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Hermeneutics and the Teacher of Theology

EDGAR KRENTZ

Some Thoughts on Authentic Lutheranism

HERBERT J. A. BOUMAN

A Growing Commonality Among Lutherans?

ANDREW J. WHITE

The Primitive Baptists of North America

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The Primitive Baptists of North America

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THE PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS OF THE UNITED STATES¹

By the beginning of the 1820s a strict "particularism"² had been reigning without a serious challenge among the Baptists of the American South for nearly two generations. In the course of the next 15 years their associations and churches felt the full divisive force of the Baptist

version of the "new measures" issue—mission societies, tract societies, Sunday schools, religious fairs and festivals to raise funds for the church's work, temperance societies, and theological seminaries.³

¹ Apart from their magazines, the recent printed literature on the Primitive Baptists is not extensive. In addition to utilizing the printed sources listed in the bibliography and cited in the text, the present writer sent out over 150 letters in connection with the preparation of this article. Early drafts were coordinated with a number of knowledgeable Primitive Baptist leaders. The semifinal draft went out to the editors of 21 periodicals circulating among Primitive Baptists for their reaction. Careful cognizance was taken of the concrete suggestions of the 19 that kindly responded.

² "Particular" Baptists adhere to the belief that Christ died only for the elect. "General" Baptists hold that Christ died for all human beings. There are other "particular" or "Calvinistic" Baptists besides the Primitive Baptists. These include the Separate Baptists in Christ, the Regular and Old Regular Baptists, most of the United Baptists, the General Association of Baptists (Duck River [and kindred] Associations of Baptists), the vanishing Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists, and the now tiny Texas and Louisiana associations that correspond with the Union Primitive Baptist Association of the Old School or Predestinarian Faith and Order organized in 1840 by Elder Daniel Parker (1781 to 1844). None of these groups comes within the purview of this article.

³ Cushing Biggs Hassell and Sylvester Hassell, *History of the Church of God from the Creation to A.D. 1885, Including Especially the History of the Kebukee Primitive Baptist Association* (Atlanta, Ga.: Turner Lasseter, 1962), pp. 747—48, links these phenomena with "Fuller's gospel." The reference is to Andrew Fuller (1754—1815), a noted Baptist theologian and the pastor of the church at Kettering, England, from 1782 until his death. His chief work, *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation* (1784 to 1785), argued against the extreme form of Calvinism that allowed "nothing spiritually good to be the duty of the unregenerate," although he himself confessed no predilection for Arminianism and regarded himself as a strict Calvinist and predestinarian. In 1792 he founded the first Baptist missionary society at Kettering and remained its secretary until his death. He stood in much the same relation to William Carey that Luther Rice did in the United States to Adoniram Judson. Hassell and Hassell quote with obvious approval the words of Elder P. D. Gold, the longtime editor of *Zion's Landmark*: "The doctrines and fables of men are accepted. Andrew Fuller becomes a wonderful standard. He takes repentance and faith out of the covenant of grace, and puts them under the law, in the sense that he makes them man's duty, and not gifts of grace. If salvation comes on account of man's performance of his duty, it is of works in some sense. He [Fuller] brings in the modern missionary enterprise, a system somewhat like the popish measures for propagating their creed, but unknown to the Bible and to Baptists, and is a disturber of gospel peace and order among churches. His followers have departed from the truth further than he did . . . and they do not preach salvation as nearly by grace

One of the associations in which the controversy became crucial was the Kehukee Baptist Association of North Carolina founded in 1769.⁴ In 1827 the association

as he did, so they are waxing worse and worse. As the world is to be evangelized, the tender mind of the young must be converted by means of the newly invented Sunday schools, and humanly prepared preachers must be sent to the heathen" (pp. 310—11). At the same time it must be remembered that Primitive Baptists do not see a strict doctrine of limited atonement as precluding "mission work" and "evangelism" as they define these terms. Primitive Baptists "do not object to missions at home or abroad for the purpose of preaching the gospel for the instruction and edification of children of God." What they "have objected to is the idea that the heathen are hell-bound unless we reach them with the preached word." (Letter from Elder Wilford A. Pyles, Murray Route, Graham, Texas, dated February 5, 1971)

⁴ Not in 1765, as frequently stated and as the designation in the minutes of the 1968 meeting of the association as the 203d annual session implies. See Hugh B. Johnson, "Some Historical Information on the Kehukee Association Regarding the Date Organized," *The Primitive Baptist Library Quarterly*, 7, 4 (January—March 1967), 1—7. For the articles of faith adopted by the Kehukee Association in 1777, see Hassell and Hassell, pp. 699—700. Except for very minor modifications, the articles of faith of this association have remained unchanged down to the present (*Minutes of the Two Hundred Third Annual Session of the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association . . . 1968*, pp. 7—8). Similarly, the Ketocton Association in 1966 reaffirmed the articles adopted by this association at its organization in 1766 (*Minutes of the Two Hundred Third Annual Session of the Ketocton Primitive Baptist Association . . . 1969*, pp. 11—12). For other early examples see the "Articles of Faith" and "On Gospel Order" of the Mississippi Baptist Association (1807) in Benjamin Griffin, *History of the Primitive Baptists of Mississippi from the First Settlement by the Americans up to the Middle of the XIXth Century*, 2d ed. by B. D. Bryant, J. D. Holder, and Wiley Sammons (Jonesboro, Ark.: Sammons Publishing Co., 1958), pp. 67—68, and the "Articles of Faith" of the Primitive Baptist Association (1839) of Holmes and Attala Counties, Mississippi, *ibid.*, pp. 156—57.

adopted a resolution discarding "all missionary societies, Bible societies, and theological seminaries, and the practices heretofore resorted to for their support in begging money from the public" and describing these institutions as "inventions of men and not warranted from the word of God."⁵

This resolution, typical of many others of the period, seems to have been the first of its kind. It thus marks in a sense the crystallization of the militant opposition of the "Old School" Baptists⁶ to the "new measures."⁷ In 1832 the Country Line Association adopted a similar course at its session in the Deep Creek Church, Orange (now Alamance) County, North Carolina.⁸

In that same year in a 3-day meeting at the end of September representatives of a

⁵ Hassell and Hassell, pp. 736—37. The association took a similar stand against membership in "the fraternity of Masons." The subject of missions first came before the association in 1803 (*ibid.*, pp. 721—22). In 1815 the association had received copies of the first annual report of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions through the board's agent, the Rev. Luther Rice (*ibid.*, p. 729). The issue of membership in the Masonic society had first come up in 1786 (*ibid.*, p. 734).

