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CONFESSIONALISM AND COOPERATION IN  
THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT, 1609–1925

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Anthony David Wolfe  
December 2024

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THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT, 1609–1925

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Dedicated to Southern Baptists, γάρ ἐσμεν συνεργοί θεοῦ.

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mornings your words of encouragement, voices of affirmation, and exhortation to pursue this work were the inspiration I needed to persevere. May the findings herein and their corresponding principles enrich, enlarge, and empower our Great Commission cooperation for generations to come, until the long-anticipated return of Christ our King.  
*ἀμήν ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ*

Tony Wolfe

Columbia, South Carolina

December 2024

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Southern Baptists are in a critical, pivotal, historical moment of confessionalism and cooperation. They must recover the force of cooperation as a Baptist doctrine, and to this end they must more clearly comprehend and appreciate their historic understanding and expressions of that doctrine. For almost two thousand years, local autonomous churches have partnered together to reach communities, regions, and the world for Christ. These partnerships have included the sharing and sharpening of ministry leaders, representative collaboration on theological issues, local and global humanitarian efforts, church planting, and much more. Lee Rutland Scarborough, pioneer of a new denominationalism for Southern Baptists in the early-mid twentieth century, believed there was a clearly taught “doctrine of cooperation” in the New Testament which “extends from the individual of a local church to the co-operation of churches of like faith and practice with each other in carrying out the Gospel program of Christ in world-wide redemption.”<sup>1</sup> For Scarborough, a church’s cooperation with others of like faith and practice was a biblical expectation—an expectation both taught and modeled in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> His influence on a new paradigm for inter-congregational financial

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<sup>1</sup> Lee Rutland Scarborough, “Article 19 On Co-Operation by L. R. Scarborough,” The L. R. Scarborough Digital Materials Collection, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, <http://cdm16969.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16969coll11/id/1133>.

<sup>2</sup> Scarborough writes, “The doctrine of church-cooperation” is “so clearly taught in the New Testament both in the commands of Christ and the example of the apostles as they were led by the Holy Spirit.” Lee Rutland Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 6, no. 2 (April 1922), quoted in *Southwestern Journal of Theology: Baptists and Unity, Lee Rutland Scarborough, 1870–1945* 51, no. 1 (Fall 2008), 21.

cooperation within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is not to be underestimated.<sup>3</sup> On the foundation of Scarborough's influence and the influence of others, Southern Baptists have pooled their financial resources for Great Commission advance for almost one-hundred years, investing more than \$20 billion through the Cooperative Program. This Southern Baptist missions-giving mechanism is built on a collective consciousness toward inter-congregational cooperation for Great Commission advance. However, the denomination is at a critical historical moment when it comes to Cooperative Program giving. The need for cooperative funding grows but the funds themselves diminish, as does the number of cooperating churches.<sup>4</sup>

Baptist cooperation did not begin with the 1925 Cooperative Program, just as the doctrine of cooperation did not begin with the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message. From their earliest days, Baptists came confessing and Baptists came cooperating. Inter-congregational cooperation between Baptist churches has never been primarily a matter of pragmatic necessity or regional solidarity. Since the beginning of the Baptist movement, cooperation for evangelism and missions has been a hallmark doctrinal tenet stated, shared, shown, and sewn among the churches. It is not a doctrine to be forced upon autonomous churches, but rather, one for which "in the spirit of love we can persuade," as Sunday School Board Secretary I. J. Van Ness wrote in *The Baptist Spirit at the turn of the twentieth century*.<sup>5</sup> A decade later, L. R. Scarborough articulated the

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<sup>3</sup> Glenn Carson suggests that as the General Director of the \$75 Million Campaign, Scarborough became the spearhead of an innovative ideology. The Campaign, which ran from 1919 to 1924, served as the forerunner and model of the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program. . . . The Cooperative Program, initiated in 1925, was a natural result of the very successful 75 Million Campaign. Scarborough's leadership helped Southern Baptists invent a new method of gathering and distributing funds for missionary, educational, and benevolent causes. (Glenn Thomas Carson, *Calling Out the Called: The Life and Work of Lee Rutland Scarborough* [Austin: Eakin, 1996], 53)

<sup>4</sup> See The Great Commission Task Force of the SBC, "Report of the Great Commission Resurgence Evaluation Taskforce," June 2024, 8–11, <https://thebaptistpaper.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Final-GCR-TR-Evaluation-May-13-2024.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> I. J. Van Ness, *The Baptist Spirit* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1914), 118.

Baptist position with convictional clarity: “The doctrine of church-cooperation [is] so clearly taught in the New Testament both in the commands of Christ and the example of the apostles as they were led by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>6</sup>

The New Testament records several instances of autonomous churches cooperating for evangelistic and missional purposes. In Acts 11:27–30, upon the prophet Agabus’s prediction of a severe famine in Rome, each of the Antiochian disciples determined, according to his or her ability, to *διακονίαν πέμψαι* (“send relief/ministry”) to their brothers and sisters in Judea by collecting funds through the Antioch church and sending them by way of Barnabas and Saul to the church in Jerusalem. *διακονίαν* in this context is to be understood as an act of service/giving that implies its result—ministration.<sup>7</sup> In other words, what they were sending was meaningful ministry in the immediate form of cooperative financial contribution. Romans 15:24–25, 31 further demonstrates inter-congregational financial cooperation; the Apostle Paul wrote that he hoped to *προπεμφθῆναι* (“be brought on my way”) by the church in Rome for his forthcoming mission to Spain.<sup>8</sup> In 1 Corinthians 16:1–4, he instructed the Corinthian church to take up a weekly offering as a *λογίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους* (“collection for the saints”) to be entrusted to Paul upon his visit so that he might pool their contributions with the contributions of other churches in his regional cooperative missions funding model. Reflecting on this passage, Scarborough insisted the collection was not only to be used for benevolence in Jerusalem but would also “help in the support of others of Paul’s

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<sup>6</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” 4.

<sup>7</sup> Horatio Hackett, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, American Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1882), 142.

<sup>8</sup> Further, in Rom 15:25–26, Paul described his purpose in Jerusalem as to “*διακονῶν τοῖς ἁγίοις*” (“to serve the saints”) by delivering the financial contributions from Macedonia and Achaia. The same language of service is used by Luke in Acts 11:27–30—*διακονίαν πέμψαι* as above noted. For both Paul and Luke, cooperative financial contribution was a demonstration of inter-congregational ministry/service.



missionary enterprises.”<sup>9</sup> Southern Baptist leaders Chad Brand and David Hankins agreed with Scarborough’s interpretation almost a century later.<sup>10</sup> Second Corinthians 11:8–9 and Philippians 1:5, 4:15–20 demonstrate the Macedonian churches’ cooperation in funding Paul’s Corinthian ministry and the Philippian church’s ongoing cooperation in funding Paul’s missionary journeys.

Cooperation between New Testament churches undoubtedly included cooperative missions funding. However, it also included confessional solidarity and contextual doctrinal counsel. Paul concludes his letter to the Colossians by instructing the church to have the letter read among the Laodiceans and to read the letter written to the Laodiceans as well (Col 4:16). When the Jerusalem church heard about the movement of the gospel among the Gentiles in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to encourage and instruct the young church (Acts 11:19–26). Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the Antioch church to evangelize and plant churches in the region (Acts 13:1–3). Upon the evangelistic and church planting growth of the Gentile mission, doctrinal questions were settled by the counsel of the Jerusalem church which wrote and sent a letter containing basic standards of faith and practice that would serve as a foundation for the doctrinal and practical health of the Gentile churches and ongoing cooperation between the churches (Acts 15:1–35). Later, when the issue resurfaced, instead of tightening or enlarging the doctrinal parameters of cooperation, leaders in the Jerusalem church reaffirmed their previous letter and the doctrinal parameters therein (Acts 21:25). Paul was sure to clarify and guard the simple gospel as he planted churches and strengthened them (1 Cor 15:1–11; Gal 1:6–9). Noticing the threat of sexual immorality and doctrinal error within the churches, Jude also found “it necessary to write, appealing [to the churches] . . . to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all” (Jude 1:3, ESV). The churches cooperated

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<sup>9</sup> Lee Rutland Scarborough, *Christ’s Militant Kingdom: A Study in the Trial Triumphant* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), 171.

<sup>10</sup> Chad Owen Brand and David E. Hankins, *One Sacred Effort: The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 67.

not only to pool their financial resources, but in doctrinal confession and contextualized doctrinal counsel.

Recent academic and popular conversations around confessions and cooperation highlight the significance of the doctrine of cooperation and the need for clarity in its biblical and historical foundations. The contemporary conversation will be further explored in the “Significance” portion of this introductory chapter. When all is considered, a contemporary need is evident for a clear articulation of the biblical and historical doctrine of cooperation among autonomous Baptist churches, especially in the Southern Baptist Convention. Cooperation is not a one-hundred-year-old fabricated denominational dogma. Neither is cooperation a pragmatic organizational end to a common means. Cooperation is a biblical doctrine rooted in New Testament theology and confessed and demonstrated among Baptist churches throughout the history of the Baptist movement.

### **Thesis**

What historical evidence exists in support of the doctrine of cooperation within the Baptist movement, and how have Baptist confessions contributed to its development and expression over time? This research demonstrates that Baptists throughout history have held a moral and theological obligation to associate and cooperate with other churches on the basis of shared biblical convictions. They viewed evangelism and missions as central components of that obligation, expressing their convictions through confessions, associational activity, missionary organization, and correspondence as the doctrine of cooperation was realized among them.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms will be used throughout the dissertation. This section clarifies the author’s intended meaning when each term is employed. The terms to be defined are: evangelistic and missional cooperation, confession, confessional, denomination, Baptist thought, and inter-congregational.

## Evangelistic and Missional Cooperation

For Baptists, the compulsion to cooperate with likeminded Baptists—whether individually, inter-congregationally, or inter-organizationally—is undergirded by the central components of evangelism and missions. Evangelism, as Timothy K. Beougher explains, is “the compassionate sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ with lost people, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of bringing them to Christ as Savior and Lord, that they in turn might share him with others.”<sup>11</sup> Missions is differentiated from evangelism, as Denny Spitters and Matthew Ellison clarify, in that it more appropriately refers to “the work of the Church in reaching across cultural, religious, ethnic, and geographic barriers to advance the work of making disciples of all nations.”<sup>12</sup> This understanding of “missions” can encapsulate several related terms including “mission” and “missional.”<sup>13</sup> The Great Commission (Matt 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–18; John 20:21; Acts 1:8) articulates the shared relationship between evangelism and missions for every Christian and every church.<sup>14</sup> It is for this purpose that Christians are *συνεργός* (“coworkers”) in the world (1 Cor 3:9; Phil 4:3; 3 John 1:8). Throughout the dissertation, the phrase “evangelistic and missional cooperation” may be used interchangeably with “Great Commission cooperation,” “inter-congregational cooperation,” or “cooperation” for short. Upon every occurrence, the researcher intends to direct the reader’s attention to the evangelistic and missional obligations that undergird the unified, cooperative Christian work.

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<sup>11</sup> Timothy K. Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism: Sharing the Gospel with Compassion and Conviction* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Denny Spitters and Matthew Ellison, *When Everything Is Missions* (Orlando: Bottomline Media, 2017), 37.

<sup>13</sup> Spitters and Ellison, *When Everything Is Missions*, 36.

<sup>14</sup> For the earliest expression of this concept in Baptist thought, see John Smyth’s 1609 letter to “Mr. Ric. Bernard,” in John Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth: Tercentenary Edition for the Baptist Historical Society with Notes and Biography by W. T. Whitley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1915), 2:420.

## Confession

A confession, in the sense of Christian history, is a declaration of faith that usually includes organized expression of Christian orthodoxy, denominational distinctives, and contemporary doctrinal confirmations. As Donald Fairbain and Ryan Reeves have suggested, a well-worded confession rooted in biblical reference assists disciples of Jesus in understanding and rehearsing “the grammar of the Christian faith” from generation to generation.<sup>15</sup> When categorical differences between creeds and confessions are considered, Fairbain and Reeves agree with Chad Van Dixhorn who distinguishes between the two in that creeds, historically, are shorter and more universal in scope while confessions “say more,” building upon historic creeds to speak to contemporary issues in biblical principle with a more localized audience.<sup>16</sup> Some influential Baptists throughout history, such as Thomas Monck, Charles Jenkins, and Benajah H. Carroll, seem to have used the words “creed” and “confession” interchangeably.<sup>17</sup> Others insisted upon sharp contrasts between creeds and confessions, mainly arguing that undue authority has often been placed upon the former throughout Christian history within systems of ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>18</sup> Some, especially in

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<sup>15</sup> Donald Fairbain and Ryan M. Reeves, *The Story of Creeds and Confessions: Tracing the Development of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 4.

<sup>16</sup> Chad Van Dixhorn, ed., *Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 7–9; Fairbain and Reeves, *The Story of Creeds and Confessions*, 7–8.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Monck was the primary author of the 1679 General Baptist “An Orthodox Creed,” which was subtitled, “Or a Protestant Confession of Faith.” See William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2011), 298–300. Charles A. Jenkins, ed., *Baptist Doctrines: Being an Exposition, in a Series of Essays by Representative Baptist Ministers, of the Distinctive Points of Baptist Faith and Practice* (St. Louis: Clancy R. Barns, 1881), iii. Benajah H. Carroll and Calvin Goodspeed, “A Commentary on the New Hampshire Confession of Faith,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 51, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 134–35.

<sup>18</sup> See Thomas Armitage, “Baptist Faith and Practice,” in *Baptist Doctrines: Being an Exposition, in a Series of Essays by Representative Baptist Ministers, of the Distinctive Points of Baptist Faith and Practice*, edited by Charles A. Jenkins (St. Louis: Clancy R. Barns, 1881), 34. For more regarding the historical Baptist thought on creeds and confessions, see Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South 1785–1900* (New York: Oxford University, 1997), 108–12.

nineteenth-century America, were averse to the thought of Baptists adopting either.<sup>19</sup> Even William W. Barnes, leading Baptist historian of the early-mid twentieth century, took issue with the adoption of a confession among a convention of Baptists, arguing less than a decade after its passage that the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925) was adopted unnecessarily and hastily in an attempt at denominational “centralization.”<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, confessions have been an important part of the Baptist story for more than four centuries. Throughout this dissertation, “confession” will refer to an individual, congregational, or inter-congregational statement of faith by Baptists. Herein, confessions are distinguished both from historic Christian creeds (such as the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, or the Chalcedonian Creed) and from less comprehensive statements of Baptist doctrine (such as John Griffith’s “Six Principles” or E. Y. Mullins’ six “Axioms”).

## **Confessional**

Dialogue around “confessionalism” is increasingly popular among Baptists in the third decade of the twenty-first century. Some might say that Baptists are a “confessional” people. Others might say that they are “more confessional” or “less confessional” in their Baptist inter-congregational preferences. The word “confessional” is shaping contemporary conversation around cooperation, but its definition among Baptists is somewhat vague. For the purpose of this dissertation, for a Baptist body (whether a church, association, convention, or otherwise) to be confessional is for it to give definite place to a confession or multiple confessions in its theological foundation and organizational structure. In other words, “To be in some way affected, guided, guarded, represented, and/or regulated by a confession of faith.”<sup>21</sup> Different forms or

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<sup>19</sup> Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, 1857), 15.

<sup>20</sup> William W. Barnes, *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology: The Southern Baptist Convention* (Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill, 1934), 8.

<sup>21</sup> Tony Wolfe, “Toward a Shared Southern Baptist Lexicon,” *The Baptist Review*, February 23, 2024, <https://www.thebaptistreview.com/editorial/toward-a-shared-southern-baptist-lexicon>.

levels of confessionalism may be perceived in Baptist cooperation, but to be confessional is for a Baptist body, in some definite way, to give place to a confession or multiple confessions in theological foundation and organizational structure.

## **Denomination**

The Baptist movement is not a “denomination” in the same sense of the word as Methodism, Presbyterianism, Anglicanism, Lutheranism, Catholicism, and others. However, to call the Baptist movement a “denomination” is not incorrect on a terminological level. Technically, a “denomination” is a subset of some whole, and in this sense the Baptist movement is, as the researcher has written elsewhere, a “division (denomination) of the larger evangelical tradition.”<sup>22</sup> The SBC’s original constitution declared the movement a “Baptist Denomination,” and that same language is retained in the current constitution.<sup>23</sup> Popular conversation in current Southern Baptist life often includes the categorical exclusion that the SBC “is a convention, not a denomination.”<sup>24</sup> But this may be a semantical argument more than a substantive one.

The Baptist movement is a denomination, but that terminological label does not require the superimposition of either organized ecclesiastical hierarchy or confessional subscription. L. R. Scarborough once clarified, “There is no such thing as ‘The Baptist Church’ meaning an ecclesiastical unit composed of a group of Baptist Churches. You can rightly say ‘The Methodist Church’ or the ‘Roman Catholic Church’ in such a sense, but not ‘The Baptist Church.’ You can correctly say ‘The Baptist Denomination,’ when you speak of the Baptists, composed of all the churches of a

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<sup>22</sup> Wolfe, “Toward a Shared Southern Baptist Lexicon.”

<sup>23</sup> *Annual of the 1845 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1845), 3.

<sup>24</sup> For example, see Jay Adkins, “Who Are We? A Question of SBC Identity. Can We Please Get This Right?,” *SBC Voices*, March 14, 2023, <https://sbcvoices.com/who-are-we-a-question-of-sbc-identity-can-we-please-get-this-right/>.

section.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, the Baptist denomination is a family of Baptist people covenanted together in voluntarily cooperating Baptist churches, but it is not an ecclesiological superstructure. “To be a convention is not mutually exclusive from being a denomination,” the researcher has written elsewhere; “however, it is important to remember that the Southern Baptist Convention has always operated with a bottom-up governing structure (what many mean by ‘convention’) rather than a top-down governing structure (what many mean by ‘denomination’).”<sup>26</sup>

### **Baptist Thought**

While congregational autonomy demands that no single Baptist is capable of speaking for all Baptists, cooperation between them has historically included the mutual sharpening of one another through theological books, newspaper articles, public statements of conviction, personal correspondence, and other communications. The thoughts of Baptist influencers, theologians, and pastors throughout the centuries have given shape and substance to a body of information and conviction that may or may not be representative of the whole, or of successive generations. Throughout the dissertation, “Baptist thought” is used not to qualify a universally held body of truth, but to categorize the theological and denominational assumptions, convictions, and declarations of leading Baptist figures whose thoughts on certain topics either represent categories of conviction or challenge their contemporary status quo (such as Thomas Grantham’s 1678 *Cristianismus Primitivus* or James M. Carroll’s 1931 *The Trail of Blood*).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Lee R. Scarborough, “The Independence and Inter-Dependence of Baptist Churches by L. R. Scarborough,” The L. R. Scarborough Digital Materials Collection, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, <http://cdm16969.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16969coll11/id/1124>, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Wolfe, “Toward a Shared Southern Baptist Lexicon.”

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus: Or, The Ancient Christian Religion*, ed. Richard Groves (London: Printed for Francis Smith at the Sign of the Elephant and Castle in Cornhill near the Royal-Exchange, 1678). James M. Carroll, *The Trail of Blood* (Lexington, KY: Ashland Avenue Baptist Church, 1931).

## Inter-Congregational

In his 2009 dissertation, Michael Waldrop employed the term “interchurch” to denote this same idea.<sup>28</sup> Waldrop’s terminology is not preferred by this researcher because L. R. Scarborough, only six years before the authoring and adoption of the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message*, utilized the term negatively by synonymizing it with the Christian Union movement which threatened to hinder Baptist doctrinal distinctives rather than clarify them.<sup>29</sup> Neither is the term “interdenominational” in mind. Baptists have historically cooperated with other denominations, and their *Baptist Faith and Message* in every iteration has confessed the goodness and usefulness of such cooperation between denominations.<sup>30</sup> It is true that throughout Baptist history, sub-sets of the Baptist denomination have divided the larger movement into microcosmic units

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Wayne Waldrop, “Toward a Theology of Cooperation: A Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Examination of the Compatibility of Cooperation and Autonomy among Local Baptist Churches” (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 2–3, 60, 64, 90. H. Leon McBeth, in a 1995 article also employed the term “inter-church.” See H. Leon McBeth, “Cooperation and Crisis as Shapers of Southern Baptist Identity,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 30, no. 3 (July 1995): 36; H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 20.

<sup>29</sup> Scarborough writes,

I inclose (sic) a letter which I have from the Brother in Louisiana about whom I wrote you on the Interchurch World movement. You can see from the inclosed literature that their heads are set on disturbing the Baptists. They have a complete, well worked out system, and are going to do their best to get Baptists in. I think it necessary for you to say some other very strong words in the paper along this line. . . . You can see from the inclosed literature what they propose. They are going to crown Baptists more and more. I am wondering if it wouldn’t be good for you to write somebody in each State asking the State to pass resolutions about this movement and have it discussed in each Convention. We are going to have to stir our people on it, or they are going to win over some of them. (Lee R. Scarborough, “1919/10/23 Correspondence—L. R. Scarborough to J. B. Gambrell” [Fort Worth, TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019])

Scarborough was asking Gambrell, then president of the convention, to leverage his voice to more directly oppose the Christian Union movement concerning which the two of them, together with many other committee members, voiced clear opposition at the 1919 SBC. See James B. Gambrell et. al., “Report of Committee on the President’s Address and Related Matters,” in *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1919* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1919), 110–13.

<sup>30</sup> The *Baptist Faith and Message* article on Cooperation reads, “It is permissible and desirable as between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such co-operation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and his Word as revealed in the New Testament.” This exact phrase concludes the *Baptist Faith and Message* article on cooperation in every iteration—1925, 1963, and 2000. See “Comparison Chart,” Southern Baptist Convention, accessed August 23, 2024, <https://bfm.sbc.net/comparison-chart/>.



(such as the General Baptists versus the Particular Baptists, the Six Principle Baptists versus the General Baptists, the Landmark Baptists versus the Missionary Baptists, etc.). However, for the most part such instances may be considered inner-denominational rather than inter-denominational. As for the term “interdenominational,” the Committee on the President’s Address and Related Matters at the 1919 SBC favored neither the word nor the concept it denoted if requiring “Romish hierarchy” that would be both “cumbrous and hurtful” was necessarily componential.<sup>31</sup> For some, “inter-church” and “inter-denominational” are synonymous. For example, when Christian historian Stephen Neill writes of “inter-Church cooperation” he means “inter-denominational” cooperation.<sup>32</sup> Benajah H. Carroll, B. R. White, Slayden A. Yarbrough, and D. Scott Hildreth prefer the term “inter-congregational” to describe the relationship and interactivity between likeminded Baptist churches for Great Commission cooperation.<sup>33</sup> Hildreth’s definition of “inter-congregational” highlights voluntary “oneness” in Great Commission engagement: “Local churches voluntarily choosing to join with other local churches as expression of ecclesiological oneness and as a means of fully participating in the single mission of God as He works through his people to redeem the nations and restore the creation from the

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<sup>31</sup> Gambrell et. al., “Report of Committee on the President’s Address and Related Matters,” 112–13.

<sup>32</sup> See Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 2nd ed. (Suffolk, England: Penguin, 1990), 214, 241. Perhaps when non-Baptists write of “inter-church,” they conflate Baptists with other Christian denominations, in the sense that there is a Methodist Church, a Presbyterian Church, an Anglican Church, a Roman Catholic Church, etc. But it may not be said that there is a “Baptist Church.” Rather, there are many Baptist churches. The distinction is in inter-congregational governance. Ecclesiastical hierarchy is essential to the denominational identity of others but antithetical to Baptists.

<sup>33</sup> Benajah H. Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1901), 29. D. Scott Hildreth, “God on Mission: *Missio Dei* as a Theological Motivation for Ecclesial Cooperation with Special Attention Given to Southern Baptist Cooperative Efforts” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 4, xii, 4, 11, 110, 180. Although Hildreth also uses the term “inter-church” synonymously with “inter-congregational. Hildreth, “God on Mission,” 22, 31. Slayden A. Yarbrough, “The Origin of Baptist Associations among the English Particular Baptists,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 23, no. 2 (April 1988): 14. B. R. White, ed., *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660: Part 1. South Wales and the Midlands* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1971), 2, 21.

effects of the Fall.”<sup>34</sup> Hildreth’s definition is adopted by this researcher. Throughout the dissertation, “inter-congregational” will be employed rather than “interchurch.”

### **Methodology**

Cooperation is not a matter of pragmatic necessity for Baptists. It is a doctrinal compulsion clearly evidenced throughout the historical record. Through the pages of this dissertation, the historical record of the Baptist movement is told with primary attention given to an ever-present and gradually maturing Baptist doctrine of cooperation. Herein, the story of Baptist cooperation is written as an analytical historical narrative that traces the doctrine in Baptist thought and activity from its earliest days until its first formal expression in the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925).

The beginning of the Baptist movement is situated in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1609, with John Smyth’s se-baptism and corresponding establishment of a credobaptized church. There, the moral and theological obligation of Baptist cooperative conviction was born in the first days of the Baptist movement. Smyth’s confession, together with the opposing 1611 confession of his friend and congregant Thomas Helwys, set the stage for an ongoing relationship between Baptist confessions and cooperation. From this point of Baptist beginnings, the argument from seventeenth-century English Baptist history will continue through the commonly distinguished General and Particular streams, evaluating, among others, the *Confession of Faith Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists* (First London Baptist Confession, 1644), *A Confession of the Faith of Several Churches of Christ* (Somerset Confession, 1656), the *Standard Confession* (1660/78), and the *Second London Confession* (1677/89), along with relevant associational correspondence and sociopolitical historical commentary. The developing doctrine of cooperation will be examined as well as the developing relationship between confessionalism and cooperation within the Baptist movement.

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<sup>34</sup> Hildreth, “God on Mission,” 183.

Next, the research will progress from seventeenth-century England to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America, when the Baptist movement began in the New World. This section will primarily focus on Baptist cooperation and confessionalism in America from 1707 to 1845. Emphasis will be placed upon Elias Benjamin Keach's involvement in the formation of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, along with his confession of faith that was first mentioned by the association in 1724 and formally adopted in 1742. Argument for the thesis will continue through the examination of selected associational records and historical commentary, demonstrating evangelistic and missional cooperation among Baptists in America through associationalism and into the modern missions movement. This section will also include careful examination of the beginning of the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions ("Triennial Convention") in 1814, the beginning of Baptist state conventions in 1821 in South Carolina and 1822 in Georgia, the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (1833), and the development of a distinctively Baptist consciousness toward a confessionally cooperative missiology in the New World.

Continuing, the author will survey the Southern Baptist relationship between confessionalism and cooperation toward its cumulative moment in May of 1925, in Memphis, Tennessee. The constitution of the SBC in 1845 will begin this section of the research, and the adoption of a distinctively Southern Baptist confession of faith, including an article "On Cooperation," will mark its culmination. State Baptist papers, actions of the Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board, and correspondence between significant Baptist theologians and leaders of the period such as Lee R. Scarborough and Edgar Y. Mullins will be evaluated in discovery of the maturing doctrine of cooperation together with its confessional and methodological implications. This section of the research will end with the culmination of the relationship between cooperation and confessionalism evidenced in the adoption of the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925).

Social, political, and cultural historical factors also played a major role in the formalization of the doctrine of cooperation among Baptists. Throughout the course of the dissertation, historical accounts will be enlarged by the examination of the religiopolitical backdrop of seventeenth-century England, the Great Awakening, the modern missions movement, the first World War, the Christian Union movement, the influence of the \$75 Million Campaign, and the socio-cultural settings of seventeenth-century England through early twentieth-century America. In these sections of the research, non-religious resources will be examined, including several general and specific histories of the English people, certain events in history, and political and governmental documents surrounding crucial moments in the progress of the Baptist doctrine of cooperation; presidential biographies and autobiographies; secular and religious newspapers; Parliament records; War commentaries; and other firsthand historical accounts of individuals throughout the duration of the time period under review. These resources will help establish the research in the historical contexts during which Baptist cooperation initiated and progressed. This broader historical setting forms what James Leo Garrett and Michael Wohlfarth have called “the matrix” of influencing factors surrounding the specific research agenda.<sup>35</sup>

As the research approaches its climax in the articulation of the doctrine of cooperation in the *Baptist Faith and Message*, the influence of Lee R. Scarborough on this article of faith will become evident. So, the final chapter will include an explanation and evaluation of Scarborough’s “Triangular Doctrine of Cooperation.”<sup>36</sup> His writings, as well as other Baptist theologians’ writings, both historical and contemporary, will be surveyed for cross-reference and examination.

The research will conclude with several assertions of contemporary application.

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<sup>35</sup> James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 2009), 1, 6–7. Also Matthew D. Wohlfarth, “Baptist Origins Revisited: A Study of the Dial influence of English Separatism and Dutch Mennonite Theology Upon Seventeenth-Century English Baptists” (PhD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), 50–51.

<sup>36</sup> Lee Rutland Scarborough, *Endued to Win* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1922), 40–41.

If the doctrine of cooperation within the history of confessionalism is a worthy, established Baptist certainty, what are Baptists of current and future generations to do? What, exactly, is the appropriate relationship between confessionalism and cooperation in the SBC? Principles will be proposed, suggestions for further research will be offered, and the dissertation will conclude.

### **Survey of Scholarly Literature**

Resources abound which provide delineation of and commentary on historic Baptist doctrine and cooperation. Because of the extent of the period in question, scope and space limit the research to those sources of primary relevance to the thesis. Another limiting factor is the narrowness of the thesis itself, restricting relevance mostly to those resources which record, delineate, illustrate, or contextualize the doctrine of cooperation as is evident and traceable through confessions, associational activity, missionary organization, and correspondence from 1609 to 1925. What follows is a brief survey of relevant resources, significant research already completed by others in the field, and how this dissertation finds its place at the scholarly table.

Hundreds of Baptist confessions—written and/or adopted by individuals, churches, associations, and conventions—were written during the period under examination, all of which add value and depth to the discussion. However, while numerous Baptist confessions form the foundation for the research, several receive special consideration as they summarize Baptist thought and highlight the doctrine of cooperation, either in wording or purpose. John Smith's *Short Confession of Faith* (1609/10) along with Thomas Helwys's *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam* (1611) are treated as the first distinctly Baptist confessions, having profound effect not only upon several expressed doctrines within the Baptist movement but also upon the rhythms of inter-congregational cooperation for the decades

and centuries that followed.<sup>37</sup> *The London Confession* (1644), *The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations* (1651), *The Midland Association Confession* (1655), *The Standard Confession* (1660), *The Second London Confession* (1677/89), *The Philadelphia Confession* (1742), *The New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (1833), and *The Baptist Faith and Message* (1925) are all given particular attention throughout the course of the dissertation as their texts and their usage among and between the churches demonstrate and/or articulate the doctrine of cooperation.

Much research exists on these confessions and on Baptist confessionalism at large. William Lumpkin and Bill Leonard's *Baptist Confessions of Faith* not only compiles the text of these confessions and others, but also provides helpful, brief commentary on their historical context and the value of each to the larger Baptist body of faith and practice.<sup>38</sup> More contemporarily, *The Confessing Baptist*, edited by Robert Gonzales Jr. and published in 2021, argues that a renewed creedalism and confessionalism is the way of the future for Baptist churches and organizations.<sup>39</sup> Throughout the book it is supposed that cooperation among seventeenth-century Baptists, for example, required living with a charitable tension between Baptist churches sharing a confession of faith but allowing for deviation on some points within that confession for the larger purpose of a unified missional and evangelistic cooperation.<sup>40</sup> The whole of Gonzales's work surveys notable Baptist confessions throughout history and includes

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<sup>37</sup> For example, Wohlfarth suggests that Helwys's confession mediates "the tension" between Calvinism and Arminianism in the era. He further labels Helwys's position the "in-between" position that became "normative for English Baptists during the seventeenth century." Wohlfarth, "Baptist Origins Revisited," 224–25.

<sup>38</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Luke Walker, "Need for Creed," in *The Confessing Baptist: Essays on the Use of Creeds in Baptist Faith & Life*, ed. Robert Gonzales Jr. (Conway, AR: Free Grace, 2021), 8.

<sup>40</sup> Walker, "Need for Creed," 10; Michael A. G. Haykin, "The Lifting up of the Name of the Lord Jesus in sincerity: An Introduction to The First London Confession of Faith," in Gonzales, *The Confessing Baptist*, 44; Michael A. G. Haykin, "Declaring before God, Angels, and Men . . . that wholesome Protestant Doctrine: The Historical Context of the Second London Confession," in Gonzales, *The Confessing Baptist*, 59–60.

commentary from contributing authors on the employment of those confessions relating to cooperation between Baptist churches. *The Story of Creeds and Confessions* by Donald Fairbairn and Ryan M. Reeves provides further commentary and historical context for the confessional conversation among the larger body of Christian faith and heritage.<sup>41</sup> These resources and others demonstrate a historic and contemporary interest in the relationship between cooperation and confessionalism. However, in subject matter they primarily focus on those doctrines of theology proper, scriptural authority, soteriological distinctives, and historic Baptist views on the ordinances and public engagement. The research in these resources stops short of tracing a biblical doctrine of cooperation through Baptist confessionalism and its surrounding contexts from the beginning of the Baptist movement.

The confessions, associational documents, and formal and informal commentaries do not tell the whole story in themselves, however. What is under examination in this research is formal doctrinal expression and demonstration surrounding the claim of a historic Baptist doctrine of cooperation. Therefore, historical and contemporary resources on Baptist historical theology enlarge the research.

In 1915, William T. Whitley compiled the writings of John Smyth into two comprehensive volumes.<sup>42</sup> Smyth writes extensively against pedobaptism and in defense of credobaptism, as well as developmentally on local church autonomy and inter-congregational cooperation. As the progenitor of the Baptist movement, Smyth's writings are of utmost importance to this research.<sup>43</sup> In 1811, Joseph Ivimey published *A History of the English Baptists*, which serves as a seminal resource for early Baptist records, historical context, and confessional statements. Thomas Crosby's 1838 series *The History*

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<sup>41</sup> Fairbairn and Reeves, *The Story of Creeds and Confessions*.

<sup>42</sup> Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 1915.

<sup>43</sup> Other original seventeenth-century primary sources giving shape and substance to this dissertation include, but are not limited to, the following: Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity 1611/1612*, ed. Richard Groves (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1998); Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*; John Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawful Subject of Baptism* (London, 1652); White, *Associational Records*.

*of the English Baptists* in four volumes not only chronicles several important events throughout the development of the Baptist movement in England, but also catalogues the development of essential Baptist doctrinal positions during their development and provides commentary on the cooperative interconnectivity of the churches holding those developing doctrinal positions.<sup>44</sup> Crosby's and Whitley's research serve as foundational reference points for many other scholars in the field. John Clifford's 1881 book *The English Baptists* acknowledges the existence of "Baptist ideas" from the earliest days of British Christianity but suggests that the beginning of the Baptist movement is properly set within the early seventeenth century, as "a *fragment* of the larger story of the 'English Reformation.'"<sup>45</sup> He articulates the significance of the coalition of Baptists and other dissenting groups winning the cooperative victory of religious liberty in 1689 with William and Mary's Act of Toleration. English Baptists freely convened to affirm their *London Baptist Confession*, but without the ongoing necessity of confessional and political cooperative expediency, lax of cooperation among Baptists after 1689 brought about by an absence of missional focus, Clifford argues, having a "desolating effect" on the advancement of the gospel in Baptist work.<sup>46</sup> The same year, in America, Charles A. Jenkins edited an extensive volume on *Baptist Doctrines*, with contributions from across the SBC. Commenting on the development of the modern missions movement among late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Baptists in America, one contributor acknowledged "Undefined and hidden principles . . . which blindly promised embodiment sometime in a Baptist organization" toward evangelistic and missional

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas Crosby, *A History of the English Baptists from the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of George I*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for the Editor, 1838).

<sup>45</sup> John Clifford, "The Origin and Growth of English Baptists," in *The English Baptists: Who They Are and What They Have Done*, ed. John Clifford (London: E. Marlborough, 1881), 10.

<sup>46</sup> Clifford, "The Origin and Growth of English Baptists," 25. In the late nineteenth century, Clifford became influential in the Downgrade Controversy that led to a confessional crisis among London Baptists. His historical viewpoints are referenced as helpful in the building of the narrative between confessionalism and cooperation, but his advocacy for minimalism in confessional cooperation is not shared by the researcher.



cooperation.<sup>47</sup> This “undefined and hidden principle” of inter-congregational evangelistic and missional cooperation among Baptists in America was further acknowledged in J. M. Frost’s 1900 book *Baptist, Why and Why Not*.<sup>48</sup>

E. C. Dargan, E. Y. Mullins, and L. R. Scarborough, who all served on the committee that brought forth the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message* for messenger consideration, each articulated cooperation as a Baptist doctrine in the decades prior to conversation surrounding the adoption of a unified Southern Baptist confession of faith—Dargan in *The Doctrines of Our Faith* (1899), Mullins in *The Axioms of Religion* (1908), and Scarborough in *Endued to Win* (1922). The doctrine (or “principle”), they each claimed, is not only evidenced throughout Baptist history but also firmly anchored in New Testament theology. Further, Scarborough circulated a series of articles in Baptist state papers from 1922 to 1925 articulating the doctrine of cooperation, all of which are consequential to the substantiation of this dissertation’s thesis. As the dissertation unfolds it will demonstrate that other popular academic resources on Baptist history and historical theology further substantiate the thesis, including Robert G. Torbet’s *A History of the Baptists* (1950/63), H. Leon McBeth’s *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (1987), McBeth’s *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (1990), William H. Brackney’s *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (2004), and James Leo Garrett’s *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (2009).

Contemporary research continues to proliferate in the area of historic and current Baptist cooperation and confessionalism. Before the turn of the third millennium, Gregory A. Wills wrote *Democratic Religion* (1997) to demonstrate the special kind of

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<sup>47</sup> A. H. Burlingham, “Baptists and Missions,” in Jenkins, *Baptist Doctrines*, 328.

<sup>48</sup> J. M. Frost, ed., *Baptist Why and Why Not: Twenty-five Papers by Twenty-Five Writers and A Declaration of Faith* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1900). Of particular interest is chap. 17 “Why Conventions of Baptist Churches,” contributed by J. B. Gambrell, Corresponding Secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Also of interest to the time period is *The Baptist Spirit*, published in 1914 by I. J. Van Ness who worked with Frost at the Baptist Sunday School Board. In his book, Van Ness connects the “principle” of cooperation to both the text of Baptist confessions and the “spirit” with which those words are carried through. Van Ness, *The Baptist Spirit*.

Southern Baptist populism prevalent between 1785 and 1900 that embraced the tension between democratic rule and structured authoritarianism, sustained by confessional and creedal solidarity within local churches and between them. Stephen Wright, publishing in 2006, challenges the popular historical divisions between General and Particular Baptists, arguing in *The Early English Baptists 1603–1649* that historical records demonstrate a propensity toward cooperation, rather than away from it, even between these two groups that are often considered separate streams of Baptist origination. Andrew Christopher Smith’s 2016 research on the relationship between the \$75 Million Campaign and the *Baptist Faith and Message* contradicts the thesis of this dissertation. Smith calls the conglomeration of cooperation and confessionalism “the Scarborough Synthesis,” arguing that L. R. Scarborough, leader of the Southern Baptist \$75 Million Campaign and influential member on the committee that brought forth the 1925 confession of faith, wrongly imposed a “doctrine of cooperation” upon the Convention, passing it off as a historic “orthodox Baptist doctrine” in efforts “to insulate the Convention from Fundamentalist fractiousness.”<sup>49</sup> The wedding of cooperation and confessionalism, according to Smith, created a “new Convention” that adopted a “new gospel,” namely “the gospel of stewardship and denominational loyalty.”<sup>50</sup>

In 2015, Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin published *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* in which they acknowledge an organic interplay between confession and cooperation throughout the history of the Baptist movement.<sup>51</sup> In 2020, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary published a fortieth anniversary edition of *Baptists and the Bible* by L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles in which the authors trace Baptist thought on the inspiration, authority,

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<sup>49</sup> Andrew Christopher Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919–1925* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2016), 135.

<sup>50</sup> Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 133.

<sup>51</sup> Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (Brentwood, TN: B & H, 2015).

and inerrancy of the Scriptures through confessions and association from the earliest days of the movement up to modern times.<sup>52</sup> In the summer of 2024, in the thick of Southern Baptist debates around the role of the confession in their cooperative mechanism, Nate Akin released *Convictional, Confessional, Cheerful Baptists* in which he roots Baptist tradition and theology in the Particular Baptist movement alone, with no mention of historic General Baptist confessions or activity, and supposes a definite and limiting historical relationship between confessions and cooperation.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, three recent dissertations are of note. In 2002, Matthew D. Wohlfarth completed and published his dissertation at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary entitled, “Baptist Origins Revisited: A Study of the Dual Influence of English Separatism and Dutch Mennonite Theology Upon Seventeenth-Century English Baptists.” Wohlfarth’s research primarily seeks to “identify foundational theological beliefs of seventeenth-century Baptists.”<sup>54</sup> He takes much care in the dating of the Baptist movement, arguing in opposition to many contemporary scholars for an “embryonic” or “proto-Baptist” period from John Smyth to the recovery of Baptism by immersion with the Jacob-Lanthrop-Jessey (JLJ) church in the fourth decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>55</sup> More importantly to the subject at hand, Wohlfarth raises the subject of the “English political matrix” during which the Baptist movement developed, a subject which this dissertation treats

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<sup>52</sup> L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible* (Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill, 2020).

<sup>53</sup> Nate Akin writes, “Confessions are statements of belief that guide biblical interpretation for cooperation and identity. . . . [which] provide boundaries for cooperation around the beliefs we will propagate to the world . . . Baptists have always been a confessional people.” Nate Akin, *Convictional, Confessional, Cheerful Baptists* (Greenville, SC: Courier, 2024), 29.

<sup>54</sup> Wohlfarth, “Baptist Origins Revisited,” abstract.

<sup>55</sup> Wohlfarth, “Baptist Origins Revisited,” 3, 91–92. The Jacob-Lanthrop-Jesse church is so named for its three founding pastors, Henry Jacob, John Lanthrop, and Henry Jessey, who planted the Separatist congregation in 1616. The JLJ church became what Chute, Finn, and Haykin, call “the fountainhead of the Particular Baptist movement.” Chute, Finn, and Haykin, *The Baptist Story*, 20. John Spilsbury, pastor of the first Particular Baptist church, was a member of the JLJ church when he first came under Baptist convictions.

more specifically with regard to the interactivity of Baptist individuals and churches in the developmental period of the doctrine of cooperation.<sup>56</sup> Limited by the scope of his thesis, Wohlfarth's research surveys seventeenth-century English Baptist confessions for the purpose of making doctrinal connections to sixteenth-century Mennonite theology, but he misses the doctrine of cooperation which began to be woven into those confessions and surrounding inter-congregational activity as early as 1609, as this dissertation will demonstrate.

In Michael Waldrop's 2009 dissertation, "Toward a Theology of Cooperation," from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, the author's primary purpose is to develop a biblical theology of cooperation while acknowledging the practical value of cooperation. He focuses on the interrelationship of local church autonomy and voluntary cooperation. Specifically, Waldrop's work is concerned with the theology behind the "compatibility of cooperation and autonomy among local Baptist churches," surveying the practice of the churches of the New Testament to develop a biblical basis for the doctrine and practice of inter-congregational cooperation.<sup>57</sup> He acknowledges and briefly discusses the historical Baptist practice of inter-congregational cooperation as a parallel component to his research. This dissertation comes alongside Waldrop's on that parallel path by more comprehensively entertaining the historical relationship between confessionalism and the doctrine of cooperation within the Baptist movement.

D. Scott Hildreth's 2015 dissertation from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, "God On Mission: *Missio Dei* as a Theological Motivation for Ecclesial Cooperation with Special Attention Given to Southern Baptist Cooperative Efforts," argues for the overarching mission of God as the primary "theological motivation for Southern Baptist inter-church cooperation."<sup>58</sup> Hildreth acknowledges Michael Waldrop's

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<sup>56</sup> Wohlfarth, "Baptist Origins Revisited," 50–96.

<sup>57</sup> Waldrop, "Toward a Theology of Cooperation," 32.

<sup>58</sup> Hildreth, "God on Mission," 4, 67, 180.

research in the field but argues that limiting justification for a doctrine of cooperation to specific activity of New Testament churches does not go far enough; instead, the entirety of the biblical text and the overarching mission of God should be considered foundational to the practice of Baptist cooperation.<sup>59</sup> Somewhat like Andrew C. Smith and in contradiction to the thesis of this research, Hildreth argues that the doctrine of cooperation was an eventual Baptist invention based on the “rich heritage of cooperation” among Southern Baptists with roots dating to the eighteenth century in William Carey’s Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Heathen.<sup>60</sup> He also, like Smith, alludes to the relationship between L. R. Scarborough and J. Frank Norris during the \$75 Million Campaign as a critical moment in Baptist history during which Scarborough’s responses to Norris “established cooperation as a key Southern Baptist ideal and core value.”<sup>61</sup> Hildreth’s and Smith’s works have contributed insightful research to the field, especially in the historical context and Baptist relational framework surrounding the *Baptist Faith and Message*. However, this dissertation will oppose their arguments that the doctrine of cooperation was an invention of L. R. Scarborough (Smith) or of Southern Baptists (Hildreth).

### **Significance**

The significance of this research to contemporary Southern Baptist evangelistic and missional cooperation should not be underestimated. A renewed interest in the relationship between cooperation and confessionalism has become evident within the SBC. As Nate Akin wrote recently, “Some wonder if we are in danger of becoming too confessional. Others worry we are becoming too broad. Some worry we’re too wrapped up in doctrine that we fail to share the good news. Others worry we don’t worry about

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<sup>59</sup> Hildreth, “God on Mission,” 6–7.

<sup>60</sup> Hildreth, “God on Mission,” 1–2, 13.

<sup>61</sup> Hildreth, “God On Mission,” 41, 65.

doctrine enough and so we're in danger of losing the gospel . . . but we must be both confessional *and* missional if we want to be consistent with our history.”<sup>62</sup> But what, exactly, does it mean to “be . . . confessional,” and how does that relate to the doctrine of cooperation and the organization of “missional” cooperation?

At its 1992 and 1993 meetings, messengers added a clause in Article III of the SBC's Constitution that restricted the seating of messengers to those who come from churches that do not “affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior.”<sup>63</sup> Up to this point, no statement on human sexuality was included in the confession of faith although what was added was undoubtedly the position of Baptists throughout history. In 1998, messengers approved the 1997-appointed Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee's recommendation to add Article XVIII “The Family” to the Convention's confession of faith, which clarified that marriage is between “one man and one woman,” and that this is “the channel for sexual expressions according to biblical standards.”<sup>64</sup> In 2000, messengers adopted an updated version of its *Baptist Faith and Message* that included the article on “The Family,” but did not remove the additional language from their Constitution, even though it was now formally expressed in their confession.

Then, for the first time in Southern Baptist history, messengers to the 2014 Convention officially tied the confession to the Convention's organizational documents by amending the Constitution to allow for the seating of messengers only from a cooperating church if it has “a faith and practice which closely identifies with the

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<sup>62</sup> Akin, *Convictional, Confessional, Cheerful Baptists*, 121.

<sup>63</sup> *Annual of the 1992 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1992), 81; *Annual of the 1993 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1993), 4.

<sup>64</sup> *Annual of the 1998 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1998), 78.

Convention’s adopted statement of faith.”<sup>65</sup> Since 2014, additional confessional conditions have been added to Article III of the Constitution that would allow for the seating of messengers only from a cooperating church that “does not act in a manner inconsistent with the Convention’s beliefs regarding sexual abuse” (although Article XV of the confession declares Southern Baptist opposition to “all forms of sexual immorality”), and “does not act to affirm, approve, or endorse discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity” (although Article XV of the confession declares Southern Baptist opposition to “racism”). In June 2023, messengers struck down a proposed amendment that would limit the seating of messengers to a cooperating church which “affirms, appoints, or employs only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture” (although Article VI of the confession declares the complementarian Southern Baptist position that “the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture”).<sup>66</sup>

In 2014, under the chairmanship of Earnest Easley, the Executive Committee recommended the addition of a stipulation to Article III of the Constitution: messengers could only come from cooperating churches with a “faith and practice that closely identifies with the Convention’s adopted statement of faith.” Consequently, the relationship between the confession, the Convention, and cooperating churches desiring to seat messengers became more complex an issue than ever before. In anticipation of the vote to amend, one Southern Baptist pastor questioned the wisdom and practicality of tying the confession to the Constitution, specifically in light of the varying Lord’s Supper practices among cooperating Baptist churches.<sup>67</sup> Another Southern Baptist online forum collected

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<sup>65</sup> *Annual of the 2014 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 2014), 63–64; *Annual of the 2015 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 2015), 7.

<sup>66</sup> *Annual of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 2023), 7, 90.

<sup>67</sup> Dave Miller, “The BF&M Communion Issue: There Is Only 1 Solution,” *SBC Voices*, February 25, 2014, <https://sbcvoices.com/the-bfm-communion-issue-there-is-only-1-solution/>. Although not opposed to the idea, Miller was “nervous” at the thought of being declared outside the boundaries of cooperation because his church practiced close communion instead of closed communion, which is clearly

and proliferated concerns from across the country that the changes to Article III might “command a rigid doctrinal conformity even on matters [about] which historically we have agreed to disagree.”<sup>68</sup> As the Baptist reaction intensified toward a more strict relationship between the Constitution, the confession, and cooperation, Easley took notice. In his 2014 address to the Convention, he announced a softening of language resulting from his sensitivity “to the concern that the changes in Article III could be understood to impose a confession of faith upon a church, which was never our intent.”<sup>69</sup>

When the credentialing question was raised to the 2022 Convention concerning Saddleback Church’s appointment of a female teaching pastor, Denny Burk, Professor of Biblical Studies at Boyce College, suggested that the standard for cooperation with the Convention was “non-contradiction” of the confession.<sup>70</sup> More recently, Colin Smothers, Executive Director of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, has argued that “closely identified with” in the SBC’s Constitution is virtually synonymous with “non-contradiction.”<sup>71</sup> However, in his 2021 book, *The Confessing Baptist*, Robert Gonzales Jr.

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articulated in Article VII of the confession. Interestingly, Miller’s concern was an echo of conversation within a Baptist confessional convention more than two hundred years earlier. During the 1689 associational meeting of London Baptists, provision was made to not exclude churches practicing open communion and at least one church practicing open membership, although the confession was clearly in opposition to these practices. Haykin praises the 1689 compromise as evidence of a “catholic attitude” that had developed among cooperating Baptists in the seventeenth century. See Haykin, “Declaring before God, Angels, and Men,” 59–60.

<sup>68</sup> Wyman Richardson, “SBC Executive Committee Chair Ernest Easley on Article III of the SBC Constitution,” Walking Together Ministries, June 5, 2014, <https://www.walkingtogetherministries.com/2014/06/05/sbc-executive-committee-chair-ernest-easley-on-article-iii-of-the-sbc-constitution/>.

<sup>69</sup> *Annual of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention*, 64.

<sup>70</sup> Denny Burk, “Non-Contradiction (not Subscription) Is the SBC’s Confessional Standard,” DennyBurk.com, June 21, 2022, <https://www.dennyburk.com/non-contradiction-not-subscription-is-the-sbcs-confessional-standard/>. In this article, Burk is offering non-contradiction as an interpretation of the SBC Constitution Article III language “closely identifies with,” in reaction to an article this researcher posted the week before. See Tony Wolfe, “Concentric Circles of Cooperation in Southern Baptist Life,” *Southern Baptist Texan*, June 17, 2022, <https://www.texanonline.net/articles/opinion/concentric-circles-of-cooperation-in-southern-baptist-life/>.

<sup>71</sup> Colin Smothers, “Not a Freelance Club: Identity, Association, and Confessionalism in the SBC,” Christ Over All, March 20, 2024, <https://christoverall.com/article/concise/not-a-freelance-club-identity-association-and-confessionalism-in-the-sbc/>.



argues for “an appropriate degree of latitude with respect to the actual wording or even some non-essential teachings of the confession” which “may allow” officers of the churches “to take exception to wording or propositions that are not deemed essential to the confession’s overall system and Reformed distinctives.”<sup>72</sup> For example, many Baptist churches in cooperation with the SBC are inconsistent with the confession’s Article VI statement on closed communion (as mentioned above), and up to one third of Southern Baptist proponents of Christian nationalism may be considered, according to some, in contradiction of the confession’s Article XVII on Religious Liberty.<sup>73</sup>

In June 2024, members of a presidentially appointed cooperation group brought recommendations on the nature of the Convention and the messenger’s usage of the confession in determining which cooperating churches “closely identify” with the confession and thereby may be considered for the seating of messengers.<sup>74</sup> Four members of the group released an article May 13, 2024 acknowledging “the issue facing us in the coming days” as one that will decide between whether a cooperating church must “affirm

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<sup>72</sup> Robert Gonzales Jr., “The Validity and Value of Confessions of Faith,” in Gonzales, *The Confessing Baptist*, 23.

<sup>73</sup> Anugrah Kumar explains, “The survey found that, among Southern Baptists, 58% of churchgoers and 62% of leaders say the government should not favor any specific religion, while about a third of church members (36%) and leaders (33%) believe the government should favor Christianity.” Anugrah Kumar, “New Poll Sheds Light on Southern Baptists’ Views on Christian Nationalism,” *The Christian Post*, April 25, 2024, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/new-poll-shows-southern-baptists-views-on-christian-nationalism.html>. On the matter of Baptist churches practicing open communion, deviating from the confession’s clear stance on closed communion, Gonzales offers historical perspective from the seventeenth century in which the “framers” of the Second London Baptist Confession “wisely allowed for some diversity within the boundaries of orthodoxy . . . in order to accommodate the minority position of open communion.” Robert Gonzales Jr., “The Validity and Value of Confessions of Faith,” in *The Confessing Baptist: Essays on the Use of Creeds in Baptist Faith & Life*, edited by Robert Gonzales Jr. (Conway, AR: Free Grace, 2021), 30–31. Later, however, Gonzales seems to argue for a “narrower focus” among cooperating churches that would utilize a shared confession as a “helpful compass” for Great Commission cooperation. Gonzales, “The Validity and Value of Confessions of Faith,” 32.

<sup>74</sup> Jared Wellman, “Cooperation Group Draft of Recommendations,” Coop Group, May 1, 2024, <https://www.coopgroupupdates.com/post/cooperation-group-draft-of-recommendations>.

the entirety of” the confession or if the Convention should “retain the present practice.”<sup>75</sup> Andrew Hebert, Pastor of Moberly Baptist Church in Longview, Texas, responded to the failure of the proposed 2024 constitutional amendment with praise, arguing that the historic and current Southern Baptist position is one of “doctrinal fidelity without methodological conformity.”<sup>76</sup>

So, what is the current relationship between confessionalism and cooperation in the SBC? Is it Burk’s non-contradiction, a more “elastic” interpretation of “friendly cooperation” as Executive Committee President Jeff Iorg has suggested, Hebert’s “doctrinal fidelity without methodological conformity,” or some other form of messenger-applied adherence to some or all articles on a case-by-case basis as the Cooperation Group members suggest?<sup>77</sup> And whenever current practice is agreed upon, what should be future practice regarding the relationship between cooperation and confession?

Can the Convention require all churches to subscribe to, affirm, or not contradict the confession to cooperate? If it can, should it? What, exactly, is the historic and current relationship between Baptist confessions and Baptist cooperation? Is the SBC appropriately rediscovering its historic commitment to confessional cooperation, as Nate Akin seems to suggest, or is it approaching what Robert Gonzales Jr. intimated might be labeled a kind of “hyper-Confessionalism?”<sup>78</sup> Historically, in the SBC, cooperation came

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<sup>75</sup> Nathan Finn et. al., “Southern Baptist Churches, Confessional Statements, and Cooperation,” Coop Group, May 13, 2024, <https://www.coopgroupupdates.com/post/southern-baptist-churches-confessional-statements-and-cooperation>.

<sup>76</sup> Andrew Hebert, “Doctrinal Fidelity without Methodological Conformity,” *Baptist Press*, June 13, 2024, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-doctrinal-fidelity-without-methodological-conformity/>.

<sup>77</sup> SBC Executive Committee President and CEO Jeff Iorg argues that the confession is at least somewhat “elastic” as it relates to the seating of messengers from cooperating churches. Jeff Iorg, “A Perspective on the Proposed SBC Amendment Regarding Women in Pastoral Ministry,” *Baptist Press*, May 22, 2024, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-a-perspective-on-the-proposed-sbc-amendment-regarding-women-in-pastoral-ministry/>.

<sup>78</sup> Gonzales, “The Validity and Value of Confessions of Faith,” 25.

before an organizationally adopted confession, but widely adopted Baptist confessions at least in some way regulated and delimited cooperation, as this research will demonstrate. The purpose of this dissertation is not to answer the questions set forth in the “Significance” section of the introductory chapter; however, these questions highlight a relevance and an intensified sensitivity to the subject that most contemporary Baptist readers will superimpose atop its pages.

These contemporary questions, however, are not best answered apart from a foundational understanding of the historic relationship between cooperation and confessionalism in Baptist history. Inter-congregational Great Commission cooperation must be first understood as a legitimate, historic Baptist doctrine before it is considered as a practical or organizational enterprise. In 2016, Andrew Christopher Smith, Director of Baptist Studies and Professor of History and Christianity at Tennessee Baptists’ Carson-Newman University, published his doctoral research in a book entitled *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919–1925* in which he challenges the legitimacy and historicity of the Baptist doctrine of cooperation. While Smith’s research provides helpful insight to the historical narrative of the Baptist \$75 Million Campaign and the concomitant Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy, his conclusion concerning the doctrine of cooperation is concerning; he describes the inclusion of an article “On Cooperation” in the first *Baptist Faith and Message* as a reaction against Fundamentalists in an attempt to articulate “support for the denomination as a key aspect of Biblical faith.” This move by denominational centralizers to develop and enshrine in their confession cooperation as a biblical doctrine, Smith further explains, turned the “centrifugal force of Fundamentalism into the centripetal force of cooperation.”<sup>79</sup> In other words, Smith’s recent argument casts a shadow on cooperation as more of an organizational powerplay than a demonstrable biblical doctrine. And D. Scott Hildreth’s dissertation, while much less accusatory in tone, leans toward agreement with Smith on

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<sup>79</sup> Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 189.

this point.

Next year (2025) will see the centennial anniversary of the first edition of the *Baptist Faith and Message* in which an entire article on cooperation was included for the first time in a Baptist confession of faith.<sup>80</sup> Was that article included as a reaction against Fundamentalist naysayers as part of a strategy toward denominational centralization? Did the doctrine change Baptist evangelistic and missional cooperation from a centrifugal to centripetal movement? Or is the doctrine of cooperation a historically evidenced and biblically justified doctrine that had been uniformly assumed since Baptist beginnings, first finding need to be formally articulated in 1925, like the article on “The Family” in 1993, 1998, and 2000?

This research demonstrates that Southern Baptists do not cooperate primarily for pragmatic reasons. Southern Baptists cooperate because their historic, shared biblical doctrine of cooperation compels them to do so. Cooperation is not a means to an end, nor is it a means to be ended. Cooperation is a biblical doctrine that guides and guards Baptist inter-congregational Great Commission enterprise today as it has since the earliest days of Baptist beginnings. The research herein surveys this shared doctrine through Baptist confessions, associational activity, missionary organization, and correspondence between 1609 and 1925. Ideally, demonstrating and clarifying the historic understanding of the Baptist doctrine of cooperation will afford contemporary Southern Baptists a firmer foundation for ongoing conversations and organizational decisions that will guide the relationship between confessionalism and cooperation in the years and decades to come.

### **Argument**

Chapter 1 introduces the content, proposes the research question and thesis, summarizes research methodology, surveys the research field, and outlines the argument. The chapter includes a brief section on the definition of terms and the limitation of the

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<sup>80</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” 5.

research. Chapter 1 concludes with the significance of the study and a summary of the chapters.

In chapter 2, “From Amsterdam to Philadelphia,” the Baptist doctrine of cooperation, in its formational stage, is evidenced throughout the course of seventeenth-century English experiments with religiopolitical reformation, associational organization, and confessional declaration.<sup>81</sup> The Baptist movement began in 1609, in Amsterdam.<sup>82</sup> As the movement progressed, within the crucible of religious intolerance and vacillating political disorder during the seventeenth century, a cooperative conviction was forged between English Dissenters who held to Baptist views.<sup>83</sup> Through several significant confessions of faith, Baptists throughout seventeenth-century England declared the doctrines of their faith to demonstrate a distinctively Baptist Christian orthodoxy and to invite strategic inter-congregational cooperation. The research shows that from the beginning of the movement, Baptists came confessing, and Baptists came cooperating. The chapter concludes with a bridge to late seventeenth-century America, where the

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<sup>81</sup> The usage of “religiopolitical” throughout this dissertation pertains to the sense of interconnectivity between religion and politics specifically as was evidenced in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English governance. See *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, “religiopolitical,” accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religiopolitical>.

<sup>82</sup> Some Baptist historians, particularly between the mid-1800s and the mid-1900s, argue for apostolic succession within the Baptist movement such that the Baptist church is the true apostolic church, supposing an unbroken line of Baptist churches from the first century until contemporary times. See William W. Everts, *Baptist Layman’s Book: A Compend of Baptist History, Principles, Practices, and Institutions* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), 9, 12–13. See also James M. Carroll, *The Trail of Blood* (Lexington, KY: Ashland Avenue Baptist Church, 1931). In contradiction to Baptist apostolic successionism, consider John Smyth’s own words that the doctrine of apostolic succession was nothing more than “old rusty rotten popish stuffe [sic].” Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 2:420. Another argues for a proto-Baptist or pre-Baptist season between 1609 and the late 1630s, preferring to mark the beginning of the movement with the recovery of credobaptism by immersion. See Wohlfarth, “Baptist Origins Revisited,” 3, 303. However, most contemporary Baptist historians and scholars point to Smyth’s se-baptism in 1609 and gathering of a credobaptized congregation as the beginning of the Baptist movement. See Chute, Finn, and Haykin, *The Baptist Story*, 3.

<sup>83</sup> To label seventeenth-century Baptists among the “dissenters” is to recognize the Baptist movement as one of several free-church movements in development. The Quakers, Congregationalists, Brownists, Anabaptists, and other Dissenters, like the Baptists, opposed (dissented from) the official state church. Because of this, they all suffered from the religious intolerance of the Roman Catholics, the Church of England, and, at times, the Presbyterians and Puritans as well.

*London Baptist Confession* (1689) was beginning to proliferate in the New World through the influence of Elias Benjamin Keach and his Philadelphia Baptist Association.<sup>84</sup>

Chapter 3, “From Philadelphia to Augusta,” surveys Baptist cooperation in America through associations, societies, and state and national conventions. Special attention is given to the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* (1724) and the *New Hampshire Baptist Confession* (1833), including the language within them and surrounding them that further develops and demonstrates the Baptist doctrine of cooperation.<sup>85</sup> Selected associational records, state and national convention records, and other historical documents are referenced to demonstrate the relationship between confessionalism and cooperation in the Baptist movement on American soil leading up to the constitution of the SBC in 1845. This chapter concludes with a bridge to the formation of the constitution of the SBC in Augusta, Georgia, in 1845.

In chapter 4, “From Augusta to Memphis,” newspapers, convention proceedings, and mission board records are surveyed to develop the historical narrative of evangelistic and missional cooperation among Southern Baptists as guided and guarded by a loose confessionalism.<sup>86</sup> The \$75 Million Campaign and various socio-political

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<sup>84</sup> Benjamin Keach was a respected pastor in London, a framer of the 1689 London Baptist Confession, and an eventual revisionist and catechist of the confession. His son, Elias Benjamin Keach, carried his father’s confessional influence into the New World. See William Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought: With Special Reference to Baptists in Britain and North America* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 2004), 35; Chute, Finn, and Haykin, *The Baptist Story*, 52–55.

<sup>85</sup> By “the language . . . surrounding them,” I mean the catechisms, commentaries, and associational record mentions of these confessions that further demonstrate how they were utilized within churches and between churches, particularly regarding the practical inter-congregational cooperation of the churches for evangelistic and missional endeavor.

<sup>86</sup> “Loose confessionalism” is the researcher’s terminology regarding the usage of various confessions in Baptist cooperation during the period, similar to what Walker labels “loose subscription” regarding the usage of creeds and confessions within a local church. See Walker, “Need for Creed,” 10. “Loose confessionalism” acknowledges a shared body of confessed doctrines among Baptist churches without the formal adoption of, or subscription to, a specific confession by the churches in unison. The Philadelphia and New Hampshire confessions were the most prominent among Southern Baptists in this period, but the SBC did not subscribe to either formally, or even acknowledge priority of one over another. From 1845 to 1925, convention mission boards and seminaries referenced several Baptist confessions when

factors of early twentieth-century America that contributed to a rising tide of evangelistic and missional cooperation within the Baptist movement are taken into account.<sup>87</sup> For Southern Baptists, the second and third decades of the twentieth century saw the culmination of the Baptist doctrine of cooperation in the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925)—the first official Southern Baptist confession of faith to include, for the first time in Baptist confessional history, a full-orbed doctrine of cooperation as its own distinct article of faith. Special attention is given to L. R. Scarborough’s influence upon the wording and inclusion of this article on “Cooperation.” The *Baptist Faith and Message*, with its formal doctrine of cooperation, was adopted by messengers to the 1925 SBC meeting in Memphis, Tennessee.

