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HIGH DOCTRINE AND BROAD DOCTRINE:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF
THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVES AND MISSIONS CULTURE AT
LAKEVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH, AUBURN, ALABAMA

BY

JEFFERY SCOTT BUSH

A PROJECT/DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

High Doctrine and Broad Doctrine:
A Qualitative Study of Theological Distinctives and Missions Culture at Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, Alabama

With a far reaching reputation for conservative, biblical, God-centered preaching and fervent evangelistic outreach, including an extraordinary commitment to international missions, Lakeview Baptist Church is characterized by what C.H. Spurgeon called "high doctrine and broad doctrine." The "broad" commitment to evangelism and missions has made Lakeview a flagship congregation in the Southern Baptist Convention, but behind these ministries is a "high" commitment to biblical inerrancy and absolute divine sovereignty. The theological distinctives at Lakeview have led some to say that the church has Reformed leanings, an inflammatory suggestion in the emotionally charged discussion of Calvinism among Southern Baptists. For many, Calvinism, specifically the doctrine of unconditional election, is seen as a threat to wholehearted, compassionate evangelism and missions. This study looks at Lakeview in terms of its doctrinal identity and missional culture and offers an explanation of the relationship between the two. For participants in this study, God's sovereign election and His missionary mandate go hand in hand and, as Spurgeon has it, do not need to be reconciled.[1]

This project is a qualitative case study that makes use of observations, document analysis, and individual and group interviews to gather data that provides a rich description of doctrinal and missional commitments at Lakeview. The research was

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, "High Doctrine and Broad Doctrine" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 30 (Pasadena: Pilgrim Publications, 1973), 49.

guided by questions about the relationship of Reformed doctrine to missions at Lakeview: 1) How did Reformed doctrine come to influence missions ministries at Lakeview? 2) How thoroughly is that doctrine articulated? 3) How does doctrine affect implementation of missions programs?

The study revealed the influence of the Reformed tradition in Southern Baptist theology on the doctrinal climate at Lakeview. This seems to result primarily from strong pastoral leadership and expository preaching. The study also identified in the Lakeview missions culture a central theme, "people groups", as a point of common ground between current missiological thinking and resurgent Baptist Calvinism. Again, this particular vision of reaching God's people from every nation, tribe, and tongue originated with the pastor but has been caught by the entire congregation. The way that these commitments coalesce in the ministry of the pastor and the life of the congregation is remarkable and could prove helpful to other Baptist churches where conditions are similar.

To my wife, Missy,

and to my parents,

Harold and Paulette Bush

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In an article printed in the Texas newspaper *The Baptist Standard* on March 26, 1997, the late Dr. William R. Estep fired a shot heard 'round the Southern Baptist theological world when he charged denominational leaders and seminary professors with the "Calvinizing of Southern Baptists."[1] He began by saying that "only the most out-of-touch Southern Baptist could be unaware of the attempt on the part of some within our ranks to promote a 19th century version of Calvinism among Southern Baptists as a return to the original theology of the first English Baptists." Estep, then professor of church history, emeritus, at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, called the renewed interest in Calvinism in Southern Baptist circles "intriguing and puzzling," arguing that both the current advocates and their forebears, denominational pillars like James P. Boyce and Basil Manly, Jr., had "only a slight knowledge of Calvin or his system." Estep summarized his thoughts in three concluding sentences.

> "Calvinism is an excursion into speculative theology with predictable results, which we as Southern Baptists can ill afford. It also introduces another divisive element in a badly divided denomination. If the Calvinizing of Southern Baptists continues unabated, we are in danger of becoming a 'perfect dunghill' in American society, to borrow a phrase from Andrew Fuller."[2]

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[1] William R. Estep, "Doctrines Lead to 'Dunghill' Prof Warns," *The Founders Journal* 29 (summer 1997): 9.

[2] Ibid.

Dr. Estep's article sparked new interest in the ongoing discussion of Reformed theology among Southern Baptists and fresh commentary on the subject across the Convention. In a paper presented to the Texas Baptist Historical Society at its annual meeting on November 10, 1997, Hardin-Simmons University chancellor Jesse Fletcher commented that "the fault line between Calvinism and Arminianism... periodically resurfaces" and that differences between the two positions have given rise to "the oldest continuing controversy among Baptists, ...particularly during the 150 year history of the Southern Baptist Convention."[3] He went on to say that the controversy "has been a relatively genteel one, as Baptist battles go, but is not without its passions."[4] One passionate reply to Estep came from then Gordon-Conwell theology professor Roger Nicole. In an open letter responding to the March article, Nicole challenged several of Estep's citations and opinions, concluding with a prediction about the esteemed church historian from Southwestern: "I do find comfort in the thought that although you may oppose Calvinism on this earth, you will be yourself a Calvinist when you get to heaven, for I say 'Who will deny or seek to restrict the sovereignty of God when appearing before His throne?'"[5]

Nicole's letter, along with several other responses to the Estep article, appeared in the summer 1997 issue of *The Founders Journal,* a publication dedicated to a revival of Reformed theology among Southern Baptists. The Founders Conference, the loose fellowship of pastors, professors, and laymen who publish the *Journal*, was organized in 1972 by a small group of theologians already committed to the Doctrines of Grace and

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[3] Dan Martin, "Jesse Fletcher: Calvinism is Longstanding Baptist Dispute," http://www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=4700 (22 March 2004).

[4] Ibid.

[5] Roger Nicole, "An Open Letter to Dr. William R. Estep," *The Founders Journal* 29 (summer 1997): 16.

involved in theological renewal within the denomination. Though Founders sympathizers have long been engaged in the conversation over Southern Baptist doctrinal identity, few moments framed the controversy as well as the publication of issue 29 of the *Journal*. The full-color cover featured a backdrop of tulips with the provocative question "Do Doctrines Lead to Dunghill?"

Contributors to issue 29 argued that the Doctrines of Grace will not, in fact, lead to the demise of the Southern Baptist Convention, but rather are the wellspring of its heritage, mission, and future. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and an original organizer of the Founders Conference, called the developments that Dr. Estep characterized so negatively "the most promising sign of renewal in Southern Baptist life" saying that "after decades marked by the absence of significant interest in many doctrines, Southern Baptists are awakening to historical doctrinal debates in a new key."[6] Tom Ascol, also an original Founders participant, disputed Dr. Estep's fears, saying that

> [i]t is very healthy that Southern Baptists are having such doctrinal discussions again. With the rise of pragmatism in the middle part of this century, theological discourse was relegated almost exclusively to the arena of the academy. But, being clear on what we believe is critical to the life and health of the church. Therefore talking about our beliefs and being challenged biblically to reexamine what we believe should not be seen as divisive, but essential. A cursory glance through denominational newspapers and associational minutes from the last century will show that Southern Baptists formerly had just such an attitude. It is wonderful to see truth becoming important to us once again as we move toward the third millennium.[7]

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[6] R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "The Reformation of Doctrine and the Renewal of the Church: A Response to Dr. William R. Estep," *The Founders Journal* 29 (summer 1997): 10.

[7] Tom Ascol, "Do Doctrines Really Lead to Dunghill?" *The Founders Journal* 29 (summer 1997): 3.

The vigorous responses to Dr. Estep, both supportive and rebuttal, only served to highlight the division over Reformed theology that existed in the Convention through the late nineties and still exists today. Much of the debate has been co-opted for political gain by rival parties within the denomination. Leaders in Southern Baptist seminaries and agencies have, from time to time, been accused of using their personal doctrinal commitments as litmus tests for employees and professors. In the charged atmosphere of discussion over the Doctrines of Grace, Calvinistic Baptists have become particularly susceptible to this accusation. The Mainstream Baptist Network, a dissident group within the denomination, characterizes certain Southern Baptist Calvinists as doctrinaire exclusivists more interested in power than love. This criticism sets the stage for the claim of some Mainstream Baptists that Calvinism "has and will contribute to an autocratic hierarchy centering around denominational leaders."[8] Similarly, convinced Calvinists have charged their less- or non-Calvinistic brothers and sisters with a pragmatic disregard for Scripture. Mark Dever, in a most irenic *Founders Journal* article, confesses that Southern Baptists have been inclined to "neglect the importance of theology," that is, the knowledge of God through inerrant Scripture. "'Thoughts are only words,' we may think. 'Actions are what counts!'," continues Dever, "And in so thinking (or at least so acting) parts of our denomination have drowned in pragmatism. The phrase 'whatever works' has been our watchword."[9]

Among the most significant concerns over Calvinism in Southern Baptist life is the effect that Reformed theology has on missions and evangelism. Fisher Humphreys,

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[8] Slayden A. Yarbrough, "What's Wrong with the 2000 BF&M," 30 September 2002, http://www.mainstreambaptist.org/miscellaneous/sy_bfm_1.htm (25 March 2004).

[9] Mark Dever, "Three Reasons to Hope for Further Reformation in the SBC," *The Founders Journal* 29 (summer 1997): 18.

professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama, and Paul Robertson, professor of theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, give a truly affable treatment of this concern in their book *God So Loved the World: Traditional Baptists and Calvinism*. Humphreys and Robertson contend that the Doctrines of Grace, specifically unconditional election and limited atonement, contradict passages of Scripture that declare God's love for all people (John 3:16) and his desire that all be saved (1 Timothy 2:3&4). They write that

> "the principle motives that drive most evangelistic and missionary work among traditional Baptists are that God loves all people and desires them all to be saved, and that we must share the gospel so people can be saved. These motives are not available to Calvinists. Since they do not believe that God loves everyone in the sense of wanting everyone to be saved, they do not accept the former motive. And Calvinists cannot conscientiously say things such as, 'If we do not preach the gospel to the lost, they can't be saved,' because they think that all of the elect will be saved whether or not Christians are faithful to their responsibility to preach the gospel."[10]

In his speech to the Texas Baptist Historical Society, Jesse Fletcher quoted Humphreys and Estep, asserting that Calvinism is in "direct opposition" to the "purpose of the SBC – missions and evangelism." "It is my feeling," Fletcher continued, "that the paucity of Calvinistic adherents in [Texas] is probably a direct legacy of the missions and evangelism culture which has dominated Texas Baptist history."[11] Many share Fletcher's feeling that a culture of missions and evangelism necessarily makes no place for Reformed theology. The specter of fatalism and hyper-Calvinism, the misunderstandings and deliberate caricatures of Reformed theology, and the legacy of pragmatism and theological accommodation all work together to cast the Doctrines of Grace in a doubtful

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[10] Fisher Humphreys and Paul Robertson, *God So Loved the World: Traditional Baptists and Calvinism* (New Orleans: Insight Press, 2000), 100.

[11] Martin, 2.

light for many, maybe even most, Baptists. The question looms large then: Can Southern Baptists embrace Reformed theology and maintain our historic commitment to missions and evangelism or will the Doctrines of Grace lead to a dunghill of conceit and apathy?

Statement of the Problem and Purpose

While much concern over Calvinism centers on seminaries and agencies where leaders have espoused Reformed views, the fact is that Southern Baptist churches, though voluntarily cooperative, are fiercely autonomous and not directly accountable to any overseeing entity. Doctrines do not simply trickle down from professors or presidents to the people in the pews, and doctrinal controversy in administrative and academic circles does not necessarily affect the life and ministry of any congregation. Perhaps a better way to observe the impact of the Doctrines of Grace on Southern Baptist missions is to look at local churches where all three variables -- Southern Baptist identity, a vibrant missions program, and a theological commitment to the Doctrines -- coexist. Such an opportunity existed at Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, Alabama. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of the Doctrines of Grace in missions ministries at Lakeview Baptist Church from the perspective of pastors and lay leaders.

The research questions for this project included the following:

1. How did the Doctrines of Grace first come to influence missions ministries at Lakeview?
2. How thoroughly are the Doctrines of Grace articulated in missions ministries at Lakeview?
3. How do the Doctrines of Grace affect implementation of missions ministries at Lakeview?

Significance of the Study

My interest in this study grows out of my own spiritual and ministry formation. I was raised in a Southern Baptist congregation with a strong revivalist flavor tempered by various other evangelical influences. My experience of Bible-belt eclecticism gave me broad exposure to a variety of doctrines and plenty of reasons to be suspicious of most of them. The landmarks that did emerge for me came from my pastor and included biblical inerrency, substitutionary atonement, human depravity, eternal security, justification by faith, and progressive sanctification (the last two terms were rarely if ever used in my home church but they do describe the doctrine taught there). My four years at a Baptist liberal arts university added little to the list. The same is true for the early part of my seminary training. I gravitated toward practical ministry electives and took only the required theology classes, completely avoiding any course in systematic theology. After seminary, though, a theological crystallization began. Fueled by Doctor of Ministry studies, personal reading, and practice of ministry, my convictions became more distinctly Reformed. My theological commitments didn't change; they only grew deeper. I believe they are more authentically biblical and, for that matter, more authentically Baptist. My study of Lakeview Baptist Church drew from both my early orientation to missions and evangelism and my emerging doctrinal convictions.

Beyond my own specific interest in Lakeview as a model of grace-centered, mission-focused ministry, this study was an opportunity to take a broad look at an important and timely issue within my denomination as well as current and historic thought on the relationship of Baptist doctrine to missions and evangelism. This study needed to be done for several reasons.

While Lakeview is often recognized as an "all-star missions church,"[12] the connection between the vigorous outreach ministries and the vibrant, grace-centered teaching ministries is rarely observed. As a pastor with twin passions for sound, biblical teaching and for effective global outreach, I aspired to the kind of ministry that I saw at Lakeview. I believed that other pastors with similar passions would find this study of Lakeview and the ministry of its pastor, Dr. Al Jackson, inspiring and helpful.

Second, the fear of the growing interest in Reformed theology among Southern Baptists is, in some instances, a reaction to unfortunate stereotypes that confuse the Doctrines of Grace with a fatalistic, anti-missionary hyper-Calvinism. Timothy George writes reassuringly that a "strongly Calvinist undercurrent has always been present just beneath the surface of traditional Baptist piety" but that Baptists with Reformed convictions "should not forget the real dangers of hyper–Calvinism and the deep scars it has left on the psychic memory of the denomination."[13] A study of Lakeview could illustrate the positive impact of grace-centered teaching on outreach ministries, dispelling stereotypes and relieving fears.

Third, other reservations about Reformed theology arise from Southern Baptists' longstanding opposition to creedalism. George writes that Baptists are non-creedal in the sense that "they deny that any humanly constructed doctrinal statement can be equal to, much less elevated above, Holy Scripture."[14] Further, Baptists are deeply committed to the liberty of personal conviction in disputable matters (Romans 14). A study of Lakeview could demonstrate that ministries influenced by the Doctrines of Grace need

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[12] Tom Telford, *Today's All-Star Missions Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 93ff.

[13] Timothy George, "Southern Baptist Ghosts," *First Things* 93 (May 1999): 23.

[14] Ibid.

not be coercive or in any way at odds with historic Baptist emphases on biblical authority, local church autonomy, or soul competency.[15]

Finally, this study needed to be done to celebrate what God is doing in and through the people of Lakeview. An ongoing ministry of fielding short-term mission teams, sending and supporting career missionaries, constantly promoting, funding, and praying for frontier missions, all fueled by grace-centered teaching, demonstrates Lakeview's commitment to "love the Lord God and... express that love by making, nurturing, and equipping disciples of Jesus Christ in Auburn and throughout the world."[16]

Members and guests would be hard pressed to find a direct reference to Calvinism in any sermon, presentation, or publication at Lakeview. But in many ways Lakeview is a model for Southern Baptist congregations that are considering or even embracing Reformed theology. Rather than a systematic or catechetic presentation of the Doctrines of Grace, Al Jackson takes a biblical approach, addressing the Doctrines as they arise in the course of his expository preaching. Jackson is thoroughly aware of the historical, Baptist, and broader evangelical contexts as well, but he subordinates them to the Scriptures, dutifully avoiding confusing jargon and inflammatory arguments. Jackson speculates that this "God-centered, biblically informed" perspective may be the reason that people think of him as a Calvinist, though he is hesitant to use the term himself. It is almost certainly the reason that Lakeview has avoided the pitched battles over Calvinism that other churches and organizations within the SBC have experienced. Jackson's twenty-eight year tenure at Lakeview and the diversity of his staff and lay leadership has

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[15] 'Soul competency' here refers to an individual's relationship to and responsibility before God without the mediation of another person or persons. Competency is often connected with 'the priesthood of all believers' in Baptist writings. In some circles the term has taken on the idea of absolute individual autonomy, but that meaning is not intended in this paper.

[16] Lakeview Baptist Church Mission Statement, http://www.lakeviewbaptist.org (9 May 2004).

produced an environment of stability and congeniality where doctrine can be examined graciously, thoroughly, and above all biblically.

Jackson's "God-centered, biblically informed" focus also answers the objection that Reformed doctrine cuts the nerve of missions. At Lakeview, commitments to election and evangelism are maintained on the same ground: both concepts are present in the Bible. Individual members may have different understandings of the intricacies of doctrine and missions but it is most widely held that the Lakeview family believes what it believes and does what it does for the glory of God and in obedience to the Scriptures. Lakeview members are inundated with reminders of their responsibility to reach the nations for Christ and of God's promise to call his people from every tribe and nation, and tongue. They maintain the biblical tension of responsibility and promise just as they do the tension of election and evangelism, and they do it with joy. The oft repeated quote from their pastor summarizes the sentiment and sets the priorities for the church: "Only two things will last forever, the Word of God and the souls of men."

Definition of Terms

Reformed Theology – According to Robert Johnson, former director for the Institutes for Reformed Theology, "the term 'Reformed' specifically designates that branch of the Reformation of the western church originally characterized by a distinctively non-Lutheran, Augustinian sacramental theology with a high ecclesiology and little regard for ecclesiastical tradition that is not traceable to the Scriptures or the earliest church."[17] Johnson, along with others is quick to say, however, that the Reformed tradition is broader than any single theologian or denomination. "Reformed theology," he continues,

[17] Robert Johnson, "What is Reformed Theology?" http://www.reformedtheology.org/SiteFiles/WhatIsRT.html (12 May 2004).

"is better imagined as a river into which many sources flow and from which many streams originate."[18]

In his book *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition,* Timothy George marks the Southern Baptist stream of Reformed theology, to which he credits a "renewed commitment to the sovereignty of God in salvation, worship that centers on the glory of God rather than the entertainment of the audience, and a perspective on history and culture that sees Jesus Christ as Lord of time and eternity."[19] For the purposes of this paper, the term Reformed theology will refer to the tradition George outlines with special emphases on the sovereignty of God, the authority of Scripture, and the Doctrines of Grace.

Calvinism – "Calvinism is nothing more and nothing less than the simple assertion that salvation is all of grace, from the beginning to the end," says Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president Albert Mohler.[20] The term will be used in this study to refer specifically to the five points of doctrine formulated at the Synod of Dort in 1619 and as a synonym for the Doctrines of Grace. The phrases "Reformed Baptist" or "Calvinistic Baptist" do not indicate an adherence to all of the teachings of Calvin but rather, to borrow an idea from Spurgeon, serve as a kind of shorthand reference to the Doctrines of Grace. "We care far more for the central evangelical truths," said Spurgeon, "than we do for Calvinism as a system."[21]

Doctrines of Grace – The phrase "Doctrines of Grace" refers to the five points of Dort, usually summarized with the initials TULIP. In this study, the term will be used with

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Timothy George, "The Future of Baptist Theology" in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition,* ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Press, 2001), 8.

[20] Mohler, "The Reformation of Doctrine and the Renewal of the Church," 11.

[21] Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1992), 636.

Timothy George's acronym ROSES in mind.[22] Radical depravity refers to the fact that, while we are not always as evil as we can possibly be, we are all born with a corrupt nature and, apart from God's grace, are all helpless "under the certain reign of death and the inescapable wrath of God."[23] Overcoming grace points to God's persistent wooing and his effectual calling of his children despite our stubbornness. Sovereign election is "the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners."[24] Eternal life, the most Baptist of the points, is the belief that "those whom God has accepted in Christ... will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end."[25] Singular redemption refers to the definite or particular atonement of Christ that, though sufficient for all, is efficient only for the elect.

Evangelism – J.I. Packer says that evangelism "is just preaching the gospel, the evangel," but he is quick to add that it is not just the work of professional preachers.[26] Recognizing the role of both human activity and divine agency in conversion ("Evangelism is man's work, but the giving of faith is God's"), Packer maintains that evangelism is "our abiding responsibility; it is a basic part of our Christian calling."[27] In the words of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, "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 term "evangelism," then, will encompass all personal and corporate efforts to communicate the gospel of

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[22] Roger Nicole uses similar ideas and terminology to restate TULIP in his book *Our Sovereign Saviour* (Fearn, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002).

[23] Timothy George, *Amazing Grace: God's Initiative – Our Response* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Christian Resources, 2000), 72.

[24] *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Christian Resources, 2000), 12.

[25] Ibid.

[26] J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 41.

[27] Ibid., 40, 93.

grace to people who are "separate from Christ... without hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

Missions – Avery Willis, Senior Vice President for Overseas Operations at the International Mission Board, SBC, says that the task of missions is "to cross natural and cultural barriers with the gospel."[28] Willis penned those words in 1979 when other leaders in the field were expressing similar ideas about missions as cross-cultural or "bridging" evangelism. This distinction is evident in the current missions climate where there is a growing emphasis on unreached people groups. The term "missions" in this study will refer generally to cross-cultural evangelism. The terms "frontier missions" and "pioneer missions" will refer to evangelistic work among previously unreached people groups.

Baptist Faith and Message – *The Baptist Faith and Message* (*BF&M*) is a confessional statement produced by the Southern Baptist Convention to identify the consensus of opinion of Southern Baptists on certain matters of doctrine. The first such statement was produced in 1925 in response to rising anti-supernaturalism in the United States. The statement was expanded in 1963 to reaffirm the authority and truthfulness of Scripture and to respond to other cultural concerns of the day. The current version of the *BF&M* was adopted in 2000 with revisions that further underscore the authority of Scripture and address other issues in the church and the culture. The *BF&M* itself maintains 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

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[28] Avery T. Willis, Jr., *The Biblical Basis of Missions: Your Mission as a Christian* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1979), 11.

conscience."[29] Baptist confessions like the latest iteration of the *BF&M* are not regarded as "complete statements of our faith, having any quality of finality or infallibility." They are, however, offered as "a witness to the world… that these are doctrines we hold precious and as essential to the Baptist tradition of faith and practice."[30]

[29] *BF&M*, 5.
[30] Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Southern Baptists, in some ways, are as diverse as we are numerous. Be that as it may, this study of the role of the Doctrines of Grace in missions and evangelism ministries at Lakeview Baptist Church was rooted in a very specific understanding of Baptist life and thought. The literature reviewed here begins with a biblical-theological framework that summarizes Baptist doctrine and supports a Baptist affirmation of the Doctrines of Grace. Next, selected historical literature demonstrates the development of Baptist thought giving a background for understanding the current state of doctrine among Southern Baptists in general and at Lakeview in particular. Finally, a review of Baptist missiological literature provides a context for understanding the missions culture at Lakeview and a pattern for correlating the church's doctrinal and missionary commitments. Though narrowed to serve the purposes of this study, the literature reviewed provides a glimpse into the often unappreciated doctrinal, historical, and missional heritage of Baptists.

Biblical-Theological Framework

The theological framework of this study is Baptist and may be more specifically identified with what R. Stanton Norman calls the "'Reformation tradition' of Baptist distinctives."[31] Norman, in his book *More Than Just a Name*, points out two strains of

[31] R. Stanton Norman, *More Than Just a Name* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 41.

doctrinal distinctives that contribute to the current theological climate of the Southern Baptist Convention. One he calls the "Enlightenment tradition" after the nineteenth-century philosophical movement, saying that, for many Baptists, Christian experience is the core distinctive of doctrine. This tradition, says Norman, draws from the Enlightenment ideals of pragmatism, individualism, and self-determination and finds expression in Baptist life in an emphasis on cooperation, soul competency, and religious liberty. The "Reformation tradition," on the other hand, draws from the theology of the Protestant Reformers and their heirs. This tradition has shaped the Baptist view of the Bible as God's inerrant, authoritative revelation of himself to humanity. The "Reformation tradition" does not discount personal experience but rather sets the Bible over it as "the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried."[32] Stanton observes that each core tradition does eventually include most of the emphases of the other (e.g. "Enlightenment" Baptists do love the Scriptures and "Reformation" Baptists do cherish personal religious experience), but he maintains that the diversity is clear and is amplified in the way that each premise nuances almost every other doctrine.

This project does not assert that all Southern Baptist doctrine fits neatly into two streams of influence nor does it allow space for a thorough survey of the Reformation tradition among Southern Baptists. It does, however, recognize the strength of that tradition in past and present Baptist life. The denomination's doctrine statement, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, preserves much of the Reformation tradition and provides an ideal outline for discussing key issues related to this study. The framework that follows will address these issues under selected headings from this historic statement of faith.

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[32] *BF&M*, 7.

The Scriptures

Baptists have long been regarded as people of the book, and at the 2000 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention this distinctive took center stage. A blue ribbon committee appointed the previous year presented a revision to the 1963 version of *The Baptist Faith and Message* that, in the words of one reporter, "embraced Biblical authority and rejected a theology that divides Christ and the Bible one from another."[33] The revision of the *BF&M* was not without controversy, mostly centered on the removal of three words. The 1963 version of the document declared that "the Bible is the record of God's revelation of himself to man" while the 2000 statement attests that "the Bible is God's revelation of himself to man." Commenting on the change, committee member and Southern Seminary president Albert Mohler warned that some pastors and professors have used the formerly ambiguous language in the *BF&M* to cast doubt on certain passages of Scripture. Summarizing the position of the 2000 document, Mohler underscored the fact that "the Bible is not merely a record of revelation. It is revelation itself."[34]

The *BF&M 2000's* insistence at this point draws primarily from the biblical data but also reflects the thinking of leading Baptist theologians. In his widely read textbook *Christian Theology*, Millard Erickson asserts that revelation is necessary if finite humans are ever to know the infinite God.[35] Employing the usual categories, Erickson says that God's revelation of himself includes the general revelation of nature and the special

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[33] Keith Hinson, "Baptist Faith and Message Committee Members say Report Embraces Biblical Authority," 14 June 2000, http://www.sbcannualmeeting.org/sbc00/news.asp?ID=19276 (4 April 2005).

[34] R. Albert Mohler, "Baptist Faith and Message: Article 1: The Scriptures" 1 August 2002, http://www.bpnews.net (4 April 2005). The commentary on the *BF&M* by Mohler, Block, Ware, and Nettles is available at the time of this writing through a link found on the Southern Baptist Convention website, www.sbc.net/bfm.

[35] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 153.

revelation of personal encounter. In the case of the latter, Erickson argues that God not only reveals himself to people, "he does so at least in part by telling us something *about* himself," who he is, what he has done in history, how he relates to his creation and how we can enjoy him."[36] Not merely vague, subjective experience, God's special revelation includes statements of objective truth. Erickson thus concludes, "If revelation includes propositional truths, then it is of such a nature that it can be preserved. It can be written down or *inscripturated.* And this written record, to the extent that it is an accurate reproduction of the original revelation, is also by derivation revelation and entitled to be called that."[37] To put it more plainly, Erickson writes that "because it carries his message, the Bible carries the same weight God himself would command if he were speaking to us personally."