⁶ The name "Primitive Baptist" does not seem to antedate the late 1830s. Three "Primitive Baptist" associations were established in Georgia in 1836 and one in Mississippi in 1839. The magazine *The Primitive Baptist* was first published in 1846. Other names for the Primitive Baptists, not always precisely applied, include Bible Baptists, Old Baptists, Predestinarian Baptists, "Old School" Baptists, "Antimeans" Baptists, "Antimission" Baptists, and "Hardshell" Baptists.

⁷ Other activities that came in for condemnation were tract societies, Sunday schools, sectarian colleges, protracted meetings, a salaried ministry, and state denominational conventions.

⁸ So Clarence H. Cayce in *Religious Bodies: 1936*, 2 (Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1941), 224.

number of "Old School" Baptist churches along the Atlantic seaboard convened with the Black Rock Church, Baltimore County, and adopted the same position that the Kehukee Association had. The "Black Rock Address to Particular Baptists Churches of the 'Old School' in the United States" was prepared in the name of this assembly by Elders Samuel Trott, John Healey, Thomas Poteet, William Gilmore, Gabriel Conklin, and Gilbert Beebe.⁹ The occasion gave the name "Black-Rockers" to the "Old School" Baptists of the North, as the Kehukee resolution had given those in the South the name of "Kehukeeites."¹⁰

In some associations the division came later. The Ketocton Association of Virginia split in 1835. In 1838 the Nollachucky (Nollachuckey) Association of Tennessee, founded in 1829/1830, faced a remonstrance of four churches "against the institutions of the day, viz. . . . the Baptist convention, manumission [that is, manumission of slaves], temperance societies, no [!] abstinence, tract, home missionary societies, and Sunday school

unions."¹¹ By 1840 the division into the Nollachucky Association of United Baptists and the Nollachucky Primitive Baptist Association was complete.

In this way the theological lines between the "Old School" (that is, the Primitive) Baptists and the "New School" (that is, "missionary") Baptists were clearly drawn. The Primitive Baptists believed that Christ died only for the elect, that the Holy Spirit and he alone calls the elect in time, and that his call is effectual and without regard to the work of the human minister or the written or spoken word.

Other doctrinal disputes rose during the next decades to harass the Primitive Baptists.¹² One was over "absolute predestination," with one party insisting that it is "Bible doctrine" that "God predestinated everything that comes to pass, both good

¹¹ Letter from Mr. Maynard G. Roberts, Cosby, Tenn., dated Oct. 1, 1969.

¹² Among the Primitive Baptists of eastern Tennessee some of the doctrines—almost all of them defended by relatively few proponents—that vexed the associations in that part of the country were the self-existence and eternity of the devil, denial of the ascension to heaven of "the Abrahamic body of Christ," the inability of human beings to live moral lives free from fornication and lewdness, issues arising out of the War between the States ("nonfellowship with all rebels [who did not] turn and repent of their evil ways"), and the "two-seed heresy," for example. The last named heresy was that of "those who teach the doctrine of an eternally damned or eternally justified outside the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God and teach that an unbeliever is no subject of Gospel address" (*Minutes of the Powell Valley Association . . . 1879*, quoted in Lawrence Edwards, *The Baptists of Tennessee, with Particular Attention to the Primitive Baptists of East Tennessee* [Knoxville, Tenn.: Trent Printing Company, 1951], p. 57).

⁹ The complete text of the address is reprinted in *The Primitive Baptist Library Quarterly*, 7, 3 (October—December 1966), 5—21.

¹⁰ Beebe stated the issues succinctly: "No mission boards for the converting the heathen or for evangelizing the world; no Sunday schools as nurseries to the church; no schools of any kind for teaching theology or divinity, or for preparing young men for the ministry; no pious rehearsals of the 'Melodies of Mother Goose' or 'Jack Horner' or the 'cow jumping over the moon' among the institutions of Christ or his apostles" (Gilbert Beebe, "Autobiography" [1876], in Hassell and Hassell, p. 935). James Willingham's thesis on "Ministerial Qualifications" links the split among the Baptists to the conviction of the "Old School" Baptists that God does not prepare "a man for the ministry by means of the natural processes of human learning" (*Inquire*, 1 [1970], 191).

and evil.”¹³ A small minority of Primitive Baptists still holds this view, but the “regular”¹⁴ Primitive Baptists reject it. Many of the latter regard those that hold the “absolute predestination” position as heretics without a legitimate claim to the name of Primitive Baptists.

A predominantly practical set of issues played a role in another internal division among the Primitive Baptists. During the latter part of the first decade of this century the “Progressive” movement began to split the Primitive Baptists of the southeastern states, especially Georgia, over such issues as musical instruments in worship,¹⁵ ministerial support, and Sunday

(“Sabbath”) schools. Linked with these issues were charges by the more conservative (“old line”) Primitive Baptists that the Progressives were marked by “liberal views toward secret societies, a slackness of discipline, and a general worldly-mindedness.” In addition to instrumental music in worship, a salaried ministry, and organized Sunday Bible study (a euphemism for Sunday schools), the “Progressive” churches have added youth fellowships to many of their congregational programs.¹⁶ Some “old line” Primitive Baptists tend to regard these innovations as so contrary to the Primitive Baptist tradition that they

¹³ *Minutes of the Powell Valley Association . . . 1888*, quoted in Edwards, p. 59. A current version of the same issue was ventilated in the printed debate between Elder T. S. Tolley, editor of *The Christian Baptist*, and Elder J. L. Bocock, editor of the now defunct *The Subscriber*. Elder Tolley argued that “the Bible teaches a conditional (time phase) of [sic!] salvation” and rejected “the absolute predestination of all things.” Elder Bocock declared that “the Bible does not teach a conditional (time phase) of [sic!] salvation” and affirmed that “the power and purposes of God are absolute” (*The Christian Baptist*, 3, 1 [January 1969], 1—3, and 2 [February 1969], 1—3; *The Subscriber*, 2 [1969], 1—12; 33—51).

