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Becoming Baptist

Baptist Beliefs and Traditions Past and Present

OVERVIEW

Old and rich in history, the Baptist faith is an outgrowth of the Protestant Reformation that began in sixteenth-century Europe. The original Baptists were a fiercely independent group of Christian **adherents** who believed that they could have a direct and personal relationship with Jesus Christ and who rejected the union of church and state that was prevalent throughout Europe.

The Protestant Reformation was a revolutionary movement begun by a German priest and **theologian**, Martin Luther, in 1517. Luther challenged established religious practices of the **Roman Catholic Church**, the preeminent form of Christianity at that time. Specifically, Luther took issue with the Catholic belief that Christians are saved through their good works. Luther was convinced that Christians are saved by a conscious acceptance of Jesus Christ as their personal savior and by God's **grace**. Luther was also quite concerned that the Catholic church had too much influence over the European political system; he firmly believed that the Christian church should function separately from the state.¹ Finally, Luther believed that Christians did not require priests or other intermediaries to speak to God for them. Instead he believed that through a covenant relationship with Christ, they have direct and meaningful access to their Savior.

Protestant Reformers, later called simply **Protestants**, were revolutionary thinkers who wished to reform the traditional system of religious faith, belief, and practice. Protestants believed in:

- *Justification by faith*: The first step in a covenant relationship with Jesus required that believers make a public confession of faith.

- *The authority of the Scriptures*: The **Bible** is the Word of God.
- *The priesthood of all believers*: This implies direct access to God and responsibility as ministers. Every Christian is responsible for building Christ's kingdom.

Baptists, as one of many Protestant groups, share these beliefs but implement them in their own way. This chapter briefly discusses standard Baptist **dogma** and practices, setting the stage for the next chapters that will delineate specific beliefs, among which are:

- Soul freedom
- Authority of the Scriptures
- Church autonomy (separation of church and state)
- Believer's baptism (immersion)
- The Lord's Supper
- Spreading the Gospel throughout all nations.

In exploring Baptist beliefs and traditions, this chapter will address the following questions:

- Why are we called Baptists?
- What are the historical roots of the Baptist faith?
- What is the history of Baptists in the United States?
- What are the main components of Baptist theology?
- What are the main beliefs and **distinctives** of Baptists?
- How is the Baptist mission movement related to Baptist beliefs?
- How has Baptist theology affected American ideas of freedom?
- What is the Baptist view of the nature of God?
- Is there a **creed** or philosophy of religious practice that Baptists follow?
- What are the most important ordinances (religious practices) of Baptists?
- How does one become Baptist?
- What are the usual categories of admission to membership in black Baptist churches?

- How are infants and children incorporated into the life of a Baptist church?
- What are the responsibilities of Baptists to their church and faith community?

THINKING THROUGH MY CHOICE

WHY ARE WE CALLED BAPTISTS?

There is some indication that Baptists existed in the 1500s, though the name was not initially accepted because it was too similar to that of the **Anabaptists**, Christians who rebaptized persons who had previously been baptized as infants. Because of the extreme nature of some of their beliefs and practices, Anabaptists were held in low esteem by Catholics and some Protestant groups.²

It was not until the 1600s that English Baptists began to use the name *Baptist* to describe themselves.³ **Baptists** are named for John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus. John the Baptist was a prophet who foresaw the coming of the Messiah, believed Jesus to be the Messiah, and practiced adult **baptism** by full **immersion** (Matthew 3).

WHAT ARE THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE BAPTIST FAITH?

The origins of Baptist theology, belief, and practice are connected to English Congregationalism, a late-sixteenth-century religious movement that rejected the parish structure of the Church of England. (A parish is the neighborhood surrounding a specific church building; all community members were required to belong to the parish and its church, and neighborhood children were automatically baptized into the faith.)

Protestants developed the “gathered church” model as an alternative to the parish structure. Membership in the gathered church was voluntary, based on evidence of spiritual conversion, and baptism was typically reserved for adult believers. Although their members were primarily English, the earliest Baptist churches (1609–1612) were located in Holland, a country with a reputation for religious tolerance. The first Baptist congregation, led by John Smyth, included thirty-six men and women. In 1612 Thomas Helwys returned to England from Holland and established the first English Baptist church.