Similarly, Baptist theologian Wayne Grudem speaks of God's propositional revelation of himself in the Bible when he says that "all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God."[38] "In fact," he writes, "if there were no written word of God, we could not gain certainty about God's will through other means such as conscience, advice from others, an internal witness of the Holy Spirit, changed circumstance, and the use of sanctified reasoning and common sense."[39] If Baptists have been hesitant to invoke the Reformation slogan *sola Scriptura,* they certainly have embraced the sentiment of James Leo Garrett, whose expression *suprema Scriptura* affirms the place of Scripture as unparalleled revelation. Garrett argues that the latter accurately describes the Protestant

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[36] Ibid., 196.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 73.
[39] Ibid.,119.

understanding of Scriptural authority as far back as the magisterial reformers, considering their veneration of councils and creeds. God certainly can and does reveal himself through church tradition and personal spiritual experience, but Scripture remains paramount and normative.[40]

Grudem notes the self-attested authority and authenticity of the Bible in cases where God speaks through his prophets (Exodus 24:3-4; Deuteronomy 18:19; Jeremiah 1:9; Amos 7:14-16), where Jesus and his apostles cite the Old Testament as the word of God (Matthew 4:4; 19:5; Acts 2:16-17; Romans 9:15-17), and where New Testament writers refer to both Old and New Testaments as inspired and authoritative (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; 3:2; 3:15-16). Grudem is not deterred by the charge that self-attested authority is circular reasoning. He contends that "all arguments for an absolute authority must ultimately appeal to that authority for proof."[41]

Southern Seminary professor Stephen Wellum joins Grudem in affirming the pervasive claim that Scripture makes for itself. "Scripture views itself as supremely authoritative speech and writing precisely because it is *his* Word. Thus one can rightly say: what Scripture says, God says; what God says, Scripture says."[42] Wellum supports his assertion with a view of biblical inspiration that he sums up in the term "*all-ness*." When we say that "all Scripture is God-breathed" we mean that God's inspiration is not limited to certain segments of the text nor is it merely the inspiration of ideas behind the words and phrases. Inspiration is plenary, meaning every part, and verbal, meaning every word and every sentence. Wellum goes on to say that Scripture does not give evidence or

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[40] James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 180.
[41] Grudem, 78-80.
[42] Stephen J. Wellum, "The Inerrancy of Scripture" in *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity*, ed. John Piper, Justin Taylor, Paul Kjoss Helseth (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 245.

affirmation that it is merely audible divine dictation but rather that "human authors freely exercised their gifts and abilities to write what they wrote and that God so superintended the process of composing the Scriptures that the end result was nothing less than his guaranteed divine intention."[43]

Wellum's essay is a response to views of inspiration that begin with libertarian, self-determining human freedom, which he shows to be out of balance with the biblical witness and incapable of providing any "guarantee" of inerrancy or authority. his colleague at Southern, Tom Nettles, puts it more bluntly: "Inerrancy appears as an aberration in the Arminian system; it is a coherent part of the Calvinist system."[44] Wellum's definition of inspiration accounts for legitimate human agency while maintaining God's absolute control of the process. "Inspiration is that supernatural work of the Holy Spirit upon the human authors of Scripture such that their writings are precisely what God intended them to write, and as such, they are completely trustworthy and authoritative."[45] Or, as Albert Mohler has it, "We really do believe that God can work in such a way that the human will wills to do what God wills that will to do. And that is exactly why we believe in the inerrancy of Scripture."[46]

God

Since the Bible is God's revelation of himself, what it says about him is of supreme importance. Erickson chooses terms for a portion of his discussion of God that are truly majestic but equally familiar. Calling to mind a nursery school prayer, he says

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[43] Ibid., 247.

[44] Tom J. Nettles, "The Conserving Power of the Doctrines of Grace," *The Founders Journal* 29 (summer 1997): 22.

[45] Wellum, 246.

[46] Albert Mohler, Jr., remarks made at the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference, Greensboro, NC, June 12, 2006.

that God is great and God is good, twin assertions essential to this discussion of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist life.

The 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* stacks superlative upon superlative in its introduction of the doctrine of God; "God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections," "God is all powerful and all knowing," "To him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience."[47] Erickson, too, chooses to talk about the greatness of God in terms of his attributes. He points to the spirituality, personality, vitality, and constancy of God as attributes of excellence but summarizes much of what he has to say under the heading of infinity. Erickson maintains "not only that God is unlimited, but that he is unlimitable" in terms of space, time, knowledge, or power.[48] God's omnipresence means that he exists apart from created space (Genesis 1; John 1:10) and throughout it (Psalm 139; Jeremiah 23:23-24) simultaneously. "He is before all things and in him all things hold together."[49] God's eternity means that he exists both in and apart from time similar to the way that he transcends space. "God is timeless," writes Erickson. "He does not grow or develop. There are no variations within his nature at different points within his existence." (James 1:17)[50] God's omniscience means that he has perfect knowledge of all things and acts in perfect wisdom at all times. "[He] has access to all information," writes Erickson, "so his judgments are made wisely. He never has to revise his estimation of something because of additional information."[51] Finally, God's omnipotence means that he is "able to do all things which are proper objects of his power."[52] Erickson summarizes: "What all of this

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[47] *BF&M 2000*, Article 2, God.
[48] Erickson, 272.
[49] Colossians 1:17
[50] Ibid., 274.
[51] Ibid,, 276.
[52] Ibid.

means is that God's will is never frustrated. What he chooses to do, he accomplishes, for he has the ability to do it" (Psalm 115:3, Isaiah 46:9-10).[53]

God's "unlimitable" nature means that God exists and acts in absolute freedom. Roger Nicole, in his book *Our Sovereign Saviour*, explains:

> It is in his own sovereign freedom that God ordains and purposes whatever he has planned. This freedom is the freedom of God, and the freedom of God is qualified by the beautiful things we read in Scripture about his nature.... However, there is nothing outside God which obligates God to decide one way or another. The decree of God is a sovereign decree in which he stands at the very peak of the pyramid. There is nothing above him to oblige him one way or the other.[54]

Influential author and pastor John Piper joins Nicole in declaring the sovereign freedom of God when he says that "[God] cannot be kept back from doing what he delights most to do. And he cannot be forced to do what he does not delight in. And this is true everywhere in the universe" (Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 46:9-10).[55]

Within a few pages Piper addresses a specific instance where the limitlessness of God seems to be questioned. In a lengthy footnote, he points to the argument of open theism, which says that God's foreknowledge is limited because future decisions of human beings have not yet been made and are, thus, unknowable. Piper characterizes this view with a quote from a leading proponent of open theism, Clark Pinnock: "God can predict a great deal of what we choose to do, but not all of it... God too faces possibilities in the future, and not only certainties. God too moves into a future not wholly known because not yet fixed."[56]

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[53] Ibid,, 277.
[54] Roger Nicole, *Our Sovereign Saviour* (Fearn, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2002), 36.
[55] John Piper, *The Pleasures of God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishing, 2000), 52.
[56] Ibid. 57.

Southern Baptists addressed open theism specifically in a resolution passed at the 1999 SBC Annual Meeting affirming that "the attributes and powers [of God] are without limitation" and that "the omniscience of God extends to all creation and throughout all time, to all things actual and potential, even to the thoughts and actions of his conscious creatures, past, present, and future."[57] The open theism discussion, with its radical view of libertarian human freedom, has revived charges that Calvinists contrive a God who is coercive and ultimately the author of sin and evil. Southern Seminary professor Bruce Ware responds thoroughly to such assertions in his books *Their God is Too Small* and *God's Lesser Glory*. In a follow up publication, *God's Greater Glory*, Ware argues for "meticulous divine sovereignty" (Ephesians 1:11) and "compatibilist human freedom" (Philippians 2:12-13). Ware also asserts that God's sovereignty over evil need not imply his approval of or direct causation. He says that God's relationship to good and evil is "asymmetrical" but maintains, as in his discussion of sovereignty and freedom, that the biblical writers seem to have no problem recognizing both God's providential control of all things (Deuteronomy 32:39; Ecclesiastes 7:13-14; Isaiah 45:5-7;) and his absolute goodness.[58]

If God's greatness is awe inspiring, then his goodness can be no less so. Erickson discusses the goodness of God in three clusters of attributes. The first two, moral purity and integrity, carry over a great deal from his discussion of the greatness of God, but the climactic last grouping, which Erickson calls 'love', distinguishes the section. For many, Erickson notes, love is "the basic attribute, the very nature or definition of God."[59] He

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[57] http://www.sbcannualmeeting.org/sbc99/res2.htm

[58] Bruce Ware, *God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 24-26, 97-109.

[59] Erickson, 292.

points to 1 John 4:8 which says that "God is love" along with John 14:31 and Matthew 3:17 to demonstrate that God's "eternal giving or sharing of himself" occurred "even before there were any created beings."[60]

Erickson discusses God's love in four dimensions: benevolence, grace, mercy, and persistence. By benevolence, Erickson means that "God's love is an unselfish interest in us for our sake."[61] He goes to great lengths to explain that God's love for us is not based on some need or inadequacy in himself, nor is it a response to our love for him (1 John 4:10, Romans 5:6-10). God does not love us because we are impressive or desirable (Deuteronomy 7:7-8) nor does he love only those who return his affection (Matthew 5:45). While God maintains his own glory as of infinite value (Erickson and Piper both present this fact as foundational), he behaves in such a way that his goodness is lavished on all of his creation and, in fact, becomes an instrument to draw his own to repentance (Romans 2:4). This does not mean that God's love is a warrant for unchecked self-esteem in us but rather grounds for deepening esteem of him.

Erickson's second dimension, grace, adds to his first that God's love is not only offered unselfishly but also freely; it is neither motivated nor merited yet it is essential to salvation (Romans 3:23-24; Ephesians 2:9-10). Erickson emphasizes the extravagance of God's grace, citing Ephesians 1:5-8 to show that it is not only "freely bestowed" but also richly "lavished upon us" in our redemption through the blood of Christ.[62] Wayne Grudem emphasizes the fact that God's grace, while freely and lavishly given, is completely undeserved. He calls grace "God's favor toward those who deserve no favor

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., 294.

but only punishment."[63] By God's grace we receive what we do not deserve and we do not receive what we do deserve.

God's mercy, says Grudem, is his "goodness to those who are in misery or distress."[64] Erickson points out that mercy is an attribute from the very heart of God (Psalm 103:13; 2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 2:4) that is expressed in response to both physical suffering (Exodus 3:7; Mark 1:41) and spiritual need (Matthew 9:36). In the case of the latter, God's mercy is also connected with his forgiveness of sins (1 Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 8:12). Ultimately, God's mercy is evidence of both his self-sufficiency (Deuteronomy 10:17-19[65]) and his sovereignty (Romans 9:14-16).

Erickson's final dimension of God's love is persistence or, as Grudem has it, patience. The Old Testament repeatedly refers to God as "slow to anger" (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 86:15; Jonah 4:2) and the New Testament regularly speaks of his patience as well (Romans 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:15). Always God's patience is portrayed as a kindness toward the people he has made but it is also offered as an assurance of his continued goodness regardless of apparently evil circumstances. We can be patient because we know that "in all things," whether they appear to be good or not, "God works for the good of those who love him" and we can rest assured that he will finish his good work (Philippians 1:6) with perfect timing (2 Peter 3:8).

Man

No specific formulation of the Doctrines of Grace appears in the *BF&M*, a fact that will be addressed in part in the historical section that follows. However, affirmation

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[63] Grudem, 200.
[64] Ibid.
[65] See comments in John Piper, *A Godward Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1997), 75.

of key tenets of the Doctrines can be seen in articles III, IV, and V respectively entitled "Man," "Salvation," and "God's Purpose of Grace."

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Daniel Block summarizes the *BF&M* article on humanity in two parts: "man's noble status and man's ignoble state."[66] Pointing to Genesis 1:26-27, Block asserts that the nobility of man lies in his "image-ness" which is often understood in terms of human intellect, creativity, morality, or spirituality. Block follows the *BF&M* in affirming the "sacredness of human personality" in view of the fact that all persons are made in the image of God. "But within the biblical literary context and the ancient Near Eastern cultural context," he writes, "'image-ness' had more to do with the role played by man than with an ontological quality about man."[67] Human nobility, then, includes nobility of purpose, which begs the question; for what purpose has God made man? Block emphasizes the divine authority given to humanity to serve as God's uniquely created "representative (not representation)" and as his "deputy" in the government of creation (Psalm 8).[68]

Grudem says that "God created us for his own glory" (Isaiah 43:7; Ephesians 1:11-12). "When we are speaking of God himself, that is a good summary of our purpose," he continues, "but when we think of our own interests, we make the happy discovery that we are to enjoy God and take delight in him and in our relationship to him" (Psalm 16:11; 34:8; 37:4; Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16).[69] Piper appeals to the formulation of this tandem truth found in the Westminster Catechism for the

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[66] Daniel Block, "Baptist Faith and Message: Article 3: Man" 1 August 2002, http://www.bpnews.net (23 June 2005).

[67] Ibid.

[68] Block; Millard Erickson calls this the "functional view" but contends that function points to a prerequisite nature and that the image of God in man is man's "personality or selfhood: intelligence, will, emotions." Erickson, 508, 514.

[69] Grudem, 440-441.

foundation of a philosophy he calls "Christian hedonism." He emphasizes the enjoyment of God as an essential element of glorifying him. "The old theologians didn't think they were talking about two things," writes Piper. "They said 'chief end' not 'chief ends'. Glorifying God and enjoying him were one end in their minds, not two." For Piper, then, God has made us to glorify him by enjoying him forever.[70]

The second feature of the doctrine of man found in Article 3 is fallenness. Two aspects are stressed: the sin of Adam "whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin" (Romans 5:12-21) and the willful transgression of individuals that occurs "as soon as they are capable of moral action" (Romans 3:9-26).[71] Erickson writes with this same understanding, presenting original sin and personal transgression as distinct yet inextricably bound in the same way that justification and faith are bound. He describes this relationship in terms of the parallel presented in Romans 5.

> What is this parallel? If, as we might be inclined to think, the condemnation and guilt of Adam are imputed to us without there being on our part any sort of conscious choice of his act, the same would necessarily hold true of the imputation of Christ's righteousness and redeeming work. But does his death justify us simply by virtue of his identification with humanity through the incarnation and independently of whether we make a conscious and personal acceptance of his work? And do all men have the grace of Christ imputed to them, just as all have Adam's sin imputed to them?[72]

Holding to an Augustinian view of natural headship, where Adam is seen as both the physical and spiritual ancestor of all humanity (c.f. Hebrews 7:9-10), Erickson argues

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[70] John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 17. Devotional books like *Desiring God* and Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* have helped to popularize the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism among Baptists.

[71] *BF&M*, Article 3.

[72] Erickson, 638.

that human depravity is both universally inherited and universally ratified in personal transgression by everyone capable of moral decision.

> We all were involved in Adam's sin and receive both the corrupted nature that was his after the fall, and the guilt and condemnation that attach to his sin. With this matter of guilt, however, just as with the imputation of Christ's righteousness, there must be some conscious and voluntary decision on our part. Until this is the case, there is only a conditional imputation of guilt.[73]

Though Erickson holds firmly to the fact that we are 'sinners because we sin' (1 Kings 8:46; Psalm 130:3), he never lets go of the equally biblical fact that 'we sin because we are sinners' (Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:3).[74] Along with the *BF&M* he affirms that, because of original sin, both our nature and environment are absolutely inclined toward sin. He describes this condition as 'total depravity' and then addresses certain objections to the term; total depravity does not mean that human beings are completely insensitive to conscience or that we are as sinful as we can possibly be (c.f. Luke 11:13).[75] It does mean that human beings are entirely affected by sin in every aspect of personality and that "the sinner is completely unable to extricate himself from his sinful condition" and "totally unable to do genuinely meritorious works sufficient to qualify for God's favor." (Psalm 14:3; 53:3; Romans 3:12; Ephesians 2:1&2).[76]

Salvation

Article four discusses salvation and begins with an affirmation that it "involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as

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[73] Ibid., 639.

[74] Michael Horton, in his book *Putting Amazing Back into Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), uses a similar turn of phrase to emphasize the role of original sin against the notion that sin is only a matter of personal transgression.

[75] Both Timothy George (*Amazing Grace: God's Initiative, Our Response*) and Roger Nicole (*Our Sovereign Saviour*) address concerns over the adjective "total" for reasons similar to Erickson's. George and Nicole both suggest the term "radical depravity" as a better description of this doctrine.

[76] Erickson, 630-1.

Lord and Saviour, who by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer."[77] The topic is then broken down into four parts: regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. The *BF&M* does not attempt a thorough *ordo salutis*, though it does make the last three aspects contingent upon the first and refers to the last aspect, glorification, as the "culmination of salvation." Regeneration in the *BF&M* is "a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus." (2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Ephesians 2:9)[78] It involves both the divinely enabled and personally enacted elements of repentance and faith. "Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of his righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ (Romans 3:21-26). Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God."[79] "Sanctification is the experience... 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." (2 Philippians 2:12-14; Hebrews 12:14)[80] Finally, glorification is "the final and blessed and abiding state of the redeemed" (Colossians 3:4).[81]

The doctrine of salvation in the *BF&M* most closely approximates the Reformed doctrine of atonement; a point of great contention between Calvinistic and non-Calvinistic Southern Baptists, especially where missions is concerned. The conflict over this doctrine centers, not on the nature of the benefits of Christ's death, but on the extent to which they are offered and applied. Issues are not made easier by the traditional Reformed description of atonement as "limited." Baptist writers like Timothy George

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[77] *BF&M 2000*, Article 3, Salvation.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

and Roger Nicole note this and prefer other terms such as "singular redemption" or "definite atonement," emphasizing that its application to those individual persons (not groups or classes) that God has 'foreknown and predestined' is certain. Nicole says that both sides can agree that the atonement provided by Christ is not limited in its value or sufficiency, nor is it limited in its general benefit, short of salvation, to all people. The limitation is in its design.

> Everybody who does not hold to universal salvation has to grant that there are limits. Obviously, if the limit is not in breadth, then the limit is in depth. If Christ offered himself for all men and all men are not saved, then obviously the *effectiveness* of the work of Christ is not without limits. It fails to accomplish what Christ intended to do. On the other hand, one could say that the work of Christ is intended only for those people who are saved. Here there is no limit to effectiveness, but there is a limit in the *intention*. And it is precisely this that the Calvinists are saying. The work of Christ was definite in its intent and wholly effective so that all for whom it was intended are going to be brought into the ultimate enjoyment of salvation by the effectual power of God who works all things as He pleases.[82]

Reformed Baptists say that the atonement does not merely make salvation *possible* based on our response, but the work of Christ *actually* saves. Its design is to redeem "his sheep" (John 10), those given to him by the Father (John 17).

A common rebuttal to this understanding emphasizes the role of human response to the gospel: "Christ died for all" (Isaiah 53:6; 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:2),[83] some object. "The application of his death depends on the response of each

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[82] Nicole, 60.

[83] George, Erickson, and Grudem specifically warn against the neglect of these verses and others like them that seem to say that Christ's death benefits all. "Unless the context clearly requires a different interpretation, it is better to say that 'all means all,' even if we cannot square the universal reach of Christ's atoning death with it's singular focus." *Amazing Grace*, 82.

individual to the gospel." John Piper answers such objections with a syllogism similar to one formulated by Puritan writer John Owen:[84]

> We can conclude this section with the following summary argument. Which of these statements is true?
>
> 1. Christ died for some of the sins of all men.
> 2. Christ died for all the sins of some men.
> 3. Christ died for all the sins of all men.
>
> No one says that the first is true, for then all would be lost because of the sins that Christ did not die for. The only way to be saved from sin is for Christ to cover it with his blood.
>
> The third statement is what the Arminians would say. Christ died for all the sins of all men. But then why are not all saved? They answer, "Because some do not believe." But is this unbelief not one of the sins for which Christ died? If they say yes, then why is it not covered by the blood of Jesus and all unbelievers saved? If they say no (unbelief is not a sin that Christ has died for) then they must say that men can be saved without having all their sins atoned for by Jesus, or they must join us in affirming statement number two: Christ died for all the sins of some men. That is, he died for the unbelief of the elect so that God's punitive wrath is appeased toward them and his grace is free to draw them irresistibly out of darkness into his marvelous light.[85]

God's Purpose of Grace

The fifth article of the *BF&M* addresses grace under two headings: election and perseverance. Ironically, the former is often the most controversial point between Reformed and non-Reformed Baptists and the latter is often the least.

The word 'grace' describes God's unmerited favor toward fallen people, including the general or common grace that all people experience and the special or saving grace experienced by Christians. Wayne Grudem writes that common grace can be seen in the physical realm as God "makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, and

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[84] John Owen, *The Death of Death* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 61-62. As quoted in Nicole, *Our Sovereign Savior.*

[85] John Piper et al, "What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism," March 1998, http://desiringgod.org/library/topics/doctrines_grace/tulip.html (October 10, 2005).

sends rain on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:44 45), in the moral realm when those "who have not the law by nature do what the law requires" (Romans 2:14), and in the societal realm, where God institutes relationships and governmental authorities "for [our] good" (Romans 13:4).[86] Timothy George writes of common grace in a similar way, citing Paul's speech to a pagan audience at Lystra; "[God] has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy" (Acts 14:17).[87] But George and Grudem both take pains to distinguish common grace from saving grace. Grudem says that common grace does not flow directly from Christ's atoning work and George reminds his readers that "common grace and general revelation alone" are not sufficient to bring lost persons to salvation. "God's presence and power are evidenced in every human heart through the witness of common grace," writes George; "this renders every single person inexcusable before the bar of God's righteous judgment. But true salvation and eternal life, that is, deliverance from sin and death, comes about only through the interposition of God's special, redemptive grace."[88]

The text of article 5 makes it clear that common grace is not in view when it describes God's purpose of grace as election of sinners to regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. The four objectives, of course, point to the *BF&M* statement on salvation, affirming that God's gracious purpose is to save sinners. The word 'election' underscores the fact that those who are saved are chosen by God. Seemingly in anticipation of the usual questions that arise from this doctrine, the *BF&M* offers five qualifications.

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[86] Grudem, 657ff.
[87] George, 15-16.
[88] Ibid., 16-17.

Often opponents of the Reformed view of grace complain that predestination robs people of legitimately free choices but the *BF&M* affirms that election "is consistent with the free agency of man." Tom Nettles explains in his commentary on the article that whenever "a person acts, he acts freely – or exactly as he is disposed to act."[89] Nettles' Southern Seminary colleague Bruce Ware calls this the "freedom of inclination." "Our wills function, according to Jesus (Luke 6:43-45), as agents of our hearts," writes Ware.[90] Nettles continues, "While dead in trespasses and sins, [each person] is a slave to sin. Sin reigns in his mortal body, and he has no desire for righteousness" (Romans 6:16-18).[91] What is required for righteousness is a change of disposition, a reorientation so that the sinner not only does what is right but desires to do it. This occurs when "the Spirit implants such a desire for righteousness in that the sinner turns to Christ."[92]

Erickson takes an interesting position on the relationship between predestination and human freedom that he calls 'congruism.'[93] "Is God's having rendered human decisions and actions certain compatible with human freedom?" he writes, "How one responds depends on his understanding of freedom." Erickson argues that human freedom need not, in fact can not, be defined as total spontaneity or random choice.[94] Even in our human relationships we see patterns and circumstances that make choices more or less predictable, especially in very close relationships. The fact that God has rendered our decisions and actions certain does not mean that our choices are not

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[89] Thomas Nettles, "Baptist Faith and Message: Article 5a: God's Purpose of Grace, Election" 1 August 2002, http://www.bpnews.net (14 October 2005).

[90] Ware, *God's Greater Glory,* 79.

[91] Nettles, "Article 5".

[92] Ibid.

[93] Erickson says that the term originated with B.B. Warfield and that it describes the "most diluted form of Calvinism" which some may deny is Calvinistic at all. 359.

[94] As Bruce Ware explains, if "no choice-specific reason or reasons can be given for any so-called "free" choices or actions that we do... this reduces all free choices and actions to arbitrariness and removes from us the basis for why we choose and act." *God's Greater Glory*, 25.

legitimately ours or that other choices are not legitimately available to us; it does not mean that we *could* not choose something else, only that we *will* not due to our divinely designed disposition and circumstances. Freedom, for Erickson, means acting without external constraint or doing as I please. "But am I free with respect to what pleases me or not?" He answers, "I make all decisions, but those decisions are in large measure influenced by certain characteristics of mine which I am not capable of altering by my own choice."[95] Human free agency and predestination, for Erickson as in Scripture, exist side by side; "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). This differs from the Arminian view of foreknowledge in that God does not leave anything to chance. In his comparison of the two views, Erickson points out that traditional Arminianism, which assumes that God from eternity foresees our faith in time, necessarily implies some predetermination of what we will do. If God sees what will happen, is it not rendered certain by the fact that he sees it? If not, the possibility exists that God might be mistaken or that he lacks complete knowledge of certain types of future events.[96] All Arminians do not necessarily arrive at this conclusion, but it is receiving more acceptance from proponents of open-theism, as mentioned above.[97]

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[95] Ibid. 357.

[96] Stephen Wellum addresses this view of foreknowledge in his essay on inerrancy. He includes the following basic argument for foreknowledge as deterministic.

"(1) God's beliefs are infallible. Thus,
(2) For any event *x*, if God believes in advance *x* will occur, then no one is in a position to prevent *x*.
(3) For any event *x*, if no one is in a position to prevent *x*, then no one is free with respect to *x*.
(4) For every event *x* that ever occurs, God believes in advance that it will occur. Therefore,
(5) No one distinct from God is free with respect to any event. And so,
(6) Human free will is a complete illusion."

"The Inerrancy of Scripture" in *Beyond the Bounds*, 256.

[97] Ibid., 359ff. Erickson's 'congruism' leads him to an understanding that conversion occurs after God's effectual calling but before regeneration. God woos those that he intends to save through the circumstances and disposition He gives them and they invariably respond with faith and repentance and then are 'born again'. Erickson's description of free moral agency is still useful even when one views regeneration as causally prior to faith. Grudem argues that chronologically faith, regeneration, and

Another complaint from non-Reformed Baptists is that election makes it pointless to pray for lost people, to send missionaries, or to invite people to believe the gospel because God has predetermined who will be saved and he does not need our help. While it is true that God does not *need* our help, it is equally true that he desires and allows us to take part in his work of election as witnesses of his grace. The *BF&M* says that election "comprehends all the means in connection with the end" that God accomplishes his gracious purpose of salvation. This subject will be dealt with in detail in a subsequent section, but for now suffice it to say that God, who elects people for salvation, also elects the means by which they are saved (Romans 10:13-15). As Nicole writes, "Without the preaching of the gospel we cannot expect the election of God to take effect. When God elected some people to be saved, he also elected the means by which they should be saved."[98]

Still others argue that the teaching of unconditional election makes God seem unfair or even mean; if all are equally undeserving, why would he choose only some and pass by others? The Apostle Paul anticipated a similar complaint and answered in Romans 9.

> But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' Does not the potter have the *right* to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath – prepared for destruction? *What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory*? (Italics added).

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effectual calling occur simultaneously but that causally effectual call precedes regeneration and regeneration precedes faith. 700.

[98] Nicole, 133.