¹⁴ Terms like “regular,” “old line,” and “absoluter” are used by Primitive Baptists to describe their own positions and the positions of others, but they are in no sense official designations.

¹⁵ For example, the condemnation in 1920 of “all modern innovation of every kind, including the use of instrumental music [in] worship,” by the Towaliga Association of Primitive Baptists and its determination “to refuse further official affiliation with any church, brother or sister so long as they are associated with it” (*Minutes of the Eighty-Second Annual Session of the Towaliga Association of Primitive Baptists . . . 1920*, p. 2) led to the division of the association into the Old School Original Towa-

liga Association of Primitive Baptists and the Towaliga Association of Primitive Baptists. In 1920 Elder J. M. F. Barron’s circular letter to the churches of the Towaliga Association began on this ominous note: “The time for the Eighty-Second Annual Session of Towaliga Association has arrived and we find the body torn asunder by division in her ranks, but, brethren, let us stand firm upon the borders of our land and keep the old ship from sinking amid the storms and waves of Progressivism” (*ibid.*, p. 3).

¹⁶ The “Progressives” are most numerous in Georgia, but are found in Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Texas, Washington, and California as well (letter from Elder Emerson Proctor, pastor, Jesup Primitive Baptist Church, Jesup, Ga., dated March 3, 1970). Ten of these Progressive associations operating in Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, and Florida, together with the Florida Ministerial Association, which is composed of independent “Progressive” Primitive Baptist churches in Florida, have a common set of articles of faith (except that the Ochlonchee Association has added to them a clause defining “washing the saints’ feet as an ordinance of the church”) and publish their minutes in a single brochure (John D. Durden, ed., 1969 *Minutes of Ten Associations, Primitive Baptist, with the Florida Ministerial Association* [Columbus, Ga.: Columbus Office Supply Company, 1969] [48-page brochure], especially p. 2). The overall number of “Progressive” Primitive Baptists is believed to be slowly increasing.

constitute the "Progressives" a new "order" or denomination.¹⁷

The Primitive Baptist theological position is in general that of classic Reformed orthodoxy.¹⁸ This is true, even

¹⁷ In the words of the moderator of the "Old Line" Original Upper Canoochee Association, which "withdrew from the Missionary Baptist in 1828" and in the present century suffered the defection of a "Progressive" element, "our order of Primitive Baptists just meet, sing, pray and preach, and have conference once a month" (letter from Elder V. H. Hooks, Senior, moderator, Original Upper Canoochee Primitive Baptist Association, Lexsy, Ga., dated Dec. 3, 1969). — Some observers differentiate as many as six "orders" among the Primitive Baptists of the United States. Others divide the Primitive Baptist spectrum into four segments. According to the latter distribution, one group holds to "the absolute predestination of all things, both good and evil," that is, of everything that human beings have done or will do, including, in the case of the elect, everything they do in obedience to God after the new birth. This group is represented primarily by 25 to 35 associations chiefly in North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky, with a scattering elsewhere and with from two to twenty churches in each association. This group is seen as declining in numbers. A second and much larger group holds that human beings are totally depraved and totally passive before and in the new birth, but active in obedience thereafter. Churches of this group exist in all but 16 states. They are most numerous in Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri; they have 24 churches in California. This group is seen as increasing slowly. The third group comprises the "Progressives." The very small fourth group, composed of churches chiefly in eastern Tennessee, "believes and teaches works by man for eternal salvation" and are thus to be regarded as Primitive Baptists only in name. (Letter from Elder William G. Fletcher, editor of the *Gospel Appeal*, Winchester, Va., dated Jan. 4, 1971, citing Elder C. M. Mills)

¹⁸ Primitive Baptists generally—but reluctantly—grant that their theology is "Calvinistic." They are unenthusiastic about the designation in part because they regard their tradition

though the articles of faith of individual associations and churches tend to differ extensively in their formulation (except where a younger association has directly borrowed its articles of faith from an older association).¹⁹

as apostolic and therefore as antedating the 16th century. They also object to being called "Calvinists" because they see this as implying agreement with some of the theological views ascribed to John Calvin that they disavow. An example is that in God's calling of the elect in time and quickening the dead sinner to life he uses the Gospel and its proclamation as means. — Another observation is in place here. The original division of the 1830s was part of the controversy between the "Old School" and the "New School" that affected most American church bodies of the period. Among the Baptists the specific form that the issues in this dispute took were society-funded missions, Sunday schools, state conventions, a salaried ministry, theological seminaries, and doctrinal rivalry between the "particular" and "general" Baptists. It is not easy, a century and a half later, to measure the extent to which the Primitive Baptists who still hold to the historic position of their spiritual ancestors on these points do so out of personal conviction. Some Primitive Baptists see traditionalism as a factor of no less power (although others contest this). See, for example, W. J. Berry, "The Whole Estate and Our Present Spiritual State," 8-page editorial reprinted from the *Old Faith Contender*, October 1969, as well as his editorial in the same magazine for October 1959, "What Were the Old School Baptists in 1840—1960?" reprinted in *Requested Reprints of Editorials and Articles from the "Old Faith Contender"* (Elon College, N. C.: The Primitive Baptist Publishing House, 1960), pp. 10—20. Others deplore among the "things of tradition" refusing to meet every Sunday, not reaching out to the neighborhoods around them, not modernizing their buildings, and not wanting ministers to labor full time in their calling (letter from Elder Edgar T. Ale-shire, editor of *The Primitive Monitor*, Springfield, Ohio, dated Dec. 18, 1970).

¹⁹ The section that follows in the text is based in large part on an examination of the recent minutes published by 76 Primitive Baptist associations. Of these 56 were minutes of 1969 meetings, 19 were minutes of 1968 meet-

In the briefest form, such a set of articles will affirm that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one immutable, true, and living God; that the first human being fell and that human beings are unable by their own free will and ability to recover themselves;²⁰ that Jesus Christ, the Son of God,

ings, and one set of minutes was of the 1967 meeting. The associations were distributed according to the state in which the association was wholly or predominantly located as follows: North Carolina, 19; Georgia, 16; Virginia, 12; Tennessee, 6; West Virginia, 5; Texas, 4; Kentucky, 3; Alabama, 3; California, 2; Arkansas, 1; Florida, 1; Maryland, 1.

