their efforts in order to minister to suffering saints.

Does cooperation work? Our system of cooperation has been a significant factor in the growth of the SBC to become the largest non-Catholic denomination in the United States.

What about cooperation with other churches and denominations? Southern Baptists belong to the Baptist World Alliance, but we have declined to join the National Council of Churches or the World Council of Churches because of doctrinal concerns. We do cooperate with other churches to accomplish projects like evangelistic campaigns and Bible publishing.



## **The Christian and the Social Order, BF&M Article 15**

*By Russell D. Moore*

*Instructor of Christian Theology; Executive  
Director, Carl F.H. Henry Institute for  
Evangelical Engagement*

Shouldn't Baptist confessions of faith focus on matters of faith, not politics? Why can't Baptists address issues such as the person of Christ and the way of salvation, leaving alone such thorny contemporary controversies as abortion and gay rights? Is it really our place as a convention of churches to speak to the fiery debates of the public square?

If the Bible addressed only matters of individual redemption and personal

piety, such objections would be compelling. Such, however, is not the case.

The prophets denounced social evils ranging from legislation deemed unfair to the poor (Isa 10:1-2) to mistreatment of immigrants (Deut 10:17-19) to the “inappropriate relationships” of public officials (2 Sam 12:1-12; John 14:4). Jesus called on his followers not to disengage from society, but to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Matt 5:13-16).

But Southern Baptists are not willing to repeat the errors of turn-of-the-century Social Gospel Protestant liberalism. This article makes clear that all efforts toward societal righteousness “can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.” In this, the article is consistent with the rest of the document.

Social disorder does not spring ultimately from an under-funded public school system or from crumbling infrastructure, but from the sinful rebellion of Adam’s heirs. Thus, all attempts at social reformation are doomed to failure, unless they are joined with the full-throated preaching of a gospel that results in a “new creation” in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17).

This confession asserts that Christians should “seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love.” It does not leave these undefined, however, but contends that Christians should oppose such evils as racism, greed, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, abortion and exploitation of the poor and the weak.

In doing so, Southern Baptists are not taking a break from doctrine in order to address a few political matters. This statement recognizes that these injustices are often themselves theological claims — addressed not only to the world, but also to the members of our churches. In our history, the local Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan was far too often a member in good standing of the local Southern Baptist church. He was able to justify a hateful heart by assuring himself that black people aren’t *really* made in the image of God.

Today, the neighborhood Planned Parenthood counselor is all too willing to assure the scared pregnant teenager that the fetus within her womb isn’t *really* a human life. Gay rights slogans invariably include the theological assertion that God creates some human beings with an irreversible same-sex attraction. When it comes to sexual morality, Southern Baptist youth groups may hear from their pastors that “True Love Waits.” But they also hear from their elected officials that, well, it depends on what the meaning of the word “is” is.

This article seeks to remind Southern Baptists that a Christian worldview means more than avoiding R-rated movies. Believers in union with Christ will share his priorities. They will be angered by those defrauded by unjust court systems (Isa 11:4). They will oppose those who seek to snuff out the lives of the helpless (Ps 72:4). They will stand against those who counsel sinners that there is no hope for them to change (John 8:34-36). Above all, they will warn the powers-that-be that all social unrighteousness will end when the kingdoms of this world are crushed by the kingdom of our Christ (Dan 2:44).





## Peace and War, *BF&M* Article 16

*By James Parker*

*Professor of Worldview and Culture; Associate Dean, Worldview and Culture, School of Theology*

The apex of the Beatitudes is found in these words, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are called the children of God.” Peacemaking is described as a fundamental characteristic of believers.

The Messiah was to be called “The Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6). The familiar Old Testament benediction concludes with, “The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Num 6:26). Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27). The Christian gospel itself is called “the gospel of peace” (Acts 10:36; Eph 6:15), and the Holy Spirit himself produces the fruit of peace (Col 3:15; Gal 5:22).

Peace is not merely the absence of war. The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, refers to a state of harmony, prosperity, well-being and completeness. The New Testament word, *eirene*, refers to harmony in relationships, where strife and discord is replaced with harmonious relationship.

There are three foundational areas where Christians are called to make peace: with God, between Christians and corporately in society.

The first is personal and “vertical”: “Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). Because of Christ’s redemptive work on the cross and our entering into a trusting relationship with him, our great war with God is over, and we have peace with God.

The second area is “horizontal” reconciliation within the body of Christ. Ephesians 2:13-17 says, “You who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace.... He has... reconciled both groups to God in one body through the cross.”

The third area involves corporate peacemaking in the society at large. “If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Rom 12:18).