Chapter 5, “An Evaluation of L. R. Scarborough’s Triangular Doctrine of Cooperation,” explains Scarborough’s “Triangular Doctrine” then offers a biblical and theological evaluation of it.<sup>88</sup> The chapter includes an exegesis of Acts 2:1–14, which serves as the biblical basis of Scarborough’s argument. Baptist scholars and theologians of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries are engaged to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of Scarborough’s position.

In chapter 6, the dissertation concludes with a restatement of the question and thesis and a summary of the research and its findings. Several contemporary implications are proposed, based on the research. Finally, opportunities for further research are presented.

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doctrinal error surfaced, but the convention itself acknowledged no confessional document as uniform and required no confessional subscription from the churches. Until 1925, the convention owned no confession formally, but still acknowledged a shared body of doctrinal positions between the churches.

<sup>87</sup> The \$75 Million Campaign was not only the predecessor to the Cooperative Program adopted by the SBC in 1925. It was also a significant catalyst for the formalization of the Baptist doctrine of cooperation solidified by the SBC in 1925. See Hildreth, “God on Mission,” 35. Other socio-political factors include the American spirit of sacrifice and President Wilson’s “volunteerism” during World War I, the globalization of the American evangelical consciousness, the movement toward efficiency in business practices within corporate America, and the larger post-war American culture of individualized and socialized indulgence evidenced throughout the Roaring Twenties.

<sup>88</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 40–43.

## CHAPTER 2

### FROM AMSTERDAM TO PHILADELPHIA

Baptists came confessing and Baptists came cooperating. Historically, confessionalism and cooperation have enjoyed demonstrable concomitance in Baptist identity and Baptist purpose. However, the balance between the two has been a matter of push and pull, expansion and contraction. Even contemporarily, Southern Baptists, who confess a biblical doctrine of cooperation in their *Baptist Faith and Message*, embrace the tension between confession and cooperation.<sup>1</sup> One contemporary Baptist scholar argues that the Baptist doctrine of cooperation was merely a denominational powerplay invented to support organizational centralization during the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy of the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Another argues for strict non-contradiction of the confession as the historical and contemporary standard of Baptist cooperation.<sup>3</sup> Some suppose a degree of “latitude” in theological confessional consensus with relationship to

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<sup>1</sup> The *Baptist Faith and Message* articulates this tension nicely. The Preamble articulates the denial of any prerogative of religious authority to “impose a confession of faith upon a church or body of churches,” while simultaneously claiming the confession’s helpfulness as an instrument of “doctrinal accountability” and an unembarrassing statement of the “doctrines we hold precious” which are “essential to the Baptist tradition of faith and practice.” Article 14 on “Cooperation” articulates a biblical justification for, and the practical usefulness of, voluntary inter-congregational cooperation while also insisting that such cooperation “involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.” The biblical and confessional impetus for autonomous churches to cooperate is safeguarded by the voluntary prerogative of those same churches.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Christopher Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919–1925* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2016), 189.

<sup>3</sup> Denny Burk, “Non-Contradiction (not Subscription) Is the SBC’s Confessional Standard,” DennyBurk.com, June 21, 2022, <https://www.dennyburk.com/non-contradiction-not-subscription-is-the-sbcs-confessional-standard/>.



practical denominational cooperation.<sup>4</sup> The Baptist relationship between confession and cooperation has ebbed and flowed through the years, but their interdependence is evidenced from the beginning of the Baptist movement. But what is the beginning of the Baptist movement, and how did the confessional faith and cooperative practice of Baptist congregations migrate from the old world to the new?

William Brackney explained that contemporary confessions of Baptist faith and practice are both the expression of and the result of a four-century movement which has built its theological consensus atop a “polygenetic base” of orthodoxical and orthopraxical expressions—a “genetic history of Baptist thought” rooted in more historic creeds, confessions, and ecclesiastical practices, while also distinct from them.<sup>5</sup> James Leo Garrett, in agreement with Brackney’s propositions on the foundations of Baptist doctrine, argues that the Baptist movement is built upon but distinct from pre-seventeenth-century expressions of Christian mission and organization, owing a great deal to the creeds, councils, and theologians of the sixteen centuries of Christian history leading up to the Baptist movement, especially to the Protestant Reformation which gave shape to “the matrix of Baptist movement” from 1609 onward.<sup>6</sup> But what of the doctrine of cooperation? As the Baptist movement began in early seventeenth-century England, new and radical expressions of local church autonomy, baptized regenerate church membership, and soul liberty within independent congregations forged a necessary and unique confessional cooperation between the churches. There, in the persecution of early Baptist people and

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Gonzales Jr., “The Validity and Value of Confessions of Faith,” in *The Confessing Baptist: Essays on the Use of Creeds in Baptist Faith & Life*, ed. Robert Gonzales Jr. (Conway, AR: Free Grace, 2021), 23. See also Andrew Hebert, “Doctrinal Fidelity without Methodological Conformity,” *Baptist Press*, June 13, 2024, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-doctrinal-fidelity-without-methodological-conformity/>.

<sup>5</sup> William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 2004), 2.

<sup>6</sup> James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 2009), 1, 6–7.

the maturing missional unity among early Baptist churches, the timeless biblical doctrine of cooperation was in timely formation.

Slayden Yarborough notes an inherent doctrine of cooperation built into the idea of Baptist confessionalism itself. The *London Baptist Confession* (1644), he suggests, “is the first documented historical record that demonstrates inter-congregational cooperation by any group of Baptist churches.”<sup>7</sup> Confessions drawn up and/or subscribed to by more than one congregation are, themselves, demonstrations of cooperation. But what about the doctrine of cooperation proper? Southern Baptists confess a biblical doctrine of cooperation, according to which “Christ’s people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God,” and according to which “New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ’s Kingdom.”<sup>8</sup> The relationship between confession and cooperation may still be debated, but the doctrine of cooperation itself is “most surely held among us.”<sup>9</sup> Critical to ongoing debates concerning the relationship between cooperation and confession is the shared conviction that cooperation is not a pragmatic means to an end, but rather, a biblical doctrine clearly taught in Scripture and evidenced throughout Baptist history.

The early seventeenth century, which became the cradle for the birth and development of the Baptist movement, entangled a compounded matrix of religious, political, social, and cultural factors. Even after the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the British island remained a hodgepodge of theocratic religious hierarchies, the Church

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<sup>7</sup> Slayden A. Yarbrough, “The Origin of Baptist Associations among the English Particular Baptists,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 23, no. 2 (1988): 14. Further, Yarbrough writes that this 1644 “elemental theory” of inter-congregational cooperation “would be developed and refined into an efficient and practical system of voluntary cooperation in associations that would move from the county to the national level” (14).

<sup>8</sup> *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, Article 14 “Cooperation.”

<sup>9</sup> *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, Preamble.

of England replacing the Roman Catholic Church but with one hundred years of significant religiopolitical vacillation between the two. In the Catholic and Anglican ecclesiastical systems, congregations in various regions were formally connected by church and state governance, so inter-congregational cooperation was inherent to the ecclesial setting of the day. However, as Michael Waldrop explains, “While denominations with no commitment to the doctrines of local church autonomy and congregational polity are exempted from this problem, Baptists by their ecclesiology are faced with the question of the compatibility of autonomy and cooperation.”<sup>10</sup> When the independent church movement began and Baptists emerged as a distinct group of dissenting, locally autonomous congregations with a shared set of core doctrinal convictions, inter-congregational cooperation was something for which churches needed to work. Their Great Commission engagement would require the rediscovery of an historic New Testament doctrine that would build within them and between them “an appropriate theology of cooperation.”<sup>11</sup> The tension between doctrinal agreement and cooperative relationship would be evidenced among the first and second Baptist churches, led by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, respectively.

At the turn of the twentieth century, among Southern Baptists in America, Lee R. Scarborough led the way toward a new denominationalism that would centralize missions funding and solidify the cooperative identity of the denomination. As will be demonstrated in later chapters, Scarborough was instrumental in the addition of an article on cooperation’s inclusion in the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925). D. Scott Hildreth asserted that the doctrine of cooperation was an “idea” that “began to develop” in

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<sup>10</sup> Michael W. Waldrop, “Toward a Theology of Cooperation: A Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Examination of the Compatibility of Cooperation and Autonomy among Local Baptist Churches” (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), abstract.

<sup>11</sup> Waldrop, “Toward a Theology of Cooperation,” abstract.

Scarborough, leading toward Southern Baptist cooperative solidarity.<sup>12</sup> Rather than a clearly taught New Testament doctrine, in his 2015 dissertation, Hildreth suggests that the doctrine was “a reaction to the pressure created by the anti-denominational rhetoric of Fundamentalism.”<sup>13</sup> In both his dissertation and his book, Hildreth upholds the significance of inter-congregational cooperation, but he seems to question whether the doctrine of cooperation owns historic Baptist precedent. Andrew Christopher Smith goes one step further, labeling the 1925 link between confession and cooperation “the Scarborough Synthesis” and arguing that Scarborough imposed this “doctrine of cooperation” upon the Convention by surreptitiously passing it off as an historic “orthodox Baptist doctrine.”<sup>14</sup> The wedding of cooperation and confessionalism, according to Smith, created a “new Convention” that adopted a “new gospel,” namely “the gospel of stewardship and denominational loyalty.”<sup>15</sup> Are Hildreth and Smith correct?<sup>16</sup> Is the doctrine of cooperation an invention of twentieth-century Southern Baptist necessity? Is there no substantive expression of the doctrine of cooperation to be found in Baptist confessional history?

I. J. Van Ness, executive secretary of the Baptist Sunday School Board, articulated in 1914, “no creed worth holding is worth anything if it is not practiced. What we want is the spirit which comes with conviction.”<sup>17</sup> The Baptist spirit for which Van

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<sup>12</sup> D. Scott Hildreth, *Together on God’s Mission: How Southern Baptists Cooperate to Fulfill the Great Commission* (Nashville: B & H, 2018), 22–23.

<sup>13</sup> D. Scott Hildreth, “God on Mission: *Missio Dei* as a Theological Motivation for Ecclesial Cooperation with Special Attention Given to Southern Baptist Cooperative Efforts” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 65.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 135.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 133.

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that Hildreth and Smith agree that the doctrine of cooperation was first expressed in 1925, but they do not agree on its biblical foundations or the motivations of its twenty-first century expression. Hildreth sees a biblical doctrine of cooperation without a historic Baptist expression, while Smith understands that the doctrine is no biblical doctrine at all, only an invention of L. R. Scarborough from the motivation of denominational powerplay.

<sup>17</sup> I. J. Van Ness, *The Baptist Spirit* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1914), 11.

Ness advocated is none other than the spirit of agreeable evangelistic and missional cooperation which pulls likeminded autonomous churches together in forward Great Commission advance. For Van Ness, the Baptist doctrine of cooperation, carried out in accordance with the congenial Baptist spirit, was the coagulant of the other doctrines and practices which run deep in the Baptist blood.<sup>18</sup> But is the doctrine of cooperation a twentieth-century invention? Or is it evidenced from the earliest days of Baptist history?

### **Chapter Thesis**

Does historical record exist to demonstrate a commonly held biblical doctrine of cooperation among Baptists in the earliest days of the Baptist movement? Did the first English Baptists feel a moral and theological obligation to cooperate for evangelistic and missional purposes? This chapter will argue that the Baptist doctrine of cooperation, in its formational stage, is evidenced throughout the course of seventeenth-century English Baptist experiments with religiopolitical reformation, associational organization, and confessional declaration.

### **Chapter Literature Review**

Several primary sources are imperative to understanding the Baptist doctrine of cooperation evidenced through the political, associational, and confessional frameworks of seventeenth-century England. John Smyth's written works, cataloged by William T. Whitley in 1915, reveal Smyth's understanding of local church autonomy, credobaptism, and a rudimentary theory of inter-congregational cooperation. Thomas Helwys's *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* (1612) demonstrates the convictions of the first Baptist pastor on English soil regarding the symmetry between Catholicism and Anglicanism during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Helwys also

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<sup>18</sup> Van Ness writes, "Baptist cooperation in accordance with Baptist principles, brought about by the common Baptist spirit and to secure the great Baptist purposes, will make a fellowship like unto New Testament times, and which will always preserve the New Testament principles." Van Ness, *The Baptist Spirit*, 14.

distinguishes his Baptist movement from that of the Anabaptists, Puritans, Brownists, and Separatists of his day and boldly embodies the Baptist conviction to stand for biblical truth amid extreme persecution. John Spilsbury's *A Treatise Concerning the Lawful Subject of Baptism* (1652) not only argues the historic Baptist position on credobaptism by immersion, but also the value of a confession of faith itself as a document that promotes unity in a local church and between local churches. Thomas Grantham's *Christianismus Primitivus* (1678) provides a biblical justification for associational funding for sending missionaries, planting churches, and supporting ministerial education.

B. R. White's compilation of the *Associational Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660* documents a prevailing expectation of, and actual occurrences of, inter-congregational cooperation among the earliest Baptist churches. These churches cooperated in providing benevolence, funding evangelistic preaching, and offering biblical counsel to one another on contextual issues of doctrine and church governance. Similarly, H. Leon McBeth's *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (1990) catalogues original records and writings from early English Baptists that demonstrate the relationship between confession and cooperation as associations formed and grew.<sup>19</sup> McBeth's *Sourcebook* also includes the text of the "Kiffen Manuscript," which serves as an instrumental piece of early English Baptist history. Several newspapers and published pamphlets give further insight into the religiopolitical context in which the Baptist movement found its genesis. "The Protestant Observer, Democritus Flens," dated December 7, 1681, highlights the tension within Parliament during the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II. Therein, a "Local Churchman" argues with a devout Tory for peaceful treatment of, and religious freedom for, dissenters (such as Baptists) whose confessions are generally orthodox and do not call for injustice to the court. The historical

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<sup>19</sup> For example, see the account of "The Abington Association, 1652," in which a biblical justification is given for the doctrine of voluntary inter-congregational cooperation for matters of benevolence, representation, general care, doctrinal accountability, prayer, and evangelistic/missional endeavors. H. Leon McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 62–63.

context of this document is extremely important to understanding the persecution against Baptists and other independents after the end of the Commonwealth and before the 1689 Act of Toleration under William and Mary. Articles by the “Mercurius Elencticus,” corroborate Baptist confessional claims in the mid-late 1640s that their opposition to Anglican religious forms during the reign of Charles I was viewed as subversive, treacherous, and tyrannical; the need for solidarity and cooperation between those Baptist churches was exacerbated by the condemnatory (and often outright false) public rhetoric against them.

Cultural and social undercurrents are sometimes lost in the work of analytical historical narrative, except that primary sources which inform one’s understanding of the arts and culture of the day may be consulted. To this end, Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400) offers a certain uniqueness in the publication of popular English literature in that it formalized and popularized the English vernacular leading into the Reformation. Into the late seventeenth century, Chaucer’s *Tales* gave both voice and shape to the English national identity while acknowledging, on both pedestrian and Parliamentary levels, the irony of obvious English religious hypocrisy.<sup>20</sup> William Shakespeare’s plays *The Tempest* (1611) and *Henry VIII* (1613) are also relevant, having become popular with the innovation of public theater among the early seventeenth-century English. *The Tempest* was written the year of the Smyth confession in Holland

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<sup>20</sup> For example, see Chaucer’s discussion of the “good man . . . of religion”: “If gold ruste, what shuld iren do? For if a preest be foule, on whom we trust, No wonder is a lewed man to rust: And shame it is, if that a preest take kepe, To see a shitten shepherd, and clene shepe.” Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (New York: D. Appleton, 1870), 17–18. Religious hypocrisy in the Middle Ages is also the theme of several other corrupted characters in the *Canterbury Tales*, such as the Prioress’s lavish lifestyle which was in direct contradiction to her oath before God and the Pardoner’s thievery through which he exploited the people he was called to spiritually serve. Chaucer’s work was influential in developing a sense of national identity and cultural expression among the English at least into the 1680s, an identity that deplored religious hypocrisy. In one 1681 pamphlet chronicling a discussion between two members of the House of Commons, discussing the relationship between the restored monarchy and the House of Commons, Chaucer is quoted. See “Heraclitus Ridens: A Dialogue between Self and Earnest, concerning the Times,” London, May 17, 1681, 3, <https://newspaperarchive.com/continuation-of-special-and-remarkable-passages-may-17-1681-p-3/>. For more detailed accounts of references to Chaucer’s *Tales* in seventeenth-century England, see Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion, 1357–1900*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1925).

and is a tale of unjust exile and betrayal, unknowingly foreshadowing unceremonious transitions within the English monarchy. *Henry VIII* is not an historical account, but it is a popular rendition of the drama between Henry VIII, his queen Catherine, and his beloved Anne Boleyn who bore him Elizabeth, the famed Gloriana and predecessor of King James who reigned during the time of Shakespeare's writing. The performing arts, during this era of English history, were an integral part of the larger cultural setting for Baptist growth.

Several works on English culture and English history at large also help broaden the understanding of the seventeenth-century Baptist economic, social, religious, and political matrix. Alexander Cowan's *Urban Europe 1500–1700* (1998) chronicles the economic and social specifics of how religion “shaped the lives of townspeople” in every respect, complicating social relationships and swaying unity and disunity within and between families in new ways.<sup>21</sup> A broad narrative of the progression of English religiopolitical evolution is portrayed, with much synergy but some differentiating particularity, in Rebecca Frasier's *The Story of Britain* (2003), Robert Tombs's *The English and Their History* (2014), and Roy Strong's *The Story of Britain* (2019). Chronologically and geographically targeted English histories such as David Ogg's *England in the Reigns of James II and William III* (1969), John Adair's *Cheriton 1644* (1973), Diane Purkiss's *The English Civil War* (2006), and Rosemary Goring's *Scotland: The Autobiography* (2008) afford more detailed accounts of certain points of interest in the era.

Baptist histories, both old and new, provide a comprehensive look into confessional and cooperative trends among seventeenth-century English Baptists. Joseph Ivimey's *A History of the English Baptists* (1811) records specific information surrounding the persecution of English Baptists as well as associational records and commentary within

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<sup>21</sup> Alexander Cowan, *Urban Europe, 1500–1700* (New York: Oxford University, 1998), 93–95, 201.



the most prominent seventeenth-century Baptist confessions of faith. *The English Baptists*, written by John Clifford in 1881, was among the first to connect intentional General and Particular Baptist cooperation during the “contagion” of public and Parliamentary opinions against dissenters to the unceremonious, century-long dissolution of that cooperation after their shared victory upon the passage of the 1689 Act of Toleration.<sup>22</sup> More recently, Stephen Wright, in his book *The Early English Baptists, 1603–1649* (2006), traces the historiographical trail of interconnectivity and cooperation between English General and Particular Baptists during their formative years. Along the same lines, in *The Baptist Story* (2015), Anthony Chute, Nathan Finn, and Michael Haykin make the connection between John Smyth’s General Baptist church and the JLJ Particular Baptist church, both of which were grown in “Puritan soil” with “Separatist roots.”<sup>23</sup> They further portray the first *London Baptist Confession* (1644) as an effort by Particular Baptists to “demonstrate their fundamental solidarity” with other Calvinistic groups across Europe.<sup>24</sup> Tom Nettles’s 2005 work *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming A Baptist Identity* uses English Baptist confessions, with the cooperative relationships surrounding them, as one piece in a puzzle to reconstruct a biographical history of the beginnings of the Baptist movement.<sup>25</sup> In *The Baptist Heritage* (1987), *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (2004), and *Baptist Theology* (2009), H. Leon McBeth, William H. Brackney, and James Leo Garrett present what may be the most comprehensive trilogy of Baptist historical theology available, including much detail surrounding the doctrinal and practical relationships between local church autonomy and voluntary Great Commission

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<sup>22</sup> John Clifford, “The Origin and Growth of English Baptists,” in *The English Baptists: Who They Are and What They Have Done*, ed. John Clifford (London: E. Marlborough, 1881), 25.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 14–21.

<sup>24</sup> Chute, Finn, and Haykin, *The Baptist Story*, 25–26.

<sup>25</sup> Tom Nettles coins the term “Conscientiously Confessional” to describe the “formative and corrective” usages of confessions among Baptists throughout history. Tom Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, vol. 1 of *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2005), 46.

cooperation.

William J. McGlothlin's *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (1911) and William L. Lumpkin's *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (2011) are seminal sources for the actual texts of historic Baptist confessions as well as concise records of the historical contexts surrounding them. More recently, Robert Gonzales Jr. edited *The Confessing Baptist* (2021) in which notable contemporary Baptist historians such as Tom Nettles, Michael Haykin, and Luke Walker interact with the usage of creeds and confessions among cooperating churches. Gonzales's own words therein define and celebrate the value of historic and contemporary Baptist confessions but warn Baptists of a certain "hyper-confessionalism" that has not produced good effect throughout Baptist history.<sup>26</sup>

Three dissertations are of note. Matthew D. Wohlforth's 2002 dissertation, "Baptist origins revisited" is substantial in the formation of a historiographical understanding of the Baptist movement. In efforts to "identify foundational theological beliefs of seventeenth-century Baptists," Wohlforth examines pre-seventeenth-century Mennonite and Separatist writings and compares them with early Baptist confessions and correspondence that gave shape and substance to the Baptist movement.<sup>27</sup> He summarizes traditional monogenesis and polygenesis theories of Anabaptist origins, interacting with primary and secondary historical sources, and concludes that while Baptist movement through "proto-Baptist" expressions is clear in the first few decades of the seventeenth century, the first Baptist church should be marked by the "recovery of believer's immersion in 1640 by members of the Jacob church" within the Particular Baptist stream.<sup>28</sup> Two more elements of Wohlforth's dissertation are of significant value to this research, namely

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<sup>26</sup> Gonzales, "The Validity and Value of Confessions of Faith," 24–32.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew D. Wohlforth, "Baptist Origins Revisited: A Study of the Dual Influence of English Separatism and Ditch Mennonite Theology upon Seventeenth-Century English Baptists" (PhD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), abstract, 296.

<sup>28</sup> Wohlforth, "Baptist Origins Revisited," 303.

his survey of Baptist confessions of faith and his emphasis on the “English political matrix” in which the Baptist movement found its genesis.<sup>29</sup>

Michael W. Waldrop’s 2009 dissertation, “Toward a Theology of Cooperation” primarily focuses on biblical and theological foundations for the doctrine of cooperation.<sup>30</sup> However, in chapter 3 Waldrop surveys historic Baptist confessions and practices relating to the doctrine of cooperation, and this survey is immensely helpful to the field of study. His primary purpose in writing is to reconcile the historical and biblical tension between local church autonomy and voluntary missional interdependence.<sup>31</sup> While several confessions are surveyed, the scope and purpose of Waldrop’s research limits him to those early confessions and interactions which concisely highlight the interrelationship between autonomy and cooperation. That limitation marks one major difference between Waldrop’s dissertation and this chapter. What follows here is a more comprehensive elucidation of the doctrine of cooperation evidenced in confessions and other historical documentation and set within the religiopolitical context of seventeenth-century England.

In 2015, D. Scott Hildreth published his dissertation entitled, “God on Mission: *Missio Dei* as a Theological Motivation for Ecclesial Cooperation with Special Attention Given to Southern Baptist Cooperative Efforts.” Hildreth’s primary purpose is to demonstrate that the *missio dei* is biblical justification enough for the practice of Great Commission inter-congregational cooperation. He acknowledges Waldrop’s dissertation but argues that it stops short of the ultimate justification for the doctrine of cooperation

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<sup>29</sup> Wohlfarth, “Baptist Origins Revisited,” 50.

<sup>30</sup> Waldrop, “Toward a Theology of Cooperation.”

<sup>31</sup> Waldrop explains,

The consensus of Baptist tradition includes adherence to both local church independence and interdependence. From the earliest years after the 1609 genesis of the denomination as it now exists, Baptist churches have related to one another, often in formal associations and conventions. While denominations with no commitment to the doctrines of local church autonomy and congregational polity are exempted from this problem, Baptists by their ecclesiology are faced with the question of the compatibility of autonomy and cooperation. This requires an appropriate theology of cooperation. (Waldrop, “Toward a theology of cooperation,” abstract)

which is to be found primarily, as Hildreth suggests, in the *missio dei* rather than in the practices of various congregations recorded in the New Testament.<sup>32</sup> Hildreth believes that the roots of Baptist evangelistic and missional cooperation are to be found in the late eighteenth century, with the rise of the modern missions movement, rather than from the earliest days of Baptist identity as this dissertation will argue.<sup>33</sup>

The beginning of the Baptist movement is dated at 1609 upon the establishment of a credobaptized local congregation led by English General Baptist pastor John Smyth.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Hildreth, “God on Mission,” 6–7. In fairness, Hildreth later admits that the *mission Dei* as a theological motif for cooperative missiology may be one of several “equal, or even more compelling, reasons for cooperation” (185).

<sup>33</sup> Hildreth, “God on Mission,” 1.

<sup>34</sup> Wohlfarth stated as recently as 2002 that “at present Baptist historians have no single, unified theory for Baptist origins,” and that these theories still “compete for scholarly acceptance.” Wohlfarth, “Baptist Origins Revisited,” abstract, 1. Successionist theories persist among some who hold to the views of English Baptist leader G. H. Orchard, articulated in 1855 in his book *A Concise History of Baptists from the Time of Christ Their Founder to the 18th Century* (1855; repr., Lexington, KY: Ashland Avenue Baptist Church, 1956) and later condensed in America by James R. Graves then published by James M. Carroll in *The Trail of Blood: Following the Christians Down through the Centuries . . . or The History of Baptist Churches from the Time of Christ, Their Founder, to the Present Day* (Lexington, KY: Ashland Avenue Baptist Church, 1931). The trouble with Baptist successionism or any form of theological Anabaptist derivation is the testimony of the historical record itself, from the earliest Baptists. Within one year of the establishment of the Smyth congregation in Holland, Thomas Helwys led a faction of the church to separate then published a rebuttal of Smyth’s 1610 confession on the grounds that true Baptist faith and practice was distinct from the Anabaptist Mennonites. See Thomas Helwys, “A Declaration of Faith of English People: Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland,” in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard, 2nd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2011), 107. Smyth’s confession, dated 1610, was written as a demonstration of doctrinal solidarity with the Waterland Mennonites, in hopes that his congregation might merge with theirs. See McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 54. The first official multi-congregational Baptist confession of faith, written in 1644, was initially entitled, *A Confutation of the Anabaptists and of All others who affect no Civill Government, or The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (although falsely) called Anabaptists*. See Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 132; W. J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 171. In 1649, William Kiffin, London Particular Baptist pastor and associational influencer for several decades, authored a letter to the civil authorities on behalf of London Baptists entitled, “The Humble Petition and Representation of Several Churches of God in London, Commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists.” Edward B. Underhill, ed., *Confessions of Faith, and Other Public Documents, Illustrative of the History of the Baptist Churches of England in the 17th Century* (London: Haddon, 1854), 289–90. The early Baptists did not think of themselves as Anabaptist. To the contrary, they were expressly and emphatically non-Anabaptist as much as they were anti-pedobaptist. Because of the prevalence of Arminian doctrine and baptism by affusion in these early Baptist expressions, Wohlfarth labels all Baptist churches before 1633 “proto-Baptist,” or “embryonic Baptists,” arguing for a formal date of Baptist beginnings around 1640 when the members of the JLJ church in London recovered credobaptism by immersion. He proposes a more fluid beginning to the movement itself, owing a debt to both English Separatism and Dutch Anabaptism, between 1607–1640. See Wohlfarth, “Baptist Origins Revisited,” 3, 296, 303. Stephen Wright

While their baptism was by affusion rather than immersion, the Baptist principle of local church constitution by credobaptized regenerate members, in conjunction with wholesale defiance of pedobaptism and affirmation of complete local church autonomy, is the defining moment of Baptist beginnings. By the late sixteenth century, infant baptism had become all but synonymous with state-church religious institution, having merely metamorphosed from its global Roman Catholic Church expression to its nationalized Church of England expression under the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. Even the Puritan and Separatist movements within and apart from the Church of England embodied Reformation principles but did not fully reject pedobaptism in conjunction with local church autonomy and regenerate church membership.<sup>35</sup>

Smyth's actions between 1609 and 1610 reveal the tension between cooperation and confession. He became a Separatist but did not oppose all cooperation. He established a Baptist congregation but within only one year sought to merge it with the Waterland Mennonite church in Amsterdam. Thomas Helwys wrote his confession in 1611/12 as an apologetic against Smyth's move to merge with the Mennonites. Smyth

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argues against any formal or informal "native English Baptist" influence, Anabaptist or otherwise, upon Smyth and the Baptist convictions he developed. However, unlike other Baptist historians who date the beginning of the Baptist movement in connection with John Smyth's activity in 1609, Wright chooses to set the date of Baptist beginnings in 1603, upon the resolution of Smyth's legal battles with the Anglican Church government. Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603–1649* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2006), 7, 13–14. William T. Whitley, Anthony Chute, Nathan Finn, Michael Haykin, Bill Leonard, James Leo Garrett, Michael Waldrop, and others agree, however, dating the beginning of the Baptist movement either at the moment of John Smyth's se-baptism or his constitution of the first Baptist church upon the credobaptism of its membership who were all originally part of his Separatist immigration to Holland because of the persecution they endured by the Anglican Church and government. Whether their exact marker is Smyth's se-baptism or his constitution of a credobaptized church, the year is 1609 and the place is Amsterdam, Holland. William T. Whitley in John Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth: Tercentenary Edition for the Baptist Historical Society with Notes and Biography by W. T. Whitley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1915), 1:xc. Chute, Finn, and Haykin, *The Baptist Story*, 5. Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 3, 91–93. Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 23. Waldrop, "Toward a Theology of Cooperation," 47–48.

<sup>35</sup> See John Smyth's own exhaustive refutation of pedobaptism as a defining factor in his Baptist convictions, evidenced in his eighteen hypothetical syllogisms constituting a well-defined logical argument, based on Scripture, written in Latin before his death ("*Argumenta Contra Baptismum Infantum*"). Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 2:710–732. Smyth's *Argumenta Contra Baptismum Infantum* is translated, categorized, and abridged in appendix 1.

vacillated between maximalist and minimalist views of confessional cooperation, and Helwys quickly led a faction to split from the Smyth congregation because of doctrinal differences. From the earliest days of the Baptist movement, leading figures seem to be asking, “How much doctrinal agreement is needed for cooperation?” This tension would characterize the movement for generations to come. However, what is clear is that credobaptism, together with anti-pedobaptism and local church autonomy, was the defining moment that gave birth to the Baptist movement in Amsterdam, in 1609.

With the major literary resources surveyed, the Baptist doctrine of cooperation now will be traced through religiopolitical reformation, associational organization, and confessional declaration in the seventeenth century. The beginning of the movement is set in 1609 with the se-baptism and gathering of an autonomous, baptized congregation by John Smyth in Amsterdam, Holland.

### **Religiopolitical Reformation and Baptist Cooperation**

No movement is isolated within itself. Rather, all of history is a complex progression affected by compounded matrices of social, political, religious, economic, and cultural realities. So was the beginning of the Baptist movement in early seventeenth-century England. James Leo Garrett acknowledges the complex religious matrix that prompted the rise of the Baptists, particularly that of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>36</sup> However, it is not enough to resign the historical setting to religion alone, particularly during the English Enlightenment period. Wohlfarth adds English politics, history, and theology to the compounded “matrix” into which the Baptist movement was born.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, it must be considered that religion itself was not only personal and ecclesial, but also social and political. Alexander Cowan noted that “Organized religion was a major part of urban life” during the time period under review; “holy images, primarily of the

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<sup>36</sup> Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 6–7.

<sup>37</sup> Wohlfarth, “Baptist Origins Revisited,” 50–51.

Virgin Mary and St. Peter, adorned coins, doorways to public buildings, bridges, gateways and many private houses . . . Religion shaped the lives of townspeople at every point.”<sup>38</sup> Social dynamics within the vacillating systems of religiopolitical regulation publicly and privately prompted “the organized church and the institutions of urban government” to work “ever more closely together to assert both a religious and a political orthodoxy.”<sup>39</sup> To this more unified, more expressly asserted “religious and political orthodoxy,” attention is now turned.

Parallel to the Protestant Reformation in England was a religiopolitical reformation as well. Not only was reform happening within the Catholic, Protestant, and English churches, but political reform was happening concomitantly within England, Scotland, and Ireland—a political reform that interlaced religion and government with intensifying complication throughout the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ultimately, this religiopolitical reformation forced the adolescent Baptist movement to search the Scriptures and rediscover the biblical doctrine of cooperation, since inter-congregational cooperation was not forced by hierarchical ecclesiology inside an autonomous, free church setting. Instead, forced cooperation between religiopolitically governed congregations would need to be replaced with voluntary cooperation between locally autonomous ones of like faith and practice. What follows is a brief survey of the religiopolitical dynamics that surrounded the birth of autonomous Baptist churches, along with previews of the rediscovered biblical doctrine of cooperation that was in timely formation among them.

### **The Pre-Baptist English Religiopolitical Climate (597–1603)**

Over the course of the first several centuries AD, after conquering the island of

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<sup>38</sup> Cowan, *Urban Europe 1500–1700*, 93.

<sup>39</sup> Cowan, *Urban Europe 1500–1700*, 94. Further, this tightening relationship between church and government, Cowan writes, not only “ended any illusion of a single unified Christian church,” but “formed new kinds of social solidarities” and “complicated social relationships” (94).

Britannia in the 40s–60s, the Romans transformed the rural, sectarian Celts of the remote British island into a civilized, urban society; for four centuries the Romans ruled the island, and its people prospered economically, religiously, and socially.<sup>40</sup> St. Patrick, in the fifth century, evangelized the Celts and established the Celtic church. Pope Gregory sent a mission to the island for further Anglo-Saxon conversion to Roman Catholicism in 597. In the centuries that followed, the Celtic and Catholic churches clashed on the island.<sup>41</sup> Northumbrian Church historian Bede, in 731, authored his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* in which he, as English historian Robert Tombs noted, “first defined an English identity” which “gave an intellectual and religious significance to this still hypothetical nation, as one of the chosen Christian peoples, an instrument of God’s plan to spread orthodox Roman Christianity.”<sup>42</sup> The Baptist movement which was to dawn upon the nation 900 years later would work against this deeply rooted national heritage of a state church.<sup>43</sup> For hundreds of years, the vast majority of British Christian congregations knew only formal, forced cooperation under Roman and English religiopolitical authority. To work toward voluntarily cooperation, as autonomous churches, would upend not only an existing national governance but a 1,000-year-old national identity.

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Westminster Abbey was built by King Edward the Confessor, who was

<sup>40</sup> Robert Tombs notes that the Romans were “tolerant in matters of religion except in the case of cults that involved human sacrifice. That is why they eradicated the Druids . . . Christianity, too, reached Britain. As early as the beginning of the third century it was written that ‘parts of Britain inaccessible to the Romans have been subjected to Christ.’” Robert Tombs, *The English and Their History* (New York: Vintage, 2014), 13. See also Roy Strong, *The Story of Britain: A History of the Great Ages from the Romans to the Present* (New York: Pegasus, 2019), 11–15.

<sup>41</sup> Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 22.

<sup>42</sup> Tombs, *The English and Their History*, 26.

<sup>43</sup> A heritage that had come under increasingly discontented public scrutiny by the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. See John Foxe’s allusions to Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* in Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years*, 1:104–7. In his *Ecclesiastical History* (1570), Protestant John Foxe, author of the *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (first published in 1563), leveraged multiple characters and plot schemes within Chaucer’s *Tales* to allude to the religious hypocrisies of Roman Catholicism in England.



coronated in 1042. King Henry III, in 1245, rebuilt the Abby in French Gothic style, in a manner worthy of “priest-like kings who were vicars of God on earth and lords of men, lay and clerical.”<sup>44</sup> The correlation between king and vicar continued to intensify through the centuries until the coronation of King Henry VIII, June 24, 1509. Henry the VII had been known as “His Grace,” but Henry VIII would become “His Majesty.” Within only a few decades, Henry VIII’s leadership severed the relationship between England and Rome, and, as historian Roy Strong suggests, “the king replaced the Pope with himself.”<sup>45</sup> English playwright William Shakespeare later dramatized the king’s egotism: “I can see his pride Peep through each part of him.”<sup>46</sup> By the end of Henry VIII’s reign “Church and state had been welded into one,” and “a new political identity had been established” in England.<sup>47</sup>

Henry VIII’s son Edward IV ruled from 1547 to 1553, moving the English Church to an early Protestant position by changing the form of worship to be more Word-centric than sacraments-centric. During Edward IV’s rule, Protestants flocked to the country and open religious debate became normal.<sup>48</sup> The churches were forcefully “rid . . . of the superstition which polluted Roman Catholicism” as stained-glass windows were whitewashed, statues of English saints were removed, and elaborate altars and church

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<sup>44</sup> Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 69.

<sup>45</sup> Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 140, 151. See also Richard Groves, prelude to *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity (1611/1612)*, by Thomas Helwys, ed. Richard Groves (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1998), xi. The break with Rome came when Henry VIII decided to divorce his wife, Katherine, to remarry Anne Bullen. The Pope refused to grant this divorce, so the King broke ties with Rome and instituted an English Church independent of Rome and completely controlled by the English monarchy.

<sup>46</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*, Folger Shakespeare Library, Act I Scene I, lines 79–80, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://shakespeare.folger.edu/>.

<sup>47</sup> Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 155. The newness of reformation, cultural expression, philosophical dialogue, and architectural renovation during the reign of King Henry VIII was set within the larger cultural shifts of the sixteenth century. The discovery of the Americas in 1492, a new interest in learning Greek and Hebrew, and a new exposure to Greek theater and Roman philosophy were giving rise to a curious and evolving English people. See Tombs, *The English and Their History*, 160.

<sup>48</sup> Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 166–67.

furnishings were smashed with hammers.<sup>49</sup> After an ill-fated attempt at a coup by Lady Jane Grey, Edward IV's half-sister Mary followed, reigning in Catholic terror over the English people from 1553 to 1558. She married a Spanish Catholic husband, formally reconciled the national church to Rome, and launched a merciless attack on non-Catholics across the island, burning more than 300 men and women at the stake for their religious beliefs during her five short years of power.<sup>50</sup> In 1611/12, Thomas Helwys, the first Baptist pastor on English soil, shortly after authoring his *Declaration of Faith of English People*, openly opposed King James I whose staunch Anglicanism, according to Helwys, placed the people "under the same bondage" as bloody Queen Mary's Roman Catholicism; the Roman Catholic Church was "the beast and the whore," and the Church of England, "the second beast."<sup>51</sup>

Elizabeth I, the famed Gloriana of England, ruled alone, unmarried, from 1558 to 1603. She was the embodiment of English dignity, national patriotism, formal religiosity, and fearless political and military leadership. Elizabeth proved herself to be a "consummate pragmatist," according to historian Rebecca Fraser, having much in common with her grandfather Henry VIII.<sup>52</sup> She was beloved by the English populace, but worked most of her life to quell the uprising of Separatists and Puritans. In *Henry VIII* (1613), Shakespeare tugged on the heartstrings of English royalists and the court of James I, Elizabeth's successor, with creative sycophancy: "yet now promises Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings, Which time shall bring to ripeness. She shall be . . . A pattern to all princes living with her And all that shall succeed . . . Good grows with her . . . [and]

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<sup>49</sup> Rebecca Fraser, *The Story of Britain from the Romans to the Present: A Narrative History*. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 277.

<sup>50</sup> Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 169–71.

<sup>51</sup> Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, 31–43.

<sup>52</sup> Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 268.

all the world shall mourn her.”<sup>53</sup> To Shakespeare, to the royal court, and to the English public at large, Queen Elizabeth was a national treasure—a progenitor of religiopolitical peace and a bulwark of Christian dignity. But to pre-Baptist eventual confessors such as John Smyth and Thomas Helwys who were working through their season of “puritan-separatist tradition” during the final years of her reign, Gloriana’s crown was an ominous predictor of future religious persecution.<sup>54</sup>

In Charles Jenkins’s 1881 volume on *Baptist Doctrines*, Thomas Henderson Pritchard, president of Wake Forest College in North Carolina, alludes to a form of Baptist successionism (or at least theological continuity with the sixteenth-century Anabaptists) when he writes that “the confessions of faith put forth by the Baptists in the days of Henry VIII, who began to reign in 1509 . . . are almost identical with these now generally entertained by Baptist churches.”<sup>55</sup> While this dissertation does not take a successionist position for Baptist beginnings, it is undeniable that, as Pritchard suggests, Baptist ideas were forming and Baptist convictions were voicing in the sixteenth century. The Protestant Reformation, the rise of the Church of England, and the religious ideologies of Anabaptism, Puritanism, and Separatism were setting the stage for a Baptist beginning that would mature throughout the course of the next seven decades.

### **The English Religiopolitical Climate from James I to the Commonwealth (1603–1649)**

When James IV of Scotland became King James I of a united kingdom

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<sup>53</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*, Act 5 Scene 4, lines 2530, 39–40, 71. Further, in lines 41–64, the famed playwright nodded to the reigning king: “Nor shall this peace sleep with her; but, as when The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix, Her ashes new create another heir As great in admiration as herself, So shall she leave her blessedness to one, When heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness, Who from the sacred ashes of her honor Shall starlike rise as great in fame as she was And so stand fixed.”

<sup>54</sup> Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas H. Pritchard, “The Difference Between a Baptist Church and All Other Churches,” in *Baptist Doctrines: Being an Exposition, in a Series of Essays by Representative Baptist Ministers, of the Distinctive Points of Baptist Faith and Practice*, ed. Charles A. Jenkins (St. Louis: Clancy R. Barns, 1881), 279.

(England, Scotland, and Ireland) upon accession to the throne, an “erosion of trust” between the throne and the people ensued.<sup>56</sup> The Tudors before him had been elevated to “semi-divine status,” but they never touted it; James, the first Stuart king, did.<sup>57</sup> While in Scotland, James had come to believe and openly espouse the doctrine of the “Divine Right of Kings.” Perhaps a concise explanation of this religiopolitical doctrine is best described in his own words. “Kings are justly called Gods,” was the title of his speech before Parliament March 21, 1609, just two months after John Smyth and his congregation of refugees constituted the first Baptist church in Amsterdam. “The state of monarchy is the supremist thing on earth,” the crowned king began, “for kings are not only God’s lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God’s throne, but even by God himself they are called Gods . . . Kings are justly called Gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth.”<sup>58</sup> The king mandated that this doctrine be preached from the pulpits on Sunday mornings.<sup>59</sup>

Four years earlier, on November 5, 1605, an organized Catholic attempt to blow up Parliament during King James’s address failed to accomplish its goal but succeeded in deeply engraining nationwide hatred for Catholics. The attempted massacre of King and Parliament became known as the “Gunpowder Plot.” It was marked as a day of annual commemoration by King James—an official national holiday that remained until 1800.<sup>60</sup> On this day of national commemoration 83 years later, another Scottish king, William of

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<sup>56</sup> Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 201.

<sup>57</sup> Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 202.

<sup>58</sup> Brian MacArthur, *The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches* (London: Penguin, 1995), 44. Combine this with King James’s unrefined Scottishness, proud superiority complex, and undignified demeanor, and it is not difficult to see how he quickly became unpopular, especially following the reign of Elizabeth I who was, in many ways, his opposite. See Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 315. Because of England’s “long-standing and vocal prejudice” against the Scots, James’s Scottishness was, as Conrad Russell explained, “His worst disadvantage.” See Conrad Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments: English History 1509–1660* (London: Oxford University, 1971), 258.

<sup>59</sup> Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 315.

<sup>60</sup> See Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 203; Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 318.

Orange, would land at Torbay in Devon and begin his land-based campaign to overthrow the throne of Charles II at the request of the Presbyterian Parliament – a Parliamentary plot against the Crown, by a Crown, that would finally liberate organized Baptist cooperation.<sup>61</sup>

In the years that immediately followed the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, “vigorous” anti-Catholic legislation was enacted by Parliament which included a forced oath of allegiance to the Church of England for any office holder in civil authority or ecclesial position.<sup>62</sup> Richard Bancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1604 to 1610, enforced this oath to the disapproval of early Baptist organizers—a major point of contention for John Smyth who wrote against “Ecclesiasticall Hierarchy, and subordination of Clergie-men” to those “having Superintendency, Superiority, & jurisdiction over them as their proper Spirituall LL. to whome they dayly yield Spirituall homage and Subjection in their oaths off Canonically obedience, and actions of like Servitude.”<sup>63</sup> In this religiopolitically oppressive climate, Smyth confessed in Article 13 of his *Short Confession of Faith* (1609) that such “power” was “delegated” to each “church of Christ,” instead of to the Crown, for “announcing the word, administering the sacraments, appointing ministers, disclaiming them, and also excommunicating.”<sup>64</sup>

Smyth knew that local church autonomy would necessitate a new kind of voluntary inter-congregational cooperation. He also knew that whatever he confessed, he must confess from scriptural principle. So, in “The Differences of the Churches” (1608)—one year before he ignited the Baptist movement, constituted the first Baptist

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<sup>61</sup> Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 381.

<sup>62</sup> William T. Whitley in Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 1:lii.

<sup>63</sup> Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 2:467. This was part of a lengthy argument by Smyth, written in 1609, in which he set out to “prove that al (sic) the Ecclesiastical assemblies of the Land, as they stand established by law are false Churches . . . framed according to the invention of man, even that man of sinne, Antichrist the Archenemy of Christ” (2:464).

<sup>64</sup> See “Short Confession of Faith in XX Articles,” in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 93–95.

church, and penned the first Baptist confession—Smyth demonstrated that the doctrine of inter-congregational cooperation was naturally seeded in the fertile soil of local church autonomy. Referencing Romans 15:17 in his section on weekly collections to supply the local church’s treasury, he foreshadows the need for a basic structure of inter-congregational cooperation in financial assistance for the poor, orphanages, and widows “not only of the[ir] owne, but of other true Churches, especially of them from whom they received the fayth.”<sup>65</sup> His 1608 *The Differences of the Churches* intends to give a unified voice to “true constituted Churches,” in tandem with the recovered biblical model of autonomy and voluntary cooperation; this unification of true churches would require “dissensions” within established ones, based upon shared doctrinal conviction.<sup>66</sup> Smyth held a moral and theological obligation for inter-congregational cooperation based on doctrinal agreement, even when his was the only congregation he knew that held to its revolutionary kind of faith and practice.

Two years later, Thomas Helwys, Smyth’s partner in Baptist beginnings and co-advocate for religious freedom and local church autonomy, likened King James’s religious totalitarianism to Bloody Mary’s before him: “Queen Mary by her sword of justice had no power over her subject’s consciences,” and neither can “the publishing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” be done by force or by king’s decree.<sup>67</sup> His point was that true

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<sup>65</sup> Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 1:319.

<sup>66</sup> Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 1:270.

<sup>67</sup> Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, 35, 38. After returning his congregation to Spittlefield, London, in 1612, Helwys sent a copy of this book to King James with a personalized inscription inside the front cover which read:

Hear, O king, and despise not the counsel of the poor, and let their complaints come before thee. The king is a mortal man and not God, therefore has no power over the immortal souls of his subjects, to make laws and ordinances for them, and to set spiritual lords over them. If the king has authority to make spiritual lords and laws, then he is an immortal God and not a mortal man. O king, be not seduced by deceivers to sin against God whom you ought to obey, nor against your poor subjects who ought and will obey you in all things with body, life, and goods, or else let their lives be taken from the earth. God save the king. (xxiv)

In the book, he warns King James that “Kings cannot serve the Lamb and the beast,” and calls the Church of England “the second beast” asserting that by it “the king’s people are under the same bondage” as

dissenters (Baptists, for Helwys) would always dissent unto death for conscience's sake, whether against Mary's militant Catholicism of the sixteenth century or James's militant Anglicanism of the seventeenth. So, evangelistic cooperation must become the voluntary pursuit of free churches rather than the forced uniformity of state-run parishes. Helwys's words were as prophetic as they were profound. Over the next sixty years, until William III's 1689 Act of Toleration afforded religious freedom to confessing London Baptists, religious freedom and local church autonomy became hallmarks of Baptist confession, provocations for the brutal persecution of Baptists and other independents, and stimuli for voluntary inter-congregational cooperation.

Charles I ascended to the crown in 1625 and reigned until his public beheading by order of Parliament on January 30, 1649. Under Charles I, the religiopolitical dynamics of a state-controlled church would take a sharp and volatile turn.<sup>68</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, was one of the king's most trusted advisors and became responsible for carrying out the religious policies of the Crown. These policies made much of religious icons such as stained-glass windows, clerical robes, crucifixes and statues, and religious rituals like bowing at the name of Jesus, producing the sign of the cross at baptism, and recitation of extra-biblical religious writings.<sup>69</sup> Laud was a curious case to

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Catholic Queen Mary's subjects before him. While there is no evidence to suggest that King James either did or did not read Helwys's book, after its publication Helwys was arrested and imprisoned at Newgate in London in 1612, where he eventually died. See pp. 31–32, 42–43, 51. Also see Chute, Finn, and Haykin, *The Baptist Story*, 20.

<sup>68</sup> His marriage to Catholic princess Henrietta Maria of France did not help, either. Henrietta's staunch and flagrant Catholicism not only caused public outrage but also internal division between the King and the Archbishop. Diane Purkiss postulated that, in many ways, the growing internal religiopolitical battle of the 1630s was not as much between the Crown and the Parliament as it was between Archbishop Laud's militant Anglicanism and Queen Henrietta Maria's flagrant Catholicism. While Charles affectionately called his queen "Maria," Anglicans and Protestants alike preferred to call her "Queen Mary," an ominous and defamatory throwback to the horrors of Mary Queen of Scots in the prior century. Diane Purkiss, *The English Civil War: Papists, Gentlewomen, Soldiers, and Witchfinders in the Birth of Modern Britain* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 34–35.

<sup>69</sup> Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 27. Further, Purkiss surmises that the ultimate religiopolitical pivot point toward civil war, inciting the greatest outrage from Protestants and independents, was Laud's teachings and orders concerning the altar. He taught that God resides at the altar among his people, rather than at the pulpit. At the altar, Christ might say *hoc est corpus meum* ("this is my body") while at the pulpit,

Baptists, Protestants, and Puritans alike. Somewhat Edwardian in Anglican philosophy, he was a staunch advocate of “royal supremacy” but sympathetic both to Catholic hierocratic ecclesiology and to Puritan theocracy.<sup>70</sup> His ecclesiastical reforms were “tactless,” “querulous,” and “aggressive” attempts to suppress and eradicate Puritanism, according to English historian Roy Strong.<sup>71</sup> David Ogg notes the peculiar social disposition toward Charles I in the beginning and middle of his reign, as fearful countrymen adopted a position of “Passive Obedience,” or “Non Resistance,” to the crown; disobedience to or even disagreement with the king was heretical, sacrilegious, and rebellious.<sup>72</sup>

Charles’s relationship with Parliament was tenuous at first, fatal at last. Between 1629 and 1640, Charles ruled without summoning Parliament even once. These eleven years are now known as Charles’s years of “Personal Rule,” during which the King’s exchequer was funded bypassing Parliament by his questionable resurrection of a long forgotten “Ship Money” tax.<sup>73</sup> Because of the entanglement of government and church,

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*hic est verbum meum* (“this is my word”). Needless to say, Laud’s elevation of the sacraments and the symbols surrounding them was an outrage to Puritans, Independents, Presbyterians, and Dissenters who held to the Reformation doctrines of *sola Scriptura* and *sola Christus*. For court records from Speaker Walter Pym’s accusations against the king regarding “popish Ceremonies, bowing to altars & pictures” and the “innovations” of publication that led to the proliferation of Catholic literature, see Judith D. Maltby, ed., *The Short Parliament (1640) Diary of Sir Thomas Aston* (London: Royal History Society, 1988), 8.

<sup>70</sup> Leo F. Solt, *Church and State in Early Modern England 1509–1640* (New York: Oxford University, 1990), 204.

<sup>71</sup> Strong writes that, for Charles I, “the Puritans were an aberration to be rooted out.” He hoped to restore the order of the church to the status it knew under its pre-reformation Roman Catholic idealism, something Elizabeth I also desired but never absolutely enforced. “This was a specifically Anglican movement . . . This was an age of intense and passionate belief.” Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 211–12. Further, Purkiss explains that “the interlacing of politics and religion” had become “obvious: the rails and table, harmless though they sound, were experienced as creating an entirely artificial hierarchy, reserving the priest as sacred and the altar as a sacred space where he presided (not unlike the inner rooms at court).” This became a constant reminder of the “new church hierarchy” put in place by Archbishop Laud, as “an attempt to prevent an upper-class drift to Rome.” Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 28.

<sup>72</sup> David Ogg, *England in the Reigns of James II and William III* (London: Oxford University, 1969), 166–67, 180.

<sup>73</sup> Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 22–25. See also Strong, *The Story of Britain*, 210. For a concise explanation of the ultimate illegality and monarchical manipulation of Charles’s “Ship Money”



taxes funded not only the king's treasury but the ecclesiastical work of the Crown. So, not only would tithes and offerings in the Anglican church fund the ecclesiastical system that threatened and persecuted early Baptists, but now questionable taxes on commerce would as well. The taxation and ecclesiastical funding schemes of the Charles-Laud era, exacerbated by Charles's despotic governance and Laud's religious relics, would feel to Baptists much more like the ruses of the Pardoner's "fained flattering" than the virtuousness of Gloriana's "princely care."<sup>74</sup> During Charles's Personal Rule, his ambitious Anglican reforms and authoritarian governance were building the platform for his own demise, like Ahasuerus's Haman, full of rage and drunk on prideful self-promotion (Esth 5:14; 7:9–10).<sup>75</sup>

But while Parliament slept and the king autonomized, English Baptists were not dilatory. During these years, the first Particular Baptist church was constituted in London (the Church at Broad Street at Wapping, 1633), Roger Williams migrated to America and planted the First Baptist Church in the New World (at Providence, Rhode Island, in 1638), Thomas Grantham and Benjamin Keach—who were to become bulwarks and architects of the General and Particular Baptist movements for centuries to follow—were born (1630 and 1640, respectively), and believer's Baptism by immersion was recovered and standardized as a matter of Baptist faith and practice (1640/41 in the JIJ church). Two years into the English Civil War, the first Particular Baptist confession of faith would be composed and adopted by seven associated congregations in London

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funding campaign, see Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments*, 320–22. With the threat of war and insufficient funding, Charles was forced to call Parliament again in 1640. It met for only one month, known now as the "Short Parliament." It was during this Short Parliament that Walter Pym, who would eventually become the King's undoing, became "a national hero" for his efforts to "energize the nation by articulating its dread of papists." In the Short Parliament, on November 7, 1640, Pym gave a two-hour speech claiming there was a Catholic plot to detrimentally change both the law and the religion of the English people. Purkiss comments, "Radical thinking in religion could come to sound like—and to be—political radicalism." Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 104–6. See also Maltby, *The Short Parliament (1640)*, 9.

<sup>74</sup> Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 23. MacArthur, *The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches*, 43.

<sup>75</sup> Purkiss calls Charles I the "disastrous shaper of his own fate." Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 3.

(1644).

Between 1642 and 1649, the English were entangled in a bloody and costly Civil War. The cause and progression dynamics of the war are too complex to adequately treat here.<sup>76</sup> However, one thing is sure; historian Diane Purkiss writes, “the English Civil War would not have occurred without the hysterical dread of popery,” whether from Rome or Canterbury.<sup>77</sup> Parliament’s New Model Army, which was created during the Civil War, “more and more conflated the war with religious struggle.”<sup>78</sup> England’s Civil War was a holy war, fought with religious liberty in mind. Upon Charles’s public beheading January 30, 1649, on charges of treason against England itself, he became a martyr for religiopolitical Anglicanism. His final words echoed throughout the halls of both Westminster and Canterbury for decades: “I declare before you all that I die a

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<sup>76</sup> In an effort toward precision in dating the beginning of the War, Purkiss states, “What triggered the war was a prayer book.” Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 71. It was the 1637 “Scottish Prayer Book” through which Archbishop William Laud sought to enforce upon Scotland “the reforms that had made many so unhappy in England” (71). The book was the culmination of efforts toward forced religious solidarity between England and Scotland, which Purkiss labels a campaign for the “Anglicization” of the Scots. “It was when it became evident that Charles and Laud hoped to make the Church of England and the Kirk [(Scottish word for “Church”)] as close to identical as possible that the Kirk grew resistive” (74). Sunday July 23, 1637, riots erupted inside and outside Scottish churches as the Prayer Book was opened and read. February 23, 1638, a special committee of Scottish nobles created the “Covenant,” vowing to oppose popery, whether from London or Rome, and to uphold the “true religion of the Church of Scotland” (77). November 21, 1638, the Scottish Glasgow Assembly was filled with people who began to work toward a future Scotland characterized by “full and unmixed Presbyterianism” (79). As war drew nearer, the people made clear that the conflict was between English Anglicanism and Scottish Presbyterianism, but King Charles believed the rising conflict was an attempt to usurp the monarchy. James Graham Montrose called the English prayer book “a dead service book, the brood of the bowels of the whore of Babylon” (81). The first battle of the Civil War was between Scot and Scot—those who supported King Charles and those Covenanters who did not, led by Montrose. See Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 71–86.

<sup>77</sup> Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 139. Purkiss and others prefer to divide the English Civil War into two distinct wars. The first was between Scot and Scot, those loyal to the English King versus those united and frenzied at the Glasgow Assembly November 21, 1638, vowing to do whatever it took to secure a future Scotland characterized by “full and unmixed Presbyterianism.” The second was between Charles and an infuriated Parliament from 1642 to 1649. The king marched on the Long Parliament January 4, 1642, with a few hundred soldiers after being presented with Walter Pym’s Grand Remonstrance one month earlier, demanding the arrest of Pym and four others. Parliament formed its own army in 1645, the New Model Army, which executed Archbishop Laud and eventually King Charles himself. Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 77–79, 118–20. See also John Adair, *Cheriton 1644: The Campaign and the Battle* (Leeds, England: Sapere, 1973), 340, 347.

<sup>78</sup> Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 420.

Christian according to the profession of the church of England . . . I go from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown, where no disturbance can be, no disturbance in the world.”<sup>79</sup>

The axe fell. The war ended. The public cringed. The nation had executed its king.

Stephano’s familiar words must have quieted the consciences of public and Parliament: “He that dies pays all debts.”<sup>80</sup> They imagined Charles’s execution to be the end of tyranny and the beginning of peace. But while Charles’s execution brought resolution to the Civil War, it merely shifted the religiopolitical conflict exacerbated by his autocratic governance. Eight-hundred thousand English and Scottish died in this, the “most costly armed conflict in [the] history” of the English people.<sup>81</sup> Those who were left could not help but be confronted by the “obvious” “interlacing of politics and religion” to the extent that their national identity had become wrapped up in their “response to the perceived menace of popery. To be truly, properly English or Scottish,” Purkiss assessed, “was to stand against Rome,” or anything that came to resemble it.<sup>82</sup> But in the aftermath of war, a militant Laudianism was soon to be replaced by a militant Cromwellianism. The latter would be somewhat more favorable for Baptists, but it would give way to a whiplash of monarchial authoritarianism when the Crown was restored, and Charles II reigned in religiopolitical solidarity with the Royalist Anglican Parliament.

### **The English Religiopolitical Climate from the Commonwealth to William III and Mary (1649–1702)**

In one publication dated September 10–17, 1649, a few months into the Commonwealth Period during which Parliament ruled on its own, Particular Baptist leader William Kiffin is described as a trouble maker who “knows how to tickle a Tyrant;”

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<sup>79</sup> MacArthur, *The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches*, 58.

<sup>80</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Folger Shakespeare Library, 107 (Act 3, Scene 2, Line 144, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://shakespeare.folger.edu/>).

<sup>81</sup> Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 3, 7.

<sup>82</sup> Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 107.

the tyrant tickled was Oliver Cromwell, a rising military leader who soon thereafter ended Parliament's rule and became the militant Lord Protector over all England.<sup>83</sup> That same year, Kiffin presented a letter to his anti-Baptist aggressors in defense against false charges of civil insurrection during Baptist meetings: "our meetings are . . . solely for the advancement of the gospel."<sup>84</sup> Kiffin, a leader among the first inter-congregational confessing body of Baptists (London, 1644), understood Baptist congregationalism and inter-congregational cooperation to be an evangelistic and missional enterprise rather than a political or social coalescence.

Baptists in England enjoyed a certain favor within the Cromwellian Protectorate between 1653 and 1659.<sup>85</sup> During the war, Oliver Cromwell was the Eastern Association's most celebrated soldier.<sup>86</sup> As Lord Protector, Cromwell ruled the country with an iron fist against Parliament's push toward a Presbyterian ecclesiastical hierarchy. Cromwell was a devout Puritan, and a friend to the Independents and other dissenters.<sup>87</sup> Purkiss writes that the Lord Protector "saw himself as acting in the name of God, and God, he thought, was

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<sup>83</sup> "Mercurius Elencticus: Communicating the unparrallell'd Proceedings of the Rebels at Westminster" (London, September 10–17, 1649, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://newspaperarchive.com/mercurius-elenticus-sep-10-1649-p-1/>). Kiffin's brief record of the JLJ church's history between 1633 and 1644, now called "the Kiffin Manuscript," is an essential account for Baptist heritage. In it is found the oldest account of Particular Baptist recovery of baptism by immersion. While General Baptist churches were many around London in the 1630s and 40s, they had not yet come to this position. According to Kiffin, by 1644, seven Particular Baptist churches in London had come to the position of credobaptism by immersion and had established a "comunion" (sic) among themselves. McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, 26–27.

<sup>84</sup> See *The Humble Petition and Representation of Several Churches of God in London, Commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists*, in Underhill, *Confessions of Faith*, 289–91.

<sup>85</sup> Cromwell's Protectorate ended upon his death September 3, 1658, but the Protectorate fell to Oliver's son, Richard, for the next eight months, until he was removed by Parliament's English Committee of Safety, setting the stage for the Restoration of the Stuart throne May 29, 1660, with the ascension of Charles I's son, Charles II.

<sup>86</sup> During the war, Parliament's New Model Army was made up of several "Associations" that were loosely connected through their shared disdain for the king. The Eastern Association was distinctively Puritan, singing hymns as they marched into battle, and living in enforced conservative morality as a military unit. See Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 342–43.

<sup>87</sup> Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 343–46.

acting through his soldiers.”<sup>88</sup> Baptists, Purkiss further explains, were a driving “force toward and within the New Model Army,” since they saw the army as “God’s instrument for the destruction of popery.”<sup>89</sup>

Political reformations in the period heavily influenced the way Baptists related to one another, including their structures and mechanisms of inter-congregational cooperation. As Stephen Wright records, “From this time, the broader political and theological controversy came to influence far more the terms in which the Baptists debated and related to each other.”<sup>90</sup> Upon the restoration of the Crown in 1660, Charles II dug up Cromwell’s body and hung it in the public square.<sup>91</sup> The display was a sign of what was to come, as Charles II became increasingly hostile toward Baptists, Independents, and Presbyterians alike. General Baptists especially became the object of much “obnoxious” persecution.<sup>92</sup> Thomas Grantham, “Defender of General Baptist Doctrine,” penned *A*

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<sup>88</sup> Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 564.

<sup>89</sup> Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 420.

<sup>90</sup> Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 114. Wright further supposes a culture of inter-denominational cooperation that was formed by necessity when the Civil War came to an end and the Commonwealth and Protectorate persisted:

The Presbyterians were laying down the framework of church government and discussing tests for the exclusion of heretics; they became increasingly impatient with Independent foot-dragging in such matters, so the estrangement of the two parties deepened . . . Altogether, the time was ripe for the Baptists to proclaim their right to congregate on the basis of moderately expressed doctrine and practice, enforced by a voluntary association of churches. This would firmly disassociate them from the more disruptive and disreputable lay preachers, and from the accusations of social radicalism and theological unsoundness. For the Baptists it would help to cement their friendship with the Independents and to secure their future in any arrangements in which the latter were influential. (Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 114)

This developing alliance between Baptists and Independents later compounded in a display of solidarity with Presbyterians in 1677, as London Particular Baptists modeled their confession primarily after the *Westminster Confession* of 1646 rather than the first *London Baptist Confession* of 1644/46. See Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 132; W. Madison Grace II, “Transcriber’s Preface to An Orthodox Creed: Unabridged 17th Century General Baptist Confession,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 48, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 127.

<sup>91</sup> Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, 565.

<sup>92</sup> Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 73–74. See also McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, 76–79. McBeth reproduces original records from the Broadmead Church in Bristol that chronicle specific persecutions during Charles II’s rule because of his religious policies and enforcement agents.

*Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith* that year and led forty-one General Baptist pastors to sign it. Grantham himself presented the confession to King Charles.<sup>93</sup> In 1663, the association of Baptists thought it safe to gather again, and they formally standardized their confession.<sup>94</sup> This act of confessional cooperation among London Baptists was a display of great courage in a religiopolitical firestorm. It was also an impetus for Grantham's continued efforts at unity and cooperation between General and Particular Baptists.<sup>95</sup> The religious persecutions of the mid-century were, for Grantham, a stimulus that excited his deeply held moral and theological obligation toward voluntary inter-congregational cooperation. Throughout the reign of Charles II, Grantham continued to openly and courageously advocate for religious tolerance and organized Baptist cooperation.<sup>96</sup>

Because of the egregious religious intolerance of Charles II's Crown, in anticipation of the unabashed Catholicism of his brother and evident successor James II, and in light of Charles II's failure thus far to produce an heir, in 1677 (the same year the *Second London Baptist Confession* was authored) conspirators in Parliament were already

<sup>93</sup> Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 74.

<sup>94</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 205.

<sup>95</sup> Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 91.

<sup>96</sup> For example, see Thomas Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus: or, The Ancient Christian Religion* (London: Printed for Francis Smith at the Sign of the Elephant and Castle in Cornhill near the Royal-Exchange, 1678). Defending Baptist churches against accusations of seditiousness and treason, he wrote, "The Principles of the Baptized Churches, in Point of Religion, have nothing of a State-seditious Spirit in the nature of them." (Book III, 4). Further, "Wherefore we humbly beseech his Majesty, and desire all our Fellow Subjects, that our Actions, Doctrines and Lives, may be the only Glasses through which they will look into our Hearts, and pass judgment upon us; and that the Tenents (sic) or Opinions of others, either in this or Foreign Kingdoms, may not be imputed to us, when our Doctrines and Lives do declare our abhorrency (sic) of them," (Book III, 8). In Book II, he argues in favor of regular "Conventions" or "General Assemblies" of messengers from Baptist churches which may promote the "Brotherly Interest which they have in the Strength of each other, and the Duty which lieth upon the Churches one to help another in their difficulties" (Book II, 137). He even somewhat prophetically anticipated a day when an annual or triannual assembly of Baptist churches would unite in General Assembly and interact with united Baptist bodies in other nations as well (Book III, 36).

working to arrange the marriage of James II's daughter Mary to William III of Orange.<sup>97</sup> James II assumed the throne upon Charles II's death in 1685, and he immediately began to re-Romanize the Anglican Church. He hoped to woo Dissenters in his anti-Presbyterian disposition, but Baptists and others preferred a Protestant Presbyterianism over any hint of a return to nationalized Catholicism.<sup>98</sup> In this environment of anticipated Catholic revival, Baptists saw the value of confessional solidarity with the Presbyterian Parliamentary stakeholders. Just as Particular Baptists sought solidarity with other Independents for political expediency in the *Declaration of Divers Elders and Brethren* (1647/51), they sought solidarity with both Congregationalists and Presbyterians in their *Second London Baptist Confession* (1677/89), modeling it after the Congregationalist *Savoy Confession* (1658) and Presbyterian *Westminster Confession* (1646) rather than the *First London Baptist Confession* (1644/46).<sup>99</sup>

James II's brief rule from 1685 to 1688 did much to jeopardize the religious freedoms of Baptists and other non-Catholics. After being denied funding by Parliament in the first months of his reign, he turned to his cousin King Louis XIV of France, a devout Catholic, who promised the English king £2 million if he would restore the country to the Roman Catholic religion.<sup>100</sup> Heavily influenced by his cousin's Catholic regime and the Jesuit movement, James II established a national army that guaranteed special provisions for Roman Catholic soldiers and officers, and he flooded the nation with

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<sup>97</sup> Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 373.

<sup>98</sup> Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 379–80.

<sup>99</sup> Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 173. Wright further argues that Particular Baptist confessions of the period mostly served political purposes unifying and expressing a certain “political activism” (150–51, 224–25). For discussion on the 1677/89 confession's likeness to the mentioned Congregationalist and Presbyterian confessions more so than the 1644/46 *London Baptist Confession*, see Chad Van Dixhorn, *Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 237; Peter Masters, *The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689* (London: Wakeman Trust, 1981), 5; McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 216.

<sup>100</sup> Ogg, *England in the Reigns of James II and William III*, 156.

printed pro-Roman Catholic propaganda.<sup>101</sup> April 4, 1687, he issued the Declaration of Indulgence which explicitly asserted his desire that all English peoples would become “members of the Catholic church.”<sup>102</sup> One year later, he passed a second iteration of the Declaration, on April 27, 1688. By this point, “a certain national unity” was being solidified against the king rather than for him.<sup>103</sup>

At the invitation of Protestant Parliament leaders in England, James II’s son-in-law, William III of Orange, organized a formidable military force and marched on London November 5, 1688. He took England in a minimally contested conquest, the first time the country had been conquered by a foreign army since 1066. Catholic King James II abdicated the throne December 14, 1688. February 12, 1689, the joint houses issued a Declaration of Rights (which later became England’s Bill of Rights). The next day, February 13, 1689, two important events took place in London relevant to this study: Parliament offered William and Mary the joint crown, and “Calvinist Baptists of England and Wales held their first General Assembly” comprised of messengers from over one hundred churches.<sup>104</sup> The “Glorious Revolution,” as William and Mary’s usurpation of the throne came to be known, “secured English Protestantism,” Rebecca Fraser explains, “which was now identified with the rights and liberties of the people against the attacks of a despotic Catholic king.”<sup>105</sup> When William and Mary signed The Toleration Act in May of 1689, the religious liberties of Baptists to congregate and worship freely was firmly secured.<sup>106</sup> Baptists from London and Wales, still in General Assembly in London,

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<sup>101</sup> Ogg, *England in the Reigns of James II and William III*, 158–68.

<sup>102</sup> Ogg, *England in the Reigns of James II and William III*, 180.

<sup>103</sup> Ogg, *England in the Reigns of James II and William III*, 189.

<sup>104</sup> McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 218. For a more detailed historical unfolding of events leading to the accession of William and Mary as England’s joint regents over the United Kingdom, see Ogg, *England in the Reigns of James II and William III*, 222–67.

<sup>105</sup> Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 384.

<sup>106</sup> Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 388.



felt a new sense of confidence in expressing their doctrinal distinctives. Between September 3 and September 12, they formally endorsed and publicly stated their second *London Baptist Confession*, which was originally penned in 1677 most likely by the hand of William Kiffin, the tyrant tickler of 1649.<sup>107</sup>

The actions of gathering and confessing through the rhythms of seventeenth-century English religiopolitical vacillation are evidence of Baptist cooperation. Throughout the period, Baptists cooperated among themselves as well as with Separatists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and other Independents and dissenters when beneficial to their cause. Even when the presenting cooperative draw was for religious liberty or political expediency, Baptists knew their coalescence was most surely for the protection of their ability to advance the gospel without undue or unbiblical hierarchal ecclesiastical control. However, further evidence subsists that a doctrine of cooperation was more than pragmatic or circumstantial necessity. Rather, through seventeenth-century English Baptist associational organization, a doctrine of cooperation that is more explicitly centered on evangelism and mission becomes evident within and between likeminded Baptist congregations in the same period.

### **Associational Organization and Baptist Cooperation**

Although the Baptist movement began with John Smyth in 1609 and the rudimentary concepts of inter-congregational cooperation were born with it, the occasion for formal associationalism between likeminded Baptist churches did not rise until early in the fifth decade. Within the Presbyterians' political maneuvering against the Church of England's oppressive ecclesiastical authoritarianism at the beginning of the Civil War, Baptists found opportunity to form associations between likeminded autonomous churches.<sup>108</sup> Formal voluntary associations of autonomous likeminded units were not

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<sup>107</sup> McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 218. For the likelihood of Kiffin's original authorship of, or at least influence upon, the 1677 confession, see Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 142.

<sup>108</sup> Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 132. See n89 in this chap.

unique to Baptist thought. As early as the late 1630s and throughout the Civil War, regional military “associations” formed across England, comprised of voluntary (and later, paid), likeminded individuals, such as the Clubmen and the Eastern, Western, and Southern Associations.<sup>109</sup> In early military associations, the English cooperated for regional policing and peacekeeping.

As King Charles I’s Royalist military and Parliament’s New Model Army began to solidify ahead of the Civil War, in the early 1640s military associations began to work together, still as autonomous units but with a shared vision and a common goal. By 1644, for example, Oliver Cromwell, eventual Lord Protector of England, had already become the Eastern Association’s most notable soldier, marked by “profoundly religious” and “exceptional military talent” and known among soldiers and officers in other military associations.<sup>110</sup> With the same voluntary associational mindset, while Anglicans, Catholics, and Presbyterians looked to hierarchical religiopolitical superstructure, Baptists formed localized, autonomous inter-congregational associations. These Baptist associations would not enforce a top-down religious hierarchy, but instead would unite likeminded Baptist churches in a peer-to-peer, voluntarily cooperative relationship for fellowship, benevolence, doctrinal advisement, and evangelistic and missional coordination.

Stephen Wright pinpoints the adoption of the *London Baptist Confession* in 1644 as the historic moment at which Baptist associationalism officially began. This “union of seven churches,” he writes, replaced loose connections between Baptists and

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<sup>109</sup> Adair, *Cheriton 1644*, 29, 36; John Stab, “Riotous or Revolutionary: The Clubmen during the English Civil Wars,” Eastern Illinois University, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.eiu.edu/historia/staab.pdf>; “A Perfect Diurnall of some Passages in Parliament,” February 26, 1643, <https://newspaperarchive.com/perfect-diurnall-feb-19-1643-p-4/>, 4. Here, William Waller, commander of the Southern Association under whom Oliver Cromwell served for a time, promised salaries for volunteer troops in his army.

<sup>110</sup> Fraser, *The Story of Britain*, 343. Later, upon the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, London newspapers carried articles condemning the Eastern Association that had opposed the king’s father, Charles I, and upended the monarchy. “To the Kings Most Excellent Majesty,” *London Gazette*, March 23, 1682, 2; “Most Gracious Sovereign,” *London Gazette*, August 10, 1682, 2.



the early 1640s General Baptist churches were “numerous” around the greater London area, but William Kiffin saw the Particular Baptist “comunion” (sic) as distinct from them, mostly based on the mode of Baptism.<sup>115</sup>

Whitley argues that all of Baptist associational and confessional history generates from Smyth: “it is but the natural growth from that seed which was planted by John Smyth . . . The handful of corn has spread, the fruit thereof shakes like Lebanon.”<sup>116</sup> Similarly, although maintaining clear General and Particular Baptist distinctions, Tom Nettles further explains that early English Baptists, with a commitment to intentional, proclamatory evangelism, “believed in the autonomy of each congregation but sought ways of cooperating with like-minded congregations, for they believed the Bible implied such cooperation.”<sup>117</sup> He acknowledges Smyth’s short-lived Baptist convictions and Arminian-influenced theology, but still sees Smyth as “the stimulus” which “provided for the creative energies of others . . . a hurricane that spawned tornadoes over the land, although his own energy was spent over the ocean before landfall.”<sup>118</sup> Baptist associational cooperation, even in its first, Particular expression, owes an ecclesiological debt to John Smyth and Thomas Helwys.

Chute, Finn, and Haykin describe the formation of the 1644 Particular Baptist association in London as a demonstration of “fundamental solidarity.”<sup>119</sup> Their purpose

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*Hampshire*, ed. Terry Wolever (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist, 2001), 10; Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought*, 204.

<sup>115</sup> McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, 26. Kiffin’s distinction is based on baptism by immersion and refers to the London Baptist association as a “comunion” (sic) shared between Baptist churches of like baptismal practice (credobaptism by immersion). While his manuscript clearly traces the origins of the movement to the JLJ church, it does not specifically deny any connection to or interaction with General Baptist churches in the area.

<sup>116</sup> William T. Whitley in Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 1:cxxii.

<sup>117</sup> Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 318.

<sup>118</sup> Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 69. Nettles is referring to Smyth’s recantation of his se-baptism in 1610 and efforts to unite his first Baptist congregation with the Mennonite church.

<sup>119</sup> Chute, Finn, and Haykin, *The Baptist Story*, 26.

was for fellowship and cooperation, and their regional association became the first of many. Records of the first general meeting of Welsh Particular Baptists in association dated November 6–7, 1650, evidence a strong, shared theological and moral obligation toward evangelistic cooperation. Seeing “the great scarcity” of gospel ministers in their region and acknowledging the “seasonable opportunity now offered” by their formal associational cooperation, messengers from the three represented churches agreed to send their elders to “hould fourth the word of truth” by preaching the gospel in Carmarthenshire on an organized rotating schedule; it was to be “the duty” of the churches to support this work in a cooperative funding model with a set budget of £30 annually, £10 from each cooperating church.<sup>120</sup> At their fourth and fifth general meetings July 14–15, 1653, and March 1–2, 1654, the association expanded their regional missions strategy and modified their cooperative funding method accordingly.<sup>121</sup> Their moral and theological obligation to cooperate for evangelistic ends was on display in their inter-congregational cooperative funding program.

In Somerset and surrounding counties on September 8–9, 1653, messengers from Baptist churches gathered an association. Their first question regarded the imposition of hands upon baptized believers. The association’s decision was that the practice was unbiblical and that churches should not endorse the ordinance; however, the practice would not be grounds for “breach of communion” in the association.<sup>122</sup> So, the association leveraged its relational influence to voice a clear doctrinal position but did not force that doctrinal position on the churches and chose to retain fellowship and cooperation with those churches which disagreed. Within one year, at a special called gathering in Bridgewater March 16–17, 1654, the association ordained and installed Thomas Collier

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<sup>120</sup> B. R. White, ed., *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660: Part 1. South Wales and the Midlands* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1971), 3.

<sup>121</sup> White, *Associational Records*, pt. 1, 6–8.

<sup>122</sup> White, *Associational Records*, pt. 2, 54.

as an associational missionary who would see “to the worke of the ministrey to the worlde and in the churches.”<sup>123</sup> Three years later, Collier wrote to the churches to reassure them of the peculiarity of his role, “not as one that hath dominion over your faith but as a poor helper of your joy.”<sup>124</sup> In their third and fourth general associational meetings, July 1654 in Taunton and February 1655 in Bridgewater, the association articulated clear positions on missionary-sending and the biblical mandate for inter-congregational cooperation that supported the publication of “the Gospel to the world.”<sup>125</sup> Their confession that would soon follow displays one of the most explicit statements on the doctrine of evangelistic and missional cooperation to be found among seventeenth-century Baptist confessions of faith. While the Welsh Particular Baptist association before them articulated evangelistic and missional cooperation on the basis of practical necessity, the Somerset

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<sup>123</sup> White, *Associational Records*, pt. 2, 103. They based this model on their knowledge of another association’s decision to do likewise—“two brethren of Luppitt who were formally ordained and now called thereunto as their duty being desired by the rest of their brethren which caused joye on [to?] us at present who are confident that particular churches will reape the frute thereof in due tyme to the prayse of God” (103).

<sup>124</sup> White, *Associational Records*, pt. 2, 92.

<sup>125</sup> The July 1654 record reads, “That it is in the power of the church to ordain and send forth a minister to the world, Acts 13.2f. Secondly, that this person sent forth to the world and gathering churches, he ought with them and they with him to ordain fit persons to officiate among them, Acts 14.23, Tit. 1.5.” White, *Associational Records*, pt. 2, 56. The February 1655 record reads,

Query 10. Whether it be according to the minde of the Lord for the church to send forth an elder to preach the Gospel to the world or to assist the churches? Answer: . . . That they may do it our grounds are: first, from the common membership that is in all the churches all make up but one body though many, therefore, as members of that body they should assist each other, Acts 8.14, 11.22, 15.22 with I Cor. 12.25f. Secondly, from that common interest that all the churches have in the gifts of God given forth in the church it being but one in the Head. If God give plentifully in one, and but sparingly in others it may be for the tryal of the liberality of the one in the right use of it, and for the trial of the patience of the other, Eph. 4.11f, Gal. 6.10. Thirdly, we judge that if it be the duty of the churches to assist each other in temporal things, that it is their duty likewise in spiritual things. The first is clear, II Cor. 8.1–4, 14. Fourthly, if the most usefull brethren may be sent with the outward gift, Acts 11.29f., much more with the spiritual gift if the case be as is exprest before, Acts 15.22. Fifthly, it being the duty both of church and elders to improve their talents that way in which they may most glorify God, if the church at such a time can part with such an elder, then he may most honour God where there is most need. (White, *Associational Records*, pt. 2, 60)

The question was raised at their meeting in Wells, March 13, 1659, whether this was a hasty decision so early in the association’s gathering. The answer came that “it was then the sense of the assembly and still is.” White, *Associational Records*, pt. 2, 102.

association grounded its evangelistic and missional cooperation in biblical doctrine.<sup>126</sup>

Their eventual confession would seek to unify General and Particular Baptists in the region for both doctrinal solidarity and missional cooperation.<sup>127</sup>

Particular Baptists in the Midlands formally associated May 2–3, 1655, in much the same manner as the London Baptists of 1644. At their constitutional meeting in Warwick, messengers from the churches adopted their confession, often called “The Midland Confession of Faith.” While a doctrine of cooperation is not expressed in their confession, Midlands Particular Baptists agreed in their second meeting the following year that it is the “duty” of likeminded Baptist churches in a region both to “hold a close communion each to other” for the purposes of fellowship and doctrinal purity and to work together “in a joynt caring on of any worke of the Lord that is common to the churches as they shall have opportunity to Joyne therein to the glory of God as apeareth in 2 Cor. 8.19.”<sup>128</sup> So, for Midlands Baptists, inter-congregational evangelistic and missional cooperation was not at first a matter of confessional conviction, but it quickly became a matter of biblically exemplified practical expediency. Their confessional union carried

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<sup>126</sup> Somerset Baptists composed and published their confession in 1655/56, *A Confession of the Faith of Several Congregations of Christ in the County of Somerset, and Some Churches in the Counties Near Adjacent*, which was prefaced by an “Epistle Dedicatory,” authored by Thomas Collier and signed by messengers from sixteen cooperating churches. The epistle acknowledged the association’s solidarity with London Particular Baptists in their 1644 confession, explicitly denying freewill and upholding the eternal security of the believer. But Collier’s answers to churches’ questions in associational meetings seemed to waver from the Particular Baptist position on the extent of the atonement. See Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 186–87.

<sup>127</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 184, 186–87. See also Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought*, 21. While White assigns the Somerset associational records among the Particular Baptists, both Lumpkin and Brackney treat the work of this association, including its 1655/56 confession, as mediatory between General and Particular Baptists in the region. Lumpkin labels Collier “the great Particular Baptist apostle to the West of England,” but also acknowledges that while he “liked the Calvinistic framework,” the Calvinism of his region was less “rigid” than that of the London Baptists and eventually gave way to a more Armenian position on the extent of the atonement. Brackney, however, labels Collier a “General Baptist messenger in Somerset” during the earliest days of their associational gathering. Collier’s theology would eventually come under question by other leading Baptists in the area, but it is obvious that from the formation of the Somerset association, his purpose in regional Baptist cooperation was to draw together as many Baptist congregations as possible for both doctrinal sharpening and missional cooperation.

<sup>128</sup> White, *Associational Records*, pt. 2, 20–21.

the primary purpose of sharpening one another doctrinally and maintaining the purity and holiness of the doctrine they shared, but it did not take long for that confessional union to compel them toward cooperative mission. At their fourth meeting April 7–8, 1656, in Warwick, they followed the example of Somerset Baptists in sending qualified pastors to evangelize and strengthen churches in their region, anchoring this cooperative sending model in Scripture.<sup>129</sup>

As persecution of Baptists enlarged under King Charles II after the restoration of the monarchy, associational meetings paved the way for general assemblies in both the General and Particular Baptist streams. General Baptists around London began to divide over doctrinal convictions regarding the *Six Principles of the Christian Religion* published by General Baptist John Griffith in 1655 (although originally mentioned in Particular Baptist Christopher Blackwood’s 1644 *The Storming of Antichrist*).<sup>130</sup> Later, in general session, they reconciled by adopting both their confession and Griffith’s Six Principles and presenting them to King Charles II on July 26, 1660. Not only is the confession articulate of a rudimentary doctrine of cooperation, but the act of General Baptists working through doctrinal division toward confessional consensus is a testament to their biblical and practical obligation to the priority of inter-congregational cooperation.

In 1666, Thomas Grantham was appointed a missionary by General Baptists, upon their convictions that the Great Commission was a mandate for churches in every generation and that churches in cooperation could accomplish this mission more effectively together than alone. His missionary work on behalf of the General Baptists led to the

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<sup>129</sup> White, *Associational Records*, pt. 1, 24–25.

<sup>130</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 205; McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, 43–45; William Roscoe Estep, “The Nature and Use of Biblical Authority in Baptist Confessions of Faith, 1610–1963,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 22, no. 4 (1987): 11; John Griffith, *God’s Oracle and Christ’s Doctrine, or the Six Principles of the Christian Religion* (London: W. Burden, 1655), 3. General Baptist Griffin’s six principles, based on Particular Baptist Blackwood’s previous argument from Heb 6:1–2, are: repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment.



planting of churches all over the region.<sup>131</sup> Writing in 1678, Grantham grounded the theological premise for his missionary appointment in Acts 13:3, in which the Antioch church laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and sent them out for evangelism, church planting, and church strengthening.<sup>132</sup> For Grantham, evangelistic and missional cooperation was more than a practical opportunity; it was a biblical conviction. In 1678, he became instrumental in the composition of the General Baptist *Orthodox Creed*.<sup>133</sup> In his *Christianismus Primitivus* (1678), he lays out a clear biblical foundation for “Conventions” or “General Assemblies” of messengers from likeminded Baptist churches—the biblical evidence being “a good Precedent,” but not a requirement for such assemblies.<sup>134</sup> Further, Grantham’s work somewhat prophetically anticipates the evangelical councils of the twentieth century: “And when it shall please God to put it into the Hearts of the Rulers of the nations, to permit a Free and General Assembly, of the differing Professors of Christianity, for the finding out of Truth, we trust that some of the Baptized Churches will (if permitted) readily make their appearance with others to help on that needful Work.”<sup>135</sup>

Book three of Grantham’s *Christianismus Primitivus* was addressed to King Charles II and published in 1678 along with the General Baptist *Standard Confession* of 1660. Interestingly, among the thirty signatories on Grantham’s letter to the king were notable Particular Baptists John Spilsbury, Thomas Lamb, and William Kiffin.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Chute, Finn, and Haykin, *The Baptist Story*, 50.

<sup>132</sup> Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book II, 131 and Book IV, 160.

<sup>133</sup> Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 37; Chute, Finn, and Haykin, *The Baptist Story*, 48–49. Lumpkin and Leonard explain that Grantham’s *Orthodox Creed* pushes the boundaries of the Baptist doctrine of local church autonomy in its efforts to pull together Calvinist and non-Calvinist Baptist churches and to elevate the doctrine of cooperation between them. Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 298–99, 338.

<sup>134</sup> Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book II, 132–37.

<sup>135</sup> Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book II, 143.

<sup>136</sup> Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book III, 9. John Spilsbury was part of the original Particular Baptist JLJ church in the 1630s and, according to Nettles, “grabbed ecclesiological issues by the theological throat and helped construct a vigorously argued foundation for Particular Baptists” over the

Theological differences notwithstanding, Particular and General Baptists cooperated across associational and assembly distinctions in advocacy for Baptist liberty during the reigns of Kings Charles II and James II, even when the General Baptist *Standard Confession* (1660) was included as an essential component of that joint advocacy.

In this same season of increasing hostility toward non-Catholics under Kings Charles II and James II, Particular Baptists in London reasoned it prudent to demonstrate doctrinal solidarity with Calvinistic Presbyterians and Congregationalists. They gathered the first Particular Baptist assembly in September 1677 to authorize a “Second London Baptist Confession” that would demonstrate shared orthodoxy with the Presbyterians’ *Westminster Confession* (1646) and the Congregationalists’ *Savoy Confession* (1658) in hopes to display an inter-denominational alliance, of sort, while all three groups were under great scrutiny by the monarchy, the Parliament, and the general public.<sup>137</sup> As with the General Baptist’s 1660 confession, the Particular Baptist’s 1677 confession articulates an elementary doctrine of inter-congregational cooperation, but the motivation behind the assembly and the authoring of the confession among Baptists in assembly is a testament to their biblical and practical priority of cooperation between likeminded churches. After the Act of Toleration was passed by William and Mary’s Parliament in 1689, London Particular Baptists assembled again to sign names to and publish their 1677 confession. Seeing the value of broader cooperation, they chose not to exclude churches from the association if they disagreed, in faith and/or practice, with the previously confessed

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next several decades. Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 113. William Kiffin is described by some as “the Father of the Particular Baptists,” leading in associational cooperation, contributing to the wording of the *Second London Baptist Confession* (1677/89), and personally summoned by King James II in his failed efforts to win the Dissenters to his cause. See Nettles, *Beginnings in Britain*, 129, 142; Ogg, *England in the Reigns of James II and William III*, 181. Thomas Lamb was among the first Baptists to recover baptism by immersion in 1640. See John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists: Together with Some Account of Their Principles and Practices* (Texarkana, TX: Bogard, 1922), 305.

<sup>137</sup> Masters, *The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689*, 5.

doctrine of closed communion.<sup>138</sup> This display of doctrinal solidarity with the wider reformed movement, together with an unwillingness to break fellowship over closed communion within their own Particular Baptist movement, is one example of early Baptist efforts at theological triage while determining confessional boundaries of cooperation.

The act of associating and assembling, and the actions within and between those associations and assemblies, were demonstrations of the doctrine of cooperation commonly held among seventeenth-century Baptists. In an editorial note on the *Association Records of the Particular Baptists in England, Wales and Ireland to 1660*, B. R. White acknowledges a clear “pattern of inter-congregational cooperation” that extended beyond the localized associations of churches themselves to other Baptist associations of churches across Britain as well.<sup>139</sup> Whether expressed in their confessions or not, seventeenth-century English Baptists saw the need for associational cooperation, both within associations and between them, for doctrinal accountability and evangelistic and missional cooperation, often crossing General and Particular Baptist lines to secure it. Further evidence of the doctrine of cooperation among and between them is identifiable within the confessions themselves.

### **Confessional Declaration and Baptist Cooperation**

In his April 1922 article “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” Lee R. Scarborough stated that the doctrine of cooperation had not found “clear pronouncement” in any Baptist confession to date, whether “English Baptists, American Baptists, German,

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<sup>138</sup> Michael Haykin gives a detailed account of the disagreement between seventeenth-century Particular Baptists regarding closed or open communion. Since 1644, their confessed position was closed communion, but throughout the 1650s, 60s, and 70s, Particular Baptists did not completely agree on this doctrine. William Kiffin and John Bunyan were the leading voices for (Kiffin) and against (Bunyan) closed communion. Their 1677/89 confession articulated neither open nor closed communion, because they had determined “not to break fellowship over this issue.” Michael A. G. Haykin, *Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands: Recovering Sacrament in the Baptist Tradition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2022), 81, 57–90. See also Haykin, “Declaring before God, Angels, and Men,” 58–59.

<sup>139</sup> White, *Associational Records*, pt. 1, 2.

French and Swedish Baptists,” although, according to Scarborough, “it should have.”<sup>140</sup> Research demonstrates that although a clear and full “pronouncement” of the doctrine of cooperation was not confessed by Baptists until 1925, as Scarborough suggested, the doctrine is not without simple confessional expression from the first days of the Baptist movement. An early, rudimentary doctrine of cooperation in the Baptist movement is evidenced not only by congregational action and interaction, but also by doctrinal expression within Baptist confessions of faith in the seventeenth century.

In 1610, John Smyth authored his “anti-Calvinist and anti-pedobaptist” *Short Confession of Faith in XX Articles* for the purpose of applying for membership with the Anabaptist Mennonites.<sup>141</sup> While the confession is traditionally understood to be that of John Smyth alone, William Whitley points out that it was likely intended to be understood as the confession of the whole congregation, since it is “prefaced in the plural”—“*Corde credimus, et ore confitemur.*”<sup>142</sup> It may be possible to interpret Smyth’s confession as an attempt at cooperation with the Waterland Mennonites (although technically it was an attempt at merging with the Waterland Mennonites), but perhaps more objectively relevant to this research is that the Waterland Mennonites consulted and cooperated with other Mennonite congregations regarding whether to receive Smyth’s congregation into their fellowship.<sup>143</sup> Smyth, “the founder” of the Baptist “denomination,” as Whitley so titles him, held a front-row seat to voluntary inter-congregational cooperation at work, even

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<sup>140</sup> Lee R. Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 6, no. 2 (April 1922), quoted in *Southwestern Journal of Theology: Baptists and Unity*, Lee Rutland Scarborough, 1870–1945 51, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 21.

<sup>141</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 93.

<sup>142</sup> Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 1:cvi; 2:682. Translation, “We believe with the heart and confess with the mouth.” Also, the 1610 version of Smyth’s confession is signed by 42 congregants, excluding Helwys and eight others who did not seek union with the Mennonites on the conviction of important doctrinal distinction from them. See Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 93, 96–105.

<sup>143</sup> William T. Whitley in Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 1:cix.

when the Baptist denomination knew only his single congregation.<sup>144</sup> The doctrine found its first formal expression, although elementary, in a successive confession of faith drawn up by Smyth's congregation after his death. Sometime between 1612 and 1615, the congregation revised and updated Smyth's *Short Confession* (1609), including one article that laments schisms between churches (as they had personally experienced between the Smyth and Helwys congregations) and another that declares the biblical conviction "that one church is to administer to another in time of need (Gal. ii.10; Acts xi.30; 1 Cor. iv.8, and chap. ix)."<sup>145</sup> Upon the church's merger with the Mennonites, the degree to which this confession can be classified "Baptist" is questionable; it was likely instrumental in the Smyth congregation's eventual union with the Waterlanders on January 20, 1615. However, Lumpkin states that not only is the confession "an important landmark" for Baptists, but it carried influence upon Baptist leaders on two continents through the mid-century.<sup>146</sup>

Those who suppose a Particular Baptist beginning that is wholly distinct from General Baptist influence argue for Separatist foundations, culminating in the 1630s–1640s among English Baptists in London through the JLJ church lineage.<sup>147</sup> The *London Baptist Confession* (1644) contains echoes of the Separatists' *A True Confession* (1596), especially in its acknowledgement of a primitive doctrine of inter-congregational cooperation. Compare the 1644 *London Baptist Confession*'s Article 47 with the 1596 Separatists' *True Confession* Article 38:

And although the particular Congregations be distinct and several Bodies, every one a compact and knit Citie in it selfe; yet are they all to walk by one and the same Rule, and by all meanes convenient to have the counsel and help one of another in

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<sup>144</sup> William T. Whitley in Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 1:xcii. Also, John Clifford pictures Smyth "standing at the head of distinctively consecutive Baptist history," and therefore "he may be regarded as the father and founder of the organized Baptists of England." Clifford, "The Origin and Growth of English Baptists," 15.

<sup>145</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 125, 128 (see articles 69 and 90).

<sup>146</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 115.

<sup>147</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 130.

all needfull affaires of the Church, as members of one body in the common faith under Christ their onely head. 1 Tim. 3.15. & 6.13, 14. Rev. 22.18, 19. Col. 2.6, 19, & 4.16.<sup>148</sup>

That though Congregations bee thus distinct and several bodyes, every one as a compact Citie in it self, yet are they all to walke by one and the same rule, & by all meanes convenient to haue the counsel and help one of another in all needfull affrayres of the Church, as members of one body in the common Faith, vnder Christ their head. Look Articles 1. 22. 23. Psal. 122.3. Cant. 8. 8. 9. 1 Cor. 4, 17, and 16. 1.<sup>149</sup>

Lumpkin writes that the *London Baptist Confession* was well received as “a worthy doctrinal standard and as a basis for church co-operation,” and further, “perhaps no Confession of Faith has had so formative an influence on Baptist life as this one.”<sup>150</sup> With messengers from seven congregations signing-on, it was the first Baptist confession of faith to articulate the doctrinal positions of multiple Particular Baptist congregations, and it included, at least in elementary form, the doctrine of cooperation.

The first confession to articulate the doctrinal positions of multiple General Baptist congregations was *The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations, Gathered According to the Primitive Pattern*, composed and adopted in 1651 at the first General Baptist associational meeting of the Midlands, likely held in Leicester three years before the Midlands Particular Baptists formally associated.<sup>151</sup> While the doctrine of cooperation is less pronounced than in the *London Baptist Confession*, it is still evident. Article 65

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<sup>148</sup> Article 47 of the 1644 London Baptists’ *Confession* in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 157.

<sup>149</sup> Article 38 of the 1596 Separatists’ *A True Confession* in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 88. Interestingly, Baptists in London were not the only dissenting confessors anchoring their doctrines of inter-congregational cooperation in the 1596 Separatist confession. John Davenport, a Congregational Separatist who had fled to Boston in June of 1637, gathered a congregation in August of 1639 and authored a creed that would later be published in London in 1642. Similarities in Article 18 are obvious:

That although particular Churches be distinct and several *Independent* bodies, every one as a city compact within it self, without subordination under, or dependence upon any other but Jesus Christ, yet are all Churches to walk by one and the same rule, and by all means convenient, to have the counsell (sic) and help one of another, when need requireth (sic), as members of one body, in the common faith under Christ their only Head. (H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, *American Christianity: An Historical interpretation with Representative Documents*, vol. I, 1607–1820 [New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1960], 107–13)

<sup>150</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 134, 140.

<sup>151</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 160–61.

articulates a clear position on inter-congregational cooperation for benevolence to meet the needs of the poor in the community, and Article 70 urges the churches to cooperate in matters of conflict resolution within or between them.<sup>152</sup> In both the Particular and General Baptist streams, the first confessions representative of multiple congregations included rudiments of the doctrine of cooperation.

Perhaps the statement closest to a doctrine of cooperation is evidenced in two articles within *A Confession of the Faith of Several Churches of Christ In the County of Somerset, and of some Churches in the Counties neer adjacent*, written and adopted by Somerset Particular Baptists under the leadership of Thomas Collier, in 1656. Article 28 reads: “THAT it is the duty of the members of Christ in the order of the gospel, tho’ in several congregations and assemblies (being one in the head) if occasion be, to communicate each to other, in things spiritual, and things temporal (Rom. 15:26; Acts 11:29; 15:22; 11:22).”

The language of “duty” upon “occasion” is stronger than the “convenient” and “needfull” language expressed in the *London Baptist Confession*. When combined with Article 34 on the “duty” of the church to send out missionaries, the *Somerset Confession*’s Article 28 doctrine of cooperation “in things spiritual” is expanded to include the task of missionary sending.<sup>153</sup> Article 34 reads, “THAT as it is an ordinance of Christ, so it is the duty of his church in his authority, to send forth such brethren as are fitly gifted and qualified through the Spirit of Christ to preach the gospel to the world (Acts 13:1,2,3; 11:22; 8:14.)” As previously mentioned, in 1664 and 1665 the Somerset association articulated clear positions on missionary-sending and the biblical mandate for inter-congregational cooperation that supported the publication of “the Gospel to the world.”<sup>154</sup> In 1656, their confession of faith pronounced their doctrinal position on the theology of

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<sup>152</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 170.

<sup>153</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 195.

<sup>154</sup> White, *Associational Records*, pt. 2, 102.

cooperation that eventually worked itself out in practical displays of evangelistic and missional cooperation.

The *Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country*, otherwise known as the *Second London Baptist Confession* (1677/89), may be the most widely adopted and adapted confession of faith among Baptists on two continents in the three-and-a-half centuries since its publication. Its primary purposes were “apologetic” and “educative,” as Lumpkin suggests.<sup>155</sup> Although this confession is seminal in Baptist thought and organization, its expression of the doctrine of cooperation, minimally evident, is much weaker than that of its predecessors. Article 26 sections 14 and 15 declare that likeminded churches are “bound to” pray for one another continually, to “hold communion amongst themselves,” and to offer “advice” concerning “cases of difficulties” that arise within other churches of the same associational communion.<sup>156</sup> In the *Second London Baptist Confession*, the doctrine of cooperation is present, but it is not directly connected to the missionary impulse of associated churches.

Seventeenth-century Baptist confessions of faith, both individual and corporate, articulate elements of the doctrine of cooperation. The doctrine may not have been confessionally expressed in its fullest form, but it is apparent and traceable among English Baptists from John Smyth to Benjamin Keach. An early doctrine of cooperation in the Baptist movement is evidenced not only by congregational action and interaction, but also by clear, albeit rudimentary, doctrinal expression within Baptist confessions of faith throughout the seventeenth century. The doctrine’s expression and demonstration crossed the Atlantic through the influence of Baptist leadership in the mid-seventeenth century. But it ultimately took root and bore fruit in the New World in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as the following chapter will

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<sup>155</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 220–21.

<sup>156</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 288–89.



elucidate, through the confessional associational work of Elias Keach, son of *Second London Baptist Confession* framer and Particular Baptist pastor Benjamin Keach.

### **Conclusion**

The Baptist doctrine of cooperation is evident throughout the course of seventeenth-century English Baptist interactivity within a vacillating religiopolitical firestorm, through associational organization and confessional declaration. From the first days of the Baptist movement, Baptists felt a moral and theological obligation to cooperate for fellowship, evangelism, and missions. The courageous undertakings and keenly worded doctrinal positions of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys set the tone and the direction of cooperation for the Baptist movement. The activities and confessional expressions of associated Baptists across Britain bolstered through the decades while the doctrine and practice of evangelistic and missional cooperation was in formation among them. General and Particular Baptists worked both together and separately in doctrinal expression and religiopolitical advocacy, and the Baptist movement crossed the Atlantic through heritable migration and transactional interactivity. If confessional and expressional roots for the Baptist doctrine of cooperation are pursued, they may be found in the annals of seventeenth-century English Baptist conviction. There, for seven decades, Baptists boldly confessed and voluntarily cooperated for the sake of the gospel.

Bill Leonard's introduction to Lumpkin's *Baptist Confessions of Faith* highlights the appropriate interplay of autonomy and cooperation in these early days of Baptist beginnings: "Congregational autonomy did not mean independence. Early Baptists soon formed associations of churches for spiritual fellowship, doctrinal mediation, and interchurch cooperation."<sup>157</sup> The timeless, biblical doctrine of voluntary inter-congregational cooperation was rediscovered by Baptists in the earliest days of their existence. When ecclesiastical hierarchies no longer forced their interactivity, the Great

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<sup>157</sup> Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 4.

Commission still compelled it. In Europe, Baptists came confessing, and Baptists came cooperating. Next, the research turns to the influence of Benjamin and Elias Keach along the path of cooperative doctrine—its English trailhead found in Amsterdam and its first official American mile marker staked in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## CHAPTER 3

### FROM PHILADELPHIA TO AUGUSTA

From its earliest days on two continents, the Baptist movement was rooted in confessional cooperation.<sup>1</sup> Like their English counterparts, early Baptists in America were “more connectional than independent, more cooperative than isolationist.”<sup>2</sup> They pooled their relationships and resources to strengthen one another ecclesiologically, to evangelize the lost in their region and abroad, to meet benevolent needs, to fund ministerial education, and to plant likeminded churches. In the pattern of their English fathers, they adopted confessions of faith as doctrinal expressions to the world, catechetical tools for their own people, and parameters for cooperation between churches and associations of churches. The inter-congregational Baptist movement in America always has known a complimentary relationship between shared doctrine and shared mission.

The Baptist movement began with John Smyth and Thomas Helwys in Amsterdam, Holland in 1609. The work of General Baptists John Smyth and Thomas Helwys was “the mother of all Baptists,” the genesis of a worldwide Baptist movement that wed confessionalism to evangelistic and missional cooperation.<sup>3</sup> In the mid-century, the Particular Baptist vein began in like confessional pattern, adding to their confessions

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<sup>1</sup> One Southern Baptist historian defined cooperation as “the desire of Baptist people and churches to work together with others like-minded to maximize their ministry for Christ.” H. Leon McBeth, “Cooperation and Crisis as Shapers of Southern Baptist Identity,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 30, no. 3 (July 1995): 35.

<sup>2</sup> H. Leon McBeth, “Cooperation and Crisis as Shapers of Southern Baptist Identity,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 30, no. 3 (July 1995): 36–37.

<sup>3</sup> While Smyth’s and Helwys’ confessions reflected the General Baptist position, their work became, according to John T. Christian, the Baptist “movement . . . which made a great noise in the world.” John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists: Together with Some Account of Their Principles and Practices* (Texarkana, TX: Bogard, 1922), 223, 225.

more explicit statements regarding the responsibility of autonomous Baptist churches to cooperate with one another for benevolence, church strengthening, church planting, evangelism, fellowship, and missions.<sup>4</sup> In England, Baptists came confessing.

The theology of cooperation and its confessional expression was carried through to the New World. On two continents, Baptists were compelled by a moral and theological obligation to work together for the sake of the Great Commission.<sup>5</sup> When Baptists came to the New World, fleeing religious persecution in the early-mid seventeenth century, they brought their confessional convictions with them. The earliest migrants from England to the New World resettled with the primary foci of trade, economy, establishment of settlement, and the building of sustainable infrastructure. Religiously motivated resettlement from England to New England came later, in the third and fourth decades of the seventeenth century, especially in the Massachusetts Bay Colony for which the Massachusetts Bay Company recruited “persons of worth and quality,” those who were both able workers and committed Christians; this colony was to be settled with an innovative philosophy as one that would, as English historian David Cressy writes, “shine as a model of godly devotion and moral rectitude.”<sup>6</sup> Roger Williams, a Separatist with

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<sup>4</sup> B. R. White, ed, *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660: Part 1. South Wales and the Midlands* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1971), 2, 3, 7–8, 18–20, 21, 24–25. Minutes from these meetings include records of inter-congregational cooperation for the coordination of evangelistic preaching in the region and the responsibility of the churches to fund it, the cooperative funding of new church plants, and doctrinal counsel. The minutes also demonstrate the role of confessional statements in associational cooperation among the Particular Baptist churches in England, Wales, and Ireland.

<sup>5</sup> McBeth, “Cooperation and Crisis,” 37.

<sup>6</sup> David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1987), 45. Cressy further explains that after the migration patterns slowed down in the 1640s, religion became the primary motivating factor for most migrants to New England: “Religion often provided the language and the frame of reference to explain decisions that involved family, financial, and incidental matters as well as the service of God. Often these factors were so tightly tangled as to defy unravelling. For some settlers religion was utterly unimportant; for others it was paramount” (74). Both religion and economy played a role in migrant motivation in the 1630s and following, but the two were so integrally intertwined, especially for the Puritans, that for many they were one and the same motivation. By 1643, colonial leaders, in the Articles of Confederation of the United Colonies of New England, mentioned the advancement of the gospel and “the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ” as the primary motivation for migration to the New World (75).

convictions for religious liberty, migrated from London to Boston in 1631.<sup>7</sup> Nineteenth-century Baptist historian John Christian suggests from that moment, “Baptist views” were seeded in America.<sup>8</sup>

A Separatist-turned-Baptist, Williams would have been as familiar with Henry Ainsworth’s *A True Confession* (1596), as were John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, including Article 38 which articulated a rudimentary doctrine of inter-congregational cooperation. After Williams began the Baptist work in America, John Clarke started, with greater stability and longevity, the Newport Baptist Church sometime between 1638 and 1644. To some, Clarke is more appropriately proclaimed “the father of American Baptists” than Roger Williams.<sup>9</sup> Between 1638 and 1681, Clarke shared the pastorate at Newport with Obadiah Holmes. Together, they authored a confession of faith, recorded in the church’s records, which articulated the urgency of Christian evangelism and mission.<sup>10</sup> Confessionally-conscientious, inter-congregational cooperation was formalized in the New World in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries through the efforts of Elias Benjamin Keach, in Philadelphia. From the earliest days of

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<sup>7</sup> Clarence Eugene Colton, *Introducing Baptists* (Portland: Interchurch, 1969), 19. Although Williams fled as a Separatist, his distinct Baptist beliefs stirred the waters of religious freedom in the colonies, leading to his own public profession of faith through water baptism and the founding of the first Baptist church in the New World, at Providence, Rhode Island, in 1639.

<sup>8</sup> Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, 360, 373. Like John Smyth in Amsterdam before him, Williams in America quickly became concerned with the validity of his own movement and defected from the work he began.

<sup>9</sup> Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, 379. In 1652, between King Charles I’s execution and the beginning of the Cromwellian Commonwealth period, John Clarke wrote to the Rump Parliament his *Ill News from New England*, concerning the maltreatment of Baptist preachers and congregations in the American colonies. His purpose in writing was to appeal to Parliament for religious freedom, demonstrating the dire situation by naming and describing acts of injustice against certain Baptists therein. John Clarke, *Ill News from New England* (1652; repr., La Vernia, TX: Brogden’s, 2019). Clarke’s *Ill News* was written as a corrective complaint to Parliament after a book entitled *Good News from New-England* arrived anonymously in 1648, “touting the achievements of the godly commonwealth.” Cressy, *Coming Over*, 28.

<sup>10</sup> Clarke and Holmes’ confession acknowledged distinctive Baptist views reflecting the doctrine of the English Particular Baptists as well as clear statements of Christian mission to, as Isaac Backus later wrote, “go forth . . . by commission,” in dependence on the Holy Spirit, “declaring the grace of God through Jesus Christ.” Isaac Backus, *A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Edward Draper, 1871), 1:208.

Baptist movement in America, Baptists came confessing and their rich heritage of confessionalism carried with it the building blocks of a maturing doctrine of inter-congregational cooperation.

On two continents, Baptists came confessing, and on two continents those confessions articulated and nurtured the distinctively Baptist, voluntary inter-congregational cooperation that fueled what Christian historian Kenneth Latourette believed to be the greatest centuries of gospel advancement the world has ever known.<sup>11</sup> As the Baptist movement spread to the American middle colonies, through both immigration and Christian missions, its inherent “theology of cooperation” spurred the formation of associations, missions societies, and conventions.<sup>12</sup> Stephen Copson, a twenty-first century Baptist associational leader, labeled this the “theology of partnership,” noting that although deeply embedded within historic Baptist missional methodology, it remains “an area relatively underdeveloped in Baptist thinking.”<sup>13</sup>

As the modern missions movement matured and progressed through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Baptists in America looked to shared confessions of faith to guard and guide their cooperation. B. H. Carroll credited the missions movement with furnishing “the centripetal force which holds our denomination together” and balanced out the “centrifugal force of church sovereignty and independence,” but he warned of a certain “chaos” that may ensue if such cooperation were not grounded in a “higher motive” than pragmatic achievement.<sup>14</sup> Southern Baptists’ organic “theology of cooperation” or “theology of partnership” was the impetus for the vigorous, spontaneous,

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<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Great Century: Europe and the United States 1800 A.D. to 1914 A.D.*, vol. 4 of *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 1–4, 20, 26, 94.

<sup>12</sup> McBeth, “Cooperation and Crisis,” 36, 37.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Copson, “Renewing Associations: An Early Eighteenth-Century Example,” *Baptist Quarterly* 38 no. 6 (April 2000): 271.

<sup>14</sup> B. H. Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1901), 7–8.

increasingly extensive missional “machinery” that fueled their collaborative efforts for the propagation of the gospel.<sup>15</sup> While the biblical doctrine of cooperation is evident among them and between them, however, the relationship between confession and cooperation was not always as explicit as some might think, especially at different organizational levels of Baptist missional movement. The relationship between missional cooperation and doctrinal confessionalism, from the formation of the first Baptist association in America in 1707 to the constitution of the SBC in 1845, is the subject of this chapter.

### Chapter Thesis

A well-formed article of faith articulating the doctrine of cooperation did not appear in a confessional statement until the *Baptist Faith and Message* was adopted in 1925.<sup>16</sup> Was cooperation an assumed, shared Baptist doctrine in early America as it was in England? Did confessionally conscientious cooperation among Baptists in America emerge after many decades or gradually mature from genetic theological heritage? This chapter explores the historical relationship between Baptist confessions and cooperation in America from 1707 to 1845, emphasizing the doctrine of cooperation held among them. Methodology includes exploration of confessionally conscientious cooperation within the selected time period between congregations, between associations, and between societies and conventions.

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<sup>15</sup> Latourette, *The Great Century*, 52.

<sup>16</sup> Matt Queen, afterword to *The Scarborough Treasury*, ed. Adam Greenway (Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill, 2022), 461. See also Lee R. Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, *Lee Rutland Scarborough, 1870–1945* 6, no. 2 (April 1922), quoted in *Southwestern Journal of Theology: Baptists and Unity*, *Lee Rutland Scarborough, 1870–1945* 51, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 21. Although this dissertation demonstrates that the doctrine of cooperation is evident and traceable through confessions of faith since the earliest days of the Baptist movement, it also concedes that a complete and “well formed” doctrine of cooperation did not appear as an article of faith in a Baptist confession until 1925.

## Chapter Literature Review

Several Baptist histories, old and new, are valuable in informing the content of this chapter. *A History of New England* (1871) by Isaac Backus is one of the most comprehensive and widely recognized early histories of New England Baptists. He aims to tell the story of colonial America through the lens of the Baptist movement and the Baptist people, particularly as it relates to persecution, endurance, and biblical conviction. John Christian's *A History of the Baptists* (1922), helps inform the bridge of historical narrative between seventeenth-century Baptists in England and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Baptists in America. H. Leon McBeth's *The Baptist Heritage* (1987) includes catalogue and analysis of Baptist thought and activity during the colonial and early constitutionalized days of American history. Other works written in the past century enlarge the understanding of Baptist beginnings in the New World, such as Williston Walker's *A History of the Christian Church* (1934), *Saints of Clay* (1971) by Loulie L. Owens, *Democratic Religion* (1997) and *The First Baptist Church of Columbia, South Carolina, 1809 to 2002* (2003) by Gregory A. Wills, *Baptists in America* (2015) by Thomas Kidd and David Hankins, and *A History of Evangelism in North America* (2021) edited by Thomas P. Johnston. These works and others are invaluable to constructing an accurate modern-day understanding of the Baptist movement in America from its earliest days. They give voice and shape to the narrative this chapter advances as the doctrine of cooperation is traced throughout Baptist thought and activity in the period under review.

Original writings of early Baptists in America, however, are the voice of the movement. Roger Williams's *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution* (1644) provides biblical, political, and cultural insight to Baptist life and Baptist thought in the earliest days of colonial life. A. D. Gillette's *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association From A.D. 1707 to A.D. 1807* (1851) records first-hand accounts of the decisions and activities of the Philadelphia Baptist Association in its earliest years. Likewise, *A Compendium of the Minutes of the Warren Baptist Association from its Formation, in 1767, to the Year 1825*, (1825); William H. Eaton's *Historical Sketch of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary*



*Society and Convention, 1802–1902* (1903); Terry Wolever’s *An Anthology of Early Baptists in New Hampshire* (2001); William D. Nowlin’s *Kentucky Baptist History 1770–1922* (1922); and several other associational and state convention records from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries demonstrate both Baptist thought and Baptist interactivity (individual, associational, societal, and conventional) throughout the period. An 1835 sermon by Ebenezer E. Cummings preached before the New Hampshire Baptist Convention celebrates the work of Hezekiah Smith and Samuel Shepherd in the 1770s as pivotal in the movement among New England Baptists that would eventually lead to the *New Hampshire Baptist Confession* of 1833, which was the foundation for the *Baptist Faith and Message* of 1925. B. H. Carroll’s dissertation, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission* (1901), surveys the doctrinal tensions of evangelistic and missional interactivity of early Baptist churches in America. These and other Baptist voices of the period afford this research the weight of originality in tracing the doctrine of cooperation at work among early Baptists in the New World.

Sources from outside the Baptist witness inform the larger historical narrative surrounding the Baptist movement during the colonial, revolutionary, and early constitutional periods of American history. David Cressy’s *Coming Over* (1987) provides bibliographic and historiographic insight into early migrants from England to America and explains the settlement patterns, systems, and motivations of the early New England settlers in the seventeenth century. Anthony Gill’s *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty* (2008) explores the importance of religious movements in the States to the ideals of religious liberty, including the persecution of many Baptists and other developing denominations. A 2002 Hoover Institution article by Alvin Rabushka entitled “The Colonial Roots of American Taxation, 1607–1700” intends to set historical precedent for low taxes in modern-day American economic models; while Rabushka’s purpose for writing is well outside the scope of this dissertation, his account of taxation laws and statistics from the colonial period not only helps the modern reader understand the

economic dynamics of early Baptists but also helps form an understanding of the marriage between church and state in the American colonies through taxation laws and practices, which was a common theme in seventeenth-century England that led to much persecution of Baptists and other dissenters who did not want their tithes to pay the salaries of government-appointed church officials. P. J. Marshall's *The Eighteenth Century* (1998), part of the Oxford series on the history of the British empire, details the nuances of trade, government, religion, and social life that factored into British immigration to America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Setting the Baptist movement of early America within the larger matrix of political, social, economic, and cultural issues informs a broader perspective of how the outworkings of the Baptists' doctrine of cooperation challenged the status quo through colonial and early constitutional days in the New World.

These sources and more form the body of information by which the story of cooperation is woven through Baptist faith and practice from the earliest days of the movement on American soil. Baptist history is not without complication, nor is it without external influence. The story of Baptist cooperation is a story of tension and resolution, minority and majority, ecclesiastics and politicians, as is the larger story of American colonialism and revolution. To build organized systems of Great Commission cooperation, Baptists in the New World would need to be creative, convictional, persistent, and long-suffering. Attention now turns to the record of that Baptist resolve, as the doctrine and practice of inter-congregational cooperation among Baptists and Baptist churches in America took shape, leading to the formation of the SBC in 1845, in Augusta, Georgia.

### **Confessional Cooperation Between Churches**

Some disagreement is apparent regarding the first confession of a Baptist congregation to be written in America.<sup>17</sup> William Estep and others note the 1665

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<sup>17</sup> William J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 293–94. H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 141–42. H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A.

confession of Thomas Gould as the first Baptist confession to be written on American soil. It was published by the congregation he pastored for the same reason that many individual confessions in England during the period were published (as discussed in the previous chapter), defending the church's right to gather for worship independently from the established state church in Charlestown, Massachusetts.<sup>18</sup>

However, because of its inter-congregational adoption and usage, the influence of Elias Keach's Philadelphia confession multiplied during his short but significant tenure as a Baptist in America. As Keach's ministry and mission work in the middle colonies grew, several congregations adopted and cooperated within the framework of the confession he authored and promoted. Because he was the English-born son of a respected London Baptist pastor, upon his migration to America Keach brought with him knowledge of and respect for the *London Baptist Confession* (1689). Two 1697 updates of the *London Baptist Confession* are attributed to Benjamin Keach and his son Elias Keach, who utilized the confession in their respective congregations in London and Philadelphia.<sup>19</sup> The Keaches' confessions were essentially reprints of the 1689 *London Baptist Confession* with two additional articles on the singing of psalms and the laying on of hands.<sup>20</sup>

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Loetscher, *American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents*, Vol. 1, 1607–1820 (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1960), 1:171. Backus, *A History of New England*, 1:206–9. McGlothlin and Smith, Handy, and Loetscher suggest the confession of the First Baptist Church of Boston in 1665 as the first in the New World. Backus, founding pastor of the Baptist church in Middleborough, MA, recorded the Newport confession of John Clarke and Obadiah Holmes published in 1675 but without clarity regarding when the confession was first authored.

<sup>18</sup> William R. Estep, "The Nature and Use of Biblical Authority in Baptist Confessions of Faith, 1610–1963," *Baptist History and Heritage* 22, no. 4 (1987): 13.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Underhill, ed. *Confessions of faith, and other public documents, illustrative of the history of the Baptist Churches of England in the 17th century* (London: Haddon, 1854), xiii–xv. The Keaches' versions of the confession added two articles on the singing of Psalms and the laying on of hands. Their versions differed from one another only in the prefaces and dedications.

<sup>20</sup> McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 295. The time-frame discrepancy between Keach's 1687 arrival in America and his prior knowledge of and subscription to the 1689 *London Baptist Confession* is rectified in that the confession was originally authored in 1677, and formally adopted by the London Baptist Association in 1689. Because his father was a prominent Baptist pastor in London, Keach would have had exposure to and knowledge of the 1689 confession for several years before its formal adoption. See Chad Van

Many immigrants from England landed in the American colonies during the seventeenth century hoping to experience both the religious freedom and the economic prosperity for which they longed in their homeland. To their dismay, what they found, in many instances, were colonies that simply traded strict Catholic or Anglican religiopoliticism for other denominational forms of the same. Denominational restrictions and corresponding religious persecution for dissenters were part of early American colonial life up until the adoption of the First Amendment to the US Constitution in 1791.<sup>21</sup> Isaac Backus explains that religious persecution was not uncommon against Baptists in early colonial America, because even those among non-Baptist denominations who fled to the New World for religious liberty “were not aware how unscripturally they had confounded church and state together” in their colonial settlements.<sup>22</sup> In 1631, for example, the Boston court passed a law requiring membership in the church for civil freedoms—an action Backus labeled “compulsive uniformity,” and a cruel and ironic shadow of the Old England ecclesiastical substance.<sup>23</sup> In 1635, Roger Williams was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for holding views contrary to the government’s religious laws. Williams fled to what became the colony of Providence, Rhode Island in 1636 where he soon began the Baptist movement in America in much the same manner as John Smyth in England twenty-three years before.<sup>24</sup> In 1638, the General Court of Massachusetts instituted a tax

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Dixhoorn, ed., *Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms: A Reader’s Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 237.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Gill, *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty*, Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2008), 61.

<sup>22</sup> Backus, *A History of New England*, 1:36.

<sup>23</sup> Backus, *A History of New England*, 1:35.

<sup>24</sup> Williams fled to the New World in 1631 under extreme religious persecution by Charles I’s Archbishop William Laud. He constituted the first Baptist church in America in 1639, in Providence, RI. However, like John Smyth before him who fled from England to Holland because of religious persecution, Williams remained with the Baptist church only a few months before recanting his own baptism in light of the absence of legitimate baptismal succession. See Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, 370, 373, 379; Colton, *Introducing Baptists*, 19.

structure that required all people within its charter to financially support both the commonwealth and the established church within it.<sup>25</sup> In 1644, as seven Particular Baptist churches gathered in London to adopt the first inter-congregational Baptist confession of faith, Williams was granted a patent for the colony in Providence and published his most famous work, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution*.<sup>26</sup>

Back in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, however, religiopolitical institution increased. A bronze statue of Mary Dyer currently stands in Boston, Massachusetts, where, in 1660, she was hanged for her Quaker beliefs that were in opposition to the state's rigorously Puritan legislation. Like in England, cooperation between congregations in the early American colonial days was a matter of institutionalized state-church legislation maintained within sanctioned ecclesial hierarchies and protected by the Crown of England. To plant independent churches and develop a system of cooperation between them would rend the religiopolitical fabric in the New World as it had in the Old.

In 1687, Elias Keach migrated from London to America. He was baptized by Thomas Dungan who was among the first settlers at Newport, Rhode Island, where John Clarke had pastored since 1644.<sup>27</sup> In 1688, Keach gathered a Baptist church at Pennepeck. For five years he travelled the region evangelizing and planting several more churches.<sup>28</sup> The separate congregations convened once per quarter for fellowship, preaching, and

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<sup>25</sup> Alvin Rabushka, "The Colonial Roots of American Taxation, 1607-1700," Hoover Institution, August 1, 2002, <https://www.hoover.org/research/colonial-roots-american-taxation-1607-1700>.

<sup>26</sup> Roger Williams writes, "God requireth (sic) not an *uniformity* of *Religion* to be *inacted* and *inforced* (sic) in any *civill* (sic) *state* . . . An *inforced* (sic) *uniformity* of *Religion* throughout a *civill* (sic) *state*, confounds the *Civill* (sic) and *Religious*, denies the principles of Christianity and civility, and that *Jesus Christ* is come in the *Flesh*." Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution*, ed. Samuel L. Caldwell (Providence, RI: Providence, 1842), 3–4.

<sup>27</sup> Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 54–55.

<sup>28</sup> A. D. Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association From A.D. 1707 to A.D. 1807: Being the First One Hundred Years of Its Existence* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 11.

observing the ordinances.<sup>29</sup> In the 1690s, Samuel Jones, pastor of the Welsh church in Pennsylvania County which was planted by Elias Keach, travelled across the region evangelizing the lost and planting churches.<sup>30</sup> This became the normal pattern of an organic domestic missions movement among the Baptist churches in the Philadelphia connection. In time, these separate preaching points became autonomous churches, and their quarterly gatherings “became the nucleus of the Philadelphia Baptist Association,” which constituted officially in 1707.<sup>31</sup> The churches of the association gathered yearly for fellowship, church strengthening, missions mobilization, and evangelistic collaboration. Although it is evident that the churches held the confession between them from their earliest days, the first associational mention of their confession of faith is found in the minutes of the 1724 meeting, in response to an inquiry from a member church.<sup>32</sup> The *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* was formalized and printed at the request of messengers to the 1742 associational meeting.<sup>33</sup> As the years progressed, the association, guarded and guided by their shared confession of faith, “sent numerous missionaries and church planters throughout the South during the middle and latter eighteenth century.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 146.

<sup>30</sup> Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 11.

<sup>31</sup> McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 146.

<sup>32</sup> The associational record reads, “We refer to the Confession of faith, set forth by the elders and brethren in London, 1689, and owned by us.” Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 27. No minutes from or records of associational meetings exist between 1712 and 1722. It is possible that Keach’s confession was formally adopted by the association in those years, perhaps as early as their associational constitution in 1707. See also the 1851 Preface by Horatio Jones. Jones argues that from its formation, no church could have been admitted to the association unless that church affirmed its confessional doctrines. Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 4.

<sup>33</sup> The record states that “a motion was made in the Association for reprinting the Confession of faith, set forth by the elders of baptized congregations, met in London, A.D. 1689, with a short treatise of church discipline, to be annexed to the Confession of faith.” Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 46. Money was raised for this purpose. Messengers agreed that if the reprinting was funded, “an addition of two articles be therein inserted: that is to say, concerning singing of psalms in the worship of God, and laying of hands upon baptized believers” (46).

<sup>34</sup> Thomas K. Ascol, *From the Protestant Reformation to the Southern Baptist Convention: What Hath Geneva to Do with Nashville?*, rev. ed. (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2013), 30.

In southern South Carolina, 680 miles south, a similar Baptist movement began concurrently. The city of Charleston was founded in 1670 with a population of 148 English settlers, many of whom were Baptist.<sup>35</sup> The Baptists there were not officially gathered into a church until 1696 when Pastor William Screven of Kittery, Massachusetts, relocated his family and several congregants to the area and began meeting with the Charleston Baptists in various homes. In 1701 they built the first Baptist church building in the South.<sup>36</sup> Screven led both his Kittery congregation and the combined church in Charleston to require adherence to the *London Baptist Confession* (1689) for membership.<sup>37</sup> In 1751, Oliver Hart became pastor of the Baptist church in Charleston, in which capacity he quickly led four churches to form the second Baptist association in America—the Charleston Baptist Association.<sup>38</sup> Previously, Hart was a young preacher in the Philadelphia Baptist Association.<sup>39</sup> He patterned the Charleston association after the Philadelphia association which, according to Owens, “stabilized the pioneer churches, provided them a program of cooperative work and set them on a

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<sup>35</sup> Loulie Latimer Owens, *Saints of Clay: The Shaping of South Carolina Baptists* (Columbia, SC: R. L. Bryan, 1971), 21.

<sup>36</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 25.

<sup>37</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 27. Owens claims Screven lead the Kittery congregation to adopt the *Westminster Confession* (1646), but fails to recognize Screven’s specific affinity for the *London Baptist Confession* (1689) in congregational formation (in both Kittery and Charleston) which was merely based upon, in part, the *Westminster Confession*.

<sup>38</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 35. The four churches were those of Charleston, Euhaw, Ashley River, and Welsh Neck.

<sup>39</sup> An essay defending the Philadelphia associational practice of excluding churches from affiliation based on deviance from the doctrines of their confessional faith is included in the minutes of the association’s 1749 meeting:

Such churches there must be agreeing in doctrine and practice, and independent in their authority and church power, before they can enter into a confederation . . . a defection in doctrine or practice in any church, in such confederation, or any party in any such church, is found sufficient for an Association to withdraw from such a church or party so deviating or making defection, and exclude such from them in some formal manner. (Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 61–62)

The essay was “Consented to” and signed by the messengers of the meeting, including Oliver Hart who subsequently travelled to the Carolinas and established the Charleston Baptist Association in 1751. This (1749) is the last time Hart is mentioned in the Philadelphia Association minutes before his return to the association as pastor in Hopewell, in 1780.

positive plan of denominational development in South Carolina.”<sup>40</sup> The Charleston association, like the Philadelphia association before it, drew from its shared confession of faith a certain strength and doctrinal focus in its organized cooperative mission work.