The association minutes conventionally contain the proceedings and most of the following: The order of preaching at the meeting, a list of the names and addresses of ministers of the association and of visiting ministers from other Primitive Baptist associations and churches that attended the meeting; a statistical table of the churches comprising the association; the "articles of faith" (occasionally called "abstract of principles"); the rules of decorum; a constitutional statement; obituaries; the annual "letter of correspondence" addressed to the associations with which the association "corresponds"; the "circular letter" addressed chiefly to the members of the constituent churches; and other occasional items.

Of the 76 association minutes studied, 74 contained "articles of faith"; the Ebenezer Association of the Old School Baptists (Virginia) and the Tygart's Valley River Old School Primitive Baptist Association (West Virginia) were the only exceptions. The "articles of faith" vary in length from a succinct eight articles to as many as sixteen, sometimes with "scriptural proofs" appended to each article. Occasionally doctrinal elements will also appear in the rules of decorum, the church covenant, and the constitution of the association.

²⁰ Mr. Norman Ward, editor of *Inquire*, 4704 Timberhill Drive, Nashville, Tenn., has pointed out to the present writer that John Gill's *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity* (Atlanta, Ga.: Turner Lassetter, 1965), which influenced early Primitive Baptist thinking, teaches a "federal" (from the Latin *foedus*, "covenant") view of the imputation of Adam's sin and of Christ's righteousness (letter dated Dec. 11, 1970).

is God; that God chose particular human beings for himself, that he effectively calls the elect in this life without using human preachers or the written or spoken word, and that he will finally preserve the saints; that the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God; that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances²¹ of Christ; that no human being has the right to administer these ordinances unless he is regularly called and has come under the imposition of hands by an orthodox presbytery;²² that immersion²³ is the Scriptural mode of baptism and that it is to be administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost only to those who already believe; that there will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust and a general judgment; and that the happiness of the righteous and the suffering of the wicked will be eternal.²⁴

("Federal" theology sees Adam as the "federal" head of all human beings under the covenant of works and Christ as the "federal" head of all the elect under the covenant of grace. Adam's sin is thus legally and effectively the imputed sin of all human beings and Christ's righteousness legally and effectively the imputed righteousness of all the elect.)

²¹ The Original Upper Canoochee Primitive Baptist Association is exceptional in calling them sacraments as well as ordinances.

²² Some associations specify that the minister of the ordinances must be in fellowship with the church of which he is a member. The Original Sequatchie Valley and Blue Ridge Association insists that ministers of the Gospel should be "unblameable, both in life and in doctrine," or be deposed. It also makes it the duty of members of the church "to beware of false teachers."—"Elder" has become the common designation for ordained ministers among Primitive Baptists, replacing the earlier "brother."

²³ "Dipping" is sometimes used as a synonym for immersion.

²⁴ See also the "Abstract of Principles" printed in every issue of *The Primitive Baptist*,

Predestination is specified in various ways, reflecting the controversies about the "absolute predestination of all things" that have gone on in Primitive Baptist circles during the last century and a half. There is a general agreement that God brings all things to pass as the result of his holy, wise, and determinate counsel from eternity.²⁵

for example, 81 (1966), 64. — In November 1900 the "Fulton Assembly" brought together at Fulton, Ky., 51 Primitive Baptist ministers, "representing 355 churches, aggregating 14,500 members in direct correspondence with over 100,000 [Primitive] Baptists." One of its acts was acceptance of the London Confession of Faith "not as a standard of faith and practice, but as an expression of our interpretation of the holy scriptures, which is the only rule of faith and practice." Where time had made the sense of a passage obscure, the assembly added notes "to bring out the meaning." The "Fulton General Address" is reprinted in *The Christian Baptist*, 2, 4 (May 1967), 3—4. See also the "principles of faith, or doctrine and practice" adopted by the Nashville (Tenn.) "Peace Meeting" of 1937 and of the Donaldson (Ark.) "Peace Meeting" of 1953 published respectively in the same journal in 2, 2 (February 1968), 3—4, and 3 (March 1968), 3—4. At the local level, see the model minutes of organization, church covenant, articles of faith, and rules of decorum published in *The Christian Baptist*, 2, 5 (May 1968), 8, for the guidance of new congregations. The church used as a model is Liberty Primitive Baptist Church, Champaign, Illinois.

²⁵ "Old line" Primitive Baptists generally reject the idea of a predestination to hell and hold that God simply leaves the nonelect as they are. Since 1932 a 2-page "exposition of the doctrine relating to God's decree, his purpose, predestination, providence, good works, and obedience" by Elder J. W. Gilliam has been a part of the articles of faith of the Upper Country Line Association; it appeals to chapters 3 and 5 of the London Confession of 1677. A brief appendix reproducing parts of Article 3 of the London Confession also appears at the end of the articles of faith of the Laurel Springs Association.

The fall of Adam, some associations declare, involved the imputation of his sin to all his posterity, and some articles of faith put this into theological shorthand by asserting simply the doctrine of original sin and/or the total depravity of human nature.

God's choice of those who are to be saved receives specification as the particular, eternal, personal, and unconditional election of a definite number of the human family to glory. When God's effective call comes to them in this life, says the Kehukee Association, "it is impossible that they can utterly refuse the call, but shall be made willing by divine grace to receive the offer of mercy".²⁶

Salvation is wholly and exclusively by the sovereign, free, and unmerited grace of God. It comes by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in his vicarious satisfaction "to law and justice." Christ's atonement is full and complete and exclusively for the elect, a number of associations state.²⁷ By his effectual working the Holy Spirit justifies the elect by imputing to them Christ's righteousness, which produces in them regeneration, sanctification, and good works. Good works, some associations say, are the fruit of faith. Following after justification, good works are evidence of, and not a means to, a gracious state, and it is the

²⁶ The Abstract of Principles (fn. 24) speaks of the "sovereign, irresistible, direct, immediate, and, in all cases, the effectual work of the Holy Spirit in calling, regenerating, and sanctifying the elect."