Paul argues that God has both a right and a reason to elect some while passing over others. Ultimately we must admit that we are not entitled to an explanation. But before we assign blame to God based on our obviously limited knowledge of his acts and our often self-serving sense of justice, further observation is appropriate. First, as Grudem has it, "*it would be perfectly fair for God not to save anyone,* just as he did with the angels: 'God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell'" (2 Peter 2:4).[99] Therefore, the fact that God saves anyone dispels the charge of unfairness. The doctrine of unconditional election does not portray God as unjust in anyway but rather as both "just and the one who justifies" (Romans 3:26) those who are in Christ. So election is, in the words of the *BF&M*, "a glorious display of God's Sovereign goodness and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable."

A final complaint answered in the *BF&M*'s section on election is that the notion of being elect produces a sense of superiority over others and personal pride. Certainly there are biblical illustrations of this (Luke 3:8), just as there are contemporary examples. But election, properly understood, absolutely and always "excludes boasting and promotes humility." The use of the word 'unconditional' highlights the fact that those who belong to Christ are elect through no merit of their own and they, like Paul, can only "boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31) because of his gracious choice of undeserving individuals. Tom Nettles writes, "Such a display of sovereign goodness humbles its recipients to the dust and absolutely excludes any synergy in this salvation, and renders boasting of any sort an utter nullity."[100]

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[99] Grudem, 682.

[100] Nettles, "The Baptist Faith and Message: Article 5a: God's Purpose of Grace, Election."

The second paragraph of article 5 deals with the doctrine of perseverance, which, says Timothy George, "is the one point of Calvinism most contemporary Baptists believe without reservation."[101] The general acceptance of this doctrine, usually called *eternal security*, is no doubt due to the extensive biblical witness (e.g. John 3:16; 10:7-29; Romans 8:30; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:3-5). Nicole cites the teaching of Jesus in a jubilant paragraph.

> He speaks about giving everlasting life. And what kind of everlastingness is this which would end in this brief course of our pilgrimage? He says that he who believes in him shall never thirst. And how would that not be thirst if, in the end, in rejection of God we should consign ourselves once again to damnation? He says that this is the will of the Father that he lose no one, but rather raise them up at the last day. He says that the Lord holds his sheep – that no one shall take them out of his hand; that they shall never perish, that he gives them eternal life.[102]

The *BF&M* makes allowance that some who seem to fall away may not have ever been true believers (1 John 2:19) and that some who are true believers may "fall into sin through neglect and temptation" only to be brought to repentance through the loving discipline of God (Hebrews 12:10), but the statement emphatically and unequivocally conveys the conviction of most Baptists that "all true believers endure to the end."

A question arises here concerning the non-Reformed Baptist view of eternal security in light of the emphasis on human freedom. If, in order to be free, human beings must be ultimately self-determining, then how can final salvation ever be certain?[103] The Arminian answer to the question is, of course, it can't. But many, if not most, Baptists who reject sovereign (unconditional) election and overcoming (irresistible) grace also

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[101] George, 78.

[102] Nicole, 86.

[103] Erickson speaks of the possibility of apostasy in the same way that he discusses free agency in general. He says that texts warning against apostasy (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:29) are part of the means by which God keeps his people from falling away. "While Hebrews 6 indicates that genuine believers *can* fall away, John 10 teaches that they *will not*.", 994. Grudem and George address these warning texts as well but find them inconclusive as evidence that any true believer has ever fallen away or even faced that possibility.

reject the Arminian view of perseverance, raising still more questions. Are we less free to renounce our faith after we are saved than we were to accept it before we were saved? Is the biblical offer of assurance (1 John 5:13) ever really warranted? In what sense can we say that eternal life is 'eternal' if there is always the possibility of defection? The *BF&M* does not address this dilemma directly but rather finds the basis of eternal security in the character and activity of God: "Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace."

Evangelism and Missions

Apart from a belief in the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, there is nothing more distinctively Baptist than a pervasive commitment to personal evangelism and global missions. Though the Baptist Faith and Message places its article on evangelism and missions eleventh, there is no doubt that the task is first in the hearts of the people. To be Baptist is, to borrow a slogan from the North American Mission Board, SBC, to be "on mission with God."

The classic text for this commitment is obviously Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission. Baptists find in the words of Jesus a mandate for missions and evangelism and a promise of his power and presence as they obey. This is not to say that God's mission among the nations of the earth begins at the end of the first gospel. In his covenant with Abraham, God unveils his invincible purpose to bless "all peoples on earth" through the offspring of the patriarch (Genesis 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). The people of God are called "a kingdom of priests" in Exodus 19:6 in view of their privileged place and ministerial responsibility among the other nations. The Psalms celebrate a time when all of the nations will hear of God's greatness and give him praise

(Psalm 22:27-28; 45:17; 67:5-7; 86:9), and they describe the role that God's people will play as they "declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples" (Psalm 96:3). The prophets also tell of God's intention to "gather all nations and tongues" (Isaiah 66:18) through the agency of his people; "I will also make you a light to the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6).

The Commission itself is seen to be binding on every member of the body of Christ until the Lord returns. Though past generations have understood the text to apply only to the apostles,[104] the *BF&M* says that evangelism "is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ."[105] Piper adds that we know that the Commission applies to all believers throughout history because of Jesus' promise in verse 20 to be with the recipients "to the very end of the age." This cannot refer merely to the apostles or the first Christians but must include all who live between the giving of the Commission and the return of the Lord at the end of the age.[106]

The imperative of the Commission is to "make disciples of all nations." This phrase, or at least the last phrase of it, has taken on a new technical meaning that will be discussed below. For now, suffice it to say that the New Testament frequently employs the image of "all the nations" or "every nation." Jesus is said to have "purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). Christians have been saved and sent ("received grace and apostleship") in order to "call people from

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[104] Garrett notes that "it is now commonly agreed that throughout the patristic, the medieval, the Reformation, and post-Reformation eras Christians generally held the view that the apostles had in their time fulfilled the Great Commission." He does note certain individual exceptions to this belief as well as groups like the Anabaptists. 542.

[105] *BF&M 2000*, Article 11, Evangelism and Missions.

[106] John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 160.

among all the Gentiles (*pasin tois ethnesin*) to the obedience that comes from faith." The gospel will be preached "in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). These references and others like them note the ultimate diversity that will exist in the kingdom of God because his missionary people will go to every ethnic people group and make disciples before history draws to its close.

This sweeping picture of enthusiastic outreach is often presented as evidence against the Reformed doctrine of election. If the impetus to be saved comes from God and the objects of salvation are predetermined by him, then why should God command our participation in personal evangelism and world missions? The assumption fails to take into account that God ordains not only the end of salvation for his people but also the means.

The logic of this is inescapable in Romans 8, 9, and 10. In Romans 8 we read that "those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the like ness of his Son... and those he predestined he also called, and those he called he also justified, and those he justified he also glorified" (vv.29-30). The perfect verbs indicate God's finished work of salvation on the basis of his loving election of individuals. Romans 9 follows this detailed assertion by defending the justice of God, who shows mercy according to his good pleasure, which is not based on any merit in individual persons, a good thing since Romans has already established that "there is no one righteous, not even one" (3:10). "It does not, therefore depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (9:16). These facts in evidence, the Apostle Paul moves without hesitation to a description of the means that God uses to apply his unmerited mercy. In order to call on the Lord for salvation, we must first believe. And in order to believe we must first hear of him. And in order to

hear of him, someone must preach his gospel. And in order to preach, they must be sent. Could there be a more perfect picture of the evangelistic and missionary enterprise in the context of God's sovereign purpose of election?

Conclusion

While the articles and the biblical texts cited in the *BF&M* do not necessarily require a Reformed interpretation, they certainly do not exclude one. On its own, the statement of faith does not establish a Calvinistic tradition among Southern Baptists, but it does give evidence of a past solidly rooted in Reformed theology.

Historical Overview

The current climate of controversy over the Doctrines of Grace frequently produces the charge that Calvinistic Southern Baptists have departed from the true Baptist tradition and revised the history of the denomination to serve their theological and political goals. How could such a great evangelistic and missionary heritage derive from men and women who believed in unconditional election and limited atonement? While a brief survey of Baptist history will not establish an exclusively Calvinistic pedigree among Baptists, it will demonstrate that many key denominational forbears and influences were distinctly Reformed and found no conflict between their doctrine and their commitment to missions and evangelism.

Baptist Beginnings

Leon McBeth chronicles the development of Baptist denominations in his widely read work *The Baptist Heritage*, beginning with their emergence from English Separatism in the early years of the seventeenth century. John Smyth, a brilliant but "unsettled" man, who neither began nor ended his life as a Baptist, is credited with the

establishment of the first distinctly Baptist congregation in Holland around 1609.[107] Smyth began his ecclesiastical pursuits as an Anglican student at Cambridge where he came under the influence of future Separatist leader Francis Johnson. After his ordination in 1594, Smyth developed a reputation as a "moderate Puritan" though he still accepted much of the formality and government influence within the Church of England. This moderation, however, soon gave way to sharp criticism of Anglicanism. Smyth "considered many Anglican priests as 'too papist' (i.e. too much like Catholicism); infant baptism he equated with spiritual adultery; and he was known to rebuke prominent sinners by name from the pulpit."[108]

After years of contention, Smyth finally left the Church of England in 1606, joining a Separatist congregation in Gainsborough. The Gainsborough church grew large enough to attract persecution, prompting a division and then the migration of both groups to Holland. One group, led by John Robinson, William Bradford, and William Brewster, eventually sailed for America in 1619 on the Mayflower.[109] The other, led by Smyth and a layman named Thomas Helwys, remained in Amsterdam and, in 1609, adopted believer's baptism as the distinguishing mark of their fellowship. Smyth denounced Anglican baptism, a conviction long in the making, on the grounds that it was administered by a corrupt church and performed on infants. He baptized himself, then Helwys, and then about forty others.[110]

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[107] H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), 32-33.

[108] Ibid.

[109] John Piper highlights the missionary motivation of these Puritan Pilgrims, who "saw their emigration to America as part of God's missionary strategy to extend his kingdom among the nations." *Let the Nations be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions,* 53.

[110] McBeth, *Baptist Heritage.* 36. Smyth's self-baptism, or se-baptism, was well attested by witnesses. Many then and since have wondered why Smyth did not seek baptism from his Mennonite neighbors who also baptized as a public profession of faith. McBeth supposes that language may have

Bill Leonard joins McBeth in portraying Smyth as impulsive. His se-baptism was a bold step, but he later questioned its legitimacy. "Smyth's restless spirit was not sated," writes Leonard. "He concluded that his own self-baptism was invalid and requested membership among the Mennonites, convinced that they had a baptismal tradition worthy of the New Testament church."[111] Smyth died without receiving membership in the Mennonite church, but several of the Baptists followed him and were eventually admitted.

Thomas Helwys did not share Smyth's sentiment about baptism and, after an amicable parting with Smyth and his followers, assumed leadership of the remaining Baptists. The group, now distinct from other separatists in polity and theology, returned to the Spitalfield section of London in 1612. "Helwys was not a sophisticated theologian," comments Leonard, but he was followed in the Spitalfield church by John Murton, who, with other General Baptists, "articulated an Arminian theology that challenged the Calvinism of English Puritanism."[112]

McBeth notes this theological vigor as well, but, along with Nettles, adds that it was short-lived and both McBeth and Nettles point to the absorption of aberrant doctrine from Anabaptists as a primary cause for General Baptist decline over the course of the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries. The neglect of the doctrines of Christ and his atonement opened inroads into Baptist life for Arianism, Socinianism, and

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been a barrier for Smyth at this time. Later, Smyth would renounce his own se-baptism and apply for membership in the Mennonite church.

[111] Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 25.

[112] Ibid., 27

ultimately Unitarianism. "They fell victim to extreme liberalism," McBeth laments. "They had no gospel to preach and they preached no gospel."[113]

Particular Baptists

Calvinistic Baptists, called Particular Baptists for their belief in a limited or particular atonement, emerged independently from the Smyth-Helwys congregation but had the same roots in English Separatism. Leonard develops his account of Particular Baptist beginnings from the ecclesiastical journeys of Henry Jacob. An Oxford educated Anglican priest, Jacob became a Separatist in the 1580s and traveled to Holland, where he met fellow expatriates and nonconformists Robert Browne and Francis Johnson. Upon his return to England in 1603, Jacob, now a Congregationalist, was jailed (literally thrown into "the Clink", a local prison) for his views. After his release, he petitioned the king for greater religious liberty but was refused and chose to return to Holland, where he met John Robinson and other members of the Pilgrim congregation. In 1616 Jacob returned to London again and helped start a new church in Southwark. He was promptly ordained the pastor of the fledgling congregation and served as such until he left for Virginia in 1625.[114] Jacob was succeeded by the like-minded John Lathrop, who was followed by Henry Jessey. The Southwark congregation eventually came to be known by the initials of its first three pastors: the JLJ church.

The Southwark church struggled with different ideas about separation from the Church of England. Henry Jacob himself seemed to have friendly relations with the state church (McBeth calls him a "mild separatist"[115]) and many of his members attended

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[113] McBeth, *Baptist Heritage,* 154, 158.

[114] Leonard, 28.

[115] H. Leon McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1990), 22.

Anglican services. In 1630 a schism developed when one family within the JLJ church had their infant child baptized in an Anglican ceremony. A group withdrew from the JLJ congregation that year in protest, though it is unclear whether they were offended by paedobaptism or by Anglicanism or both. Three years later, following increased persecution against Separatists by the Church of England, anti-Anglican sentiment grew stronger among some in the Southwark congregation. The question of baptism again was central but details are scarce. On September 12, 1633, a group of seventeen persons, led by Samuel Eaton, withdrew from the JLJ church and subsequently were re-baptized. McBeth laments the dearth of information about this parting:

> How many received a "further baptism" and why? Did they object to infant baptism or merely to baptism from the church of England? By what mode was this further baptism performed? We do not know. We do know that by 1633 there was a church of Calvinist theology in London, at least some of whom had experienced rebaptism.[116]

Particular Baptist churches continued to gain ground in London and by 1644 seven such congregations issued the First London Confession of Faith. The stated purpose of the 1644 Confession was to distinguish the Baptist congregations, who were "unjustly called Anabaptists," and to establish their doctrine within the Reformed tradition. William Kiffin, an original signer of the Confession, later wrote that the document was produced because the Particular Baptist churches were "much spoken against as unsound in Doctrine as if they were Armenians [sic]."[117] William H. Brackney, in his *Genetic History of Baptist Thought*, notes that "the Reformed consensus [in London at the time] was clear and those outside, including the General Baptists, were pronounced theologically anathema." Brackney writes that "the Calvinistic character of

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[116] McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage,* 44.
[117] McBeth, *Sourcebook*, 27.

the First London Confession is visible throughout the document." He cites sections that declare that "the elect which God hath loved with an everlasting love are redeemed, quickened, and saved... wholly and onely by God of His free grace" and that "God hath in Christ before the foundation of the world, according to the good pleasure of His will, foreordained some men to eternall life through Jesus Christ... leaving the rest in their sinne to their just condemnation to the praise of His justice."[118]

The 1644 Confession was revised and expanded in 1646. Other statements of faith from Particular Baptist notables followed, including one from John Bunyan (though some argue that Bunyan was more of a 'baptist' than a 'Baptist" because of his unwillingness to require baptism for church membership and his distaste for denominations). General Baptists were also active during this period of theological definition, producing the Midlands Confession in 1651 (drawing from Thomas Helwys's 1611 statement of faith) and the Standard Confession in 1660. Brackney even highlights a mediating confessional tradition during the mid-to-late seventeenth century. Both the Somerset Confession of 1650 and the Orthodox Creed of 1679 attempted to bridge the gap between General and Particular Baptists but, possibly because both were produced by General Baptists, neither gained wide acceptance in the Calvinistic churches.[119]

Particular Baptists produced what is arguably their most influential confession in 1677. The Second London Confession furthered the goal of the First in aligning Particular Baptists with other Reformed churches by adopting much of the language of the Westminster Confession. The Baptists were following the lead of Congregationalist churches who had adapted the Westminster Confession at their Savoy Conference in

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[118] Quoted in William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004), 28-29.

[119] Brackney, 21

1658. "We have no itch to clog religion with new words," declared Particular Baptists in 1677, "but to readily acquiesce in that form of sound words which hath been, in consent with the holy Scriptures, used by others before us."[120] Of course, this was no uncritical reproduction or wholesale endorsement of the views of the Westminster divines. The Baptists incorporated their distinctive views on Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and church membership, and borrowed an entire article on missions entitled "The Gospel and its Gracious Extent" from the Savoy Declaration. The inclusion of this article foreshadowed events a century later that would set in motion the modern Protestant missionary enterprise.

Baptist, Calvinistic, and Evangelical

English Particular Baptist luminaries continued to advance the movement into the eighteenth century.[121] Leon McBeth presents the early seventeen hundreds as a low ebb for Particular Baptists, saying that theologians like John Brine "helped to fix upon Particular Baptists a withering form of hyper-Calvinism" that "refused to apply the gospel to sinners, abandoned and even ridiculed evangelistic invitations, and severely limited human ability to respond to the gospel."[122]

Brine and his predecessor John Skepp are usually noted in connection with the prominent and prolific John Gill. Called "Dr. Voluminous" by his admirers, Gill was highly esteemed in his time but is rarely regarded among the Baptist fathers today. Timothy George notes that when Gill "is mentioned in standard denominational histories,

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[120] *The Second London Confession*, 1677, quoted in Brackney, 7.

[121] General Baptists enjoyed seasons of vitality through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as well, but the purpose of this project is to explore the influence of the Particular Baptist tradition on the developing denomination.

[122] McBeth, *Sourcebook*, 116. Interestingly, McBeth points to Brine's defense of eternal justification as evidence of his hyper-Calvinism and then quotes Brine himself as saying that "it is very bad logic to argue from the part to the whole" by saying that eternal justification means that the elect may be saved without the exercise of personal faith.

he is invariably caricatured as the bogey-man of hyper-Calvinism."[123] But Gill's own writings and ministry paint another picture. Gill believed in both the necessity of conversion and the evangelistic mission of the church. Tom Nettles maintains that Gill's evangelistic fervor was not an aberration but an integral part of his theological system. Gill urged "the gathering in of others to Christ" in his Confession of Faith and charged ministers to "preach the gospel of salvation to all men, and declare, that whosoever believes shall be saved."[124]

Followers of Gill later invoked his writings in debate with the Baptist evangelical Andrew Fuller over the question of the role of means in evangelism. The Gillites cited their mentor's strong case for the sovereignty of God in salvation as an argument against the promiscuous preaching of the gospel. But George, along with Nettles, maintains that the assessment of Gill as a hyper-Calvinist is made by historians who view him largely through the lens of controversialists who followed him. Without respect for hyper-Calvinists who appealed to Gill or whose work in some measure Gill admired, Nettles places John Gill in the mainstream of evangelical Baptist Calvinism, saying his "theology differs little from that of Keach and Bunyan (and at points is even less radical)."[125] Still, George does not exonerate Gill entirely. "It can be shown that Gill never intended for his ideas to have such questionable consequences," writes George. "It is another question, however, of whether he sufficiently anticipated or guarded against such misinterpretation."[126]

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[123] George, *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 12.

[124] Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: a Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1986; reprint, Lake Charles, LA: Cor Meum Tibi, 2002), 99.

[125] Ibid., 84.

[126] George, *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 26.

Gillites, accentuating the hyper- tendencies of Gill's Calvinism, found a formidable opponent in the great evangelical Calvinist and missionary theologian, Andrew Fuller. Raised in a high Calvinist home, Fuller later commented that his childhood pastor at Soham, "tinged with false Calvinism, had little to say to the unconverted."[127] Struggling with a strong sense of his own depravity, Fuller found encouragement in the Scriptures, and in 1769, after years of vacillation, he felt "a ray of hope mixed with a determination" to believe and be saved. When Fuller assumed the pastorate at Soham in 1775, he was a convinced Calvinist, but his evangelical convictions were not yet fully formed. He became acquainted with fellow pastors John Sutcliff and Robert Hall who introduced him to the writings of Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, and John Eliot. Fuller was impressed that such thoughtful men would see no conflict between God's sovereignty and human responsibility, and in 1781 he wrote *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptance*, a book expressing his conviction that "any *poor* sinner had a warrant to believe in Christ for the salvation of his soul."[128]

Fuller held that the doctrine of God's sovereign decrees was not inconsistent with the duty of faith: "Neither Augustine nor Calvin, who each in his day defended predestination, and the other doctrines connected with it, ever appear to have thought of denying it to be the duty of every sinner who has heard the gospel to repent and believe in Jesus Christ."[129] Fuller was impressed by Edwards' distinction between the "natural" and

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[127] Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: with a Memoir of His Life by Andrew Gunton Fuller*, 3rd ed., revised with additions by Joseph Belcher, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845; reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 1:2.

[128] Ibid., 1:5.

[129] Andrew Fuller, "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 3:367.

"moral" abilities of fallen people;[130] "No one in his senses would think of calling the blind to look, the deaf to hear, or the dead to rise up and walk," wrote Fuller, "and of threatening them with punishment in case of their refusal. But if the blindness arise from the love of darkness rather than light, there is no absurdity or cruelty in such addresses."[131] Fuller was convinced, by his observations of Christ and the Apostles and by the parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22), that the indiscriminate preaching of the Gospel was fully consistent with the doctrine of election.

Historians like McBeth and Leonard refer to Fuller's theology as a "modified Calvinism" and, in the sense that it differs from the high Calvinism of his youth, this is true. But Fuller saw no disconnect between evangelism and Calvinism, hence his characterization of hyper-Calvinism as "false Calvinism." Fuller did not seem to think of his Calvinism as 'modified' at all; he believed that the sovereign work of God and the particular atonement of Christ were not contradictory to but rather "ground for a universal invitation to sinners to believe" and that this understanding "was maintained by Calvin and all the old Calvinists."[132] Fuller's opponents accused him of reviving the convoluted soteriological views of the Puritan Richard Baxter and even of rank Arminianism. Fuller vehemently denied both charges, saying of the former that he couldn't make sense of Baxter either and of the latter that he "should rather choose to go through the world alone than be connected with [Arminians]."[133]

Fuller was not alone in his evangelistic sentiments. William Carey, still a cobbler when Fuller wrote his seminal work, absorbed Fuller's biblical and logical argument that

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[130] Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham, AL: Christian History Institute, 1998), 55.

[131] Fuller, 388.

[132] Quoted in Leonard, 101.

[133] Nettles, 127.

sinners were obliged to hear the gospel and that believers were equally obliged to preach it. "Fuller was the theologian," writes George, "Carey the visionary and activist of the missionary awakening."[134] The Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1792 with Fuller presiding, and Carey sailed for India the next year.

Fullerism[135] came into full bloom during a time of great evangelical enthusiasm in England. The Methodist revivals lead by Wesley and Whitefield had influenced both General and Particular Baptists and had, in some ways, provided common cause for the two groups. One group of General Baptists, led by the bright and energetic Dan Taylor, rallied to the scriptures and to the work of evangelism, preserving that branch of the Baptist family from complete dissolution into Unitarianism. Taylor criticized many aspects of Fuller's soteriology but never "argued with Fuller on the principle of calling all, indiscriminately, to faith in Christ."[136] Fuller, though he deplored the Arminian leanings of the General Baptists, did express a personal admiration for Taylor and his enthusiastic witness.[137]

But gracious words for his opponent should not be mistaken for a softening of Fuller's Particular convictions. He was a convinced Calvinist and equally convinced that if the work of the Baptist Missionary Society ever fell into the hands of men who cared little or not at all for the Doctrines of Grace it would "soon come to nothing." "For Fuller correct doctrine and theology were not the niceties of the faith but indespensible building blocks," writes Phil Roberts. "In his understanding that meant a Calcedonian Christology,

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[134] George, *Faithful Witness*, 57.
[135] Fuller preferred the term "strict Calvinism" for his theology.
[136] Phil Roberts, "Andrew Fuller" in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition,* 41.
[137] Nettles, 122.

evangelical Calvinism, and a Baptist church order. Each of these was to be expressed with Christian love and applied practically to world evangelization and mission."[138]

The New World and the Modern World

Standing astride the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Fuller's doctrinal and missionary commitments were shaped in what was then called the "modern controversy": is unconditional election logically consistent with the promiscuous preaching of the gospel? His vigorous affirmation of evangelical Calvinism foreshadowed the modern era of missionary expansion as well as the ministry of the great Baptist Calvinist and controversialist, Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Born June 19, 1834, the son and grandson of Congregational pastors, "Spurgeon breathed a Puritan, therefore a basic Calvinistic, atmosphere from his birth, and he never really changed throughout life; nor did he want to."[139] Lewis Drummond points out that Spurgeon's interests and influences were diverse, contrary to one critic who charged that he pointed his "spiritual telescope to just one portion of the sky," but he calls the Doctrines of Grace the very "core" of Spurgeon's ministry.[140] Though utterly dependent on Scripture for his theology, "Spurgeon became convinced that one could take a simple step from Paul to Augustine and then from Augustine to Calvin. He said, 'You may keep your foot up a good while before you will find such another.'"[141] But like Fuller, Spurgeon's theological commitments and his evangelistic efforts seemed contradictory to his contemporaries. In his sermon on John 6:37, where Spurgeon presents the "high doctrine" of divine election alongside the "broad doctrine" of personal response, he

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[138] Roberts, 47.
[139] Drummond, 612.
[140] Ibid., 572 & 635.
[141] Ibid., 255.

explains his own view: "I was once asked to reconcile these two statements, and I answered 'No, I never reconcile friends.'" He adds, "The grand declaration of the purpose of God that he will save his own is quite consistent with the widest declaration that whosoever will come to Christ shall be saved."[142] Spurgeon took umbrage with those who claimed Calvinists were not evangelistic. "They suppose that we never preach the gospel freely to sinners, which thing we never fail to do with a freeness which none can excel. Can they tell us how we can improve in gospel preaching for we should rejoice to learn?"[143] Drummond explains Spurgeon's fervency as the fruit of what he calls the "Puritan revival principle". "Puritanism, because of its Calvinistic theology, constantly affirmed the absolute necessity of God's sovereign act in effecting personal redemption. Therefore, Spurgeon exemplified a constant seeking for the moving of the Holy Spirit to come upon the preaching of the Word to bring people to Christ."[144]

Spurgeon's twin commitments to sound doctrine and evangelism were also evident in his passionate and stormy relationship to the Baptist Union. Particular Baptists formed the Union in 1813 to promote "the cause of Christ in general... with a primary view to the encouragement and support of the Baptist Mission."[145] Churches were slow to affiliate with the Baptist Union due to their historic skepticism of national organizations and to the Union's vagueness of purpose. Over the years the Union adapted and reorganized to become more accommodating and in 1873 modified its

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[142] C. H. Spurgeon, "High Doctrine and Broad Doctrine" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 30 (Pasadena, CA: Pilgrim Publications, 1973), 49.

[143] C. H. Spurgeon, "How to Meet the Doctrine of Election" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 30 (Pasadena, CA: Pilgrim Publications, 1973), 473.

[144] Drummond, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon" in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 125-6.

[145] McBeth, 292.

doctrinal statement in order to encourage the participation of General Baptist churches.[146] Vagueness of purpose had given way over the half-century to vagueness of doctrine; ten years later Unitarianism and Universalism re-emerged among General Baptists, and a modern skepticism of the inspiration of Scripture found an ear among members of the Union. Apathy toward the spiritual decline grieved Spurgeon, and the remedy he sought was a return to doctrine. In the "Down Grade" controversy, Spurgeon pleaded for an articulation of biblical doctrine, though not necessarily Calvinism, but to no avail. The Baptist Union continued to relax its doctrinal identity in favor of pragmatic considerations and in 1891 General and Particular Baptist entities in England merged.