The *BF&M* statement is very specific that this corporate peacemaking is to be based on “principles of righteousness.” In other words the peace to be sought is not “peace at any price” — which is transitory and an illusion — but rather peace that is based on God’s justice and righteousness. Once I saw a bumper sticker that said, “If you want peace, work for justice.” In the Beatitudes, righteousness comes before peacemaking. In Romans 14:17 Paul summarizes that the kingdom of God is “righteousness” and “peace” — in that order. The prophet Isaiah (32:17) also affirmed that “the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.”

Where unrighteousness, injustice and wickedness dwell, there can be no peace (Isa 48:22). The reason for this is that unrighteousness sustains division, discord, pain and strife. So whether in personal, familial, business, school or international relationships, there will not be biblical peace (healthiness, harmony) unless it is founded on God’s righteousness.

The *BF&M* statement calls upon the faithful to “do all in their power to put an end to war.” While some have suggested that must mean unilateral disarmament,

Baptists have not understood the statement in this way and have usually taken the position that sometimes in order to establish a just and righteous peace, following the Augustinian tradition, a “just war” must be engaged.

After all is said and done, the supreme task for believers is to “pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace” and look forward to that day when his will will in fact be done on earth even as it is being perfectly done even now in heaven.



## Religious Liberty, *BF&M* Article 17

By Thomas Nettles

*Professor of Historical Theology*

Religious Liberty sprung fully panoplied from the earliest Baptist writings. Their doctrine of the church assumed that the Spirit, and he alone, used the power of biblical truth, normally through preaching, to produce the new birth. The composition of the church consists only of those born again under such influences; believers only, therefore, should be baptized.

The Spirit's sword, not the magistrate's sword, makes Christians. A church constituted by those whose consciences have been either forced or bribed by carnal power is not a New Testament church.

The General Baptists gave lengthy, cogent and gospel-centered arguments for full liberty of conscience, though their's was violated for this stance. John Smyth, in voluntary exile, wrote, “The prince must leave the Christian religion free to every man's conscience.” Thomas Helwys said, “Let them be heretiks, Turcks, Jewes or whatsoever it apperteynes not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.” Leonard Busher wrote in *A Plea for Liberty of Conscience* that “no king nor bishop ... is able to command faith; ... it is the gift of God, who worketh in us both the will and the deed of his own good pleasure.”

An anonymous General Baptist wrote *Persecution for Religion Judg'd and Condemn'd*. John Murton wrote in *A Most Humble Supplication* to the king, “Far be it from you to sit in the consciences of men, to be lawgiver and judge therein.” John Spilsbury, the first pastor among the Particular Baptists, wrote, “No conscience ought to be forced in the matters of Religion, because no man can bear out another in his account to God.”

Christopher Blackwood in *The Storming of Antichrist* asks, “Whether it be lawful for any person whatsoever to compell the conscience?” He gives the answer, “It is not,” followed by 29 reasons for such an answer. Roger Williams labeled the violation of conscience by the civil power *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience*. John Clarke in his description of persecution in Massachusetts and his arguments against it calls conscience “a sparkling beam from the Father of lights and spirits that cannot be lorded over, commanded, or forced, either by men, devils, or angels.”

All of these were written before John Locke perceived of religious liberty and as much as 160 years before Thomas Jefferson was able to distill it into law in

Virginia. Rhode Island under the influence of Williams and Clarke stated in its charter, the one gained in 1663, "A most flourishing civil state may stand and best be maintained with a full liberty in religious concerns." Those words, perhaps commonplace today, expressed a revolutionary understanding of society and reflected a worldview trained by the gospel and the ideal of a regenerate church membership.

The 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* continues this historical witness when it states as its first sentence, "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it."

The article strongly implies that creeds enforced by a civil power would be unwarranted and outside the bounds of legitimate government: "The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind."

The preface of the 2000 *BF&M* includes a wording on this issue more carefully constructed than that of the 1963 *BF&M*: "Baptists cherish and defend religious liberty, and deny the right of any secular or religious authority to impose a confession of faith upon a church or body of churches."

Just as strongly, however, the confession encourages and approves the development of doctrinal statements derived from the Word of God and entered into voluntarily by churches for the sake of gospel witness. "The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends" and includes among these "the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power."

Though Baptists arose in the fires of persecution, endured them for the better part of a century in Old England, witnessed in spite of them in New England and suffered greatly under an established church in colonial Virginia, they have never desired special treatment from civil powers, only neutral protection of universal rights.

"The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work," the confession says. This echoes Madison's famous *Memorial and Remonstrance*, which echoed the concerns of Virginia Baptists in saying that when the civil authority uses religion as "an engine of civil policy," he thereby indulges "an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation."

Long and sad experience has taught Baptists and even the inside of a jail cell could not dissuade them from the truth of these two assertions of the *BF&M*: "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." John Leland's *The Rights of Conscience* gives the corollary to that concern in proposing the query, "Did not religion receive a deadly wound by being fostered in the arms of civil power and regulated by law?"