²⁷ One of the most explicit statements is that of the Forked Deer Association: "Christ, while suffering on the cross, made a complete atonement for the elect only."

duty of all believers to perform them from a principle of love.²⁸

There is agreement that "persons who are sprinkled or dipped while in unbelief" — which would include all persons baptized in infancy or prior to adult conversion — "were not regularly baptized according to God's Word and that such ought to be baptized after they are savingly converted into the faith of Christ," in the words of the Kehukee Association's articles of faith. The same requirement holds for persons who have been baptized in "missionary" Baptist churches,²⁹ as well

²⁸ The stress on the juridical idea of duty is illustrated by the assertion of the Staunton River Association that it is the "duty" of each member of the church to be "jointly and severally engaged in every good work for the glory of God and to the honor of the Christian religion." The Marietta Association's articles of faith echo the same theme: "It is the duty of every heaven-born soul to become a member of the visible church, to make a public confession of his faith, to be legally baptized so as to have a right to partake of the Lord's supper at every legal opportunity during life." The Abstract of Principles (fn. 24) declares that born again believers "are all under the law to Christ, and that it is obligatory upon them to obey this law; that in doing so they enjoy the blessings promised, but in disobedience thereto they suffer the penalty thereof while here in this world." Here and there the point is made that "the Lord's day ought to be observed and set apart for the worship of God and no work or worldly business ought to be done or transacted thereon, works of necessity only excepted" (Mud Creek). The Bethlehem Association "will not fellowship any member who is known to take part in any speculation on the Sabbath day," that is, Sunday. Most Primitive Baptists, however, reject "the observance of 'days'" and deny that Sunday is the equivalent of the Old Testament Sabbath. By the same token, they hold that the church should not celebrate Christmas, Easter, or other ecclesiastical holidays.

²⁹ See, for instance, *Minutes of the Buttabatchee Association of Primitive Baptist . . . 1855*, item 31, p. 3, and *Minutes of the 37th*

as for those who have been baptized by anyone who has not been regularly called and has not come under the imposition of hands by an orthodox (understood generally as a Primitive Baptist) presbytery. "Old line" Primitive Baptists refuse to recognize either the baptisms or the ordinations of "Progressive" Primitive Baptists.³⁰

A valid baptism is universally a precondition of participating at the Lord's Table. In some cases this is put restrictively: "Only baptized persons have a right to commune at the Lord's table." More frequent is the inclusive formulation: "All persons [legally] baptized" — or, alternatively, "all persons who shall continue to walk circumspectly" — "have a right to partake of the Lord's supper." In normal practice red wine and unleavened bread are used exclusively for the Lord's Supper, and the grape juice and crackers sometimes found in other denominations are carefully avoided. The bread and wine are universally seen as emblems that represent the absent body and blood of Christ.

On the question of washing the saints'

Annual Session of the Towaliga Association of Primitive Baptist . . . 1875, p. 3). This line is being consistently held at the present time. Even the "Progressive" Primitive Baptists refuse to accept "missionary" Baptist baptisms. Allegedly there are two Primitive Baptist associations in Tennessee and one in Florida that receive other baptisms, but they reportedly believe in a universal atonement applied through the preaching of the Gospel; other Primitive Baptists therefore do not regard these associations as being authentic Primitive Baptists theologically.

³⁰ Letter from Elder Bob Dickerson, Valdosta, Ga., dated Nov. 20, 1970. After 13 years as a "Progressive" Primitive Baptist minister, including five years as editor of the "Progressive" journal *The Banner Herald*, Elder Dickerson joined the "old line" Union Primitive Baptist Association of southern Georgia.

feet, it is possible to distribute the associations studied into three groups of roughly equal size: (1) Those who call the washing of the saints' feet an ordinance on a par with Baptism and the Lord's Supper; (2) those who call washing of the saints' feet an example that Jesus gave the church to follow; and (3) those that refer only to Baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances and in their articles of faith say nothing about the status of the washing of the saints' feet. (But it does not follow that associations in the third group do not in fact practice foot-washing; the Mount Zion Association of Alabama, for example, prescribes that "saints should wash each other's feet after the Lord's supper.") A few churches and associations make foot-washing a test of fellowship (the Mount Zion Association of West Virginia, for instance); most do not. At least half the Primitive Baptist churches actually practice foot-washing.³¹

³¹ Primitive Baptists — unlike some other communities that content themselves with washing one foot — wash both feet. For this reason they uniformly refer to the rite as "foot-washing." — The history of "feet (or foot) washing" among North American denominations deserves additional study. As a Christian religious rite the practice is documentable as early as Tertullian. It never became a matter of general obligation in the Catholic Church of either the East or the West. There is some evidence that the medieval Albigenses and the Waldensians observed it generally. The revived Moravian Church formally discontinued it in 1818. In the 16th century a concern for literal conformity to Christ's example at the last supper led some Anabaptist leaders — among them Pilgram Marpeck (1495?–1556), Menno Simons (1492–1561), and Dirk Philips (1504–1559) — to endorse it. Part of their rationale was the value of the rite as a symbol of humility, equality, and mutual service. Many Anabaptist circles did not adopt the practice. In those communities that adopted it, it may not have fallen into quite such

The church, thought of as the local church, is composed only of baptized believers and God gives ministers of the New Testament to this institution alone.³²

total non-use in the 17th and 18th centuries as is sometimes affirmed. It survived among the Russian Mennonites, and their North American offshoots have perpetuated it. It is common among many North American Mennonite groups of German and Swiss origin, and from them it has passed to a number of other North American denominations that these Mennonites have influenced directly or indirectly — such as the Church of the Brethren, the National Fellowship of Brethren Churches, the Brethren in Christ Church, the Missionary Church, and the General Eldership of the Church of God. It also flourishes in Sabbatarian groups like the Seventh-day Adventists and the Church of God (Seventh Day), and many Holiness and Pentecostal groups. The list could be extended. Besides the Primitive Baptists, the rite is in use in the Christian Unity Baptist Association, the Duck River and Kindred Associations, the Free Will Baptists, the General Baptists, the Regular Baptists, the Separate Baptists, and the United Baptists. It seems to have been rarely practiced among the English Baptists. Its origins among American Baptists are obscure; it did not become a matter of importance until near the end of the 18th century. In the 1880s Sylvester Hassell declared that "among the Old School or Primitive Baptists of the United States . . . about one-half do and one-half do not practice the washing of feet as a church ordinance or rite" (Hassell and Hassell, p. 845 n.). One contemporary Primitive Baptist observer holds that this ratio is still probably correct (letter from Mr. W. J. Berry, Elon College, N. C., dated Oct. 26, 1969). Another observer expresses the view that on a nationwide basis the number of Primitive Baptist churches that practice "foot-washing" may exceed 80% (cited letter of Elder Pyles [fn. 3]). Foot-washing is most common in the South (especially Georgia and Alabama), the Southwest (including Oklahoma), and the Far West, less common in North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia, least common among the Primitive Baptists of the northern and eastern United States.