Baptists in America at the end of the nineteenth century found themselves engaged in vigorous doctrinal discussions as well, and their journey to that point, in many ways, mirrors that of their brothers across the Atlantic. As in England, the first Baptist church in America was established by a brilliant but restless man who had been formally trained as an Anglican priest, but who became a convinced Separatist, then a Baptist, and then died without membership in any denomination.[147] Roger Williams' controversial views on religious and civic liberty drove him to Massachusetts in 1631 and into exile in the American wilderness in 1635. He purchased land from the Narragansett Indians and established Providence Plantation where, in 1638, he formed the first Baptist congregation in New England.[148] Like Smyth and Helwys, Williams believed in baptism for believers only and was concerned about toleration. But his theology was the Puritan Calvinism that marked early Baptist life in the colonies.

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[146] McBeth notes that several New Connection churches had sought admission to the Baptist Union even before the restructuring of 1863. 293.

[147] McBeth, 132.

[148] Bill J. Leonard, *Baptists in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 14.

Thomas Nettles chronicles the personalities and developments central to Particular Baptist life in the new world of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. "Under the probable influence of Williams," he writes, John Clarke became a Baptist and founded a Calvinistic church at Newport. Thomas Gould established the first Baptist church in Boston in 1665 under withering persecution from magistrates and Anglicans there. Gould was influenced and supported by the English Particular Baptist William Kiffin. In Kittery, Maine, in 1682, William Screven started a Baptist church that later moved to Charleston, South Carolina, where it remains to this day. The Charleston church subscribed to the Second London Confession, as did the Charleston Association when it was formed in 1751.[149]

In 1742 a version of the Second London Confession prepared by Benjamin Keach in England was adopted by the Philadelphia Baptist Association. "The Philadelphia Confession of Faith," writes William Brackney, "remained the principle Calvinistic statement for most Baptists in all sections [of the country] until the Second Great Awakening in the 1820s."[150] Nettles notes the 1769 Kehukee (Kentucky) Association Confession of Faith and the 1816 Sandy Creek (South Carolina) Association Confession of Faith as important Calvinistic statements in emerging Baptist life as well.[151]

The explicitly Calvinistic Philadelphia Confession held sway among New England Baptists until the emergence of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith in 1833. Nettles and Brackney differ on their assessment of the influential New Hampshire Confession. Brackney presents it as a "mediating type of confession" designed to woo

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[149] Nettles, 43-43.

[150] Brackney, 35.

[151] The latter is especially interesting in light of the popular conception of the Sandy Creek Baptists as enthusiastic revivalists whose congregations stood in stark theological contrast to their Calvinistic cousins in Charleston.

"Freewillers" back from the brink of Universalism.[152] If this was the intent of the New Hampshire framers, they failed to achieve their objective. Free Will Baptists were not satisfied with the statement and produced their own confession the following year. Nettles, on the other hand, sees it as a popularized affirmation of human responsibility, consistent with historic Baptist Calvinism, and not "a gradual retreat from the Calvinism of former days".[153] Because of its brevity and its affirmation of both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, the New Hampshire Confession would later serve as a model for the *Baptist Faith and Message* statement of 1925.

The rise of Free Will Baptists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reflected the emerging national emphasis on personal liberty, self-determination, and individualism. Similarly, the mid-century troubles which Baptists faced mirrored the tumult of a nation at war with itself. Leonard notes that the mid-to-late nineteenth century was marked by the "proliferation of Baptist subgroups born of conflicts and schisms as well as regional, cultural, and theological differences. During this period mission societies flourished, churches moved west, schools were established, and controversies raged, particularly over the issue of human slavery."[154] While the great majority of Baptists, both north and south, were neither slaveholders nor engaged in the slave economy, the issue was far from settled. Eminent Baptist spokesmen like John Leland decried slavery as "contrary to the Word of God." Others, like Leland's fellow Virginian John Leadley Dagg, mustered Scripture to defend the South's "peculiar institution." Still others, like Francis Wayland, struggled to hold Baptists together with a

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[152] Brackney cites W.W. Barnes' observation that "the five points that distinguished Calvinism from Arminianism were almost ignored." 40.

[153] Nettles, 47.

[154] Leonard, *Baptist Ways*, 158.

moderate view, hoping to insulate the Baptist family from the national conflagration. Insisting that slavery should not be an issue in missionary appointments, the Triennial Convention, a body organized in 1814 along the same lines as the BMS in England, faced hostile aspersions cast by abolitionists and blatant test-cases proposed by slaveholders. Ultimately, both parties lost confidence in the neutrality of the Convention. In 1845, a small group met in Augusta, Georgia, and, without mention of slavery, formed a new convention dedicated to the propagation of the Gospel.[155]

The Southern Baptist Convention

The strict lines of demarcation in Baptist life, however, did not extend to theology and the new Southern Baptist Convention retained the historic evangelical Calvinism of its Baptist forebears. A noted Baptist author, pastor, and professor, Paul Basden traces the Calvinism of early Southern Baptists into the late twentieth century through three phases. First, Basden points to the "Protestant scholasticism" of P.H. Mell, John L. Dagg, and James P. Boyce. He argues that, in slightly different ways, all three see predestination as a corollary of God's sovereignty more than a feature of his love. "They believed that God eternally predetermined that some individuals would be elected to salvation and that the remainder of humanity would suffer and die in their sins," writes Basden, "This schema fit the logical requirements demanded by the essentially rationalistic systems to which Mell, Dagg, and Boyce adhered."[156]

But the Calvinism of the earliest Southern Baptist theologians was not merely the product of philosophical speculation. It was the fruit of biblical conviction and the foundation of vibrant ministry. In his *Manual of Theology*, J.L. Dagg eschewed the study

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[155] Ibid., 189.

[156] Paul Basden, "Predestination" in *Has Our Theology Changed?* ed. Paul Basden (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 48.

of theology for "the sake of amusement" or to "gratify mere love of knowledge" or even to prepare for a profession as "an abuse and profanation." Instead, he insisted that religious truth ought to be studied "from a sense of duty, and with a view to the improvement of the heart."[157] Dagg outlined his theology in terms of duties owed to God, including the "duty of love to God," "the duty of delighting in the will and works of God," and "the duty of gratitude for divine grace." He argued that the doctrine of grace, including election, particular redemption, and effectual calling, remedies self-righteousness, excludes all human boasting, motivates holiness, honors God, unites the people of God, and "prepares us to join the song of the redeemed in heaven."[158] Undaunted by objections that the Doctrines of Grace invalidated evangelism, Dagg concluded his *Treatise on Church Order* with a reflection on the duties of Baptists. This short section includes a missionary flourish celebrating Carey, Judson, and Rice under the rubric of the "duty to labor faithfully and perseveringly to bring all men to the knowledge of the truth."[159]

Dagg's *Manual* was the text used by James P. Boyce, the founding president and first professor of theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Educated at Princeton under Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge, Boyce's doctrinal commitments are unmistakable and unambiguous. Regarding election, he wrote that

> God (who and not man is the one who chooses or elects), of his own purpose (in accordance with his will, and not from any obligation to man, nor because of any will of man) has from Eternity (the period of God's action, not in time in which man acts), determined to save (not as actually saved, but determined so to do), [and to save (not to confer gospel or

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[157] John L. Dagg, *Manual of Theology* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1859), 13.

[158] Ibid., 338.

[159] John L. Dagg, *A Treatise on Church Order* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1858), 302.

> church privileges upon)] a definite number of mankind (not the whole race, nor indefinitely merely some of them, nor indefinitely a certain proportionate part; but a definite number), as individuals (not the whole or a part of the race, nor of a nation, nor of a church, nor of a class, as of believers or the pious; but individuals), not for or because of any merit or work of theirs, nor of any value to him of them (not for their good works, nor their holiness, nor excellence, nor their faith, nor their spiritual sanctification, although the choice is to a salvation attained through faith and sanctification; nor their value to him, though their salvation tends greatly to the manifested glory of his grace); but of his own good pleasure (simply because he was pleased so to choose).[160]

After his studies at Princeton, Boyce served as the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Columbia, South Carolina. In 1856 he was installed as professor of theology at Furman University. In his inaugural address, Boyce lamented the drift that he saw among Baptists toward Campbellism and Arminianism. "A crisis in Baptist doctrine is evidently approaching," he warned, "and those of us who still cling to the doctrines which formerly distinguished us have the important duty to perform of earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints."[161] This contending, for Boyce, would find expression in theological education for a growing denomination and for the cause of Christ the world over. "The whitened harvest, the awakened activity of the churches, the favorable reception of the Word of God, have never been more signally manifest. Never have been heard more piercing cries for the gospel than those with which Ethiopia accompanies her outstretched hands; never have been felt deeper longings for the coming of the kingdom of God than are uttered by praying hearts throughout Christendom."[162] Some have argued that "Boyce's emphasis on the sovereign will of

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[160] James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), 347.

[161] James Pettigrue Boyce, "Three Changes in Theological Institutions (July 31, 1856)" in *Treasures from the Baptist Heritage: James P. Boyce,* ed. Timothy and Denise George (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 127.

[162] Ibid., 107.

God, the passivity of humanity, the objectivity of the atonement, and particular election produces an inadequate platform for missions and evangelism."[163] It is evident from his own writings, however, that Boyce saw human agency in missions and evangelism, not as a contradiction to but as a feature of God's sovereign work.

Basden identifies a shift in Baptist theology away from the rationalism of Boyce and toward modern pragmatism and personalism around the turn of the twentieth century. He sees a primary impetus and expression of this shift in the theology of Edgar Young Mullins, president of Southern Seminary from 1899 to 1928 and chief architect of the original *Baptist Faith and Message* statement. While a student at Southern Seminary, Mullins was fully immersed in the evangelical Calvinism of the young denomination and held to the Doctrines throughout his life. After graduation, Mullins pastored in Herrodsburg, Kentucky, and later in Baltimore and Boston. His last two pastorates were in cultured cities where his theological reflections were influenced by cosmopolitan concerns and philosophical considerations, particularly the Enlightenment emphasis on personal autonomy. In 1899, Mullins returned to Southern Seminary as president where he took up the conservative theological program and even the textbook of his teacher, James Boyce. Mullins retained a Calvinistic view of election, insisting that God's electing work necessarily precedes any human response of faith: "God's choice of a person is prior to that person's choice of God, since God is infinite in wisdom and knowledge and will not make the success of the divine kingdom dependent on the contingent choices of people."[164] He affirmed the disinclination of human beings toward

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[163] Walter Draughon, III, "The Atonement" in *Has Our Theology Changed?* 111.
[164] E.Y. Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1925), 26.

God and that a salvation "announced to a race of sinful people and left without the active energy of God's grace to make it effectual, would surely come to naught."[165]

But his emphasis on the experiential dimension of faith marked a departure from both the method and conclusions of the first Southern Baptist theologians. Mullins regarded "soul competency" to be the chief contribution of Baptists to the religious life of humanity and the wellspring of other cherished Baptist distinctives like religious liberty, congregational polity, and moral and social responsibility. His concern for human freedom and his reticence to portray God as acting on "mere will" recast his Calvinism. He did not hold the traditional view of particular atonement, and he rejected the doctrine of irresistible grace.[166] He posited instead that God's sovereignty was conditioned upon his character and that his character of holiness and love created "limitations upon God" including that of "saving man and at the same time leaving him free, which means that salvation is a moral process and not a mere physical act of power"; "Holiness thus vindicates itself in that God refuses to violate man's moral nature, even in order to save him."[167] Mullins' assertion of moral constraint moved him closer to a consistent view of sovereignty and self-determining human freedom, but in the end he could not reconcile the two and held them as an "insoluble mystery."[168] In short, Mullins held as axiomatic that "the holy and loving God has a right to be sovereign," but his concept of human

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[165] Ibid.

[166] Walter Draughon III writes that "the major weakness in Mullins's formulation of the atonement is the inconsistency between his stance on universal atonement and particular election. While grace is not irresistible, out of the mass of humanity God chooses some in whom he makes grace more operative than in others." "The Atonement" in *Has Our Theology Changed?,* 112.

[167] E.Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion,* Albert R. Mohler, compiler, ed. Timothy and Denise George (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997), 88.

[168] E.Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1917), 355.

freedom muddles that affirmation and marks a substantial modification of Southern Baptist doctrine.

Mullins' theological innovation coincides with the galvanizing of the denomination around two rallying points. First, in the cultural climate of anti-supernatural modernism and obscurantist Landmarkism, Southern Baptists needed a unifying statement of beliefs. Mullins himself crafted the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message* to serve as a popular confession for the diverse and growing denomination. He based his work on the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith,* rather than the longer and more explicitly Calvinistic *Philadelphia Confession,* and thus enshrined his modified Calvinism for generations of Baptists to come. In the same year that they adopted their first confession, Southern Baptists also embraced a new method for funding denominational concerns: the Cooperative Program. The ingenious plan to streamline financial support from local churches to seminaries, mission agencies, and other denominational entities captured the imagination of Baptists and engendered a new fiscal and programmatic identity. The pragmatic appeal was powerful and, as Tom Nettles notes, "the basis of Southern Baptist fellowship gradually became loyalty to a program rather than unity in the faith."[169]

Mullins was followed by others who shared his modified Calvinism, most notably Walter Thomas Conner. A student of Mullins in 1914, Conner practiced a theological method also began with God's personal revelation of himself in Christ and made substantial room for individual experience. Basden portrays Conner as loathe to begin his theology "with a hidden decree of God from which he could reason logically to

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[169] Nettles, *By His Grace*, 244.

philosophical deductions."[170] But Conner describes just such a reasoning in regard to election in his *System of Christian Doctrine.*

> The doctrine of predestination or election is an inescapable inference from the doctrine of a sovereign and omniscient God. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning. If all the events of the universe were known to God from the beginning and God ordained the world, then God ordained all that was involved in the history of the world.
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> To put the matter another way, election is saying that what God does in saving men he does because he purposes to do it. We are arguing on the assumption that as a God of wisdom he has a purpose that is being carried out in the history of the world, and that as a God of power he does all that he purposes to do. If these two propositions are accepted, election must be accepted. God does not save all men. He does save some men. Hence, God did not purpose to save all, but did purpose to save some.[171]

Basden sees Conner as a popularizer of Mullins' modified Calvinism, and he sees the chief modification in both as a rejection of double predestination. "Conner believed that election depends on God's sovereign choice, not on a person's foreseen belief. Nonelection, however, depends not on God's sovereign choice, but on a person's foreseen unbelief. To the elect God gives faith; to the nonelect, He does not give unbelief."[172] This emphasis on individual responsibility fit comfortably with the growing culture of missions and evangelism in Southern Baptist life.

Basden sees a third movement in the Southern Baptist Convention away from the theology of its founders in the writings Herschel H. Hobbs and Frank Stagg with an even more radical departure from Calvinism in the work of Dale Moody. Raised in Birmingham, Alabama, and educated at Howard College (now Samford University) and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Herschel Hobbs possessed an unquestioned pedigree as both a Southerner and a Baptist; his influence in the SBC during the middle

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[170] Basden, 54.

[171] Walter Thomas Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville, TN: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), 362-3.

[172] Basden, 56.

decades of the twentieth century cannot be overestimated. Hobbs pastored prominent churches, held influential denominational offices, wrote scores of books for pastors and laypeople, and chaired the committee that revised the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1963. Though he never met E.Y. Mullins, he became enthralled with his writing while at Southern and regarded Mullins as his theological mentor. Hobbs drank deeply at the well of "soul competency," and his work is marked by an unflinching commitment to personal responsibility and self-determining freedom.[173] Like Mullins, Hobbs sees the classical Calvinistic view of election as errant because "it magnifies some aspect of God's nature to the neglect of all others. It emphasizes God's will and power and minimizes his righteousness and love."[174] Hobbs viewed election as God's purpose to redeem sinners in Christ. God elected Christ and then saved all who came to Christ; "By free will men can elect to be saved."[175] He rejected particular atonement and irresistible grace, just as Mullins had, and saw election as conditioned upon the individual's response of faith. Hobbs did retain the doctrine of perseverance, an identifying doctrine for Baptists then and now. He addressed the great liability of free will for Baptists, the possibility of apostasy, by arguing that the new birth produces a new nature that somehow remains free but can never fall away from true faith.

In this third theological movement, Basden also mentions Hobbs's contemporary, Southwestern and Southern Seminary professor Frank Stagg. Like Hobbs and even Conner and Mullins, Stagg maintained that God takes the initiative in the work of

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[173] This commitment to soul competency is also reflected in Hobbs's remark in the introduction to the 1963 *BF&M* that "Southern Baptists have a living faith, not a creedal one." Historical theologian James Leo Garrett replied that "the statement poses an improper antithesis. The opposite of a living faith is a dead one. The opposite of a creedal or confessional faith is a vague or contentless or undefined faith." David Dockery, "Herschel H. Hobbs" in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 222.

[174] Herschel H. Hobbs, *Fundamentals of our Faith* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1960), 90.

[175] Herschel H. Hobbs, *What Baptists Believe* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1964), 107.

salvation. For Stagg, election was a feature of the "larger doctrine of the priority of God over all that is" so that "the initiative in salvation is not on man's side: 'Ye did not choose [*exelexasthe*] me, but I chose you.'"[176] But Stagg recoiled against the notion of infringement on human freedom. "One is strangely insensitive," he writes, "to the throb and pulse beat of the whole New Testament if he thinks that each man's fate is determined for him in advance."[177] Stagg argued that "behind any man's salvation is the initiative of God" and that "behind any man's damnation is man's sin and neglect" including both failures "in the witnessing of Christians and the response of the lost."[178] Basden considers Hobbs and Stagg to have embraced a thoroughly Arminian view of election while maintaining both the initiative of God in salvation and the impossibility of true believers falling away.[179] Hobbs and Stagg did much to popularize this position through denominational publications and ministerial education. This perspective accommodates the popular emphasis on personal decision and individual responsibility, particularly in regard to evangelism, and is the most widely accepted view among Southern Baptists today.

Basden includes the controversial Southern Seminary professor Dale Moody in his third category as well, even though Moody goes considerably farther than Hobbs or Stagg in his rejection of Calvinism. In a caustic treatment of traditional views of predestination, Moody concludes that "there is a human condition attached to predestination, and that condition is the free response of faith, God's grace and man's faith. Conditional predestination is taught in the New Testament, but absolute

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[176] Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1962), 85-6.
[177] Ibid., 88.
[178] Ibid., 87.
[179] Basden calls this view of election "auto-election, in which a person elects himself or herself to salvation through faith in Christ." 68.

predestination is a human tradition and an unfortunate perversion of the language of the Bible."[180] Moody depicts election as a synergism where God elects to save those who are in Christ and then man elects or, as Basden has it, auto-elects himself to be in Christ by the exercise of faith. Moody's perspective on particular atonement and irresistible grace might not have separated him from the majority of Southern Baptists had he not gone so far as to reject the doctrine of perseverance as well. A corollary of his view of human self-determination, Moody compares predestination to boarding an airplane with a predetermined flight plan. "I get on and relax and feel predestined," he writes. "Of course I know I can open my emergency exit at any time and jump out. I am not so silly as to think that it is predetermined that once aboard, always aboard."[181] He chided others in the denomination, including Hobbs, for their doctrinal inconsistency, but in the end the pragmatic tendencies of Southern Baptists overwhelmed Moody's logic and his views were marginalized.

Basden ends his survey of Baptist views of predestination with Moody, but he acknowledges that in recent decades there has been a resurgence of Calvinism in Southern Baptist life. He specifically points to the work of Thomas Nettles and Timothy George, both cited extensively above, but he also mentions David Dockery, L. Russ Bush, and Millard Erickson as important Southern Baptists with Calvinistic leanings.[182] In addition to the authors Basden lists, the discussion of the Doctrines of Grace among Southern Baptists has been greatly influenced by the writing and teaching of Southern

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[180] Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 347.

[181] Ibid., 346.

[182] Basden, 70.

Seminary president R. Albert Mohler and the publishing and collegial activities of the Southern Baptist Founders Conference.

Moody's views on apostasy moved him beyond the scope of accepted Baptist theology, but his rejection of Calvinism at several other points resonated with many Southern Baptists. He gave voice to a chief concern about Calvinistic doctrines when he wrote that "wherever they have prevailed, evangelism and missions have not even begun, but wherever they have been repudiated in the light of a "whosoever" gospel the fires of evangelism and missions have been lighted."[183] He does not elaborate on the assertion, leaving the test of its veracity to a review of literature on Calvinism and missions in Baptist life.

Missiological Perspective

In a paper prepared for the 2005 Maintaining Baptist Distinctives Conference, Steve W. Lemke, provost of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, addressed concerns about the danger of a "hyper-Calvinist turn" in Southern Baptist churches that could hinder missions and evangelism. Lemke opens his section on Calvinism with a bouquet of compliments for Baptists past and present with Reformed leanings who have been committed to both sound doctrine and fervent evangelism. He points to the legitimacy of the Calvinistic tradition among Baptists, the commitment of Calvinists to inerrancy, and the need for theological balance as reasons for his own efforts to bring Calvinistic Baptist professors to NOBTS. But Lemke distinguishes the "softer baptistic Calvinism" that he applauds from the "hard hyper-Calvinism" he perceives to be on the rise in the SBC, particularly among those identified with the Founders Movement. To illustrate the danger, Lemke points to a survey that he and an NOBTS colleague

[183] Moody, 344.

conducted comparing the membership, attendance, and baptism statistics of 233 Founders-friendly churches and those of the SBC as a whole. Lemke found that the baptism to member ratio for Founders churches was 1:62 while it was 1:42 for the remainder of the 40,000+ SBC churches. Over 79% of Founders churches were plateaued or declining in attendance as well, 10 percent more than the typical Southern Baptist church. "So does the fact that someone has hard Calvinist theology *necessarily* mean that he is not evangelistic? Of course not," says Lemke. "But do churches who emphasize hard Calvinist theology *tend* to be less evangelistic? Look at the hard evidence and you be the judge!"[184]

The aspersions of Lemke certainly serve to warn against a tendency toward fatalistic, anti-missionary hyper-Calvinism, the error of certain groups of Baptists past and present. But then again, the fear of this tendency within the SBC may be an unwarranted hysteria based more on assumption than observation. Attention to historical, missiological, and denominational voices will give clues to the effect that Calvinism has had and is having on Baptist missions.

The Birth of Baptist Missions

Southern Baptists, it is commonly explained, can trace their heritage to two traditions emerging in the colonial period. The first, called the Charleston tradition, has its source in the First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina, originally founded in

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[184] Steve W. Lemke, "The Future of Southern Baptists as Evangelicals" a paper presented at the Maintaining Baptist Distinctives Conference at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, April 2005. p.17. Of course, Lemke's findings have been decried by Founders pastors and writers as inaccurate and unfair. Lemke notes that the current generation of seminarians and young pastors are more Calvinistic than any before and that Founders friendly churches tend to be smaller congregations. Could it be that these pastors simply have not yet had access to more prominent pulpits in more populated locales? Could it be that the Founders emphasis on the quality of church membership affects the reporting of growth statistics? How do Founders churches compare with other churches of similar demographics? Can we assume that all Calvinistic pastors and churches in the SBC are affiliated with Founders Ministries?

Kittery, Maine, in 1682. The Charleston Baptists embraced the explicitly Calvinistic Philadelphia Confession and are often caricatured as doctrinaire and unconcerned with evangelism. The second tradition emerged near Sandy Creek, North Carolina, and is often associated with early American revivalism. The Sandy Creek tradition is commonly thought to have minimized or even rejected certain aspects of Calvinism in order to emphasize evangelism. But Tom Ascol contends that this "dichotomy between Calvinism and evangelism... [imposed] on Baptists in the early American South is simplistic to the point of being false."[185] Ascol makes his case for the missionary and evangelistic fervor of the Charleston Baptists in their own words. He cites the church's 1755 appointment of a missionary to labor "in the interior settlements of this and neighboring states," quotes a proclamation of the 1800 General Committee of the Charleston Association calling "churches to make the most serious exertions, in union with other Christians of various denominations, to send the gospel among the heathen," and he points to the work of Charleston pastor Richard Furman, who helped organize the Triennial Convention, which by 1845 had 109 missionaries serving around the world.[186]

Ascol further contends that the Sandy Creek Baptists did not jettison their Calvinism for the sake of evangelism. The work at Sandy Creek was begun by Separate Baptists, who distinguished themselves from Regular Baptists by emphasizing in their worship more experiential elements such as evangelistic invitations, fiery preaching, and even dancing.[187] Ascol notes that many of the Sandy Creek Baptists were former Congregationalists who abandoned what they considered a "dead formalism" in worship

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[185] Tom Ascol, "Calvinism, Evangelism, and Founders Ministries," *The Founders Journal* 45 (summer 2001): 4.

[186] Ibid.

[187] McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 229.

but maintained their Reformed soteriology.[188] The Sandy Creek Association, with missionary statesman Luther Rice in attendance, adopted a statement of faith in 1816 affirming a belief in "election from eternity, effectual calling by the Holy Spirit of God, and justification in his sight only by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. And we believe that those who are thus elected, effectually called, and justified, will persevere through grace to the end."[189] Though McBeth suggests that Sandy Creek represents "Calvinism with a difference," namely, a heavy emphasis on human responsibility, there is every indication that the early Separate Baptists found their Calvinism to be consistent with their revivalism and their evangelism. The double helix of Southern Baptist DNA includes both a Sandy Creek Separate strand and a Charleston Regular strand, inextricably held together by bonds of evangelical Calvinism.

Of course, the question of consistency for evangelistic Baptist Calvinists had reached a watershed in England by 1792. With his own deep Baptist convictions, a thoughtful Calvinistic theology nurtured by Andrew Fuller, and a missionary vision cultivated in a cobbler shop, William Carey petitioned his peers to join him in an epoch-making enterprise. His "deathless sermon" at Nottingham called on every Baptist to "enlarge the place of thy tent... spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left (Isaiah 54:2-3)." Remarkably, no text of Carey's sermon survives, but his two-line conclusion is immortal; expect great things, attempt great things! Timothy George notes that later editors added references to the Deity (*from God* and *for God*) after each phrase but that they are absent in the earliest recollections of the sermon. More importantly, George corrects other writers who have

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[188] Ascol, "Calvinism, Evangelism, and Founders Ministries," 6.
[189] McBeth, *Sourcebook*, 164.

"reversed the order of Carey's watchword, placing the 'attempt' before the expectation."[190] The original order reflects the primacy of God in salvation and in mission, the very heart of Carey's missionary theology.

Carey's *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* calls for "an inclination to conscientious activity" in the spread of the gospel message. This missionary impulse, says Carey, serves as "one of the strongest proofs that we are the subjects of grace, and partakers of that spirit of universal benevolence and genuine philanthropy which appear so evident in the character of God himself."[191] "Unless one grasps this point from the beginning," writes Timothy George, "it is easy to misunderstand the motivation for missions which Carey unfolds in the following pages. While his plan was a call for action based on genuine compassion for the lost, it was grounded in something deeper still, namely, the character of God Himself – eternal, holy righteous, loving, giving."[192] Consistent with his high view of sovereignty, Carey saw the glory of God, the coming of his kingdom, "the knowledge of his name" as the rationale for missions.

