

The Origin and Beginnings of Baptists into Our Day: Over 100 Million worldwide after 400 Years

by Prof. Dr. Lorin L Cranford¹

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, and honored guests. With gratitude to God, I present this material this evening.² My personal religious heritage is of one born into a Baptist family sixty-eight years ago in a ranching community in the western part of west Texas in the United States. From barely a week old I have been involved in Baptist Church life continuously over these many years. My parents were leaders in the local Baptist church as well as active in Baptist denominational structures beyond the local congregation.³ All of my professional career of some thirty-six years I have served as a professor of New Testament in two significant Baptist institutions in the US.⁴ Additionally, I have served as senior pastor of Baptist churches on both sides of the Atlantic during the fifty year plus ministry as an ordained Baptist minister.⁵ Thus my perspectives reflect an 'insider' view from one with long years of experience and with deep appreciation of the contributions of Baptists to the larger Christian community as well as to the Kingdom of God.

I will seek to be methodologically objective in my reflections as a scholar, but these come from one who is deeply involved in his subject matter. Within the time limitations of this evening, I want to stress three aspects of Baptist life: roots, growth, and diversity/unity perspectives. At the close there will be opportunity for you to ask questions.

Roots

Roots have both a historical and a theological reach. During 2009 Baptists around the world are celebrating four hundred years of existence.⁶ Thus the historical roots reach back quite a ways. Our goal as Baptists is that our theological roots reach even further back to Jesus and the apostles as an accurate reflection of His teachings.

Perhaps a bit of definition of terms will be helpful to our understanding. What does the word "Baptist" mean? Quite interestingly, the online article "Baptist" in Wikipedia provides a definition at the outset of the article:

[A Baptist⁷ is a Christian who subscribes to a theology and may belong to a church that, among other](#)

¹Currently pastor of the International Baptist Church in Cologne, Germany.

²With intention most of the footnote references for follow up study are limited to sources available on the internet. As users of the internet are well aware, one must be extremely cautious about the trustworthiness of most of the information posted on the internet. Great desecration has been used in the selection of these internet based sources. The decision to focus on internet based sources was made with readers in mind who would have limited access to print materials and yet desire to probe some of the issues more thoroughly. The electronic version of this presentation is located at <http://cranfordville.com> under Resources >> Lectures.

³My parents, Lorinza Heath Cranford, and Mary Ethylene Cranford, were active in the First Baptist Church of Perrin, Texas all of their lives. My father served as deacon, Sunday School director, Church Training director along with countless committee responsibilities. My mother was Minister of Music in the church from the early 1950s until her death from cancer in 1975.

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1998-2008, professor of New Testament and biblical Greek at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, North Carolina. GWU is the fourth largest church related university in North Carolina with over four thousand students.

⁵**Pastorates:** First Baptist Church, Graford, Texas, 1964-1968; Springdale Baptist Church, 1968-1974. **Interim pastorates:** Arlington Heights Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, 1974-75, 1977-78; First Baptist Church, Perrin, Texas, 1976-77, 1989-90; First Baptist Church, Argyle, Texas, 1978; Normandale Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, 1979, 1983, 1994; First Baptist Church, Grandfield, Okla., 1979; First Baptist Church, Bellevue, Texas, 1981; Walnut Creek Baptist Church, Azle, Texas, 1983; First Baptist Church, Iowa Park, Texas, 1986; Grace Baptist Church, Sandhausen, Germany, 1991; Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Haltom City, Texas 1997

⁶July 24-26, 2009 some 820 Baptists from 57 countries gathered together in Amsterdam to celebrate the beginnings of the Baptist movement in the city in 1609 when a group of English refugees met together in a bakery to pray and study the Bible. Out of this came the first Baptist congregation that launched the movement in the English speaking world and has now spread to the majority of the countries in our world.