All of the world’s Baptists are part of a tradition that is most reliably traced to the seventeenth century (1600s). “This tradition has emphasized the lordship and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, believer’s baptism, the competency of all believers to be in direct relationship with God and to interpret Scripture, the influence of the Holy Spirit on individual lives and ministries, and the need for autonomous congregations free from government interference or hierarchical **polity**.”⁴

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF BAPTISTS IN THE UNITED STATES? In England, Baptists were social outcasts, persons in need of a place to **worship**. They were strong believers in religious freedom as well as in the separation of church and state, and they were not practicing Anglicans (members of the Church of England).⁵ Formerly a **minister** in and a member of the Church of England, Roger Williams was expelled from England because of his religious differences with the throne.

With other Pilgrims, Williams traveled to Massachusetts, a British colony, where he resumed his work as a minister. However, he was distressed by the influence of the church on civic affairs in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In Massachusetts, Williams was threatened with death for his beliefs about church autonomy.

Williams escaped to uncolonized Rhode Island and in 1639 established the first Baptist church in America. This action made Rhode Island the first government in history that was founded on the belief in absolute religious freedom. Williams was the first American to be baptized by full immersion.⁶ Another Baptist church was started around the same time in Newport, Rhode Island, by John Clark, a minister and physician.⁷

WHAT ARE THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF BAPTIST THEOLOGY?

While early Baptists did not share a single theological view, most believed that free worship requires soul competency (freedom), responsibility before God, and church autonomy (see other questions later in this chapter).

Baptists also exercised their religious freedom of belief and practice in other ways. Some Baptists based their **theology** on **Calvinism**,

which believes in **predestination**, the concept that God has determined every action and outcome in the world and, by extension, those who benefit from God's **grace**. Other Baptists embraced **Arminianism**, the view that **free will** is the essential determining factor in **salvation**. General (Arminian)⁸ and Particular (Calvinist) Baptists were the first two distinct groups of Baptists and Baptist thought. Calvinist Reformed theology was predominant by the eighteenth century, a time when Baptists became heavily involved in evangelism and overseas missionary work. Today Baptists are more typically Arminian in their theology, stressing free will, evangelism, and discipleship.⁹

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BELIEFS AND DISTINCTIVES OF BAPTISTS?

Baptists have a unique interpretation of the Protestant beliefs described in Chapter 1. Important Baptist beliefs might be listed as categories of freedom:

- *Soul freedom*: Baptists believe in the priesthood of all believers, the capacity of each believer to communicate directly with God as part of a sacred covenant, and the ability of each believer to practice faith without government interference.
- *Bible freedom*: Baptists believe in the authority of Scripture and in its centrality to our lives as individuals and within our community of believers. Baptists also strongly believe in our individual right to interpret Scripture as led by the Holy Spirit, not as dictated by church leadership.
- *Church freedom*: Baptists believe in church autonomy, the independence of every local church. Under the leadership of Jesus Christ, a Baptist church is free to determine its leadership, the ways in which the congregation worships, and forms of outreach and ministry.
- *Religious freedom*: Baptists believe that people should be free to practice their faith as they wish, without interference from informal bodies or state regulation of belief and practice (that is, they believe in separation of church and state). There are many different Baptist groups and a resulting number of differing beliefs, a fact that is not surprising if we think about the importance in Baptist faith of the concept of autonomy.

HOW IS THE BAPTIST MISSION MOVEMENT RELATED TO BAPTIST BELIEFS?

The Baptist mission movement has an interesting history. During most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, missionary work outside of the North American continent was unheard of. Adoniram Judson (1788–1850), the Baptist gentleman for whom Judson Press is named, was a well-known missionary. Born to a strict Congregationalist minister, Judson lost his faith during his college years. Reclaiming it after a prolonged spiritual struggle, he attended seminary and became interested in overseas mission work after reading a book on work in Burma (India). As there was no missionary society to support him, he gathered a group of like-minded persons from his seminary and created The American Board. He resigned from the Congregationalists and solicited the American Baptists for support, though they had no missionary society at that time.