Carey's work stirred hearts not only in England but also in America and in no small part helped set the course for two young men from Massachusetts, missions pioneers Luther Rice and Adoniram Judson. Rice began his journey toward missionary service first when he, along with other students from Williams College, started a "Society of Inquiry on the subject of Missions." The group's most famous meeting occurred under a haystack where, while taking shelter from a thunderstorm, four members first proposed

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[190] George, *Faithful Witness*, 32.

[191] William Carey, "An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens" in Timothy George, *Faithful Witness,* E.3.

[192] George, *Faithful Witness*, 58.

and prayed that American missionaries would be sent abroad. Rice was not present at the haystack, but his personal piety and interest in missions contributed immeasurably to the group and its aims. Tom Nettles notes Rice's devotion to the Scriptures and his pleasure in the fact that he was raised on the Westminster Catechism, later becoming a "rather profound advocate of the doctrine of God's decrees."[193] Rice pleaded for civility in doctrinal disagreements, but he candidly considered it "absurd... to contend against the doctrines of election, or decrees, or divine sovereignty."[194] Rice reveled in both the omnipotence of God in determining his purposes and his sovereign control of the means by which they are accomplished. Like Fuller and Carey, his understanding of missions flowed logically from his view of sovereignty. In an 1809 letter to his brother, he explains:

> "God often chooses the weak things in this world to confound those which are mighty. He always makes use of such instruments as will most evidently manifest that the power is all of himself. He will certainly have all the glory. It appears to be duty for some to carry the knowledge of Christ to the benighted heathen. The gospel must, sooner or later, be preached to all nations. The heathen are the inheritance of our blessed Saviour; of this inheritance he will surely take possession. In bringing to pass this glorious event, he undoubtedly uses men as instruments to bear his precious name to benighted tribes. In this blessed work I hope one day to be engaged."[195]

Rice became acquainted with Adoniram Judson when they were both students at Andover Theological Seminary. Judson committed himself to mission service in 1810. He and Rice, along with other brethren of the "Society," absorbed Carey's *Serampore Circular* and determined to join him in India. The Congregationalists in New England

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[193] Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory*, 147. A concise presentation of Rice's views on sovereignty has been adapted from a memoir prepared by James B Taylor in 1841 and called "Luther Rice on God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility" in *Founders Journal* 9 (summer 1992): 10-16.

[194] James B. Taylor, *A Memoir of Rev. Luther Rice*, 2[d] ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1937), 293.

[195] Ibid., 80.

formed The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810 and in 1812 commissioned Luther Rice, Adoniram Judson, Jr., Samuel Nott, Jr., Samuel Newell, and Gordon Hall to serve in Asia. Aware that he would soon meet Carey and certain that the subject of baptism would come up, Judson began to study his Greek New Testament and, eventually, both he and his wife Ann became convinced of the Baptist view of baptism and church membership. Rice also, after shipboard debate with Baptists and prolonged study during an illness in India, changed his sentiments on baptism. Several months of correspondence with the Board of Commissioners followed, but ultimately it was decided that Rice would return to the United States to organize support from Baptist churches. Both he and Judson had hoped that Rice would return to the mission field, but it was not to be. Rice, instead, served as an advocate for international missions at home. Through his efforts, a missions society formed in Philadelphia that anticipated the 1814 formation of the "General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions," also known as the Triennial Convention. Rice became an agent of the Convention traveling and preaching tirelessly, establishing mission societies, soliciting financial support, and calling Baptists to consider serving overseas.

Judson found his way to Burma where he labored with deep devotion through unimaginable hardship to translate the Scriptures and plant the church among the Burmese. His life is testament to his missionary convictions and his letters, sermons, and publications give insight into the theology that shaped them. Ascol argues that Judson never moved away from the Calvinist soteriology learned from his childhood among the Congregationalists. He cites the confession of faith that Judson prepared for the Burmese church as a primary evidence: "God, originally knowing that mankind would fall and be

ruined, did, of his mercy, select some of the race and give them to his Son, to save from sin and hell."[196] Both Nettles and Ascol point to the only English sermon that Judson ever preached in Burma to show the relationship of his doctrine to his mission.

> "We come now to consider the main duty of a Christian pastor. First he must call his people. Though enclosed in the Saviour's electing love, they may still be wandering on the dark mountains of sin, and he must go after them; perhaps he must seek them in very remote regions, in the very outskirts of the wilderness of heathenism. And as he cannot at first distinguish them from the rest, who will never listen and be saved, he must lift up his voice to all, without discrimination, and utter, in the hearing of all, that invitation of mercy and love that will penetrate the ears and hearts of the elect only."[197]

Early in his missionary career Judson suffered a torturous imprisonment of nearly two years in Burma, the loss of his first wife, "whom he loved almost to idolatry," and, shortly afterward, the loss of his only child, driving him to trust all the more in God's absolute sovereignty.[198] Piper attributes Judson's endurance to a "deep confidence in God's overarching providence through all calamity and misery. He said, 'If I had not felt certain that every additional trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy, I could not have survived my accumulated sufferings.'"[199] Piper says that Judson "did not wear his Calvinism on his sleeve."[200] In fact, he was suspicious of any "faith which consists merely in a correct belief of the doctrines of grace, and prompts no self denial."[201] Evangelical Calvinism, says Nettles, "was no dry and merely intellectual endeavor for

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[196] Ibid., 2:469.

[197] Frances Wayland, *Memoir of the Life and Labor of the Rev.Adoniram Judson, D.D.* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, & Co., 1835), 2:490.

[198] Ibid., 1:534.

[199] John Piper, "How Few There Are Who Die So Hard!" (February 4, 2003) http://desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1528_How_Few_There_Are_Who_Die_So_Hard/ (December 10, 2006).

[200] Ibid.

[201] Wayland, 1:480.

Judson."[202] It was a call to join Christ in his indomitable purpose to "establish his kingdom throughout the habitable globe."[203]

The titanic influence of Rice and Judson was soon felt in the newly formed Southern Baptist Convention. Ascol notes that many Baptists in the South were both Reformed and missionary from their beginnings, citing the fervently evangelistic Georgia Baptist Association of churches, who, in their 1772 "abstract of principles and decorum", declared their belief in "the corruption of human nature, and the impotency of man to recover himself by his own free will" as well as "the eternal election of a definite number of the human race, to grace and glory."[204] Ascol further demonstrates that this sentiment was alive and well in the earliest missions efforts of Southern Baptists. James B. Taylor, the first corresponding secretary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and a biographer of Luther Rice, wrote that "the doctrine of divine decrees has often, in various respects, suffered injury" by friends and enemies alike and "its true loveliness has been concealed from the eye." Taylor decried both those who reject unconditional election and those who reject human responsibility in language reminiscent of Spurgeon: "What God has joined together they have put asunder."[205] Similarly, C.D. Mallary, an early Southern Baptist missions advocate, pondered "Is election unfavorable to efforts for the salvation of men? The farthest from it possible. It lies beneath the eternal rock of confidence and hope." He continues:

> "With what immovable confidence may the missionary of the cross, in obedience to his ascended Savior, fly to distant lands, and proclaim in every valley and every hill, Oh ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord! Victory he knows will sooner or later come, and the assurance of

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[202] Nettles, *By His Grace and For His Glory*, 150.
[203] Adoniram Judson, "Obedience to Christ's Last Command a Test of Piety" in Wayland, 2:519.
[204] Ascol, "Calvinism, Evangelism, and Founders Ministries," 13.
[205] Ibid., 10.

> victory nerves his arm and gladdens his heart amidst all the terrors of the battlefield."[206]

Nettles, Ascol, and others demonstrate the vital part played by evangelical Calvinists in the beginnings of Baptist missions. In summary, Ascol sympathizes with those who are wary of "any teaching which cuts the nerve of biblical evangelism," but he flatly maintains that "the doctrines of grace, rightly understood and applied, have never done that."[207]

Calvinistic Baptist Missiology

"The world of missiology is experiencing a return to theological reflection," writes Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminar professor emeritus Justice Anderson. And while the "fusion of missiology and theology is encouraging" to Anderson, the majority of Baptist missions writers, including Anderson, address only representative theological issues.[208] In the absence of a definitive Calvinistic Baptist missiology, other sources will have to suffice. Icons like Carl F.H. Henry, Francis Schaeffer, and J.I. Packer frame the issues of sovereignty and missions in the broader evangelical context while Baptist writers like Thomas Nettles, Timothy George, and John Piper offer distinctive views from within the denomination.

To portray Carl Henry as an outsider among Southern Baptists is somewhat misleading. From his days at Wheaton College, the great evangelical statesman's church membership was influenced by his conviction about believers' baptism. He held membership in the Capitol Hill Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington, DC, and

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[206] Quoted in George Martin, "The Doctrines of Grace and World Evangelism" in *Reclaiming the Gospel and Reforming Churches*, ed. Tom Ascol (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2003) p.258

[207] Ascol, "Calvinism, Evangelism, and Founders Ministries," 14.

[208] Justice Anderson, "An Overview of Missiology" in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. Justice Anderson, Ebbie Smith, and John Mark Terry (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 9.

served as a visiting professor at Southern Seminary and lecturer at New Orleans and Southeastern Seminaries. In 1987 Henry spoke at the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference where he received a plaque "celebrating his influence and claiming his identity as a Southern Baptist."[209]

With this pedigree in mind, it may seem strange to some to find Henry championing decretal theology in his opus *God, Revelation, and Authority.* "The fact is," writes Henry in response to a paragraph of objections against the teaching of election, "the Bible itself thrusts on us this theme of divine predestination."[210] In the same chapter, Henry answers the objection that the doctrine of eternal election "tends to kill the missionary impulse." "Arminians often say that divine election of individuals would lead to spiritual inertia and evangelistic apathy," he writes. "But spiritual inertia and evangelistic apathy are not peculiar to Calvinists; many Calvinists, in fact, are spiritually and evangelistically zealous." Ever committed to Scripture as propositional revelation, Henry argues that election and evangelism stand side by side in the Bible and that to deny either is to be unfaithful to both. "The fact that God has elected some persons," he summarizes, "undergirds the divine imperative to proclaim the redemptive good news universally; it assures us also that some will indeed respond to the teaching of salvation."[211]

Though clearly outside the Baptist tradition, Henry's contemporary, Francis Schaeffer, has influenced the way that all evangelicals think about both doctrine and evangelism. Like Henry, Schaeffer worked from an understanding of Scripture as inerrant propositional revelation. In fact, Schaeffer attacked the relativism in both the

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[209] Albert Mohler, "Carl F.H. Henry" in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition,* 399.
[210] Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 6 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 76.
[211] Ibid., 86, 87.

church and the world by appealing to the Reformation assertion of biblical authority. "For the Reformation, final and sufficient knowledge rested in the Bible – Scripture alone," he wrote. "The Reformation followed the teaching of Christ Himself in linking the revelation Christ gave of God to the revelation of the written Scripture."[212] For Schaeffer, it was immanently sensible that God, who made verbalizing people in his own image, should verbally communicate with them.[213]

Schaeffer's commitment to evangelism is motivated by the greatness of the gospel and the lostness of the lost. It stands to reason that if we have heard from God and believed the gospel of his grace and the truth about his judgment, we will be glad and compassionate "tellers," whether we are missionaries by vocation or not.[214] Schaeffer's Reformed soteriology takes into account both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. "The Bible makes very plain that the gospel is universally offered and that man is significant," he writes. Schaeffer asserts that there is a "conscious side of justification" involving human decision and, for that reason, "man is not simply a zero." Still, he maintained that "there is no chance back of God," that ultimately God knows and infallibly causes the salvation of individuals. To neglect the promiscuous preaching of the gospel and to deny the significance of human decision is, for Schaeffer, to step off of one side of a cliff. To deny the prior activity of the Holy Spirit in salvation, is to fall off of the opposite side. [215] Either fall is fatal.

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[212] Francis Schaeffer, "Escape from Reason," in *The Francis Schaeffer Trilogy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 218.

[213] This is a recurrent idea in Schaeffer. It is explicitly treated in "He is There and He is not Silent," in *The Francis Schaeffer Trilogy,* 343-7.

[214] Francis Schaeffer, "The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century," in *The Collected Works of Francis Schaeffer*, vol. 4 (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 53.

[215] Ibid., 169-170.

A more direct approach to a Calvinistic theology of missions and evangelism can be seen in the writing of J.I. Packer, whose defense of Calvinism and advocacy for evangelism are voluminous. In a 1966 article, he begins his discussion of the subject with a question: "Whence comes the expectation that Calvinism will distract a man from evangelism, or make him ineffective in it?"[216] Packer acknowledges the effect of hyper-Calvinism, a position that he says was never mainstream among Calvinists, and he addresses the anti-Calvinism of Finney, whom he considers emotionally manipulative, but he maintains that both are caricatures of true Reformed doctrine.[217] In light of God's sovereign, efficacious grace, Packer exclaims that "a Christian should evangelize better – more earnestly, more tirelessly, more expectantly – for being a Calvinist!" and he points to the historical record, with names like Whitefield, Edwards, and McCheyne, for proof.[218]

In a beautiful sermon on the text of John 6:35-37, Packer responds to charges that election is mean-spirited, limiting the work of God and excluding people from his promises. Citing Spurgeon's great sermon on the same text, he concludes that "so far from election excluding anybody who wants to come to Christ, which it does not do, it is only election that causes any fallen man or woman in this world ever to want to come to Christ."[219] Packer sees in God's electing and preserving love a sure hope for those coming to faith and for those sharing their faith. He asserts from verse 36 that the

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[216] J.I. Packer, "A Calvinist – and an Evangelist!" in *Serving the People of God: Collected Shorter Writings of J.I. Packer*, vol.2 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1998), 205.

[217] Ibid., 209-10.

[218] Ibid.

[219] J.I. Packer, "To All Who Will Come" in *Serving the People of God: Collected Shorter Writings of J.I. Packer*, vol.2, 198.

salvation of sinners "does not depend on our being brilliant evangelists. It depends on the Father enlightening and drawing."[220]

In his book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* Packer characterizes the tension between the more- and less-or-not-at-all- Reformed views. Prophetically, he speaks to the current situation among evangelicals in general and Baptists in particular.

> There are some who have come to believe in the sovereignty of God in the unqualified and uncompromising way in which (as we judge) the Bible presents it. These are now wondering whether there is not some way in which they could and should witness to this faith by modifying the evangelistic practice which they have inherited from a generation with different convictions.... Others, who do not construe the doctrine of divine sovereignty in quite this way, nor take it quite so seriously, fear that this new concern to believe it thoroughly will mean the death of evangelism; for they think it is bound to undercut all sense of urgency in evangelistic action. Satan, of course, will do anything to hold up evangelism and divide Christians; so he tempts the first group to become inhibited and cynical about all current evangelistic endeavors and the second group to lose its head and become all panicky and alarmist, and both to grow self-righteous and bitter and conceited as they criticize each other.[221]

Obviously, the discussion of Reformed doctrine and its implications for missions and evangelism is broader than any single denomination, but it has in recent years taken on a new intensity for Baptists. Writers who are known for their defense of the Doctrines of Grace are also contributing to Baptist missiological thinking.

The last and longest chapter in Nettles' book *By His Grace and for His Glory* is entitled "World Mission and Bold Evangelism; the Power of Grace Exhibited." In it he allows that "objections to the Doctrines of Grace out of an ostensible concern for evangelism [or, we might add, missions] often arise from earnest hearts." But, he argues, such objections are essentially creature-centered (he uses the word 'concupiscent'),

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[220] Ibid., 202.
[221] J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 95.

adding that this attitude "elevates the second greatest commandment over the first," seeking the interest and enjoyment of the creature before the glory of the Creator.[222]

Nettles goes on to say that such objections arise from inconsistent or underdeveloped thought concerning the relationship of doctrine to practice. Both divine sovereignty and human agency in evangelism (or any endeavor) are clearly taught in Scripture and should not be regarded as contradictory. "Does the fact that God is creator and owner make it right that his children violate the commandment "Thou shalt not steal"?" queries Nettles. Does the fact that God "brings sickness to whom and how he pleases" (Job 2:10; 42:11) negate his command to pray for the sick (James 5:14)? Does the fact that he works all things for good for those he loves (Romans 8:28) invalidate the Christian duty to weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15)? "In the same way, God's prerogative to choose, out of his own purpose, some to salvation does not erase the Christians call to biblical witnessing."[223]

Finally, Nettles says that the objection that Calvinism threatens evangelism demonstrates an inadequate rationale for human action.[224] The danger of concupiscense already described, Nettles moves from defense to offense when he declares that God's absolute sovereignty is "the only consistent basis for evangelism."[225] He notes the tendency of inclusivism to abandon the uniqueness of the gospel and the tendency of free-will theologies to make the work of God dependent on the decision of man, concluding that "only Calvinism maintains the doctrines that jealously guard the

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[222] Nettles, 392.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid., 391.
[225] Ibid., 402.

uniqueness of the Christian faith."[226] For Nettles, the ultimate motivation for missions, indeed for all of life, is the glory of God, a goal that is pursued by reverence for and obedience to the Scriptures for the sake of the elect (2 Timothy 2:10) and for the defense and confirmation of the gospel (Philippians 1:3-7).[227]

A more popular treatment of the subject can be found in Timothy George's book *Amazing Grace: God's Initiative - Our Response.* In his chapter on "Grace and the Great Commission," George pleads for "theological balance" that appreciates both the role of human responsibility and divine sovereignty in salvation. He begins by warning of an overemphasis on human responsibility. He identifies this tendency in radical Arminianism, saying that ultimately it "obscures the real meaning of grace and reduces God to a puppet on a string."[228] He moves next to the opposite extreme, the "quagmire of hyper-Calvinism," characterized by the doctrine of eternal justification and the denial of promiscuous evangelism, free moral agency, and the universal love of God.[229] This unbiblical and anti-missionary sentiment infected many Southern Baptist congregations in the late nineteenth century, says George, and has left "deep scars on many churches and associations. It is one reason why many Baptists still fear anything that smacks of Calvinism."[230]

Like Nettles, George argues for a biblical harmony between sovereignty and responsibility and illustrates his case with a brief look at the ministries of Carey and Spurgeon. Though both men were considered to be 'inconsistent' by the high Calvinists of their day, George argues that they were "no more or less so than the Bible itself." He

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[226] Ibid., 409.
[227] Ibid., 395.
[228] George, *Amazing Grace*, 89.
[229] Ibid., 90.
[230] Ibid., 88.

points to texts like Acts 2:23 and 4:27-28 to demonstrate that "the theology of grace in Christian history oscillates between the poles of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Both are biblical and evangelical truths, which must be held in tension if the gospel is to be proclaimed in its purity and urgency."[231]

Perhaps the most developed Calvinistic Baptist missiology of our time can be observed in the writing of John Piper. Piper's Bethlehem Baptist Church (Baptist General Conference) in Minneapolis has a stated commitment to both Baptistic and Calvinistic traditions, a commitment that is consistently reflected in his writing. His book *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* is not concerned with the reconciliation of Baptist missionary culture to the Doctrines of Grace but rather with presenting a biblical vision for global missions that happens to be both Reformed and Baptist. In *Let the Nations Be Glad*, he argues that God's missionary purpose and his ultimate goal "in all of history is to uphold and display his glory for the enjoyment of the redeemed from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."[232] From the very beginning of the text, Piper contends that worship, the "white-hot enjoyment of God's glory," is both the fuel and the goal of missions: the fuel because missionaries must enjoy God before they can commend him to others and the goal because ultimately missions will culminate in the complete gathering of God's elect who will sing his praise to the fullest extent.[233]

Piper, like Nettles, warns against pragmatic and sentimental approaches to missions that place the second great commandment before the first, robbing God of ultimate glory. "If the pursuit of *God's* glory is not ordered above the pursuit of *man's*

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[231] Ibid.
[232] Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!* 231.
[233] Ibid., 17.

good in the affections of the heart and the priorities of the church," he writes, "*man* will not be well served and *God* will not be duly honored."[234]

Piper's emphasis on God's sovereignty, exercised in the pursuit of his glory through missions, is the refrain of the book. The desperate condition of the lost is due to, and, in fact, proportionate to, their offense against his glory (Romans 3:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:9). The motivation for missionary activity is the glory of God (Psalm 96). The work of missions itself, proclamation undergirded by prayer, is a demonstration of God's glory emanating from his Word (Romans 10:13-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:1). And, of course, the legacy of missions is and will be God's glory revealed in his mercy toward his people (Ephesians 1:3-14; Revelation 7:9-10) and their worship of him. With his glory at stake, says Piper, "missions is supremely the work of God."

Sovereign grace, therefore, is no rival to the work of missions but is the foundation for it and the assurance of its success. Piper demonstrates at length the necessity of human agency in missions through prayer and service, but he insists that the only sufficient ground for such fervency and sacrifice is the absolute assurance that God is calling his elect from every nation. And if God's purpose is to redeem people from all the nations (Romans 1:5; Revelation 5:9) and nothing can frustrate his purpose (Psalm 115:3, Psalm 135:6), then churches can send and missionaries can go with joy, knowing that he will use them to bring all of his sheep (John 10:16). "The New Testament makes clear," says Piper, "that God has not left his Great Commission to the uncertainties of the human will. The Lord said from the beginning, 'I will build my church (Matthew 16:18).'"[235]

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[234] Ibid., 12.
[235] Ibid., 54.

Piper's definition of missions goes beyond simply reaching the most or the farthest. "In other words, the task of missions may not be merely to win as many people as possible from the most responsive people groups of the world but rather to win individuals from *all* the people groups of the world."[236] Piper makes his case biblically, with impressive lists of references to "nations" and "peoples," that the commission to "go and make disciples of all nations" refers not merely to crossing geo-political boundaries but to reaching diverse ethnicities (the Greek for "nations" is *ethne*), cultures, and castes, wherever they are. He demonstrates how the redemption of people from diverse nations brings maximum glory to God and maximum joy to his people (mutually inclusive objectives, both integral to Piper's theology) by revealing his wisdom, power, beauty, and grace.[237]

Piper's emphasis on peoples, or more accurately "all peoples," also affects his missions methodology. "The unique task of missions, as opposed to evangelism," he says, "is to plant the church among people groups where it doesn't exist."[238] Piper elaborates on this assertion in his book *The Pleasures of God,* where he distinguishes "Timothy-type missionaries," who cross cultures to oversee churches and minister in relatively unevangelized areas, from "Paul-type missionaries" who preach and plant churches among unreached people groups.[239] He cites Romans 15:20 and Paul's "ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known" and not to "be building on someone else's foundation" as the model for this kind of frontier missionary work.

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[236] Ibid., 157.
[237] Ibid., 199.
[238] John Piper, "Driving Convictions Behind World Missions at Bethlehem," 2 November 1996, http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/96/110296.html (17 May 2004).
[239] Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, 109ff.

Piper's views demonstrate a key point where Reformed doctrine and world missions intersect. Southern Baptists formally enshrined this perspective in 2000 by amending the Baptist Faith and Message article on missions and evangelism to read, "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."[240] The International Mission Board, SBC, further popularized the approach through its annual prayer and giving emphasis when it adopted the theme "that all peoples may know Him" based on Psalm 22:27, NASB: "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before You." The IMB web site explains that "with people specific strategies, we can look more closely at a country and see all of the diversity within it. This sharper focus helps our missionaries develop new ways of ministering to the people to whom they are called."[241]

Piper credits much of the revolution in modern missions thought to Ralph Winter, who introduced the concept of "people-groups" and, more specifically, "people blindness" into the modern missions conversation at the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization. Winter sees three basic eras in the development of missions over the past two centuries. The first begins with Carey in 1792 and is focused on reaching people on distant shores. The second begins with Hudson Taylor in 1865 and seeks to move inland to find people in unreached regions. The third is qualitatively different. It begins in 1934 with Donald McGavran and Cam Townsend and their emphasis on ethnic differences. Where the first two are "geographic strategies," the third recognizes non-

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[240] *BF&M*, Article 11, Evangelism and Missions.

[241] "People Groups: Why Focus on Them?" http://ime.imb.org/Theme/whoare.asp (December 20, 2006).

geographic barriers to the spread of the gospel: language, religion, ethnicity, class, etc.[242] Winter's charge of "people blindness" meant simply that, while the gospel is accessible in almost every geographic region, it is not accessible to every kind of person. Winter sees the essential missionary task as "A Church for Every People," and he sees it as an achievable goal that will precede the conclusion of human history (Matthew 24:14). But "the mandate is more than just closure," reminds Winter. "We know that in every place on earth the key effort is not going to be our wisdom or even our hard work. It will be all of that – plus his sovereign power breaking down the strongholds of his enemies to bring his glory to the ends of the earth."[243]

The Denominational Discussion

The 2006 Southern Baptist Pastors Conference in Greensboro, North Carolina, drew standing-room-only crowds to two break-out sessions entitled "Reaching Our World through Differing Views of Election." The gathering was billed as a discussion, not a debate, between R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, concerning the impact of doctrinal differences on missions and evangelism in SBC churches. Though far more emphasis was placed on doctrine than missions, both speakers made important assertions about the relationship of the two. Patterson, who expressed his own belief in God's absolute sovereignty but denied being a Calvinist, affirmed Calvinists for their stand on inerrancy, their emphasis on theology, and their "pious lives." He did, however, accuse "some Calvinists" of being compassionless

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[242] Ralph Winter, "Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement,* 3rd ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 259.

[243] Ralph Winter and Bruce Koch, "Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement,* 518.

toward the lost, saying that "too often [Calvinism] ends up being the deathknell of evangelism in many, many people."

Mohler, on the other hand, acknowledged his Calvinism ("if you're counting points," he quipped, "five"), adding that he believed that all Baptists are "almost certainly one form of Calvinist or another" because the vast majority of Baptists believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the omniscience of God, and the eternal security of believers. Mohler warned of dangers from hyper-Calvinism and "Calvinists who are hyperactive," saying that "it is not healthy when we have persons who will drive across the state to debate Calvinism, when they would not drive across the street to share the gospel." Instead of this kind of "coldness" among those "who believe they understand the architecture of the gospel without understanding the great purpose of the gospel," the doctrine of election provides believers with solid biblical motivation to share their faith. Appealing to the logic of Romans 8 (the order of salvation), 9 (God's sovereign, electing purpose), and 10 (the means employed in salvation), Mohler demonstrates the joy and confidence that the doctrine of election brings to evangelism and missions. "When we send out evangelistic teams, we don't say 'good luck – happy fishing.' No, we pray... that God will open eyes, open hearts, and make ears receptive to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."[244] Mohler, along with Patterson, adds that Calvinists can find great motivation for missions in obedience to God's revealed will as well as in a concern to see his glory among the nations.