The Sandy Creek Baptist Association formed in 1758 under the leadership of Shubal Stearns, a revivalistic Separate Baptist pastor with a clear plan for “strategic church planting” as one of his five principles for associational cooperation.<sup>41</sup> His was the first Baptist association in North Carolina, the second in the South, and the third in America.<sup>42</sup> Larry McDonald, Dean and Professor of Christian Spirituality for North Greenville University’s Graduate School of Christian Ministry, suggests that “Baptist churches of the South owe much of their evangelistic fervor and zeal for church planting to Stearns and the Separate Baptists.”<sup>43</sup> The association was both a product of and a stimulus for American revivalism. Stearns’ ardent revivalism grew out of the First Great Awakening in America and led into the Second, creating somewhat of a bridge between the two on the Southeast coast as Stearns led the way toward a cooperative model for aggressive evangelism and rapid, strategic church planting.<sup>44</sup> The Sandy Creek Association did not initially adopt a confession of faith in the pattern of the Philadelphia and Charleston associations. Instead, they looked strictly to the New Testament as their standard of faith and practice, but articulated nine “rites” which became foundational to their movement:

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<sup>40</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 35. See also Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists in America: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2015), 28.

<sup>41</sup> Larry Steven McDonald, “Shubal Stearns and the Sandy Creek Association,” in *A History of Evangelism in North America*, ed. Thomas P. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021), 86–94. According to McDonald, Stearns’s five principles were dependence on the Holy Spirit, prioritization of evangelism, mobilization of the laity for ministry, strategic church planting, and an organized associational model.

<sup>42</sup> McDonald, “Shubal Stearns and the Sandy Creek Association,” 83.

<sup>43</sup> McDonald, “Shubal Stearns and the Sandy Creek Association,” 82.

<sup>44</sup> W. L. Muncy sees Stearns and Marshall’s move southward through Virginia and the Carolinas as “the beginning of Baptist activity and influence” that sparked the revivalism of the First Great Awakening in the middle and southern colonies. See W. L. Muncy, *A History of Evangelism in the United States* (Kansas City: Central Seminary, 1945), 49.



believer's baptism, the Lord's Supper, love feasts, laying on of hands at baptism, foot washing, anointing the sick with oil, the right hand of fellowship, the kiss of charity, and infant devotion ceremonies.<sup>45</sup> These nine rites did not comprise a well-formed confession of faith, but they did form a foundation of faith and practice that would undergird the church planting and domestic missions work of the association. As the association expanded, its stance on confessionalism evolved. In 1817, fifty-nine years after its constitution, the association adopted "Principles of Faith" of a reformed theological persuasion, and in 1845 it affirmed the *New Hampshire Confession*.<sup>46</sup>

In 1767, the Warren Baptist Association formed from several churches around Boston, Massachusetts. They adopted the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* in their inaugural meeting.<sup>47</sup> The association operated in the same pattern of confessional cooperation as the Philadelphia and Charleston associations before it, requiring confessional adherence for churches in associational membership.<sup>48</sup> The Warren Association challenged its member churches to faithfully give toward and support the work of their sister churches and to give toward and support domestic and foreign missions.<sup>49</sup> Several generations later, Benajah H. Carroll, founder of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Southern Baptist denominational bellwether, declared the Philadelphia, Charleston, and Warren associations "the three most influential" associations when it came to Baptist heritage in America.<sup>50</sup> These associations of churches, and others like them,

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<sup>45</sup> Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 37.

<sup>46</sup> Steve W. Lemke, "Articles of Religious Belief: The Confession Authored by the Founders of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary," *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 83.

<sup>47</sup> Warren Baptist Association, *A Compendium of the Minutes of the Warren Baptist Association from its Formation, in 1767, to the Year 1825, Inclusive* (Boston, 1825), 2–3.

<sup>48</sup> Warren Baptist Association, *A Compendium of the Minutes*, 2–5.

<sup>49</sup> Warren Baptist Association, *Minutes of the Warren Baptist Association Held at New-Bedford on Wednesday and Thursday, September 10 and 11, 1828* (Providence, RI: H. M. Brown, 1828), 6–8.

<sup>50</sup> Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 20.

pulled together autonomous Baptist churches in organized cooperation for church strengthening, church planting, ministerial education, local benevolence, and missionary support, even during what one historian has called the “dark ages” of evangelism “in Colonial America.”<sup>51</sup>

The northward expansion of the Baptist movement on American soil was slower and more challenging. Historical records suggest a Baptist witness in New Hampshire as early as 1639, but due to the severity of religious persecution there, the seeds of the Baptist movement in the state did not begin to take root until 1720.<sup>52</sup> In an 1835 sermon before the New Hampshire Baptist Convention, Ebenezer E. Cummings, pastor of First Baptist Church Concord, marked 1770 as a turning point in New Hampshire Baptist history.<sup>53</sup> In that year, God began to do a fresh work across the state through several pioneering Baptist preachers including Hezekiah Smith and Samuel Shepard. New Hampshire Baptist historian Terry Wolever acknowledged Shepard as the most prominent figure in New Hampshire Baptist history.<sup>54</sup> Much like the early ministry of Elias Keach in Philadelphia and the surrounding areas, Shepard’s ministry resulted in the establishment of at least eleven Baptist congregations, all of which were initially “branches” of his primary pastorate in Brentwood but eventually became autonomous local congregations.<sup>55</sup> In this way, the initial days of inter-congregational church planting mission work in New Hampshire mimicked those of Philadelphia one century earlier. By 1779, New Hampshire churches were cooperating to send missionaries into eastern Maine.<sup>56</sup> The New Hampshire

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<sup>51</sup> Muncy, *A History of Evangelism in the United States*, 23.

<sup>52</sup> Ebenezer E. Cummings, “A Sermon Preached Before the New-Hampshire Baptist State Convention, at its Tenth Annual Meeting, Held at Deerfield, October 20, 1835,” in *An Anthology of Early Baptists in New Hampshire*, ed. Terry Wolever (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist, 2001), 10–11.

<sup>53</sup> Cummings, “Sermon Preached Before the New-Hampshire Baptist State Convention,” 10–11.

<sup>54</sup> Wolever, *An Anthology of Early Baptists*, 149.

<sup>55</sup> Cummings, “Sermon Preached Before the New-Hampshire Baptist State Convention,” 13.

<sup>56</sup> William Hurlin, O. C. Sargent, and W. W. Wakeman, *The Baptists of New Hampshire* (Manchester: John B. Clarke, 1902), 95–96.

Association formed in 1785 and eventually merged with two other associations.<sup>57</sup> The Meredith Association formed in 1789, the Dublin Association in 1809, and the Salisbury Association in 1819.<sup>58</sup> In 1817, the New Hampshire Baptist Mission Society was organized and, in 1825, the New Hampshire Baptist State Convention.<sup>59</sup> By 1828, most Baptist churches in the state belonged to one of six associations, affording them a “strong bond of unity,” “great zeal,” and “vital godliness . . . for the general diffusion of the gospel.”<sup>60</sup> Like Baptists before them in the middle and southern colonies, autonomous Baptist churches in New Hampshire voluntarily associated for church strengthening, ministerial education, church planting, benevolence, missions funding, and evangelistic coordination.

The *Philadelphia Baptist Confession*—usually shortened, simplified, and adopted by the individual churches—was the initial unifying doctrinal expression of New Hampshire Baptists.<sup>61</sup> However, as the doctrine of unlimited atonement gained popularity with the rise of the Freewill Baptists in New Hampshire toward the mid-nineteenth century, the state convention felt the need for a more theologically unifying confessional statement.<sup>62</sup> Messengers to the 1830 state convention set in motion the effort to create a new “Declaration of Faith and Practice, together with a Covenant, as may be thought agreeable and consistent with the views of all our churches in the state.”<sup>63</sup> Wolever calls the action a “theological shift,” an unnecessary and unjustified “doctrinal downgrade,”

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<sup>57</sup> Cummings, “Sermon Preached Before the New-Hampshire Baptist State Convention,” 16.

<sup>58</sup> Cummings, “Sermon Preached Before the New-Hampshire Baptist State Convention,” 26.

<sup>59</sup> Cummings, “Sermon Preached Before the New-Hampshire Baptist State Convention,” 28–29. The New Hampshire Baptist Mission Society merged into the state convention in 1828.

<sup>60</sup> Cummings, “Sermon {reached Before the New-Hampshire Baptist State Convention,” 26–27.

<sup>61</sup> Terry Wolever suggests that doctrinal positions of the Philadelphia Confession were “prevalent among New Hampshire Regular Baptists” in the early nineteenth century. Wolever, *An Anthology of Early Baptists*, 516.

<sup>62</sup> Wolever, *An Anthology of Early Baptists*, 530–33.

<sup>63</sup> Wolever, *An Anthology of Early Baptists*, 530–31.

and an exercise in “theological neutrality.”<sup>64</sup> However, while some Calvinistic doctrinal positions undoubtedly were softened in comparison to the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* before it, the new confession still articulated the moderately reformed evangelical positions most surely held by doctrinally sound Baptist churches.

Contemporary church historian Thomas Kidd observes that the new confession moderated the “crosscutting theological winds generated by Freewill Baptists, Campbellites, anti-mission movements, and others.”<sup>65</sup> It was to be a consensus of faith and practice, reflecting the core doctrinal convictions of voluntarily associated Baptist churches who pooled their resources and relationships for evangelistic and missional cooperation.

Throughout colonialism and the earliest decades of the twentieth century, Baptists of the South “rejected modernity’s individualism,” according to Gregory Wills, exemplifying a sure doctrinal aversion to the Enlightenment’s “privatizing trend of democratized individualism;” instead, local Baptist churches and Christians within them “had prerogatives that superseded those of individuals.”<sup>66</sup> The trendy political doctrines of individualized belief and practice were lost on Southern Baptists in those days, whose populist take on congregational democracy was “unashamedly authoritarian,” and “stubbornly creedal.”<sup>67</sup> Baptists in the South, from colonialism up to the early twentieth century, believed in a voluntary interdependency under the authority of the Bible and the headship of Christ. They were doctrinally centered, convictionally communal, and missiologically inter-dependent. While each church was autonomous, the act of associating together was common from the earliest days of the Baptist movement in the New World. Baptist churches chose to seek the fellowship and advice of others in the region, and

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<sup>64</sup> Wolever, *An Anthology of Early Baptists*, 533.

<sup>65</sup> Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 115.

<sup>66</sup> Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South 1785–1900* (New York: Oxford University, 1997), viii.

<sup>67</sup> Wills, *Democratic Religion*, vii.

although they were not required to take that advice, they usually did. If an associated church was defiantly uncooperative or persistent in doctrinal error, the association reserved the right to withdraw fellowship from them.<sup>68</sup> Common Baptist confessions of faith were often used as baselines for these doctrinal inquiries.

Reflecting on the inter-congregational cooperation that was seeded within the Baptist movement, McBeth articulated that the Baptists have a “heritage of cooperation . . . . They came into the world reaching out hands of fellowship to other like-minded believers . . . . They saw their churches not as Lone Ranger independents, but as cooperative communities to advance God’s kingdom together.”<sup>69</sup> B. H. Carroll notes that associational “foundations and inter-congregational activity” revealed “a distinct tendency to co-operation in mission work.”<sup>70</sup> This cooperation was built around a body of shared doctrine which was quickly formalized and occasionally refined in written and adopted confessions of faith, forming the foundation for inter-congregational domestic and foreign missions engagement.<sup>71</sup> The doctrine of cooperation itself, however, was still latent, devoid of well-formed expression in Baptist confessions of faith in the New World. As associations developed in organization, they used their confessions to strengthen associational relationships which “served as doctrinal clearing houses and effective agencies for the churches in missions and education.”<sup>72</sup> Early Baptist churches in America formed associations around shared confessional agreements for the purpose of cooperation in

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<sup>68</sup> Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 98–100.

<sup>69</sup> McBeth, “Cooperation and Crisis,” 36.

<sup>70</sup> Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 29.

<sup>71</sup> McBeth writes,

To provide a basis for fellowship, associations and later the general assemblies used their confessions as ‘constituting documents,’ providing the basis for affiliation and fellowship among churches and messengers. Local churches studied the confessions to decide if they desired to affiliate with associations; churches or individuals who deviated from the faith were often dealt with according to the confessions. (McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 68)

<sup>72</sup> William W. Barnes, *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology: The Southern Baptist Convention* (Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill, 1934), 16.

church strengthening, church planting, evangelistic collaboration, benevolence, education, and missions funding and mobilization. Their confessions of faith guarded and guided their cooperative work. As the Baptist movement in America strengthened, with increased awareness of domestic and foreign mission fields and increased resources with which to engage those mission fields, organized confessional cooperation expanded.

### **Confessional Cooperation Between Associations**

By 1800, Baptists in America numbered approximately 180,000 members belonging to churches in forty-eight organized associations, most of which were sympathetic to, if not constituted upon, the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession*.<sup>73</sup> Just as churches propagated confessionally aligned churches, associations propagated confessionally aligned associations. For example, correspondence between the Philadelphia and Shaftsbury associations is evident as early as 1787. As the Shaftsbury association stabilized, churches in the Philadelphia association that were geographically closer to the Shaftsbury association were released into its fellowship.<sup>74</sup> The Warren association dismissed eight churches in 1801 to form another association, twenty-four in 1812 to form the Boston association, and several more in 1819 to form a third association.<sup>75</sup>

By this time, Baptists in America enjoyed a renewed revivalistic and missionary spirit, evidenced in associational discussions of extending their missional cooperation to further advance the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>76</sup> The camp meeting movement and frontier revivals of the Second Great Awakening fanned the fires of inter-congregational

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<sup>73</sup> Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 16, 28.

<sup>74</sup> Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 237, 247.

<sup>75</sup> Warren Baptist Association, *A Compendium of the Minutes*, 6–13.

<sup>76</sup> William Harrison Eaton, *Historical Sketch of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society and Convention, 1802–1902* (Boston: Colonial, 1903), 5.

cooperation while also challenging the doctrinal boundaries of evangelistic cooperation.<sup>77</sup> In 1792, the Philadelphia Baptist Association funded and sent domestic missionaries “to preach the gospel to the destitute.”<sup>78</sup> In 1794, a domestic missionary was sent, from a combined Baptist and Congregationalist effort, into the “destitute communities” of New York.<sup>79</sup> For eight years before the formation of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, beginning in 1796, the Shaftsbury Association funded and sent missionaries into New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Canada.<sup>80</sup> Between 1794 and 1802, missionaries to New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Canada were commissioned and sometimes jointly funded from the Philadelphia, Warren, and Shaftsbury associations.<sup>81</sup> The formation and emerging successes of these associations fueled and strengthened the missionary spirit of Baptists in America.<sup>82</sup>

As the number of associations grew and the cooperative mobilization of missionaries multiplied, collaboration and cooperation between the associations broadened. In 1798, the Philadelphia association financially supported a mission work in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.<sup>83</sup> One year later, minutes record the first reference to a request for a “general conference” gathering of the various associations scattered across the United

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<sup>77</sup> Johnston, *A History of Evangelism in North America*, 111–51. Johnston reflects on this historical reality in a discussion on Billy Graham’s Youth for Christ organization and crusade evangelism in the mid-twentieth century: “All churches and denominations have some kind of boundaries—largely dictated by their statements of faith. Cooperative evangelism usually challenges these boundaries.” Johnston, *A History of Evangelism in North America*, 239. See also Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 7. Wills notes that during the Great Awakening, the number of Baptist churches multiplied from sixty in 1770, to one thousand in 1790, many of which were originally Congregationalist and separatist churches that became Baptist during the Awakening.

<sup>78</sup> Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 283.

<sup>79</sup> Eaton, *Historical Sketch*, 6.

<sup>80</sup> Eaton, *Historical Sketch*, 6.

<sup>81</sup> Eaton, *Historical Sketch*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 29–34.

<sup>83</sup> Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 334–35.

States.<sup>84</sup> In 1800, two years before the first evangelical missions society in America was officially organized in Boston, Massachusetts, the Philadelphia association proposed the formation of a missionary society to be formed from the several nearby associations and the general committee of Virginia.<sup>85</sup> Occasionally, Baptist associations refused to cooperate with one another, whether in fellowship or missionary enterprise, on the basis of doctrinal differences such as Arminianism and Calvinism.<sup>86</sup> Other associations chose to cooperate regardless of doctrinal variances whether antinomianism, hyper-Calvinism, Arminianism, or other disagreements. J. S. Lawton of Georgia's Rehoboth Baptist Association wrote in 1874 that cooperation among Baptists and groups of Baptists should be based "on the great Baptist principles of regeneration, immersion, and strict communion," while allowing a wide variety of other divergences in faith and practice.<sup>87</sup> Just as the early Baptist churches in America formed associations for (and as a result of) cooperative domestic missions engagement, those autonomous associations began to form confessional connections between one another for the same purposes.<sup>88</sup> The resulting

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<sup>84</sup> The association's invitation reads, "Apprehensive that many advantages may result from a general conference, composed of one or more members from each Association, to be held every one, two, or three years, as may seem most subservient to the general interests of our Lord's kingdom; this Association respectfully invites the different Associations in the United States to favor them with their views on the subject." Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 343.

<sup>85</sup> The record reads,

Whereas, the church of Philadelphia have presented a query, on the propriety of forming a plan for establishing a missionary society. This Association, taking the matter into consideration, think it would be most advisable to invite the general committee of Virginia and different Associations on the continent, to unite with us in laying a plan for forming a missionary society, and establishing a fund for its support, and for employing missionaries among the natives of our continent. (Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 350)

<sup>86</sup> Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 105–6.

<sup>87</sup> Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 107.

<sup>88</sup> Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 202–3. Carroll argues that associations were not first organized as missionary bodies, but rather "for mutual edification through fellowship and advice," and that Conventions, a later development, were "strictly missionary bodies," not developed from purpose of missionary endeavor, their organization came about *because of* shared doctrinal confession and shared mission, and their earliest cooperative endeavors included, among other things, church planting, coordination of evangelistic preaching, and domestic missions.



organizations were mission societies and state and national conventions. However, the tension between minimalism and maximalism in confessional cooperation persisted and took on a different character altogether within societies and conventions when compared to local associations. The timeless moral and theological obligation toward cooperation was stronger than ever, but the boundaries of doctrinal agreement were to be stretched.

In London, England, the first Baptist Missionary Society formed in 1792 under the influence of William Carey.<sup>89</sup> Carey was appointed as part of its first missionary team to Serampore in the East Indies, and his letters to Baptist associations in England and America ignited a new enthusiasm for international (foreign) missions engagement. The Philadelphia association's minutes from 1801 record that a letter from Carey was read to the association.<sup>90</sup> Energized by the movement and burdened by "the Great Commission and the constraining love of Christ," the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1802; its constitution required leadership to be "professing brethren of the Baptist denomination."<sup>91</sup> It labeled those funded and sent "missionaries," commissioning them "to promote the knowledge of evangelistic truth in the new settlements within these United States; or further if circumstances should render it proper."<sup>92</sup> A confession of faith was not specifically mentioned in its organizational documents, but the constitution was signed by those who comprised the "Committee of the Baptist churches in Boston," where associations like the Warren Baptist Association had been exercising guarded confessionalism, around the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession*, for years.<sup>93</sup> The

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<sup>89</sup> Smith, Handy, and Loetscher, *American Christianity*, 547.

<sup>90</sup> Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 360.

<sup>91</sup> Eaton, *Historical Sketch*, 7, 9.

<sup>92</sup> Eaton, *Historical Sketch*, 9.

<sup>93</sup> Warren Baptist Association, *A Compendium of the Minutes*, 2–5. In 1779, messengers condemned the doctrine of universal salvation a "damnable heresy" not in keeping with the confession. In 1781, the association withdrew fellowship from all member churches which affirmed the restoration movement. In 1782 the association formally voted, regarding churches which depart from the faith and practice commonly held among them, to recommend neighboring churches to confront and seek to correct

Massachusetts society produced and circulated a “Missionary Magazine” which proliferated success stories and opportunities for domestic and foreign missions support; the magazine was widely supported by associations across the states, especially the Philadelphia Baptist Association.<sup>94</sup> In 1803, a plan was presented for the formation of a mission society among Philadelphia Baptist churches.<sup>95</sup> As early as 1805, the Philadelphia Baptist Association urged churches to support mission societies working in New York, Georgia, New England, South Carolina, and Serampore.<sup>96</sup> Early in the nineteenth century, confessionally conscientious Baptist associations were corresponding and cooperating across state and national lines for domestic and foreign mission work through missions societies.<sup>97</sup>

The development of societies gave fresh expression to the organizational methodology of Baptist missions funding and sending efforts. The idea “electrified” Richard Furman of South Carolina, according to Loulie Owens, South Carolina Baptist historian.<sup>98</sup> Furman was already an established denominational shaper in South Carolina, having led his local association to begin an organized effort for funding ministerial education.<sup>99</sup> In 1802, he convinced the Charleston Baptist Association to extend its domestic missions efforts to the Catawba Indians and to “whites in destitute sections of the state.”<sup>100</sup> As the needs and opportunities for missions cooperation grew, “Furman and

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the issue and if correction was not made, to remove the church from the association. In 1788, the Church at Grafton was disfellowshipped for affirming the doctrine of universal salvation.

<sup>94</sup> Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 412, 422.

<sup>95</sup> Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 381.

<sup>96</sup> Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 412–13, 422.

<sup>97</sup> See William Rogers’ “Circular Letter” in the 1806 Philadelphia association’s annual report. Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, 426–32.

<sup>98</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 55.

<sup>99</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 60.

<sup>100</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 61.

his fellow pastors in the Charleston Association talked of closer cooperation between the associations.”<sup>101</sup> In 1819, he led the conversation that initiated the constitution of the first Baptist state convention—the South Carolina Baptist Convention, in 1821.<sup>102</sup> The Convention was comprised of messengers from three Baptist associations in South Carolina. Its original Constitution begins:

Whereas, by an address to the Baptist Associations of this State, which was circulated among the Churches of their connexion (sic) during the present and past year, it was made to appear, that it would be of great advantage to the denomination to form themselves into a State Convention, which should be a bond of union, a centre (sic) of intelligence, and a means of vigorous, united exertion in the cause of God, for the promotion of truth and righteousness that so those energies, intellectual, moral and pecuniary, which God has bestowed upon the denomination in this State, might be concentrated, and brought into vigorous, useful operation.<sup>103</sup>

The constitutive purposes of the South Carolina Baptist Convention were ministry education and missions as matters of “cordial and vigorous co-operation.”<sup>104</sup> Furman authored a letter to non-participating associations intimating that non-cooperation of Baptist churches and associations for missionary purposes would be “criminal” and “negligent,” basing his argument in both “revelation and experience.”<sup>105</sup> His words foreshadowed those of a Southern Baptist denominational leader one hundred years later.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 61.

<sup>102</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 61.

<sup>103</sup> *Minutes of the State Convention Held by the Baptist Churches in South Carolina at Columbia, December 4, 1821* (Charleston, SC: W. M. Riley, 1821), 2.

<sup>104</sup> *Minutes of the State Convention, December 4, 1821*, 3, 5.

<sup>105</sup> Furman argues for active cooperative efforts: “Did the Lord carry on his great designs among men by miraculous inter-position only: or without the use of means we might find some excuse for our inactivity. But both revelation and experience teach the contrary. *That* calls us to activity, in the service of God, and declares us criminal when we are negligent; this shows, and proves to us, the benefit arising from those active pursuits.” *Minutes of the State Convention, December 4, 1821*, 8.

<sup>106</sup> See Lee R. Scarborough, “The Heresy of Non-Co-Operation by L. R. Scarborough,” The L. R. Scarborough Digital Materials Collection, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, <http://cdm16969.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16969coll11/id/1136>.

Georgia Baptists soon followed with an organized state-wide “Association” in 1822. The word “Convention” was not, at the time, widely appreciated especially among Baptists in America who were hesitant of the perceived denominational centralization that came along with growing missional cooperation.<sup>107</sup> However, the gathering of messengers from associations and the organizational structure of Georgia’s “Association” was like the South Carolina Baptist Convention’s before it. This 1822 body of Georgia Baptists is not to be confused with the local associationalism which preceded it. Rather, it was a “Convention” in the proper sense of the term. The constitution of the 1822 General Baptist Association for the State of Georgia began by acknowledging a “highly expedient” opportunity in “a more close and extensive *union* among the Churches of the Baptist denomination” within the state.<sup>108</sup> Its first enumerated item assumed broad confessional consensus without mentioning a specific confession at all: “This body is constituted upon those principles of christian (sic) faith exhibited in Scripture, generally acknowledged and received in the Baptist denomination.”<sup>109</sup> The “specific object of this body” (the purposes for organization) were listed as follows:

1. To unite the influence and pious intelligence of Georgia Baptists, and thereby to facilitate their union and co-operation.
2. To form and encourage plans for the revival

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<sup>107</sup> See William D. Nowlin, *Kentucky Baptist History 1770–1922* (Louisville: Baptist Book Concern, 1922), 116–26. Nowlin mentions regional pastor jealousies, doctrinal disagreements, differences in opinion over denominational mission endeavors, and a general fear of the word “Convention” as potential bases for the naming of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky only five years after its failed predecessor, the Kentucky Baptist Convention, was initiated. Neither body adopted a confession of faith upon its constitution, but both were inaugurated for the purposes of regional and state-wide evangelism, missions, and church strengthening (as constitutional documents in Nowlin’s volume record).

<sup>108</sup> *Minutes of the General Baptist Association for the State of Georgia 1822*, Mercer University, accessed July 19, 2024, [https://ursa.mercer.edu/bitstream/handle/10898/13748/GBC\\_1822.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://ursa.mercer.edu/bitstream/handle/10898/13748/GBC_1822.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y), 3. This state-wide convention (“association”) of Georgia Baptist churches is not to be confused with the older Georgia Baptist Association, which was constituted in 1784.

<sup>109</sup> *Minutes of the General Baptist Association for the State of Georgia 1822*, 3. See also the opening paragraph of Moderator Jesse Mercer’s “Address,” on p. 5. He stated a “uniformity of faith and practice on one of the great sacraments of Christianity (sic),” which “was regarded as a principle of union no less dear, than sacred.” Mercer seems to assume that the ordinance of credobaptism (by immersion?) was the only uniting and sacred principle of faith and practice Baptists needed in order to associate and convene. Further doctrinal parameters “exhibited in Scripture, generally acknowledged and received in the Baptist denomination” were assumed among them but, perhaps, not imposed as convening qualifications.

of experimental and practical religion in the State and elsewhere. 3. To promote uniformity of sentiment and discipline. 4. To aid in giving effect to the useful plans of the several Associations. 5. To afford an opportunity to those who may conscientiously think it in their duty to form a fund for the education of pious young men, who may be called by the Spirit and their Churches to the christian (sic) ministry. 6. To correspond with bodies of other religious denominations on topics of general interest to the Redeemer's kingdom, and to promote pious and useful education in the Baptist denomination.<sup>110</sup>

The statewide body of Georgia Baptists intended to work toward unity of faith and practice, to strategize for evangelistic and missional engagement, and to provide an organizational mechanism for cooperative funding. In other words, theirs was an organized effort at enabling the moral and theological obligation felt by Baptists in their state to cooperate for Great Commission purposes. Messengers assumed a general level of doctrinal consensus, but did not adopt, or even mention, a confession as part of their constitutional organization. In his "Address," Moderator Jesse Mercer suggests that "The want of exact uniformity in discipline is of frequent disturbances in our Churches."<sup>111</sup> He laments that the faith and practice of one Baptist congregation in the state would often conflict with that of another and that when neither would "acquiesce," disagreement would negatively affect "christian (sic) fellowship" and produce "rivalship (sic), "jealousy," and "angry disputes among the brethren." The obviation of this lamentable disunion between the churches, which is to the "detriment of the sacred cause" that they shared in Baptist cooperation, is "one design of our general union," he explained. For Mercer, a necessary relationship is implied between local church autonomy and associational influence in matters of faith and practice, but that relationship was more stimulating than restrictive. The Georgia Baptist state convention ("General Association") could not guarantee or effect changes in the churches, but the influence of the association and of its fellowship

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<sup>110</sup> *Minutes of the General Baptist Association for the State of Georgia 1822*, 4.

<sup>111</sup> *Minutes of the General Baptist Association for the State of Georgia 1822*, 7.

of messengers might gradually “produce a sameness in the usages of all our Churches.”<sup>112</sup>

This experiment was put on display as late as 1839, when the United Baptist Association was permitted to send messengers to the state convention in Georgia even though its confessional history was suspect, and its cooperation with other associations was non-existent. J. H. Campbell, in his historical record, *Georgia Baptists: Historical and Biographical* (1874), noted that although the association “held no correspondence with other bodies of the Baptists in the State, still they were all missionary in their principles, and were ever ready to contribute liberally of their substance for their Master’s cause.”<sup>113</sup> The state-wide General Baptist Association in Georgia would require neither confessional subscription nor inter-associational correspondence for the seating of messengers, but they were not ignorant of their confessional heritage or of the importance of confessional agreement. Associations would require confessional agreement for cooperation, but the state convention would allow cooperation with a variety of associational confessional expressions hoping to leverage the influence of relationship to correct doctrinal error and spur greater missional cooperation.

A doctrine of cooperation undergirded the formation of the first Baptist state conventions, even though they did not formally adopt confessions of faith at their constitutional conventions. Southern Baptist Historian William W. Barnes saw a connection between the “centralized ecclesiology” of Furman’s Convention Plan and that

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<sup>112</sup> *Minutes of the General Baptist Association for the State of Georgia 1822*, 7. Full paragraph:

The want and uniformity in discipline is a source of frequent disturbances in our Churches. It has often happened that cases have been disposed of in one Church, whilst another Church could not acquiesce in the decision of its sister-institution, and long contentions have ensued upon this diversity of disciplinary measures. Meanwhile christian (sic) fellowship has been suspended, rivalry and jealousy have prevailed, and angry disputes among brethren have existed to the no small detriment of the sacred cause. At the same time, it has been easy for imposing characters to shelter themselves from deserved censure by relying on the peculiar modes of an individual society, and disclaiming the principles of other bodies. To obviate such a state of things, is one design of our general union. It is true that the influence even of this meeting might not produce an immediate change in this evil, but it might adopt expedients to counteract it and gradually to produce a sameness in the usages of all our Churches. (7)

<sup>113</sup> J. H. Campbell, *Georgia Baptists: Historical and Biographical* (Macon, GA: J. W. Burke, 1874), 111.

of the Philadelphia Baptist Association but noted obvious disagreement among Baptists associating and convening in early nineteenth-century America, evidenced in their General and Particular heritages and their stated confessions of faith.<sup>114</sup> Even with competing soteriological viewpoints and hesitations over centralization, “denominational consciousness was still prominent,” and the biblical conviction to cooperate was still evident.<sup>115</sup> Baptists in America held a moral and theological obligation to associate and cooperate with other churches on the basis of shared biblical convictions. The doctrine of cooperation undergirded their collective evangelistic and missional activities, even when not confessionally expressed between them.

State conventions formed with less strict confessional regulation than some local associations. However, each assumed a level of doctrinal agreement among the churches even when the confessions of those churches were not uniform. The doctrinal value of state conventions would be in the influence of the body upon doctrinally wandering congregations rather than organizational restrictions on matters of faith and practice not commonly shared between them. Furman’s 1814 “Convention Plan,” and his society plan before it (1785)—the “germ of the Furman concept,” as Loulie Owens Latimer explains—became the organizational framework on which state and national Baptist conventions were formed.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> William W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845–1953* (Nashville: Broadman, 1954), 4–7.

<sup>115</sup> Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845–1953*, 6.

<sup>116</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 60–62. Differences in the organizational structure of the Triennial Convention and the SBC are acknowledged with regard to the society plan structure of the former versus the centralized ecclesiological missiology structure of the latter. Those differences notwithstanding, both organizations were largely influenced by Furman’s “Convention Plan,” which owes an organizational debt to his 1785 society plan before it.

## **Confessional Cooperation Between Societies and Conventions**

Voluntary societies for benevolence and missions-funding multiplied rapidly among Baptists in America from the 1790s through the nineteenth century. From this point forward, more than ever, as Gregory Wills noted, “missionary activity shaped Baptist identity.”<sup>117</sup> Stimulated by the society movement, students at Andover, Massachusetts led in the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810, a Congregationalist body. In its formation, the board agreed to cooperate with other evangelicals for the purpose of foreign missions.<sup>118</sup> Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice were among the Congregationalist board’s first missionaries, commissioned to work with William Carey and his team in Serampore, India. On his way to India, Judson studied the New Testament scriptures intently, knowing he would be challenged by Carey’s Baptist doctrinal leanings; instead of becoming more confident in his own Congregationalist doctrine, however, Judson converted to Baptist views on the ship and, upon landing in Serampore, accepted credobaptism. Rice’s story of conviction and credobaptism, on his way to India, was the same. Contemporary church historian Ruth Tucker notes that Congregationalists in America were outraged to hear that Judson and Rice had become Baptists.<sup>119</sup> With this new doctrinal conviction, the two missionaries removed themselves from association with the Congregationalist organization.<sup>120</sup> Rice soon returned to America and began a campaign among Baptist churches, associations, and societies, to fund the Baptist work in India.<sup>121</sup> The future of foreign mission work among Baptists in America was to be both doctrinally Baptist and convictionally cooperative.

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<sup>117</sup> Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 57.

<sup>118</sup> Smith, Handy, and Loetscher, *American Christianity*, 547.

<sup>119</sup> Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 132.

<sup>120</sup> John Mark Terry and Robert L. Gallagher, *Encountering the History of Missions: From the Early Church to Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 250–51.

<sup>121</sup> Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 132.



However, B. H. Carroll argued that when Rice returned to America to promote organized foreign mission work among Baptists, he “found no [Baptist] instrument perfectly fitted” for this purpose.<sup>122</sup> While associations, societies, and networks were actively engaged in the effort, a synergistic, cooperative missions-supporting mechanism between them did not exist. Rice and Judson’s work to unite Baptists in a uniquely Baptist missions funding and sending mechanism resulted in the formation of the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions, in 1814.<sup>123</sup> The formation of this American national Baptist body for organized cooperative missions culminated where the movement began—in Philadelphia.<sup>124</sup> B. H. Carroll noted the link between the 1707 Philadelphia Baptist Association and the formation of the 1814 national convention, identifying the Philadelphia association as “the mightiest power for missionary activity up to the formation of what was afterwards called the Triennial Convention,” noting that its confession of faith “left its stamp ineradicably on the Baptists of the United States.”<sup>125</sup> The Triennial Convention was formed in 1814 “for the purpose of carrying into effect the benevolent intentions of our constituents, by organizing a plan for eliciting, combining and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort, for the propagation of the Gospel.”<sup>126</sup> National cooperation was desired, “with all of its necessary machinery, politics, stresses, and strains,” in order to unite Baptist churches in America to fund and send domestic and foreign missionaries.<sup>127</sup> The creation of a distinctively Baptist organization, together with

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<sup>122</sup> Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 203–4.

<sup>123</sup> Terry and Gallagher, *Encountering the History of Missions*, 251.

<sup>124</sup> Jason G. Duesing, “Pre-Beginnings,” in *Make Disciples of All Nations: A History of Southern Baptist International Missions*, ed. John D. Massey, Mike Morris, and W. Madison Grace III (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021), 50.

<sup>125</sup> Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 28.

<sup>126</sup> *Proceedings of the 1814 Baptist Convention for Missionary Purposes* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 1814), 1.

<sup>127</sup> Duesing, “Pre-Beginnings,” 51.

the circumstances surrounding its formation, exemplifies the moral and theological obligation of Baptists in America to cooperate in missions endeavors without compromising their historic doctrinal positions.

While most celebrated the formation of the national Baptist organization, some lamented it. For example, Francis Wayland, prominent Northeast America Baptist pastor, professor, and seminary president, argued against the enforcement of confessional doctrines for nation-wide Baptist missions organization and against the apparent denominational centralization created by the very existence of such a body.<sup>128</sup> His main objection was to the standardization of a Baptist creed or confession in general, noting that because of local church autonomy such an initiative is, inherently, “impossible” within the Baptist movement.<sup>129</sup> B. H. Carroll, however, argued that organized, confessionally guided missions cooperation in associations, societies, and state and national conventions did not set up the organizations as “extra-ecclesial authorities,” but rather, as mere “instruments of cooperation. If it be right to co-operate,” he wrote, “it cannot be wrong to use some means of co-operation.”<sup>130</sup> The longstanding Baptist doctrine of cooperation, together with a new opportunity for cooperation, compelled the organization of cooperation.

As the Baptists’ denominational awareness toward confessionally conscious cooperative missions deepened—with several associations, societies, and state conventions leading the way—doctrinal schism threatened the unity of the movement.

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<sup>128</sup> Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, 1857), 184–87.

<sup>129</sup> Wayland’s reason for writing is to “present a brief view of our principles and practice, that we ourselves may have the means of verifying it, and knowing the harmony which exists between us and our brethren.” Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, 13. He argued for a common yet necessarily unexpressed doctrinal agreement between the churches.

<sup>130</sup> Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 186–87. He continues, “Baptist Conventions or Associations are in no sense of the word ecclesiastical bodies. . . . They can only control their membership. They are co-operative organizations for the cheap and speedy transmission of the liberality of churches, missionary societies and individuals to worthy objects of benevolent effort, which the aforesaid churches and individuals may use or not, as seems good to them” (87).

Universalists were numerous enough to hold a meeting in Philadelphia in 1790.<sup>131</sup> Their doctrinal views proliferated across the evangelical American east to such extent that in 1803, a New England convention of Universalists was organized in Winchester, New Hampshire, at which messengers “adopted a brief creed which . . . is the historic basis of American Universalism.”<sup>132</sup> The Universalist confession of 1803 contained only three articles of faith. It encouraged associating churches to adopt their own, more extensive confessions as they saw necessary, but to continue to happily cooperate with the larger body in “the spirit of Christian meekness and charity.”<sup>133</sup> Although having gone further in both organizational laxity and doctrinal error, the movement was an ominous foreshadowing of the Downgrade Controversy in England that would follow it in the next generation. In his book *A History of the Christian Church*, Williston Walker notes the impact of revivalism and Baptists upon the inauguration of the Universalism movement in the New World. John Murray, the “father of organized Universalism,” was heavily influenced by the revivalistic preaching of Anglican preacher George Whitefield in his native England before moving to America. However, Murray had moved beyond the orthodox teachings of Whitefield toward universal salvation, a doctrinal position advanced by James Rely who directly disciplined Murray. Murray began the Universalist movement in New England upon his migration in 1780. Philadelphia Baptist pastor Elhanan Winchester soon adopted Murray’s Universalist views and further developed the

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<sup>131</sup> Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1934), 577.

<sup>132</sup> Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, 577.

<sup>133</sup> “1803 Winchester Convention Documents,” UniversalistChurch.net, accessed July 24, 2024, <http://www.christianuniversalism.net/universalist-history/1803-winchester-convention-documents/index.html>. The three articles of faith were: “Article I. We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation of the character of God, and of the duty, interest and final destination of mankind. Article II. We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness. Article III. We believe that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected, and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practice good works; for these things are good and profitable unto men.”

movement.<sup>134</sup> Winchester would eventually spread the Universalist agenda to England in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Further, during the first and second decades of the nineteenth century Alexander Campbell's anti-mission views split the Baptist denomination.<sup>135</sup> His main complaint was that associationalism for missions cooperation—whether local, statewide, or national—was unbiblical.<sup>136</sup>

The doctrine of cooperation was in a full-blown confessional crisis in New England by the first few decades of the nineteenth century. In 1833, New Hampshire Baptists, endeavoring to moderate Calvinist and Arminian leanings among some of the cooperating churches, authored a new confession of faith which one historian has labeled an exercise in “theological neutrality.”<sup>137</sup> Their confession was quickly adopted by Baptist churches across the country.<sup>138</sup> The purpose of the new confession was to capture doctrinal consensus without capitulating to doctrinal error.<sup>139</sup> It quickly became a confessional statement around which Baptist churches could unite for cooperation in evangelism and missions.

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<sup>134</sup> Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, 576–78.

<sup>135</sup> Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, 581. Alexander Campbell's father, Thomas Campbell, migrated from Scotland to Philadelphia in 1807, and immediately found himself in discord with the Presbyterian church there. He became a successful itinerant revivalist, and his followers organized themselves into The Christian Association of Washington. Alexander migrated from Scotland to lead this group in 1810 and was an ardent and popular revivalist as well. He led the group to cooperate with the Baptists until their split over doctrinal issues in 1830, at which point he started the Disciples of Christ denomination, which saw immediate and rapid growth in the region. See Muncy, *A History of Evangelism in the United States*, 100–101. Also of note, Carroll called Campbell “the greatest and most influential of the antimissionaries” and a “disturber of the saints” during the early nineteenth century. Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 8, 181.

<sup>136</sup> Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 127.

<sup>137</sup> Wolever, *An Anthology of Early Baptists*, 533. Carroll later called the *New Hampshire Confession* a “moderate Calvinist” or “non-Calvinist” Baptist confession. See Benajah H. Carroll and Calvin Goodspeed, “A Commentary on the New Hampshire Confession of Faith,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 51, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 130.

<sup>138</sup> Hurlin, Sargent, and Wakeman, *The Baptists of New Hampshire*, 50.

<sup>139</sup> Cummings, “Sermon Preached Before the New-Hampshire Baptist State Convention,” 33. In 1835, Concord pastor Ebenezer E. Cummings made an appeal to the churches to refuse to capitulate to any doctrinal error; while those of other denominations would label Baptist confessional matters “non-essential,” “we do not call things by such names.”

As the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions (“Triennial Convention”) and the *New Hampshire Confession* both gained prominence, some associations and societies refused to cooperate. As early as 1819, one Georgia association refused to even correspond with the Triennial Convention.<sup>140</sup> Also, in the 1840’s “the Florida Association of Baptists, having once accepted the New Hampshire Confession, on second thought rejected it in favor of articles affirming ‘the doctrine of eternal and particular election.’”<sup>141</sup> Even with doctrinally aligned, distinctively Baptist missional cooperation in its most organized season to date, Thomas Kidd and Barry Hankins suggested that “no statement of faith could forestall theological controversy among Baptists.”<sup>142</sup> Similarly, confessions themselves could neither mediate nor force cooperation. The togetherness of Baptists, embracing the tension of confessional pushing and pulling, would need to facilitate a stewardship of influence among the churches that leaned toward cooperation, even through seasons of doctrinal controversy. Confessions could not be placed above the doctrine of cooperation, as if to force cooperative engagement for doctrinally homogenous churches. Nor could confessions be placed below cooperation, as if to assume theological symmetry had no substantive place in the framework of cooperation. The moral and theological obligation Baptists felt for cooperation was, in itself, a doctrinal priority. But it was a doctrinal priority that yet found no formal expression in confessional statements.

In 1845, the Triennial Convention split over whether slave-owners could be appointed as missionaries. William B. Johnson, founding pastor of the First Baptist

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<sup>140</sup> Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 96.

<sup>141</sup> Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 115. See also Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 110. Wills explains that the Florida Baptist Association’s application for fellowship with the Georgia Baptist Convention was met with “protracted debate” because they had adopted the *New Hampshire Confession*, which moderated Armenian and Calvinistic positions. The Florida Baptist Association was admitted to the Convention that year, but only after James McDonald, a delegate from the Florida association, successfully defended the association’s doctrinal positions. Soon thereafter, the Florida association changed its confession.

<sup>142</sup> Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 115.

Church in Colombia, South Carolina, and close friend and denominational partner of Richard Furman, led the newly formed SBC meeting in Augusta, Georgia, to adopt the original constitution of the Triennial Convention as its own.<sup>143</sup> The new convention's established purpose was, as the Triennial Convention's before it, to carry "into effect the benevolent intentions of our constituents, by organizing a plan for eliciting, combining and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort, for the propagation of the Gospel."<sup>144</sup> Confessionally conscious cooperation among Baptists in America began in 1707 in Philadelphia and over a period of 138 years carried Baptists through a developing season of missions mobilization and organizational expansion. Then, in 1845 in Augusta, a dissolution of confessional consensus together with sinful rationalization of the practice of slavery, led to the greatest rupture the Baptist movement in America has ever known. But by God's grace alone, the newly formed SBC would become a powerful force for evangelistic and missional inter-congregational cooperation.

### Conclusion

Although the doctrine of cooperation is not well developed in the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* and is altogether absent from the *New Hampshire Baptist Confession*, its roots are evident in the inter-congregational activity of local Baptist churches in America from the earliest days of the movement.<sup>145</sup> In *Democratic Religion* (1997), Gregory Wills details the historic Baptist practice of church discipline on American soil, then pivots to demonstrate how that drive toward inner-congregational "theological unity" served as a foundation for their inter-congregational cooperative efforts.<sup>146</sup> As

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<sup>143</sup> Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 63.

<sup>144</sup> *Proceedings of the 1845 Southern Baptist Convention* (Augusta: H. K. Ellyson, 1845), 1.

<sup>145</sup> See chap. 2 of this diss. under the subtitle "Confessional Declaration and Baptist Cooperation" regarding the doctrine of cooperation articulated in the 1689 London Baptist Confession which was retained in the Philadelphia Baptist edition under Elias Keach's leadership.

<sup>146</sup> Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 88.

opportunity for missional cooperation expanded, the necessity of doctrinal clarification persisted. Baptists in the South would find out in the generation to come that although unanimity was not the goal, agreement on fundamental doctrinal truths was necessary for cooperation, especially as the culture around them moved toward union and “dogma-free cooperation.”<sup>147</sup> The doctrine of cooperation had always been shared among them, but that doctrine itself included a base of theological agreement that set Southern Baptists apart from other evangelical denominations.

The shared mission of regional evangelistic and mission work compelled Elias Keach to form relationships between the churches he started. That same doctrine of cooperation guided the interconnectivity of those autonomous churches in the formation of the Philadelphia Baptist Association and, subsequently, in the formation of other associations across the states. The roots of cooperative doctrine and confessional guidance among Baptists in America are much deeper than the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message*, the 1814 Triennial Convention, or the various missions societies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The doctrine of cooperation and its relationship to confessionalism among Baptists in America was first formally evidenced in 1707 in Philadelphia then expanded through inter-congregational, inter-associational, inter-societal, and inter-conventional movements leading to the formation of the SBC in Augusta, Georgia, in 1845. From Philadelphia to Augusta, Baptists in America held a moral and theological obligation to cooperate for the advancement of the Great Commission locally, regionally, and globally. They were convictionally and confessionally cooperative.

The annals of history record a steady, concerted, fruitful missions movement among Baptist churches and organizations which shared theological symmetry. The churches were strengthened. Biblical doctrine was preserved. New congregations were planted. Missionaries were sent. Ministers were educated. Domestic and foreign missions were sustained. Baptist confessions in America have never claimed to elucidate every

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<sup>147</sup> Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 89.

biblical doctrine or to extrapolate the implications of every important New Testament teaching. Rather, they have formed a baseline of agreement on major doctrinal issues, for the purpose of church strengthening and missions cooperation. The difficulty among Baptists in America, from Philadelphia to Augusta, was over which confession should be prominent and the degree to which it would be authoritative from association to association and convention to convention. The doctrine of cooperation, although not yet fully developed or expressed between them, was as demonstrably significant among Baptists in America in their early days as was the doctrine of local church autonomy. Although independent from one another in all matters of local church governance, they were also voluntarily dependent upon one another for matters of Great Commission advancement.

Twenty-first century Baptists in America certainly can learn from their historical record that confessionally aligned local associations have much to offer the larger Baptist ecosystem. Associations historically “served as doctrinal clearing houses and effective agencies for the churches in missions and education,” as W. W. Barnes once wrote.<sup>148</sup> Baptist churches can find theological symmetry, wise counsel, likeminded fellowship, and contextualized Great Commission strategy within local Baptist associations. State and national conventions organized for broader evangelistic and missional impact but, at least initially, without the organizational restrictions of specific confessional subscription. In associations, churches found stricter doctrinal uniformity, but in conventions the influence of various historical Baptist viewpoints sharpened, stretched, and strengthened cooperation. The value of associational life among twenty-first-century Baptists is an area of continued discussion. History records that the most confessionally aligned, relationally rich, and missionally productive Baptist movements began in, and in some cases remained within, local associations. Conventions assumed doctrinal consensus because of the prevalence of formal associational confessionalism.

In America as in England, Baptists came confessing, and Baptists came

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<sup>148</sup> Barnes, *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology*, 16.



cooperating. The relationship between the two (confessionalism and cooperation) suggests a unique, voluntary, confessionally conscientious cooperation between Baptist churches and groups of Baptist churches in American history, albeit with organizational nuances related to its associational and conventional expressions. From Philadelphia to Augusta, confessionalism, at least in some way, guarded and guided inter-congregational, inter-associational, and inter-societal/conventional cooperative missions endeavors. The doctrine of cooperation is evident among them from the earliest days of the Baptist movement in America. In the next chapter, the doctrine of cooperation is traced through Southern Baptist activity from Augusta, Georgia, to Memphis, Tennessee, where it was formally and comprehensively confessed for the first time in a confession of faith—the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925).

## CHAPTER 4

### FROM AUGUSTA TO MEMPHIS

Baptists in the Southern United States constituted the Southern Baptist Convention May 8, 1845, for the express purpose of evangelistic and missional cooperation. Slavery, more specifically the suitability of slave owners to be appointed as missionaries, was the presenting reason for the Convention's split from the Northern Baptist controlled Triennial Convention.<sup>1</sup> Such egregiously sinful provocation notwithstanding, the unanimously adopted resolution which constituted the convention identified its purpose to expediently organize "a Society for the propagation of the gospel."<sup>2</sup> Only by the grace of God were successive generations of effective evangelistic and missional cooperation built atop such a sinful constitutive foundation.

The final address of that constitutional meeting, delivered by the newly elected president of the Convention, William B. Johnson of South Carolina, described the gravity of the moment in that this "disunion" was one of "Foreign and Domestic Missions" only. Northern and Southern Baptists, as Johnson declared, differed in "no article of the faith." He stated that the Southerners had constructed "no new creed," claiming an historic "Baptist aversion for all creeds but the Bible."<sup>3</sup> To Johnson, the 1845 separation of Southern Baptists from their Northern brethren was a necessary "calamity of division."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W. Madison Grace II, "Beginnings: Southern Baptists, the Foreign Mission Board, and James Barnett Taylor," in *Make Disciples of All Nations: A History of Southern Baptist International Missions*, ed. John D. Massey, Mike Morris, and W. Madison Grace II (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021), 63. *Annual of the 1845 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1845), 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Annual of the 1845 Southern Baptist Convention*, 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual of the 1845 Southern Baptist Convention*, 17–20.

<sup>4</sup> *Annual of the 1845 Southern Baptist Convention*, 20.

It knew no basis in doctrinal disagreement or confessional divergence. The presenting cooperative crisis was an organizational disagreement without a clear confessional divergence.<sup>5</sup>

Doctrinal controversies persisted throughout the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The newly constituted and organized Southern Baptists felt rising occasion and opportunity for restatement of their faith and practice. But leaders were very aware of the age-old tension between confessionalism and cooperation in the movement to which they were called in their time. Edgar Y. Mullins, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, gave thoughtful pause in the conversation in his book *The Axioms of Religion* (1908):

We have two kinds of radicals among us today—the high church radicals who want to bind us hand and foot with the multiplication of minute tests of fellowship, on the one hand, and the broad church radicals on the other, who are without doctrinal moorings of any kind. The high church radicals would give us a creed like the tight-fitting shoes and trousers and dress coat of a dude which forbid the free action of the limbs in any direction. The broad church radicals would give us a creed like the flowing robe of the Oriental, exactly adapted to the life of indolence and self-indulgence, but not for strenuous endeavor. Baptists however will insist on a creed like the garments, not of a dude nor yet of the voluptuary, but like the habiliments of the athlete, which guard the body and protect it at every vital point but which leave it free for conquest.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In their 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message*, Article 21 on “Social Service” began, “Every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ regnant in his own life and in human society to oppose in the spirit of Christ every form of greed, selfishness, and vice.” In 1963, the updated article, Article 15 on “The Christian and the Social Order,” used the same wording: “The Christian should oppose in the spirit of Christ every form of greed, selfishness, and vice.” It was not until 2000, 155 years after the 1845 split between Baptists in the north and south, that racism was added to the formally confessed list of evils Christians should avoid: “In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography.” See “Comparison Chart,” Southern Baptist Convention, accessed June 1, 2024, <https://bfm.sbc.net/comparison-chart/>. In 2000, Southern Baptists confessed a moral and theological obligation to value, love, and serve all people in the name of Christ, regardless of race. This moral and theological obligation was not most surely held among them in 1845, but it became a clear and crucial point of doctrinal agreement for cooperation among Baptists as they rediscovered a biblical theology of race through the twentieth century. In 1920, M. E. Dodd, 1925 Convention president and instrumental leader in the development of the Cooperative Program, wrote, “The God whom Jesus Christ revealed to the world is not a tribal, national, or racial God. He is for all men of all races, classes, and colors, in all nations and throughout all ages.” Monroe E. Dodd, *Missions Our Mission* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1930), 92.

<sup>6</sup> Edgar Young Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Roland, 1908), 264–65.

The maximalist and minimalist debate over how much doctrinal agreement was necessary for cooperation persisted among Baptists in the South through the turn of the twentieth century. Their commitment to cooperation was firm, but their willingness to clearly define parameters of cooperation, as a national Convention, was slow in formation. In other words, Baptists owned a shared moral and theological obligation to cooperate for the advancement of the Great Commission, but their confessional consensus could not guarantee either theological uniformity or organizational unity. Thomas Kidd and Barry Hankins once suggested that “no statement of faith could forestall theological controversy among Baptists.”<sup>7</sup> Perhaps one may also note that no confessional consensus could forestall cooperative controversy among Baptists.

### Chapter Thesis

What were those unspecified articles of faith from which neither the North nor the South departed in their 1845 missiological bifurcation? If no new doctrinal or creedal statements were proposed at the formation of the SBC, then to which articles of faith did President Johnson refer as a basis of doctrinal agreement between Northern and Southern Baptists before 1845? The unified Triennial Convention’s 1814 constitution, adopted in unaltered form by Southern Baptists in 1845, proposes that Baptist evangelistic and missional endeavors in America depended upon voluntary cooperation.<sup>8</sup> But without a formally adopted confession of faith, what was to become of the acknowledged but undefined relationship between cooperation and confessionalism in Southern Baptist inter-congregational evangelism and missiology? This chapter demonstrates that the

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists in America: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2015), 115.

<sup>8</sup> *Proceedings of the 1814 Baptist Convention for Missionary Purposes* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 1814), 3. The 1814 and 1845 constitutions begin, “We . . . for the purpose of carrying into effect the benevolent Intentions of our Constituents, by organizing a plan for eliciting, combining, and directing the Energies of the whole Denomination in one sacred effort, for sending the glad tidings of Salvation to the Heathen, and to nations destitute of pure Gospel-light, DO AGREE to the following Rules or fundamental Principles” (3). See also the President’s Address in which Richard Furman notes an awakening to and anticipation of cooperative evangelistic and missionary zeal among the churches (41).

Baptist doctrine of cooperation is evident and traceable from Augusta, Georgia in 1845 to its cumulative moment in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1925, with its formal statement in the *Baptist Faith and Message*.

### Chapter Literature Review

Two American Baptist confessions of faith rose to prominence in early Southern Baptist cooperation. Prior to the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925), these two confessions of faith were widely adopted in Southern Baptist churches, associations and institutions: the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* (1742) and the *New Hampshire Baptist Confession* (1833).<sup>9</sup> The *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* essentially restates the *London Baptist Confession* (1689) with the addition of two articles composed by the influential Philadelphia associational leader Elias Keach (Article 23 “Of Singing Psalms” and Article 31 “Of Laying on of Hands”). The earliest recorded mention of an inter-congregational Baptist confession of faith in America was in 1724, when the leaders of the Philadelphia Baptist Association referred its member churches to the *London Baptist Confession* (1689), as had already been amended by Elias Keach when the association constituted in 1707. Keach’s edition was formally adopted by the Philadelphia association in 1742 and was printed by Benjamin Franklin in 1743. According to the estimations of some, this confession was the most influential of all Baptist confessions of faith, providing theological and ecclesiological substance for local Baptist church covenants into the twentieth century, on two continents.<sup>10</sup>

However, the *New Hampshire Confession* took root quickly among Baptists in

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<sup>9</sup> James E. Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith, 1845–1945” (ThD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1964), 2–3.

<sup>10</sup> William L. Lumpkin, and Bill J. Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2011), 364–68. In 1855, Charles Spurgeon recommended the *Second London Baptist Confession* (1689) to his Metropolitan Tabernacle in London with a preliminary note clarifying that the confession “is not issued as an authoritative rule, or code of faith, whereby ye are fettered, but as an assurance to you in controversy, a conformation in faith and a means of edification in righteousness.” Peter Masters, *The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689* (London: Wakeman Trust, 1981), 3.

America and by the early twentieth century began to outpace the *Philadelphia Confession* in popularity. Printed in J. Newton Brown's mid-nineteenth-century "The Baptist Church Manual," the *New Hampshire Confession* was copied, distributed, and adopted across the American north, east, and west, where, according to W. J. McGlothlin, "Calvinism has been most modified by Arminianism;" soon the new confession began to gain widespread popularity in the south among the Landmark Baptists, under the influence of J. M. Pendleton during the 1860's and 1870's.<sup>11</sup> Even into the second decade of the twentieth century, renowned Southern Baptist professor of church history W. J. McGlothlin suggested that the *New Hampshire Confession* was "perhaps the most widely used and influential statement of doctrine among American Baptists at the present time."<sup>12</sup> In 1913, E. Y. Mullins, who later chaired the committee on the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925), championed "co-operation in Christian work" as a duty and privilege of the churches, as long as ecclesiastical hierarchy is not formed in the process.<sup>13</sup> He acknowledged the Philadelphia and New Hampshire confessions as the "two notable Confessions of Faith" that "have found acceptance among Baptists in America." Mullins also acknowledged in 1913 that while the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* seemed to be losing ground in the early twentieth century, the *New Hampshire Confession* was gaining a broader acceptance.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the Philadelphia and New Hampshire confessions, many books

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<sup>11</sup> W. J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 301.

<sup>12</sup> McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 299.

<sup>13</sup> Edgar Young Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Baptist World, 1913), 64. Mullins writes,

Each church is free and independent. No church or group of churches has any authority over any other church. Co-operation in Christian work, however, is one of the highest duties and privileges of the churches of Jesus Christ. Yet in so doing they do not form or constitute an ecclesiasticism with functions and powers to be authoritatively exercised over the local bodies . . . voluntary co-operation in missionary and other forms of activity in the Kingdom of God is our only Baptist method of working together for these great ends. (64–65, 76)

<sup>14</sup> Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs*, 83–84.

on Baptist doctrine prove helpful to this research including Charles Jenkins' *Baptist Doctrines* (1880) and James Leo Garrett's *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (2009). The former presents a collection of essays from nineteenth-century Baptist pastors compiled by Jenkins, a North Carolina Baptist pastor; it records historic Baptist expression on twenty-three doctrinal tenets commonly found in confessions of faith before and after its publishing date. The latter offers a more contemporary reflection upon historic Baptist doctrines from a renowned Southern Baptist theology professor; Garrett traces Baptist doctrines from the beginning of the Baptist movement to the early twenty-first century, through Baptist confessions, theologians, and controversies.<sup>15</sup>

Because of their historical significance relating to the research, four Baptist theology books are contributory above many others: E. C. Dargan's *The Doctrines of Our Faith* (1899), E. Y. Mullins' *The Axioms of Religion* (1908) and *Baptist Beliefs* (1913), and L. R. Scarborough's *Endued to Win* (1922).<sup>16</sup> In 1899, Dargan justified Baptist cooperation as a "Doctrine of our Faith" on the basis of its "naturalness, usefulness, and efficiency," and that it "is not contrary to any soundly inferred Scriptural principle."<sup>17</sup> In 1908, Mullins argued that no one would "contest the proposition that co-operation for religious purposes on the part of individuals and churches and societies is highly desirable and fully in accord with the nature of Christianity, and not opposed to the teaching of the New Testament."<sup>18</sup> It was Scarborough's *Endued to Win*, however, which first clearly articulated a New Testament doctrine of evangelistic cooperation. From the Acts 2

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<sup>15</sup> James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 2009), xxv.

<sup>16</sup> Because Dargan, Mullins, and Scarborough were three of the five signatories of the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message which included, for the first time in Baptist confessional history, an article on "Co-operation," their voices in the theological framing of cooperation in Southern Baptist life are of great significance.

<sup>17</sup> E. C. Dargan, *The Doctrines of Our Faith* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1899), 185.

<sup>18</sup> Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 212.

Pentecost, Scarborough understood cooperation to be a “triangular” doctrine in which God works within his own triunity, God works together with people, and people work together with each other as they work together with God.<sup>19</sup>

McGlothlin’s *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (1911) is of particular significance. McGlothlin served on the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message* committee with Mullins, Dargan, and Scarborough. Considering his good repute as a Southern Baptist historian and his involvement on the committee, McGlothlin’s comprehensive *Baptist Confessions of Faith* likely would likely have been the work to which Scarborough and others looked for historical perspective when considering the formation of a new, distinctively Southern Baptist confession. The work traces global Baptist confessionalism from the sixteenth century through the early twentieth century, commenting on major confessions of faith and reproducing many of them in part or in full. In *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (2011), Bill Leonard and William Lumpkin update and continue McGlothlin’s work on Baptist confessionalism. Their contribution to the research is twofold: to highlight several newly discovered documents pertaining to historic Baptist confessionalism since the time of McGlothlin’s writing and to carry McGlothlin’s chronological treatment of Baptist confessionalism through, from the time of his writing in 1911 to the time of Leonard’s in 2011.<sup>20</sup>

Some influential Southern Baptists voiced concerned or antagonistic perspectives toward the formation of the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925). However, the major dissenting voice regarding its adoption, particularly regarding Article 22 “On Cooperation,” comes from a more contemporary source—that of Andrew C. Smith in his 2011 dissertation and corresponding book *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the*

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<sup>19</sup> Lee Rutland Scarborough, *Endued to Win* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1922), 40–41.

<sup>20</sup> William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2011), vii–viii. Lumpkin published an updated version of the work in 1959. Leonard’s 2011 version includes both Lumpkin’s updates and his own.



*Transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919–1925* (2016). Smith argues that cooperation, as a Baptist doctrine, was included in the *Baptist Faith and Message* because of the denominational powerplays of L. R. Scarborough, among others, in efforts to centralize Baptist authority and standardize Baptist practice. According to Smith, the confession itself, and especially cooperation as a Baptist doctrine, was a reaction against the non-cooperative, anti-denominational spirit of J. Frank Norris and others during the throes of the \$75 Million Campaign.<sup>21</sup>

Baptist newspapers enlarge the narrative, including Texas’s *Baptist Standard*, Oklahoma’s *Baptist Messenger*, Tennessee’s *Baptist and Reflector*, Georgia’s *The Christian Index*, Arkansas’s *Baptist Advance*, Kentucky’s *Western Recorder*, Louisiana’s *Baptist Message*, and Alabama’s *The Alabama Baptist*. Articles in circulation from the earliest days of the SBC through the Summer of 1925 prove invaluable to understanding existing and emerging Southern Baptist convictions regarding cooperation and confessionalism. Several specific articles from Baptist papers are helpful, particularly from the early 1920’s. In the first five months of 1922, Scarborough’s articles, “Is Cooperation A New Testament Doctrine” and, “The Heresy of Non Co-operation” were widely circulated in Baptist papers across the South.<sup>22</sup> In response, the editor of the *Western Recorder* resented the idea of a doctrine of cooperation and doubted its inclusion

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<sup>21</sup> Andrew Smith explains, “Rejecting Fundamentalist critics of the SBC such as J. Frank Norris as enemies of the cause of Christ owing to their non-support of denominational agencies, Lee Scarborough and others articulated support for the denomination as a key aspect of Biblical faith. In other words, Southern Baptist leaders sought to turn the centrifugal force of Fundamentalism into the centripetal force of cooperation.” Andrew C. Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919–1925* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2016), 189. See also Andrew C. Smith, “‘Flocking by Themselves’: Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Bureaucratization of the Southern Baptist Convention 1919–1925” (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Lee R. Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” *The Alabama Baptist*, May 18, 1922, 5; “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” *The Baptist and Reflector*, May 11, 1922, 4–5; “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” *Baptist Message*, May 4, 1922, 4.

in the anticipated Baptist confession.<sup>23</sup> Only two months earlier, however, the editor of *The Baptist Advance* took the opposite position, pointedly arguing for the doctrine to be included in the upcoming faith statement.<sup>24</sup> In a *Baptist Courier* article dated June 11, 1925, Scarborough sharply rebuked those in the convention who, in the month following the confession's adoption, began an organized movement to oppose and undermine the confession on the basis of its inclusion of the doctrine of cooperation.<sup>25</sup> Articles such as these provide insight into the larger circle of Baptist thought surrounding the relationship between Southern Baptist confessionalism and cooperation as it developed toward the adoption of the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1925.