William Carey, a British citizen who lived from 1761–1834, was a powerful voice among a small group of Baptists who publicly interpreted the **Great Commission** to be a requirement dictating the action and attention of modern-day Christians.¹⁰ Carey believed that “as our blessed Lord has required us to pray that His kingdom may come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, it becomes for us not only to express our desires of that event by his words, but to use every lawful method to spread the knowledge of His name.”¹¹

As is often the case, it is difficult to track the contributions of persons of color. In the missionary arena, well before Adoniram Judson traveled to Burma or William Carey did his important work, George Liele, the preacher who as a slave established one of the first black Baptist churches (see Chapter 5, page 55), conducted personal missions to the Caribbean and sent missionaries to West Africa. Following the founding of Silver Bluff between 1773 and 1775, Liele moved across the Savannah River into Savannah, Georgia, where he was one of the founders of the First African Baptist Church. Liele gained his independence from slavery and enjoyed great success as a minister in that community. As the Revolutionary War became a reality (1770–1785), the British told

him (a deliberate untruth) that if he stayed in Georgia, he would be re-enslaved by the Americans fighting for independence. Fearing re-enslavement, he went with a British group to Jamaica and there organized the Hanover Street Baptist Church. From that church he sent out missionaries to other Caribbean Islands and to the African continent.

Lott Carey (1780–1828; no relation to William Carey) was a slave who became an evangelist. Converted to Christianity in 1807, he joined the First Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia; learned to read; and was later licensed by First Baptist Church to preach. Carey bought his freedom from slavery in 1813. A New Jersey man named William Crane came to town and, taking an interest in the young blacks in Richmond, worked with Lott Carey to organize the Richmond African Missionary Society. In 1821 Carey made his first trip to Africa and traveled from Norfolk to Sierra Leone. In 1822, when the colony of Liberia was founded, Lott Carey established Monrovia's first church, Providence Baptist Church.¹² The Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention continues to be an active missionary organization.¹³

In later years, African American churches had to work outside of established missionary societies to contribute to missions in the African Diaspora. For example, in the 1940s when members of the Antioch Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio,¹⁴ decided to become involved in foreign missions, they had to work through the Christian Missionary Alliance and other independent agencies because at that time "colonial powers (then in control of Caribbean and African nations) did not want African Americans missionaries stirring up the African masses. The U. S. State Department agreed with this position and mainline Christian denominations, including the Northern Baptists [see Appendix I, page 114] acquiesced."¹⁵

The missionary movement has grown considerably since the early years of the movement. Most Baptists embrace the idea of missionary work, have missionary societies in their local churches, and jointly conduct missionary work under the auspices of Baptist conventions and associations.

HOW HAS BAPTIST THEOLOGY AFFECTED AMERICAN IDEAS OF FREEDOM?

- The Baptist faith developed as a radical alternative to state-sponsored religion and control. Baptists strongly believe in religious freedom, the freedom to worship God as one chooses.
- America now holds dear the ideal of freedom.
- Rhode Island was founded by Baptists as a place that respected religious liberty.
- When Thomas Jefferson wrote a religious freedom bill in Virginia in 1786, it was actively supported by John Leland, a local Baptist pastor. Leland, a state delegate for the proposed federal constitution, also pushed for the issue of religious liberty to be included in the Bill of Rights.
- The First Amendment of the Constitution contains evidence of the Baptist influence on political processes. It reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...."¹⁶
- By 1883 all U.S. state constitutions "affirmed the principle of separation of church and state with full religious liberty."¹⁷

WHAT IS THE BAPTIST VIEW OF THE NATURE OF GOD?

Baptists believe in the **triune** God—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (also known as the **Trinity** and God the Three-in-One). Baptists also believe in a God whose attributes include love (1 John 4:8), mercy (Psalm 136:1; 2 Corinthians 1:3), goodness (Psalm 52:1; 1 John 1:5), grace (Romans 11:6; Ephesians 2:8–9), an unchanging nature (James 1:17), foresight (Acts 2:23; Romans 8:29–30), holiness (Revelation 15:4), faithfulness (Deuteronomy 7:9), and judgment (Romans 9:12). The God that Baptists serve is supreme (2 Chronicles 20:6). Pages 4–5 in Chapter 1 list additional attributes of God.