While Mohler and Patterson highlighted key differences in their respective positions, both concluded that Calvinistic and non-Calvinistic Southern Baptists have far

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[244] Mohler elaborated on this point, saying, "Everyone is a Calvinist when praying before surgery. Trust me. No one wants a God of mere potentiality when we need the sovereign God who acts."

more in common than not and that the things that separate them need not and should not distract from the denomination's work of missions and evangelism. In fact, the language of sovereignty is regularly employed in connection with missions in Southern Baptist life. Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board, writes that "the Scripture reveals a God who reigns over the earth and in His providence is moving through all things to accomplish His predetermined will." Rankin goes on to say that God knows how he will call out his people from all nations and who he will use to call them. "God is able to see beforehand history and all that is going to transpire – He knows the end from the beginning – and plans to use it to accomplish His purpose."[245]

The conversation will no doubt continue and will probably become more prominent. Over the summer of 2006, the newly formed LifeWay Research, an agency of the SBC, asked Southern Baptist pastors if they considered themselves to be "five-point Calvinists." Of 413 pastors polled, 10% said yes, 4% said that they were not sure, and 85% said no (1% refused to answer). Age did not appear to be a factor in the results, with roughly as many affirmative responses from pastors under forty as from those over forty.[246] At the same time, SBC seminaries report an "unprecedented flowering of missionary zeal on all our campuses." At a 2003 meeting, seminary presidents agreed that "this generation has a passion and a vision to reach the world."[247] With record numbers of missionaries serving and support dollars given, there is no doubt that the vitality observed in the seminaries extends beyond them as well. Though the relationship

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[245] Jerry Rankin, *To the Ends of the Earth: Churches Fulfilling the Great Commission* (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, SBC, 2005), 59-60.

[246] Libby Lovelace, "10 Percent of Baptist Pastors Call Themselves 5-Point Calvinists" September 18, 2006 http://www.bpnews.net (January 8, 2007).

[247] Joni B. Hannigan, "SBC Seminary Presidents Optimistic for a 'Golden Age' in Theological Education" January 7, 2003, http://www.bpnews.net (January 8, 2007).

of these facts may be debated, the growing interest in both Calvinism and missions among Southern Baptist has set the stage for more vigorous discussion within the denomination and its churches.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed demonstrates the need to study churches where historic Baptist denominational and doctrinal identity enrich and enhance the life of the congregation. For too long the pragmatic tendencies of Southern Baptists have bolstered apathy, even antipathy, toward the rich heritage of the denomination. Doctrine is often eschewed as elitist and divisive and compassionate ministry, including missions, is held to be the antidote. In fact, as the literature reviewed demonstrates, nothing could be further from the truth. Baptist theology is not cold speculation or sterile philosophy. It is rooted in personal encounter with God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who has revealed himself to humanity in Scripture. Because God speaks through the Bible, what it says about itself, about God, about humanity, about salvation, and about God's purpose of grace is of the utmost importance. Theories of atonement, anthropological presuppositions, experiential assumptions all must submit to God's propositional revelation of himself.

This biblical bedrock has been the foundation of Baptist thought and practice from the beginning. The edifice that rises from it declares the glory of God. The halls echo with the voices of Bunyan, Fuller, Carey, Judson, Spurgeon, Boyce, and Broadus, all proclaiming the sovereignty of God and exulting in his matchless grace. In the last century these voices have been questioned for their commitment to the Doctrines of Grace and rivaled by alternative proposals, but not silenced. The influence of their

convictions is seen in both the *Baptist Faith and Message* and the current resurgence of Reformed theology in the SBC.

Still, objections persist that to teach election is to cut the nerve of missions and evangelism. But, as the literature demonstrates, this is not the case logically, and it has not been the case historically. In fact, a theology rooted in God's electing love gave birth to the modern missionary movement and has been a boon to it in recent decades. The biblical vision of chosen individuals from every nation, tribe, and tongue has revolutionized missions, marking a key intersection of Reformed doctrine and global evangelization. This vision of reaching all peoples for the glory of God now holds sway at the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, and it stands behind the missions mindset at Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, Alabama. This study demonstrated the vital connection between the historic Baptist doctrinal commitments observable at Lakeview and the vibrant missions culture for which the church is known.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Lakeview is a Southern Baptist church with over 2,600 members located in the heart of the university town of Auburn, Alabama. The church was established in 1959 and has had five senior pastors over its near half-century of existence. Dr. Al Jackson has been Lakeview's pastor since May of 1979. Brother Al, as he is affectionately known in the congregation and community, is a graduate of Samford University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and holds the Doctor of Ministries degree from Fuller Seminary. Highly regarded in Alabama Baptist and Southern Baptist circles for his gifted pastoral leadership and preaching, Brother Al is undoubtedly best known for his passion for international missions.

I first became aware of Lakeview through a conversation with a classmate at a Covenant Seminary D.Min. seminar in Birmingham, Alabama. At the time Harrison Spitler was a church planter for the Presbyterian Church in America working in Charlotte, North Carolina. Now he is the pastor at Grace Community Church in the Charlotte area. I told Harrison of my interest in studying the Reformed tradition in Baptist missions, and he told me that I needed to meet Brother Al. Harrison was converted under the ministry of Al Jackson and discipled in the Lakeview church during his time at Auburn. "Al will say he's not a Calvinist," Harrison told me, "but the only difference between him and me is the way we baptize."

After several encounters with Lakeview alumni (where I live it's not hard to find former Auburn students who attended Lakeview while they were in college), I decided to contact Jackson. A brief interview in his office paved the way for the study design described below.

Design of the Study

This project is a qualitative case study of the effect of denominational and doctrinal distinctives at Lakeview Baptist Church on the church's culture of missions and evangelism. Specifically, this study observes the influence of Calvinism, both in its popular resurgence and in its historic Baptist expression, on the theory and practice of missions at Lakeview and draws conclusions for wider application. This was an evaluative case study, using document analysis, observations, and interviews. As Sharan B. Merriam points out in her book *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, the purpose of any such study is "to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of a program"[248] through rich description and explanation. The intent of my study was to make a judgment concerning the effect of grace-centered teaching on outreach ministries at Lakeview in the light of the charge that the Doctrines of Grace are at odds with the Southern Baptist approach to missions and evangelism. Data was gathered and then analyzed using the constant comparative method. "The basic strategy of the method," says Merriam, "is to do just what its name implies – constantly compare" incidents from data collected in order to form categories and ultimately develop theory that emerges from, or is "grounded in", the researchers findings.[249]

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[248] Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass Publishers, 2001), 39.

[249] Ibid., 159.

The documents analyzed included church educational and policy publications, historical records, and sermon transcripts, all maintained as public records at the church. According to Merriam, because documents like these are "produced independently of the research study," they are "nonreactive and grounded in the context under study" and particularly useful for inductive analysis.[250] I also found articles about Lakeview published in *The Alabama Baptist* state newspaper and a chapter about the church in Tom Telford's book *Today's All-Star Missions Churches.* In addition to the printed material available to me, I was given access to the extensive library of audio recordings maintained at Lakeview. By sampling recorded and transcribed sermons from the past, I gained a sense of the development of both doctrinal and missional commitments at Lakeview.

My observations at Lakeview ranged from attending a worship service to participating (indirectly) in an international mission project. During the course of my research, I became aware of plans to send a large group of volunteers to participate in an Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Southern Baptist missionaries serving in Asia. Churches selected by the International Mission Board to host an AGM raise funds and recruit teams to conduct a week-long event for career missionaries, many of whom serve in remote areas with few resources. Some volunteers from Lakeview provided professional support (medical, dental, technical, etc.) to missionaries while others conducted youth camps, Bible clubs, recreational events, and worship services for missionary families. At the invitation of missions pastor John West, a group from my congregation, including my wife, joined the team. I was allowed to observe every aspect of Lakeview's recruiting, training, and fielding of short-term volunteers.

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[250] Ibid., 133.

Most of my observations came from staff meetings, classes, and casual personal interactions at the church. Brother Al holds two staff meetings each week, one for the equipping staff (pastors, ministry directors, and interns) and another for the entire staff, including ministers, secretaries, and facilities support personnel. I observed one of each. Lakeview also offers the study course *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, published by the U.S. Center for World Mission, to members of the church and to students from Auburn University, who receive undergraduate credit. I attended a session where Al Jackson gave a brief overview of the history of Protestant missions. Finally, I gathered information through casual conversations with people whom I met during my many visits to the Lakeview campus.

Merriam says that "interviewing is often the major source of the qualitative data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study," and this was certainly the case for my work.[251] The consensus that I gleaned from my observations was that both the doctrinal and the missional vision at Lakeview is cast by the senior pastor, so I chose to conduct a series of four interviews with Al Jackson. I also interviewed missions pastor John West to get a better idea of the scope of missions education and programming at Lakeview. All of the interviews with Jackson and West were recorded on audio cassette and transcribed for analysis and comparison.

In addition to individual interviews, I conducted four group interviews, also recorded and transcribed. David Morgan, in his book *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*, says that "the rule of thumb that projects should consist of three to five groups

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[251] Ibid., 91.

comes from a claim that more groups seldom provide meaningful new insights."[252] Morgan expresses doubts about this assertion, however, when groups come from diverse segments of the population under study. Though my groups were diverse, I believe that I did reach a point where my group interview data, along with other data collected, ceased to provide significantly new insights. Morgan calls this point "saturation," a place where answers become more or less predictable to the researcher, and describes it as the goal of data gathering through focus groups.[253]

My first focus group met on December 5, 2003, and was made up of five lay leaders from various segments of the congregation. Members were selected by the pastor in light of their active and long-term participation at Lakeview. I also arranged for a focus group interview with the senior staff at Lakeview on February 22, 2004. This group included five associate pastors and four ministry directors. Both focus groups provided a general sense of the doctrinal and missional climate at Lakeview and some idea of the development of both.

Perhaps my most interesting and insightful group interviews were with seminary interns working at the church. Lakeview has a unique relationship with Southern Baptist Theological Seminary that allows the church to enroll a cohort of students in a three year internship. The interns rotate through six semester-long assignments in various areas of ministry at Lakeview (pastoral, educational, youth, outreach, administrative, etc.), and they spend two summers serving with Lakeview mission teams away from Auburn: one summer overseas and one somewhere in the United States. Interns at Lakeview also receive intensive instruction from prominent ministry leaders and theological educators

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[252] David Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 43.

[253] Ibid.

like Jerry Rankin, Paige Patterson, Frank Barker, and Timothy George. One class that I interviewed had just spent an afternoon with John Stott while they were studying and ministering in London. Each student that completes the program is awarded the Master of Divinity degree with an emphasis in missions and evangelism from Southern Seminary. I met with two different groups of interns, the first graduating in 2005 and the second finishing their first year in 2006. The seminarians were conversant with my topic and eager to share their observations and insights.

In a late development in my research, I interviewed two of eight former Lakeview members who are now serving or preparing to serve in Presbyterian churches and institutions. The first, Harrison Spitler (mentioned above), is a pastor in North Carolina and the second, Seth Tarrer, is a Ph.D. candidate at St. Andrews University in Scotland. I interviewed Spitler over the phone and corresponded with Tarrer via email.

Interview Design

For my individual interviews and my focus groups I used a "semi-structured" format that allowed me to prepare a list of questions and then introduce them at appropriate points in the conversation. With this approach, I was able, as Merriam says, "to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic."[254] I began my individual interviews with structured questions about the respondent's theological and ministerial development and about the doctrinal and missional climate at Lakeview. I moved into less structured inquiry as the interviews progressed, allowing participants to discuss their perceptions and experiences.

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[254] Ibid., 74.

My focus groups generally followed Morgan's rule of thumb, having six to ten participants. The staff focus group was larger but was still orderly and productive.[255] I used the same semi-structured format that I had with my individual interviews, but my focus groups moved very quickly to a conversational exchange of ideas. The staff and lay-leader groups were somewhat more tentative, but in the intern groups there was minimal moderator involvement. Participants were extremely responsive both to my questions and to each other. The groups were never disorderly, but the vigorous interaction did add considerably to the discussion. I was careful in all of the group interviews to avoid prejudicial terms and characterizations related to the discussion of Reformed theology in Baptist life, but I was able to probe the more controversial ideas as they were introduced by participants.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the case of Lakeview Baptist Church. While I made reference to the wider debate over the Doctrines of Grace within the Southern Baptist Convention, my primary concern was with the perspective on this issue that can be gained from Lakeview.

The study was further limited to the perspective gained from select leaders, members, and former members at Lakeview chosen for their insight into this issue. This narrowing of scope will be necessary due to time and resource constraints. In some sense the doctrinal position and ministry direction of a church is endorsed by anyone who chooses to maintain membership. But the reality is that there are often many marginally involved people who either don't know or don't care about vision or doctrine. An

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[255] Morgan uses an example of a large group from his own research to illustrate that his "rules of thumb" are just that and should not become restrictive standards., 43.

extensive survey of the entire congregation at Lakeview concerning Calvinism and missions would be interesting but was not practical. Instead, I relied on data gathered from a sample of leaders to assess the general climate of the church.

Finally, this study was limited in focus. Lakeview is an impressive congregation for many reasons, and the attention given in this project to a single feature of the church should in no way diminish any of the others. Though much could be written about the various ministries at Lakeview and their relationships to each other, this study is only concerned with one aspect of the teaching ministry and its impact on outreach, especially missions. It was not my intent to portray the Doctrines of Grace as the only matter taught at Lakeview or to say that the Doctrines are the only reason or even the chief reason for the enthusiastic outreach of the church. I only hoped to understand how grace-centered teaching, with emphases common to Reformed theology, affects the missions mindset in this particular Southern Baptist congregation.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Once again, Sharan Merriam describes the typical means of data collection for a qualitative case study as personal observation, document analysis, and interviewing. Information gathered in this way allows for a constant comparison of details that will produce a rich description of the case under study.[256] With this in mind, I began a two-year journey with Dr. Al Jackson and Lakeview Baptist Church that has not only answered my research questions but also given me a rewarding insight into a remarkable congregation.

Observations

It only takes a glance at Lakeview Baptist Church to realize that international missions is more than a passing interest for the congregation. The church's welcome center is dominated by a giant map of the world surrounded by pictures of dozens of missionaries, families and individuals, ministering on every continent. Some of their last names and places of service are omitted for security reasons, but each image is a testimony to God's work through the Auburn church. As of this writing, Lakeview is personally connected to 78 career missionaries serving around the globe, all of them former members of the congregation. Pastor Al Jackson regularly tells members that, if the Lord tarries, he hopes to see 200 pictures on that wall. Candidly, he admits that he and his wife, Kem, would like to be numbers 199 and 200.

[256] Merriam, 69-70.

"Lakeview is considered by the International Mission Board, SBC, to be a missions mobilizing church," said Associate Pastor for Missions, John West. There are forty-four churches so designated out of the over forty thousand SBC congregations. In fact, Lakeview is taking the lead in IMB efforts to evangelize a specific unreached people group, identified discretely as Islamic Coastal People, with a steady stream of volunteers, resources and prayer support.

West, who previously served with Franklin Graham at Samaritan's Purse, coordinates about a dozen overseas mission trips for Lakeview volunteers in a typical year. Teams serve alongside full-time missionaries and national church leaders in far flung places like Bangladesh and Bhutan and even in restricted countries where missionaries, career and volunteer, are not welcome. West estimates that in 25 years of short-term mission trips, Lakeview has sent more than 2,000 volunteers, some of whom God has eventually called to full-time missions service.

In 2007, West led Lakeview in an overseas project of unprecedented scale. The church was invited to host the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for missionaries serving with the International Mission Board in one of the most challenging regions in the world. West recruited 240 volunteers to provide services and support for attending missionary families. Training for the team took place in eight half-day meetings spread over the full year preceding the project. Presented by leaders from Lakeview and the IMB, the sessions included both practical matters and a general orientation to mission work among unreached and unevangelized people groups. The AGM project was not the only international trip Lakeview volunteers will make in 2007 (there are already five

scheduled for Africa and one for England) but it was the congregation's most concentrated exposure to missionaries serving unreached peoples.

But the missions culture at Lakeview isn't simply a schedule of trips. Church members are constantly exposed to missions in a myriad of ways. Hardly a service goes by without a word about (or from) an international missionary. These presentations are often spontaneous but have become so frequent and are so warmly received that they hold an integral place in the worship of the congregation. Even the 2004 Christmas cantata at Lakeview included a video about the *Lottie Moon Christmas Offering*, a gift collected by Southern Baptist Churches that directly supports international missionaries.

More than just promotion, missions education is a priority at Lakeview. Children participate in Missionary Prayer and Care (M-PAC) groups, a program unique to Lakeview that encourages personal awareness and involvement in international missions. As they learn about, pray for, and correspond with missionaries, children in the M-PAC groups receive baseball-type cards with pictures and information about missionary families with Lakeview ties. When missionaries visit the church, they autograph the cards for their delighted prayer partners. Lakeview members and students from Auburn University attend *Perspectives* classes, including the core class on the worldwide expansion of Christianity and a new class on Christian missions in the Islamic world. Lakeview also hosts an annual International Missions Festival where missionaries, some on stateside assignment and some fresh from the field, lead and attend sessions throughout the week. The event began as a weekend emphasis in the early 1980s and has grown to an eight-day conference featuring nationally known missions leaders like Jerry Rankin, Avery Willis, George Verwer and Paul Borthwick.

Observers of the extraordinary missions culture at Lakeview will soon see that it grows out of a profound devotion to Scripture, and nowhere is this more obvious than in the ministry of the senior pastor. Both those who consider him Reformed and those who do not, agree that Jackson is a true expository preacher, unflinchingly committed to the inerrancy and authority of the Bible. The congregation at Lakeview is accustomed to detailed discussion of texts, punctuated with vivid illustration, and most often presented in lengthy sermon series through entire books of the Bible. Jackson wholeheartedly supported the adoption of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message, with its emphasis on the nature of Scripture as revelation, and in 2001 preached a series of sermons affirming each article of the Southern Baptist statement of faith. Leaders and ministry participants at Lakeview, including all mission trip volunteers, are required to affirm their agreement with the 2000 *BF&M*. The commitment to biblical Christianity and its historic Baptist doctrinal expression is unmistakable at Lakeview.

Lakeview's stated purpose of "making, nurturing, and equipping disciples" stands behind an impressive program of Bible study gatherings, including age-specific groups and affinity groups like those designed for internationals and college students in the Auburn community. The "equipping staff," made up of the senior pastor, associate pastors, program directors, ministry assistants, and interns, meets weekly to coordinate and evaluate discipleship ministries at Lakeview. Individuals report on their respective areas of responsibility, but they also detail instances where they are personally involved in "making, nurturing, and equipping disciples" in the previous week.

This format guards against an overly theoretical approach to ministry at Lakeview, highlighting and encouraging effective practice. To balance the (notoriously

Southern Baptist) tendency toward mere pragmatism, Jackson also requires reading and reflection from his leaders. The equipping staff is regularly assigned a book and required to interact with it theologically. During my observations, the staff was reviewing John Piper's *Don't Waste Your Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003) and had recently read *The Passion of Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), a short devotional book by the same author. Comments on that day revolved around the "God-centeredness" of the book and ways that ministry, church life, and personal spirituality often drift from the biblical pattern of loving and serving God.

Though Jackson admits that he is heavily influenced by the writing of Piper and J.I. Packer, his staff reading list is diverse. Whether staff members agree with the assigned authors or even each other is less important than the group's assessment of ideas in the light of Scripture.

One final observation from my participation in staff meetings, classes, and my casual interactions with Lakeview leaders and members has to do with the central role of the pastor. Jackson is highly esteemed by staff and members alike, and it is almost universally held that the vision for missions and the doctrinal commitments of the congregation are precisely his. Whether the result of his long tenure with the church, his effective leadership style, or his personal devotion to God's Word and his people, Jackson's influence over the character, ministry, and doctrine of the church is recognized by denominational and community leaders. On September 9, 2004, Jackson was named a fellow of the R.G. Lee Society at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, for his excellence in pastoral leadership. In his remarks, Union President David Dockery named Jackson among the "great communicators, great statesmen, and great leaders in Southern

Baptist life."[257] While he goes about his work with quiet understatement, surrounded by capable and dedicated leaders who flourish in their respective areas of responsibility, Jackson serves as the overseer of a flock that, by all appearances, gratefully receives his shepherding.

Documents

Few documents about Lakeview are in publication, but those that are generally celebrate the missions culture of the church. Tom Telford, in his book *Today's All Star Missions Churches*, cites Lakeview as an example of a church that makes the most of its denominational missions agencies while maintaining a personal involvement in sending and supporting missionaries. A quick search of the archives of *The Alabama Baptist* state newspaper will reveal more than a few articles about missions programs at Lakeview and missionaries from Lakeview, all confirming the observed vitality of the church's commitment to global outreach.

The documents gathered in-house at Lakeview tell much the same story, but they also give a glimpse into the other aspect of this study: doctrine. In particular, Jackson's sermon transcripts and recordings address important and timely issues related to the Doctrines of Grace, coming as close as anything else to an official theological position on these matters. No attempt is made here to present an exhaustive review of Al Jackson's preaching, nor is there any suggestion that all that Jackson says fits neatly into a Reformed paradigm. To be sure, Jackson is an ardent advocate for what has been called in this study the 'promiscuous preaching of the gospel,' and much of what he says may be construed as contrary to Calvinism. But a look at three representative sermons, the

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[257] Tabitha Frizzell, "Jackson Inducted as Fellow of R.G. Lee Society," Sepetember 10, 2004, http://www.uu.edu/news/newsrelease/release.cfm?ID=750 (March 17, 2007)

first preached in 1980, the second in 1989, and the third in 2002, will demonstrate a consistent and substantial commitment to key elements of the Doctrines of Grace.

"The Riches of the Christian" – a sermon

The first sermon is actually the introduction to a fifteen-week series in Ephesians preached in the first year of Al Jackson's pastorate at Lakeview. The sermon is not designed as a defense of the doctrines of election and perseverance, but it does address them directly, giving important evidence of Jackson's settled convictions early in his tenure. With Ephesians 1:1-14 as his text, Jackson follows the Trinitarian outline of the passage as he describes the blessings that are lavished on those who are in Christ: election, redemption, and keeping.

After a lengthy introduction of both the book and the text, Jackson discusses the "first blessing" which Christians receive from God the Father: election. He contrasts God's electing love with human choosing that is based on the merit of the one chosen. "Now when we think of choosing we may think of kids out on a ball field... [as] they begin to choose up sides. Always the best ones are taken first and then on down the line, with the clumsy ones and the awkward ones taken last. It's really kind of cruel, I guess." But God's election, says Jackson, is not based on any virtue or ability in those who are chosen. His choosing is based solely on his love for us; "In love he predestined us," says Jackson, "to be a son or a daughter in [his] family."

To emphasize the unconditional nature of election, Jackson points out the time of its occurrence. "He chose us... before the creation of the world," he quotes, adding that "before he ever hung the moon or created the sun or the earth or anything in it, God created you in Jesus Christ and he chose you.... That's how much he loves you." He

goes on to quote Spurgeon, who said "God must have chosen me before he created the world because he never would have chosen me after I was born." He calls on his hearers to accept this teaching by faith because it is biblical, admitting that he has "struggled with this issue for years now, since [he] was a college student." He briefly but flatly denies that a belief in election requires a belief in 'double predestination' and then punctuates his comments with three short sentences. "Salvation begins with God. We don't choose Jesus Christ, he chooses us. And if he does not choose us, we cannot be saved."

Under his second heading, Jackson presents the blessing that believers receive from God the Son: redemption. He does not address the extent of the atonement or any particular theory, though it seems likely from the context that he believes Christ's work is substitutionary. For the problem of our sinfulness, says Jackson, "God's solution is the cross." "We need to proclaim the doctrine of sin," he exclaims, "for men and women are sinners and if we shall be forgiven our sins, we must know that it is only through the blood of Jesus Christ." Nothing in his comments indicates a belief in limited or particular atonement, but he does warn against the error of universalism.

Finally, Jackson describes the blessing that believers receive from God the Holy Spirit: sealing or keeping. It is not surprising to hear a Baptist like Jackson declare the eternal security of those who are in Christ, but it is refreshing to see the thorough job he does. Jackson includes the progressive sanctification and ultimate glorification of believer in his concept of "sealing," resembling more the idea of perseverance than the typical Baptist 'once saved, always saved.'

This first sermon demonstrates that the discussion of the Doctrines of Grace is not a late development for either Lakeview or Al Jackson. In it, Jackson gives a detailed

description of his understanding of election and perseverance and gives important clues about his understanding of depravity and atonement. While this sermon may or may not serve as evidence of Reformed leanings, it certainly shows a willingness to engage the issues biblically.

"Let God Be God" – a sermon

The second sermon, delivered nine years after the first, is an exposition of the entire ninth chapter of Romans and is entitled "Let God be God." "Have you ever said 'God must…' or 'God would never…' and then filled in the blank with something of your own idea of God, something foreign to Scripture?" Jackson asks. He points out that there are images of who God is and what he does that we all easily embrace, citing texts like Psalm 23, John 3:16, and even Romans 8. "But," he asserts, "if you and I are going to have a full-orbed, correct, authentic view of the nature of our God and of his ways with men, we must take Romans chapter 9 and set it alongside Romans 8 and those other passages." He warns that when we neglect texts that are uncomfortable to us, we are rejecting God's self-revelation and we are "dethroning God" by a subtle "form of humanism that will creep into the church if we are not careful."

After an overview and explanation of verses 1 through 9, Jackson returns to his title assertion as he discusses the election of Jacob in verses 10 through 13. Acknowledging the difficulty of the passage and the implications for evangelicals who prize their personal experience of faith, Jackson assures his hearers that election is clearly described in the text. "'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated,'" he reiterates. "How does a finite human understand [this]? But God has a purpose in election. We choose God because he first chose us; the Scriptures say that we love him because he first loved us.

So I am appealing to you today to let God be God." In impassioned tones, Jackson declares that "God is God and he answers to no man... and we can be assured that when he elects, he makes no mistake."

On this ground, Jackson asserts that God's election is absolutely sovereign and absolutely free. "God chose Isaac but he didn't choose Ishmael, [even though] both were the natural sons of Abraham. So if election is not based on natural decent, on what is it based? It's based on divine promise." Further, Jackson explains that election is not based on merit. Taking up the case of Jacob and Esau, he returns to the dilemma; how can we say that God loves one person and hates another when we affirm that God is love? "Now we don't need to interpret that word 'hate'... in terms of some malicious or vindictive spirit," says Jackson, "it simply means to love less." To those who puzzle over this, he admits "I don't know [how God loves someone less] but the Scripture teaches it." He quickly adds, however, that he has "as much trouble understanding how God *could* love Jacob" in the light of Jacob's selfish and deceptive life. Both of these things he describes as mystery, a feature of God's infinite wisdom that is simply beyond human understanding, cross referencing Isaiah 55:8-9; "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways."

Anticipating the objections that election is unfair, Jackson moves on to verses 14 to 24. He compares Moses to Pharoah, pointing out the flawed character and conduct of both, in order to show that God's dealing with Moses is a matter of sheer mercy, not personal merit. Conversely, God's hardening of Pharoah is also a justly exercised divine prerogative. Nevertheless, God is not to blame for Pharoahs sin; "God never coerces or compels anybody to be wicked or unjust or evil. Pharoah was already a wicked man,"

says Jackson. "God just backed away from Pharoah, and when God withdrew his restraining arm, Pharoah's hard heart became harder still. He let Pharoah be what Pharoah already was." Turning again to the example of mercy, Jackson says that "it's not as though we present to God innocent lives, pliable to be used in anyway. We have the old sin nature." The wonder is not that anyone is lost but that anyone is ever spared. That's why salvation is a work of divine mercy and not of human determination (cf. v16).

After a reflective pause, Jackson resumes with the remainder of the chapter. He reminds his hearers that God's grace has extended to Gentile people, those who never expected to receive it, and that his purpose in election is to have a people for himself from every nation. He invites people to come to Christ by faith, reminding them that "the same Bible that teaches the absolute sovereignty of God teaches the absolute responsibility of man." Pointing to Romans 10:13, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," he answers the final, most personal objection; "What if I am not elect?" "If you call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," says Jackson, "you are elect... and you will be saved."