### Research Methodology

Prior to 1925, Southern Baptist churches, associations, and conventions primarily looked to the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* or the *New Hampshire Baptist Confession* for doctrinal consensus in evangelistic and missional cooperation. Did cooperation as a confessional Baptist doctrine arise, as Smith suggests, during the days of the \$75 Million Campaign, or was cooperation an assumed Baptist doctrine all along?

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<sup>23</sup> The editor writes, "We do not favor doctrinal tests in fruit-bearing—which 'co-operation' effort is . . . There is no chance, in our judgment, for it to be made an Article of Faith." Victor J. Masters, ed., "Proposes that 'Co-Operation' Be Made a Baptist Article of Faith," *Western Recorder*, May 18, 1922, 9.

<sup>24</sup> J. S. Compere states,

The editor of the *Advance* has been saying for a long time that a Baptist has no more right to refuse to co-operate in Baptist work than he has to get drunk or to commit adultery. . . . If a new Baptist confession of faith is to be formulated (as it seems that there will be) we believe an article on co-operation should be included in the confession. We believe no Baptist should be considered sound or in good standing if he refuses to co-operate in the work of Baptists. (J. S. Compere, ed., *The Baptist Advance*, February 23, 1922, 4)

<sup>25</sup> Scarborough writes,

They refuse to cooperate in the work and spread abroad a propagation of misrepresentation of our schools, our methods, our leaders, and our successes; and yet try to determine the doctrinal content of our Convention. I believe the man or the movement that refuses to assume the responsibilities of the work of the kingdom of Christ has no right to decide the doctrinal faith of the workers. You cannot satisfy these men. They are obsessed. They have a brain spasm. They are opposed to the articles of faith the Convention has approved for another reason and that is that it contains an article on New Testament cooperation. (L. R. Scarborough, "Southern Baptists Lift Up a Great Doctrinal Standard," *Baptist Courier*, June 11, 1925, 7)

What evidence of a moral and theological obligation to cooperate can be found in Southern Baptist organization and/or communication from 1845 to 1925? This chapter will demonstrate that while no clear reference to a doctrine of cooperation is included in either of the two confessions of faith primarily agreed upon by Southern Baptists between 1845 and 1925, from their formation Southern Baptists understood evangelistic cooperation to be a shared doctrine as is evidenced in their organization and communication, building toward its formal inclusion in the *Baptist Faith and Message*. During this period, the timeless moral and theological obligation Baptists felt to cooperate for the advancement of the gospel was being formalized into clear confessional expression.

Research methodology in this chapter includes a survey of evangelistic cooperation in Southern Baptist organization between 1845 and 1925 evidenced in organizational operations, leadership, and progress, followed by a survey of evangelistic cooperation in Southern Baptist communication between 1845 and 1925 evidenced in Baptist paper correspondence and the *Baptist Faith and Message* committee correspondence. A section is included on wider cultural and denominational factors that gave shape, substance, and language to the Baptist doctrine of cooperation in the early twentieth century. The body of the chapter demonstrates a continuous narrative regarding Southern Baptist evangelistic cooperation and confessionalism within the defined time frame. Interaction with the polemical viewpoint opens the paper's conclusion.

### **Evangelistic Cooperation in Southern Baptist Organization, 1845–1925**

Neither the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* nor the *New Hampshire Baptist Confession* includes an article on cooperation as a fundamental Baptist doctrine.<sup>26</sup>

However, the very idea of organized evangelistic and missional cooperation in Baptist life is, and has been, grounded in a shared doctrinal conviction which includes the moral

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<sup>26</sup> The Philadelphia Confession's Article 27 "Of the Church" and includes language that promotes inter-congregational prayer (Section 14) and advice (Section 15). Article 28 "Of the Communion of the Saints" promotes congregational and inter-congregational voluntary benevolence.

and theological obligation of the churches to cooperate with one another. Confessional cooperation is evident in Southern Baptist organizational operations, organizational leadership, and organizational progress from 1845 to 1925.

### **Organizational Operations**

The first sentence Southern Baptists published, emerging from their constitutional convention in May of 1845, expressed their intention to “organize a plan for eliciting, combining and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort for the propagation of the gospel.”<sup>27</sup> Messengers convened, and the organization was constituted with the express purpose of evangelistic and missional cooperation. Even without an officially sanctioned confession of faith, evangelistic cooperation around “a strong theological unity” became the foundation on which the Convention was built.<sup>28</sup> Twentieth-century Southern Baptist historian H. Leon McBeth believed that from their beginning, Southern Baptists held to a “theology of cooperation. The Baptist emphasis on inter-church cooperation grew not out of programmatic or pragmatic motives, but out of biblical theology.”<sup>29</sup> McBeth compares the evangelistic and missionally minded language in the Preamble to the 1845 Southern Baptist constitution with historic Baptist foundations. “Elicit, combine, and direct,” he writes, “express the same commitment to cooperation that we find in the London Confession of 1644 and the Abingdon Statement of 1652. . . . From day one, the SBC was based on a doctrine of cooperation.”<sup>30</sup> The Baptists’ moral and theological obligation toward cooperative evangelistic and missional engagement

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<sup>27</sup> *Proceedings of the 1845 Southern Baptist Convention*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Nettles, *An Historic Perspective of Southern Baptists: 1975–Present: A Trust Re-Established* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, n.d.), 9–10.

<sup>29</sup> H. Leon McBeth, “Cooperation and Crisis as Shapers of Southern Baptist Identity,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 30, no. 3 (July 1995): 36.

<sup>30</sup> McBeth, “Cooperation and Crisis,” 38.

was as strong in Augusta, Georgia, in 1845 as it was in Amsterdam, in 1609, in London, in 1644, and in Philadelphia, in 1707.

Because the occasion for its convening included appointment of missionaries, the creation of Foreign and Domestic Missions Boards were among the first orders of business for the newly formed Convention. The Foreign Mission Board's stated purpose was to carry out "one sacred effort in sending forth the word of life to idolatrous lands." In its first commissioning service, the newly appointed Foreign Mission Board leader James B. Taylor challenged Southern Baptist missionaries to "go from this land not to engage in scientific research or pecuniary speculations, not to represent the best form of government, or to exhibit the various stores of human knowledge – but to preach the gospel."<sup>31</sup> Although the Foreign Mission Board would not adopt a formal confessional statement until 1920, from its genesis it operated on the conviction of a biblical theology of evangelistic cooperation:

Truth is the great instrument which God employs in the conversion of men; but the truth cannot be heard without a preacher, nor can he preach unless he be sent. If he give his time and talents to the work of preaching among the heathen, he must be sustained by his brethren at home. In the distribution of tracts or the word of God, money is indispensable. This position is so well sustained, that labored argument is unnecessary. The chief inquiry of interest is, how shall the means be obtained? The whole subject is respectfully submitted to the Convention.<sup>32</sup>

The same is true of the Board of Domestic Missions. In its first annual report to the SBC, in 1846, the Board implored all employees ("Agents") to "do much to secure harmony and cooperation throughout the entire denomination . . . The successful operation of the *whole* depends upon the mutual and harmonious action of all the *parts*."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "175 years: 1840's," International Mission Board, accessed September 29, 2022, <https://www.imb.org/175/decades/1840s/>.

<sup>32</sup> *Proceedings of the First Triennial Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Richmond, VA: H. K. Ellyson, 1846), 24.

<sup>33</sup> *Proceedings of the First Triennial Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 32.

Confessional cooperation was more explicitly demonstrated in the founding of the first two Southern Baptist seminaries.<sup>34</sup> The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, when founded in 1858, drew its Abstract of Principles primarily from The Philadelphia and New Hampshire confessions.<sup>35</sup> Upon its founding in 1906, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary adopted the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* in whole, with one slight revision.<sup>36</sup> The adoption and required professorial signing of these confessions of faith assured supporting Baptists that their cooperative work would be guarded by distinctively Baptist doctrines.

In the Convention's formative years, organizational cooperation was not without doctrinal controversy. The Foreign Mission Board experienced its first major test of confessional cooperation in 1881, thirty-nine years before it would formally adopt articles of faith. John Stout and T. P. Bell were appointed by the Board as foreign missionaries to China in early 1881. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president James Boyce, however, voiced concern over their appointments. Both men were students of Crawford Toy at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Upon his appointment to the seminary in 1869, Toy affirmed the seminary's Abstract of Principles, but by the late 1870s he began

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<sup>34</sup> New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, founded in 1917 as the Baptist Bible Institute, was the first theological institution officially founded by the SBC. The Southern and Southwestern Baptist seminaries had been established by individuals and supported by state conventions and associations until they were each later adopted as entities of the SBC. In 1918, one year after its founding, the New Orleans Baptist Bible Institute published its own confession of faith, which articulated distinctive Baptist doctrines but did not use any well-known existing confession as its basis, unlike Southern and Southwestern. See Steve W. Lemke, "Articles of Religious Belief: The Confession Authored by the Founders of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary," *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 78–99.

<sup>35</sup> "The Development and Role of the Abstract of Principles," The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, accessed September 15, 2022, <https://archives.sbts.edu/the-history-of-the-sbts/our-beliefs/the-development-and-role-of-the-abstract-of-principles/>. The site also mentions consultation of the Westminster Confession and the 1689 London Baptist Confession in the formation of the Abstract. But the London Confession was the basis for the Philadelphia Confession, and the Westminster Confession was a basis for the London Confession. See Chad Van Dixhorn, ed., *Creeeds, Confessions, and Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 216–17.

<sup>36</sup> McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 300–301. Southwestern's revision changed "visible church" to "particular church" in Article 13. (The original 1833 *New Hampshire Confession* included only sixteen articles. In 1853, J. Newton Brown added two: "Repentance and Faith" and "Sanctification," changing the number from sixteen to eighteen articles from 1853 onward.)

to teach in opposition to the Abstract's position on biblical inspiration.<sup>37</sup> Boyce wrote of his concern to the Foreign Mission Board's Corresponding Secretary, Henry Tupper, and on June 6, 1881, a committee was appointed to study Boyce's concerns together with the written testimonies of Stout and Bell on the doctrine of inspiration.<sup>38</sup> Minutes from the Board's next meeting note that Stout's "views on inspiration . . . do not seem to the Board to be in accord with the views commonly held by the constituency of the Southern Baptist Convention," and that missionaries appointed by the Board have no right to teach or print anything that is "contrary to the commonly received doctrinal views of the constituency of the Southern Baptist Convention."<sup>39</sup> Stout's appointment was rescinded immediately and Bell's soon followed. Even without a formally adopted confession of faith, Southern Baptist cooperation through their Foreign Mission Board was guarded and guided by confessional agreement around core doctrines of their faith and practice. Confessional cooperation undergirded their evangelistic and missional organization, if only implicitly.

In 1886, First Baptist Church of Waco pastor B. H. Carroll led five competing state conventions in Texas to combine their cooperative work into one organization, the Baptist General Convention of Texas.<sup>40</sup> While some local associations in Texas had formally adopted confessions of faith, the state convention had not.<sup>41</sup> Only two years later,

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<sup>37</sup> Anthony L. Chute, "Growth and Controversy: The Administration of Henry Allen Tupper, 1872–1893," in Massey, Morris, and Grace, *Make Disciples of All Nations*, 120.

<sup>38</sup> "Foreign Mission Board Minutes, accession no. 1222," International Mission Board, June 6, 1881, <https://solomon.imb.org/public/ws/oldmin/www2/minutesp/Record?parenttreeid=521325193&sessiondepth=1&parenttreeid=521325193&sessiondepth=1&r=1&upp=0&w=NATIVE%28%27TEXT+inc+%27%271881%27%27%27%29&m=7>.

<sup>39</sup> "Foreign Mission Board Minutes, accession no. 1223," International Mission Board, June 10, 1881, <https://solomon.imb.org/public/ws/oldmin/www2/minutesp/Record?parenttreeid=521325193&sessiondepth=1&parenttreeid=521325193&sessiondepth=1&r=1&upp=0&w=NATIVE%28%27TEXT+inc+%27%271881%27%27%27%29&m=8>.

<sup>40</sup> Robert A. Baker, *The Blossoming Desert: A Concise History of Texas Baptists* (Waco, TX: Word, 1970), 145–48.

<sup>41</sup> Baker, *The Blossoming Desert*, 76. The Union Baptist Association was the first association organized in Texas. Upon its formation in 1840, the association adopted articles of faith to serve as the basis for their unification in evangelistic and missionary cooperation. See also *Organization and*

Texas denominational harmony was disrupted when a young Baptist minister began teaching doctrines that were deemed contrary to traditional Baptist positions. The minister was de-credentialed on the charge that he was in “violation of six doctrines which were specifically identified as being a part of the New Hampshire and Philadelphia Confessions of Faith.”<sup>42</sup> Over the next ten years, doctrinal controversy would divide the Texas convention three times more. Each controversy revolved around disagreement over what were commonly understood, but not organizationally stated, as Baptist doctrines and practices.<sup>43</sup> The Philadelphia and New Hampshire confessions guarded and guided organizational Southern Baptist cooperation in Texas, even where not formally adopted. Texas’ progressive influence on the larger SBC during the early twentieth century should not be underestimated.<sup>44</sup>

As the organized Baptist movement made its way from the South to the Northwest, the same, three-century old tension between doctrinal agreement and missional cooperation persisted. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, as Southern Baptists from Missouri and Kentucky migrated to Oregon, they carried their Landmark tendencies with them. The Southern Baptist Landmark position against alien immersion especially became divisive among Oregon Baptists. The East Oregon Baptist Convention was formed by Landmark-leaning Southern Baptists in 1892 in direct opposition to the existing Oregon

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*Proceedings of the 1848 Baptist State Convention of Texas* (Huntsville, TX: Banner, 1848), 9–10. At the Texas convention’s constitutional meeting in 1848, the convention proposed the creation of a Baptist state paper to “disseminate the great principles of our denomination.” However, proceedings from the 1849 session recorded that the idea of a Baptist state paper in Texas was not practicable at the time, so the idea of publishing Texas Baptist “principles of our denomination” failed with the rejection of the creation of a Texas Baptist paper.

<sup>42</sup> Baker, *The Blossoming Desert*, 156.

<sup>43</sup> Baker, *The Blossoming Desert*, 160–63. Haydenism, challenging a perceived denominational ecclesiasticism, resulted in the 1900 formation of the East Texas Baptist Convention (later, Baptist Missionary Association). The Fortunism (questioning biblical inspiration and substitutionary atonement) and Whitsitt (questioning modes of Baptism in Baptist history) controversies of 1896 also caused sharp doctrinal schisms in the Texas convention, although neither culminated in the formation of a separate Baptist organization.

<sup>44</sup> Baker, *The Blossoming Desert*, 168–69.



Baptist Convention, an American Baptist Convention connected organization. Northwest Southern Baptist historians Sims, Johnson, and Daley argue that “it was this doctrinal conviction that gave rise to much of the disagreement among Oregon Baptists in the late nineteenth century.”<sup>45</sup> In January of 1894, a meeting was held between representatives from the Home Mission Society, the Baptist Convention of the North Pacific Coast, the Oregon Baptist Convention, and the Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho Convention to resolve the matter. The advisory council, which leaned American Baptist rather than Southern Baptist, recommended a change in the Oregon Baptist Convention’s constitution to secure that alien immersion would not be a “test of fellowship in convention work.”<sup>46</sup> But the Southern Landmark Baptists saw the doctrinal division too great to continue fellowship and cooperation. The SBC appointed a committee to study the issue, and in their May 1894 annual meeting decided not to admit the newly formed East Oregon Baptist Convention into cooperation, consigning cooperation to geographic territory rather than doctrinal symmetry. Not until the 1930s–1940s would the SBC officially expand its cooperative work to the furthest corner of the Northwest by extending the hand of organizational fellowship to Southern Baptists there. But between 1894 and the 1930s, convictional Southern Baptists in Oregon utilized the SBC’s curriculum and supported its missional organization.<sup>47</sup> They held the age-old moral and theological obligation to cooperate with likeminded Christians and congregations and worked through the tension of confessional alignment in organizational engagement.

In Texas, in the Northwest, and in the SBC at large, Southern Baptists enjoyed a certain confessional missiology without a uniformly defined confessional organizational structure. But that confessional missiology was wed to a doctrinal identity that crossed

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<sup>45</sup> Cecil C. Sims, Roy L. Johnson, and H. Max Daley, *Northwest Southern Baptists, 1884–1998* (Vancouver, WA: Northwest Baptist Historical Society of the Northwest Baptist Convention, 1998), 54.

<sup>46</sup> Sims, Johnson, and Daley, *Northwest Southern Baptists, 1884–1998*, 57.

<sup>47</sup> For more details see Sims, Johnson, and Daley, *Northwest Southern Baptists, 1884–1998*, 53–59.

geographic boundaries and challenged the cooperative organizational mechanisms of the Baptist people from coast to coast. Not until after the *Baptist Faith and Message* was adopted and the denomination's consciousness toward greater missional opportunity enlarged did doctrinal symmetry supersede geographic boundary.

### **Organizational Leaders**

Many mid-late nineteenth-century Baptists demonstrated a strong aversion to the idea of the convention adopting a faith statement as part of its formal organization.<sup>48</sup> They celebrated the principle of voluntary cooperation between Baptist churches as well as the rights of individual churches to adopt or draw up articles of faith, but they believed formal adoption of a confession of faith by the convention was a step too far toward ecclesiastical hierarchy. However, before the turn of the twentieth century, the narrative began to shift. E. C. Dargan, professor of church history at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and later president of the SBC, wrote instructively on *The Doctrines of Our Faith* in 1899. He championed inter-congregational cooperation as an instructive biblical model.<sup>49</sup> He put forth cooperation as a biblically supported, necessary principle for worldwide evangelism and mission.<sup>50</sup> In the introduction to Dargan's work, George W. Truett, newly appointed pastor of First Baptist Church Dallas, Texas, and future president of the SBC, wrote with conviction of the need for doctrinal clarity and consensus in the SBC: "The time is surely most propitious for a faithful restatement . . . of the fundamental doctrines of God's Word. Every Baptist ought to know why he is a

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<sup>48</sup> Charles A. Jenkins, ed., *Baptist Doctrines: Being an Exposition, in a Series of Essays by Representative Baptist Ministers, of the Distinctive Points of Baptist Faith and Practice* (St. Louis: Clancy R. Barns, 1881), iii, 23, 34. Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, 1857), 13–15. Interestingly, while Wayland expresses antagonism toward the adoption of creeds or confessions by any Baptist organization, on p. 87 he celebrates the solidarity of the Baptist tradition by tracing doctrinal consistencies and divergences through historic confessions of faith.

<sup>49</sup> Dargan, *The Doctrines of Our Faith*, 183, 185.

<sup>50</sup> Dargan writes, "The co-operative work is justified by its naturalness, usefulness, efficiency; and is not contrary to any soundly inferred Scriptural principle." Dargan, *The Doctrines of Our Faith*, 185.

Baptist, and to know it from the specific commands of God’s Word.”<sup>51</sup> Dargan’s 1899 *Doctrines* championed the necessity of evangelistic cooperation among the churches but stopped short of pointedly affirming cooperation as a Baptist doctrine on its own.

E. Y. Mullins, President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and, according to some, “the most influential theologian in Southern Baptist history,” further developed the convictions behind confessional Baptist beliefs in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>52</sup> In his *Axioms of Religion* (1908), he argued that “some motive or incentive or cohesive principle [was] strong enough to give unity to each of the religious bodies if these bodies are to continue their careers of usefulness,” and that “the time has come for the various Christian bodies to give a fresh account of themselves to the world.”<sup>53</sup> He articulated a “law of interdependence” between the churches and insisted that “no one will contest the proposition that co-operation for religious purposes on the part of individuals and churches and societies is highly desirable and fully in accord with the nature of Christianity.”<sup>54</sup> In 1913, Mullins championed the value of creeds and doctrinal statements in Baptist cooperation. He acknowledged “a number of excellent Baptist creeds in existence already” and that these doctrinal statements were already widely used by Southern Baptists in their churches and missions organizations. While Mullins was fervently opposed to ecclesiastical hierarchy within Baptist organization, he insisted that evangelistic and missional cooperation between churches was dependent upon their agreement on the same theological essentials.<sup>55</sup>

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, L. R. Scarborough, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and future president of the SBC, made a

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<sup>51</sup> Dargan, *The Doctrines of Our Faith*, vii–viii.

<sup>52</sup> Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 180.

<sup>53</sup> Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 19–20, 25.

<sup>54</sup> Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 40, 212.

<sup>55</sup> Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs*, 5–7, 64–65.

name for himself as a denominational leader, fundraiser, and unifier.<sup>56</sup> Various books and articles from the mid 1910s into the early 1920s express Scarborough's emerging doctrine of cooperation. His greatest contribution to the theology of cooperation, leading up to the 1925 Convention, came in his 1922 book, *Endued to Win*.<sup>57</sup> "Cooperation is a doctrine as well as a privilege taught by the word of God," he wrote; "each man . . . each church . . . is under obligation to cooperate . . . to carry out the orders of Christ."<sup>58</sup> In chapter two, Scarborough articulates what may be the first well-formed, biblically based doctrine of evangelistic and missional cooperation in Southern Baptist history. He outlines "the great doctrine of co-operation" as triangular in nature: God working within his own triunity, God working with people, and people working with people while together they work with God.<sup>59</sup> The "success" of Southern Baptists, he insists, is dependent upon "full-length co-operation with the Holy Spirit."<sup>60</sup>

More than ever before, Southern Baptist leaders at the turn of the twentieth century were formally exploring the relationship between confessionalism and cooperation in Southern Baptist organization. The voices of at least three Southern Baptist leaders and articulators of Southern Baptist theology undergirded the language of the doctrine of cooperation as the conversation amplified in the early twentieth century. The magnitude of Dargan's, Mullins's, and Scarborough's influence upon Baptist theology at this crucial moment was to be equaled only by their influence in Baptist organizational progress in the decades ahead.

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<sup>56</sup> Glenn Thomas Carson, *Calling Out the Called: The Life and Work of Lee Rutland Scarborough* (Austin: Eakin, 1996), vii–xii, 102–6.

<sup>57</sup> Scarborough's later work *Products of Pentecost* (1934) further developed his doctrine of cooperation, especially as being rooted in the Acts 2 Pentecost.

<sup>58</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 171.

<sup>59</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 40–41.

<sup>60</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 43.

## Organizational Progress

As the twentieth century dawned, “efficiency” became a “watch-word” for religious organizations that looked to the business world for “examples of . . . sound practice.”<sup>61</sup> The \$75 Million Campaign, led by L. R. Scarborough from 1919 to 1924, became the Southern Baptist exposé of new business-like practices in inter-congregational missions funding. But the campaign was more than an exercise in organizational efficiency. James B. Gambrell, president of the SBC during the campaign’s adoption, saw it as an opportunity to demonstrate globally the effectiveness of the Baptist doctrines of local church autonomy and voluntary cooperation, above and beyond any ecclesiastically enforced inter-congregational activity.<sup>62</sup> Baptist doctrinal distinctives, including the voluntary cooperation of locally autonomous churches, would be proliferated worldwide through the organizational streamlining of the five-year funding campaign.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to the pressure of more structured cooperation in the best business practices of the day, the appetite for inter-denominational cooperation increased during the early twentieth century. The World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh ignited an ecumenical movement for Christian union by promoting evangelical unification

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<sup>61</sup> Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith,” 79.

<sup>62</sup> James Gambrell notes,

This worthy and commanding program gives us a new opportunity to demonstrate how readily and efficiently a great spiritual democracy can mobilize for the accomplishment of a big thing. It is my belief that the freedom of the Baptists is more efficient and quick-acting than the overhead control of any other people . . . we can boil the pot from the bottom quicker and stronger than anybody else can boil it from the top, and boil it longer. (James B. Gambrell, *Facing a Worthy Task in a Worthy Way* [Nashville: The Baptist 75 Million Campaign, 1919], 6)

<sup>63</sup> Gambrell, *Facing a Worthy Task*, 6. As part of this campaign, Gambrell recognizes the opportunity for Baptists to “indoctrinate” their own and others who will listen. “These truths,” which he believes God had called Baptists to proliferate in every generation because if they did not no one else would, are

absolute religious liberty for all, Jew and Gentile alike, a converted church membership, self-determination in all religious matters for all individuals and churches without any overhead meddling or management, the supreme sovereignty of Jesus in all matters of the soul, the Bible the law of His reign, and so on. . . . It is especially urgent that they be preached in those lands where Romanism, Lutheranism and other state church religions have so long enthralled mankind. This \$75,000,000 is to be used to propagate the full gospel wherever men live and grope in darkness. (6)

for missional organization. The Christian Union movement quickly included an appeal for the formal unification of all non-Catholic denominations. Southern Baptists found need to express the parameters of their willingness to cooperate with other evangelicals. For the first time, messengers of the 1914 annual meeting of the SBC adopted a confession of faith inside the “Pronouncement on Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency.”<sup>64</sup> This pronouncement was expressed as a testimony to other evangelical groups regarding Baptist doctrinal distinctives. Three of the committee members—E. C. Dargan, E. Y. Mullins, and J. B. Gambrell—were already respected shapers of Baptist theology and organization. Two of them would later serve on the committee that brought the *Baptist Faith and Message* before the Convention in 1925. In their 1914 report, the committee acknowledged that denominational cooperation and Christian union should not come at the expense of doctrinal conviction. The confession consisted of five articles relaying, respectively: soul competency, salvation and spiritual regeneration, two church ordinances, the church, and separation of church and state. “We believe,” the committee reported, that “with all that has been set out above [in the five articles of faith] . . . the highest efficiency of the SBC in the propagation and confirmation of the Gospel can be attained.”<sup>65</sup> A new season of efficiency and clarity in Southern Baptist evangelistic and missional cooperation was expected upon the formal expression of five distinctively Baptist articles of faith. As one twentieth-century Baptist researcher reflected, the 1914 articles “set the precedent” for the SBC’s “adoption of creedal statements” moving forward.<sup>66</sup>

The Christian Union movement matured during the second decade of the twentieth century, and Southern Baptists found it necessary to further define and declare

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<sup>64</sup> *Annual of the 1914 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1845), 73–78. See appendix 2.

<sup>65</sup> *Annual of the 1914 Southern Baptist Convention*, 77.

<sup>66</sup> Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith,” 87–88.

their doctrinal distinctives to the larger evangelical world. James B. Gambrell, established Texas Baptist denominational influencer and president of the SBC from 1917 to 1920, became the figurehead of Southern Baptist doctrinal distinctiveness during the unification movement.<sup>67</sup> In his address to the 1918 Convention, Gambrell expressed concern over the idea of inter-denominational unification on the basis that “Faith and Order is preliminary to union.” He was optimistic about a gathering that might give occasion for different evangelical denominations to enjoy the fellowship of their faith, but recognized the growing necessity of clear doctrinal expression in talks of unification: “It is to be hoped, that in the fulness of time, men competent to set forth the simple views of Baptists may have the privilege of meeting brethren of other faiths and setting before them and the world, the grounds on which our people feel justified in maintaining a separate existence.”<sup>68</sup> By the time of his 1919 report to the Convention, Gambrell was much less convinced of the value of such gatherings. He and others began to see the union movement as an imposition of ecclesiastical hierarchy which Southern Baptists would not—could not—embrace:

The numerous and various schemes of federation, cooperation, or other forms of common action by Christian denominations which have been proposed, cannot be ignored without discourtesy. Such of these schemes as involve a leadership which we cannot appoint or dismiss, but to which we must in some degree surrender our autonomy, are impossible for Baptists . . . Baptists have, as we profoundly believe, a distinct witness to bear and our message must in no way be mutilated or enfeebled. It is our inescapable duty to bear this message unabated to the uttermost part of the world. To syndicate our denomination with other denominations would impair, if it did not destroy, this message. We have a great Christian communion, great in numbers and resources. Among us there is a spirit of the body, and we have fine and ennobling history and traditions. We have our own methods which we like and to which we are accustomed, but which we can change at will to meet changing conditions. The practical and important question emerges, even if fundamental difficulties are removed, whether we cannot better promote the Kingdom of Christ by pressing on along the lines that are familiar to us, using methods that are approved among us and have been favored of God, than by venturing on vague schemes of

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<sup>67</sup> For a concise yet substantive affirmation of Gambrell’s influence in Southern Baptist life during this season, see George W. Truett, “James Burton Gambrell: Life Stories of Great Baptists—Baptist World Alliance Series No. 8,” *Biblical Recorder*, August 17, 1932, 4–5.

<sup>68</sup> James B. Gambrell, Oliver F. Gregory, and Hight C. Moore, “Report of Committee on World Conference on Faith and Order,” in *Annual of the 1918 Southern Baptist Convention*, 137.

general cooperation with other Christian organizations. We think we can . . . instead of wasting our time and confusing the minds of our people with fruitless discussion of impracticable proposals, let us make a program for ourselves so large, so progressive, so constructive, that it shall challenge the faith and imagination of our people. And through all our plans and programs let the recognition of the sole and supreme Lordship of Jesus run like a thread of gold binding together our prayers, our labors, and our gifts.<sup>69</sup>

Gambrell affirmed the respectful fellowship of Christian faith among and between evangelical denominations, but he deplored and rejected the idea of unification, recognizing such imposition as a contemporary expression of an ancient “Romish hierarchy.”<sup>70</sup> Three hundred years of Baptist sentiment reverberated in his voice. As a matter of moral and theological obligation, for Baptists, inter-congregational cooperation must be voluntary or it would not be biblical. Even within evangelicalism, the Baptist doctrine of cooperation needed an expressed delimitation regarding inter-denominational activity.

Gambrell later reflected on the 1919 Convention in a pamphlet celebrating and promoting the adopted \$75 Million Campaign. “God was with us,” he recalled, and there Southern Baptists became “united like never before . . . united in spirit and on sound principles and on a program large, sane and commanding.”<sup>71</sup> What emerged from the 1919 Convention was a body of Baptists further united in both doctrinal principle and missional cooperation. He declared the unionizing movement to officially be behind Southern Baptists: “Happily, we may fairly regard the unionizing propaganda, with its almost endless implications and complications, finally disposed of and the way cleared for the united action of our people for those things that make for progress . . . Happily, we go afield untrammled and unembarrassed by any entangling alliances.”<sup>72</sup>

A messenger at the same Convention made a motion from the floor that a

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<sup>69</sup> *Annual of the 1919 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1919), 111–12.

<sup>70</sup> *Annual of the 1919 Southern Baptist Convention*, 112.

<sup>71</sup> Gambrell, *Facing a Worthy Task*, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Gambrell, *Facing a Worthy Task*, 2–3, 7.



committee be appointed to “prepare greetings . . . to the people of ‘like precious faith with us’ scattered abroad in all nations.”<sup>73</sup> Mullins, Scarborough, and Gambrell were three of the five appointed to the committee. While their statement was never read from the floor of the convention, it was circulated by many Baptist newspapers throughout the convention, including the *Baptist Standard* in Texas.<sup>74</sup> This “Fraternal Address,” in eight articles, carried with it the intention of “co-operation in the furtherance of the truth” with those scattered among the nations who were of like faith and practice with Southern Baptists. It is “the duty of a church to co-operate with other churches of like faith,” the committee expressed in the fifth article. Its closing statement pledged Baptists to a program of “great missionary and educational” endeavors and to “pray for the co-operation of all our people to this end . . . an apostolic program of world redemption.” The Fraternal Address was carried by Gambrell to the London Conference of Baptists in July of 1920, on behalf of Southern Baptists in America. Gambrell believed this to be the most significant meeting of Baptists ever held.<sup>75</sup> There, Thomas Grantham’s 250-year-old dream for international Baptist cooperation came true.<sup>76</sup>

While the committee’s Fraternal Address did not find its way into the SBC Annual in 1920, another important confession of faith did. The Foreign Mission Board included in its report to the convention a well-formed confession of faith in thirteen articles.<sup>77</sup> These articles included matters of “Christian essentials as well as Baptist

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<sup>73</sup> *Annual of the 1919 Southern Baptist Convention*, 75.

<sup>74</sup> E. Y. Mullins et al., “Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists,” *Baptist Standard*, February 26, 1920, 5, 20, 24. See appendix 3.

<sup>75</sup> Truett, “James Burton Gambrell,” 5.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus: Or, The Ancient Christian Religion*. Edited by Richard Groves (London: Printed for Francis Smith at the Sign of the Elephant and Castle in Cornhill near the Royal-Exchange, 1678), Book 3, 36.

<sup>77</sup> See appendix 4.

distinctives.”<sup>78</sup> Missionaries appointed by the Board were to affirm these articles of faith as well as the 1914 statement on Christian union. For the first time, the Board’s evangelistic and missionary service on behalf of cooperating Southern Baptists officially became tied to confessional affirmation. Not only is this an important chronological marker for Southern Baptist organizational history, it was a monumental step forward in Southern Baptist confessional cooperation.<sup>79</sup> While in the early 1920s their Northern Baptist brethren remained embroiled in debates around biblical inspiration, modernism, and distinctive Baptist beliefs, Southern Baptists were well on their way toward a clear and comprehensive confessional consensus that would guard and guide their evangelistic cooperation moving forward.<sup>80</sup> This confessional consensus was formalized upon the adoption of the *Baptist Faith and Message* at the 1925 annual meeting of Southern Baptists in Memphis, Tennessee, which included a distinct article on cooperation.

The fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early 1920s, especially regarding the teachings of Darwinian evolution and higher criticism in biblical scholarship, formed the “larger context” for the Convention’s adoption of the 1925 faith statement.<sup>81</sup> Both Missouri Baptists and Oklahoma Baptists proposed articles of faith to the 1924 convention for adoption.<sup>82</sup> The committee chose to bring neither for a vote, noting that the 1920 Fraternal Address was sufficient as a statement of Southern Baptist doctrinal

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<sup>78</sup> David Dockery, “Hopefulness, Expansion, Disappointment, and Retrenchment: Paving the Way for the Next Generation of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions, 1915–1933,” in Massey, Morris, and Grace, *Make Disciples of All Nations*, 165–66.

<sup>79</sup> Dockery explains, “Because missionary concern is rooted in what people believe and in their ongoing Christian experience, the theological commitments expressed by Mullins... were important. Biblical convictions are the soil in which mission work grows, particularly for ‘people of the Book’ like Southern Baptists.” Dockery, “Hopefulness, Expansion, Disappointment, and Retrenchment,” 177.

<sup>80</sup> Norman F. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1954), 119. Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith,” 129–34.

<sup>81</sup> Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith,” 103–5.

<sup>82</sup> C. P. Stealey, “Doctrinal Statement Offered at Southern Baptist Convention,” *Baptist Messenger*, May 21, 1924), 4. “Our Interpretation,” *The Word and Way*, June 5, 1924, 3.

belief. However, after increasing interest became evident throughout the course of the meeting, the Resolutions Committee recommended the formation of a committee to study the feasibility of creating and adopting a formal Southern Baptist confession of faith.<sup>83</sup> Three of the seven committee members were recognized leaders in the subjects of Baptist history, theology, and confessionalism: E. C. Dargan, E. Y. Mullins, and W. J. McGlothlin. Another was the leading voice of denominational cooperation in the early twentieth century, L. R. Scarborough.<sup>84</sup>

Mullins chaired the committee. David Dockery notes that the committee presented articles to the convention one year later which comprised the Convention's first "full-orbed" confession of faith.<sup>85</sup> It largely became an edited restatement of the *New Hampshire Confession* with the addition of several articles arising from the Convention's present doctrinal and organizational pressure-points.<sup>86</sup> Correspondence between committee members between June 14, 1924, and May 6, 1925, especially concerning the work of the committee in editing the *New Hampshire Confession* and offering new articles for the present hour, is thoroughly documented by Carter in his 1964 dissertation.<sup>87</sup> Carter submits that every historic statement of faith adopted by Southern Baptists was "formulated to meet a specific need," and the specific need presenting the occasion for each confession is evidenced in that it receives "the most attention" in the statement. He later refers to the article on "Co-operation" as "one of the longest articles . . . probably both Scarborough's

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<sup>83</sup> *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1845), 70–71, 95.

<sup>84</sup> The other three committee members were C. P. Stealey, S. M. Brown, and R. H. Pitt. Stealey was the founding editor of Oklahoma's *The Baptist Messenger*. Brown was the founding editor of Missouri Baptists' *The Word & Way*. Both had offered doctrinal statements (declined for presentation by the committee) to the convention for proposed adoption in 1924. Pitt was the editor of the Virginia Baptists' *Religious Herald*.

<sup>85</sup> Dockery, "Hopefulness, Expansion, Disappointment, and Retrenchment," 160.

<sup>86</sup> May, *The Spirit of Southern Baptists*, 10. Dockery, "Hopefulness, Expansion, Disappointment, and Retrenchment," 160, 163.

<sup>87</sup> Carter, "The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith," 120–23.

insistence and the needs of the time made this a necessary article of faith.”<sup>88</sup> The inclusion of Article 22, “Co-operation,” he writes, was “an attempt to prove doctrinal orthodoxy, and . . . to give doctrinal support to the practice of Southern Baptists.”<sup>89</sup>

As has been demonstrated throughout the course of this dissertation, cooperation was not a new doctrinal concept among Southern Baptists in the 1920s. Rather, the cultural, denominational, and organizational dynamics of the age demanded a clear expression of the timeless doctrine. For the first time, necessity and opportunity coalesced to make way for an urgent, formal expression of the inherent moral and theological obligation Baptists felt to cooperate for evangelistic and missional purposes.

In 1925, messengers to the SBC meeting in Memphis, Tennessee formally adopted an article on cooperation as part of their *Baptist Faith and Message*.<sup>90</sup> This article was not a nefarious, opportunistic addition to Baptist doctrines as some would suggest. Rather, it formally codified a core doctrinal belief that had informally guided and guarded Southern Baptist organizational cooperation throughout their first eight decades. The same year, messengers changed the SBC constitution to include denominational cooperation as a requirement for all officers elected and employees hired by the Convention.<sup>91</sup> The progressive organizational history of the SBC demonstrates that although cooperation was not formally adopted as a Southern Baptist article of faith until 1925, “from day one, the SBC was based on a doctrine of cooperation.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith,” iv, 152–53.

<sup>89</sup> Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith,” 156–57.

<sup>90</sup> *Annual of the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1845), 71–76.

<sup>91</sup> *Annual of the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention*, 77.

<sup>92</sup> May, *The Spirit of Southern Baptists*, 38.

## **Evangelistic Cooperation in Southern Baptist Communication, 1845–1925**

One year before Southern Baptists would organize denominationally, on June 29, 1844, Tennessee's *The Baptist* reinstated its circulation with a "Salutatory" address from the editor.<sup>93</sup> The address includes a short confession of faith which, although not specifically mentioned, includes what appears to be summary statements from articles in the *New Hampshire Confession* with one noticeable addition: an article on "co-operation . . . to spread more extensively the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ." The editor further promotes "the union of the Churches for the promotion of brotherly love, and co-operation by the use of divinely appointed means to spread more extensively the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ." *The Baptist* editor could not have imagined the prophetic nature of his confessional conviction. Baptists refined the articulation of this New Testament doctrine of cooperation within the SBC over the next eighty-one years. The following section traces the Southern Baptist conversation around confessionalism and cooperation through Baptist papers in the early years, Baptist papers in the 1920s, and selected correspondence of the 1924–25 committee which drafted and presented the *Baptist Faith and Message* for the Convention's consideration.

### **Baptist Papers in the Early Years**

Within only a few years after the Convention's formation, state Baptist papers published varying opinions regarding confessional cooperation. In the August 29, 1849 edition of the *Alabama Baptist Advocate*, the editor responded to a reader's inquiry concerning the Baptist position on closed communion. Although he did not appeal to a specific confession, the editor clearly articulated the closed communion position of

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<sup>93</sup> Rob Boyte C. Howell, "Salutatory," *The Baptist*, June 29, 1844, 1. *The Baptist* was circulated years earlier, in the first half of the nineteenth century, but suspended its publication between 1840 and 1843 in its agreement to attempt the unification of all Baptist papers in the South. Seeing the effort as undesirable, Howell reinstated the paper's circulation June 29, 1844. Other articles of faith in the "Salutatory" address included statements on the trinity of God, the fall of man, the way of salvation, grace and regeneration, repentance and faith, perseverance of the saints, credobaptism by immersion only, and closed communion, all of which are included in the *New Hampshire Confession*.

Baptists evident in the *New Hampshire Confession* (Article 14). Expanding his commentary to inter-congregational cooperation, he continued by insisting that to “co-operate” implies “a similarity of opinions and practices.”<sup>94</sup> For the editor of the *Alabama Baptist Advocate* in 1849, denominational cooperation depended upon shared doctrinal convictions, and shared doctrinal convictions should lead churches to cooperate. Even without a denominationally authorized confession of faith, cooperation and confession were not opposed to one another; nor was one greater than the other. Rather, cooperation and confession demanded reciprocal dependency.

Similarly, Georgia’s *The Christian Index* published an article November 6, 1856 entitled “In Union There Is Strength.” The article articulated the doctrine of local church autonomy but insisted that failure to cooperate with churches of likeminded faith and practice for gospel advance was “the idol before which everything else is prostrated;” voluntary cooperation between sister churches is “the peculiar glory of Baptists,” and as such, “it is not well for the different churches each to pursue alone its own plan of extending Christ’s kingdom, without co-operating with others.”<sup>95</sup> Three years later an article in *The Christian Index* discouraged Southern Baptists’ cooperation with the Young Men’s Christian Association because the organization did not share the same basic Baptist doctrinal beliefs.<sup>96</sup>

Tennessee’s *The Baptist* published correspondence in three issues, in April 1881, which championed cooperation as a doctrinal commitment among Southern Baptists. “The unified co-operation of our Baptist forces” is “unquestionably the prime necessity of this hour,” E. R. Carswell Jr. articulated. Although specifically targeting

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<sup>94</sup> A. W. Chambliss, ed., “Free Communion,” *Alabama Baptist Advocate*, August 29, 1849, 103.

<sup>95</sup> T. D. Martin, ed., “In Union There Is Strength,” *The Christian Index*, November 6, 1856, 177.

<sup>96</sup> Editor of *The Christian Index*, E. W. Warren, writes, “No Christian who entertains a firmly established faith in the doctrines of the Bible, can co-operate with these Associations without misrepresenting himself, disseminating error, and compromising the truth.” E. W. Warren, ed., “Young Men’s Christian Association,” *The Christian Index*, November 9, 1859, 1.

inter-congregational cooperation in his own city, he insisted that evangelistic denominational cooperation was “a movement we are met [meant?] to inaugurate.” Carswell argued that local church independence is “exaggerated, abused,” and “perverted” if that independence leads a church to be uncooperative with likeminded sister churches. “Oh! what co-operation and what grace in unity we need,” he exclaimed, to “do our whole duty to the whole field.”<sup>97</sup> In the same issue, prominent Tennessee Baptist pastor Henry W. Jones agreed that unfettered cooperation was Christ’s biblical intention for the fulfillment of the Great Commission, although he was clear that denominational cooperation did not require centralization.<sup>98</sup> The next issue of *The Baptist* includes an article entitled “Co-Operation and Centralization,” in which the author reiterates the urgent need for cooperation across the SBC: “associational co-operation is imperatively needed all over the land, for two purposes: to revive a healthy denominationalism, and encourage and secure more active and sufficient efforts on the part of the churches in the conversion of the unconverted.”<sup>99</sup> Articles on the Baptist doctrine of cooperation and its practical denominational implications continued to circulate in Baptist papers leading up to the 1920s.<sup>100</sup> Well before the Christian Union movement and the move toward business-like organizational efficiency during the early

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<sup>97</sup> E. R. Carswell Jr., “Co-Operation, Not Centralization,” *The Baptist*, April 16, 1881, 691.

<sup>98</sup> Henry W. Jones, “Co-Operation, Not Centralization Needed,” *The Baptist*, April 16, 1881, 693.

<sup>99</sup> Henry W. Jones, “Co-Operation and Centralization,” *The Baptist*, April 23, 1881, 709. The author further claims that even within the churches, “The mass of the members are not Baptists, and do not know what principles distinguish them from other denominations” (709).

<sup>100</sup> For example, see O. P. Eaches, “Jesus and Money,” *The Christian Index*, July 6, 1893, 1. Eaches states,

The two greatest of missionary preachers, Barnabas and Saul were called by the spirit and set apart by the church at Antioch, and from henceforth the duty of the churches seems to be plain and well defined—namely—to give to those whom the spirit thus called—their prayerful sympathy—their cordial co-operation and their cheerful and hearty financial support. The subsequent epistles of Paul are very clear in the enforcement of this duty. (1)

See also L. R. Scarborough, “The Primal Test of Theological Education,” *Baptist Standard*, June 3, 1915, 25, 29. Scarborough argues that seminary professors should model active denominational cooperation and hold to the doctrinal positions of the convention.

twentieth century, Southern Baptists shared and regularly articulated a moral and theological obligation to the doctrine of cooperation for evangelistic and missional purposes.

### **Baptist Papers in the 1920s**

As the twentieth century matured toward its third decade, Baptist papers showed increasing interest in the subjects of doctrinal consensus and confessional cooperation. In 1919, the Tennessee *Baptist and Reflector* recorded the recommendation that the Stone Free-Will Baptist Association be received into the Tennessee Baptist Convention, noting it had “adopted the New Hampshire Confession in toto.”<sup>101</sup> The July 6, 1921 issue of Oklahoma’s *Baptist Messenger* contained an article which proposed that more was involved in the \$75 Million Campaign than many perceived; namely, “the ability of separate churches, little independent republics, to ever cooperate in big enterprises” in a way that would touch “the vitals of Baptist doctrines and our claims concerning New Testament teaching.”<sup>102</sup>

The course toward confessional cooperation as doctrinal consensus was most definitely provoked on November 24, 1921, when Texas’ *Baptist Standard* published L. R. Scarborough’s article “The Heresy of Non-Co-operation.” In it, the seminary president and \$75 Million Campaign director argued extensively that the “doctrine of co-operation” is a “fundamental doctrine” clearly and compellingly taught in the New Testament. Therefore, to refuse cooperation was doctrinal heresy to the same degree as performing baptism by affusion, denying biblical inspiration, or affirming Darwinian evolution.<sup>103</sup> It is notable, however, that William W. Barnes, Southwestern seminary professor under

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<sup>101</sup> Fleetwood Ball, “Cleveland Calls Christly Clans—Tennessee Baptists Meet, Undaunted by Rain,” *Baptist and Reflector*, November 20, 1919, 1.

<sup>102</sup> F. M. McConnell and J. B. Rounds, “Building a Denomination: Our Organized Work,” *Baptist Messenger*, July 6, 1921, 4.

<sup>103</sup> Lee Rutland Scarborough, “The Heresy of Non-Co-operation,” *Baptist Standard*, November 24, 1921, 6, 14.



Scarborough's presidency (and recurring acting seminary president during Scarborough's absences), disagreed with and apparently opposed the concept of a New Testament doctrine of cooperation that was equal in importance to other Christian doctrines. Barnes appreciated the season of increasing corporate consciousness among Southern Baptists, but saw the adoption of a confession in 1925, especially with the new article of faith on cooperation, as evidence of an increasingly centralized ecclesiological structure in Southern Baptist organization that may eventually become indistinguishable from other Protestant ecclesiological hierarchies. He also warned that increasing doctrinal uniformity and organizational centralization may lead to the weakening of the very missionary zeal the Convention was constituted to effect.<sup>104</sup> The tension between cooperation and confessionalism was on full display even as the two approached a new cohesive status in Southern Baptist history.

The conversation surrounding Southern Baptist confessional cooperation was well primed by May of 1922 when Scarborough's companion article "Is Co-operation a New Testament Doctrine" circulated in several Baptist papers in the South.<sup>105</sup> The editor of *The Baptist Advance* commented that he had been

saying for a long time that a Baptist has no more right to refuse to co-operate in Baptist work than he has to get drunk or to commit adultery. . . . If a new Baptist confession of faith is to be formulated (as it seems that there will be) we believe an article on co-operation should be included in the confession. We believe no Baptist should be considered sound or in good standing if he refuses to co-operate in the work of Baptists.<sup>106</sup>

Scarborough's article called for Southern and Northern Baptists to work together to write "a new expression of our articles of faith" that would include "Article XIX – on Cooperation." Southern and Northern Baptists had worked together in 1910 to open a

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<sup>104</sup> William W. Barnes, *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology: The Southern Baptist Convention* (Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill, 1934), 8, 78.

<sup>105</sup> Lee R. Scarborough, "Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?," *The Alabama Baptist*, May 18, 1922, 5; "Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?," *The Baptist and Reflector*, May 11, 1922, 4–5; "Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?," *Baptist Message*, May 4, 1922, 4.

<sup>106</sup> J. S. Compere, ed., untitled editorial, *The Baptist Advance*, February 23, 1922, 4.

Baptist seminary in Tokyo, but that cooperation ended in 1918 because Northern Baptists were more sympathetic than Southerners to work with non-Baptist groups that taught contrary to the Baptist doctrine of baptism.<sup>107</sup> Despite Scarborough's efforts to bring together the North and South in confessional cooperation, expressed publicly through Baptist paper correspondence, it was not to be. The Northern Baptists would not adopt a confession at all, while the Southern Baptists soon did so.

In the October 19, 1922 issue of Texas's *Baptist Standard*, Pastor Ervin F. Lyon of First Baptist Church San Angelo, Texas published the seventeenth in his series of eighteen articles on "Who the Baptists Are." These articles would delineate distinctively Baptist doctrines and principles on which Southern Baptists should be clear and of which they should be unapologetically proud.<sup>108</sup> The seventeenth installment in his series of Baptist doctrines was titled, "Baptists and Co-Operation." In it, Lyon outlined "three points of contact" in Baptist cooperation—cooperation between sister Baptist churches, cooperation with other denominations, and cooperation with the government: "All of our associations and conventions are founded upon the principle of wholesome and in the main, harmonious co-operation."<sup>109</sup> He further insisted that churches which refuse to cooperate with their sister churches for evangelistic, educational, and missional endeavors, if they do not "die because of their own inactivity," will eventually "drift into heretical organizations" and "break with the denomination." Lyon was one of many who weighed in on the subject. The Baptist paper conversation around cooperation and confessionalism amplified over the next several years. Leading up to the 1925 annual meeting, Oklahoma's *Baptist Messenger* reported that out of fifteen Baptist papers, eight gave approval to a confession of faith, one other gave limited approval, two were opposed, and five

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<sup>107</sup> Massey, Morris, and Grace, *Make Disciples of All Nations*, 138.

<sup>108</sup> E. F. Lyon, "What Baptists Believe," *Baptist Standard*, June 22, 1922, 7.

<sup>109</sup> E. F. Lyon, "What Baptists Believe: XVII Baptists and Co-Operation," *Baptist Standard*, October 19, 1922, 15, 17.

remained uncertain.<sup>110</sup>

### **Committee Correspondence**

L. R. Scarborough wrote in private correspondence to E. Y. Mullins in April 1922 that if the SBC adopted the recommendation for the rewriting and formal adoption of Baptist articles of faith, he intended to nominate Mullins as the chair of the committee. Mullins replied the following week with his willingness to serve, noting, “No committee of recent years had been more important than this one will be . . . if we can work it out satisfactorily we will render a great service to the Kingdom.”<sup>111</sup> The committee was formed at the 1924 annual meeting. Mullins was appointed chairman. Joining him in the task were C. P. Stealey, S. M. Brown, W. J. McGlothlin, E. C. Dargan, L. R. Scarborough, and R. H. Pitt. Stealey and Pitt opposed the committee’s final recommendations and refused to be included as signatories in the 1925 report.<sup>112</sup> Mullins and Scarborough both drafted articles on cooperation for the committee’s consideration. Mullins’ article on cooperation was twenty-first in a list of twenty-two handwritten articles that comprised his draft of the “Doctrinal Statement” under construction. “Individualism is a clearly revealed principle of the gospel,” Mullins noted, “but the duty of cooperation for great common ends is equally clear.”<sup>113</sup>

Mullins’ draft of the article on cooperation remained short and unfinished. Conversely, Scarborough’s draft, “Article 19 – Co-operation,” was lengthy and

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<sup>110</sup> Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith,” 110–11. C. P. Stealey, “Southern Baptist Press and the Doctrinal Statement,” *Baptist Messenger*, April 29, 1925, 6–7.

<sup>111</sup> Lee Rutland Scarborough, “Letter to E. Y. Mullins, April 12, 1922” (Box 6, Folder 330A), Carroll Center for Baptist Heritage and Mission, Southwestern Theological Seminary.

<sup>112</sup> Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith,” 123–25.

<sup>113</sup> E. Y. Mullins, “Doctrinal Statement,” E. Y. Mullins Papers (Box 39, Folder 17), The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. See appendix 7.

comprehensive.<sup>114</sup> “We believe,” he begins, “in the doctrine and practice of co-operation.” The doctrine is “fundamental and essential” to fulfill the Great Commission with which Christ had entrusted the churches and includes both congregational and inter-congregational cooperation in “evangelism, missions, Christian education and benevolence.” Scarborough’s draft concludes, “We believe that co-operation in carrying out Christ’s Gospel will in the earth is a New Testament limitation to our freedom and the independence of the churches put on us by the commands and Lordship of Christ.” The final version to be presented to the messengers of the 1925 convention Article 22, “Co-operation,” carried the tone and intention of both Mullins and Scarborough, but a greater degree of similarity is evident between Scarborough’s draft and the final version (see Appendices 7, 8, and 9).<sup>115</sup> In its final form, the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925) article on cooperation reads,

Christ’s people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure co-operation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over each other or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Individual members of New Testament churches should co-operate with each other, and the churches themselves should co-operate with each other in carrying forward the missionary, educational and benevolent program for the extension of Christ’s Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary co-operation for common ends by various groups of Christ’s people. It is permissible and desirable as between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such co-operation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and his Word as revealed in the New Testament. (Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Neh. 4:4-6; 8:1-4; Mal. 3:10; Matt. 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; Acts 1:13-14; 1:21-26; 2:1,41-47; 1 Cor. 1:10-17; 12:11-12; 13; 14:33-34,40; 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:1-15; Eph. 4:1-16; 3 John 1:5-8.)<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> L. R. Scarborough, “Article 19 On Co-Operation by L. R. Scarborough,” The L. R. Scarborough Digital Materials Collection, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, <http://cdm16969.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16969coll11/id/1133>.

<sup>115</sup> See also Carson, *Calling Out the Called*, 76. Carson mentions “an unmistakable affinity between the two documents”—Scarborough’s draft and the final version.

<sup>116</sup> “Comparison Chart,” Southern Baptist Convention.

## Other Cultural and Denominational Factors

The American cultural, social, and political matrix of the period greatly influenced the formalization of confessional cooperation among Southern Baptists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In *A Study of the Development of Ecclesiology: The Southern Baptist Convention*, W. W. Barnes broaches the subject. For example, he briefly points out the differences between the “non-membership representation” convention structure of the mid-late nineteenth-century SBC that was inherited from their English Baptist fathers.<sup>117</sup> This custom, in seventeenth-century England, was initially built on English Parliament policies that allowed members of Parliament to represent districts in which they did not reside. So, as a carry-over from colonial days, Southern Baptists in the mid-late nineteenth century allowed for non-membership representation at conventions.<sup>118</sup> But as the concept of national American citizenship became prominent after the American Civil War, especially with the assurance of permanent and irrevocable union between the states, Southern Baptists began to move toward a membership representation model for Convention proceedings. The American political model shifted the conventional philosophy of Baptists in the states. As Barnes notes, such practices are evidence of “the influence of the state on church life.”<sup>119</sup> More factors than can be treated herein substantially influenced the cooperative mindset and model of Southern Baptists in the period under review: the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws from 1865 through the 1950s, the creation of the Federal Reserve system in 1913 in response to the economic Panic of 1907, the flu pandemic of 1918–1919, and the spread of communism and socialism during the Russian Revolution of 1917–1923. Due to the limits of space, what follows is a very brief representation of

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<sup>117</sup> Barnes, *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology*, 26.

<sup>118</sup> Two Tennessee Baptists were messengers from a church in Shanghai, China, in 1867. In 1869, John Broadus of South Carolina was a messenger from a church in Tungchow, China. The next year, seven Tennessee Baptists represented South Carolina and eight Kentucky Baptists represented Alabama. See Barnes, *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology*, 26.

<sup>119</sup> Barnes, *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology*, 26.

the historical interplay between the first World War, American government centralization, and the Southern Baptist \$75 Million Campaign. Perhaps more than most other social, cultural, denominational, or political events, these immensely influenced the formalization of the Southern Baptist doctrine of cooperation throughout the 1910s and 1920s.

The Southern Baptist \$75 Million Campaign of 1919–1924 was born into the post-war cradle of American patriotism, cooperation, and bureaucracy. “Efficiency,” “centralization,” and “economic organization” were the trends of the day.<sup>120</sup> President Woodrow Wilson reflected on that season of American life during which the trials of urgent need were adjudicated in the cooperative spirit of American volunteerism: “America was never so beautiful as in the spring, summer, and autumn of 1917 when people were stirred by a passion in common, forgot themselves and political differences in an urge to put all they had, all they were, to use in a great purpose.”<sup>121</sup> Within only two years after America entered the Great War, an army numbering millions was drafted, hundreds of new government bureaucracies were formed to support the war effort, and “farmers and factory workers and millionaires alike” enlisted in the financial program to fund the war.<sup>122</sup> Every American could do something to play his or her part and become involved in the cooperative effort. As a result, historical biographer Scott Berg noted that the economic growth and financial commitments of the American economy during and immediately following the war years were unparalleled, the gross domestic product more than doubling to \$76.8 billion by the Fall of 1918 while the gross public debt almost tripled to \$14.6 billion.<sup>123</sup>

President Calvin Coolidge later reflected on the Great War as a unifying force

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<sup>120</sup> Scott Berg, *Wilson* (New York: G. P Putnam’s, 2013), 444–45, 448.

<sup>121</sup> Berg, *Wilson*, 456–57.

<sup>122</sup> Berg, *Wilson*, 475–77.

<sup>123</sup> Berg, *Wilson*, 481.

for the American people.<sup>124</sup> He acknowledged the “missionary spirit” of Christians in that day, “so strongly in favor of helping Europe.”<sup>125</sup> The World War was horrific and devastating, but through it Americans gained a new corporate consciousness of their military and economic power. The spirit of volunteerism, coupled with loyal patriotism, drew the country together from every corner in unified, sacrificial cooperation for a common goal: to win the war that British author H. G. Wells claimed would “End [all] War.”<sup>126</sup> The opportunity was ripe, Wells believed, for both government and church to circle their wagons and leverage their voices to be about the business of killing harmful ideas and propagating peace.<sup>127</sup> To be sure, Baptists did not look to H. G. Wells for social, political, or theological direction. His own philosophies of socialistic, secular utopianism were as antithetical to the teachings of Christ as were those of Prussian Imperialism. But his words of exhortation in the face of World War were timely and exhortative. The war-ravaged world needed a gospel of peace, but the church, he thought, was silent. Wells proposed an artillery of words in opportunity of convictional cooperation.<sup>128</sup> Similar wartime language and calls for declarations of clear thought worked their way into Southern Baptist correspondence during the war years. The 1915 SBC report of the Committee on Home Missions, for example, imagined a might army of “soldiers of the

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<sup>124</sup> President Coolidge writes,

The whole nation seemed to be endowed with a new spirit, unified and solidified and willing to make any sacrifice for the cause of liberty. I was constantly before the public gatherings explaining the needs of the time for men, money, and supplies. . . . The response which the people made and the organizing power of the country were all manifestations that it was wonderful to contemplate. The entire nation awoke to a new life. (Calvin Coolidge, *The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge: Authorized, Expanded, and Annotated Edition* [Wilmington, DE: ISI, 2021], 78)

<sup>125</sup> Coolidge, *Autobiography*, 97.

<sup>126</sup> Herbert G. Wells, *The War that Will End War* (New York: Duffield, 1914).

<sup>127</sup> Wells, *The War that Will End War*, 98, 105.

<sup>128</sup> In the final paragraph of the book, Wells writes, “How are we to gather together the wills and understanding of men for the tremendous necessities and opportunities of this time? Thought, speech, persuasion, an incessant appeal for clear intentions, clear statements for the dispelling of suspicion and the abandonment of secrecy and trickery; there is work for every man who writes or talks and has the slightest influence upon another creature.” Wells, *The War that Will End War*, 106.

Cross” that would solve “those vexing problems which hitherto have been the despair of both diplomacy and force . . . an educative force . . . [with] a patriotic task.”<sup>129</sup>

In the months leading up to the 1919 Convention, the Interchurch World Movement launched a campaign to raise one billion dollars for missions in a period of three years.<sup>130</sup> Southern Baptists were intrigued by the idea, but their doctrinal convictions would preclude them from participation. L. R. Scarborough, James B. Gambrell, and George W. Truett circulated articles in Baptist papers opposing cooperation with the movement on the basis that both “Baptist fundamentals” and the Baptist work would be compromised.<sup>131</sup> During their 1919 Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, Southern Baptists declined participation in the Interchurch World Movement, reflected on the successes of the war efforts, celebrated the renewed spirit of American patriotism, recognized the efficiency of unified budgets and business-like practices, and rose to new opportunities of global evangelism and missions in the post-war era. President J. B. Gambrell, in his convention address, exhorted the churches to collectively “go afield all over the world with the sword of truth flashing in the sunlight and piercing to the heart of everything that exalts itself against the sovereignty of Jesus in the realm of the soul . . . Let us gird up our loins and go forward.”<sup>132</sup> He closed his message with an appeal for Southern Baptists “to adopt a program for work commensurate with the reasonable demands on us and summon

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<sup>129</sup> *Annual of the 1915 Southern Baptist Convention*, 26–27. The committee’s report reads,

It is not only a great evangelistic and educative force but it has a patriotic task, calling for statesmanship of the highest degree. This has always been true, but it is doubly so now. America with breaking heart is looking on the tragedy of the ages expecting and expected to give her hand to maimed and wounded humanity when all is over, and to open her home to the multitudes who will seek here a refuge from staggering debt and mayhap, God help them, from starvation itself. The Home Board with far-seeing vision is doing its utmost to prepare our churches and through them the nation for this high task. (26–27)

<sup>130</sup> Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith,” 89.

<sup>131</sup> Z. T. Cody, “The Atlanta Convention,” *Baptist Courier*, May 22, 1919, 5. James B. Gambrell, “The Union Movement and Baptist Fundamentals,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 3, no. 1 (January 1919): 5. James B. Gambrell, George W. Truett, and Lee R. Scarborough, “A Statement Concerning the Attitude of Southern Baptists toward the Interchurch World Movement,” *Baptist Courier*, March 11, 1920, 1.

<sup>132</sup> *Annual of the 1919 Southern Baptist Convention*, 22.



ourselves and our people to a new demonstration of the value of orthodoxy in free action.”<sup>133</sup> Agreeing with the spirit of President Gambrell’s exhortation, J. T. Henderson, General Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Laymen’s Missionary Movement of the SBC, acknowledged “the thorough methods of organization that have come from our experiences within the World War. . . . the lessons of this new day.” Henderson continued to press the Convention for “a period of simultaneous education and enlistment, to be followed by a simultaneous drive throughout the South in the interest of all the enterprises of the denomination, both general and local.”<sup>134</sup> His report was adopted unanimously. Initially, the five-year campaign was proposed at \$50 million, according to Scarborough’s best estimations, but it was officially recommended at \$75 million (probably to correspond with what would be the convention’s 75th year of existence in 1920).<sup>135</sup> It was organized after efficient business-like practices but within the boundaries of voluntary cooperation necessitated by the Baptist doctrine of local church and organizational autonomy—a willing partnership between local churches, state conventions, and the national convention in all its agencies and boards. Lee R. Scarborough, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, was chosen as General Director for the \$75 Million Campaign.

In 1920, after campaign pledges were recorded at over \$90 million, Scarborough acknowledged the contributions of Americans’ involvement in the world war as an undeniable factor in the campaign’s assured success.<sup>136</sup> At the same time, he pointed to a ten-year period of the development of a certain “missionary conscience” and an “enlargement of the missionary vision” of Southern Baptists, having “gripped our people,

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<sup>133</sup> *Annual of the 1919 Southern Baptist Convention*, 23.

<sup>134</sup> *Annual of the 1919 Southern Baptist Convention*, 32.

<sup>135</sup> *Annual of the 1919 Southern Baptist Convention*, 74.

<sup>136</sup> Lee Rutland Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership: Or, the Story of the Southern Baptist 75 Million Campaign* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1920), 13–14.

as never before . . . The call of Christ in all the world has been sounding the soul of Southern Baptists in a mighty fashion for ten years, getting them ready for the great task of the Seventy-five Million Campaign.”<sup>137</sup> During the 1919 convention, Scarborough insisted that the impetus for this campaign was not the work of a few convention leaders. Rather, it “seemed to come out of the very soul of the messengers.”<sup>138</sup> President Gambrell agreed, labeling the cooperative spirit and corresponding financial commitment nothing short of a mighty work of God.<sup>139</sup> An enlarged missionary vision had taken hold among Southern Baptists, and the \$75 Million Campaign was the mission-funding strategy they needed to underwrite the work. Certainly, it was influenced by the Interchurch World Movement’s \$1 billion campaign launched only a few months earlier. But the Southern Baptist campaign was born from their genetic moral and theological obligation to work together for Great Commission advance, strengthened by an unstated yet ever-present doctrine of cooperation, and given new opportunity for organized effectiveness in the centralized business practices of the day and post-war spirit of volunteerism and causal loyalty.