⁷The online *Merriam-Webster American English* dictionary defines Baptist as "1 : one that baptizes; 2 capitalized : a member or adherent of an evangelical Protestant denomination marked by congregational polity and baptism by immersion of believers only," And the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* states: "1. (**Baptist**) a member of a Protestant Christian denomination advocating baptism only of adult believers by total immersion. 2. a person who baptizes someone."

things, is committed to believer's baptism (as opposed to infant baptism) and, with respect to church polity, favors the congregational model.⁸ The term Baptist can also describe a local church, denomination, or other group of individuals made up of individual Baptists.⁹

The etymology of the English word reaches back to the Greek word βαπτιστής with the meaning 'baptizer.'¹⁰ This group of Evangelical Christians is chiefly known for their stance on believer's baptism by immersion in water and for the congregational polity of their church organization. From their beginnings Baptists have been a branch of Protestantism and have adopted the core belief system of Christianity expressed in the Apostles' Creed established in the fourth Christian century.

Historical Roots:

The historical beginnings of Baptists cannot be traced back to a single individual such as Martin Luther or John Calvin, as within the official Protestant Church in Germany. Various individuals have played a major role in the early period, and some of these remain unknown by name in history. Baptists have historically been a people movement, rather than a preacher centered movement. Consequently, tracing the history is sometimes more challenging because many more beginning points must be explored, and then inner relationships among these examined. Limited historical records impose handicaps on being able to uncover the full story in great detail. An impact of this is differing perspectives by historical scholars exploring the roots of the Baptist religious movement.

Possible Beginnings. In general four possible beginnings are advocated among scholars today. 1) Baptist Succession; 2) Baptist Teaching; 3) Anabaptist Influence; and 4) Baptist Separatists. **Baptist Successionism** is a largely discredited view that Baptists can trace their historical beginnings all the way back to John the Baptist in the first Christian century. Never a wide-spread belief, this view point was pretty much limited to a small group known as Landmark Baptists in the southern part of the US. The **Baptist Teaching** view originated with Thomas Crosby in the early 1700s and seeks to identify historical dissenting groups from Roman Catholicism prior to the Reformation with doctrines similar to those of modern Baptists. Baptists in this view have their origins in these groups. Not many Baptist historical scholars today would agree with this perspective.

The two views of Baptist beginnings that are very much debated today are the third and fourth views. The **Anabaptist Influence** view contends that Baptist roots begin with the so-called Radical Reformation in the middle to late 1500s following the reforms of Luther and Calvin. This movement was convinced that Luther and Calvin did not go far enough in purging themselves of Roman Catholic tradition and practice and thus did not achieve full biblical authority for their beliefs. The Dutch Catholic priest who joined the movement in 1536, named Menno Simons, looms as one of the more influential sources of teaching in this movement. Clearly coming out of this movement historically are the modern day Mennonites, Amish and Hutterites. Less certain, however, is the historical connection of Baptists to the Radical Reformation. The ability to trace documentable historical links from the early Baptists in Holland and English at the beginning of the 1600s to branches of the evolving Radical Reformation are extremely limited and these few writings are not without debatable interpretation. Definite historical links then from Baptists to the Radical Reformation are very uncertain.

On the other hand, the teachings of many of the Radical Reformers such as Menno Simons laid a conceptual foundation that Baptists later on would heavily use in developing their beliefs and church practices. Chief among these are believer's baptism of individuals confessing faith in Christ; the church is to be a local body of baptized believers only; church authority resides exclusively within a local congregation and not with some external organization; the church must be free from the authority and control of political governments; every citizen must enjoy complete religious freedom to choose the religious path of his own determination

⁸<http://www.abc-usa.org/portals/0/ABC10FactsBrochure.pdf>

⁹Somewhat similar is the article "Baptisten" in the German edition of Wikipedia: "Als Baptisten werden die Mitglieder einer Familie von christlichen Freikirchen bezeichnet, zu deren besonderen Merkmalen die ausschließliche Praxis der Gläubigentaufe ebenso gehört wie die Betonung, dass die Ortsgemeinde für ihr Leben und ihre Lehre selber verantwortlich ist (Kongregationalismus). Die erste Baptistengemeinde entstand 1609 in Amsterdam. In Deutschland ist der Baptismus seit 1834 vertreten, von wo aus er sich in viele Länder ausbreitete, auch innerhalb der Schweiz (ab 1847) und innerhalb Österreichs (ebenfalls ab 1847)." The online Roman Catholic encyclopedia article "Baptists" provides a little different slant in order to highlight the contrast between Baptist and Catholic perspectives: "A Protestant denomination which exists chiefly in English speaking countries and owes its name to its characteristic doctrine and practice regarding baptism."