In this second sermon Jackson makes a case for sovereign election and strongly implies affirmation of the doctrines of radical depravity and overcoming grace. Jackson presents God as gracious in electing some (like Isaac, Jacob, and Moses) despite their sinfulness and resistance. He is equally just in passing by others (like Ishmael, Esau, and Pharoah) who remain in their guilt. Jackson regards the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility as mysterious but maintains that the "same Bible that teaches [one] also teaches [the other]." Characteristically, Jackson includes the idea that in his purpose of election, God is calling out his own from every people for his glory.

Overall, the sermon is a call to revere God, believe his word, and gladly receive his mercy.

"Election: God's Purpose of Grace" – a sermon

The final sermon reviewed was preached in 2002 as part of a long series on the *Baptist Faith and Message*. In it Jackson discusses Article V of the *BF&M*, addressing each paragraph in turn.

> 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.[258]

"Now some say that Baptists don't believe in election," Jackson begins, "Well shame. If there's a Baptist somewhere that doesn't believe in election, he should ask God's forgiveness because election is clearly taught in the Scriptures." Gradually working backward through texts in the Gospel of John, Jackson turns first to John 15:16, where Jesus says to his disciples "You did not choose me, but I chose you." As in the previous sermon, Jackson presents election as both sovereign and free, and he maintains that God's choice is both prior to and causes our choice. "Jesus says, 'you are my followers, not because you choose me, but because I chose you to follow me,'" according to Jackson. Later in the sermon he will remind listeners that "it is not because we are so lovely that God had no choice but to provide a way of salvation for us, not at all. We are

[258] *BF&M*, Article V, 12.

sinners, guilty, deserving of God's wrath. But God in his grace and mercy sent Jesus to take our place."

Next he demonstrates that God's choosing issues in effectual drawing. Citing John 6:65 and 6:44, Jackson maintains that no one can come to Jesus in saving faith unless he or she is "drawn" or "enabled" by the Father. Taking one more step, Jackson refers to verse 37 in the same chapter where Jesus says "all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." But rather than affirming the "irresistible" or even the "overcoming" quality of grace with which this verse is so often connected, Jackson chooses instead to focus on the "invitation for sinners everywhere to repent."

Leaving his string of texts from John for the first chapter of Ephesians, Jackson next discusses the "when" and the "why" of election. He asks, "When did God choose us? Did he choose us once we chose him? What does the Bible say? Before the creation of the world.... God chose us in him before the creation of the world.... In love he predestined us." Once the primacy of election is established, Jackson moves on to the purpose. He says that God elects out of his "good pleasure" and "to the praise of his glorious grace." God's election reflects his gracious character in that it is completely unmerited and produces appropriate worship in those who receive it. In this way it "precludes boasting," as the *BF&M* has it, because it is given and never earned.

The *BF&M* adds that election is "consistent with the free agency of man and comprehends all the means in connections with the end," points that Jackson affirms in passing. He only mentions the distinction between free-will and free moral agency, but he gives a personal illustration of what free agency is not. "I had a professor in seminary

who said that election is like this," says Jackson. "There are three votes. God elects, Satan elects, and then I elect to either go with God or with Satan. Now at one time I believed that [but now] I think my professor... underestimated the pull of the sin nature. He underestimated a person's condition outside of Christ." Jackson makes it clear that while he believes in personal responsibility, he believes that the fallen will is in bondage to sin; he does not equate free agency in people with self-determining free will.

As in his sermon on Romans 9, Jackson emphasizes that the "means" by which people come to faith are also predetermined. He refers again to Romans 10:14-15 to show that "it's impossible to be reconciled to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ unless you hear the message." He refutes the claims of inclusivists, who say that "perhaps God has a people who trust in him, but they don't know his name, somewhere in some isolated place." Jackson simply responds, "You won't find that in the Scriptures."

Jackson concludes his discussion of the first paragraph of Article V with a word of caution. He reminds the overly zealous predestinarian that the doctrine of election is mysterious, warning against the strained logic of double predestination. "The Bible clearly teaches that believers are elected and chosen in Christ," he says, "But I find nothing in the Scriptures that teaches that... others are elected to be damned. You may say that's logically so, but it's not biblically so." To those at the other extreme who are overwhelmed or even offended by the doctrine of election, he is equally direct. "We can be sure of this folks, whatever God does is right and just," Jackson says, affirming the wording of the *BF&M* that election "is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable."

After lengthy treatment of the first paragraph, Jackson briefly turns to the second, summarizing its content in the phrase, "all *true* believers endure to the end." He begins with Philippians 1:6 to show that God is the one who began the good work of salvation, and he will "carry it on to completion." "Now if salvation was of us, yes it would be possible to fall away because we could choose to do so," he reasons, "But it's not of us, it's of God. That which God purposes, that which God begins, God brings to completion." He demonstrates the reality of false professions from Matthew 7:21-23, noting that, though the people in this text called him 'Lord', Jesus said he never knew them (not that he once knew them and knows them no more, but that he *never* knew them), and from 1 John 2:19 where apostates, by "their going out showed that none of them belonged." On the other hand, says Jackson, God's children are kept through Fatherly discipline and by sovereign power. He points to the "golden chain" of Romans 8:29-30 to say that, from predestination to glorification, "our salvation is not contingent upon us hanging on... [but] on the grace of God keeping us secure in Christ."

In the 2002 sermon, Jackson presents the doctrines of election and perseverance in language that a great many Calvinists can embrace. He doesn't directly address the nature of the atonement in detail but he does hint at an affirmation of effectual calling. As in the previous two sermons, Jackson's conclusions can be traced directly to his conviction about the nature and authority of Scripture. Noting the difficulty of explaining election and the sensitivity surrounding the doctrine among Baptists, Jackson introduces his remarks with a confession; "May I confess to you that I stand before you here tonight with more fear and trembling than I usually have?" But he quickly adds, "I never stand before you that I don't have some sense of fear and trembling because I am handling the

oracles of God," implying that teaching on election, though uncomfortable at times, is an essential element of faithful biblical proclamation.

Conclusion

Once more, it is important to note that the sermons analyzed in this study were chosen for their content. There should be no inference that Al Jackson regularly emphasizes election from his pulpit. But by the same token it should be noted that his views on the Doctrines of Grace are, for the most part, very specific and have been consistently so throughout his tenure at Lakeview. Further, language pertaining to God's sovereign grace, including biblical references to election, quotes from Reformed authors, and even mention of Reformers by name, does appear regularly in sermons and lessons on other subjects. Wherever they do, there is always direct appeal to the authority of scripture. From the documents analyzed it is clear that the discussion of the Doctrines of Grace at Lakeview is a matter of biblical integrity more than theological curiosity.

Focus Groups

Of course, observations and sermon analysis can only provide circumstantial evidence to this study. To find the answers to specific questions, a series of individual and group interviews was conducted. Four focus groups were convened: a group of staff members, a group of lay leaders, and two groups of ministry interns. Participants were purposefully selected for their insight into ministry at Lakeview and their awareness of issues related to the topic of the study.

Lay Leaders

The first group was made up of five lay people from various segments of the congregation, all involved in ministry and all but one associated with Lakeview for more

than twenty years.[259] This is an important time frame because it corresponds with exponential growth in the congregation and unprecedented expansion of missions programs. Members of this group were involved in deacon ministries, international ministries, mission trips, administrative committees, evangelism programs, Sunday School leadership, and prayer ministries. They were deeply committed to the church and well informed about its mission and its history.

With almost no prompting, the group quickly reached a consensus that any understanding of Lakeview must begin with an appreciation of Al Jackson. Admiration for the pastor came early and often in the interview. "Al casts the vision here," came the very first comment, followed by another respondent who had known Jackson in his previous pastorate. "Al had a passion for missions when he got here. All that you see, the internationals ministry, the Perspectives classes, the community outreach, and the mission trips, all of that comes from him." Group members did discuss a variety of topics but regularly underscored their esteem for Jackson. Brother Al was commended for his interest in developing young ministers, his passion for personal evangelism, his commitment to prayer, his administrative strategy, his heart for missions, and, of course, his gifted preaching and teaching. "I've heard fancier preachers, but never anyone more solidly biblical," commented one lady.

The accolades for the pastor came in the context of an overwhelmingly positive assessment of ministries at Lakeview and, predictably, the missions ministries dominated the discussion. "I don't know why, but God has his hand on Lakeview," exclaimed one participant as others detailed the remarkable opportunities the church has enjoyed.

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[259] The only group member not associated with Lakeview for twenty years was, in fact, associated with Jackson at his previous pastorate more than twenty-seven years earlier. He has been a member at Lakeview since 1993.

Members agreed that personal connection with missionaries was key to the vitality of the missions culture at Lakeview, putting a "face on missions." This is not always the case in Southern Baptist churches, where mission support is coordinated through the denomination's International Mission Board, rather than directly with missionaries. The entire group seemed to appreciate the rare, possibly unique, situation that exists at Lakeview in this regard. The group was aware of Brother Al's personal goal to see the number of international missionaries with Lakeview ties grow to two hundred or more.

When asked how the Lakeview missions culture was developed and is sustained, group members listed several things. Mission trips, including a recent (2004) trip to Baghdad, Iraq, as a part of a Southern Baptist disaster relief team, have been high water marks. One member praised the M-PAC ministry for raising awareness of global missions early. "Kids in these groups recognize missionaries when they're here. They know them because they've been praying for them. [The missionaries] often can't get away from the kids because they are so glad to see them and have so many questions." Another group member described the impact of adding a staff member to lead the missions ministry. "John West added a new dimension to an already exciting program. His contacts and experience have opened a lot of doors for us." Others mentioned the internationals ministry, with over 400 participants, mostly Chinese and mostly connected with Auburn University. Relationships with Christians from overseas have heightened awareness of God's work among the nations and produced opportunities for ministry around the world. The annual Missions Festival at Lakeview was also mentioned.

Interestingly, the entire group considered an International Mission Board missionary appointment service held at Lakeview in 2000 to have contributed

significantly to the missions culture at the church. In almost reverent tones, group members described the impact that hosting the commissioning service, meeting and praying for new missionaries, had on them personally and congregationally. This was surprising in light of the extensive connections with missionaries that already exist at Lakeview. It seems that, in addition to a love for particular missionaries, there is a significant sense of participation in the denominational missions strategy as well.

When the subject of doctrine was introduced, there was no less enthusiasm from the group. "Brother Al feels strongly about his call to pastor Lakeview," said one respondent, "and what he preaches is biblical; what he tells us is in the Word." Examples followed, one building on the other, of Jackson's effective preaching and teaching ministry at Lakeview and of his faithfulness, first and foremost to the Scriptures and then to Baptist distinctives. The point was also made that members at Lakeview who lead and teach are also expected to be doctrinally sound, especially deacons who must verbally affirm the Baptist Faith and Message. Biblical doctrine is a serious matter at Lakeview and, with this fact well established, questions were introduced to determine the group's awareness of Reformed doctrine. Group members seemed unaware of, or at least uninterested in discussing, the suggestion that Al Jackson might be a Calvinist. One member observed that the congregation has changed a great deal in his time, with more and more people coming to Lakeview who have an interest in doctrine and an appreciation for the style and content of Jackson's preaching. Still, the mention of terms like "Reformed", "Calvinism", and "Doctrines of Grace" elicited almost no response.

Moving away from the obviously unfamiliar theological terms, the discussion culminated in one final question; "You've all described Brother Al as a biblical preacher,

a gospel preacher. Just what does he say that the Bible says? What is the gospel?" The response was telling. "Al says we are sinners saved by grace; by grace alone, through, faith alone, in Christ alone." Group members chimed in, explaining that they understand "by grace alone, through faith alone" to mean not by merit. From earlier comments it was apparent that group members had a strong sense of human 'lostness', including a sense of their own 'lostness' before conversion, so their understanding of salvation by grace does include some notion of depravity. Returning to the original question, another member summarized Jackson's message; "It is the chief end of man to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." When asked about the quote, it was clear that group members were not aware that it comes from the Westminster Catechism. These and other less striking Reformed ideas emerged naturally in conversation and always in connection with biblical concepts. This suggests that group members have been exposed to some Reformed theology at Lakeview and that, where these ideas are bolstered biblically, they are embraced.

Staff Members

The shortest group interview in this study was a forty-minute meeting with the equipping staff at Lakeview. The group was made up of associate pastors, ministry directors, and interns, but most of the interaction was among the senior staff members. This group was convened as the first half of a weekly staff meeting and discussion seemed somewhat inhibited by time constraints and the need to move on to the business of the hour. Still, responses were courteous and very informative.

Participants were initially asked how leaders and members at Lakeview related the doctrinal emphasis on absolute divine sovereignty to the church's pervasive missions

culture. "God is the Sovereign ruler," one participant responded, "and he commands us to go and preach the gospel." The matter-of-fact response seemed to have general approval around the table. After a pause, the same group member added, "Of course, he's also said he *will* save some. It's a matter of God's spirit calling them out." And, once again, the balancing comment received the nods of others in the group.

When asked if Lakeview members thought of their church or their pastor as Reformed, one respondent replied, "Al preaches the word, if a text talks about sovereignty, about grace, he preaches it. He never talks about it in terms of Calvinism, so it's not really an issue here." "We have an array of people in our congregation who hold very different theological positions on these issues," he clarified, "They all believe in sovereignty." Group members agreed that debate on the subject of Calvinism was rare and almost always limited to college and seminary students. "I don't believe I've ever heard an adult bring it up," said one man. "I didn't know I was a Calvinist until someone told me," added another participant. "I was talking with a friend about these things once and he said to me, 'Well you're almost Reformed,' and I said 'Well, halleluia.' But I don't think it really matters what we wear on our t-shirt." Most members of the group seemed willing, even glad, to acknowledge some Reformed leanings but hesitant to identify the church in those terms.

Members of the group all agreed that Jackson's doctrinal preaching has played a vital role in the missions culture at Lakeview, deepening devotional life and making people sensitive to God's call to give and to go, often even as career missionaries. "Brother Al emphasizes God's glory in all things," said one participant. "That shapes the missions culture. God is supremely satisfying, now whether that's from [John] Piper or

Al Jackson is not important; it's just that he is." Group members added that not everyone buys into the missions vision. People occasionally complain about the amount of money and time dedicated to missions at Lakeview. "We've even had people quit coming to prayer meeting because we spend so much time praying for missions." But overall, the group agreed that the congregation is genuinely supportive of both the missions vision and the doctrinal distinctives. In fact, participants felt that the congregation understood and embraced the emphasis on God's glory as the foundation for the missions culture at Lakeview.

Interns

The most detailed focus group data came from two classes of ministry interns. Both groups of seminarians were enthusiastic, well read, and well informed about both the popular resurgence of Calvinism in Southern Baptist life and the theological and missiological climate at Lakeview.

The first intern focus group met on February 22, 2005, as the cohort of six began their final semester in the program. The students were first asked about denominational identity at the church. True to form with all of the preceding focus groups, the immediate and unanimous response centered on the pastor; "Lakeview's Baptist identity *is* Brother Al's Baptist identity." Group members elaborated on the assertion, pointing to the numerous offices and positions in Southern Baptist life held by staff and lay members at Lakeview. They listed a dozen or more prominent persons in Baptist life who regularly visit Lakeview at Jackson's invitation. They mentioned Jackson's championing of the *Baptist Faith and Message*. Then they came to the crown jewel of Lakeview's denominational connection: the scores of missionaries serving with the International

Mission Board, SBC. "[IMB president] Jerry Rankin calls Lakeview his premier church," said one member. "We have more missionaries serving with IMB right now than any other SBC congregation."

Participants were quick to say, too, that this enthusiasm ran deeper than just the leadership. While allowing that not everyone at Lakeview is equally concerned with these things, one group member summarized, "Lakeview is the most educated Baptist church I've ever seen. More people can talk about Baptist life and theology here than anywhere else I've ever been."

When pressed about doctrinal identity, specifically, about Reformed leanings, the group began at a now familiar place; Lakeview is as Reformed as Jackson is, and Jackson is as Reformed as the Bible is. "Al preaches the whole counsel of God, book by book and verse by verse," said one student. "He doesn't shy away from anything." Inevitably, the Doctrines of Grace come up. "When Al was preaching through 1 John, we spent an entire staff meeting discussing the doctrine of limited atonement." Respondents were careful to say that talk about Calvinism is an "in-house, or actually, an in-office conversation" that is not allowed to adversely affect evangelism and discipleship ministries at Lakeview. "When someone says, 'I think I'm really a good person,'" explained one intern, "I don't talk about 'total depravity', I show them Romans 3 and Ephesians 2."

However, the group recognized a growing interest in the Doctrines of Grace at Lakeview, especially among college students. "A lot of them are reading John Piper now, so they're getting it there." In fact, one intern said that he knew of several students who attended Lakeview while they were at Auburn and who now attend Presbyterian

Church in America (PCA) congregations. "They just can't find the kind of sound doctrinal preaching that Al does in the Baptist churches where they live." He added that these people often held convictions about believers' baptism but were willing to put them aside to sit under Reformed teaching.

The group saw the influence of Reformed theology in several places at Lakeview. Members felt that, due to his long tenure, Al Jackson's views were widely known and often reproduced in the teaching ministry. "When Sunday School teachers come to texts about election or depravity, they're going to remember what Al has said about those things." "I know that when I took my Systematic Theology class," recalled one seminarian, "I was amazed at how much theology I had absorbed from Brother Al and at how Calvinistic it was." Group members also saw hints of Calvinism in the missions and outreach ministries. "When I came here, I had a default Arminian view of evangelism that put all of the responsibility on me," one commented. "I dreaded sharing my faith, and I felt guilty when I wasn't successful. But here leaders are constantly praying for God to draw [the lost], to change their hearts, to save them. There's a real freedom about it." Another added, "When we talk about a mission project, it's just accepted that wherever we are going, God has people there. They're his and he wants to use us to reach them." When asked if they saw any conflict between Reformed doctrine and fervent evangelism, the reply was no and especially not at Lakeview. "There's a professor at Southern, a Reformed guy, that says he meets more of God's elect when he goes out witnessing. He sees no conflict [between election and evangelism]," reported one student. "Brother Al says it this way," explained another: "Across the door post of heaven is this scriptural truth: *Whosoever will, may come.* And so you walk through the

doorway, and then you turn around and you look back. On the door post of the inside of heaven is written *Chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world.*"

The second seminarian focus group, a new cohort of ten students, met on May 9, 2006. The timing of this interview was exceptional, as the group had just returned from the *Together for the Gospel* conference, featuring John Piper, Ligon Duncan, C.J. Mahaney, Mark Dever, and their seminary president, Albert Mohler. They were also preparing to attend the Southern Baptist Convention Pastor's Conference, where Mohler and Paige Patterson were scheduled to discuss Calvinism and evangelism. The group was primed to address the issues of the study and eager to share their thoughts.

In response to an introductory question, seven of the ten identified themselves as Calvinists without hesitation. When asked how they came to these convictions, one quickly replied, "By reading the Bible." Others gave a little more detailed information about their journey. "I grew up a Baptist and never heard one word about Calvin or Reformed theology or even predestination until I got to college," one student said. "A friend in the PCA introduced me to the discussion and I gradually came to believe all of TULIP." He added, "My mother cried when I told her I believed in limited atonement." Another followed, saying, "My [Baptist] friends and family used to ask 'Do you really believe that' and I would say, 'So do you, you just don't know it yet.'"

When asked if Lakeview is a Reformed Baptist church, respondents gave mixed answers. The consensus seemed to be that while some at Lakeview are clearly and consciously Reformed, most are less so, and a few are decidedly opposed to Calvinism. The question then was rephrased: "Why do so many people think that Lakeview is a Reformed Baptist church?" This time the response was unanimous and, by now,

familiar: "Brother Al preaches the Bible." "I grew up in churches where preaching meant funny stories and tear-jerker illustrations, just emotionalism," said one intern. "I never heard an expository sermon until I came to Lakeview." One student postulated an "assumption" made by people who visit the church. "They hear Brother Al talk about God's sovereignty and then they hear him quote Piper and they say to themselves, 'He must be a Calvinist, and this must be a Reformed church.'" The group noted that Al avoids most theological labels but admitted that those who want to see him as a Calvinist are seldom disappointed.

Turning to the effect of doctrine on missions at Lakeview, the group saw nothing but positives. The group agreed that the emphasis on sovereignty at Lakeview produces a shift in the missions mindset: "Instead of going to help these people out [or even to help God out with these people] we're going because God is saving them and using us for his glory." The focus on God and what he is doing in the world also gives confidence for missions. "If it's up to me, we're all in a lot of trouble," said one participant. "But because this is God's work, I know it will succeed. I know Revelation 7:9 [...a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb...] is going to happen." "There are four of us at this table who are fully convinced, five-point Calvinists who are headed to the mission field," elaborated another, "If I didn't *know* that God was going to save some, there's no way I would have the confidence to go."

The second group of seminarians, in almost every case, gave answers that were similar or identical to those given by the first group. Both groups detected a substantial interest in Reformed theology at Lakeview. Both attributed that interest to consistent

biblical preaching. Both felt that the stance on sovereignty and election enhanced an already extraordinary missions culture. In fact, these points are more or less common to all of the focus groups, indicating that the group interviewing segment of this research achieved a considerable degree of saturation.

Individual Interviews

Several individual interviews were conducted to complement the focus group research. The most helpful individual interviews can be divided into two groups: interviews with Al Jackson and interviews about Al Jackson. The latter will be addressed first.

Though a number of formal interviews and casual conversations dealing with a variety of aspects of Lakeview Baptist Church have contributed to this study, invariably respondents will mention the shaping influence of the senior pastor. John West regularly says, "I don't know of a church involved in missions where the pastor doesn't have a passion for missions. I know of a few churches that would like to have a passion for missions but because the pastor doesn't, it won't work."[260] West maintains that Jackson's vision of the gospel going to every nation, every tribe, and every tongue is the point of ignition for the explosive missions program at Lakeview. West commends Jackson for his participation, traveling extensively with volunteer mission teams throughout the year. "The pastor doesn't have to lead the team," said West, "But he has to go; he has to be seen. That's how mission projects become a priority in a church." West also appreciates Jackson's tireless advocacy of missions ministries. "He's a sucker for a live missionary. If he can't get one to speak in a service, then he'll show a video.

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[260] JohnWest, interview by Jeffery Scott Bush, Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, AL, 6 December 2004.

He's just constantly keeping the vision before the people. He has to, it won't promote itself."

When asked about the role of doctrine in the missions venture at Lakeview, West drew two clear connections. "Al is constantly talking about 'nations' and 'peoples' from the pulpit," said West, pointing to biblical passages like the call of Abraham and the Great Commission that are commonplaces in Jackson's preaching. West called this 'people group language,' the theological foundation for missions at Lakeview. Second, West pointed out that, while Lakeview teams work with a variety of like-minded evangelical groups, church members are expected to believe and behave like Baptists. The diversity of Lakeview's missionaries (of the seventy-eight missionaries with ties to Lakeview, just over half serve with IMB, and the others work for organizations like Campus Crusade for Christ and Mission Aviation Fellowship) and mission partners demonstrates a willingness to work beyond denominational boundaries, but Lakeview mission team members must affirm the doctrinal positions of the *BF&M* before they are sent.[261]

Seth Tarrer also responded to interview questions via email.[262] Tarrer grew up in Auburn and attended Lakeview Baptist Church. Today he is a Ph.D. candidate at St. Andrews University in Scotland and a Presbyterian. Tarrer wrote that by the time he left Lakeview for seminary, he considered himself a Calvinist though "without the clearest understanding of the interdependency of the Doctrines of Grace upon each other and upon the tradition as a whole. I believe this is due to the fact that the Doctrines of Grace

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[261] West did recall a project with a Wesleyan missions organization that required participants to sign their theological statement. "Of course, we couldn't. It would have been contradictory to our own beliefs."

[262] Seth Tarrer, RE: Lakeview Baptist Church, E-mail to author (19 February 2007).

were never explicitly enumerated in public at [Lakeview]." Tarrer attributes his own Calvinistic convictions to his personal reading (specifically, Calvin's *Institutes* and commentaries) and to "the foundation of biblical preaching received under Al Jackson." "Looking back," he adds, "I believe [Jackson's] distinctive has consistently been and is Reformed, particularly in regard to his views on soteriology and missiology." Tarrer considers Jackson a 'Reformed Baptist,' comparing him to Timothy George, who often preaches at Lakeview, and to John Piper, who is regularly quoted from that same pulpit.

Harrison Spitler (mentioned above) was converted through a Campus Crusade program while a student at Auburn University.[263] He was baptized at Lakeview in 1980 and remained a member of the church until his graduation in 1983. Spitler felt called to ministry while in college and became part of a small group of prospective pastors mentored by Al Jackson. In 1990, Spitler enrolled in the Birmingham Theological Seminary at Briarwood Presbyterian Church. Still a Baptist, Spitler had a personal relationship with Frank Barker and an interest in expository preaching that drew him to the seminary and ultimately to membership at Briarwood. "I argued with professors for a year and a half about Reformed theology," Spitler recalled. "I was so certain that salvation was all about my decision that [Calvinism] just didn't make sense. Finally, I read through Romans. I marked the passages that seemed to be Reformed with a blue pen and the others with a red pen, and it just brought me to my knees. That's when it came together for me: Calvinism and Covenant Theology."

Spitler said that he was not aware of any Reformed tendencies when he was at Lakeview; "I was a college student and a new Christian, so a lot of that may have just gone over my head." "What I did get from Al was sovereignty," he said. "Al's view of

[263] Harrison Spitler, interview by Jeffery Scott Bush, via telephone, 22 March 2007.

God was so much bigger, more majestic than anything I had ever heard before. Al's preaching is Christ-centered, biblical, not just a bunch of stories." Spitler did catch the urgency of evangelism and missions at Lakeview and eventually became a missionary. In 1997, the Spitler family moved to Lyon, France, to plant a PCA church there. Lakeview even provided some support for the work. Spitler spoke warmly of his ongoing relationship with Lakeview and Jackson. "I still come to Auburn for an annual mentoring retreat that Al holds for ministers who come out of his church. I consider Al Jackson and Frank Barker to be my fathers in the ministry."

Jackson's own assessment of the development of the doctrinal and missional identity at Lakeview is much more modest. He does not deny the importance of his convictions or his visionary leadership, but he does insist that the climate at Lakeview is more a reflection of shared commitments than of his personal charisma. In four interviews, conducted over two years, Jackson consistently identifies the same contributing factors and explains their significance.

Lakeview's senior pastor considers the congregation's commitment to the authority of Scripture to be foundational. This, of course, grows out of his own convictions and permeates every area of life at Lakeview. "When the pulpit committee from Lakeview came to me and asked if I would consider becoming their pastor," recalls Jackson, "I told them that if they were looking for someone who is a scholar, who can hold his own with the faculty at [Auburn University] in the various academic disciplines, I said, 'I'm not your man.' But if you're looking for someone who will stand in the pulpit, week after week, and will faithfully preach the Word of God, then I want to talk to

you."[264] From that first contact with the church, Jackson's unwavering commitment has shaped both the programs and the people at Lakeview. When asked what single theological commitment most affects life at Lakeview, interns, staff members, lay leaders and casual observers all respond in unison: inerrancy. Jackson said, "I have been called a fundamentalist, a Calvinist, even a charismatic, but I prefer to be called a Biblicist."