³² "We the members of the Primitive Baptist church believe our church is the visible church of Jesus Christ" (James Bibler, "What Is a Primitive Baptist?", *The Christian Baptist*,

A number of associations undertake to describe the church, or, more specifically, the visible church, usually in such a way as to safeguard its independence of decision and action against the possible encroachments of the associations. Other associations describe Christ as the great head of the church, as the only lawgiver in Zion, and in other similar terms. In any case, the strictly advisory relation of the association over against the local churches receives

2, 5 [May 1968], 2). "That portion of Baptists who have not departed from the faith [that is, the Primitive Baptists] . . . must be the true church of Christ" (Hassell and Hassell, p. 751). At the same time, Primitive Baptists believe that "the Lord's people are everywhere and of many religious persuasions" (letter from Elder Floy F. Gross, editor of the *Gospel Witness*, Queen City, Mo., dated Nov. 19, 1970). (Not all Primitive Baptists concur in Bibler's statement.) — Primitive Baptists see themselves as the present-day successors of the apostolic church, by way of the Novatians, Donatists, Paulicians, Petrobrusians, Henricians, Arnoldists, Albigenses, Waldensians, and Anabaptists—all of them persecuted for heresy by the established church. This explains in part the strong anti-Roman-Catholic strain in Primitive Baptists. It also explains why they do not see themselves as "Protestants," since their line of descent does not go through the 16th-century reformers. Hassell and Hassell devotes an entire chapter to the 12 marks of the apostolic church (pp. 269—326): (1) A regenerated church membership; (2) the immersion of believers in water; (3) frequent observance by baptized and orderly-walking believers of the Lord's supper; (4) maintenance of strict discipline; (5) congregational polity; (6) complete separation of church and state; (7) the general poverty, illiteracy, obscurity, and afflicted and persecuted condition of the members; (8) the fraternal equality of ministers and members; (9) a humble, God-called and God-qualified ministry, mostly destitute of human training; (10) an unsalaried ministry; (11) the sending forth of the ministry by the Holy Spirit and their going forth in simple dependence on the Lord to preach the Gospel to every creature and to shepherd Christ's sheep and lambs; and (12) separation from all worldly, men-made, money-based religious organizations.

emphasis; one association states that the association is to function as an advisory council "when asked to do so"; a few others discountenance the formerly frequent practice of referring issues that had divided a local church to the association for decisive counsel.

Traces of the original polemics against the "new school" Baptists recur occasionally.³³ Thus the Original Upper Canoochee Association states: "Not being under law, but under grace, we take the New Testament as the rule of our faith and practice, and decline to recognize anything not specifically authorized in the New Testament and practiced by the apostles. We hold that modern Sunday schools, religious societies or organizations separate from the church, known as auxiliaries to the church, a salaried ministry, assessing or taxing the members, instrument music in church worship, are unscriptural and, together with oath-bound secret societies, will not be held in fellowship by the association." The Golden West Association explicitly rejects a number of heresies, "Arminianism, two-seedism, non-resurrectionism, soul-sleepingism, secret institutions of the day, or any other ism that is inconsistent with sound doctrine." A similar disavowal by the Original White Oak Association includes advocates of theological schools. The refusal to fellowship members of secret orders—Free Masonry is occasionally mentioned by name as the primary example—is not uncommon.

³³ A "notice" on p. 6 of the 1969 minutes of the Forked Deer Association appeals to its continuing adherence to the same articles of faith adopted by the association at its organization in 1825 as proof "beyond doubt or question that the Missionaries (New School Baptists) are the ones who seceded or left the original (or Primitive) Baptist principles."

In spite of their strong opposition to missionary societies, Primitive Baptists are not opposed to evangelistic efforts. Both regular pastors and evangelists who are in a position to do so travel a great deal to proclaim the Gospel, going where they feel that God's providence opens a way and where the Spirit of God leads them. Those whom they serve freely in this way contribute as freely to their support. Again, although Primitive Baptists oppose Sunday schools, they believe in giving their children religious training and instruction in the home.

Some Primitive Baptist associations specify the doctrine about the Holy Scriptures by affirming its inspiration, its inerrancy, and its unique status as the rule of faith and practice. A few prescribe the King James Version. The Original White Oak and the Pigg River District associations, for instance, explicitly affirm a cardinal point of the historic Primitive Baptist tradition, that it is "the office of the Holy Spirit to apply Christian righteousness to the souls of the children of men and that the Scriptures alone are not sufficient to accomplish this."³⁴

³⁴ "One must have faith before the gospel can reach him, and 'faith is the gift of God'" (cited letter from Elder Fletcher [fn. 17]). Primitive Baptists reject the "idea that gospel preaching is a 'means' (in God's hand) for the eternal salvation of souls, or to impart eternal or spiritual life. We do believe, however, that there is a saving power in the Gospel and that it does save God's 'born again' children from ignorance, superstition, and fear. We therefore believe it should be preached wherever God by his Spirit might direct." (Cited letter from Elder Gross [fn. 32].) The Word written or preached merely explains to the awakened sinner what has happened to him. The principle of direct revelation in this sense is basic to Primitive Baptist thinking. Nevertheless, Primitive

Primitive Baptists hold that the divinely established offices in the church are those of elder and deacon. No theological train-

Baptists regard the Bible as their only authority for faith.