A brief review of denominational media both leading up to and following the campaign reveals that expectations were high, and pressure was great for the success of the overall program. In his written report to the 1919 convention, Foreign Mission Board Corresponding Secretary J. F. Love foreshadowed the severity of possible failure: “If Southern Baptists fail in this the Seventy-fifth year of their history to make a program for Foreign Missions which will take care of that with which they are solemnly charged, they will prove themselves unfaithful stewards and unwise statesmen in the Kingdom of God . . . Will the Convention now make a financial program which will enable the Board and the missionaries to execute on the field the denominational program which has been

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<sup>137</sup> Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 12.

<sup>138</sup> Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 16.

<sup>139</sup> Gambrell, *Facing a Worthy Task*, 2.

made for them? Or will we, failing to do this, place our missionaries in a false light and shame them before those who would delight to see our denominational program break down?”<sup>140</sup> As Scarborough closed his 1919 pamphlet *Evangelism, Enlistment, Enlightenment*, setting out the great needs and opportunities of the campaign, he argued that the campaign itself would be a defining moment for Southern Baptists toward a future of either “meager endeavor” or “great victories.”<sup>141</sup> For better or worse, before a single pledge was committed on “Victory Week” in 1919, Southern Baptists tied the success of their cooperative missions to the successes of the \$75 Million Campaign.

The post-war depression of 1920–21 adversely affected the American economy and, by extension, the collection of pledged funds. As one historian records, “ruinous inflation . . . ravaged” the American economy between 1919 and 1920, toward a comprehensive economic collapse that peaked in May of 1920.<sup>142</sup> By November 1919, the cost of living had increased 82.2 percent above the 1914 level; by July 1920, it had peaked at 104.5 percent over 1914.<sup>143</sup> While the economy mostly recovered by early 1923, Southern Baptists had not caught up on financial installments toward their pledges to the \$75 Million Campaign. In the final months of the campaign, serious pledge-collection shortfalls became evident. Several denominational leaders employed language of failure to describe the shortage. In April 1925, F. S. Groner, Executive Director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, wrote an article published on the front page of the *Baptist Standard* pleading with Texas churches to fulfill their commitments in the final hours of the campaign: “If we fail . . . it will be regarded as a sure token that the budget

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<sup>140</sup> *Annual of the 1919 Southern Baptist Convention*, 198, 201.

<sup>141</sup> Lee Rutland Scarborough, *Evangelism, Enlightenment, Enlistment: Millions for the Master* (Nashville: Baptist 75 Million Campaign, 1919), 31.

<sup>142</sup> Robert K. Murray, *The Harding Era: Warren G. Harding and His Administration* (Newtown, CT: American Political Biography, 1969), 81–82.

<sup>143</sup> Murray, *The Harding Era*, 82.

plan is a failure.”<sup>144</sup> He continued by employing language such as “crushing anxiety,” “crashing defeat,” “most desperately serious,” and “the critical stress of our situation.” In the same month, Tennessee Baptists also felt this sense of dire consequence upon the inevitable shortfall of pledge collection: “Baptists are in a mighty struggle . . . The battle is on. The next few days will record for eternity the efficiency or inefficiency of Tennessee Baptists in this battle . . . Every interest of Christ’s kingdom is imperiled.”<sup>145</sup> At the beginning and end of the \$75 Million Campaign, failure to collect on pledged funds would be deemed unworthy of Christ and unworthy of the great missionary task taken up by the SBC. Sacrificial longsuffering in cooperation became the urgent need of the day, driving the narrative toward a confessionally cooperative consciousness that would undergird the unified budget strategy which found its genesis at the same Convention as the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1925 (the Cooperative Program).

More recent scholarship has reiterated the perception that the \$75 Million Campaign should be considered a failure of Southern Baptist experimentation. In his 2016 book *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919—25*, Andrew Christopher Smith casts the campaign as a “failure” of “apocalyptic nature,” an immature outgrowth of wartime hype and American volunteerism.<sup>146</sup> He argues that “a number of Southern Baptists seem to have pledged in the heat of post-war excitement more than they were later willing to pay . . . As a result, funds trickled in to the coffers of the Campaign at a rate far too slow to sustain the spending of Southern Baptist institutions.”<sup>147</sup> Because initial pledges came in so strongly, Smith notes, “The apparent success of the Campaign led to a rash of spending that threatened to bury Southern Baptist denominational work underneath a mountain of

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<sup>144</sup> F. S. Groner, “The Hour for a Superior Effort,” *The Baptist Standard*, April 23, 1925, 1.

<sup>145</sup> O. E. Bryan, “The Strategy of Simultaneous Action,” *Baptist and Reflector*, April 23, 1925, 2.

<sup>146</sup> Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 133.

<sup>147</sup> Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 104.

debt.”<sup>148</sup> He argues, contrary to Scarborough’s insistence that the idea for the campaign arose from “the very soul of the messenger body,” that it rather “seems to have depended on the advance creation of a program by leaders who then submitted it to their constituency for their approval.”<sup>149</sup> Smith further records that “denominational insiders” and “historians” remember the campaign “as a failure” and claims that while the economic difficulties of the day were a factor, much blame should be placed upon Southern Baptist leaders themselves.<sup>150</sup> Ultimately, Smith sees the \$75 Million Campaign as an unwieldy instrument in the hands of a few denominational power players, chiefly L. R. Scarborough, to centralize denominational missions and force denominational loyalty and cooperation along the breadth of its constituency.

In his 2021 book *In the Name of God*, O. S. Hawkins, long-time Southern Baptist statesman and entity leader, agrees with Smith on this point. For Hawkins, the campaign is set within the tumultuous historical relationship between George W. Truett and J. Frank Norris. He writes that the campaign “reached its end in dismal failure,” nodding to J. Frank Norris’s insistence that it was “an attempt by a small established group to centralize power in the denomination away from the local churches.”<sup>151</sup> Hawkins mentions early accusations of financial mismanagement against Scarborough as well as imprudent institutional spending based on pledges rather than receipts; he also repeatedly labels the \$75 Million Campaign a “failure.”<sup>152</sup>

If the success of the campaign is to be measured by financial receipts alone, Hawkins and Smith may be correct. The goal was \$75 million. By the end of 1919,

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<sup>148</sup> Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 103.

<sup>149</sup> Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 60.

<sup>150</sup> Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 187.

<sup>151</sup> O. S. Hawkins, *In the Name of God: The Colliding Lives, Legends, and Legacies of J. Frank Norris and George W. Truett* (Nashville: B & H, 2021), 100.

<sup>152</sup> Hawkins, *In the Name of God*, 99–101, 102, 146.

Southern Baptists had pledged \$92,630,923. But the campaign would end in disheartening shortfall with a final collection of \$58,591,713.69, only 78% of its goal and 63% of its pledges.<sup>153</sup> Campaign director L. R. Scarborough was rightfully encouraged and invigorated by Southern Baptists' initial response to the campaign's launch.<sup>154</sup> But when the campaign was completed, actual receipts fell short of the goal by almost \$16.5 million. Some disagreed with the campaign's philosophy altogether and argued that it was doomed for failure before it began. J. Frank Norris, Scarborough's greatest opposition through the campaign and in the years that followed, referred to the initiative as "unscriptural and ill fated."<sup>155</sup> Louis Entzminger, Norris's thirty-four year friend and partner in the ministry, agreed with the Fort Worth pastor that the campaign was "ill-fated" from the start, comparing its leadership and collection methodology to "Roman governors," the "Sanhedrin when they stoned Stephen," and a "conscienceless, heartless denominational machine" destined for obvious and embarrassing failure.<sup>156</sup>

The Conservation Commission was appointed at the 1920 annual meeting to carry through to completion the work the Campaign Commission began in 1919. Table 1 presents a state-by-state comparison between pledged and collected campaign funds.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> William W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845–1953* (Nashville: Broadman, 1954), 224.

<sup>154</sup> Scarborough writes, "The 75 Million Campaign presents an opportunity for Southern Baptists to show how they can cooperate in a campaign and program which takes in all their combined activities. With charity for all others, malice toward none, we are to throw the full force of our strength into a program somewhat worthy of our great numbers, our commanding influence and the tremendous tasks that confront us." Scarborough, *Evangelism, Enlightenment, Enlistment*, 20.

<sup>155</sup> Louis Entzminger, *The J. Frank Norris I Have Known for 34 Years* (n.p.: CreateSpace, 2015), 287.

<sup>156</sup> Entzminger, *The J. Frank Norris*, 186–87, 286–87.

<sup>157</sup> Numbers in the center column are taken from the *Annual of the 1919 Southern Baptist Convention*, 51. Numbers in the far-right column are taken from the *Annual of the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention*, 23.

Table 1. \$75 Million Campaign pledges and collection comparison by state

State	Amount pledged in 1919	Amount collected by 1925
Alabama	\$4,200,000	\$2,717,464.62
Arkansas	\$3,114,407	\$2,319,654.72
District of Columbia	\$250,000	\$301,848.81
Florida	\$1,375,000	\$1,009,416.89
Georgia	\$10,100,000	\$5,282,493.24
Illinois	\$912,362	\$691,245.89
Kentucky	\$7,454,387	\$6,414,159.87
Louisiana	\$3,002,163	\$1,681,438.52
Maryland	\$900,000	\$729,440.82
Mississippi	\$4,209,585	\$3,107,040.36
Missouri	\$981,756	\$2,438,561.24
New Mexico	\$732,260	\$708,124.80
North Carolina	\$7,250,000	\$5,174,865.61
Oklahoma	\$3,144,682	\$1,462,030.34
South Carolina	\$7,600,000	\$4,773,889.11
Tennessee	\$4,540,003	\$3,950,655.49
Texas	\$16,560,000	\$8,720,161.50
Virginia	\$8,100,318	\$6,657,778.86
Other	\$8,231,346	\$451,443.00
TOTAL	\$92,630,923 <sup>158</sup>	\$58,591,713.69

For reporting purposes, initial subscriptions were divided by state according to the pledged five-year amounts recorded during Victory Week.<sup>159</sup> By the end of 1919, total pledges came to \$92,630,923.

In the Conservation Commission’s final report to the body of messengers in 1925, the committee acknowledged an overall disappointment in collections and corresponding distributions.<sup>160</sup> Because of the drastic shortfall of collected funds, the campaign’s distributions to the various boards and agencies were significantly less than

<sup>158</sup> A \$27,346 discrepancy in the total of the center column is acknowledged. Figures are taken from SBC annuals and are represented here without correction or alteration.

<sup>159</sup> Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 93. “Victory Week” marked “Eight Immortal Days” of pledges toward the campaign, from November 30 to December 7, 1919. See also Frank E. Burkhalter, “Seventy-Five Million Campaign,” in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, ed. Norman Wade Cox (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), 2:1197.

<sup>160</sup> *Annual of the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention*, 22.

anticipated in 1919. Table 2 summarizes the discrepancy between promised and actual distributions according to campaign allocations:<sup>161</sup>

Table 2. \$75 Million Campaign projected and actual distribution comparison

Recipient of distributed funds	Projected \$75 million distribution amount in 1919	Actual total distribution by January 1925
Foreign Missions	\$20,000,000	\$11,615,327.91
Home Missions	\$12,000,000	\$6,622,725.55
State & Associated Missions	\$11,000,000	\$9,900,785.93
Christian Education	\$20,000,000	\$16,087,942.07
Orphanages	\$4,700,000	\$5,134,522.10
Hospitals	\$2,125,000	\$2,975,380.07
Ministerial Relief	\$5,000,000	\$1,786,676.30
Other/Miscellaneous	\$175,000	\$4,468,362.76
TOTAL	\$75,000,000	\$58,591,713.69 <sup>162</sup>

If the success of the \$75 Million Campaign is to be measured by the collection of pledged funds alone, there is no doubt the effort must be remembered as an overall failure. “The prospect that the campaign would end in failure was a devastating thought,” Chad Owen Brand and David E. Hankins suggested in their 2005 book *One Sacred Effort*, “Yet fail it did.”<sup>163</sup> Because the mission boards and seminaries had made promises and taken action based on pledges, they all ended the five-year campaign in serious, institutionally crippling debt.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>161</sup> Numbers in the center column are taken from Burkhalter, “Seventy-Five Million Campaign,” 2:1196. Numbers in the far right column are taken from *Annual of the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention*, 23.

<sup>162</sup> A \$9.00 discrepancy in the total of the far-right column is acknowledged. Figures are taken from SBC annuals and are represented here without correction or alteration.

<sup>163</sup> Chad Owen Brand and David E. Hankins, *One Sacred Effort: The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 95.

<sup>164</sup> For example, Brand and Hankins describe the setting as “a state of enthusiasm and high expectancy” toward the beginning of the campaign, in which the Foreign Mission Board was ordered by the convention “to advance in the scope and care of its work” and “to loan money to three theological schools which are within the bounds of the Convention.” Brand and Hankins, *One Sacred Effort*, 95. At the



Great institutional debt and shortfall of collection on pledges wounded the convention's campaign outlook, but it simultaneously invigorated its cooperative spirit.

In many ways, the \$75 Million Campaign "was a remarkable success."<sup>165</sup> In 1942, H. E.

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instruction of the 1919 convention, in 1924, the board reported outstanding loans to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans Baptist Bible Institute, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary totaling \$257,730.80. By May 1924, the interest on the three school loans rose to approximately \$30,000. The leaders of the board estimated they would receive a minimum of four million dollars per year during the campaign, but because of the shortfall in receipts the board's allotment amounted to merely \$2,161,698.20 in 1920, \$2,399,392.42 in 1921, \$1,814,598.32 in 1922, and commensurate amounts in 1923–1924. The financial shortfall created "consequent embarrassment" to the Foreign Mission Board "and peril to its work." Between 1920 and 1924, the board cut \$3,531,609 from its promised missions-funding expenditures and still ended the campaign with "enormous debt" totaling \$711,611.95, the interest on which totaled \$70,632.04 in 1923 alone. *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 165–66. Corresponding Secretary J. F. Love noted that the financial shortfall and corresponding indebtedness affected resident missionaries, colleges and seminaries, hospital buildings and medical equipment, and other needs "for every one of our mission fields. This wholesale denial to the missionaries of material equipment for their work will be a sad historical incident in the annals of this work." In the face of mounting debt and unfulfilled financial promises, Love frankly laid out the options before the convention: "retirement from some fields and retrenchment in all, or else increased contributions by Southern Baptists to their foreign mission work." *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 176–77.

The Home Mission Board mounted institutional indebtedness during the early years of the campaign but by its 1924 convention report began to see reduction in its debt, albeit due to "drastic retrenchments in our operations." *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 318. The debt incurred was "heavy and burdensome" as receipts diminished year over year during the campaign leaving the board "handicapped" in its work. *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 330. Total indebtedness for the Home Mission Board climbed to \$822,183.60 in 1924, not including \$53,724.58 promised yet unpaid in individual church gifts. *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 330, 445. Prior to 1919, the convention's newly formed Education Board launched a \$15 million campaign to benefit denominational educational institutions, but this effort was rolled into the larger \$75 Million Campaign upon its commencement with the promise of 4 percent allocation, or an expected total distribution amount of \$3 million. However, in the board's 1924 convention report, corresponding secretary W. C. James lamented that only 53.8 percent of the board's promised allocations had been collected. "This means a severe handicap," he regretted, "since only a little more than one-half of the expected funds have been received upon which to administer and carry forward the work." *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 435. The Education Commission promised Illinois, New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Florida a total of \$500,000 (\$100,000 each) to strengthen educational institutions in their respective states, promises upon which these institutions made plans and investments. However by 1924, only between \$8,000 and \$40,000 had been dispersed to each. The inability of the Education Board to invest the promised funding in these schools due to the failure of Southern Baptists to make good on their campaign pledges, together with the plans the schools enacted based on the expectation of those receipts, was seen not only as an imperilment to the future of the educational institutions but also as a great embarrassment to the states in which they were planted. *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 452–453. Additionally, three Southern Baptist seminaries—The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and New Orleans Baptist Bible Institute—had been granted advance loan funds totaling \$330,413.11, but the financial shortfall of the campaign made it "manifestly impossible" for the Education Commission to follow through with the loan funding which it had promised and which the respective seminaries had already begun to spend. *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 54.

<sup>165</sup> Brand and Hankins, *One Sacred Effort*, 95.

Dana, L. R. Scarborough's first biographer, labeled the campaign "the most significant forward movement ever launched by the Southern Baptist Convention" despite its financial shortfall.<sup>166</sup> Scarborough himself argued early in the campaign's life cycle that "the money to be realized from the Campaign is of far less consequence than the spiritual energy aroused and the demonstration of spiritual unity which has been made."<sup>167</sup>

Southern Baptist historian H. Leon McBeth argues that the campaign "represents a great leap forward in Southern Baptist stewardship, promotion, and denominational self-identity."<sup>168</sup> The campaign was financial in nature, but the real objectives could not be measured in dollar signs.

In their final report to the convention, in 1925, the Conservation Commission highlighted the following advancements made in the funding of ongoing cooperative mission works.<sup>169</sup> In the area of ministerial relief, the campaign did more for the 1,000 supported retired preachers and their families than Southern Baptists had done for them in their combined seventy-five-year history. The number of Baptist hospitals doubled, from 12 to 24, and the value of their properties tripled. From 1919 to 1925, Southern Baptists added two orphanages, invested almost as much money in colleges and seminaries as the combined value of their property, and enlarged their missionary force by 100%. Local churches baptized 225,000 people, increased membership by 375,000, and planted 1,200 new congregations.

The Foreign Mission Board, in the same 1924 annual report that lamented the campaign's financial shortfall and corresponding enormous debt it provoked, reported the following net gains from 1919 to 1924: Missionaries, 216 (66% increase); Native Workers, 1,867 (298% increase); Churches, 590 (117% increase); Members, 62,213 (125% increase);

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<sup>166</sup> H. E. Dana, *Lee Rutland Scarborough: A Life of Service* (Nashville: Broadman, 1942), 98.

<sup>167</sup> Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 151.

<sup>168</sup> H. Leon McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 447.

<sup>169</sup> *Annual of the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention*, 23–24.

Self-Supporting Churches, 165 (115% increase); Contributions, \$271,296 (156% increase); Baptisms, 7,221 (128% increase).<sup>170</sup> In the same breath as his disappointment over the campaign's financial shortfall, Love celebrated that "the Spirit of God has in these recent marvelous years created an atmosphere, mellowed human hearts, ripened mission fields, quickened Christian aspiration, nurtured the graces of the Spirit, removed religious prejudice and created hospitality for the truth on all our mission fields."<sup>171</sup>

The Home Mission Board reported a field-wide exponential increase in baptisms, funds raised, and church leaders trained in schools and seminaries over 1919 numbers.<sup>172</sup> Hildreth notes an 84% increase in per capita giving among Southern Baptists from 1914–1918 to 1919–1924 followed by another significant average increase in 1925–1929 totaling more than a 100% per capita increase in giving among Southern Baptists as a result of the campaign years.<sup>173</sup> While the opportunities of the \$75 Million Campaign were tremendous, those that lay ahead of Southern Baptists were even more so. Notably, it was the sacrificial and cooperative spirit born in the five-year campaign that not only financed concurrent mission works but stimulated Southern Baptists for the unified, strategic funding of ongoing mission work as well. "The ends of the world, with their growing need for Gospel remedy, have come in upon the soul of the South," Scarborough noted in 1920, "and the missionary impulse has been quickened a thousand-fold."<sup>174</sup>

The entire campaign was marked by an evangelistic zeal woven through every

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<sup>170</sup> *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 168. These numbers do not include the Board's work in Russia, which had peaked during the years of the campaign to the point of expected successful completion and withdrawal in 1924 (172).

<sup>171</sup> *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 168.

<sup>172</sup> *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 328. Under the subheading "Some Significant Comparisons," the report refers to the numbers in Cuba as the normative "comparison of growth . . . in most of our fields" between 1919–1924.

<sup>173</sup> D. Scott Hildreth, *Together on God's Mission: How Southern Baptists Cooperate to Fulfill the Great Commission* (Nashville: B & H, 2018), 19.

<sup>174</sup> Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 117.

aspect of the movement. McBeth argues that the impact of the campaign's "unified effort upon evangelism" is evidence of its overall success, despite its financial shortfall.<sup>175</sup>

Following Victory Week in late 1919, Scarborough noticed unanticipated "doors of opportunity" opened to "evangelism and missions" as well as an overall "new dignity for the power of redemption over the lives of men."<sup>176</sup> He continued: "one of the most meaningful and heaven-honed by-products of the Campaign is to be found in the deepening of the evangelistic and compassion and hunger for the salvation of a lost world . . .

Everywhere a revival spirit was started. A new zeal . . . the kindling of new spiritual fires for soul-winning have started the revival hope everywhere throughout the South."<sup>177</sup>

In the Home Mission Board's 1924 convention report, Corresponding Secretary B. D. Gray acknowledged the "financial depression of the past three years," a "necessary retrenchment in our forces," and the drastic shortfall in collections on pledge funds, but still reported "the unwonted favor of God upon the labors of our missionaries and evangelists."<sup>178</sup> He reported advancement in historically difficult fields of labor, "thousands" having been brought to Christ, and an overall season of "great harvest" during the years of the campaign: "The success of our workers—evangelists and missionaries—has been so great as to create needs never before dreamed of."<sup>179</sup> He noted that the five-year campaign strengthened Southern Baptist churches in self-support and awakened them to new fields of cooperative evangelism and missions: "Our people have been brought to a consciousness of responsibility and opportunity in their Christian lives . . . The spirit of evangelism and the activity of our evangelists and missionaries have penetrated unexpected fields which in turn have responded to the gospel message and are

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<sup>175</sup> McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, 447.

<sup>176</sup> Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 124.

<sup>177</sup> Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 124–25.

<sup>178</sup> *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 318.

<sup>179</sup> *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 318.

sending out pleas for help.”<sup>180</sup> Gray believed the \$75 Million Campaign’s legacy would be more than a shortfall in receipts or incurred institutional debt. He noted a certain, identifiable, permeant “success” in evangelistic and missionary zeal and effectiveness in the field of labor. The campaign, although falling short in collection of funds, produced incalculable dividends in evangelistic and missional cooperative engagement.

Six months into the campaign, Scarborough reported witnessing “the mightiest spiritual awakening among Southern Baptists . . . known in all Baptist history.”<sup>181</sup> “Everywhere revivals broke out. Hundreds of souls were saved.”<sup>182</sup> From its inception, the program was to be inaugurated and carried forth in “the most glorious spirit of evangelism.”<sup>183</sup> It was. As a missions-funding strategy, the finances themselves were not the vision. The vision was the rekindling of the Southern Baptist spirit of missions and evangelism, inflamed and carried along by new measures of efficiency to unify and mobilize the churches as a mode of fulfillment for their three-century long shared moral and theological obligation for evangelistic and missional cooperation. According to twenty-first century Baptist missiologists John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne, “missionary strategy” makes use of goals, but those goals are not an end unto themselves; rather, they are “accomplishments on the journey toward the achievement of the vision.”<sup>184</sup> If the \$75 Million Campaign enumerated the goal, the advancement of evangelistic and missional cooperation among Southern Baptists embodied the vision. In this regard the \$75 Million Campaign knew colossal success.

Scarborough ended his final report to the 1925 convention with language of

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<sup>180</sup> *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 328.

<sup>181</sup> “Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 63–64.

<sup>182</sup> For evidence, Scarborough counts 4,000 salvations of “young people” in the churches and 2,500 in Baptist schools. Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 63.

<sup>183</sup> Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 243.

<sup>184</sup> John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne, *Developing a Strategy for Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 236.

great expectation:

The 75 Million Campaign has left Southern Baptists a great heritage, which is more precious than life or gold . . . a great spirit of co-operation and liberality . . . If Southern Baptists take care of what the 75 Million Campaign has left them every one of us must make a holy covenant to do his dead level best in the highest possible standards and claims of new Testament cooperation, sacrificial liberality and prayerful, aggressive, co-operant, constructive kingdom-building evangelism.<sup>185</sup>

On the same page of the 1925 annual report, the Future Program Commission offered its first annual report that would begin the Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists.

On behalf of the Home Mission Board, B.D. Gray wrote in 1924,

So marvelous have been God's favors upon our people in the last few years, and especially during the five-year Campaign, that we are ready by virtue of our forces and resources to seize the present situation and make Southern Baptists the greatest single religious force in the South and throughout our nation and the whole world . . . May God help our people in this great day of opportunity.<sup>186</sup>

In the creation of a future campaign, the board advocated for “terms and agreements” that would take into account lessons learned from the \$75 Million Campaign and that in the future work there be “conference and cooperation” between state and the national agencies.<sup>187</sup> It formally recommended to the 1924 messenger body “Cooperative Missions—with their unifying influence among Southern Baptists,” and “Evangelism and Enlistment—without which the Kingdom of our Lord cannot progress or our denomination succeed.”<sup>188</sup> In this newly formed denominational consciousness, the Cooperative Program was born.

D. Scott Hildreth notes that the \$75 Million Campaign showed Southern Baptists “the power of cooperation, a unified budget, and a denominational stewardship plan.”<sup>189</sup> W. W. Barnes credits the five-year campaign with revealing to Southern Baptists “the desirability and the possibility of enlisting the whole membership of the churches in the

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<sup>185</sup> *Annual of the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention*, 24–25.

<sup>186</sup> *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 319.

<sup>187</sup> *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 330.

<sup>188</sup> *Annual of the 1924 Southern Baptist Convention*, 331.

<sup>189</sup> Hildreth, *Together on God's Mission*, 19.

work of the Convention.”<sup>190</sup> The SBC entered the twentieth century with a laser sharp focus on world evangelism, and the \$75 Million Campaign showed them they had the means and the mechanism to carry out that big vision. The five-year campaign served as a prototype and inspiration for the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program which became their permanent, unified budget missions-giving strategy for the future.<sup>191</sup>

H. E. Dana reflected on the \$75 Million Campaign and the years that followed it: “The Seventy-five Million Campaign did not attain its objective, but it was by no means a failure . . . There developed a new consciousness of corporate capacity and co-operative possibilities.”<sup>192</sup> There was now a corporate capacity Scarborough called “a new denominationalism . . . the consciousness of world power . . . the bonds of denominational life have been strengthened.”<sup>193</sup>

President Wilson’s war awakened corporate consciousness and simultaneously shackled the country with “unpredictable debt.”<sup>194</sup> Similarly, the \$75 Million Campaign awakened Southern Baptists to a new season of cooperative missions and simultaneously left the denomination with a financial commitment it had yet to realize. The campaign funded and expanded ongoing Southern Baptist mission initiatives, inspired renewed cooperative evangelistic and missional zeal, and galvanized a new and more efficient missions-funding strategy for the future. It gave opportunity for Baptists to work out their timeless moral and theological obligation to cooperate for the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It set the stage for the greatest inter-congregational evangelistic and missions funding mechanism Baptists have ever know—the Cooperative Program. The successes of the five-year campaign are to be found in the fruits of the cooperation rather

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<sup>190</sup> Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 230.

<sup>191</sup> Brand and Hankins, *One Sacred Effort*, 95–97.

<sup>192</sup> Dana, *Lee Rutland Scarborough*, 107.

<sup>193</sup> Scarborough, *Marvels of Divine Leadership*, 116.

<sup>194</sup> Coolidge, *Autobiography*, xiii.

than the funds of the ledger.

### Conclusion

Not all researchers see the doctrine of cooperation steadily maturing from 1845 toward its formal inclusion in the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message*. Some propose a more disreputable motivation. Referencing the denominationally amalgamizing effect of the \$75 Million Campaign under Scarborough's leadership, Andrew C. Smith chides, "By the time the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message* appeared, the idea that loyalty to Christ required denominational participation was already so commonplace among Southern Baptists that no one seemed to notice the document's unusual inclusion of a new article on 'Co-Operation.'"<sup>195</sup> Smith sees Article 22 on "Co-operation" as an "unusual inclusion" entirely brought about by the denominational excitement of the day. He further argues that Scarborough leveraged his position and influence to ensconce the idea of a New Testament doctrine of cooperation into the collective conscience of Southern Baptists in the 1920s; the doctrine of cooperation was one of Scarborough's "own denominational concerns," he argues, making the Baptist Faith and Message "a codification of the 'Scarborough synthesis'" rather than the formalization of long-standing Baptist doctrine and practice.<sup>196</sup> O. S. Hawkins expresses similar sentiment, noting that fundamentalist pastor J. Frank Norris's constant agitation of Scarborough during the \$75 Million Campaign was a major factor leading to the adoption of the *Baptist Faith and Message* in

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<sup>195</sup> Smith further argues,

Briefly stated, the new synthesized identity that Southern Baptist leaders created under the informal leadership of L. R. Scarborough emphasized the distinction between Southern and Northern Baptists by drawing on then-widely-accepted ideas of Southern exceptionalism and then framed the Southern Baptist Convention as itself a guarantor of conservative doctrine. Scarborough went one step further when he defined Southern Baptist doctrinal consensus as including cooperation with other congregations as a "New Testament doctrine," thus excluding and stigmatizing radical Fundamentalists who failed to give to the Seventy-Five Million Campaign for ostensibly doctrinal reasons. (Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 110)

<sup>196</sup> Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation*, 132.



1925 which carried with it an intention to mollify Norris and those who followed him.<sup>197</sup> Admittedly, other notable Baptist voices closer to the event held a similar view in reflection upon the Southern Baptist confessional maneuvering of the 1920s.<sup>198</sup> To the contrary, however, Southern Baptist organization and communication from 1845 to 1925 unveils an ever-present and gradually maturing acknowledgement of cooperation as a timeless New Testament doctrine. This research demonstrates that cooperation's inclusion as a doctrine of the faith in the *Baptist Faith and Message* was neither unnoticed nor unusual, as Smith protests.

Further, this research demonstrates that confessionalism and cooperation have been part of Southern Baptist organization and conversation from the convention's inception. Through the years, cooperation as a New Testament doctrine undergirded Southern Baptist evangelistic and missional mechanisms with or without a formal confession of faith. The expectation has always been that cooperation required some level of shared doctrinal conviction, and part of that shared doctrinal conviction was the moral and theological obligation of every Christian and every church to cooperate voluntarily and joyfully in evangelistic and missional engagement.

Historically, Southern Baptists shared a corporate evangelistic and missional consciousness around the Philadelphia and New Hampshire confessions. Missionaries and seminary professors were required to affirm and operate within the boundaries of Baptist confessions. Cooperating churches were assumed to agree with distinctive Baptist doctrines, even if that agreement was undefined or unstated. As Thomas Nettles affirmed, from the beginning of the SBC, "classic orthodoxy undergirded their whole doctrinal system."<sup>199</sup> When Southern Baptists formalized and affirmed their first comprehensive, convention-wide statement of faith in 1925, it only made sense to include the doctrine of

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<sup>197</sup> Hawkins, *In the Name of God*, 99, 117–18.

<sup>198</sup> Barnes, *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology*, 8.

<sup>199</sup> Nettles, *An Historic Perspective of Southern Baptists*, 9.

voluntary congregational and inter-congregational cooperation as one of their most fundamental shared tenets of the faith, because it had always been so.

In a series of lectures to students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary between 1905 and 1909, president B. H. Carroll delivered an article-by-article treatment of the *New Hampshire Confession*. He explained that every Christian holds to a creed and to a confession of it, whether that confession is internalized, verbalized, or written down.<sup>200</sup> Carroll recognized the great need for churches and groups of churches to determine and standardize biblical orthodoxy through adherence to a substantive confession, even among Baptists who acknowledge only the Bible as their ultimate creed.<sup>201</sup> Correspondingly, Nettles acknowledges confessional cooperation as a “seal of trust within a larger community of churches,” which guides and guards their inter-congregational evangelistic and missional endeavors.<sup>202</sup>

In 1934, W. W. Barnes lamented the adoption of the Southern Baptist Faith and Message, especially its inclusion of an article on cooperation.<sup>203</sup> In his polemical pamphlet, Barnes approves the creation of confessions by churches and by local associations of churches but argues it a step too far that state and national conventions would draw up and enforce their own confession(s) of faith. The question, for Barnes, was not on the confession itself but on its usefulness in mechanisms of Southern Baptist cooperation: “How far do these items represent . . . Baptist church members and how are

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<sup>200</sup> Benajah Harvey Carroll and Calvin Goodspeed, “A Commentary on the New Hampshire Confession of Faith,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 51, no. 2 (2009): 130–220. Carroll suggests, “A creed is what we believe, and a confession of faith is a declaration of what we believe.” Carroll and Goodspeed, “A Commentary on the New Hampshire Confession of Faith,” 134.

<sup>201</sup> Carroll and Goodspeed argue, “There must be some standard to determine what is orthodoxy in the view of the church. . . . If you say the Bible is your creed, all others say the same thing.” Carroll and Goodspeed, “A Commentary on the New Hampshire Confession of Faith,” 135. Later, they argue for a large, broad confession for Baptists: “Now, the bigger your creed, the better; and the less creed you have, the less accountable you are” (139).

<sup>202</sup> Nettles, *An Historic Perspective of Southern Baptists*, 30.

<sup>203</sup> Barnes, *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology*, 8.

they binding upon these members?” The question for Southern Baptists today, as they approach the centennial anniversary of their formal confessional cooperation (and of its organizational companion, the Cooperative Program) is as it was then: to what degree does the confession direct the state and national denominational cooperation of an autonomous church, and to what degree does that church’s cooperation or non-cooperation affect Southern Baptists’ readiness to associate and/or cooperate with it?

Cooperation as a convictional, shared New Testament doctrine holds a reciprocal place in Southern Baptist life and history. To be Southern Baptist is to affirm cooperation as a core doctrinal tenet, and to cooperate with Southern Baptists is to engage in its confessionally conscientious evangelistic and missional endeavors. Cooperation as a Baptist doctrine did not arise from the political maneuvering or personal agendas of leading convention voices in the 1920s. Rather, from their formation Southern Baptists understood evangelistic cooperation to be a shared, foundational biblical doctrine.

This research demonstrates an ongoing and gradually maturing narrative in the relationship between evangelistic cooperation and confessionalism in Southern Baptist organization and communication between 1845 and 1925, building toward the adoption of the *Baptist Faith and Message*. Confessional cooperation among Southern Baptists is as old as their constitutional convention. Interestingly, in the Convention’s 179th year, the complexities of confessional cooperation’s significance to evangelistic and missional denominational work are yet to be either fully understood or agreed upon.

## CHAPTER 5

### L. R. SCARBOROUGH'S TRIANGULAR DOCTRINE OF COOPERATION

From the beginning of the Baptist movement, Baptists owned a theological and moral obligation to cooperate, as individuals and as churches, for the advancement of the gospel. Inter-congregational cooperation was forced under systems of ecclesiastical hierarchy in England and America, whether Roman, Anglican, or Protestant. To liberate Christ's churches from unbiblical hierarchical ecclesiasticism was to require Baptists to rethink the organizational philosophies and structures of biblical cooperation between local autonomous congregations. What is forced under inter-congregational ecclesiasticism must become voluntary under association and convention models. So, the recommended doctrine's statement before the 1925 SBC began,

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure co-operation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over each other or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner.<sup>1</sup>

A shared doctrine of evangelistic and missional cooperation among Baptists is evidenced from the first day of the Baptist movement through its formalization in the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925). Baptists felt the pull toward cooperation for centuries, but some led the way toward its formal confessional expression in their time. Lee R. Scarborough, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and leader of the \$75 Million Campaign, was chief among them.

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<sup>1</sup> "Comparison Chart," Southern Baptist Convention, accessed June 1, 2024, <https://bfm.sbc.net/comparison-chart/>.

James Leo Garrett recognized the unique influence of Lee R. Scarborough on both the inclusion of the article on cooperation in the *Baptist Faith and Message* and on its wording.<sup>2</sup> James Carter points to Scarborough’s “insistence,” together with the “needs of the time” that made cooperation a “necessary article of faith” in the *Baptist Faith and Message*.<sup>3</sup> The *New Hampshire Confession* (1833) was widely accepted among Southern Baptists by the 1920s and was the officially adopted confession of faith for the Baptist seminary Scarborough led. In Scarborough’s mind, however, the *New Hampshire Confession* was missing one important doctrinal statement above all else: a dedicated article on the doctrine of cooperation. It was for this reason he proposed the article on cooperation as Article 19, the first of several new articles to be added to the *New Hampshire Confession* which ended with Article 18.<sup>4</sup>

Scarborough drafted an article on cooperation for the committee’s consideration.<sup>5</sup> His draft carries a similar tone and the same general substance of what became Article 22 in the 1925 confession. Its wording is emphatic that Christ’s people

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<sup>2</sup> James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 2009), 446.

<sup>3</sup> James E. Carter, “The Southern Baptist Convention and Confessions of Faith, 1845–1945” (ThD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1964), 153.

<sup>4</sup> L. R. Scarborough, “Article 19 On Co-Operation by L. R. Scarborough,” The L. R. Scarborough Digital Materials Collection, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, <http://cdm16969.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16969coll11/id/1133>. The undated article draft must have been written in late 1921 or early 1922, after convention action to seek confessional cooperation between Northern and Southern Baptists. At their 1922 meeting, Northern Baptists passed a resolution declining any such endeavor, decrying any form of doctrinal uniformity even on fundamentals of Christian orthodoxy and determining that “the NBC would not be bound by a creed—New Hampshire, fundamentalist, or otherwise.” See Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists in America: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2015), 200. While Scarborough suggested cooperation as Article 19, it became Article 22 in the 1925 Southern Baptist confession. In another article, Scarborough suggests, “This doctrine as such has no clear pronouncement in any of them [(historic Baptist confessions of faith)]. It should have. I propose to the committee to be appointed by Northern and Southern Baptists a new expression of our articles of faith that it put in Article XIX—on Cooperation.” Lee R. Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 6, no. 2 (April 1922), quoted in *Southwestern Journal of Theology: Baptists and Unity, Lee Rutland Scarborough, 1870–1945* 51, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 21–22.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 6.

“should co-operate” as a matter of obligation to Christ and to one another: cooperation “is a part of the obligation put on us in our salvation and church membership.” He believed the doctrine to be biblical and theological in substance: “We believe in the doctrine and practice of co-operation in carrying out and forward the world-will of Jesus Christ as set out in the New Testament and in the leadership of His Spirit in the hearts and plans of His people.”<sup>6</sup> To Scarborough, the doctrine of cooperation was as clearly evidenced “in the New Testament” as was any other matter of biblical faith and practice, and it was also a theologically motivated unction of the Holy Spirit evidenced in the “hearts” of all Christians and in the “plans” for Great Commission advancement between them.

While E. Y. Mullins, E. C. Dargan, and other leading Baptist voices of the day acknowledged the doctrine of cooperation and gave general expression to it, Scarborough more completely formulated the doctrine in writing. He preferred to think of cooperation as a “triangular doctrine,” referencing co-workmanship within the Godhead, within local churches, and between local churches. Scarborough’s triangular doctrine of cooperation seems to have been in development throughout 1921–1922. It is mentioned and explained in his 1922 *Southwestern Journal of Theology* article, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?” and given further treatment in his 1922 book *Endued to Win*.<sup>7</sup> His treatment of the doctrine of cooperation is more extensive than any Baptist before him. In it, Scarborough sets before the world a mature argument for cooperation as a timeless doctrine with contemporary application—one that was felt with the force of moral and theological obligation from the beginning of the Baptist movement.

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<sup>6</sup> Scarborough, “Article 19 On Co-Operation by L. R. Scarborough.”

<sup>7</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” 19; Lee R. Scarborough, *Endued to Win* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1922), 40–43. Subtle differences are noticeable between the two accounts, but the substance is the same.

## Chapter Thesis

What is L. R. Scarborough's triangular doctrine of cooperation? Is it biblically established? Is it theologically sound? This chapter argues that Scarborough's triangular doctrine of cooperation is biblically and theologically defensible. Methodology includes an exegesis of Acts 2:1–13 with a focus on evangelistic cooperation followed by a critical biblical and theological evaluation.

### Chapter Literature Review: Scarborough's Triangular Doctrine

Lee R. Scarborough believed the doctrine of cooperation to be three-sided, each side working in concert with the others for the advancement of the Great Commission and, with all three sides in perfect harmony, “vital to all the other doctrines and teachings of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>8</sup> Cooperation, according to Scarborough, simply means “working together.”<sup>9</sup> This doctrine of co-workmanship in Christ's kingdom is perfectly reflected within the Godhead. It is commanded within each New Testament church and between likeminded churches. Scarborough's doctrine of evangelistic and missional cooperation crosses the entire New Testament, but it is primarily rooted in the events of the Acts 2 Pentecost, which he believes is “the most epochal event in evangelism . . . mighty things turn on it as a pivot.”<sup>10</sup> The deep, burning “message of Pentecost,” as Scarborough saw it, was “power, spiritual power, Heavenly power, God's power, Christ's power co-operative with men.”<sup>11</sup> From the Jerusalem Pentecost, Scarborough draws the framework for his triangular doctrine of cooperation: God's side, the church member's side, and the local church's side.

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<sup>8</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 40.

<sup>9</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 19.

<sup>10</sup> Lee R. Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1934), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 37.

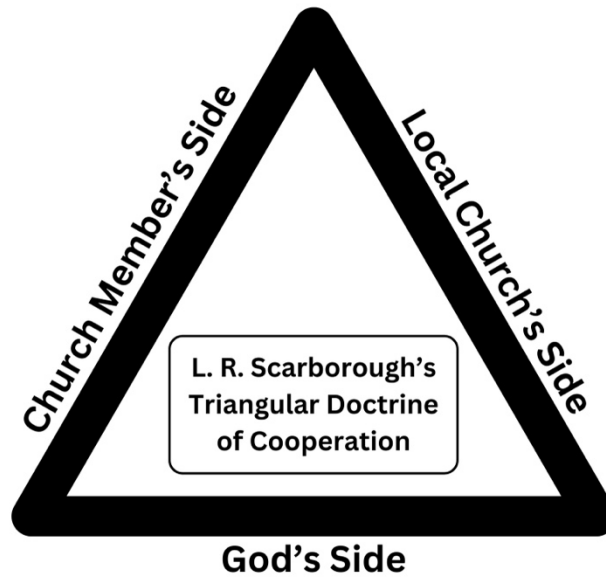


Figure 1. L. R. Scarborough's Triangular Doctrine of Cooperation

### God's Side

In *Endued to Win* (1922), and later in *Products of Pentecost* (1934), Scarborough labels the first leg of the triangle “The Divine side,” while in “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” he labels it “God’s side.” Either way, the concept is as clear as its titular expression. God in three persons works together to accomplish his perfect will: “God co-operates with Himself in His three-fold expression of His personality—Father, Son and Spirit,” or, “The three persons in the Godhead work together with one another in proposing, proffering and promoting God’s world-program of redemption.”<sup>12</sup> In its shorter explanation in *Endued to Win*, Scarborough focuses mostly on the perfection, holiness, and unified will of God’s triune cooperation. This is the gold standard of Heaven for the doctrine, “a holy symphony” as he explains in the longer article.<sup>13</sup> In *Products of*

<sup>12</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 40; Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 19.

<sup>13</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 19.



*Pentecost*, he articulates each of the three Divine Persons' role in the redemptive work but singles out the Holy Spirit as "the major agent in the operation of divine grace."<sup>14</sup>

The journal article is more extensive than the book's mention. There, Scarborough more clearly (although still concisely) explains the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in the triunity's shared will and action to save humans from sin as part of his own "world-program of redemption."<sup>15</sup> Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has taken up "the task" on the divine side, in obedience to the Father's will and in service to and through the Lamb's—the Son's—"Bride."<sup>16</sup>

While the book includes treatments of many New Testament passages concerning the power of the Holy Spirit for success in the evangelistic task, *Endued to Win* is largely a commentary on the Acts 2 Pentecost with an emphasis on the Holy Spirit's work, on behalf of the Godhead, within and between local churches in cooperative Great Commission relationship. The Pentecost, Scarborough argues, "is God's, the Father's, heaven-high call to all Christ's churches to go afield with the most flaming evangelism, expectant, hopeful, and assured of a final and eternal harvest of souls."<sup>17</sup> The "base" of his triangular doctrine, as Scarborough deems it, highlights the innerworkings of God's three Persons to affect his own divine will for worldwide redemption. But it does not neglect the divine prerogative and initiative to work with mankind toward the fulfillment of the task. The Christian's cooperation with others is wholly dependent upon his or her "full-length co-operation with the Holy Spirit."<sup>18</sup> In the journal article's extended explanation, Scarborough comments, "God does not want to go alone without us nor does He want us to go alone without Him in this the biggest task of the centuries. His co-

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<sup>14</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 87.

<sup>15</sup> Scarborough, "Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine," 19.

<sup>16</sup> Scarborough, "Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine," 19.

<sup>17</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 38.

<sup>18</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 43.

operation with us is the stimulating hope of every hour of the way and the guarantee of success.”<sup>19</sup> God’s side of the triangular doctrine of cooperation is the foundation of any anticipated cooperative success. God models cooperative perfection and holiness and takes the initiative to include humanity in his global redemptive work.

### **The Church Member’s Side**

Some discrepancy is noticeable between *Endued to Win* and “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?” on this second leg of the triangular doctrine. Between the two accounts, the end of “God’s Side” somewhat bleeds into the beginning of “The Church Member’s Side.” In the book, Scarborough labels the second leg of the triangle “God works harmoniously with man,” but the label in the article focuses more on man’s efforts in working with fellow men.<sup>20</sup> While a clean-cut line between the first and second sides of the doctrine may not be uniform in Scarborough’s writings, the idea of cooperation within the Godhead obviously composes the base of the triangular doctrine and the idea of Christians cooperating with one another and with God, a second side.

Scarborough describes the work of the church member in the doctrine of cooperation as a two-handed approach: “He has two spiritual hands, one to reach up for God and one to reach out for his brother church member.”<sup>21</sup> The born-again Christian is “the *basal factor* for God’s multiplication table.”<sup>22</sup> Every Christian is under moral and theological obligation to cooperate with others for the advancement of the Great Commission as a fundamental, essential, and obligatory rule of faith and practice.<sup>23</sup> Inherent difficulty persists on the human side of cooperation, because even though

<sup>19</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 19.

<sup>20</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 41; Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 19–20.

<sup>21</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 20.

<sup>22</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 20.

<sup>23</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 20.

redeemed and filled by the Spirit, humans live “in the shadows of sin.”<sup>24</sup> Still, for a church member to refuse cooperation with other church members is a high offense and a great heresy.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the very “heart of the [Great] Commission,” Scarborough argues, “is co-operation.”<sup>26</sup> He argued that every free and autonomous Christian holds a theological and moral responsibility to surrender his or her personal freedoms under the authority of Christ, for cooperation with likeminded Christians. This is “an imperative obligation,” he remarked, “in which we have no option.”<sup>27</sup>

Scarborough was careful to note that the desire and ability of Christians to cooperate with one another is, itself, a result of God’s initiative to cooperate with them—the stimulant for hope and the guarantee of gospel success.<sup>28</sup> The coworking relationship between man and man is made possible by God’s coworking relationship with man. This divine prerogative constitutes a “covenant of co-operation” which allows mankind to be wise and successful in carrying out the will of God.<sup>29</sup> By the grace of God, Christians cooperate with one another in the evangelistic task, as evidenced in the “unified, cooperating witness” of the 120 disciples during the Jerusalem Pentecost of Acts 2.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Local Church’s Side**

God perfectly models cooperation within his eternal triunity, and every Christian is theologically and morally obligated to cooperate with God and with one another, in concert with God’s will, for the advancement of Christ’s worldwide redemptive mission.

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<sup>24</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 87.

<sup>25</sup> Lee R. Scarborough, “The Heresy of Non-Co-Operation by L. R. Scarborough,” The L. R. Scarborough Digital Materials Collection, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, <http://cdm16969.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16969coll11/id/1136>, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Scarborough, “The Heresy of Non-Co-Operation,” 1.

<sup>27</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 20.

<sup>28</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 20.

<sup>29</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 41.

<sup>30</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 90.

But Scarborough's doctrine of cooperation does not stop there. This "fundamental law of the New Testament"—Great Commission cooperation—extends from individual Christ-followers to local churches as well. Just as the doctrine of cooperation limits the personal freedoms of Christians, it also limits the independence of local churches.<sup>31</sup> The seminary president states with no ambiguity: "non-cooperation . . . is sin."<sup>32</sup> Churches should not be forced to cooperate with one another. However, under the clear teachings of the New Testament and for the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ, they should voluntarily cooperate one with another, whenever and wherever possible. "Victory hung on cooperation," Scarborough declares referencing the Acts 2 Pentecost and the Great Commission movement that followed. If any single church was to be effective in evangelistic and missional witness, it must cooperate with others of like faith and practice.<sup>33</sup>

The necessity and obligation of cooperation between likeminded churches is paramount to "the progress and power of the earth-wide Kingdom of Christ."<sup>34</sup> For biblical justification, Scarborough points to a long list of New Testament teaching: "the Commission of Christ, the earthly ministry of Christ, the missionary record of Paul among the churches, the message of the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles and the very heart of the ministry of the Holy Spirit." These biblical foundations all "teach with mighty power this great doctrine of co-operation between churches and all the agencies

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<sup>31</sup> Lee R. Scarborough, "The Peril of Lop-Sided Cooperation by L. R. Scarborough," The L. R. Scarborough Digital Materials Collection, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, <http://cdm16969.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16969coll111/id/1138>, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Scarborough, "The Peril of Lop-Sided Cooperation," 1.

<sup>33</sup> Scarborough writes,

*Obedience to the orders of their Lord, his dying will, demanded cooperation, demanded their cooperation with God, their cooperation with each other in the local church, their cooperation between churches as they were multiplied. I do not believe that a disciple of Christ can be fully obedient to Christ and not cooperation with his fellow disciples in putting forward the will of Christ. Cooperation is a central, cardinal doctrine of loyal obedience. (Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 91, emphasis original)*

<sup>34</sup> Scarborough, "Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine," 21.

of these churches.”<sup>35</sup> Appealing to the sociopolitical phrenzy of his day, Scarborough compared non-cooperative philosophies of church missional engagement to Bolshevism, a socialist, revolutionary political theory of the early twentieth century favoring concentrated control among a select few.<sup>36</sup> To Scarborough, autonomous churches were not islands unto themselves. They were part of the larger kingdom of Christ and, as such, were obligated to cooperate with Christ and with one another to accomplish Christ’s will. In an undated article draft titled, “The Independence and Inter-Dependence of Baptist Churches,” Scarborough emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ’s churches. When establishing his church, Scarborough suggests, Jesus had no earthly model. Instead, he set up a new institution entirely with Christ as the direct head of all local congregations, each completely independent from the others but also bound by the laws of the kingdom to voluntarily work together to accomplish Christ’s will.<sup>37</sup>

The doctrine of cooperation is incomplete without all three sides of this triangle working together. “God’s plan is all members of the Godhead, Father, Son and Spirit, all Christians, all His New Testament churches, going together into all the world, preaching, teaching, healing—a whole Gospel to the whole world.”<sup>38</sup> Like three legs on a single stool, the doctrine of cooperation would not stand if any of the three components were to be denied. God sets the standard for cooperation within his own triunity. He extends the grace of cooperation to mankind through redemption and Great Commission obedience. He requires his autonomous churches to work together under the headship of

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<sup>35</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 21.

<sup>36</sup> Scarborough’s insistence upon inter-congregational cooperation is evident in the strength of his language: “Any Baptist who says an individual church member or a local church has a right to do as he or it pleases in the world-program of Christ has Bolshevism in his thinking. All of our rights are subject to the limitations of Christ’s will.” Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 21.

<sup>37</sup> Lee R. Scarborough, “The Independence and Inter-Dependence of Baptist Churches by L. R. Scarborough,” The L. R. Scarborough Digital Materials Collection, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, <http://cdm16969.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16969coll11/id/1124>, 1–2.

<sup>38</sup> Scarborough, “The Peril of Lop-Sided Cooperation,” 2.

Christ to advance the gospel in all the world. This triangular doctrine, Scarborough emphatically supposes, is the lynchpin for the success of every other doctrine and action in Baptist faith and practice.<sup>39</sup> But is Scarborough’s triangular doctrine of cooperation biblically founded and theologically sound?

### **Exegesis of Acts 2:1–14**

Acts 2:1–14 is Luke’s record of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the early church. In terminology parallel to Scarborough’s, Darrell Bock called this event the “pivot” of Luke-Acts.<sup>40</sup> Its significance in the New Testament can hardly be overstated. Major themes in the passage include the unity of Jesus’ disciples (2:1, 14), the eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:2–4), speaking in tongues (2:4–6), the assembly of the nations to hear τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ (“magnificent acts of God”) in their own native languages (2:5–11), and the crowd’s diverging responses of curiosity and skepticism (2:12–13).

Scarborough labels Pentecost “the most epochal event in evangelism,” a “pivot” on which turn “prophetic, dynamic, and mighty things.”<sup>41</sup> He bases his doctrine of cooperation between individuals and churches on the paradigm and teaching set forth in this passage.<sup>42</sup> But does Acts 2:1–14 qualify as a cooperative evangelistic encounter? What, exactly, were τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ the disciples declared by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the heart-languages of those gathered on the day of Pentecost? And

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<sup>39</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 21.

<sup>40</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God’s Promised Program, Realized for All Nations*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 80.

<sup>41</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 11. Matthew Queen also notes a “shift” in evangelistic witness at the moment of Pentecost. Matthew Queen, *Recapturing Evangelism: A Biblical-Theological Approach* (Brentwood, TN: B & H, 2023), 181.

<sup>42</sup> Scarborough writes, “They believed that cooperation between individuals and churches in spreading the gospel and building Christ’s kingdom was one of the major doctrines, loyalty to which was the one hope of applying the power of the other doctrines to the needs of a lost world. Disloyalty to Christ in cooperation was to them a fundamental heresy.” Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 81.

how does Luke’s note in verse 14 that Σταθείς δὲ Πέτρος σὺν τοῖς ἑνδεκά (‘‘Peter stood up with the Eleven’’) relate to the activity of the rest of the disciples in verse 11 and following? This section offers an exegesis of Acts 2:1–14 with critical emphasis on understanding the pericope as a cooperative evangelistic encounter.

The opening verse of Acts 2 highlights two important details. First, the events occurred ‘‘When the day of Pentecost had arrived.’’ Polhill articulates a certain sense of long-awaited accomplishment in the συμπληροῦσθαι (‘‘had arrived’’ or ‘‘had fully come’’) of 2:1. It was not less than a chronological marker, but it was certainly more.<sup>43</sup> L. R. Scarborough and A. T. Robertson see importance in the Pentecostal chronolocation pointing to its consonance with the Old Testament Festival of Harvest.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, Craig Keener suggests that the importance of this chronological locator is more simply practical and twofold in that it confirms the short time frame for the baptism of the Spirit promised by Jesus in 1:5 and explains the presence of so many transient, foreign Jews in Jerusalem for this important eschatological event.<sup>45</sup> Luke’s intentions remain unspecified to the reader. But a straight-forward reading of the text sets the event on the day of Pentecost within the context of Jewish history, demonstrates timely fulfilment of Christ’s promise from 1:5, and provides an explanatory foreshadowing of the presence of both resident and transient Jews in Jerusalem in 2:5–11.

Second, the disciples were ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό (‘‘all together in one place’’).<sup>46</sup> The emphasis is not on their physical location as much as it is on their ‘‘concerted activity

<sup>43</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 96.

<sup>44</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 71. See also A. T. Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 3 (Nashville: Broadman, 1930), 20.

<sup>45</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 1:797.

<sup>46</sup> Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 20. It should be noted that Robertson takes issue with manuscripts that include ὁμοθυμαδὸν here, arguing for the simpler and less terminologically pregnant ὁμοῦ. However, he admits this would make the reading a bit repetitive (‘‘a bit of a tautology’’). Keener argues, in contrast, for the same emphasis on spiritual unity over physical location from either reading. See Keener, *Acts*, 1:795.

or unity,” Keener explains.<sup>47</sup> Scarborough interprets this as initial evidence of Spirit-empowered evangelistic cooperation.<sup>48</sup> They were “all together” in the sense that they were of one mind and one purpose. Dodds sees their Spirit-filled togetherness as an expression of what, at the end of the day, is termed *κοινωνία* (“fellowship,” 2:42), evidenced not only in their relational and spiritual togetherness but also in their outward-facing fellowship which in some way mirrors the *κοινωνία* of God’s own triunity. As Adam Dodds explains, their Spirit-filled oneness in the *missio ecclesiae* specifically revolves around the task of evangelism—the communication of the gospel—as a reflection of God’s own triune cooperation in the task.<sup>49</sup> Whatever was to come in the following verses, 2:1 sets the situation within the context of physical and spiritual togetherness with gospel single-mindedness.

The Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, and a pair of surprising occurrences marked the occasion as one of unmistakable divine visitation. Keener offers “theophanic storm images” as a descriptor for the “wind and fire” of 2:2–3. He explains the significance of these images in terms of both ancient pagan supernaturalism and Jewish Septuagintal allusion.<sup>50</sup> The audible sign of a *φερομένης πνοῆς βιαίας* (“violent rushing wind”) came downward on them, *ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ* (“from heaven”), as the visible sign of fiery tongues *ἐκάθισεν τε ἐφ’ ἕνα ἕκαστον αὐτῶν* (“rested on each one of them”). The miraculous happenings came from heaven, downward to the gathered disciples. There could be no more fitting proof that this occurrence was one of both divine initiative and divine presence.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:795.

<sup>48</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 75, 91.

<sup>49</sup> Adam Dodds, “The Mission of the Spirit and the Mission of the Church: Towards a Trinitarian Missiology,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35, no. 2 (2011): 212, 216.

<sup>50</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:800.

<sup>51</sup> Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 21.



Just as the heavenly wind ἐπλήρωσεν (“filled”) the whole house in 2:2, the disciples also ἐπλήσθησαν (“were all filled”) by the Holy Spirit in 2:4. The repetition of *filling* terminology lends itself to what Scarborough understood to be spiritual power from the Holy Spirit in both its individual (“they were all filled”) and corporate (“filled the whole house”) senses.<sup>52</sup> F. F. Bruce notes the uniqueness of this filling as “the spiritual baptism foretold by John and promised afresh by the Lord” in comparison to the recurring pattern of “being filled with the Spirit on several occasions (cf. 4:8, 31).”<sup>53</sup> The fiery tongues from heaven were literally observable, but also figuratively symbolic of the Holy Spirit empowering the disciples who spontaneously and intelligibly ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν ἐτέραις γλώσσαις (“began to speak in different tongues”). This Pentecostal cross-lingual empowerment is evidence of what Bock understands to be “the major function the Spirit has in Luke-Acts: enablement for witness and life that shows the new era has come through Christ.”<sup>54</sup>

It was the Spirit who ἐδίδου αὐτοῖς ἀποφθέγγεσθαι (“enabled them [to speak]” or “gave them utterance”). Glossolalia itself is not sufficient evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence, as Bruce has noted.<sup>55</sup> Further, the glossolalia on the Day of Pentecost was unlike what the Apostle Paul dealt with in Corinth (1 Cor 14:1–5) in that the latter displayed a more individual experience than a purposefully corporate one and was characterized by Paul as unintelligible.<sup>56</sup> Instead, the enablement to λαλέω (“to speak”) and ἀποφθέγγομαι

<sup>52</sup> In Scarborough’s words, “The Holy Spirit’s power at Pentecost was personal as well as corporate. He filled all the house where they were assembled, and he appeared as a personal enduement to each of the hundred and twenty.” Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 98.

<sup>53</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 51.

<sup>54</sup> Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 217.

<sup>55</sup> Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 52. Because of its common occurrence in the ancient Near East, the New Testament community of faith later added qualifiers to ecstatic utterance to discern whether or not an utterance was, in fact, from the Spirit from God (1 Cor 12:3; 1 John 4:2).

<sup>56</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 99.

(“to give utterance”) in ἐτέραις γλώσσαις (“other languages”) in 2:4 is more appropriately characterized as intelligible, prophetic declaration. Alan Thompson notes that the same term (ἀποφθέγγομαι) is used of Peter’s proclamation in 2:14.<sup>57</sup> Bock adds that within the larger context of 1:8, “The Spirit’s activity is tied to ‘power,’ which refers here to being empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak boldly by testifying to the message of God’s work through Jesus.”<sup>58</sup> Herein is “an asymmetric cooperation in God’s triune reconciliatory and redemptive work in the world . . . human actions are imbued with real agency.”<sup>59</sup> When the Holy Spirit ἐδίδου αὐτοῖς ἀποφθέγγεσθαι, his enablement came with a distinct expectation: to witness to God’s work in Christ Jesus. Keener adds that the first-century cultural setting would include the common understanding that such a display exhibited divine activity through a human agent; in other words, in view was “human cooperation” with divine prophecy.<sup>60</sup> Empowered humans spoke the message of God. The utterance the disciples gave that day, under the Spirit’s enduement, was an utterance of prophetic witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As Luke’s narrative continues, he fills the scene with those who were to become beneficiaries of the disciples’ Spirit-filled prophetic utterance. While many in attendance were permanent residents of Jerusalem, transient Ἰουδαῖοι ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν (“Jews from every nation under heaven”) were present that

<sup>57</sup> Alan Thompson explains, “The use of the same term twice in this immediate context to refer to the activity of speaking indicates that Peter’s address is also enabled by the Spirit . . . The speaking in other languages then, as with Peter’s sermon, in this context, is a subset of the activity of ‘prophesying.’” Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 133.

<sup>58</sup> Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 130.

<sup>59</sup> D. J. Konz, “The Even Greater Commission: Relating the Great Commission to the Missio Dei, and Human Agency to Divine Activity, in Mission,” *Missiology* 46, no. 4 (2018): 342.

<sup>60</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:807.

day as well, presumably in observance of the Festival of Harvest/Pentecost (2:5).<sup>61</sup> Their general presence moves to more specific assembly (2:6) as the heavenly events of 2:1–4 draw a crowd to the prophetic platform of the Spirit-filled disciples. The φωνῆς (“sound”) that got the crowd’s attention was, at least in part, the noise of the rushing wind in 2:2. However, what drew them together (συνῆλθεν τὸ πλῆθος) was the sound of prophetic speech in a multitude of languages at once.<sup>62</sup> Each traveler heard his or her own language in the φωνῆς. Their curiosity drew them together at the disciple’s prophetic platform.

Those in the crowd were συνεχύθη (“confused” or “confounded”). Shouldn’t they be? Robertson points out the imperfect active indicates that their “wonder grew and grew.”<sup>63</sup> In 2:12 Luke rearticulated their ongoing and increasing bewilderment: ἐξίσταντο δὲ πάντες (“they were all astounded”). The closer the gatherers came to the prophetic stage, the more their sense of wonder increased. For having gathered there ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν (“every nation under heaven”), they each heard the Spirit-filled disciples declaring the magnificent acts of God in their own languages. While some scholars would suppose, from this phrase, a Pentecostal miracle of *hearing* rather than of *speaking*, such an interpretation does not line up with Luke’s explicit account.<sup>64</sup> The Spirit-filled disciples spoke, and the crowd heard. The presence of the diverse crowd emphasizes the Spirit’s empowerment of the church to witness “across cultural barriers with their prophetically inspired message.”<sup>65</sup> Everyone speaking prophetic utterance was Galilean (2:7), but each member of the ethnically diverse crowd heard his or her own

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<sup>61</sup> Robertson clarifies that the text could imply the gathering of some who had come to Jerusalem for permanent residence (a multicultural Jewish faith community) and others who were only staying temporarily. Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 23.

<sup>62</sup> Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 54.

<sup>63</sup> Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 23.

<sup>64</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:823. See also Gotthard Victor Lechler, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Exegetical and Doctrinal Commentary*, trans. Charles F. Schaeffer (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 35.

<sup>65</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:823.

διαλέκτω (“language” or “dialect”). Pentecost demonstrates that the message of God, empowered by the Spirit of God, would not be encumbered by cultural, geographic, or linguistic barriers.<sup>66</sup>

Verses 9–11 list a table of nations represented at the event. While the obvious miracle is linguistic, the list of nations is more geographically organized. Luke’s point, Robertson insists, was to demonstrate the vastness of the Jewish Diaspora at the time and the significance of their being gathered by God for this important eschatological event.<sup>67</sup> These were *ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς* (“devout people”). They were devoted to worship in the Jewish temple and obedience to the Mosaic law. The *προσήλυτοι* of 2:10 are Gentile “converts” to Judaism and, therefore, are included among the *Ἰουδαῖοι ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς* in 2:5.<sup>68</sup> Keener points out that Luke’s geographical catalogue begins with those from the east, then moves around the Holy Land—north, south, and west—through a total of fifteen nationalities, all “circling back to Jerusalem, as the theological ‘center’ of the earth.”<sup>69</sup>

But what, exactly, were the disciples saying? What was the content of their Spirit-empowered prophetic utterance? 2:11 qualifies the *λαλέω* of 2:4 and 2:6–7 as *τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ* (“the magnificent acts of God”). This phrase should be understood as gospel proclamation for two main reasons: because of its immediate context in Acts 1–2 and because of its larger biblical and social-historical contexts.