Jackson said that he believes his biblical preaching, more than anything else, explains the perception that he is Reformed. "I guess people hear Calvinism when they see the absolute sovereignty of God explained from Daniel or John or Romans or Ephesians. But it's clearly there in the text and I'm going to preach the whole counsel of God." When asked point-blank if he is a Calvinist, Jackson smiled and replied, "A five-pointer? Most days I'm about a four or a four point two." Later in the interview he admitted, "I don't mind being called Reformed. Truthfully, though, I didn't even have a theology until 1986." That was the year that Jackson spent three weeks in Vancouver studying under J.I. Packer. "After that," he said, "I guess I became more intentionally Reformed, more precisely Reformed, because it was more biblical." He added that recently he has been most influenced by the writing of John Piper. "Twenty years ago I made a list of the ten best books that I've ever read," he explained. "I had authors like Spurgeon, E.M. Bounds, C.S. Lewis, and Francis Schaeffer. I didn't add one book to that list until just a few years ago when I read *Desiring God* and then *Let the Nations Be Glad*. Now I read everything [Piper] writes. It's his God-centeredness."

The second contributing factor to the climate at Lakeview, consistently cited by Jackson, is a pervasive missions vision. This flows naturally from Jackson's emphasis on

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[264] Al Jackson, interviews by Jeffery Scott Bush, Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, AL, 9 March 2004, 6 December 2004, 9 May 2006, 5 February 2007.

God's greatness and his purpose to be glorified among all peoples. "The sovereignty of God means that when the Lord Jesus calls us to reach the nations, the only answer we can give is 'Yes, Lord,'" said Jackson, "because 'no' doesn't go with 'Lord.'" This obedience comes with confidence that God is at work in every mission venture. "Jesus promised that the gospel will be preached 'as a testimony to all nations,'" said Jackson, highlighting the link between sovereignty and election; God commands missions because he has people from every nation that he will save. The image of God's people going to the nations for his glory is everywhere at Lakeview. Jackson adds, with delight, that "everyone here at Lakeview, whether they've studied Greek or not, has heard me say *panta ta ethne* so many times that they know what it means."

Mission trips play a big part in keeping the vision before the people. Jackson travels extensively with Lakeview teams, and he requires his staff members to go on at least one international mission trip every year. He also challenges them to take someone along who has never been before. Education is another key to the missions culture at Lakeview. Jackson is particularly excited about the *Perspectives* course, which he calls a "huge factor in getting people with a missions interest overseas; they get into *Perspectives* and they get called." Jackson also sees the internationals ministry at Lakeview as a primary means of connecting members with the nations. "On any Sunday at Lakeview you're likely to see dozens of nationalities represented in our worship service: Chinese, other Asians, Hispanics, Africans, sometimes in cultural dress. What's more exciting is that over one hundred souls have been saved through this ministry." The steady schedule of programs and the constant exposure to missions and missionaries "saturates" the congregation in the mission vision.

"In a missions church, the pastors role is strategic," explained Jackson. "His passion will either move the church, or they will fire him. The most common criticism I face here is that we are out of balance in our missions emphasis." Jackson points out that Lakeview has extensive benevolence ministries, distributing more free food than any other agency in their county. Lakeview is also committed to local outreach, serving as a primary training site for the Southern Baptist Convention's FAITH Evangelism program for nine years.[265] He is quick to add that these are not competing interests; they complement the church's efforts to reach the nations. In addition to a heavy emphasis on soul-winning in his own preaching, Jackson hosts well known Southern Baptist evangelists every Spring for a "Harvest Day" event designed to reach the lost and stir the church to personal evangelism.[266] Still, Jackson does not apologize for his dedication of time and resources to international missions. "It's just what we do; it's who we are, and people should know that when they come here."

Finally, Jackson identified prayer as a vital part of Lakeview life. "We have a real prayer meeting here each week, not a few minutes of prayer before or after a Bible study." He described a gathering of one to two hundred people who meet in small groups around tables. They begin their time praying for God's Word to penetrate unreached people groups. They often use resources like the IMB booklet *Loving the Lost of the World through Prayer.* Then they pray for missionaries, individuals and families that they know by name. Jackson noted that the personal connection adds urgency to their intercession. Aware of Jackson's vision of two hundred career missionaries from

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[265] Lakeview used Evangelism Explosion for fifteen years prior to the publication of FAITH.

[266] Interestingly, the evangelists Jackson invites, men like Gray Allison and Junior Hill, are often publically opposed to Calvinism. Jackson admires their zeal for evangelism even though he differs with them at points of doctrine.

Lakeview, prayer meeting faithful regularly "ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out to send out workers into his harvest field" (Luke 10:2). Next they pray for individuals in the congregation and community. And finally they pray for lost friends, family members, and acquaintances, again by name. "We pray that God will save them, that he will change their hearts and save their souls," Jackson said. "I tell people all the time that there are only two things that are eternal, the Word of God and the souls of men, and we ought to be about those things all the time."

Research Questions

This study of the role of the Doctrines of Grace in the missions ministries at Lakeview Baptist Church relied on observations, document analysis, and interviews to provide rich description and explanation of the congregation's unique doctrinal and missional culture. The questions that guided this research addressed the origin of the phenomenon, the extent to which it is observable, and the impact that it has on people and programs at this remarkable church.

How did the Doctrines of Grace first come to influence missions ministries at Lakeview? This first question addressed origin. The documents and the interviews indicated that the Doctrines of Grace were, in some measure, introduced at Lakeview through the preaching of Al Jackson. Sermons from 1980, 1989, and 2002 showed a remarkably consistent presentation of the doctrines of election, depravity, and perseverance. Group and individual interviews confirmed that, while the theological labels are seldom if ever used, the doctrinal commitments at Lakeview closely resemble the Baptist Calvinism popularized by writers like Timothy George and John Piper.

Interviews and observations also revealed an extraordinary vision for international missions, cast by the pastor, embraced by the congregation, and fueled by a belief that God has chosen people from every nation, tribe, and tongue to be his and that he has commissioned his church to reach them. This idea represents an intersection of Reformed doctrine and missionary passion. The data collected shows that both distinctives exist at Lakeview and that the doctrinal commitment has been influencing the missional commitment, in greater or lesser degrees, since the arrival of Al Jackson in 1979, mostly through his expository preaching.

How thoroughly are the Doctrines of Grace articulated in missions ministries at Lakeview? The second question asks, "Who knows what?" While leaders at Lakeview generally avoided theological labels, especially the terms 'Reformed' and 'Calvinist,' the group and individual interviews made it clear that the teaching and preaching at Lakeview is at least Reformed-leaning. Theological wrangling over the more controversial points of TULIP takes place at Lakeview, but it is generally restricted to "in-office conversations." Still, the emphasis on biblical inerrancy and God's sovereignty is pervasive, and the understanding that missions ultimately rests on his election of some from every nation is, at least, implied in every aspect of the missions ministry. In fact, observations of mission team training revealed a basic 'people groups' orientation that relies heavily on a Reformed understanding of election. Average participants in missions education or mission projects may not know the terms but they are likely to know the concepts.

How do the Doctrines of Grace affect implementation of missions ministries at Lakeview? The final question explores the practical aspects of missions ministries in a

church with Reformed sentiments. The data collected indicated that the Doctrines of Grace provide confidence for missions volunteers and prospective career missionaries from Lakeview. If anything, the notion that God has people in the farthest places who are his inspires more urgent prayer, more sacrificial giving, and more ambitious projects, all motivated by a biblically informed vision of the greatness of God and his purpose of grace.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"We believe that God's purpose for Lakeview Baptist Church is to love the Lord God and to express that love by making, nurturing, and equipping disciples of Jesus Christ in Auburn and throughout the world." The ubiquitous message greets worshippers, adorns publications, and guides staff meetings at an extraordinary southeast Alabama church. Lakeview is impressive for many reasons, but the church is most widely known for two. Baptists across the state and around the world are aware of the innovative and expansive missions programs at Lakeview. With hundreds of volunteers, a dozen mission trips annually, and scores of personal connections with international missionaries, the church's reputation is well deserved. But friends and members of the church often think of something else, too. Many who came to Auburn as impressionable college students and many more that have grown up in the Lakeview family know it as a place where faith is nurtured by powerful expository preaching.

The twin emphases, biblical doctrine and international missions, exist side by side at Lakeview and have since the arrival of current senior pastor Dr. Al Jackson. But in recent years a suggestion has been made that this is an anomaly. That Jackson is an inerrantist does not pose a particular problem. But because he has espoused a belief in the absolute sovereignty of God, including God's sovereign electing work in salvation, the question has been raised: How can such a doctrinal stance support a vibrant missions

ministry? This project is a qualitative case study of the nature of doctrine at Lakeview and its influence on the theory and practice of missions.

Summary of the Study

This study addressed a problem of perception. It has been commonly thought among Southern Baptists that Calvinism, or Reformed theology, is foreign to the denomination's doctrinal identity and threatening to its missionary and evangelistic character. The Baptist emphasis on the personal experience of faith and on the urgency of preaching the gospel to the lost seems to be at odds with the view that God has sovereignly elected some to salvation from before the foundation of the world. The fear seems to be that, if Calvinism gains acceptance, Baptists will become fatalists and the nerve of personal piety and missionary zeal will be cut. This project, however, provided evidence to the contrary through an examination of Baptist doctrine, its historical development, and its missiological expression. The project culminated in a qualitative case study of a particular church with a clear Southern Baptist identity, a vibrant missions culture, and a perceptible, albeit tacit, commitment to Reformed theology.

Stanton Norman, in his book *More Than Just a Name*, identifies two streams of influence that have shaped contemporary Baptist life. One he calls the Enlightenment tradition, with an emphasis on personal religious experience, and the other he calls the Reformed tradition, with an emphasis on the authority of Scripture. While this study did not deny the helpful contributions of the Enlightenment stream, it did seek to identify and trace the origins of the Reformed tradition in Baptist life.

The study began with a biblical-theological framework that followed the outline of the SBC doctrinal statement, *The Baptist Faith and Message*. First, the study

demonstrated how Baptists arrive at the conclusion that Scripture is "God's revelation of Himself to man."[267] As such, the Bible is regarded as absolutely trustworthy and absolutely authoritative for Baptist belief and practice. The second section addressed the doctrine of God, demonstrating from Scripture that God is "unlimitable" in power, knowledge, and eternity as well as benevolence. He exists and acts in absolute freedom. The third section discussed human beings as created in God's image, yet fallen. A strong case was made for the doctrine of total depravity or inability. The fourth section dealt with salvation and included discussion of regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. The section also addressed redemption and included a defense of the Reformed view of the nature and extent of Christ's atonement. The fifth section described election as "the gracious purpose of God according to which he regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners."[268] It maintained that election is "consistent with the free agency of man"[269] and is a corollary to the Baptist doctrine of perseverance. The final section addressed the missionary mandate, a cherished Baptist distinctive, emphasizing the confidence that comes from God's sovereignty over the means and the results of evangelism.

The study continued with a review of literature concerned with the history of Reformed doctrine in Baptist life. Esteemed Baptist historians Leon McBeth and Bill Leonard were extensively cited but original sources were consulted as well whenever they were available.

This brief overview began with the 1609 congregation, led by the impulsive John Smyth, which is credited with beginning the Baptist movement. Those earliest Baptists

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[267] *BF&M 2000*, Article I, 7.
[268] *BF&M 2000*, Article V, 12.
[269] Ibid.

were contemporaries of Jacob Arminius and their theology resembled his in that they believed in a general atonement, self-determining human freedom, and the possibility of apostasy for true believers. In the early 1600s, a similar movement emerged, equally committed to believer's baptism but drawing its theology from the Calvinist Puritans of England. These Particular Baptists, so called for their belief in a particular or limited atonement, had churches in London by 1633. Skeptical of denominationalism but happy to be bound to each other by common conviction, early Particular Baptists published a Calvinistic confession of faith in 1644 and another, more influential one in 1689.

The movement grew strong in England over the next two centuries through the writing of Bunyan and Gill, the evangelistic fervor of Fuller and Carey, and the zealous Puritan preaching of Spurgeon. Baptist Calvinism crossed the pond, too, beneath the sails of the 1689 London Confession, reprinted in America by Benjamin Franklin as the Philadelphia Confession of Baptist Faith. Roger Williams had already planted the first Baptist congregation in the colonies in 1638 and over the two centuries that followed the branches spread in every direction. The loose confederation of Baptists in America rallied to the cause of missions in 1814, forming the Triennial Convention, but fractured under the strain of the national conflict over slavery in 1845. But Calvinistic Baptist conviction remained stalwart in the South and a new Convention was born.

Forged by men who were thoroughly committed to Reformed theology, the Southern Baptist Convention was decidedly Calvinistic for its first half-century. But the theological commitments of Boyce, Mell, and Dagg began to fall into disfavor after the turn of the twentieth century. The accommodation and pragmatism of the early nineteen-

hundreds left Southern Baptists with a theological vagueness that has, in many ways, persisted until now.

The study next turned to the role of Reformed doctrine in the development of Baptist missions. It chronicled the work of Calvinistic Baptists, like Carey and Fuller in England and Rice and Judson in the United States, who ushered in the modern era of international missions. The study gave an account of early Southern Baptist missions as well, noting the appeal of Calvinists like C.D. Mallory and James B. Taylor to the Doctrines of Grace for missionary confidence.

Surveying contemporary missions writers like Ralph Winter and John Piper, the study suggested that a focus on "people groups" may provide an important intersection of Reformed theology and Baptist missions. Rather than stemming missionary work, a belief that God has preordained both the salvation of individuals and the means by which they will be saved, encourages missions by introducing the element of certainty. Missionaries can go, knowing that God has people from every nation, tribe, and tongue that he *will* save.

The literature review concluded with a brief look at the growing interest in Calvinism among Southern Baptists and some of the implications for missions. The current consensus seems to be that there is no reason Baptists with differing views of election can't work together to reach the lost. Still, sources cited cautioned against extremes and called for cordial conversation from every side.

The discussion of the case study proper began with a description of Lakeview Baptist Church, an explanation of the reasons for choosing Lakeview for the project, and an outline of the methods used in data collection. Lakeview is a Southern Baptist

congregation of more than 2,600 members located in the university town of Auburn, Alabama. The church is widely acclaimed for its involvement in international missions but is also well known for emphases on personal evangelism, community outreach, and ministry with college students and internationals in Auburn. Lakeview is a remarkable church in many ways, but the focus of this study was on the role of doctrine in the missions culture. Specifically, Lakeview was chosen for this study because the doctrinal commitments of Pastor Al Jackson are perceived by some to be Reformed, a position that is often regarded in Southern Baptist circles as threatening to missions. The project was conducted as a qualitative case study and made use of observations, document analysis, and interviews to gather data. The study produced a rich description of life at Lakeview with particular insight into the areas of doctrine and missions.

The case study revealed the central role of the pastor in both the missions culture and the doctrinal climate at Lakeview. Jackson is loved and trusted by the congregation, and he casts the vision for the total church program. The study also demonstrated a substantial Calvinistic influence on the doctrine of the church. Leaders are hesitant to use the jargon of Reformed theology, which is not surprising in a Baptist congregation, and they even challenge some of the assumptions of popular Calvinism, but documents and interviews show a wide acceptance of the Doctrines of Grace and an eagerness to discuss them in light of the Scriptures. Finally, the study explored the effect that the Calvinistic leanings at Lakeview have on missions ministries. Generally, lay leaders and staff at Lakeview did not see any conflict between their doctrinal and missional commitments, noting the missionary urgency and confidence produced by the biblical doctrines of divine election, human inability, effectual calling, singular atonement, and perseverance.

Discussion of Findings

This study was designed to give a brief glimpse into the life of a vibrant Southern Baptist congregation in southeastern Alabama and to observe, in that local setting, a conversation that is taking place across the country's largest protestant denomination. The national discussion is centered on the resurgence of Calvinism in Baptist life and the repercussions that it could have on missions and evangelism. The study did not portray Lakeview as a battleground in some imagined intra-denominational war, nor did it suggest that Lakeview fits neatly into one doctrinal category or another. Instead, it analyzed the legitimate strain of biblical, Reformed doctrine that has shaped Southern Baptist theology, the expression of that tradition at Lakeview Baptist Church, and the contribution that it makes to the exceptional missions culture of the church.

Baptists are generally unaware of the history and, in some cases, the doctrinal distinctives of our denomination, to our shame, and often, our detriment. Whether this reflects an intentional pragmatism, a subjective experientialism, or simple apathy is open to debate, but the fact remains. Often this ignorance masquerades as piety ("Don't bother us with theology, we just care about God") when in fact it is more likely immaturity and ingratitude. Like a child who asks his parent to walk a few paces behind while out in public, we tend to believe that we sprang full-grown from the earth and have no parents to thank. Baptists owe a great debt to those upon whose shoulders we stand: our fathers who stood their ground on inerrancy and their fathers who battled antisupernaturalism, and their fathers who resisted Unitarianism and universalism, and their fathers who rebelled against papism, all buttressed in their fight by the Word of God.

Baptists who deny the influence of the Reformed tradition may as well deny their own existence. The argument that Baptist Calvinism is either a minor tradition or a late development is clearly misinformed. Those who downplay their Reformed roots run the risk of doctrinal inconsistency and missional incoherence. The biblical-theological framework of this study demonstrated the interdependency of the Doctrines of Grace, and the historical survey showed how they have produced a legacy of faithful biblical witness to all peoples.

Both the biblical and the missional heritage of Southern Baptists are easily identified at Lakeview. While individuals may quibble over how many points they can affirm in TULIP, they unequivocally declare their conviction that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. The study did not uncover any effort to teach Baptist history at Lakeview, but it did find that members are aware of key figures, like Bunyan, Carey, and Spurgeon, and their contributions. It was abundantly clear, however, that the congregation has an above-average understanding of Baptist doctrine. This is due in part to their exposure to key Baptist leaders who are regular guests in Jackson's pulpit. It is also the result of intentional education on the part of Jackson and his staff. The adoption of the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* gave occasion for Jackson to emphatically underscore the theological convictions that he has always preached and the presentation of Timothy George's study course on the Doctrines of Grace became a benchmark in the ongoing discussion at Lakeview.

Study participants were often hesitant, some even resistant, to use the term "Reformed" to describe their pastor or their church. Whether intentional or not, the practice of minimizing the use of theological jargon in favor of biblical language has,

undoubtedly, preempted much of the usual conflict that emerges in Baptist churches over any hint of Calvinism. Even where the terms overlap, as in the sermons on election cited above, appeal is always made to the Scriptures and seldom if ever to any tradition. The foundational reverence for Scripture at Lakeview has provided a place for gracious discussion rather than unrestrained emotionalism.

Whatever terminology they preferred, participants all agreed that certain Reformed doctrines are embraced at Lakeview. Further, these participants saw the doctrines in question as an integral and an invigorating part of evangelism and missions at the church. They pray, give, and go on mission trips, and they share their faith *because* they believe God will save people and that he will use them as his appointed means. This raises new questions about the current assessment of the effect of Calvinism on Southern Baptist evangelism and missions. Steve Lemke's survey of baptisms in "Founders friendly" churches (mentioned above) does not account for evangelism by Baptist Calvinists in other churches or, as in the case of Lakeview, Baptist evangelism that is undergirded by the Doctrines of Grace. In short, Lakeview is an example of a Southern Baptist church where Reformed doctrine and effective evangelism not only co-exist but thrive on each other.

But just how do doctrine and missions enrich each other? How do the Doctrines of Grace, in particular, enhance the missions culture at Lakeview? Observations and interviews consistently produced evidence that the Doctrines provide evangelism and mission volunteers with both urgency and confidence. When asked the simple question "Why missions?" the most common answer by far was "Because God says, 'Go.'" The foundational belief in the sovereignty of God moves Lakeview members to immediate,

glad-hearted obedience. In fact, a favorite saying of their pastor, actually a quote from Thomas a Kempis' *Imitation of God*, is "Delayed obedience is disobedience." It is true that Lakeview members have found no warrant for laxity in their understanding of election, but it is more the case that they are eager to share what they have in Christ with their community and the world. The doctrine of depravity, often captured in the phrase "sinners saved by grace alone," undercuts any sense of entitlement and reminds witnesses of the desperate condition of the lost. Far from exploiting guilty consciences, this is motivation by observable fact and biblical truth.

The second contribution of doctrine to missions at Lakeview is confidence. The constant barrage of testimonies, videos, prayer requests, photographs, guest speakers, classes, festivals, and sermons reminds the congregation that, not only is God calling them to the harvest, he's using them to bring it in. At Lakeview, missions is celebrated as God's work and, as such, success is guaranteed. The prospect is so compelling that one intern reported a negative stigma in the community; "Parents used to say, 'Don't let your kids get involved with that Lakeview youth group, they'll end up on the mission field.'" People-group thinking plays a huge part in this mindset. The vision of God's work to call out those that are his (election) from every nation, and to call them invariably by the means of the preaching of the gospel (effectual calling) is the heart of missions at Lakeview.

Recommendations for Further Research and Practice

As has been stated, this study was limited to the case of Lakeview Baptist Church and was further limited to one aspect of the ministry at Lakeview, the interaction between

Reformed doctrine and missions. These limitations suggest opportunities for further research.

First, Lakeview is one of over 40,000 individually autonomous Southern Baptist congregations in the United States. In many ways, the interplay between missions and doctrine at Lakeview is unique to that church. Studies of other churches with similar doctrinal and missional commitments would allow for comparison. Studies of dissimilar churches (i.e. Baptist churches that are decidedly not Reformed, Calvinistic Baptist churches with little or no commitment to missions) could provide contrast. A Convention-wide study could also be helpful. This study would need to take into consideration factors ignored in the survey conducted by Steve Lemke, some of which are mentioned in footnote 183. Lemke polled churches affiliated with Founders Ministries and then made statements about evangelism in Calvinistic churches in general. It should be recognized that not all Calvinists who are involved in missions and evangelism attend Founders churches or even churches that are consciously Reformed, and not all churches with Reformed doctrinal commitments identify with Founders Ministries.

Other opportunities for further research exist at Lakeview as well. A study of discipleship ministries, including Sunday School, other small groups, and student ministries, could provide insight into the articulation of doctrine throughout the congregation. Are there other ways to observe and evaluate the specific content of teaching at Lakeview? In what ways could greater articulation of Lakeviews Reformed dictinctives benefit the church? A study of ministry interns after they leave Lakeview would also be helpful. Do these interns duplicate the doctrinal and missional culture

from Lakeview in their own pastorates? How are their theological and missiological commitments received? A survey of international missionaries with Lakeview ties would be interesting. Do they connect "people group thinking" to election? Do they consider themselves Calvinists? How does their theology affect the way they understand and carry out their ministry on the field? How does it affect their interaction with colleagues and denominational entities? Questions like these evidence the complexity of life at Lakeview and the potential for more fruitful study of the church.

The study also raises questions about the conservation of doctrine both at Lakeview and beyond. Jackson's preference for biblical language over technical theological terminology has helped to maintain respectful and civil discourse at Lakeview but may also obscure specific doctrinal commitments that contribute to the integrity and vitality of the church. Lakeview, like all Southern Baptist churches, is subject to dramatic change when staff or lay leaders are in transition. If the only point of continuity between incoming and outgoing leadership is Southern Baptist identity, even if it includes commitments to the *BF&M*, to missions, and to biblical inerrancy, the danger of destabilization looms large. New leaders may understand inerrancy, missions, and even key Lakeview distinctives like the sovereignty of God and the perseverance of the saints differently. Churches like Lakeview that have grown strong on sound doctrinal teaching in the Reformed tradition of Baptist life could be devastated by their neglect, not to mention the global mission efforts that depend on these churches. Further study should be done into issues of succession. How can pastors like Jackson develop more solid and specific doctrinal commitments in their congregations and their leaders while avoiding undue divisiveness and theological tribalism? Do features of Southern Baptist life like

local autonomy and anti-creedalism isolate churches and hinder the healthy effects of doctrinal accountability? What steps can be taken to insure that transitions in leadership will not destroy doctrinally sound and missionally vibrant ministry? Exploration of these issues could prove helpful not only for Lakeview but also for Southern Baptist churches in general and for the broader Body of Christ.

One final recommendation is a study of Southern Baptist churches where Calvinism has created conflict. Dale Huff, director of the Office of Leader Care for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, says flatly that, where most people in Alabama Baptist churches will work out their interpersonal or systemic differences, they "will not negotiate doctrinal positions." Huff cites eight examples of conflicts caused by Calvinism where he was consulted and says that all eight resulted in church splits.[270] It would be interesting to know what these conflicts had in common and how they differed from churches where Calvinism is less divisive. It would also be helpful to know what aspects of Calvinism are offensive to these Baptists. Could there be misunderstandings? Are there better ways to communicate the Doctrines of Grace? What middle ground exists for people and churches in conflict over this issue?

One suggestion for practice presents itself as well. Southern Baptist churches would benefit greatly from civil discussion of the issues covered in this study. A growing body of literature is emerging, but an effective introductory activity would be the study of Timothy George's excellent course *Amazing Grace: God's Initiative, Our Response.* Further, pastors could prepare reading lists for their congregations, with books about Baptist history, theology, and missions, to promote healthy doctrinal discussion and to

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[270] Dale Huff, "Calvinism and Conflict" in *Christian Life Report: A Newsletter of the Alabama Baptist Christian Life Commission*, vol. 16, no. 3, July/August/September 2006, p.3.

encourage and inspire their congregations. Nothing is more befitting a people committed to the Doctrines of Grace than gracious words and deeds.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Both individual and group interviews moved from a more- to less-structured format. Questions similar to those listed below were selected and phrased to suit the tone and course of conversation.

History – These questions explored the origin of both doctrinal and missional distinctives at Lakeview.

1. How has Lakeview historically expressed its denominational identity? How is it expressed today?
2. What movements, programs, events, persons, and ideas have influenced the doctrinal identity and ministry culture of the church?
3. How have the Doctrines of Grace been emphasized at Lakeview? Who has emphasized them?
4. How has the emphasis on missions and evangelism developed? Who has been involved in that process?
5. How has doctrine shaped ministry at Lakeview in the past and under current leadership?

Articulation – These questions explored the level of awareness of the Doctrines of Grace at Lakeview and the impact of doctrine on the missions culture at the church.

1. What biblical and doctrinal emphases support the missions vision at Lakeview?

2. What formal doctrinal training does Lakeview offer to members and leaders? What exposure is given to the Doctrines of Grace specifically?
3. What steps are taken to integrate doctrine with practice in the outreach ministries at Lakeview? What doctrinal commitments are participants expected to share?
4. How familiar are Lakeview ministry volunteers with the Reformed doctrine? Do they become more aware of the Doctrines of Grace as they serve?
5. What Baptist distinctives (inerrancy, divine sovereignty, cooperation in missions, etc.) help to bridge the gap between typical Baptist views and Reformed doctrine?

Implementation – These questions explored the practical aspects of ministry in a church with commitments to both Reformed doctrine and international missions from the perspective of staff and lay leaders.

1. What projects, programs, and commitments does Lakeview currently have for missions? How do the Doctrines of Grace influence them?
2. What points of friction exist between doctrine and practice at Lakeview?
3. How has an emphasis on doctrine enhanced missions ministries at Lakeview?
4. How do ministry leaders address substantial doctrinal differences (particularly regarding the Doctrines of Grace) with participants? How are they addressed with other leaders?
5. How does the broader denominational discussion of the Doctrines of Grace affect ministry at Lakeview? How might it in the future?

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