¹⁰In the original language Greek New Testament this word is used some 12 times exclusively in reference to the baptizing ministry of John the Baptist. The verb form βαπτίζω, "I baptize," has 63 uses in the New Testament, mostly in reference to Christian baptism of individuals confessing faith in Christ.

whatever it might be. At this level of linkage a strong case can be made for Anabaptist influence on Baptists later on.

Baptist Separatists. Historically abundant documentation exists for the beginnings of the modern Baptist movement as coming out of the English Separatist movement.¹¹ Separatism in English is closely linked to the Puritan movement which was convinced that Church of England did not go far enough in purging itself of the influence of Roman Catholicism in the English Reformation under Henry VIII. The Anglican priest with Puritan leanings, John Smyth, broke with the Church of English in 1594 and went to Holland where a small group of English came gathered together in Amsterdam. After adopting the Separatist ways of the Puritans, Smyth led his group in Amsterdam to adopt believer's baptism as the only biblical mode of baptism in 1609. Gradually the group adopted a twofold understanding of church leadership, pastor and deacons, in rejection of the thrifold structure of Pastor-Elder, Lay-Elder, and Deacons which prevailed in many of the reformation churches. Most church historians today will contend that the Baptist movement descends from the work of Smyth in the early 1600s. Toward the end of Smyth's life he moved toward the Mennonite church in his thinking, and the continuation of Baptist efforts fell to another Englishman, Thomas Helwys, who had been closely connected to Smyth from the beginning in Amsterdam.

Theological Roots:

Confessions of Faith. Under Helwys' leadership in 1611, the first Baptist confession of faith was produced in the effort to clearly state publicly the belief system of the group of English immigrants in Amsterdam.¹² From this modest beginning would come a steady stream of 'confessions of faith'¹³ by Baptist groups in the desire to clearly state their core beliefs for the general public to know who Baptists were. Two or three of these confessions have been more widely adopted and have helped shape Baptist thinking more extensively than the others. The Second London Baptist Confession in 1677 (1689) laid a major foundation for Baptists in the United Kingdom early on. In the United States, the so-called Triennial Convention which formed in Philadelphia in 1814 for promoting mission work adopted a short confession of faith as the definition of beliefs to be used in evangelization of the American colonies. It has come to known as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. The New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith adopted in 1833 has played a very influential role in shaping Baptist thinking on the western side of the Atlantic. In the past two centuries the emerging groups of Baptist denominations have typically developed their own confession of faith for use by their distinctive group. The listing of belief topics will mostly be the same, or else very similar. And the statement of belief will be generally similar in the basic expression of belief. The differences normally surface in the detailed depiction of a particular belief, e.g., the nature and role of scripture.¹⁴

Calvinism vs. Arminianism. The modern Baptist movement with its historical beginnings in the English Separatist movement in the early 1600s could not avoid many of the theological debates swirling around Europe during this era. Among Protestant Christians in the 1600s the Calvinist / Arminian debate was one of the 'hot topics' of the day. The Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Arminius contended that Jesus' atoning death on the cross applies potentially to all of humanity, while the view of the successors of John Calvin tended to argue that Jesus' death had salvational potential only for the elect, that is, only for those individuals whom God chooses to save, the elect of God. Thus the Atonement was either general (Arminian) or limited (Calvinistic). Both John Smyth and Thomas Helwys adopted the viewpoint of Arminius. Out of this came the General (Arminian) Baptist group in England. By the 1640s the influence of Calvinism spread among Baptists in England, and in the London Confession of Faith -- possibly the first one in 1644 and clearly in the 1689 revised second one -- the idea of a limited atonement found favor with many Baptists. The movement known as

¹¹"English Christians in the 16th and 17th centuries who wished to separate from the Church of England and form independent local churches were influential politically under Oliver Cromwell, who was himself a Separatist. They were eventually called Congregationalists.¹² The Pilgrims who established the first successful colony in New England were separatists." [Source: "Separatists," Wikipedia online]

¹²"A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland"

¹³A Baptist 'confession of faith' looks much like a creed set forth in either Roman Catholic or Protestant tradition. Historically, however, the major difference is that while creeds typically prescribe orthodox belief mandated for members, (inward focus), a 'confession of faith' attempts to explain Baptist belief to those outside the church (outward focus). And in most Baptist groups internal adherence to the parameters of the confession are voluntary rather than mandatory. The expectation is that if a member comes to believe doctrines significantly in conflict with the adopted confession of faith, he or she will have the integrity to disassociate themselves from the Baptist church.