Elder H. J. Donohue, editor of *Oasis*, Madera, Calif., explains the preference for the King James Version by saying that it "has stood for 360 years as our text book [and] the messages from it have been blessed by the Lord of heaven." Other versions may supplement but should not be allowed to supersede it. (Letter dated Jan. 30, 1971)

In a 23-page tract, *What Do Primitive Baptists Believe?* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Baptist Bible Hour, 1965), Elder Lasserre Bradley, Junior, speaks for many (possibly for most) Primitive Baptists (although not for all on every point) when he affirms salvation by grace, unconditioned by repentance, faith, Baptism, or hearing the Gospel; a limited atonement ("He died for the sheep, not for goats"); and the certainty of the response of all the elect to the Spirit's call. Primitive Baptist ministers preach, Bradley says, in order to comfort and to instruct the Lord's people, not to bring eternal salvation to sinners ("the gospel brings life and immortality to *light*, but doesn't produce life"). Passages like 1 Cor. 1:21 say that those whom the Gospel saves are already believers, not "alien" sinners. "Since preaching is not designed to make men ready for a home in heaven," it is not necessary to send men across the seas to "save souls." Gospel ministers should go where the Spirit directs them to go, not wait until a mission board sends them and pays their way. The true church of Christ antedates the Reformation; for that reason Primitive Baptists are not properly called Protestants. Their ministers receive only free-will offerings. One need not be a Primitive Baptist to go to heaven. "No one will be there because of what he believed, but many will be there in spite of it. One's doctrinal views or church affiliation has nothing to do with his destiny." The word by which men are born again is not the written word or the preached word, but Christ. Primitive Baptists preach to burdened sinners, not "alien" sinners. They call on their hearers to repent and believe, to "save" them not in the sense of taking them to heaven, but to save them here on earth from distress, error, and confusion. The Primitive Baptist message is the only one that leaves hope for infants, feeble-minded persons, or heathen. Since "one may be a recipient of the mercy of

ing is required for ministers. After the gifts of the candidate have been tested he is recommended for ordination. Primitive Baptists do not oppose education in their ministers: God, they hold, can call an educated man to preach his Gospel when it is his will to do so, and many Primitive Baptist preachers at the present time are educated men, some of them holders of graduate degrees. They also hold that it is the duty of the minister to study, especially the Sacred Scriptures. At the same time they believe that lack of education and of literary attainment does not prevent one whom God has called from being able to preach the Gospel effectively.³⁵

Although one of the issues on which the "Old School" and "New School" Baptists separated was that of ecclesiastical organizations other than the local church, they retained the principle of "association correspondence." That is, they established

God without hearing the report of it through the gospel and even without fully understanding what has taken place in his heart," God will save his elect regardless of their circumstances in life. Bradley's *Five Messages on the Doctrine of Grace*, 4th printing (Cincinnati, Ohio: Baptist Bible Hour, 1966), discuss the traditional "Calvinistic" pentad: "Total Depravity," "Unconditional Election," "Particular Redemption," "Effectual Calling," and "Final Perseverance."

³⁵ "More and more of our people are coming to more fully appreciate the importance of education where our ministers are concerned. . . . There are some highly educated men in our pulpits, and a great many of our ministers are possessed with what one must regard as a fairly good education. It is true, however, that altogether too many of our people, both laity and clergy, do fail to attach as much importance to this as I feel that they should. But I am also positive that those men, whom the world at large would call ignorant and unlearned, do have an understanding of spiritual things and of the basic teachings of the Bible, and many of them do preach with profit to the hearers." (Cited letter from Elder Cross [fn. 32])

associations—although not as permanent or necessary institutions—to encourage fellowship among the churches without having any power over them, and they arranged for the exchange of "correspondence" among associations of the same faith and order.³⁶

³⁶ While the "correspondence" is by letter, it is also a personal action in that wherever possible "messengers" from each of the constituent churches deliver the individual churches' letters to the assembled association. The letters are commonly read, sometimes by the clerk, sometimes by a "reading committee." A similar procedure is followed between associations, when a "correspondent" from the sending association delivers its "corresponding letter" to the receiving association at its annual meeting, although these letters are rarely read in the meeting. In addition to the corresponding letters, "correspondents" usually bring with them a number of sets of the published minutes of the sending association. Where personal representation is not feasible, minutes may be transmitted by mail. In the 76 associations studied for this survey, the number of other associations with which a given association "corresponded" was 0 (or indeterminable) in 9 cases; for the other 67 associations the range was from 1 to 18 associations, the mode 12, the median 8, the average 6.57. The age in years of the associations (measured in terms of the number of annual meetings reported) ranged from 3 (Little Yadkin River) to a nominal 203 (Ketocton) and 204 (Kehukee); the mode was 140-149, the median 123, the average 105.16 years. Because of the "confusion" that existed from time to time in some of the Primitive Baptist associations, a few associations, like the Powell Valley Association and the Reorganized Silver Creek Association, have suspended formal correspondence with other associations altogether, preferring "to remain alone," since their own churches "were in peace." Such a decision does not keep these associations from seating at their annual meetings visiting ministers and members from other associations "of the same faith and order" that are "orderly" and "sound in the faith." (Letters from Elder John Wilder, moderator, Powell Valley Primitive Baptist Association, Sharps Chapel, Tenn., dated Nov. 3, 1969, and Elder Orvin J. Huffman, Asheville, N. C., dated Jan. 20, 1970)

Theoretically, the existence of an association does not in any way minimize the autonomy of the local churches that belong to it. Local autonomy is the bulwark of Primitive Baptist faith and practice. The associations normally meet only once annually for two or three days and are dormant the rest of the year. Yet in the course of time personal differences among the leaders of these associations have resulted in factionalism, restricted fellowship, and continuing divisions within and among associations.

In actuality, the basis of mutual recognition is frequently the unwritten interpretations of leading ministers and their followers, who in fact exercise a considerable degree of authority over the churches in an association.

There are no state conventions and no general organization of any kind.