IS THERE A CREED OR PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE THAT BAPTISTS FOLLOW?¹⁸

Although **evangelical** Christians, such as Baptists, tend to believe that the Bible is a sufficient guide in matters of belief and religious practice, many Baptist **denominations** have established **creeds**,

confessions, and covenants. These documents are designed to unify believers and provide a structure for teaching beliefs.

- *Articles of faith:* Also known as The New Hampshire Confession, these articles state the main beliefs of Baptists regarding the nature of God, expectations of church members, and the power of the body of believers to build God's kingdom through individual, family, and joint efforts. The purpose of articles of faith is to clarify the Baptist faith, to inform and educate church members, to provide a basis for fellowship, and to deal with controversy within the church about specific beliefs and practices.¹⁹ (See the Appendix 3 for a list of the Articles of Faith.)

- *Covenants:* The historic Baptist Covenant (see Appendix 4) serves as a statement of faith among the congregation of Baptist believers. The covenant is typically read monthly as an affirmation of faith that precedes the **Lord's Supper**. The covenant is often found in the front of hymnals. (Some Baptists use The New Hampshire Confession as a covenant statement or adapt its components for recitation in unison on Communion Sunday or for special ceremonies relevant to the faith.)

- *Creeds:* There are many historic creeds, of which the **Apostles' Creed**²⁰ is the most well known. Written around the fourth century, it is thought to have originally been used as a **catechism** for baptismal candidates. (See Appendix 5 for The Apostles' Creed.)

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ORDINANCES (RELIGIOUS PRACTICES) OF BAPTISTS?

The two most important expressions of belief in Baptist churches are believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper.

- *Believer's Baptism:* It is impossible to be born into the Baptist faith. Each Baptist must choose Jesus for himself or herself; that is, Baptists adhere to believer's baptism. A person must make a confession of faith and engage in a voluntary ceremony of baptism by immersion. Baptism by immersion symbolizes a life changed by commitment to and relationship with Jesus. One enters the water a sinner; sins are symbolically washed away. Christ's salvation enters one's heart, and one is returned to the world, charged with

living a Christ-like life. The act of baptism is a symbolic representation of our death, burial, and rebirth as new beings in Jesus Christ (Matthew 20:23; Mark 1:4; Acts 19:4; Romans 6:4).

- *The Lord's Supper:* The Lord's Supper is a symbolic reenactment of the last meal that Jesus had with his **disciples**. Frequently called **Communion** in the Baptist faith, it is a commemoration and celebration of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:18–20). The term *Communion* reflects the practice of celebrating this service within a community of believers and is also the name for the **elements**, the bread and wine, which are essential parts of the ceremony. Baptists have two Communion practices:²¹

- ◊ Open Communion permits the participation in the Lord's Supper of any persons who believe themselves qualified to partake in the ceremony.²² They may be Baptist, belong to other Christian groups, or may be members of no one particular congregation.

- ◊ Closed Communion restricts participation in the Lord's Supper to baptized believers who are members in good standing within their local congregations.

Most Baptist churches practice open Communion and celebrate the **Lord's Supper** on the first Sunday of each month.

HOW DOES ONE BECOME BAPTIST?

According to the *New Historic Guide for Baptist Churches*, membership in a Baptist church requires meeting four criteria:²³

- *A regenerate heart:* The church is to be made up of members whose lives have been spiritually transformed (saved) and who believe that transformation to be the direct result of their relationship with Jesus Christ (Romans 6:22–23).

- *A confession of faith:* The Christian confession of faith in Jesus is the external expression of a profound internal change (Romans 10:10). The public confession of faith puts us in company with others who have been similarly converted, provides for us a community of like believers, and strengthens our capacity to work together to bring God's kingdom to earth.

- *A voluntary baptism:* Baptism is a physical manifestation of our public confession of faith. Baptists, unlike many other Protestant

faiths, make the conscious choice to be baptized. Baptism is a cleansing ritual in which the sins of our former life are washed away and we are made pure to live for Christ and within the realm of his protection (Romans 6:4; Ephesians 4:5).

- *A Christian life:* Baptists must strive to live a Christian life according to the examples and teaching of Jesus Christ.