¹⁴Compare the 10 point statement about scripture in the 1814 Philadelphia Confession, to the same topic in the 1689 English Baptist confession, to the 1833 New Hampshire confession, to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message confession, to the 2008 International Baptist Convention confession.

Particular Baptists was born.¹⁵ In colonial America the label Regular Baptist emerged from these two groups of Baptists who immigrated from England to North America. With the growth of Particular Baptists and the near extinction of General Baptists, this American brand of Baptists was heavily influenced by the Calvinistic thinking of the British Particular Baptists. Most Baptist groups in North America for the past two centuries have tended toward the Calvinistic side, but in varying degrees have adopted aspects of the older General Baptist viewpoint. In the United Kingdom, General and Particular Baptists came together in 1891 to form the Baptist Union of Great Britain.¹⁶ This has significantly diminished the debate over the atonement in the UK among Baptists.

Growth

The growth of the Baptist movement world wide has several phases and layers. These can perhaps be best summarized under the categories of English / non-English speaking countries.

One common pattern for growth among Baptists has been the almost universal tendency to form 'Associations' with other Baptist congregations. Although fiercely independent and completely autonomous from any outside control, Baptist churches have been anxious to band together with other Baptist churches in order to achieve common goals. Mostly these goals relate to missionary work, education of pastors, and providing mutual help to one another. The 'Baptist Association'¹⁷ is the smallest unit of this organizational structure, and consists of churches in a local area, often a governmental county, coming together for the common good of all the churches. In the pattern of a concentric circle, these organizational patterns expand out to the regional, usually defined by the political boundary of state or province, to the national organization, usually labeled a convention or union, and ultimately to a world wide 'umbrella' structure such as the Baptist World Alliance. Largely through participation in these various levels of organized structure individual Baptist churches have been able to grow within themselves and also to expand rapidly the number of Baptist congregations.

English Speaking World:

Although Baptist beginnings were in Europe, early growth and large scale expansion of Baptists took place mainly in North America in the 1800 and 1900 hundreds. And from North America, Baptists have rapidly grown elsewhere in the world through the impact of the Great Awakenings and the modern Missions Movement. Most of the thirty one Baptist groups in North America have a strong missionary orientation and send out missionaries to other parts of the world to evangelize and establish churches.

Great Awakenings. Baptist growth in North America took a huge leap forward as part of the so-called 'Great Awakening' revival movements.¹⁸ Three eras of extensive religious revival took place from the 1740s to the middle of the twentieth century: First Great Awakening (1730s and 1740s); Second Great Awakening (1790s-1840s); and the Third Great Awakening (1850s to 1900s). Particularly during the second and third great awakenings, Baptists grew in numbers very rapidly. The emergence of revival meetings during these periods produced powerful preachers of the gospel who conducted mass meetings where thousands of individuals confessed faith in Christ. Among Baptists the names of Dwight L. Moody and Billy Graham are readily recognized as outstanding Baptist revival preachers. These spiritual awakenings in North America had spill over impact across England in the Evangelical Revival and Methodism, as well impacting the emerging German Pietism movement on the continent. One by-product of these revival movements was the 'toning down' of the Calvinistic tendencies among most Baptists in North America. The passion to evangelize non-Christians and strict predestinarianism of Calvinism do not naturally fit one another. But Baptists in North America found ways to bring these two concepts together in a healthy tension with positive results for rapid growth.

Modern Missionary Movement. In 1792, the Baptist Missionary Society was formed in England among Particular Baptists and sent out William Carey and John Thomas to Bengal, India as missionaries. William Carey has become known as the "Father of Modern Missions" through his extensive work and influence in India. Today the BMS continues to send over three hundred missionaries to over forty countries around the world. From this came the modern missionary movement¹⁹ in both Europe and North America

¹⁵This movement is also known as Reformed Baptist, and Strict Baptist. But these three labels are not precise synonyms, since each one stresses a slightly different theological aspect of belief.