Firstly, *τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ* should be understood as gospel proclamation because of its immediate context in Acts 1–2. As mentioned above, the Pentecostal

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<sup>66</sup> As Keener explains, “This particular form of prophetic speech provides the most obvious symbol of people empowered to cross cultural and linguistic barriers with the gospel, which fits Luke’s emphasis (1:8).” Keener, *Acts*, 1:828.

<sup>67</sup> Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 24.

<sup>68</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 101–2. Keener, *Acts*, 1:833.

<sup>69</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:835. He further comments regarding Acts 2:11, “According to one more complex suggested pattern, we may count the third group, including Egypt and Lybia as well as Rome, as west, with a return toward Judea by way of the sea (hence including Crete) and concluding with Arabia.” Keener, *Acts*, 1:835.

outpouring of the Holy Spirit comes as fulfilment of Jesus' Acts 1:8 declaration: ἀλλὰ λήψεσθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐφ' ὑμᾶς (“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you”). This power, conveyed to them upon the coming of the Holy Spirit, would carry with it Jesus's expectation that ἔσεσθέ μοι μάρτυρες (“you will be my witnesses”). The power and presence of God would not be divorced from the purpose of God. That purpose was clearly to bear witness to Christ.<sup>70</sup> Bruce explains that the context of Acts 1–2 puts τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ in the framework of “worldwide proclamation of the gospel... the [central] message of Jesus' church.”<sup>71</sup> Thompson references λαλούντων in 2:11 as an example of verbs used “to describe the action of apostolic preaching.”<sup>72</sup> He further clarifies that the opening language of 2:14, Σταθεῖς δὲ Πέτρος σὺν τοῖς ἑνδεκά (“Peter stood up with the Eleven”), implies that Peter's subsequent sermon is, in fact, the message of all the apostles in Acts 2.<sup>73</sup> Martin Luther was even more explicit in his treatment of the same idea: “every one of them steps before a mob of strangers and starts preaching to them . . . what Peter does, all the other apostles do also.”<sup>74</sup> The message they all preached, Luther insisted, included Jesus's rejection, crucifixion, and Lordship.<sup>75</sup> Scarborough saw a certain “demonstration of gospel team work” here, “under the leadership of Christ's vice-gerent, the Holy Spirit.”<sup>76</sup> “All went afield,” he noted, and “the tread of a mighty spiritual army of evangelists was heard in

<sup>70</sup> Keener insists that the entire Pentecost event “focuses on the fulfillment of the promise of empowerment to speak God's message.” Keener, *Acts*, 1:780.

<sup>71</sup> Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 53.

<sup>72</sup> Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 99.

<sup>73</sup> Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 179. Thompson argues this point is further exemplified in the repetition of ἀπεφθέγγατο in both 2:4 and 2:14 (179).

<sup>74</sup> Martin Luther, “Holy Pentecost: First Sermon,” in *Complete Sermons of Martin Luther* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 6:153. Luther continues, “Not only Peter preached on Pentecost Day, but . . . all the disciples, as well as the eleven apostles, also preached. All of this happened at the moment when they were set afire by the Holy Spirit” (6:153).

<sup>75</sup> Luther, “Holy Pentecost,” 6:154.

<sup>76</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 32, 88–89.

Jerusalem.”<sup>77</sup>

Secondly, τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ should be understood as gospel proclamation because of its larger biblical and social-historical contexts. A general understanding of the Greco-Jewish background for Luke’s authorship prepares the student of Scripture to understand more clearly the magnitude of the Lucan phrase τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ.<sup>78</sup> In LXX Deuteronomy 11:2, God’s “greatness” (גְּדוּלָתוֹ) is translated τὰ μεγαλεῖα αὐτοῦ and is set in the context of the Israelite’s deliverance from Egyptian slavery. In LXX Psalm 71:19, μεγαλεῖα ὁ θεός is translated the “greatness of God,” then as the Psalmist continues, he extends the expectation of God’s μεγαλεῖα to his own eventual resurrection from the dead. 2 Maccabees 3:34 employs God’s μεγαλεῖα in the context of the high priest making an atonement offering, following which the atoned should “report to all the people the μεγαλεῖα of God.”<sup>79</sup> Elsewhere in both 2 Maccabees and 3 Maccabees, μεγαλεῖα is used in conjunction with God’s present and future deliverance of Israel.<sup>80</sup> Twenty-first century Greek scholar and Columbia International University professor William J. Larkin draws attention to Septuagintal and Qumran usages of the μεγαλεῖος word grouping as evidence that, in Acts 2:11, God’s “witnesses sound forth his mighty acts in accomplishing salvation

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<sup>77</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 99. It should be noted that not all biblical scholars share this interpretation of τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ. For example, in Lechler’s exegetical treatment of the passage, he suggests the ecstatic utterances were in brief spurts, intelligible as such but only containing sporadic, generic praise to God. Lechler, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 36–38.

<sup>78</sup> Keener argues for the value of what he calls “Social-Historical Inquiry” so that biblical scholarship might avoid the “extreme” of exploiting the “canonical texts” to “attach canonical status to their own readings or those of their interpretive community.” Keener, *Acts*, 1:16–17. The inclusion of a social-historical inquiry in this section of the exegetical paper is undertaken with the intention to understand Luke’s meaning of τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ apart from preconceived, ill-informed, and/or unjustified interpretations.

<sup>79</sup> σὺ δὲ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ μεμαστιγμένος διάγγελλε πᾶσι τὸ μεγαλεῖον τοῦ θεοῦ κράτος ταῦτα δὲ εἰπόντες ἀφανεῖς ἐγένοντο (2 Maccabees 3:34). Apocryphal and Septuagintal references are only mentioned as part of the social-historical background for understanding Luke’s Greco-Jewish authorial context. Marion Soards points out Luke’s familiarization with, and frequent usage of, both Septuagintal and the Apocryphal sources throughout the book of Acts. Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 143–56.

<sup>80</sup> 2 Macc 7:17; 3 Macc 7:22–23.

through the death and resurrection of his Son.”<sup>81</sup> By the time the phrase shows up in the New Testament canon, under Luke’s pen, it contains a rich usage history in reference to supernatural acts of deliverance and/or salvation by the hand of almighty God.

But Acts 2:11 is not the first appearance of this eschatologically pregnant terminology in Luke’s writing. Mary, in her *Magnificat*, sings of the mighty one who has done *μεγάλειά* (Luke 1:49). Bock points out that in Mary’s song, she not only lyricized Israel’s deliverance but “the hope of salvation” and God’s “intricate plan” through which he “‘redeemed his people’ (v.68) through a ‘horn’ raised up from the House of David (v. 69).”<sup>82</sup> *μεγαλείος* is used only twice in the Greek New Testament: once at the beginning of Luke’s first volume to introduce Jesus to the world through physical impregnation by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s body, and the other at the beginning of Luke’s second volume to introduce Jesus to the world through spiritual impregnation by the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body – the church. What could be mightier in action, what more pregnant with divine exigency, than God, in Christ’s life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, reconciling sinful mankind to himself through the power of the Holy Spirit? Each of the disciples in Acts 2:1–14 could not help but *λαλούντων*, loudly and openly under compulsion of the Holy Spirit, *τὰ μεγαλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* in the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>83</sup> Reflecting on the Acts 2 Pentecost, twenty-first century Baptist evangelism scholar and professor Matt Queen

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<sup>81</sup> William J. Larkin, *Acts*, in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, vol. 12, *Luke Acts*, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006), 389.

<sup>82</sup> Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 451.

<sup>83</sup> Polhill disagrees. He sees the ecstatic declaration of the Spirit-filled disciples to be no more than praise, possibly even in the form of song. Polhill, *Acts*, 104. Ironically, Polhill does not venture to suppose what, exactly, the lyrics of that song may have been. Certainly, it would have included praise to God for the fulfilled promises of salvation in Christ and empowerment in the Holy Spirit. What else would be on their lips in this epochal moment? Tim Beougher leaves no room for error, if this account is to be considered evangelistic in nature “the gospel is a message about [the] person and work of Christ. When sharing the gospel we must first give his credentials and then his message. We show people who he is and then what he has done.” Timothy K. Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism: Sharing the Gospel with Compassion and Conviction* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021), 107. The person and work of Christ most certainly formed the content of the disciples’ Spirit-filled witness to the magnificent acts of God on the Day of Pentecost. This was the fulfillment of the Acts 1:8 promise that connected the filling of Christ’s Spirit to the witness of Christ’s disciples.

writes, “When the Holy Spirit fills believers, they naturally and consistently share Christ with unbelievers.”<sup>84</sup> To be Spirit-filled is to be gospel-fluent. The whole company of Spirit-filled disciples testified to the mighty acts of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ that day.

Some who heard their Spirit-empowered gospel proclamation that day, still awe-struck by the wonder of it all, were interested in hearing more (2:12). However, others mocked the disciples for their message and its method of conveyance (2:13). They supposed the disciples were *μεμεστωμένοι* (“full of”) new wine. Only here does Luke use the *μεστώω* sense of “to fill.” He is sure to draw stark contrast between the filling of the Holy Spirit and the perception of the unbelieving crowd.<sup>85</sup> This situational bridge is just what Peter needed in 2:14 to “stand up with the Eleven” and *ἀπεφθέγγατο* (“proclaimed”) what the rest of the disciples had already *ἀπεφθέγγατο* up to this point. The evangelistic gospel proclamation of the Spirit-filled disciples, along with the reception and rejection of that message within the crowd, set the stage for Peter’s more formal evangelistic sermon in 2:14–40.

“Pentecost is God’s, the Father’s heaven-high call to all Christ’s churches to go afield,” L. R. Scarborough insisted, “with the most flaming evangelism, expectant, hopeful, and assured of a final and eternal harvest of souls.”<sup>86</sup> The Acts 2 Pentecost, as a cooperative evangelistic encounter between Spirit-filled disciples of Jesus and those God brought to their prophetic platform, stands in church history not only as an eschatological marker, but as an epochal evangelistic example for Christ’s churches in every generation. Five points of ongoing practical application for Christian churches are offered upon reflection: (1) oneness of heart and mind among prayerfully gathered disciples sets the stage for

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<sup>84</sup> Queen, *Recapturing Evangelism*, 196.

<sup>85</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:861. Keener wrestles with the ambiguity of Luke’s language. *Γλεύκος* carries mostly a positive connotation in biblical usage, often connected with God’s good gifts in abundance, joy in God’s kingdom, eschatological celebration, and even pleasant speech. Luke’s point is not the nuances of being filled with sweet wine, but in contrast and even more excellently, the mysterious joy of the Lord that emanates from the believer in Christ upon the filling of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>86</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 38.



Spirit-filled evangelism in the church; (2) disciples of Jesus who are controlled by the Holy Spirit cannot help but open their mouths with joyful gospel witness; (3) through the Holy Spirit's empowerment, the gospel of Jesus Christ forever remains unbound by cultural, geographical, or linguistic impediments; (4) upon hearing the gospel message, some whom God gathers will respond favorably and others will resist obstinately; and (5) God is glorified and the gospel is magnified when faithful, Spirit-filled witnesses to Christ stand together in evangelistic cooperation.

### **Biblical and Theological Evaluation of Scarborough's Triangular Doctrine of Cooperation**

L. R. Scarborough was unambiguous in his belief that the doctrine of cooperation was biblically established and theologically sound. Cooperation is “one of the major doctrines” of the Christian faith and, as such, is “binding on a Baptist church.”<sup>87</sup> Further, the biblical and theological foundations of the doctrine of cooperation present “a tremendous and constantly binding obligation for Baptist churches to co-operate.”<sup>88</sup> As explained above, Scarborough understands the doctrine of cooperation to be three-fold, like three sides of a triangle: God's side, the church member's side, and the local church's side. Because Scarborough divides his doctrine into three distinct parts, the outline of this biblical and theological evaluation will follow his tripart structure accordingly. Evaluation of each side of the triangular doctrine will include interaction with relevant biblical texts, corresponding theological concepts, and historic and contemporary theologians.

#### **God's Side**

The gold standard of cooperation is on exhibition in God's own triunity from the first page of the biblical canon to the last. In creation, the three persons worked as one,

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<sup>87</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 81. Scarborough, “The Independence and Interdependence of Baptist Churches,” 3.

<sup>88</sup> Scarborough, “The Independence and Interdependence of Baptist Churches,” 4.

in concert with both triune consubstantiality and functional cooperation through common yet distinguishable activity.<sup>89</sup> Thomas Grantham, in his 1678 book *Christianismus Primitivus*, references Genesis 1:1–3, John 1:1–3, and Hebrews 1:2 to demonstrate the cooperative activity of the Father, Son, and Spirit in creation.<sup>90</sup> God the Father spoke the cosmos into existence *ex nihilo* (Gen 1:1, 3) as God the Spirit hovered over the waters (Gen 1:2); God the Son was the active agent of creation (John 1:1–3, Heb 1:2).<sup>91</sup> Similarly, contemporary reformed evangelical theologian Scott Swain explains the “hidden presence” of the Trinity in the Genesis 1 creation account through subject-verb disagreement coupled with God’s “singular agency.”<sup>92</sup> In 1:1 alone, as Swain demonstrates, the plural form אֱלֹהִים (“Elohim”) is paired with the singular form of the verb בָּרָא (“created”), a pattern repeated in 1:27. In other words, God is named plurally but acts—operates—creates—singularly. In this grammatical nuance alone, creative cooperation is on display on the first page of the Bible. Unified creative cooperativity within the Godhead is not a distinctively Baptist thought. Contemporary Anglican theologian John Webster, for example, mentions a certain “economic differentiation” between the Father, Son, and Spirit in the creation event without diminishing the importance of the theological axiom *opera ad extra sunt indivisa*.<sup>93</sup> God’s external activity, although expressed in attribution

<sup>89</sup> John Webster, “Trinity and Creation,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12, no. 1 (January 2010): 15.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus: Or, The Ancient Christian Religion*, ed. Richard Groves (London: Printed for Francis Smith at the Sign of the Elephant and Castle in Cornhill near the Royal-Exchange, 1678), Book II, 40–42.

<sup>91</sup> See also Thomas Helwys’s *A Declaration of Faith of English People* (1611), in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard, 2nd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2011), 109. In the first two articles, Helwys confesses the unified creative action of the three divine persons: “THREE are one God, in all equalitie . . . By whom all things are created and preserved, in Heaven and in Earth . . . this GOD in the beginning created all things off nothinge, Gen. 1. 1.”

<sup>92</sup> Scott Swain, “Is the Trinity in Genesis 1?,” The Gospel Coalition, January 1, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/trinity-genesis-1/>.

<sup>93</sup> Webster, “Trinity and Creation,” 16. The phrase means that the external works of the Godhead (in creation, redemption, and providence in general) are indivisible between the Father, Son, and Spirit because they act as one.

to each distinct person, is a singular cooperative action. This perfect divine cooperation, free from selfishness, disorganization, and disunity, sets the standard for cooperation between Christians and churches.

In the works of redemption, justification, and sanctification also, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are perfectly co-operative. Perhaps the introduction to Paul's Ephesian epistle most clearly sums up the biblical record of God's triunity in the work of redemption: God the Father chose, predestined, and adopted the elect to be his children through Jesus Christ in whom they have "redemption through his blood" and on account of whom they have been "sealed . . . with the promised Holy Spirit" (Eph 1:1–13). Articles 4 and 5 of the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1925), when taken together, mention the interactivity of God (the Father), Christ, and the Holy Spirit in securing atonement from sin through Jesus's atoning death. Writing in 1880, Alvah Hovey, president of the Newton [Baptist] Theological Institution in Massachusetts, notes the biblical, theological, and historical importance of the doctrine of the trinity to the doctrine of substitutionary atonement; a biblical doctrine of salvation hangs upon the effectiveness of the triune God's cooperative interactivity in incarnation, justification, and sanctification.<sup>94</sup> Lewis S. Chafer points to creation and redemption as the two "fields of divine undertaking" in which God's sovereignty "stands alone:" the Father purposes salvation and draws the sinner; the Holy Spirit divinely enables; the Son's willing self-sacrifice makes possible the imputation of divine righteousness.<sup>95</sup> L. R. Scarborough's claim in his triangular doctrine of cooperation, on "God's Side," is that all Christian cooperation hangs on the triune God's exhibition of

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<sup>94</sup> Charles A. Jenkins, ed., *Baptist Doctrines: Being an Exposition, in a Series of Essays by Representative Baptist Ministers, of the Distinctive Points of Baptist Faith and Practice* (St. Louis: Clancy R. Barns, 1881), 381–82.

<sup>95</sup> Lewis S. Chafer, *Grace: The Glorious Theme* (1922; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 51–52. Chafer was co-founder of Dallas Theological Seminary with his brother Rollin T. Schafer, a contemporary of Scarborough, Mullins, Truett, and other Baptist theologians of the early twentieth century, and an influential dispensationalist. The researcher does not share Chafer's dispensational hermeneutical framework. However, Chafer's theological and denominational influence alongside Scarborough in the early twentieth century makes his voice notable on this subject and others.

perfect cooperation in the work of redemption: “the Father who gave, the Son who died, the Holy Spirit who bears the Father’s love, applies the Son’s blood, and is the major agent in the operation of divine grace.”<sup>96</sup> Together with the divine display of triune cooperation in the biblical creation account, God’s perfect cooperativity in the work of salvation sets the tone and the standard for all Christian cooperativity.

God’s triune cooperativity is also on display in the establishment and accomplishment of the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19–20 and Acts 1:4–8 are usual references to the commission Christ left his disciples before ascending into heaven. Matthew’s version explicitly mentions Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the baptizing formula while Luke’s more descriptive account notes the filling of the Spirit for the purpose of witnessing to the Son in fulfillment of the Father’s promise. Scarborough believed in an eventual end to the cooperative “task” of Christians.<sup>97</sup> To Scarborough, cooperation was a theologically and morally “binding obligation” upon Christians toward the advancement of the gospel “around the world.”<sup>98</sup> The “plan” of the Great Commission hinged upon the holy and unified cooperation of “all members of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit, all Christians, all His New Testament churches, going together into all the world, preaching, teaching, healing—a whole Gospel to the whole world.”<sup>99</sup> Scarborough did not entangle himself in debates over millennial theories, but he did anticipate a day when “all the work of sin and salvation will be completed,” signaling the end of Great Commission cooperation.<sup>100</sup> For Scarborough, 1 Corinthians 15:24 and 51–58; 2 Timothy 4:18; and Revelation 7:14–17, 11:15, 12:10–11, 19:6–9, and 21:1–11 gave

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<sup>96</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 87.

<sup>97</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 87.

<sup>98</sup> Scarborough, “The Independence and Inter-Dependence of Baptist Churches,” 4.

<sup>99</sup> Scarborough, “The Peril of Lop-Sided Cooperation,” 2.

<sup>100</sup> Lee R. Scarborough, *Christ’s Militant Kingdom: A Study in the Trial Triumphant* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), 193–95.

definition to a powerful image of God’s triune cooperation in the work of consummation. The sacrificed and risen Lamb will deliver the kingdom to the Father upon the consummation of the Holy Spirit’s work in the world through the church.<sup>101</sup> The perfection and holiness of God’s triune cooperativity in the establishment and accomplishment of the Great Commission are unmistakable in the biblical record. In his 2021 book *Invitation to Evangelism*, twenty-first century Baptist evangelism scholar and professor Timothy Beougher puts it concisely: “The Great Commission will be fulfilled! . . . We labor in the confidence that the work will be finished.”<sup>102</sup>

From the first pages of the Christian scriptures to the last, perfect cooperation is on display within God’s own triunity, as Scarborough suggests. “If God’s people would work together in his big program as do the three of the Trinity, the task would have been achieved long, long ago.”<sup>103</sup> Interestingly, disagreement over God’s triunity constituted what Tom Nettles supposes may be the first doctrinal controversy in the Baptist movement. John Smyth’s confessed Mennonite leanings in 1609 made room for a doctrine of Christological celestial flesh, then Thomas Helwys refuted, counter-confessed, and split the church.<sup>104</sup> In the late seventeenth century a denial of the triune nature of God led General Baptists to part ways with a previously influential and cooperative pastor, Matthew Caffyn. The “Caffyn Controversy” of the late 1680s demonstrates the convictional heritage of the Baptist doctrine of cooperation that unorthodox views of God’s triunity have no place in Baptist evangelistic and missional cooperation.<sup>105</sup> The doctrine of the trinity and

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<sup>101</sup> Scarborough, *Christ’s Militant Kingdom*, 191–92.

<sup>102</sup> Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 30.

<sup>103</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 87.

<sup>104</sup> 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: Baker, 1986), 15.

<sup>105</sup> It is probable that Caffyn had a hand in authoring the General Baptists’ *Standard Confession* (1660), along with Thomas Monck. However, in the years that followed Monck and Caffyn became “unyielding opponents” in the debates over Caffyn’s Christological heresies. See William Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought: With Special Reference to Baptists in Britain and North America* (Macon,

the doctrine of cooperation own an historical and abiding relationship within the Baptist movement. God’s triunity is on display in creation, redemption, and Great Commission inter-congregational cooperation, as Scarborough suggests. The perfect, holy cooperation of the triune God sets the standard and the tone for cooperation among Christians.

### **The Church Member’s Side**

The second side of Scarborough’s triangular doctrine included God working with Christians and Christians working with one another in the local church: “How royally God and man work together, how they formed a holy combination and fulfilled a divine purpose and attained and practiced a conquering co-operation in the winning of men and the building of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>106</sup> The *Baptist Faith and Message* confesses this doctrinal conviction: “Individual members of New Testament churches should co-operate with each other . . . in carrying toward the missionary, educational, and benevolent program for the extension of Christ’s Kingdom.”<sup>107</sup> Such unified, supernaturally empowered and missionally focused interactivity was only possible because of God’s prerogative to fulfill his promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that came to the group of disciples on the day of Pentecost. Christians are enabled to work together evangelistically and missionally precisely because God works with them. This holy phenomenon, the power of God working with men for Great Commission success, is to Scarborough “the one burning message of Pentecost.”<sup>108</sup> Beougher reflects with inspiration

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GA: Mercer University, 2004), 20; Alex Carver, “Matthew Caffyn Revisited: Cooperation, Christology, and Controversy in the Life of an Influential Seventeenth-Century Baptist,” *Baptist Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (April 2016): 46.

<sup>106</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 21.

<sup>107</sup> “Comparison Chart,” Southern Baptist Convention.

<sup>108</sup> Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 37.

on the evangelistically cooperative task between God and man: “God’s amazing plan” involves his prerogative “to let us be involved.”<sup>109</sup>

To Scarborough, voluntary cooperation between church members is not an option. Rather, every Christian holds a moral and theological obligation to do so under the lordship of Christ and for the advancement of the gospel: “This unity of labor in a mutual love and fellowship, facing Godward and manward is essential, fundamental, and obligatory upon each church member.”<sup>110</sup> In *Democratic Religion* (1997), Gregory Wills stresses the uniqueness of Baptist church covenants, especially in the earliest days of the movement on American soil, as commitments to God and to one another for doctrinal accountability.<sup>111</sup> Church members belonged to one another, in Christ. The obligation of the church was the obligation of the individual, and the commitments of the whole were the commitments of each member.<sup>112</sup> Such was the doctrinal commitment to cooperation among church members. Wills further demonstrates that this mutual submission and commitment to one another was Baptist practice firmly rooted in the Baptist belief of the

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<sup>109</sup> Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 122. Regarding this divine prerogative, J. I. Packer discusses the apparent antinomy of God’s sovereignty and man’s activity in the work of evangelism. He concludes that every disciple of Christ

should be devoting all our resources of ingenuity and enterprise to the task of making the gospel known in every possible way to every possible person . . . the doctrine of divine sovereignty would be grossly misapplied if we should invoke it in such a way as to lessen the urgency, and immediacy and priority, and binding constraint, of the evangelistic enterprise. . . . God did not teach us the reality of his rule in order to give us an excuse for neglecting his orders. (J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008], 38)

<sup>110</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine?,” 20.

<sup>111</sup> Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South 1785–1900* (New York: Oxford University, 1997), 21.

<sup>112</sup> Stanley Grenz connects the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the eternal purpose of God inaugurated in the age of the church—a newly organized and empowered community of faith with cooperative missiology at the core of its existence:

At Pentecost, the Spirit entered the world in a unique way. And in so doing he inaugurated a new age, the age of fulfillment . . . The outpouring of the Holy Spirit signaled the birth of the Spirit-endowed, Spirit-empowered, Spirit-led community—the church. Beginning with Pentecost, the Spirit took on a new role. Throughout this age, the Spirit would focus his work on the new community, the fellowship of the followers of Christ. (Stanley J. Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 158)

“apostolic example” clearly revealed in the pages of the New Testament.<sup>113</sup> Scarborough bases his argument primarily on the Acts 2 Pentecostal precedent, but also on the examples of the twelve disciples in the gospels, the seventy sent out by Jesus in Luke 10, the imperative nature of the Great Commission command, and the apostolic history recorded in the book of Acts.<sup>114</sup>

The Great Commission task of all disciples, working together, was of primary importance to the earliest Baptists. John Smyth references Great Commission biblical texts arguing for a whole-Church responsibility in the work rather than the reservation of the Great Commission to a select ruling class of Christians.<sup>115</sup> Like Scarborough, Smyth plainly connects the cooperative Great Commission responsibility of all disciples to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.<sup>116</sup> John Spilsbury, writing from London in 1652, acknowledges the force of triunity in the New Testament commission to baptize those who had “proved” they had “faith to believe,” rather than infants; he further argues from Matthew 28:18–19 that these are “the expresse commands, so fully held forth by Christ himself, together with the whole practical order of the Apostles, and others following the same in their administrations.”<sup>117</sup> For Spilsbury, the Great Commission was a shared, cooperative relationship between the triune God, the Apostles, and all who would follow in the faith. Thomas Grantham, arguing for credobaptism in 1678, argues from the negative that if the Great Commission did not apply to all Christians of all ages

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<sup>113</sup> Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 28.

<sup>114</sup> Scarborough, “Is Cooperation a New Testament Doctrine,” 20; Scarborough *Products of Pentecost*, 74–75, 89–91.

<sup>115</sup> Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 2:420–27.

<sup>116</sup> Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, 2:420. Scarborough calls the Pentecostal unction toward Christian cworking in Great Commission engagement “irresistible cooperation.” Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 89–93.

<sup>117</sup> John Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawful Subject of Baptism* (London, 1652), 48–49.



(if it were “not obliging to us”), all of Christ’s commands to individual Christians and churches in every generation would be dismantled.<sup>118</sup>

Fredrick B. Meyer, London Baptist pastor elected president of the Baptist Union in 1906, argues that the “machinery” of cooperation is powerless without the divine power of the Holy Spirit. However, when the churches avail themselves to God in humbled dependence upon Christ, such divine power is natural between God and the reborn person, as the Holy Spirit and the man’s spirit work in sanctified unity for Christ’s purposes.<sup>119</sup> Meyer bases his concept of the “natural affinity” between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the reborn person on 1 Corinthians 2:14–15: “But the person without the Spirit does not receive what comes from God’s Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually. The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, and yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone.”<sup>120</sup> Concurrently, 450 miles north of Meyer, Alexander B. Bruce of the Free Church of Scotland wrote concerning the twelve disciples sent with the seventy in Luke 10 that they were all “agents” of the “movement” that aimed at “rousing the mass out of the stupor of indifference,” as God the Son worked with and through his disciples for gospel proclamation; this action—the sending of the seventy in cooperative gospel proclamation—was a precursor to an age of the same to be empowered by the Holy Spirit.<sup>121</sup> Bruce later connects the perpetual “operations” of Christ’s Great Commission plan and the “capacities and idiosyncrasies of

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<sup>118</sup> Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book 2, 20–21.

<sup>119</sup> Fredrick B. Meyer, “The Dynamic of Pentecost,” in *20 Centuries of Great Preaching* (Waco, TX: Word, 1971), 6:402.

<sup>120</sup> Meyer, “The Dynamic of Pentecost,” 404.

<sup>121</sup> Alexander Bruce further explains,

Such need to be reminded that there were *two* religious movements going on in the days of the Lord Jesus. . . . Of the one movement the disciples, that is, both the twelve and the seventy, were the agents, of the other movement they were the subjects. And the latter movement, though less noticeable, and much more limited in extent, was by far more important than the former; for it was destined to bring forth fruit that should remain—to tell not merely on the present time, but on the whole history of the world. (Alexander B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* [New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1900], 107)

the agents” to the power they received together on the day of Pentecost, a power that carries with it a “moral” obligation rather than a political one.<sup>122</sup> The training of the twelve and the sending of the seventy in divinely ordered evangelistic teamwork is evidence of the doctrine of cooperation in the gospels while anticipatory of Pentecostal enduement, as Scarborough suggested.

As nineteenth-century revivalist George W. Hervey explained, commenting on the Acts 2 Pentecost, to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to overflow with the gospel; the “evidence” of Spiritual filling is in the word and action that necessarily overflows from the “inward experience.”<sup>123</sup> Surely this was the case for the 120 disciples at the Jerusalem Pentecost. Timothy Beougher emphasizes the importance of divinely empowered evangelistic interactivity between God and church member in the work of the Great Commission. The Holy Spirit empowers and “guides the witness,” and he “sovereignly arranges circumstances for the communication of the gospel message.”<sup>124</sup> Believers do this Holy Spirit empowered work together, as a local church, understanding their evangelistic cooperativity to be among the most fundamental reasons for their existence: “The church is one of the only institutions in the world that exists primarily for those not yet a part of it.”<sup>125</sup>

Craig Keener stresses the Acts 2 Pentecost as “fulfillment of the promise of empowerment to speak God’s message.”<sup>126</sup> He connects the Pentecost to both the Joel 2:28–32 prophecy and the Acts 1:8 promise. This is eschatological empowerment, forming the church across cultural barriers, theologically democratizing the Great Commission for

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<sup>122</sup> Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, 35–42.

<sup>123</sup> George W. Hervey, *Manual of Revivals: Practical Hints and Suggestions from Histories of Revivals and Biographies of Revivalists* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 127–28.

<sup>124</sup> Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 26.

<sup>125</sup> Beougher, *Invitation to Evangelism*, 320.

<sup>126</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:780.

all Christians, and expressing Luke’s desire to call “the church of his own day to depend on the same empowerment of the Spirit that he reports.”<sup>127</sup> The focus, Keener suggests, is on empowerment and inspiration to “communicate Christ’s message cross-culturally.”<sup>128</sup> Thus, for Keener, the emphasis in the passage is on forward-facing, cross-cultural evangelistic empowerment for the church. Martin Luther, Alan Thompson, and Lee Scarborough add to the interpretive framework the perspective that Peter’s sermon in 2:14–40 is an expanded, formal demonstration of what all the Spirit-filled disciples were doing in 2:4, 6–8, and 11. Luther elaborates that “not only Peter preached on Pentecost Day, but... all the disciples, as well as the eleven apostles. All of this happened at the moment when they were set afire by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>129</sup> Thompson argues for a shift in God’s delegated authority from the temple leadership to the leadership of the apostles on the basis of Peter standing *σὺν τοῖς ἑνδεκα* “with the Eleven”) in 2:14 and the crowds’ response to Peter *καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀποστόλους* (“and to the rest of the apostles”) in 2:37.<sup>130</sup> Scarborough understood the Pentecost to not only be an eschatological inauguration, but also a paradigm of cooperant, Spirit-filled evangelism for local churches.<sup>131</sup> In 2:1–14, he saw “a demonstration of gospel team work,” showing the disciples “how to work together under the leadership of Christ’s vice-regent, the Holy Spirit.”<sup>132</sup>

The Holy Spirit *ἐπλήρωσεν* (“filled”) the whole house in 2:2 just as the disciples were each *ἐπλήσθησαν* (“filled”) by him in 2:4. The repetition of *filling* terminology lends

<sup>127</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:780–81, 794.

<sup>128</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:830.

<sup>129</sup> Luther, “Holy Pentecost,” 153. Elsewhere, Luther comments, “The Holy Spirit descends and fills the hearts of the disciples sitting in fear and sorrow. He renders their tongues fiery and cloven, and inflames them with love unto boldness in preaching Christ—unto free and fearless utterance.” Martin Luther, “Pentecost,” in *Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 4:332.

<sup>130</sup> According to Thompson, the message is not only Peter’s but is more appropriately “the message of the apostles in Acts 2.” Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 179.

<sup>131</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 28.

<sup>132</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 32. See also 88–89.

itself to what Scarborough understood to be spiritual power from the Holy Spirit both individually (“they were all filled”) and corporately (“filled the whole house”).<sup>133</sup> This twin filling by the Holy Spirit—the filling of the space between them and the filling of the space within each of them—erupted in the empowered gospel proclamation of the disciples that day. They λαλούντων, loudly and openly under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ in the gospel of Jesus Christ. But the disciples did not evangelize in isolation from one another – rather, Scarborough insists, in cooperation: “How beautifully they [(Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus)] worked together... how beautifully John and Simon worked together at Pentecost... Pentecost magnifies the unities and cordialities and fellowships of that little group marvelously.”<sup>134</sup>

Until this moment, “the organization Jesus had set up as his church had not sufficient experience as a corporation to give them a chance at cooperation,” Scarborough continues. The Holy Spirit’s enduement at Pentecost conveyed the power and provided the occasion they needed to experience the full weight of their cooperative evangelistic influence for the first time. Scarborough explains that they depended on cooperation that day because “the preservation of their life” depended on it, “the propagation of truth they loved” depended on it, “Loyalty to the name” of Christ depended on it, their surrender to “the social order” depended on it, a missional “comradeship” was found in it, “spiritual rewards... were greatly enlarged” by it, obedience to Christ demanded it, the “enrichment of their fellowship” depended on it, and the “only way out was the way together.”<sup>135</sup> It was there, in the Holy Spirit empowered, “unifying cooperating witness” of Pentecost, that Scarborough found a beautiful, amalgamizing oneness of heart and mind in cooperative evangelistic enterprise. This oneness is set forth in the first verse of Luke’s account, pregnantly embedded within the ὁμοθυμαδὸν of the prayerfully expectant

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<sup>133</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 98.

<sup>134</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 88.

<sup>135</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 90–91.

potential evangelists. The Holy Spirit became, for the disciples that day, “a great unifying agency,” incorporating them “into a spiritual unity” and giving them “driving force in an irresistible [evangelistic] cooperation.”<sup>136</sup>

Scarborough understands evangelism in the Acts 2 Pentecost to be a work of cooperation with the Holy Spirit and among the disciples themselves. What the Pentecost brought to the New Testament church, Scarborough believes, was a doctrine of “irresistible cooperation.”<sup>137</sup> And the immediate irresistibility of this New Testament doctrine was to be matched only by its immediate effectiveness: “All went afield,” he writes, and “the tread of a mighty spiritual army of evangelists was heard in Jerusalem, and the songs of triumph emanating from a courageous offensive has been heard around the world for twenty centuries.”<sup>138</sup> The gathering and empowerment of the Jerusalem church on the day of Pentecost was the beginning of God’s activity within and through his churches. The evangelistic success of the disciples on that day was a demonstration of what God intended to accomplish through his Spirit-filled churches, *in prima instantia pertractatis*.<sup>139</sup> According to Jesus, the mission of Spirit-empowered witness was to begin in Jerusalem and spread to the ends of the earth (1:8). The scene Luke sets is centripetal, representatives from every nation gathering at the Spirit-filled prophetic platform of the evangelists. But the work of God from that moment was to be perpetually centrifugal, the message of the gospel expanding and enlarging from Jerusalem to all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Correspondingly, Scarborough believed that the Acts 2 Pentecost was not simply a monumental dot on the timeline of salvation history, but the much-anticipated launching

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<sup>136</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 92.

<sup>137</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 92.

<sup>138</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 99.

<sup>139</sup> The phrase means, “in the first instance.” In other words, more Pentecosts would follow. Later, in defense of the Gentile Pentecost in Caesarea, Peter describes the occurrence to the Jerusalem church by saying that the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles in Caesarea *ὡσπερ καὶ ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ἐν ἀρχῇ* (“as on us at the beginning,” Acts 11:15). Bock sees Peter’s use of *ἐν ἀρχῇ* as evidence that the apostle believed “something novel . . . a new era” began at the Acts 2 Pentecost. See Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 372.

pad for Spirit-filled churches' world-wide evangelistic witness throughout the coming generations as part of "a new divine policy" inaugurated by God in that very moment.<sup>140</sup>

Finally, the historical record of apostolic work throughout the book of Acts is evidence of cooperation on the church members' side of Scarborough's triangular doctrine. Scarborough saw "a glorious illustration" of the doctrine of cooperation in "the apostolic band," emphasizing their personal differences while working together with Christ and with one another toward the goal of evangelistic and missional effectiveness, writing upon reflection, "this is cooperation of the highest sort."<sup>141</sup> In Acts 2:14, with representatives from every nation under heaven assembled at the Spirit-empowered evangelistic platform of the disciples, Peter stood up *σὺν τοῖς ἑνδεκά* as if to speak with them, or at least on behalf of them all. In verse 37, the interruption from the crowd was directed not to Peter alone, but *τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀποστόλους*. In verse 42, the Jerusalem church devoted itself to the teaching of *τῶν ἀποστόλων*, rather than the teaching of a single *ἀπόστολος*. In both evangelism and discipleship, the Great Commission multiplied throughout the book of Acts by the Spirit-filled, cooperative work of the apostolic team.

In *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus* (2011), Alan Thomson presents an inaugurated eschaton as the framework for the Book of Acts. As such, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is critical to the launching of the new era of God's activity in the continuation of his unfolding redemptive narrative, during which the church will take center stage.<sup>142</sup> This paradigm shift of representative authority in the kingdom of God signaled the end of temple-based leadership and the beginning of Jesus's reign through a new authority structure—namely, the apostles.<sup>143</sup> It is more specifically the apostles' *διδαχή* ("teaching"), rather than the apostles themselves, through which

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<sup>140</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 120.

<sup>141</sup> Scarborough, *Christ's Militant Kingdom*, 92.

<sup>142</sup> Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 18, 125–26.

<sup>143</sup> Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 145, 151.

Christ rules his church and advances the gospel. As such, the “direct authority” within the church, as the book of Acts continues, is found in the doctrinal teaching of the Apostles, together, who cooperate as “authorized delegates of the risen Lord Jesus.”<sup>144</sup>

In Acts 2:43, signs and wonders were being performed through the apostles. In 4:33, among the spiritually and missionally unified church in Jerusalem, all the apostles, together, were giving testimony to the gospel “with great power.” In 5:12, the apostles were *ὁμοθυμαδόν*, as was the whole company of disciples in 2:1, and “many signs and wonders” were performed by them, together. In 5:29–40, the Pharisees rallied against, imprisoned, beat, and ordered an injunction against all the apostles, as a unit. In 6:6, the seven were brought before the Apostles, together, for ordination and commissioning into their office of service within the church body. When persecution scattered the church abroad in 8:1, the apostles remained in Jerusalem, together. After Saul’s conversion on the road to Damascus, in 9:26–30, Barnabas brought him to the apostles in Jerusalem, who protected him and helped him escape to Tarsus. In Iconium, the Jews, enraged by Paul and Barnabas’s gospel ministry, turned against the apostles (Acts 14:4). In chapters 15 and 16, the apostles and elders acted as consultants for newly formed Gentile congregations in the region, powerless over those autonomous congregations but encouraging them and strengthening them in biblical and theological matters. Throughout the rest of the book, the apostle Paul worked on behalf of the apostolic band, as a missionary, evangelist, and church planter throughout the ancient near east. Through his leadership, the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and throughout Macedonia were planted and strengthened from chapters 16–20. Acts 21:15–25 presents the anticipated reunion between Paul and the Jerusalem church leaders during which they enjoyed hospitable friendship, shared celebration, and contextualized ministry advice. As the New Testament band of evangelistic and missional cooperants expanded to more and more elders, disciples, and cross-congregational *ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν* (“messengers of the churches,” 2 Cor

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<sup>144</sup> Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 163, 178–79.

8:23), cooperation multiplied among those who bore the name of Christ. Eventually, Paul would come to call them *συνεργούς* (“co-laborers”) in Christ, in the kingdom, in the gospel, and in the joy of Great Commission togetherness.<sup>145</sup>

The final chapters of Acts chronicle Paul’s arrest, imprisonment, and defenses before Jewish and Roman rulers, often alone, for his part in advancing the Great Commission. Late in life, he would lament the breakdown of cooperation and companionship in the crucible of his persecution (2 Tim 1:15, 4:16). Throughout the book of Acts, the apostolic band is presented as a unified front, cooperating in evangelism, preaching, doctrinal teaching, inter-congregational advice, and missionary sending. Scarborough was emphatic that the apostolic example in the Book of Acts bears testimony to the veracity of the biblical doctrine of cooperation: “All the remarkable precepts and examples of the apostolic history bear impressive testimony to the correctness of this position that co-operation under the Lordship of Christ is a New Testament doctrine and that our voluntary response in full length service determines the quality and quantity of obedience to Jesus Christ.”<sup>146</sup>

### **The Local Church’s Side**

In his book, *The Doctrines of Our Faith* (1905), Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor and eventual *Baptist Faith and Message* committee member E. C. Dargan acknowledges biblical and theological foundations for inter-congregational cooperation but stops short of clearly identifying such as a primary doctrine of the Christian faith. “The co-operative work [between congregations in societies, associations, conventions, etc.] is justified by its naturalness, usefulness, efficiency; and is not contrary

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<sup>145</sup> Rom 16:3, 9, 21; 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 1:24; 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; Col 4:1; 1 Thess 3:2; Phil 1:1, 24; 3 John 1:8.

<sup>146</sup> Scarborough, “Is Co-Operation a New Testament Doctrine,” 20.



to any soundly inferred Scriptural principle.”<sup>147</sup> This evangelistic and missional inter-congregational cooperation, according to Dargan, is the opposite of “the dry rot of selfishness . . . the last affliction which should befall a church of Jesus Christ.”<sup>148</sup>

Doctrinally, as the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message* confessed, “the churches themselves should co-operate with each other in carrying forward the missionary, educational and benevolent program for the extension of Christ’s Kingdom.” Such “voluntary co-operation” would be evidence of true Christian “unity” and “spiritual harmony” between the churches.<sup>149</sup> Inter-congregational cooperation is evidenced in the biblical accounts of New Testament churches sharing financial resources, sending messengers, and commissioning and receiving missionaries. These churches, though autonomous under the authority of Jesus Christ alone, were under the “direction” of the Holy Spirit who was “God’s chiefest (sic) earthly, structural agency in the establishment and the building of his cause among men.”<sup>150</sup> Autonomous churches were under spiritual obligation to cooperate in the Great Commission task, and the Holy Spirit empowered, assured, directed, and facilitated their inter-congregational cooperation.

Much biblical evidence exists to support Scarborough’s position (and the position of the *Baptist Faith and Message*) that Great Commission cooperation between likeminded congregations is at least a biblical pattern if not a biblical expectation. In Acts 11:27–30, upon the prophetess Agabus’s prediction of a severe famine in Jerusalem, each of the Antiochian disciples determined, according to his or her ability, to *διακονίαν πέμψαι* (“send relief”) to their brothers and sisters in Judea by collecting funds and sending them by way of Barnabas and Saul. *διακονίαν* in this context is to be understood as an act of

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<sup>147</sup> Edwin C. Dargan, *The Doctrines of Our Faith: A Convenient Handbook for Use in Normal Classes, Sacred Literature Courses and Individual Study* (Nashville: Sunday School Board Southern Baptist Convention, 1899), 185.

<sup>148</sup> Dargan, *The Doctrines of Our Faith*, 183.

<sup>149</sup> “Comparison Chart,” Southern Baptist Convention.

<sup>150</sup> Scarborough, *Christ’s Militant Kingdom*, 98–99.

service/giving that implies its result—ministration.<sup>151</sup> In other words, what they were sending was meaningful ministry in the immediate form of financial contribution. Brand and Hankins noted the benevolent emphasis of this collection while including it in their list of Pauline passages which “establish the point” that the New Testament affirms the autonomy of local churches but not the independence of local churches. The Acts 11:27–30 collection for a benevolent need, in their analysis, was evidence that churches regularly participated in inter-congregational financial giving and receiving.<sup>152</sup> Köstenberger noted the liberality of the Antiochian givers and proposed that the collection was evidence of reciprocity in its similarity to the inter-congregational evangelistic work of the dispersed Jerusalem church; with this understanding, the disciple’s efforts to *διακονίαν πέμψαι* in Acts 11:27–30 was not merely a benevolent financial collection, but a reciprocal ministry that implied a cooperative similarity between the sharing of the gospel and inter-congregational ministration for the advancement of the gospel.<sup>153</sup>

In Acts 18:1–17 Luke summarizes the cooperative evangelistic success of the Apostle Paul, Silas, and Timothy while in Corinth for a year and a half. While ministering in Corinth, Paul and his cooperants did not receive financial assistance from the Corinthian Christians directly. Instead, in 2 Corinthians 11:8–9, he *ἐκκλησίας ἐσύλησα λαβῶν ὀψώνιον πρὸς τὴν ὑμῶν διακονίαν* (“robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve” the Corinthians).<sup>154</sup> Paul’s ministry in Corinth was initially funded by his own

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<sup>151</sup> Horatio Hackett, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, American Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1882), 142.

<sup>152</sup> Chad Brand and David Hankins, *One Sacred Effort: The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 67–71.

<sup>153</sup> Andreas Köstenberger does not offer a direct reference for this claim of similarity. The researcher assumes it is with regard to the Jerusalem Cyprian and Cyrenian believers of Acts 11:20 who came to Antioch and began sharing the gospel with Gentiles there. Andreas Köstenberger, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 143–44.

<sup>154</sup> Robertson notes that the language of “despoiling” one church to serve another is so strong and so unique, it is mentioned only here in the New Testament. Archibald T. Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul*, Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman, 1931), 258.

tent-making efforts. But when Timothy and Silas joined him, they brought funding with them from the churches in Macedonia (Acts 18:5, 2 Cor 11:9). Paul did not receive missionary funding from the Corinthians for his Corinthian ministry.<sup>155</sup> Instead, the cooperative funding of Macedonian churches subsidized the cooperative missionary work of Paul, Timothy, and Silas in Corinth. Roland Allen sees a biblical paradigm in this passage, applicable for all generations of inter-congregational missionary funding.<sup>156</sup> Köstenberger roots the issue in the Corinthian context uniquely.<sup>157</sup> Either way, the evidence of cooperative inter-congregational activity is undeniable.

In Philippians 1:5 and 4:15–20, The Philippian church is praised and prayed for by the missionary apostle because of their ongoing *κοινωνία ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον* (“partnership/fellowship in the gospel”) since the day he first came to them up until the time of his writing. Most scholars agree that “The particular kind of ‘partnership’ or ‘fellowship’ involved is the [financial] contribution made by the Philippians for the spread of the gospel.”<sup>158</sup> F. F. Bruce is careful to make a distinction between the Philippians’ ongoing financial support mentioned in Philippians 1:5 and the church’s

<sup>155</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods, St. Paul’s or Ours: A Study of the Church in the Four Provinces* (London: Robert Scott, 1912), 84. Richard Pratt, *I & II Corinthians*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 422. Colin Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 188. James Scott, *2 Corinthians*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 11 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 208.

<sup>156</sup> Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 84.

<sup>157</sup> Köstenberger, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 167. Köstenberger notes the Corinthians’ apparent accusation that Paul was financially motivated in his ministry to them. Thus, v. 8 and following is Paul’s polemic to this Corinthian-specific accusation.

<sup>158</sup> Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 436. See also Andreas Köstenberger, “Women in the Pauline Mission,” in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul’s Mission*, ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 233; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, vol. 2 of *Early Christian Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 1159. These authors and more see the *κοινωνία* of Phil 1:5 in light of not only spiritual and relational reciprocity but ongoing financial investment in the mission work of Paul. It is not within the scope of this paper to extrapolate the meaning of the word *κοινωνία* with reference to inter-congregational financial cooperation. However, it is important to note wide scholarly consensus that the *κοινωνία* of Paul with the saints in Philippi included, on some level, ongoing financial support for his mission work.

generous participation in the Jerusalem relief fund.<sup>159</sup> The fourth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Philippians provides what is considered by some to be the most substantial evidence for ongoing inter-congregational financial cooperation in mission work. Robertson noted that while Paul's book-keeping with the Philippian church was unique, the Philippians were later joined in like manner of financial missionary support of Paul by the churches in Thessalonica and Berea.<sup>160</sup> Some missiologists see this text as instructive for financial missions-funding cooperation between churches.<sup>161</sup> Others make special note of the fact that these contributions were given directly to, and for the use of, the missionary apostle himself rather than given to other churches through Paul.<sup>162</sup> Whether the Philippian cooperative funding program was intended for other churches or for Paul in his ministry to other churches, their pooled funds at least indirectly, if not directly, benefitted those churches. The biblical record is clear that the Philippian church pooled its resources and relationships together with other Macedonian churches to fund evangelistic and missionary work in the first-century near east.

Scarborough's contemporary and chair of the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message* committee E. Y. Mullins acknowledged the New Testament pattern of inter-congregational cooperation as a "clearly revealed principle of the gospel . . . Paul gathered funds in European churches for the poor in Jerusalem. Christians scattered abroad were enjoined to cooperate with missionaries and laborers in the Kingdom . . . the duty of cooperation

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<sup>159</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 11 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989), 31.

<sup>160</sup> Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 462.

<sup>161</sup> In "The Willowbank Report," from The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in 1978, missiologists argue that "each church should enter into a 'partnership . . . in giving and receiving' (Phil 4:15). No church is, or should try to become, self-sufficient. So churches should develop with each other relationships of prayer, fellowship, interchange of ministry and cooperation . . . we should be outgoing and not timid in seeking fellowship; and we should share our . . . financial resources." Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 523–24.

<sup>162</sup> A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Paul's Collection: Chronology and History," *New Testament Studies* 48 (2002): 102.

for great common ends is . . . clear.”<sup>163</sup> Later, in *Products of Pentecost* (1934), Scarborough became even more emphatic, writing that “No church has a right” to consume all its revenue for its own ministries; instead, he advocates a minimum of twenty-five percent missions giving from each local church budget, “distributed proportionately to the needs of a lost world.” This, he insists, would be evidence of “the spirit of cooperation.”<sup>164</sup> The doctrine of cooperation had financial obligations in addition to relational ones. Scarborough’s tone and content in this aspect is an echo of Baptist confessional sentiment from the earliest days of the movement 5,000 miles away and three centuries removed.<sup>165</sup> Inter-congregational financial cooperation for the purpose of Great Commission advance knows both biblical and Baptist historical precedent.

Not all Baptists believed the doctrine of cooperation extended to inter-congregational efforts. Primitive Baptists, for example, were “suspicious of any supralocal agency,” as Gregory Wills explains; they were skeptical of and ardently non-cooperative with societies, associations, and conventions that centralized missional organization or pooled funding for missionary purposes.<sup>166</sup> Other strictly anti-mission Baptists in the nineteenth century challenged the biblical precedent for inter-congregational missions funding and organizational models. Daniel Parker led such a countermovement among Texas Baptists in the 1830s.<sup>167</sup> John Taylor led a similar movement in Kentucky and Alexander Campbell in Virginia. B. H. Carroll’s 1901 dissertation was devoted to the chronicling and defense of strategic inter-congregational and inter-societal missions

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<sup>163</sup> Edgar Y. Mullins, “Doctrinal Statement,” E. Y. Mullins Papers (Box 39, Folder 17), The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville. See appendix 5.

<sup>164</sup> Scarborough, *Products of Pentecost*, 119.

<sup>165</sup> A doctrine of inter-congregational financial cooperation was evident in the Separatists’ *A True Confession* (1596) to which John Smyth alluded while in Amsterdam, and upon which the first *London Baptist Confession* (1644) was built. See chap. 2 of this diss.

<sup>166</sup> Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 32.

<sup>167</sup> Robert A. Baker, *The Blossoming Desert: A Concise History of Texas Baptists* (Waco, TX: Word, 1970), 24–29, 64.

cooperation among Baptists in the face of such movements. John Taylor's main complaint was with the constant solicitation of money from the congregations, particularly by Luther Rice. Taylor warned of the arising of a "Baptist Papacy," which "seemed almost childish" to Carroll. "The real root of the anti-mission spirit," Carroll countered, is fear of centralization and ecclesiastical hierarchy by the one "whose whole mind is dominated by a fear lest the Baptist Board should destroy the democracy of church government... His [Daniel Parker's] charge is, that the Board purposes to govern the ministry."<sup>168</sup> By the time of Carroll's writing, in the first years of the twentieth century, the anti-missionary Baptists had either severed ties completely with the Southern Baptists or had been marginalized to no substantial consequence in the fellowship. The problem then, as Carroll saw it, was to capture the hearts of the non-participatory but not anti-missionary Baptists: "We have routed the anti-missionaries; our problem now is to vitalize the Omissionaries, and their name is legion."<sup>169</sup> The same challenge perplexes Baptist leaders in every generation.

### Conclusion

Baptists have always felt a moral and theological obligation to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and between individuals, churches, and parachurch organizations, for the advancement of the Great Commission. This obligation is biblical and theological at its core, a shared doctrine that demands "unity in labor and effort" among churches of like faith and practice.<sup>170</sup> Scarborough understands the doctrine of cooperation to be triangular in nature. God's side includes the perfect and holy model of cooperation within his own triunity. The second side is represented by every church member who co-labors with God

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<sup>168</sup> Benajah H. Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1901), 97–107, 113.

<sup>169</sup> Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Mission*, 226. By "Omissionaries," Carroll meant those he believed were omitting (neglecting) the Great Commission by not actively cooperating with likeminded Baptist churches for evangelistic and missional purposes.

<sup>170</sup> Scarborough, "Is Co-Operation a New Testament Doctrine," 21.

and other church members to the advancement of the gospel within and through their local church. The third relates to the inter-congregational activity of autonomous churches through associations, societies, and conventions, as they voluntarily pool their relationships and resources together to accomplish the Great Commission in the power of the Holy Spirit. Scarborough's triangular doctrine of cooperation depends upon all three sides working at full capacity with one heart and one mission.

Scarborough's book *Endued to Win* (1922) was written as a compilation of his lectures at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary between 1909 and 1922. He saw the Pentecost and the Acts following as Christ's demonstration, both of individuals and churches, that the Holy Spirit works within and between them to advance the Great Commission and win the lost.<sup>171</sup> For Scarborough, all the promises and power of God to his Great Commission people hinged upon the doctrine of cooperation, and this doctrine was most wonderfully and most obviously on display in the Acts 2 Pentecost. In *Products of Pentecost* (1934), he further organized and expanded his position on Pentecostal power for Great Commission cooperation. Scarborough's Pentecostal paradigm for a triangular doctrine of cooperation set the tone and the content for his greatest advocacy in Southern Baptist work. The doctrine consumed his thoughts and directed his leadership among Southern Baptists all his life. It was biblically grounded, theologically rich, and practically compelling.

This chapter has shown that Scarborough's triangular doctrine of cooperation, established in and demonstrated by the Acts 2 Pentecost, is biblically grounded and theologically sound. While Scarborough himself did not attempt to thoroughly exegete biblical passages in support of his triangular doctrine, biblical exegesis supports his conclusions. Scarborough's approach was more systematically theological in nature, tying together the New Testament accounts in development of a New Testament theology of

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<sup>171</sup> Further, Scarborough writes that the "Acts of the Apostles is a most wonderful and marvelous exhibition of divine co-operation and leadership shown in the affairs of men as they carry on the commission of Jesus Christ." Scarborough, *Endued to Win*, 7, 20.

cooperation. He expressed that theology of cooperation as a critical biblical doctrine and leveraged his influence among Baptists in the early twentieth century to refine the language and create the mechanisms necessary to express the doctrine in the first Southern Baptist confession of faith, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (1925).

The triangular Pentecostal paradigm is Scarborough's, but the New Testament doctrine of cooperation belongs to all Christians, and the organization of voluntary cooperation among autonomous congregations for Great Commission advance belongs to Baptists, from the earliest days of their movement and onward. Since 1609, Baptists held a moral and theological obligation among themselves to cooperate for evangelistic and missional endeavors. Scarborough's work in the early twentieth century codified their language and created opportunity for official confessional expression. Baptists have not cooperated—do not cooperate—merely for pragmatic reasons. They cooperate because they share a doctrinal conviction to do so, as they always have.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The Baptist doctrine of cooperation is evident and traceable through Baptist confessions, Baptist thought, and Baptist activity from the earliest days of the Baptist movement through the third decade of the twentieth century. The official confession of this doctrine by Southern Baptists in 1925, with the weight of Great Commission advancement behind it, was not an opportunistic denominational powerplay by Baptist leaders in efforts to centralize control. It was the timely, careful, and deliberate expression of the moral and theological obligation Baptists felt to cooperate since the earliest days of the Baptist movement on two continents. In many ways, the story of Baptists is the story of cooperation and confession. Baptists confessed and cooperated; they cooperated and confessed.

#### **Summary of the Research**

In Amsterdam, in 1609, John Smyth ignited the Baptist movement by establishing a regenerate, credobaptized congregation in wholesale rejection of ecclesiastical hierarchy and infant baptism. At the same time, he rearticulated the doctrine of cooperation from the 1596 Separatists' *A True Confession* and watched that cooperation unfold between the Mennonite congregations he soon petitioned to join. Doctrinal disagreements between Smyth and his fellow church planter Thomas Helwys quickly gave occasion for confessional declarations that delimited cooperation between the first and second Baptist churches. Helwys's confession and pastoral leadership added fearless advocacy for a doctrine of religious liberty to the earliest Baptist doctrinal expressions. Baptists were theologically orthodox but ecclesiologically distinct within the larger

Christian anti-ecclesiastical movements of the day. As the matrix of political, social, economic, and relational dynamics compounded around Baptists through the seventeenth century, their doctrine of local church autonomy forced them to rediscover the doctrine and mechanics of voluntary inter-congregational cooperation. In 1644, seven Baptist churches in London cooperated to confess—and confessed a rudimentary doctrine of cooperation—in what became the first Baptist association. Between 1630 and 1707, the Baptist doctrine of cooperation found cross-continental expression as Roger Williams, Hanserd Knollys, John Clarke, Elias Keach, and others migrated to the New World and corresponded with the Old. While seeded within the larger body of Baptist doctrine heritably transferred across the Atlantic Ocean in the seventeenth century (acknowledging the interplay between congregational autonomy and voluntary inter-dependency) the doctrine of cooperation is first objectively noticeable in the formation of the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1707.

Through associational correspondence and missional collaboration, the doctrine of cooperation took root and bore fruit on American soil as it had in the mother land. The Philadelphia, Charleston, Sandy Creek, and Warren associations modeled inter-congregational cooperation for evangelistic and missional engagement, advancing the Great Commission across the American colonies in the midst of religiopolitical complications not unfamiliar to the Baptist work before them in England. The *Philadelphia Baptist Confession*, based on the *Second London Baptist Confession* (1689), provided doctrinal solidarity for many, but an aversion to confessions and creeds was evidenced in others. Spiritual awakening, revivalism, doctrinal disagreements, revolution, and expansion challenged and elevated cooperation between churches and associations. The rise of the modern missions movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries stirred a greater desire for more robust cooperation. Societies and conventions were formed to combine the efforts of churches and associations and direct those efforts toward national and international mission causes. In South Carolina and Georgia, in 1821 and 1822,

Southern Baptist state conventions began without a clearly defined confessional relationship, but not without a clearly evidenced confessional consciousness. The Triennial Baptist Convention of 1814 was upended by the SBC in 1845, in Augusta, Georgia, over whether slave owners should be appointed as missionaries. Through civil war, reconstruction, economic fluctuation, world war, Wilsonian volunteerism, American patriotism, increasing global attentiveness, and swelling denominational awareness, between 1845 and 1925 Southern Baptists cooperated evangelistically and missionally without a formal confessional statement, albeit never without a functionally delimiting confessional sentence.

At their 1925 Convention in Memphis, Tennessee, the biblical, timeless, heritable obligation Baptists felt to cooperate for evangelistic and missional purposes found opportunity for official statement in the first distinctively Southern Baptist confession of faith, the *Baptist Faith and Message*. This confession was based on the *New Hampshire Baptist Confession* which had mediated theological disagreement among Southern Baptists since the 1830s for the purpose of a collegial and cooperative missiology. The doctrines Baptists confessed in Memphis that year were those “Christian fundamentals” that were “most surely held among us,” as the committee disclosed in the Preamble. Among those doctrines was Article 22’s doctrine of “Co-operation” which articulated, for the first time in history, a comprehensive expression of cooperation as a core tenet of Baptist faith and practice. Lee R. Scarborough, a respected leader among Southern Baptists in the first half of the twentieth century, became the voice of cooperation. He developed, taught, and implemented a robust, paradigmatic, biblically grounded and theologically rich doctrine of cooperation that served Southern Baptists well in his lifetime and the decades following.

### **Conclusions from the Research**

Southern Baptists in the twenty-first century have much to learn from their past. But disagreement is evident over historic Baptist practices regarding confessionalism

and cooperation. If Southern Baptists do not share an accurate understanding of their confessional history, they will not be best situated to build a confessional future. Carlisle Driggers once challenged the oldest state convention to learn from their past while reimagining their future: “It is ill-informed leadership that ignores the past and concentrates only on the present and the future. We must learn from those who preceded us and build on the best of traditions handed down to us. But we must not live in the past, as inviting and secure as that may feel.”<sup>1</sup> To know and agree upon the history of confessionalism and cooperation is necessary for twenty-first century Baptists to effectively envision and build a successful future reality. Cooperation among Southern Baptists is not a pragmatic end to a theological means. It is a theological obligation that informs and compels missiological means. Cooperation is among the rich, biblical, historic doctrines of our shared confession that give substance and shape to the entire body of Baptist faith and practice.

The Convention is experiencing a season of heightened awareness around the age-old tensions between confession and cooperation. Baptists in every generation have wrestled through this same dynamic. But considering some existing and proposed SBC constitutional language, contemporary conversations carry the potential to monumentally effect and possibly existentially alter the nature of SBC evangelistic and missional cooperation for the foreseeable future. This dissertation has told the story of the doctrine of cooperation within the Baptist movement from 1609 to 1925, together with its confessional implications and organizational nuances. The following five conclusions are offered, based on the research, in an attempt to set the historical table at which contemporary Baptist leaders might take a seat, informedly and amiably, for this critical discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> Carlisle Driggers, *A Journey of Faith and Hope* (Columbia: South Carolina Baptist Convention, 2001), 77.

## **Great Commission Cooperation Is a New Testament Doctrine**

Evangelistic and missional cooperation is, as Southern Baptists confess in their *Baptist Faith and Message*, a doctrine firmly seated within the teachings of the New Testament. Lee R. Scarborough saw the doctrine's primary New Testament foundation in the Acts 2 Pentecost. He developed his triangular doctrine of cooperation to reflect the coworking relationship between God, Christians, and Christian churches for the shared goal of Great Commission advancement. Scarborough noted many New Testament passages to further support his triangular paradigm, but he saw the Pentecost as the most fundamental point of church history during which the New Testament doctrine of cooperation was born at the exact moment the Holy Spirit endued Christ followers with the power necessary to accomplish the mission entrusted to them. This power, Scarborough notes, is as necessary today as it was then, and a voluntarily inter-dependent relationship between God, Christians, and churches is as fundamental to the cause today as it was then. The Great Commission must be fulfilled, and it will only be fulfilled as Christians and churches cooperate with God and with one another.

Whether the most compelling biblical foundation for the doctrine of cooperation is found in the Acts 2 Pentecost, as Scarborough suggested, theologians and New Testament scholars are free to decide. The New Testament is replete with examples and exhortations of evangelistic and missional cooperation, both inter-personal and inter-congregational. In the ancient near east, as the message of the gospel spread during the first century, the Holy Spirit inspired biblical writers to record instances of Christians and churches working together to evangelize communities, plant churches, and train and send workers. The same writers, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recorded evidence of other doctrines fundamental to Baptist faith and practice such as the doctrines of the ordinances, religious liberty, eschatological assurance, and just war. In the *Baptist Faith and Message*, these doctrines are confessed alongside matters of Christian orthodoxy such as the doctrines of the Scriptures, the trinity, sin, and salvation. While the doctrines

of Christian orthodoxy are necessary for salvation, the doctrines of Baptist distinction are necessary for denominational identity and solidarity. Among the latter is the doctrine of cooperation, firmly rooted in the teachings of the New Testament and unapologetically confessed and practiced by Baptists for four centuries.

Southern Baptist articulation of the doctrine of cooperation in the *Baptist Faith and Message* was not a denominational powerplay in the third decade of the twentieth century. Neither was it the expression of a uniquely Southern Baptist belief that rose to prominence through denominational controversy and solidarity from 1845 onward. Organized, strategic, voluntary cooperation between Christians and churches for the purpose of Great Commission advancement is a doctrine firmly grounded in the New Testament.