Along with such insistent refusal to obey the state in religious matters is the glad acquiescence to the necessity of governmental authority in the lawful regulation of civil society. "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."

No citizen is more loyal to the government or more zealous for the rights of others than a historically informed, gospel believing Baptist.

A well-ordered government should function “so that every church [and every religion enjoys] protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends.” This commitment to freedom arises not from doubts concerning the clarity of divine revelation or a relativistic view of truth, but from the happy conviction that the gospel, and it only, is the power of God unto salvation.



## **The Family, *BF&M* Article 18**

*By William Cutrer*

*C. Edwin Gheens Associate Professor of Christian Ministry; Director, Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry*

The Bible is replete with family imagery as evidenced in the many wonderful verses cited for the *Baptist Faith and Message* Article 18. We are indeed “brothers and sisters” in Christ, adopted as children by our heavenly Father. The importance of the marriage relationship unfolds symbolically in the Old Testament with God as husband and Israel as wife, and in the New Testament with Jesus as the bridegroom and the church as the radiant bride. Clearly, marriage and family are distinctly theological.

A healthy home has deep spiritual dimensions, and thus the Bible instructs us concerning the family. We as believers must look first to Jesus Christ, our bridegroom, to engage and understand the divine design for marriage. God’s perspective always places greater emphasis on character and motivation than merely on outward conduct. Thus, as Jesus described himself as gentle and humble in heart, always acting in a manner pleasing to the Father, the family provides the altar of transformation where we learn to love and to live like Jesus.

God reveals himself as a relational being, and we are created in his image for lasting, intimate relationships — first with God himself, and then with others. Our love and understanding of God find expression in our love for people, with family relationships being the deepest and most precious.

God’s ideal for the home — an intimate relationship that brings deep soul satisfaction to both husband and wife — models grace and faith for the children and proclaims to a lost and lonely world the type of love that God has for his people. This intimacy extends from a spiritual foundation through a relational sphere and culminates in the physical expression within the bounds of marriage.

Christian homes draw people to Christ, both the children that God may bring into the family and those outside the church who witness a love that is committed, sacrificial and selfless, dependent moment by moment upon Jesus as Lord.

The Scriptures give unique imperatives — directed to the husband, the wife and the children — that detail the incarnation of submission. The godly husband will nourish and cherish his wife, loving her “as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her.” The spiritual husband is a submissive servant of Christ, humble, gentle, faithfully putting his wife’s welfare and needs above his own. The godly wife will respect and honor her own husband, submitting to him “as unto the

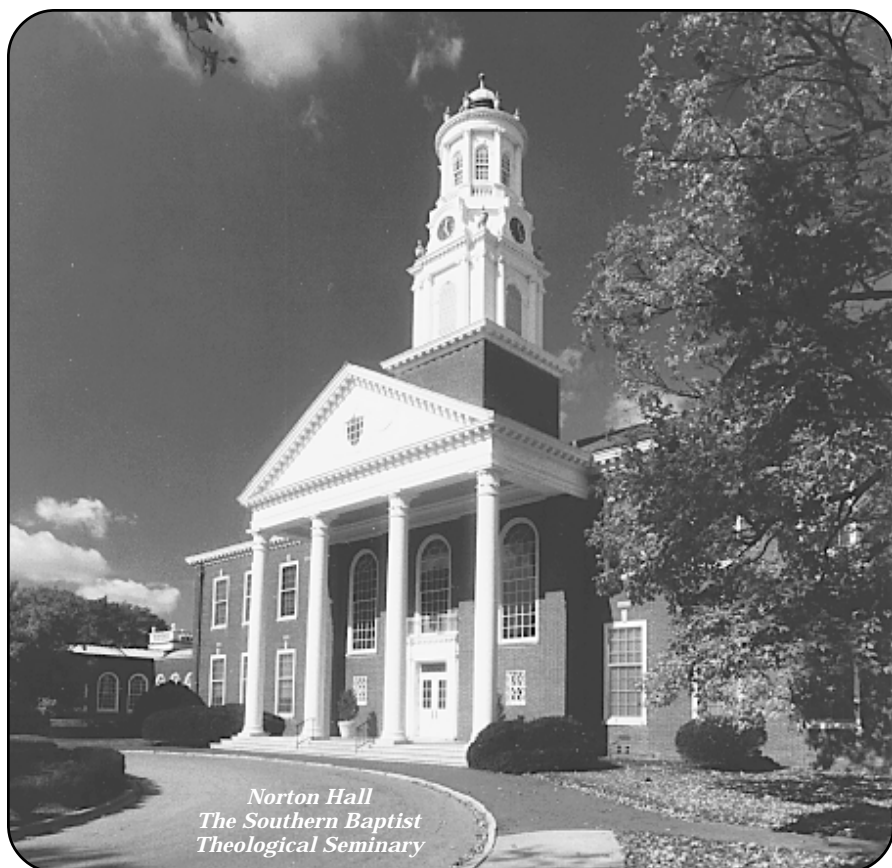


Lord.” Her character and conduct can draw even an unbelieving husband to faith.