There are several categories of Baptist church membership and a variety of ways to join with the priesthood of believers within a Baptist church.²⁴ Though they may differ between churches, typical membership categories are:

- ◊ Full membership: This category is reserved for those who have made a public confession of faith and have been baptized. Full members participate in ministries of the church, contribute financial resources according to their personal means, cast a vote on important church issues, and engage in the fellowship opportunities provided by worship, Bible study, and other forms of Christian education.
- ◊ Nonresident parishioner: Nonresident parishioners are full members who live at a distance from the church and, as a result, are not able to regularly participate in church services and activities.
- ◊ Associate member: Associate, nonvoting church members hold multiple church affiliations. They may be college students, military personnel, or businesspersons on temporary assignment to a city. While they are interested in participating in a local church, they do not wish to relinquish their home church membership. Some Baptist churches also provide associate membership to persons baptized in another faith who attend and participate in the church but do not wish to change denominations.
- ◊ Watchcare fellowship: This is a special category of membership that allows churches to include persons "who are not yet ready or fully able to join the fellowship by reason of age, spiritual conviction, or other considerations."²⁵
- ◊ Inactive member: These members were once active but now are chronically ill or are otherwise unable to participate in worship and ministries. Members without known addresses are often placed on the inactive list.

WHAT ARE THE USUAL CATEGORIES OF ADMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP IN BLACK BAPTIST CHURCHES?

Categories of admission to a black Baptist church typically are:

- *Baptism:* A candidate for church admission may join by acknowledging that they wish to be voluntarily baptized and by making a confession of faith.

- *Christian experience:* This category of membership is reserved for believers who have been baptized and who have confessed their faith.
- *Letter:* Those who move to a new city but were formerly active members of a church can request that a letter be sent to a specific church in their new location. Indicating that they were church members in good standing, this letter transfers their membership to the new church.

HOW ARE INFANTS AND CHILDREN INCORPORATED INTO THE LIFE OF A BAPTIST CHURCH?

Children are an essential part of the Baptist community of faith. They represent fresh souls who will one day choose Christ for themselves. In conjunction with their biological families, the church family is responsible for providing them with religious support and education. By regular attendance at services and activities, children learn the components of the worship service, have the opportunity for service through age-appropriate ministries, and learn about the life of Christ and the beliefs of Baptists in Christian education classes. The primary ways in which children are incorporated into Baptist church life are:

- *Dedication:* Baptists do not baptize infants but want to provide for children evidence of God's love for them. Families typically bring their children before the congregation for an infant dedication ceremony (also called a blessing), in which the child's soul is prayed for, godparents are named, and parents and godparents are reminded of their responsibility for the child's religious and spiritual education.
- *Sunday school:* Sunday school is the primary form of Christian education for children and young teenagers. It provides a structure for learning about the life and work of Jesus Christ and for understanding Baptist beliefs and practices as preparation for making the choice to be baptized. (Many

churches now offer Saturday school as one of many Christian education options for youth. Saturday school represents an adjustment to the changing needs of congregants.)

- *Believer's baptism at the age of reason:* Most Baptist churches support believer's baptism at the age of reason—the age when a child is old enough to understand the decision that he or she has made. The specific acceptable age varies among congregations, but the earliest age for baptism tends to be around age seven or eight. Most youth are baptized in their teen years.

- *Worship:* Children participate in worship through attendance with their families and by participating in children's activities such as the children's or youth choirs and usher boards. Some congregations provide a separate church service that is specially designed to meet the developmental needs of children and teenagers.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BAPTISTS TO THEIR CHURCH AND FAITH COMMUNITY?

Baptists are expected to join fully with their church community, learn the beliefs of the Baptist faith,²⁶ study the Bible, assist with ministries, contribute their whole hearts and spirits to worship, and maintain membership in good standing according to the guidelines set forth by their local church. See Chapter 4 for more information on Baptist requirements for full church participation and membership.

FVI

Many Baptists believe in praising God out loud. We tend to be exuberant in our praise because we see daily evidence of the presence of the Lord in our lives, are thankful for his blessings, and are delighted by opportunities to serve him. Based on Psalm 150:6, this contemporary song of praise outlines all of the reasons why our praise is essential.

Praise Him²⁷

*Let everything that hath breath praise Him,
Praise Him, Praise Him....
For giving me life and strength praise Him,*

Praise Him, Praise Him....