### **Great Commission Cooperation Is a Historic Baptist Doctrine**

Baptists in every generation have felt a moral and theological obligation to cooperate for the advancement of the Great Commission. The doctrine is expressed in the extra-confessional writings of John Smyth, John Spilsbury, Thomas Collier, Thomas Grantham, and other influential seventeenth-century Baptists. It is evidenced in the interactivity of Baptist churches, often across General and Particular lines, in associational, societal, and conventional formation long before the SBC was organized. It was fully expressed as a Baptist doctrine in 1844, one year before the formation of the SBC, by Rob Boyte C. Howell, a Baptist paper editor, in the first issue of Nashville, Tennessee's *The Baptist*. The first paragraph of the 1814 Triennial Convention's and 1845 SBC's constitution sets forth the purpose of these Baptist organizations as a cooperative effort to propagate the gospel through the elicitation, combination, and direction of the Baptist people's resources and energies. Edgar Y. Mullins, Edwin C. Dargan, and Lee R. Scarborough each articulated a doctrine of cooperation in their writings throughout the course of the first two decades of the twentieth century, leading up to the 1925

Convention. The doctrine of cooperation has known prolific expression by Baptists on two continents from the first day of the movement.

Rudimentary expressions of the doctrine are evident and traceable through confessions, associational correspondence, and Baptist activity from 1609 to 1925. The first inter-congregational Baptist confession of faith, the *London Baptist Confession* (1644) included a statement on the doctrine of cooperation taken from the Separatists' *A True Confession* written in 1596. Successive seventeenth-century confessions which in some way included expressions of the doctrine, although rudimentary, include *The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations, Gathered According to the Primitive Pattern* ("Midlands Baptist Confession," 1651), *A Confession of the Faith of Several Churches of Christ In the County of Somerset, and of some Churches in the counties neer adjacent* ("Somerset Baptist Confession," 1656), and the *Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* ("Second London Baptist Confession," 1677/89). Through these seventeenth-century Baptist confessions and others, the doctrine of cooperation is evident and traceable in both the General and Particular Baptist streams. Beginning in 1707, the doctrine is evident in American confessional expressions and associational correspondence within the Philadelphia, Charleston, Sandy Creek, and Warren Baptist Associations, among others. Most associations on American soil adopted Elias Keach's edited version of the *Second London Baptist Confession* (1689), but a few acknowledged shared doctrinal convictions without formally adopting a confession. As the decades progressed and awareness of and opportunity for greater missional organization grew, societies and conventions were formed, usually without the formal adoption of a confession of faith at their outset, but always with a confessional consciousness that guided and guarded their cooperative efforts.

In 1925, denominational awareness and organizational expediency coalesced to afford Southern Baptists the opportunity for a fuller, more complete expression of the

doctrine of cooperation in their *Baptist Faith and Message*. The confession was an edited and enlarged version of the *New Hampshire Baptist Confession* (1833) which did not include a doctrine of cooperation, although its widespread adoption and usage among Baptist churches in the south is evidence of doctrinal solidarity between them. L. R. Scarborough believed the most important doctrine missing from the *New Hampshire Confession* was a doctrine of cooperation which he thought knew no expression in any Baptist confession to date. Scarborough was incorrect in believing that the doctrine of cooperation was not included, at least in basic language, within historic Baptist confessions of faith, but he was correct that the doctrine knew no comprehensive and formal expression within any multi-congregational Baptist confession. *The Baptist Faith and Message* (1925) became its vehicle. In the Southern Baptist confession of faith, the doctrine of cooperation found its first full treatment and recognition as a biblical doctrine most surely held among Baptists in all generations.

### **Baptists Have Always Lived in the Tension of Confession and Cooperation**

Baptists have always been a confessional people, and their confessional consensus has always included some degree of inter-congregational cooperation. But the employment of confessions in organized Baptist cooperation is not as universal or straight-forward throughout history as some might like to think. If a standard, universal practice were evident throughout history regarding the usage of confessions in Baptist cooperation, perhaps ongoing debates over the relationship between the two would be more quickly settled. However, the tension between autonomy and organization—confession and cooperation—is as old as the Baptist movement itself. For over four-hundred years, Baptists have wrestled through the question, “How much doctrinal uniformity/solidarity is necessary to cooperate?” In most instances, they continued to cooperate as they wrestled with this question.



Confessions in the Baptist movement are expressions of a consensus of faith and practice. They hold no authority over a local church and their employment between voluntarily associated Baptist churches in no way threatens the autonomy of those churches. Historically, Baptist churches have found comfort and assurance in cooperating most closely with those churches that hold their core doctrinal distinctions most surely. A three-tiered (autonomous) organizational structure is evident among voluntarily cooperating Baptist churches throughout the history of the movement. Because Baptist organizations are also autonomous, it is impossible to put forth an unbroken uniformity between organizational structure and polity regarding confession and cooperation. However, general confessional practices are evident and distinct on three levels of Baptist cooperative organization.

#### *Associations*

Since 1644, churches in local Baptist associations have held confessions closely and correctively. A church in egregious doctrinal error was often no longer allowed to cooperate with the association, until it addressed the doctrinal issue. Most associations formally adopted a confession of faith, but some did not. Among those who did not formally adopt a confession of faith, such as the Sandy Creek Association in the Carolinas, certain doctrinal positions were held among them that delimited cooperation even though not set forth in historic confessional form. In local Baptist associations, for four-hundred years Baptists have found doctrinal accountability, contextualized ministry, localized evangelistic strategy, and relational camaraderie. Churches that did not associate locally were in danger of falling into doctrinal error and falling away from the Baptist movement altogether. For four centuries, confession and cooperation in the Baptist movement have seen the closest synergy in local associations.

### *Societies*

Baptists began forming societies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially among Baptists in America. They were, in large part, an outgrowth of the modern missions movement that directed the hearts and energies of Baptist churches to unreached areas of the United States and across the globe. While associations were not usually members of or officially connected to Baptist missionary societies, they often promoted and financially supported them. Societies did not usually adopt confessions of faith. Rather, they pooled the resources and relationships of Baptist people, within a region, and directed their energies in a well-defined, narrow missional direction. These Baptist people came from Baptist churches which almost always owned some version of a historic Baptist confession, and which were almost always part of a local association which had adopted (or at least practically leveraged) some historic Baptist confession as a guide to their cooperative relationship. In societies, the mission was front and center (“confessed”), and doctrinal solidarity was behind the scenes (assumed).

### *Conventions*

Although anticipated in seventeenth-century Baptist writings (such as those of Thomas Grantham), state and national conventions came into existence in the early nineteenth century. In 1814, the Triennial Convention was formed as a national body of Baptists gathering for missionary funding and sending every three years, coming from churches, societies, and independently contributing Baptists. In 1821, the first state convention was formed in South Carolina with the clear purposes of education and missions. In 1822, Georgia followed, and other states successively. These state conventions pooled the relationships and resources of churches across associational lines, and directed their resources and energies in state-wide, regional, national, and international evangelistic and missional cooperation, usually in concert with the Triennial Convention. In 1845, the matter of appointing slaveholders as missionaries split the Triennial Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention was formed adopting the exact constitutional document of

the 1814 convention, unaltered. State conventions in the south chose to partner with the SBC over the Triennial Convention.

As state and national conventions were formed, they did not adopt specific confessions of faith. In many ways, this was strategic in efforts to unify the Baptist people for accomplishing shared evangelistic and missional goals without allowing confessional differences to divide them. Conventions were like societies in that they pooled resources from across associational lines, but they were not like societies in that they organized a broader scope of mission and ministry rather than targeting one or two specific missionaries or mission endeavors. Conventions were like associations in that they employed formal messenger-representative polity, but they were not like associations in that they allowed messenger-representatives from a broad scope of Baptist organizations (instead of churches only, until 1931 in the SBC) and without a clearly adopted confession.

That is not to say, however, that Baptist confessions played no role in conventions. Baptists convening came from Baptist churches and Baptist organizations that owned some kind of defined Baptist faith and practice, usually confessed in some form of a historic Baptist confession. When convention appointed and funded personnel—whether missionary or educational—departed from historic Baptist doctrine in some way, their appointments and funding were rescinded. In conventions, from 1814 to 1925, the Philadelphia and New Hampshire confessions guarded and guided the cooperative missiology of the Baptist people without forcing a restrictive function within the representative body. In 1925, when the *Baptist Faith and Message* was confessed by the SBC, it was mostly seen as a set of doctrines agreed upon by the gathered body that year rather than a perennial document to be restrictive in messenger representation. For eight decades, Southern Baptists had been leveraging confessional consensus for missiological accountability. Their intention was to continue doing so, with a more cohesively agreed upon set of doctrines “most surely held among us.”

W. W. Barnes understood the “evolution” of the SBC in the early twentieth century (specifically the adoption of a confession of faith in 1925 coupled with the policy change of only allowing messengers from cooperating churches in 1931) to be a crossbreed “of two species—association and convention” that was in danger of evolving into “an entirely new species—the ecclesiastical.”<sup>2</sup> Whether what Barnes warned became reality in the decades that followed is another topic of research, outside the scope of this dissertation. What is conclusive, however, is that from 1609 to 1925, the tension between confession and cooperation is something Baptists lived with and worked through, as they pooled their relationships and resources together for evangelistic and missiological purposes. They often cooperated across Particular and General lines and across geographic boundaries. Confessions sometimes highlighted doctrinal distinctions between groups of Baptists (such as the Arminian-leaning versus Calvinistic-leaning confessions of English Baptists in the seventeenth century), and other times moderated doctrinal differences between them (such as the 1689 *Second London Baptist Confession* which did not make closed communion a confessional stance as it had been in 1644, or the 1833 *New Hampshire Baptist Confession* which softened soteriological language to represent the views of both Calvinistic and non-Calvinistic Baptists). In some settings, Baptists made exceptions to allow representation from and fellowship with churches that displayed obvious confessional divergence. Their moral and theological obligation to cooperate for Great Commission advancement was often stronger than their tendencies to divide over non-essential and/or non-agreed upon tenets of faith and practice. Accordingly, they formed autonomous Baptist associations that met the needs of local fellowship and local missions among those who were most closely doctrinally aligned. Then they formed autonomous Baptist societies and conventions that met the larger needs of Great Commission cooperation through a confessionally guarded and guided missiology

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<sup>2</sup> William W. Barnes, *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology: The Southern Baptist Convention* (Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill, 1934), 34.

without a confessionally restrictive society/convention representation. If the length of Baptist history is considered, the tension between confession and cooperation is more perennial than the functional place of any single confession.

### **Doctrinal Solidarity Is Essential to Great Commission Cooperation**

While the tension between confessional alignment and cooperative engagement has been a perennial reality among Baptists, one should not fall into the error of believing that doctrinal solidarity was unimportant to Baptists between 1609 and 1925. Conversely, doctrinal distinctiveness was the driving force for the ignition of the Baptist movement in 1609, and it has been the driving force for evangelistic and missional organization since that day. From John Smyth to L. R. Scarborough, the doctrine of the Great Commission compelled Baptists in autonomous churches to cooperate. But from John Smyth to L. R. Scarborough, doctrinal division also delimited Baptist Great Commission cooperation. Some doctrinal divisions were too deep to maintain cooperation resulting in church splits and denominational schisms, such as the split between John Smyth and Thomas Helwys in 1610 because of Christological and ecclesiological doctrinal division and the schism between Campbellites and Baptists in the 1820s–30s because of missiological and soteriological doctrinal differences. Other doctrinal disagreements did not rise to the level of division, such as the debate over open versus closed communion among 1677/89 London Baptists or disagreement over church membership that did not preclude messenger allocation from the United Association at the Georgia state convention in 1839 (although the same doctrinal division caused splits in area associations, the state convention was able to bring messengers from all of them together for their shared evangelistic and missional objectives). Never has doctrinal solidarity been unimportant to Baptists. Rather, the question has always been over how much doctrinal alignment is necessary to cooperate and whether different degrees of doctrinal solidarity are acceptable among

cooperating Baptists at different levels of organizational cooperation (associations, societies, and conventions).

Doctrinal alignment, or at least doctrinal symmetry, has always been essential to Great Commission cooperation among Baptists. But levels of cooperation are evident inside an increasingly organized structure of Baptist interactivity from 1609 to 1925. It may be helpful to think of confessional cooperation at work within a paradigm of concentric circles. It must be noted, however, that because autonomy is at work in every level of Baptist cooperation, uniformly categorizing Baptist organizations is impossible. What follows in Figure 2 is a general depiction of organized cooperation in the Baptist movement from 1609 to 1925, and it is not without historical exceptions or nuances.



Figure 2. Concentric Circles of Baptist Cooperation

The innermost circle, “Confessional Uniformity,” represents the greatest level of doctrinal alignment between Baptist churches or organizations. While perfect unanimity is not possible, uniformity on thought around the most essential doctrines of Baptist distinction (such as the ordinances, religious liberty, soteriology, and ecclesiology) is what is in mind. A singular, shared confession that is required for admission to the fellowship

would allow for divergence only on the least significant of confessed doctrinal details, and only by special approval of the gathered body of Baptists. Most (though not all) Baptist associations from 1644 forward adopted this form of uniformed confessional cooperation.

The second circle, “Confessional Homogeneity,” represents a doctrinal consensus between voluntarily organized churches – consensus that the doctrines they share own necessary biblical and historical consistency. The articles of the confession(s) they share contain the same general elements and characteristics of historic Baptist beliefs and, as such, are unifying enough to direct the organization’s forward Great Commission energies without restricting its participating Baptist churches’ (or other Baptist organizations’) representation. State and national conventions were formed according to this organizing principle as the modern missions movement enlarged and enlivened the missionary impulses of Baptists on American soil during the early-mid nineteenth century. Doctrinal accountability would take place in the tightest circle, while confessionally conscientious evangelistic and missional cooperation would be expanded through the second.

The third circle, “Confessional Amity,” represents the level of Baptists’ willingness to cooperate with either non-representationally governed Baptist groups (such as some Baptist mission societies) or admittedly non-Baptist groups (such as other evangelical denominations) for a common cause “when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such co-operation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and his Word as revealed in the New Testament.”<sup>3</sup> The moral and theological obligation Baptists felt to cooperate extended to those groups that may not share confessional alignment, but were willing and able to amiably respect confessional differences while co-laboring toward a common end. Cooperation at this level was usually

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<sup>3</sup> “Comparison Chart,” Southern Baptist Convention, accessed June 1, 2024, <https://bfm.sbc.net/comparison-chart/>.

restricted to those activities that advocated for less overtly evangelistic or missional enterprises such as advocating for religious liberty or meeting human needs. While obvious in English Baptist political expediencies, this third circle of Baptist cooperation became an especially significant point of differentiation during the Christian Union movement of the 1910s–20s. Doctrinal accountability and locally contextualized cooperation would take place in the tightest circle, confessionally conscientious evangelistic and missional cooperation would be expanded through the second, and cooperative Great Commandment work would be enlarged through partnership with non-Baptist groups when respectful and expedient.

To say that doctrinal solidarity is essential to Great Commission cooperation is not to ignore that different levels of doctrinal solidarity have historically delimited different levels of cooperative engagement. The concentric circles paradigm, although not perfect, may help Baptists think more objectively through what is meant by “confessional cooperation,” at least in retrospect from the beginning of the movement through the early twentieth century. For a Baptist organization to be confessional is to give a confession a defined and proper place in the organizational structure. Most associations knew confessional uniformity. Most conventions knew confessional homogeneity. Most societies and other interest groups knew confessional amity. The first two concentric circles evidence a confessional cooperation while the third allows for broad, extra-confessional cooperative arrangements.

### **Great Commission Cooperation Is Significant to Doctrinal Conservation**

Not only did the doctrinal distinctiveness of the Baptist movement compel Baptist churches to cooperate, but their doctrine of cooperation compelled Baptists to associate and convene. Those churches that refused to be an active part of the larger Baptist movement through associational, societal, and conventional engagement eventually either defaulted from core Baptist doctrines or dissolved altogether.



Something about the regular rhythms of associating locally and convening regionally helped convictional Baptist people and autonomous Baptist churches wrestle through doctrinal issues, strengthening and sharpening one another theologically and guarding the doctrinal distinctiveness of the Baptist movement moving forward. Confessions locked-in the mainstream consensus of Baptist faith and practice, and those churches that found themselves on the edges of that confessional alignment felt the pull back toward the middle. If their doctrinal error was egregious, they were removed from associational fellowship. If they continued to cooperate, they either felt growing doctrinal tension or moved back toward the mainstream doctrinal position. If they refused to cooperate, they lost their Baptist doctrinal distinctiveness and defected from the movement.

In the Baptist movement, inter-congregational confessions of faith are only possible because congregations voluntarily associate and cooperate. To co-confess, churches must voluntarily organize. To safeguard doctrinal solidarity, churches must voluntarily associate. To ensure confessionally guarded missiological enterprises, churches must regularly convene. Without the Great Commission impulse driving cooperation forward, every doctrinal disagreement may end in denominational division. But when involved and invested Baptists gather, they hold each other and their supported organizations to a shared doctrinal standard. In the Baptist movement, the conservation of the doctrines “most surely held among” them is entirely dependent upon the voluntary associating and convening of the churches that most surely hold those doctrines. Historically, doctrinal distinctiveness drove Baptists to confess and disassociate, then Great Commission agreement drove them to confessionally cooperate. The perennial tension between confession and cooperation affords Baptists a reciprocal benefit between the two. Doctrine compels cooperation, and cooperation safeguards doctrine.

### **Opportunities for Further Research**

A single dissertation cannot exhaust the details of the rich history of confessionalism and cooperation in the Baptist movement. More research is necessary to

inform and enlarge the story of the doctrine of cooperation among Baptists from their earliest days to contemporary times. The invitation stands for future researchers to dig more deeply into the following areas of study in efforts to correct, enlarge, or refine the claims of this dissertation. Iron sharpens iron and one man sharpens another (Prov 27:17). May future research on this significant doctrinal and historical matter be an open display of the cooperative spirit of Southern Baptists, even as the doctrine of cooperation itself is the subject of investigation.

### **Wartime Language and Organization**

The research raised awareness of an interesting relationship between geopolitical warfare and Baptist thought and organization. The earliest days of the Baptist movement are set within the geopolitical struggle between the politically and religiously sovereign English monarchy and Roman Catholic European counterinfluence. In his biographical preface to Smyth's works, Whitley acknowledges the effects and results of the Hundred Years War upon the religiopolitical setting of sixteenth- and seventeenth- century Europe during which Smyth fled from England to Holland, where his Baptist views found opportunity in what was the "centre of freedom" on the post-war continent.<sup>4</sup> During English Civil War in the 1640s, military language was coopted by cooperating Baptists, such as the choice of word "association" to describe the London Baptist gathering of churches in 1644. Throughout the writings of John Smyth, Thomas Helwys, John Spilsbury, Thomas Grantham, and other seventeenth-century English Baptists, terminology such as soldiers, generals, war, battle, armor, weapons, barbarians, peace, and liberty are utilized in connection to Christ's cause among and through his churches. The same wartime language can be found in the writings of Isaac Backus, Samuel Stillman, John Gano, and other influential Baptists in America during the Revolutionary War. Southern

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<sup>4</sup> William T. Whitley in John Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth: Tercentenary Edition for the Baptist Historical Society with Notes and Biography* by W. T. Whitley (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1915), 1:lxv.

Baptist leaders who lived through the first World War, like Lee R. Scarborough, George W. Truett, and Monroe E. Dodd, made wide use of the parallels between the language of war and Christ's conquering kingdom. Undoubtedly, war language and wartime ideology gave shape and substance to the narrative of Baptist cooperation through the twentieth century. The specific parallels, however, are yet to be documented.

Further, wartime language in Baptist cooperation may be a subset of larger wartime organization in Baptist inter-congregational cooperation. Seven London Baptist congregations organized their "association" in 1644 after the pattern of the military "associations" of their day – autonomous and independent units working together for a common goal. In *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology* (1934), W. W. Barnes makes a connection between the organizational principles of the seventeenth-century English Parliament and the seventeenth- through twentieth- century organization of Baptist associations, societies, and conventions in both England and America. The SBC's concepts of representation, messenger delegation, and entity autonomy must be, at least in some way, connected to the American concepts of representative delegation and constitutional federalism.

As was true with the various religiopolitical, social, and cultural factors of the seventeenth-century English Baptists, the Baptist movement in America from 1707 to 1845 undoubtedly was affected by various political and cultural events of the day. The French and Indian War of 1754–1763, for example, became part of the religiopolitical and cultural matrix into which the Charleston, Sandy Creek, and Warren associations were begun; in both South Carolina and Boston, the effects of the war were felt heavily in the escalating conflicts between Native American and American settlers in the state as well as increased taxation from the English government. The Revolutionary War of 1775–1783 disrupted all life on American soil, marking its defining moment in Philadelphia, with the Constitutional Convention in 1776, the same city in which Baptist associationalism in America had begun sixty-nine years earlier. The War of 1812 transpired

during the formation of some of the most effective Baptist missions societies and conventions. American experiments with and military defense of democratic governance rose parallel with Baptist experiments in voluntary inter-congregational cooperation. How did these rhetorical and organizational dynamics effect the formation, methodology, relational nuances, effectiveness, and expansion of the Baptist missionary movement within associations, societies, and conventions? The need for continued research concerning the relationship between Baptist confessionalism and cooperation in American history is evident.

### **συνεργός and the Doctrine of Cooperation**

Throughout the New Testament, the *συνεργός* word grouping (*συνεργόν, συνεργούς, συνεργῶν, συνεργῶ*) is used by both Paul and John to describe a co-working relationship between God and Christians and between Christians and other Christians. While L. R. Scarborough did not specifically mention these references, they certainly fit into his triangular paradigm for a New Testament doctrine of cooperation. The word group is used thirteen times in the New Testament, by two different authors. Some instances describe a coworking relationship simply between two Christians, or within a group of Christians, while others describe a coworking relationship between Christians and God. Every usage is set within the context of evangelistic and missional cooperation.

A thorough study of these passages and their historical and literary contexts may either refine or enlarge the theology of cooperation and give more helpful language to its expression. In the 1990s, French political scientist Philippe Turchet coined the term *synergologie* (synergology) for his work in the relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication. But the biblical term is a compound word, from *σύν* (“with” or “beside”) and *ἔργον* (“work”). Because its biblical usage is always set within the context of evangelistic and missional co-laboring, a thorough word study focused on Great Commission partnership may afford Baptists a better understanding of New Testament cooperation and enlarge the Baptist vocabulary in the field.

## **Confessionalism and Cooperation in the SBC, 1925–2025**

Much has changed in Southern Baptist organization since 1925. In 1931, the constitution was changed to only allow messengers from cooperating churches, rather than from any contributing Baptist person or group (such as societies, associations, or individuals). In 1948, the phrase “friendly cooperation” was added, restricting the seating of messengers solely to those who come from churches that meet this criterion, although the phrase is not sufficiently explained in governing documentation.<sup>5</sup> In 1968, Bylaw 1 of the constitution was changed to instruct the President to appoint a Credentials Committee of seven to assist the Registration Secretary with any problems regarding the seating of messengers. This was a change from the 1914 bylaw provision that trusted Convention secretaries to approve messenger seating and utilize a Committee on Credentials only if necessary, when a church appealed the secretaries’ decision. In 1993, Article III of the constitution was amended to provide an example of a church that would not be considered in “friendly cooperation” (any church that affirms, approves, or endorses homosexual behavior).<sup>6</sup> In 2014, Article III was amended to allow for the seating of messengers only from a church that “closely identifies with the Convention’s adopted statement of faith.” For the first time in the SBC, the confession and the governing documents were officially conjoined. In 2019, a standing Credentials Committee was added to the organizational structure, through which the committee members were to

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<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Baker explains what is meant by “friendly cooperation” in a series of *Baptist Standard* articles immediately following the 1948 Convention. The context for adding this phrase is set within increasing tensions between the Northern and Southern Conventions. Baker makes the case that cooperation should not be restricted by geography, that Baptists migrating to territories outside the South should exhibit Christlike amity toward their Northern Baptist brothers and sisters, and that the SBC constitution was changed in 1948 to secure that messengers come from churches that not only have given to the work, but also exhibit “a friendly and co-operative spirit.” For Baker, “friendly cooperation” meant exactly what it sounds like: friendly/amiable/congenial. See Robert A. Baker, “Relations Between Northern and Southern Baptists: Third Discussion,” *Baptist Standard*, June 24, 1948, 6. Robert A. Baker, “Relations Between Northern and Southern Baptists: Fifth Discussion,” *Baptist Standard*, July 8, 1948, 6.

<sup>6</sup> If Baker’s 1948 interpretation of “friendly cooperation” was correct, this 1993 constitutional amendment fundamentally changed the convention’s interpretation of the phrase.

monitor the doctrinal positions of churches throughout the year, when requested, and make recommendations to the Executive Committee regarding whether a church should be considered in “friendly cooperation.”<sup>7</sup> In 2021, two more enumerations were added to the constitution’s Article III to further qualify “friendly cooperation” as moral and theological solidarity on contemporary social issues (sexual abuse and racism). In 2024, a proposed sixth Article III amendment was struck down by messengers; the amendment would have further qualified “friendly cooperation” regarding the office of pastor.

The organization of the SBC is becoming more complex, and an accelerated rapidity of change in organizational documentation is evident. Since 1993 and 2014, the phrases “friendly cooperation” and “closely identifies with” tie the confession to the governing documents in a way that Southern Baptists have not known for most of their history. Is the SBC’s organizational structure in the twenty-first century what the organizational framers would have anticipated in 1845 or 1925? Is the usage of the *Baptist Faith and Message* in this changing organizational structure what the messengers of the 1925 Convention imagined? Are current changes in SBC organizational documentation evidence of the foreboding ecclesiastical hierarchy of which W. W. Barnes warned in his book *A Study in the Development of Ecclesiology* (1934)? Perhaps more importantly, does the contemporary trend relating to confession and organizational documentation reflect or redefine the doctrine of cooperation within the Baptist movement?

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<sup>7</sup> So, since 2019, the Credentials Committee works throughout the year, and the Executive Committee can act throughout the year to determine “friendly cooperation” based on a church’s agreement with or divergence from the confession (or other stipulations set forth in the constitution’s Article III). From 1948 to 1993, “friendly cooperation” referred to amiability in the shared work. From 1993 to 2019, “friendly cooperation” referred to general doctrinal agreement on certain theological positions important to the day, but still only pertained to the seating of messengers at an annual meeting. Since 2019, “friendly cooperation” seems to be a perpetual status, based on doctrinal alignment, that a church either does or does not maintain whether or not the church attempts to seat messengers at an annual meeting. The 2019 change in the Credentials Committee was an existential pivot point in SBC organization.

## APPENDIX 1

### JOHN SMYTH'S 18 HYPOTHETICAL SYLLOGISMS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM

John Smyth's 18 hypothetical syllogisms in refutation of infant Baptism, in *Argumenta Contra Baptismum Infantum* ("Against Infant Baptism") abridged, categorized, and translated. Latin text taken from John Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth: Tercentenary Edition for the Baptist Historical Society with Notes and Biography* by W. T. Whitley (Cambridge: University Press, 1915), 710–732.

#### **Argument 1 (understanding of the sacraments)**

- *Ad quos non pertinet ecclesiae doctrina, ad eos non pertine[n]t ecclesiae sacramenta: ideoque non baptismus.*
- *Ad infantes non pertinet ecclesiae doctrina.*
- *Ergo, ad infantes non pertine[n]t ecclesiae Sacramenta ideoque non baptismus.*

Translation:

- To whom the doctrine of the church does not pertain, the sacraments of the church do not pertain: thus, not baptism.
- The doctrine of the church does not pertain to infants.
- Therefore, the sacraments of the church do not pertain to infants, thus not baptism.

#### **Argument 2 (understanding of doctrinal teaching)**

- *Qui non possunt doceri, ij non debent baptisari.*
- *Infantes non possunt doceri.*
- *Ergo infantes non debent baptisari.*

Translation:

- Those who cannot be taught should not be baptized.
- Infants cannot be taught.
- Therefore infants should not be baptized.

#### **Argument 3 (inability to repentant)**

- *Qui non agunt poenitentiam non sunt baptisandi.*
- *Infantes non agunt poenitentiam.*
- *Ergo infantes non sunt baptisandi.*

Translation:

- Those who do not do penance (do not repent) are not to be baptized.
- Infants do not do penance (do not repent).
- Therefore infants are not to be baptized.

**Argument 4 (inability to believe)**

- *Qui non credunt, non sunt baptisandi.*
- *Infantes non credunt.*
- *Ergo infantes non sunt baptisandi.*

Translation:

- Those who do not believe are not to be baptized.
- Infants do not believe.
- Therefore infants are not to be baptized.

**Argument 5 (no original sin)**

- *Qui peccato vacui in innocentia sua permanent, non sunt baptisandi.*
- *Infantes peccato vacui in innocentia sua permanent.*
- *Ergo Infantes non sunt baptisandi.*

Translation:

- Those who are permanently empty of sin in innocence, are not to be baptized.
- Infants are permanently empty of sin in innocence.
- Therefore infants are not to be baptized.

**Argument 6 (cannot partake in communion)**

- *Aut infantes debent coenam dominicam comedere, aut non debent baptisari.*
- *At infantes non debent coenam domini comedere.*
- *Ergo infantes non debent baptisari.*

Translation:

- Either infants should partake of the Lord's Supper (eat the Sunday meal), or they should not be baptized.
- Infants should not partake of the Lord's Supper (eat the Sunday meal).
- Therefore, infants should not be baptized.

**Argument 7 (lack of conviction over sin)**

- *Quorum corda non aspera sunt a mala conscientia, eorum corpora non sunt abluenda aqua pura baptismatis.*
- *Corda infantum non sunt aspera a mala conscientia.*
- *Ergo infantum corpora non sunt abluenda aqua pura baptismatis.*



Translation:

- Those whose hearts are not hard with an evil conscience, their bodies are not to be washed in the pure water of baptism.
- The hearts of infants are not hard with an evil conscience.
- Therefore the bodies of infants are not to be washed in the pure water of baptism.

**Argument 8 (have no remission of sins)**

- *Qui non habent remissionem peccatorum, non sunt baptisandi.*
- *Infantes non habent remissionem peccatorum.*
- *Ergo infantes non sunt baptisandi.*

Translation:

- Those who do not have remission of sins, are not to be baptized.
- Infants do not have remission of sins.
- Therefore infants are not to be baptized.

**Argument 9 (inability to evangelize)**

- *Qui non possunt viam domini praeparare, non debent baptisari.*
- *Infantes non possunt viam domini praefarare.*
- *Ergo infantes non debent baptisari.*

Translation:

- Those who cannot prepare the way of the Lord, should not be baptized.
- Infants cannot prepare the way of the Lord.
- Therefore infants should not be baptized.

**Argument 10 (the seriousness of the New Testament ordinance)**

- *Si sacramenta novi testamenti multo praestantiora sunt sacramentis veteris testamenti: tum infantes non sunt baptisandi:*
- *At sacramenta novi testamenti multo praestantiora sunt sacramentis veteris testamenti.*
- *Ergo infantes non sunt baptisandi.*

Translation:

- If the New Testament sacraments are much more important than Old Testament sacraments: then infants are not to be baptized.
- But the New Testament sacraments are much more important than the Old Testament sacraments.
- Therefore infants are not to be baptized.

**Argument 11 (cannot understand Christ's teaching)**

- *Si solus Christus, utpote Doctor coelestis audiendus est, in ecclesia novi testamenti tum infantes non sunt baptisandi.*
- *At solus Christus utpote D. coelestis audiendus est in ecclesia novi testamenti.*
- *Ergo infantes non sunt baptisandi.*

Translation:

- If only Christ, the teacher from heaven must be understood, in the New Testament Church infants are not to be baptized.
- But only Christ is the heavenly teacher to be understood in the New Testament church.
- Therefore infants are not to be baptized.

**Argument 12 (infants are shadows of their future, redeemable selves)**

- *Nudae umbrae non debent baptisari.*
- *Infantes sunt nudae umbrae.*
- *Ergo infantes non debent baptisari.*

Translation:

- Naked shadows should not be baptized.
- Infants are naked shadows.
- Therefore infants should not be baptized.

**Argument 13 (impossibility of Baptizing all infants – all or nothing)**

- *Aut omnes infantes baptisandi sunt; aut nulli:*
- *Sed omnes infantes non sunt baptisandi.*
- *Ergo nulli infantes debent baptisari.*

Translation:

- Either all infants are to be baptized; or none.
- But not all infants are to be baptized.
- Therefore no infants should be baptized.

**Argument 14 (significance of John the Baptist's baptism for repentance from sin)**

- *Si Johannis baptistae ministerium praestantius est, omnium prophetarum ministerio, tum infantes non debent baptisari.*
- *At ministerium Joannis praestantius est reliquorum prophetarum ministerio.*
- *Ergo infantes non sunt baptisandi.*

Translation:

- If the ministry of John the Baptists is superior to the ministry of all other prophets, then infants should not be baptized.

- But the ministry of John is more superior than the ministry of the rest of the prophets.
- Therefore infants are not to be baptized.

**Argument 15 (preeminence of Jesus's example in baptism)**

- *Si ministerium Johannis sit principium evangelij Christi, et tamen minus ministerio Christi: tum infantes non sunt baptisandi.*
- *At ministerium Johannis est principium evangelij Jesu Christi, et tamen minus ministerio Christi.*
- *Ergo Infantes non sunt baptisandi.*

Translation:

- If the ministry of John is the beginning of the gospel of Christ, and yet less than the ministry of Christ, then infants are not to be baptized.
- But the ministry of John is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and yet less than the ministry of Christ.
- Therefore Infants are not to be baptized.

**Argument 16 (salvation in Christ alone)**

- *Si Christus servat populum suum a peccatis suis; tum infantes non sunt baptisandi.*
- *At Christus servat populum suum a peccatis suis.*
- *Ergo Infantes non sunt baptisandi.*

Translation:

- If Christ saves people from their sins, then infants are not to be baptized.
- But Christ saves people from their sins.
- Therefore Infants are not to be baptized.

**Argument 17 (no biblical example or teaching for infant baptism)**

- *Cujus nullum extat vel exemplum vel praeceptum, id non debet fieri.*
- *Baptismatis infantum nullum extat vel exemplum vel praeceptum.*
- *Ergo infantes non debent baptisate donari.*

Translation:

- For that which there exists neither example nor precept, it should not be done.
- No example or precept exists for infant baptism.
- Therefore infants should not be given to baptism.

**Argument 18 – conclusion (infant baptism is an unwritten tradition of the church):**

- *Traditiones ecclesiae non scriptae rejiciendae sunt. 1 Cor. 4. 6.*
- *Baptismus infantum est traditio ecclesiae non scripta.*
- *Ergo baptismus infantum rejiciendus est.*

Translation:

- Unwritten church traditions must be rejected. 1 Cor. 4. 6.
- The baptism of infants is an unwritten church tradition.
- Therefore infant baptism must be rejected.

## APPENDIX 2

### PRONOUNCEMENT ON CHRISTIAN UNION (1914)

Dargan, E. C. et al. "1914 Pronouncement on Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency." In *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1914*, 73–78. Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1914.

In view of the widespread discussion of Christian Union and the interest of Christian people generally in this great theme, and in order to make clear to the world at large our position on the subject of Christian Union, and to promote the efficiency of our denominational work, the Southern Baptist Convention, assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on May 13, 1914, adopt the following paper as an expression of the views of Southern Baptists on the subject of Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency:

This Convention rejoices in the many evidences of increasing interest in the subject of Christian union among Christian people everywhere. Many evils arise from the divided state of modern Christendom. The prayer of Jesus in the seventeenth (sic) of John and the many exhortations to unity in the Epistles of the New Testament should keep us constantly reminded that this matter lay very near the heart of the Master and of His apostles.

We have deep and abiding joy in the spiritual unity and brotherhood which bind together all believers in Jesus Christ, of every name and in every clime. We are intensely grateful for that form of personal religious experience which is the priceless possession of every soul who has known the redeeming grace of God in Christ. All other distinctions among men, whether social, national or racial, are superficial in comparison with this common bond of spiritual unity through grace. We are also in hearty accord with every movement and cause in which Christians of every name may take part without doing violence to the sacred mandates of conscience and without impairing their sense of loyalty to Christ.

In setting forth his declaration of our views on Christian union, there are four things which we take for granted:

1. That all true disciples agree in accepting the Lordship of Jesus Christ as supreme and final in all matters of faith and practice.
2. That none of us desire to seek Christian union by compromise of honest convictions as to duty to Christ.
3. That in the New Testament alone do we find the sufficient, certain and authoritative revelation of His will.
4. That all alike desire to know and obey the revealed will of Christ.

In order to define our attitude to the question of Christian union, we deem it necessary to state our understanding of the Gospel on the following points:

1. The relations of the individual to God.
2. The nature of the change which takes place in the individual when right relations are established with God.
3. The initial ordinance whose observance is enjoined by Christ at the outset of the renewed life.
4. The nature of the spiritual fellowship and life of the church into which the renewed man enters.
5. The relation of the church to the state and to the world at large.

It will be found that all these are vitally related to each other, and that if clearly understood they convey the message which Baptists believe to be entrusted to them for the blessing of the world.

**1. The relation of the individual to God.** We believe that all men are entitled equally to the direct access to God; and that responsibility and freedom are bound up together. This will be recognized by all as a moral and spiritual principle of profound and far-reaching significance. Yet it is in the closest manner connected, for good or ill, with ceremonies and ordinances which are regarded by some as mere matters of expediency or convenience. The spiritual principle, as we believe, expresses the essential nature of Christianity. Hence, it is impossible for us to accept or approve infant baptism, since it takes away from the child the privilege of conscious personal obedience to Christ. We must also refuse to accept or approve any form of proxy religion which puts priest or sacrament between the soul and God. In like manner, we are bound to disapprove of all ecclesiastical systems which set up human authorities over the consciences of those whom Christ has made free. In a word, our view of ordinances, sacraments, priest-hoods, ecclesiastical system, is not due to considerations of expediency or convenience, but to the spiritual nature of Christianity itself as revealed in the New Testament.

**2. The nature of the change in the individual when right relations with God are established.** This is described in the New Testament as a birth from above, a renewing of the Holy Spirit, a regeneration, a partaking of the divine nature, and in other ways. It is a radical renewal of the spiritual nature of man, due to the direct action of the Holy Spirit, and always in connection with conscious acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Repentance and faith are always associated with it. It is not dependent upon the use of sacraments or priestly mediation. It is a spiritual transformation which results from the direct and immediate contact of the soul with the Spirit of God. Holding as they do that this spiritual birth through the operation of God's Spirit is of the very essence of Christianity, it would be a glaring contradiction if Baptists should place their approval upon infant baptism or any other form of proxy obedience.

**3. The initial ordinance of the Christian life.** The reason why Baptists hold that the immersion of the believer in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the only true baptism may be briefly summed up. First, and chiefly it is the express command of Christ, and the uniform practice of apostles. Secondly, its symbolism is due, in a very large part to its form as immersion. Death, burial and resurrection could not be set forth symbolically by the act if the form of the ordinance were changed. The beauty, fitness and spiritual impressiveness of the ordinance as thus administered have been abundantly demonstrated by its history. Thirdly, the world's best scholars of all names

and country are practically a unit in their opinion that immersion was the New Testament practice.

Our view of baptism also emphasizes in another way our intense desire to preserve the spirituality of the Gospel. Baptism is, in no measure or degree, a saving ordinance. It has not the slightest efficacy in regenerating the soul. It is purely and exclusively a symbol of a spiritual renewal wrought by the Spirit of God through faith in Christ. Our chief concern, therefore, in holding our view as to baptism is not to preserve "a mere form," or contend merely for an empty ceremony. It is rather to express symbolically through the ordinance the meaning of the spiritual life, and to practice in its observance that obedience to the command of Christ which, in principle, is the glory of discipleship.

The reason for our insistence upon the form of baptism as related to its meaning may easily be made clear to Protestant Christians. All feel a sense of the incongruity and unfitness of the Catholic practice of withholding the cup from the laity. Half the form and half the meaning are thus taken from the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. So, also, in our view of the form of baptism as a symbol of spiritual truths and facts. In thus holding that baptism is a symbol we protect the spiritual realities symbolized from being identified with the form, and at the same time we secure the symbol itself against the very human tendency to convert outward ceremonies into spiritual causes. Holding as we do these Scriptural views of the ordinance of baptism and believing that Christian baptism is a necessary condition of access to the Lord's Supper, we cannot in good conscience do otherwise than uphold the divine order in our practice.

**4. The church is the outward organization which conserves and propagates the spiritual principles we have outlined.** Its polity and ordinances are the formal expression of the spiritual life in Christ. The equality of believers in the church is the necessary consequence of the equality of the status of men before God. That each local church is, and in the nature of the case should be, self-governing and independent is a truth inseparable from the other truth that all men are directly responsible to God. The priesthood of all believers carries at its heart the necessity for self-government in church life. The freedom of the sons of God is a freedom which requires democracy for its adequate expression.

In all that we are saying about the church, it will be seen that our emphasis is upon the spiritual nature of Christianity and upon outward forms only as they fitly belong to such a religion. Our chief concern is not with ordinances and polity. Our concern is not with them at all for their own sake. We find that the New Testament prescribes two ordinances and hence we maintain them. We find in the New Testament a form of church life adapted to the universality, simplicity and spirituality of the Christian faith. Our supreme desire is to make known to men this universal and supremely spiritual religion. When confronted with the suggestion that we abandon our position as to ordinances and polity, we have been unable to find sufficient grounds for so doing. Our unqualified acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ holds us to that position. The close connection between right views as to ceremonies and the duty of conserving the spirituality and universality of the gospel reinforces our sense of loyalty to Christ. The service which we may render to civilization through the propagation of these views powerfully influences us. That they are practically workable as well as self-consistent within themselves is shown by the marvelous growth of our people and the spread of our principles.

**5. The complete separation of church and state is clearly the only proper relation between ecclesiastical and civil organizations.** Soul-freedom and civil liberty are twin blossoms on the stalk of Christian faith. A free church in a free state has become an American axiom. We rejoice in the witness our Baptist people have ever borne to this great truth, and pledge ourselves to its perpetuation through all the future.

It follows from all that has been said that as we regard the matter, the interests of Christian unity cannot be best promoted by a policy of compromise. Much good will come of fraternal conference and interchange of view. There will no doubt gradually arise far greater unity of conviction than exists now. But this cannot be artificially produced or made to order. A deepening and enriching of the life in Christ among Christians of all names are a prime condition. Groups of Christian bodies which stand nearest each other can first come to an understanding. The desire and prayer for the coming of Christ's Kingdom on earth will more and more intensify the spiritual unity of His people.

We have declared ourselves on those matters which enter into the question of outward or organic Christian union. We have not dwelt upon the truths and doctrines in which there is substantial agreement among evangelical Christians. We rejoice that the measure of agreement is already so great. We regret that it is not great enough to remove our separateness from brethren in Christ who bear other names.

We wish to add that pending the realization of Christian union in the ideal sense, we may resort to the principle of Christian cooperation. Many moral, social, civic and other movements invite the united effort of every lover of his fellowmen and friend of righteousness. Our modern civilization is undergoing many changes and making rapid progress in material things. Moral issues are multiplying on all hands. The moral forces of the nation are challenged as never before. We hereby avow in the most emphatic manner our desire and willingness to co-operate in all practicable ways in every cause of righteousness. We join hands with Christians of all names in seeking these common ends. We ask no one to compromise his convictions in joining us in such movements, and we ask only that our own be respected. We firmly believe there are ways by which all men who stand together for righteousness may make their power felt without invading the cherished convictions of any fellow-worker. Mutual consideration and respect lie at the basis of all cooperative work. We firmly believe that a way may be found through the maze of divided Christendom out into the open spaces of Christian union only as the people of Christ follow the golden thread of an earnest desire to know and do His will. But, meantime, we may have the rare joy of fellowship and co-operation in many forms of endeavor wherein angels might well desire to have part.



### APPENDIX 3

#### FRATERNAL ADDRESS OF SOUTHERN BAPTISTS (1920)

Mullins, E. Y., et al. "Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists." *Baptist Standard*,  
February 26, 1920, 5, 20, 24.

Fraternal Address of Southern Baptists:  
To Those of "Like Precious Faith With Us" Scattered Abroad, Beloved in the Lord

GREETING — In view of the conditions of the new times into which we have come and the part which religion must play the reconstruction of the world, we address this letter to our spiritual kinsmen in all lands. If these greetings shall result in opening up communications with scattered groups and individuals who hold a common Christian faith with us, and thus lead to a mutually helpful relation and co-operation in the furtherance of the truth, the initial purpose of this letter will have been realized.

Thoughtful men are persuaded now as perhaps they never were before that religion alone can conserve the true values and promote the highest interests of society, and that religion is an indispensable factor in the reconstruction of the world now torn by war and divided by enmity and in the restoration of social harmony. All races and classes of men cannot be taught these lessons without the motives and experiences of religion. There is, therefore, a large service before those who hold the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. The need and the opportunity of the present hour conspire to make it especially propitious for the promulgation of the religious views and practices which Baptists hold and have consistently exemplified through a long victory. The message of no other religious people is so completely a need of such times as are the principles which Baptists hold and teach. There is not an article of their faith which is not essential to the reconstruction of the world and the social fellowship of the race. Therefore, all people who hold the views which distinguish Baptists should seek to draw close together and render a service which men of pure Christian faith owe their fellow men. We covet a better understanding and a closer fellowship with those in all lands who cherish a common faith with us, and this to the end that we may with oneness of purpose and concert of action strengthen our witness for this faith everywhere.

The Southern Baptist Convention, composed of 4,200 messengers in annual session, May, 1919, in Atlanta, Ga., U. S. A., and representing 3,000,000 Baptists in the Southern States of America, realizing the responsibility that is upon them, the largest representative religious body that is in America, address this letter to their brethren and sisters everywhere, and would assure them of our prayers and love in Christ Jesus our Savior and Lord, in the hope that both they and we may be edified, and that a more perfect, effective and universal witness to our faith may be borne throughout all lands. In order that those who to any degree lack knowledge of the things which Southern Baptists

believe and practice may identify their oneness with us, we submit herewith a brief statement of the fundamentals of our faith and the peculiar beliefs and observances which characterize and distinguish us.

**1. God.** We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, who created the heavens and the earth. God is a personal and spiritual and holy Being who loves men with an everlasting love. He has ever had an eternal purpose towards mankind. He loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and to Him belongs every moral perfection. He governs the world with a view of the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. He overrules the sins of men and makes the wrath of men to praise Him. In the Scriptures, God is revealed to us as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one and one in three. He has provided for the salvation of men in the revelation He made of Himself in the sinless life, the perfect teaching, the atoning death, the resurrection and the ascension and intercession of Jesus Christ our Lord, the eternal Son of God. Through the Holy Spirit God makes Himself known within the hearts of men, and sanctifies them through the truth as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 10:37; Ephesians 2:18.

**2. The Word of God.** We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as God's authoritative message to men concerning the way of salvation. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The books of the Bible are the record of the messages which these inspired men received from God. The Old Testament is the preliminary and the New Testament is the completed revelation of the Gospel of our redemption. In our study of the Scriptures we are constantly impressed with the unity and progress of the revelation of divine truth. This truth was imparted to men by slow degrees as they were able to receive it. The earlier books of the Old Testament give us the beginnings and the books of the New Testament the endings of the saving truths of God's revelation. The wonderful unity and harmony of the various parts of Scriptures show with great clearness the presence of an overruling and guiding divine mind. The center of the entire revelation is Jesus Christ and His eternal Kingdom. All the earlier stages lead up to the crowning revelation in Jesus Christ. Thus, the incarnation of the Son of God is the key to the meaning of all history. From the above setting forth of our view, it clearly follows that we hold that the Scriptures are the sufficient, certain and authoritative revelation of God in all matters of faith and practice, and that obedience to their teachings is binding upon all men. Ephesians 2:20; Romans 3:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 2:4, 10-16; Acts 28:23.

**3. The Atonement.** We believe that in the incarnation Jesus Christ identified Himself completely with the state of sinners, while remaining Himself without sin. He became subject to the operation of the law of sin and death when He became one with the sinful race of men. He endured the agony of the cross in order that by dying He might break the power of death. In His resurrection from the dead, He proved Himself to be the conqueror of sin and death. Thus, He was able to break the power which held men in bondage and redeem them unto God and righteousness. In His atoning death He vindicated and established the righteousness of God. He suffered instead of sinners that sinners might go free. There is and can be no repetition of the sacrifice of Christ. His atonement was made once for all and brought to an end all previous forms of sacrificial offerings through priest and altar and slain animals. He thus opened the way for sinners into the most holy place of the divine presence. Being justified, we have peace with God

through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have our access into the divine grace wherein we stand. Christ ascended into heaven and ever liveth at the right hand of God to make intercession for us. Isaiah, Chapter 53; Philippians 2:6, 7; Romans 8:30 and 3:24-26.

**4. Regeneration and Attendant Blessings.** We hold that the natural man is not subject to the law of God. The direct action of the Holy Spirit is necessary in order that sinful men may be regenerated or born again into the divine Kingdom. The Spirit of God makes use of the truth of the Gospel in His regenerating work. It is conditioned upon personal repentance, towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is a sincere renunciation of sin, and faith, is genuine trust in the atoning Christ as Savior and Lord. Justification is God's declaration freeing the sinner from the consequences of his transgressions and adopting him as a member of the divine family. John 3:1-8; 1 Peter 1:22-25; Acts 13:39; Ephesians 2:8; Isaiah 53:11, 12.

**5. A Church: Its Form, Functions and Limitations.** A church of Jesus Christ is a body of baptized believers united under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for the public worship of God, for spiritual edification and growth, for the observance of the ordinances, for the spread of the Gospel, and for the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ in the earth. The members of a local church are spiritual equals. In the New Testament church there were, no overlords or ecclesiastical superiors, to whom the members were under authority. This equality of believers in the church arises from the direct relation between each individual soul and the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the ruler of His people. It follows that each church is a self-governing body. It conducts its own affairs in its own way and is responsible to no other ecclesiastical body of any kind. A church has no right to take from or add to the revealed will of Christ as recorded in the New Testament. Its duty is to obey the commands of Christ and promulgate them over the earth. It is also the duty of a church to co-operate with other churches of like faith in the work of their common Lord. Missionary and other religious associations and conventions are not ecclesiastical bodies. They are simply voluntary bodies for co-operative purposes. Churches are not subject to the authority of these or any other organizations. The officers of a church are bishops or elders and deacons. In the New Testament the words "bishop" and "elder" are used interchangeably. The duties of the bishop or elder are teaching and preaching, and the spiritual guidance of the church. Deacons have charge of the temporal affairs of the church. Other officers of local churches, such as recording secretaries or committee chairmen, are not necessary to constitute a New Testament church. They are convenient and useful for certain ends and may be dispensed with whenever the need for them ceases to exist. Acts 14:23; Ephesians 3:10; Hebrews 12:23.

**6. The Ordinances.** The ordinance of a church of Jesus Christ are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Immersion alone answers the New Testament teaching as to the form of baptism. The following will make this clear: The Word in the Greek means to dip, or immerse. The symbolism of baptism can only be expressed thus: It represents a death, a burial, and a resurrection. It symbolizes complete cleansing from sin and complete consecration and surrender to Christ. Hence, if the form of baptism is changed, the meaning is destroyed. A death, burial and resurrection can only be symbolically

expressed by immersion. Since baptism admits to church membership, it is a prerequisite to participation in the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper was instituted by the Master for the perpetual observance of His people until His return. The elements employed are bread and the fruit of the vine. The bread represents His body given for His people. The fruit of the vine represents His blood shed for many for the remission of sins. The Lord's Supper commemorates Christ. We do it in remembrance of Him. It declares the death of Christ. In it we show forth His death till He comes. The ordinances are not sacraments. They do not convey saving grace. They are symbols observed and preserved by the churches. They are of value to those who observe them only as their meaning is discerned. They are of deep significance as symbols or outward forms. They represent the essential and saving truths of the Gospel of Christ. The ordinances are, when properly observed, great conservators and propagators of evangelical truth. A great responsibility rests upon the churches to preserve in their purity and integrity the two ordinances entrusted to them. Otherwise great abuses creep in and various perils arise. We believe that in thus preserving the ordinances we do a needed work in safeguarding the purity of the Gospel. The great evil of infant baptism arose as a result of changing the New Testament ordinances into sacraments. No error has done greater harm than this in destroying the spirituality of the church. It should be resisted with steadfast vigor and fidelity to the New Testament teaching of believer's baptism. Ephesians 4:5; Acts 2:41; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-23.

**7. The Rights and Responsibilities of the Individual Soul.** We believe that the true nature of the Christian religion is understood only when we recognize that it is a relation between the individual soul and God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Each soul must repent and believe for itself. Each soul is responsible directly to God for sins committed. Each soul has the high privilege of dealing directly with God. No priest is needed to mediate between the soul and God, save our great High Priest, Jesus the Lord. Every true believer, by reason of his union with Christ, is a priest unto God with free access to the divine presence. Salvation cannot be imparted by means of sacraments in the hands of earthly priests. This would rob the soul of its spiritual right to direct approach to God, and it would displace the one divine Mediator and Redeemer. No body of people calling itself the church of Jesus Christ has any right to limit salvation to its own members. This is to substitute a saving church for the saving Christ. No one, not even a parent, has any right to substitute his own faith for that of a morally unconscious infant, and in the name of the substitute have water applied to the infant and call it baptism. This robs the child of his own God-given privilege of believing and obeying for himself when he reaches a suitable age. The mediation of earthly priests, ecclesiastical salvation, sacramental grace and proxy faith are each and all foreign to the teachings of the New Testament and the nature of the Christian religion. Matthew 10:28, and 23:10; Romans 14:4; John 4:23, 24.

**8. Civil Government and Religious Freedom.** Religious freedom is one of the inalienable rights of men. Since God is superior to the state, civil government has no authority whatever to control men in their religious beliefs. Every man has an inherent right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. The state should protect individuals and religious denominations in the free exercise of their religious rights. It is an abuse of the power of the state when it favors one religious denomination to the exclusion of others. All religious denominations should stand on an equality before the civil power, just as all individuals stand on an equality in their religious rights. It

follows that state churches are a clear violation of the religious rights of men. It is equally clear that all attempts on the part of the church to control the state are wrong in principle and disastrous in results. As the state has no religious function, so also the church has no civil function. A free church in a free state is the ideal relation between church and state. Romans 13:1-7; Matthew 22:1; Acts 5:29; Matthew 10:28, and 23:10; Romans 14:4; John 4:23, 24.

#### Baptists and Christian Union.

For Baptists the question of Christian union goes to the heart of the deeper question as to the nature of the Christian religion. Questions of outward forms of worship and organization and of relations to other denominations depend upon the fundamental question: What is Christianity? The Christian religion is primarily the personal union of the individual with Christ by faith. From this root springs the tree. It is this direct relation of the soul to God in Christ which is the growing principle for Baptists.

In their view of religion Baptists are necessarily democrats of the most thorough-going kind. They hold the following truths as self-evident: first, that the individual soul is competent to deal directly with God in Christ; second, that all are equally entitled to direct access to God; third, that all believers are entitled to equal privileges in the church; fourth, that to be responsible the soul must be free; fifth, that the true ideal of the relations between church and state is a free church in a free state; sixth, that our social ideal is best expressed in the divine command, "Love your neighbor as yourself." These principles allow and encourage the broadest charity and cordiality for Christians of other names, and they permit us to co-operate for many, common ends with Christians of other names — ends which involve no compromise or weakening of conviction. But the same principles debar us from all forms of effort where these principles cannot be fully safeguarded.

We hold the foregoing principles not as incidental or detachable opinions, but as cardinal teachings of the New Testament and vital to genuine Christianity.

Baptists are convinced that the voluntary principle is an essential element in all ecclesiastical and religious organization, because of the direct relation of the soul to Christ and of the equality of believers in the church. It follows that they reject any and all forms of centralized church and ecclesiastical organization and government. In the Baptist view there could scarcely be any greater disaster to Christianity than the formation of a great centralized bureaucratic organization, with a single directing head for all the denominations. As we believe, such an organization would be the forerunner of new forms of strife and discord, new and bitter antagonisms, and new legal contests. And it is because Baptists desire to live in amicable relations with their brethren of other names that they oppose any artificial joining together of alien elements in any form of so-called organic church union. Since Baptists feel themselves called, not only to hold, but also to bear witness to the truths above set forth, they refrain from combinations with others in ways which would bring embarrassment to others by reason of the Baptist witness and embarrassment to Baptists by reason of the restraints imposed. We hold that freedom of preaching is of greater value to the world than the alleged gains of merely outward union.

Baptists are irrevocably committed to a great missionary and educational program, unhampered by any compromises of Gospel teaching. We are convinced that the whole world needs Christianity of the New Testament, unmixed with errors brought over from earlier ages of autocratic and sacramental doctrines of the church. We pledge

ourselves to such a program, and pray for the co-operation of all our people to this end. In this new age of the world all Baptists should seek fraternal relations with each other, so far as this is practicable. Thus united upon the broad platform of New Testament Christianity, we should seek together the great ends of an apostolic program of world redemption.

Finally, we would admonish all who accept these articles of faith and practice that they do not compromise them through either fear or sentiment, but that they so teach and observe these things as to commend them to the understanding and conscience of all men everywhere.

“Now to Him who is able to guard you from falling, and to set you without blemish in gladness before the presence of His glory; to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might and authority, before all time, and now, and forever. Amen.”

Signed by the committee appointed by the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, Ga., May, 1919.

E. Y. Mullins (Chairman), President Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
J. B. Gambrell, President Baptist Convention  
Z. T. Cody, Editor Baptist Courier  
L. R. Scarborough, President Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
William Ellyson, President Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention

APPENDIX 4  
FOREIGN MISSION BOARD ARTICLES  
OF FAITH (1920)

*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1920, 197–98.* Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1920.

**A Statement of Belief.** All missionaries of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention are expected to read carefully and subscribe to the following statement of belief before they are appointed to missionary service under this Board.

I believe and am prepared to teach the following:

I. I believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were written by men who were divinely inspired and that they are a sufficient and final authority in all matters of religious faith and practice;

II. That there is one and only one living and true God who is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;

III. That the virgin birth, the deity, the vicarious death, the bodily resurrection and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ are plainly taught in the Scriptures;

IV. That in his natural state, man is depraved and without true holiness;

V. That salvation is wholly of grace through Jesus Christ;

VI. That on condition of personal repentance for sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ any man can receive the forgiveness of sin and salvation unto everlasting life;

VII. That regeneration is necessary to spiritual life in Christ, and that this change is effected by the direct action of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of each individual who exercises personal faith in Jesus Christ;

VIII. That sanctification is the process by which, between regeneration and glorification, the spiritual life of the believer is deepened, and he grows in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;

IX. That a church is a company of voluntarily associated baptized believers in Christ, recognizing Him as the only Head of the church, exercising only such administrative and disciplinary authority as He has committed to it, conducting holy worship, observing the

ordinances as He has commanded, and seeking by co-operative effort to extend His Kingdom in all the world;

X. I believe in the evangelical view of the ordinances. They were appointed to show the Lord's death and resurrection. They are not sacraments. They do not expiate sin; they exhibit the atonement. Baptism is not a means of salvation but a symbol of Christ's resurrection. The Lord's Supper is not a social feast, but a memorial of Christ's death. We are not to observe it to show our amiability, but do it in remembrance of Him. I will observe and teach these ordinances in accordance with the views and customs common among Southern Baptists;

XI. I believe that the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath should be sacredly observed by all Christian believers everywhere;

XII. That civil government being ordained of God, due obedience and subjection should be rendered to the government under which I may live and that prayers should be offered for rulers; but that God alone is Lord of the conscience and He has left the soul free to worship after its own dictates;

XIII. That there will be a resurrection and future judgment and that believers in Christ will go to a place of eternal happiness and unbelievers to everlasting condemnation.



## APPENDIX 5

### E. Y. MULLINS ARTICLE ON COOPERATION DRAFT

Mullins, Edgar Y. "Doctrinal Statement." E. Y. Mullins Papers. Box 39, Folder 17. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

21. Cooperation. New Testament churches pursuing common aims found ways of expressing their sympathy for each other and so far as their circumstances permitted cooperated for common goals. Paul gathered funds in European churches for the poor in Jerusalem. Christian scattered abroad were enjoined to cooperate with missionaries and laborers in the Kingdom. Individualism is a clearly revealed principle of the gospel. But the duty of cooperation for great common ends is equally clear. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is voluntary cooperation for . . .

## APPENDIX 6

### L. R. SCARBOROUGH ARTICLE ON COOPERATION DRAFT

Scarborough, L. R. "Article 19 On Co-Operation by L. R. Scarborough." The L. R. Scarborough Digital Materials Collection, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. <http://cdm16969.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16969coll11/id/1133>.

We believe in the doctrine and practice of co-operation in carrying out and forward the world-will of Jesus Christ as set out in the New Testament and in the leadership of His Spirit in the hearts and plans of His people. We believe that the individual members should co-operate with each other in the church in the support of the local ministry or preaching, teaching, benevolence, soul-winning and community building as decided on by the local church as it is lead (sic) by the Spirit of God, and in the larger Gospel matters of the Kingdom of Christ under (sic) the uttermost parts of the world. Every member of a Baptist church is in conscience bound by the commands and precepts of Christ to co-operate with time, talent and money with his fellow church members in giving the gospel of salvation and service to every creature of all nations. This comprehends evangelism, missions, Christian education and benevolence. We believe that this doctrine of co-operation also extends from the individual of a local church to the co-operation of churches of like faith and practice with each other in carrying out the Gospel program of Christ in world-wide redemption. We claim this doctrine is fundamental and essential to full obedience to the world-will of Christ and is not a matter of opinion with any individual or church; but is included in obedience to the Lordship of Christ and is a part of the obligation put on us in our salvation and church membership. We have no more option in this than in the matter of baptism. This is not to

be interpreted as a condition of salvation but is a condition of acceptable obedience to Christ's will in our service to Him. This doctrine is not to be interpreted as contravening or interfering with the freedom of conscience of the individual, nor to the sovereignty and independence of the local church. The liberties of the individual and of the local church are all limited and bounded by the will of Christ as set out in the New Testament. The individual is free and the church sovereign only under the will of Christ. We believe that co-operation in carrying out Christ's Gospel will in the earth is a New Testament limitation to our freedom and the independence of the churches put on us by the commands and Lordship of Christ.

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## ABSTRACT

### CONFESSIONALISM AND COOPERATION IN THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT, 1609–1925

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Baptists came confessing and Baptists came cooperating. But historically, what is the relationship between the two? For more than four hundred years of the Baptist movement across two continents, confession and cooperation have known necessary and effectual concomitance. However, cooperation was not explicitly stated as a full-orbed Baptist doctrine in a confession of faith until the Southern Baptist Convention's *Baptist Faith and Message* of 1925. This dissertation demonstrates that Baptists throughout history have held a moral and theological obligation to associate and cooperate with other churches on the basis of shared biblical convictions. They viewed evangelism and missions as central components of that obligation, expressing their convictions through confessions, associational activity, missionary organization, and correspondence as the doctrine of cooperation was realized among them.

Chapter 1 introduces the content, proposes the research question and thesis, summarizes research methodology, surveys the research field, and outlines the argument. It includes a brief section on the definition of terms and the limitation of the research as well as the relevance of the research to contemporary Baptist faith and practice. Chapter 2 begins with the genesis of the Baptist movement in 1609 upon the se-baptism and constitution of a credobaptized congregation by John Smyth, then traces the doctrine of cooperation through Baptist confessions, communications, and associations from Amsterdam, Holland in 1609 to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the last decade of the



seventeenth century. Original writings of formative leaders in the English Baptist movement are engaged, such as those of John Smyth, Thomas Helwys, John Spilsbury, Thomas Collier, Thomas Grantham, and Benjamin Keach. Several influential confessions of faith are analyzed. Baptist associational activity is surveyed. The chapter also sets the developing doctrine within the cultural and religiopolitical matrix of seventeenth-century England.

Chapter 3 carries the doctrine of cooperation forward through confessional statements, associations, and missionary organizations in America up until the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention in Augusta, Georgia in 1845. Several influential Baptist theologians and historians are consulted as well as Baptist papers and associational correspondence, which are instrumental in following the movement of the doctrine of cooperation on American soil in this period. Chapter 4 engages Southern Baptist actions and the larger cultural context of the early twentieth century toward the culmination of the doctrine's formal expression in the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message*, adopted in Memphis, Tennessee. Leading Baptist theologians and influencers of the day are consulted, including E. Y. Mullins, E. C. Dargan, L. R. Scarborough, I. J. Van Ness and others. The conversation around the doctrine of cooperation is set within the context of the cultural and political climate of the early twentieth century. Chapter 5 presents a biblical and theological evaluation of the "Triangular Doctrine of Cooperation" proposed by L. R. Scarborough, who significantly influenced the doctrine's inclusion in the 1925 confession. Chapter 6 concludes the research with a summary of the findings, contemporary applications, and opportunities for further research.

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