¹⁶The Baptist Union of Scotland, formed in 1869, remains distinct from the Baptist Union of Great Britain. It tends to be more conservative and Calvinistic in its stance.

¹⁷Here the term is used in its most basic sense. The labels for the regional and national organizations can include the term 'association,' but more commonly will be one of the following: convention, fellowship, union, conference, alliance et als. For an illustration of this see the article "List of Baptist sub-denominations," Wikipedia.com.

¹⁸Also to be noted is the similar extensive growth in North America of Methodists and Presbyterians through these movements as well.

¹⁹The Missionary Movement of the past two centuries has been closely linked and influential upon other trends

beginning in the 1800s and continuing strong into today. In 1814 the Triennial Convention²⁰ was founded in Philadelphia among Baptists in the United States for the purpose of spreading the gospel across the colonies and into the rapidly expanding westward movement of settlers. Several seminaries and Baptist universities came out of the desire to send out trained leaders for doing missionary work.

The combination of the great awakenings and of the missions movement together produced substantial growth among Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic in the English speaking world. And this growth laid the foundation for the expansion of Baptist church into the rest of the world.

Today Baptists number somewhere between 105 and 135 million people around the world with over 220,000 congregations. In the United States, one of every five citizens of the US belongs to a Baptist church of some kind. The vast majority of Baptists are a part of one of the five largest groups of Baptists: the Southern Baptist Convention (16.3 million members); the National Baptist Convention, USA (7 million members); the National Baptist Convention of America, Inc. (5 million members); and the Progressive National Baptist Convention (2.5 million). Baptists in the UK number upwards of 200,000 in approximately 3,000 churches. These are scattered across the Baptist Union of Scotland, the Baptist Union of Wales, and the Baptist Union of Great Britain which are the largest groups of Baptists and who work together in the Fellowship of British Baptists and the BMS World Mission group.

Non-English Speaking World:

Europe. Out of Baptist life in Great Britain came not only the spread of Baptists in India but also the expansion of Baptist churches on the European continent. A German sailor named Johann Gerhard Oncken found Christ in London in 1820 and returned to Hamburg to begin spreading the gospel message on the European continent. By 1826 he had adopted Baptist views on believer's baptism and was himself baptized by Barnas Sears, a Baptist preacher and professor from the US, on April 22, 1834. Oncken formed a Baptist church in the Hamburg area that grew rapidly, and other Baptist churches were started. In 1849 the Union of the Baptist Congregations was formed, and in 1880 a training school for preachers was established in Hamburg. Through his ministry he established over 280 Baptist churches and 1,222 preaching stations all over Europe, including over 170 churches in the Scandinavian and Slavic countries. He well deserves the titles "Father of German Baptists" and "Apostle of European Baptists" which have been used in reference to him. Today the Bund Evangelisch-freikirchlicher Gemeinden Deutschland, comprised of both Baptists and Brethren churches, numbers some 828 churches with nearly 84,000 members.

The European Baptist Federation, the European wide umbrella organization for most Baptist groups in Europe, is made up of 51 Baptist groups with around 12,000 churches and 800,000 members. Baptists in Russia are one of the largest groups of Baptists in Europe with over half a million members. Oncken's labors have produced an abundant harvest.

Africa. Largely but not exclusively through the missionary efforts of the Southern Baptist Convention in the US, Baptists have grown explosively throughout the sub-Saharan countries of Africa. The All Africa Baptist Fellowship, the umbrella organization for most African Baptist groups, numbers over five million members in about twenty national conventions with the Nigerian Baptist Convention being the largest with three million member. Very rapid growth continues to take place.

India to Asia. Through missionary efforts following the second World War especially, but reaching back to the efforts of Southern Baptists in China during the late 1800s, Baptist churches have grown extensively so that Baptist congregations and organizations of Baptist churches can be found in virtually every country from India through Japan. Baptists in Korea are the largest group with approximately a million members. The largest Baptist church in the world is located in Seoul Korea with over 50,000 members. Baptists in India today number over two million with almost fifty percent of the population in the Northeastern region being Baptist.