For waking me up this morn praise Him,

Praise Him, Praise Him....

For the Lord has been good to me,

I can't hold my peace,

I must praise Him!

THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT . . .

- Through what form of membership did you join a Baptist church?
- What has been your experience of the major practices of the Baptist faith (believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper)? In what ways do they contribute to your walk with God?
- What risks have Baptists taken to praise God throughout the faith's history?
- Is the Baptist faith still revolutionary? In what ways?
- As a participant in the life of a Baptist church, what talents, skills, and resources do you make available to enhance the ministries that serve your congregation and community?
- What does the song "Praise Him" teach about African American Baptist belief and practice?

PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATIONS

- Why did I join a Baptist church? What made it seem like the right place for me to seek and serve God?
- Do I live up to the expectations of the Baptist faith in belief, practices, and service? If not, how have I fallen short? What must I do to enhance my membership and my faith?
- What am I willing to sacrifice for my belief in Jesus?

REFERENCES

- Freeman, Curtis W., James Wm. McClendon Jr., and C. Rosalee Velloso da Silva. *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1999.
- Goodwin, Everett C. *The New Hiscow Guide for Baptist Churches*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1995.

- McBeth, Leon H. *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*. Baptist Sunday School Board—Baptist Book Stores, 1987. Website of the American Baptist Churches: www.abc-usa.org.

NOTES

1. To clarify his protest with the Catholic Church, Luther nailed a list of concerns, called the Ninety-Five Theses, to the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg, Germany. Luther was particularly concerned about the sale of indulgences, a fine that was paid for forgiveness of sins and that was being used to finance the building of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. www.encyclopedia.com (keyword: Martin Luther).
2. A strict, radical Protestant **sect** that disagreed with Catholic and other Protestant practices, **Anabaptists** believed that the church comprised a body of saints, mandated a literal translation of the **Great Commission** to go into the world and preach the gospel, practiced shunning for people thought to have broken God's laws, and refused to pay taxes or serve in the armed forces.
3. www.encyclopedia.com (keyword: Baptists).
4. www.abc-usa.org; polity refers to the governmental structure of a church.
5. Anglicans recognize the British monarch and God as heads of state. Henry VIII (1491–1547) established the Church of England when he sought permission to divorce his first wife and the Catholic Church would not allow it.
6. Williams did not remain Baptist but later returned to the Congregational faith.
7. www.encyclopedia.com (keyword: Baptists).
8. Historically, General Baptists forbade singing as part of worship, believing it to be carnal and frivolous.
9. www.abc-usa.org.
10. While Judson and Carey actually worked together, Carey is the missionary who is credited with contributing to Baptists the idea that missionary work is an essential soul-saving tool, for those served and for the missionaries.
11. Curtis W. Freeman, James Wm. McClendon Jr., and C. Rosalee Velloso da Silva, *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1999), 150.
12. Lott Carey was also involved in political uprisings in this country, after which he was suspended from his ministerial position. He died in 1828 in a munitions explosion. For more information, see www.google.com, keyword: Lott Carey missionary.
13. www.lottcarey.org. See also Chapter 5, page 59, for more information on Lott Carey.
14. Rev. Wade Hampton McKinney, the author's grandfather, pastored Antioch Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, from July 1928 to December 31, 1962.
15. Conversation with Rev. Dr. Samuel Berry McKinney on February 10, 2003.

16. www.house.gov/Constitution.
17. www.abc-usa.org.
18. Documents described here can be found in Everett C. Goodwin, *The New Hiscox Guide for Baptist Churches* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1995), 225–71, 320.
19. Leon H. McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage/Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (1987), 68.
20. This anonymously authored document was not written by the apostles. It was written in Greek and later translated into Latin.
21. Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, *Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice, Revised* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1991), 170.
22. The author's father and grandfather reminded worshipers that Communion is "not to be used as a pacifier for their children."
23. Goodwin, 31–38.
24. *Ibid.*, 38–41.
25. *Ibid.*, 40.
26. Most Baptist churches provide classes for new members that teach the basic beliefs of the faith.
27. Nolan Williams Jr. "Praise Him." New-J Publishing, 2000. Used with permission.