For each the Lord Jesus is the motivation and object of an obedient life. Each recreates the very picture of Christ’s love for his people as he willingly gave up his life for his beloved. Both husband and wife, absolute equals before the Lord, fix their eyes first upon him and then upon each other. Obedience for the Christian is neither optional, selective, nor conditional upon the spouse’s response or behavior.

Should God bless such a household with children, they will witness daily submission and godly love as they are charged to obey their parents “in the Lord.” Jesus, the perfect bridegroom and the central focus of each command, radiates his love to the family and through each member to the world.

The family of God operates in direct opposition to our culture and our natural tendency to self-centeredness, self-absorption and self-gratification, and requires the supernatural enablement of the Holy Spirit. The theology of family is characterized by each member outdoing the other in service, in sacrifice, in submission to the Lord, reflecting gratitude for God’s faithful, intimate love toward us.



### The Baptist Faith and Message

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#### Report of the Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee to the Southern Baptist Convention June 14, 2000

The 1999 session of the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, adopted the following motion addressed to the President of the Convention:

“I move that in your capacity as Southern Baptist Convention chairman, you appoint a blue ribbon committee to review the Baptist Faith and Message statement with the responsibility to report and bring any recommendations to this meeting next June in Orlando.”

President Paige Patterson appointed the committee as follows: Max Barnett (OK), Steve Gaines (AL), Susie Hawkins (TX), Rudy A. Hernandez (TX), Charles S. Kelley, Jr. (LA), Heather King (IN), Richard D. Land (TN), Fred Luter (LA), R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (KY), T. C. Pinckney (VA), Nelson Price (GA), Adrian Rogers (TN), Roger Spradlin (CA), Simon Tsoi (AZ), Jerry Vines (FL). Adrian Rogers (TN) was appointed chairman.

Your committee thus constituted begs leave to present its report as follows:

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

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

New challenges to faith appear in every age. A pervasive anti-supernaturalism in the culture was answered by Southern Baptists in 1925, when the Baptist Faith and Message was first adopted by this Convention. In 1963, Southern Baptists responded to assaults upon the authority

and truthfulness of the Bible by adopting revisions to the Baptist Faith and Message. The Convention added an article on “The Family” in 1998, thus answering cultural confusion with the clear teachings of Scripture. Now, faced with a culture hostile to the very notion of truth, this generation of Baptists must claim anew the eternal truths of the Christian faith.

Your committee respects and celebrates the heritage of the Baptist Faith and Message, and affirms the decision of the Convention in 1925 to adopt the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, “revised at certain points and with some additional articles growing out of certain needs . . . .” We also respect the important contributions of the 1925 and 1963 editions of the Baptist Faith and Message.

With the 1963 committee, we have been guided in our work by the 1925 “statement of the historic Baptist conception of the nature and function of confessions of faith in our religious and denominational life . . . .” It is, therefore, quoted in full as a part of this report to the Convention:

- (1) That they constitute a consensus of opinion of some Baptist body, large or small, for the general instruction and guidance of our own people and others concerning those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely held among us. They are not intended to add anything to the simple conditions of salvation revealed in the New Testament, viz., repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.
- (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.

Baptists cherish and defend religious liberty, and deny the right of any secular or religious authority to impose a confession of faith upon a church or body of churches. We honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers, affirming together both our liberty in Christ and our accountability to each other under the Word of God.

Baptist churches, associations, and general bodies have adopted confessions of faith as a witness to the world, and as instruments of doctrinal accountability. We are not embarrassed to state before the world that these are doctrines we hold precious and as essential to the Baptist tradition of faith and practice.

As a committee, we have been charged to address the “certain needs” of our own generation. In an age increasingly hostile to Christian truth, our challenge is to express the truth as revealed in Scripture, and to bear witness to Jesus Christ, who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

The 1963 committee rightly sought to identify and affirm “certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe, cherish, and with which they have been and are now closely identified.” Our living faith is established upon eternal truths. “Thus this generation of Southern Baptists is in historic succession of intent and purpose as it endeavors to state for its time and theological climate those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely held among us.”

It is the purpose of this statement of faith and message to set forth certain teachings which we believe.

## I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11, 89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

## II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

### A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

### B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God

where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

### C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

## III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gen-

der is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

#### IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

## V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6, 12, 17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.



## VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

## VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

## VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

## IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

## X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

## XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

## XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

### XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21, 42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

### XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

## XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

## XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

## XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to 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.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7, 24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

## XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given

responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.



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