Latin and South America. Mostly through missionary activity from North America almost two million Baptists can be found in Central and South America. The oldest work and one of the larger groups are Brazilian Baptists. Most of the Central and South American Baptist conventions have their own missionary sending agencies and send missionaries to Spanish and Portuguese speaking people around the world.

Caribbean. The nations and territories of the West Indies and the non-Latin countries of Guyana, Suriname, and French Guinea which border the Caribbean on the northern coast of South America have been in Protestant Christianity as well. The formation of missionary sending agencies, often across denominational lines, has brought Protestants closer together in ecumenical concerns. The Bible translation trends of the past two centuries is directly related to the sending of missionaries into non-English speaking countries with translations in the native languages becoming necessary. The Biblical Archaeology movement parallels the Missions Movements historically and is also closely linked.

²⁰The name Triennial was adopted because it convention met every three years, rather than annually.

a fruitful ground for planting Baptist churches since the late 1800s. Several thousand churches and a very large number of Baptist Christians can be found throughout these countries.

Middle East. Although small in size and few in number Baptist churches can be found in most of the countries of the Middle East. The First Baptist Church of Bagdad Iraq had over 200 worshipers in the Sunday service the first of October 2009.

Through the tireless labors of countless numbers of devoted believers in Christ and with the blessing of Almighty God, Baptist in four centuries have grown from a handful of people in 1609 to one of the largest Protestant Christian groups in the world today.

Diversity / Unity

The final topic I want to touch on this evening is the tension between diversity and unity in Baptist life. The passion for religious freedom coupled with the belief in the priesthood of every believer who makes him / her directly accountable to God for understanding the scriptures has produced great diversity of belief and practice among the many groups of Baptists. A few Baptists worship on Saturday rather than on Sunday. Some Baptists wash the feet of fellow believers as a third church ordinance after baptism and communion. This is but a sprinkling of the diversity among Baptists.

In the midst of all this variety, however, a few common beliefs hold Baptists today in basic unity of belief and practice.

Unity:

The Confessions of Faith discussed above have played an important unifying roll. But the core beliefs that hold Baptists together have sometimes been described through an acrostic:

- ▶ **B**iblical authority (Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- ▶ **A**utonomy of the local church (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 6:1-3)
- ▶ **P**riesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5-9; 1 Timothy 5)
- ▶ **T**wo ordinances (believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper) (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Cor. 11:23-32)
- ▶ **I**ndividual soul liberty (Romans 14:5-12)
- ▶ **S**eparation of Church and State (Matthew 22:15-22)
- ▶ **T**wo offices of the church (pastor-elder and deacon) (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1-2)

In general, these beliefs will be found among most all Baptist groups.

Baptist historian Walter Shurden has also contended that "Four Freedoms" will help identify Baptists in their uniqueness from most other Christian groups.²¹ These are

- ▶ **Soul freedom:** the soul is competent before God, and capable of making decisions in matters of faith without coercion or compulsion by any larger religious or civil body
- ▶ **Church freedom:** freedom of the local church from outside interference, whether government or civilian (subject only to the law where it does not interfere with the religious teachings and practices of the church)
- ▶ **Bible freedom:** the individual is free to interpret the Bible for himself or herself, using the best tools of scholarship and biblical study available to the individual
- ▶ **Religious freedom:** the individual is free to choose whether to practice their religion, another religion, or no religion; Separation of church and state is often called the "civil corollary" of religious freedom

Diversity:

Some of the things Baptists tend to disagree about include women in ministry, biblical eschatology, the correct translation of scripture, how missionaries should be supported, who may participate in communion services, the drinking of alcohol - to name a few items.

Sometimes these and other issues have become so divisive that Baptist churches have withdrawn from one group to form another with more common view points. This unfortunate reality is a part of the history of who Baptists are.

And yet in the midst of all this God continues to enable Baptists have a strong witness of the gospel and to be anxious to help others discover the blessings of God through personal faith commitment to Christ.

I was born into a Baptist family 68 years ago. I have been active in Baptist church life through all these years. Although at times critical of the imperfections of Baptists, I remain grateful to God for the spiritual heritage they have given to me over a lifetime.

²¹Shurden, Walter B. *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993