The different factional thrusts within the Primitive Baptist community have tended to identify with one or the other of the many journals that circulate among Primitive Baptists.³⁷

³⁷ The list which follows is not exhaustive. *The Advocate and Messenger*, 215 South Royal, Apartment 14, Front Royal, Va.; the *Baptist Witness*, Box 17032, Cincinnati, Ohio; *The Christian Pathway*, 942 Holly Hedge Road, Stone Mountain, Ga.; the *Gospel Appeal*, Box 833, Winchester, Va.; the *Gospel Witness*, Queen City, Mo.; *The Primitive Baptist*, Thornton, Ark.; and *The Primitive Monitor*, Box 452, Springfield, Ohio, represent broadly the same theological position. *Signs of the Times* (founded in 1832 by Gilbert Beebe), Route 1, Box 539, Beechwood Lane, Danville, Va., and *Zion's Landmark*, 117 N. Goldsboro St., Wilson, N.C., represent what is unofficially called the "absoluter" position. The *Banner-Herald*, Box 4168, Martinez, Ga., is a "Progressive" organ. The *Old Faith Contender*, Route 2, Elon College, N.C., is regarded as not identified with any faction.

Traditionally Primitive Baptists have gathered for worship once a month, for a Sunday or weekend. This pattern probably reflects to a large extent the scarcity of pastors in the early 19th century and the communication problems of the rural frontier at that time. As the Primitive Baptist community has moved into the second half of the 20th century, the once-a-month formula is gradually giving way to more frequent occasions of worship, particularly (but not exclusively) among "Progressives."³⁸ A similar change has taken place in the "church houses." At one time they were severely simple and unfurnished. During the past two decades the old "church houses" have been extensively

Others include: *The Banner of Love*, Box 699, Ralls, Tex.; *The Baptist Companion*, Box 2843, Birmingham, Ala.; *The Baptist Light*, Glen Rose, Tex.; *The Baptist Trumpet*, Box 711, Killeen, Tex.; *The Christian Baptist*, Box 5, Atwood, Tenn.; *The Little Messenger*, 3225 S. Jennings, Fort Worth, Tex.; *Oasis*, 1225 Rogers St., Madera, Calif.; *The Pathway of Truth*, Route 2, Holly Pond, Ala.; and the *Primitive Baptist Messenger*, Box 130, Route 2, Pulaski, Va.

Although the concerns of *Inquire*, 4704 Timberhill Drive, Nashville, Tenn., are largely those of Primitive Baptists, it describes itself as an interdenominational open forum engaged in "the search for true religion."

The Subscriber, Box 423, Boones Mill, Va., began publication in 1968 and suspended publication in 1970.

³⁸ In the 76 associations studied, of the 689 churches reporting the frequency of their services, 443 (64.30%) held services 1 weekend (Saturday or Sunday or both) a month, 142 (20.61%) held services 2 weekends a month; 3 (0.43%) held services 3 weekends a month; and 101 (14.66%) were holding services on all (or at least the first four) weekends a month. Many of those in the last category were "Progressive" churches. In the original Upper Canoochee association (fn. 17) the 1969 minutes list 17 churches; 15 meet one "Sabbath" a month, two meet every Sunday.

improved and, particularly in the cities and suburbs, some architecturally handsome structures have been erected.³⁹

As many as possible of the members of the churches that belong to an association attend the annual meeting of an association, along with as many ministers and members of other churches of the same faith and order as can come.⁴⁰

³⁹ Elder M. M. Morton, Lawrenceville, Ga., a Primitive Baptist preacher in many parts of the Southeast for over 50 years, describes the change: "[When] I began preaching for them in this section . . . they did not want to make any improvements on their church houses or property, such as electric lights, brick [church] houses, or pews. [That was regarded as] going 'Progressive,' which I think was mostly due to the teaching of the ministry. But now most all have brick [church] houses or improved frame buildings, well kept, with carpeted floors [and] comfortable pews." (Letter dated Nov. 23, 1970)

⁴⁰ Occasionally intruders engage in behavior that is subject to criticism. Thus in 1968 the Kehukee Association resolved that it "discountenances, condemns, and forbids all manner of trade or misbehavior on or around the grounds while in session, and will endeavor to punish same to the full extent of the law" (*Minutes of the Two Hundred Third Annual Session of the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association . . . 1968*, p. 3). In 1969 the Little River Association of North Carolina "agreed that all irregular trade and traffic be forbidden within the legal bounds of the association during sitting" (*Minutes of the One Hundred and Fortieth Session of the Little River Primitive Baptist Association . . . 1969*, p. 1). The Durham Colored Association reprints in its minutes a 1913 act of the General Assembly of North Carolina forbidding the sale "within one mile of any meeting of [a] Primitive Baptist Association at any time during the three days and nights of its meeting, any wine, whiskey, or other alcoholic drinks, or beer, confectionaries, candies, lemonade, Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, soda water, ginger ale, or any cold or soft drinks or concoction of any kind whatsoever, and cigars, cigarettes, tobacco of any kind, or to make photographs or other pictures" (*Minutes of the Eighty-First Annual Session of the Durham Colored Primitive Baptist Associa-*

The nearest British counterpart of the Primitive Baptists in the United States are the "Strict and Particular" Baptist Churches of England.⁴¹

Primitive Baptists are most numerous in the rural South of the United States, although they are found in every part of the country; in the West they are strongest in California. The total membership may be as high as 120,000 (largely white).⁴²

tion . . . 1969, p. 5).—The rules of decorum of the black Piedmont District association provide that "if any men who belong to our council, coming in, and their breath smells of whiskey, they shall be ruled out of order." Members "known to get drunk" will be dropped from fellowship. (*Minutes of the Seventy-Eighth Session of the Piedmont District Primitive Baptist Association . . . 1968*, pp. 19—20)

⁴¹ The term "Strict" refers to the restriction of "sitting down at the Lord's table . . . to those who are in membership with such churches as maintain the same faith and order." "Particular" refers to belief in "particular redemption," the limitation of the atonement to the elect. There are about 600 churches, with an average membership of between 40 and 50. A division precipitated in the latter 19th century about the "eternal sonship of Jesus Christ" still divides the churches that are approved by the publishers of the *Gospel Standard* (about 200) from the others. Both groups have been declining in membership, but some observers see signs of an upturn. The English churches differ from their North American counterparts in their general use of Sunday schools. See *Inquire*, 1 (1970), 92—93; 121—125; 133; 152—161. One noteworthy difference between *Gospel Standard* Strict Baptists in England and North American Primitive Baptists is that the former regard the gospel as "a means in order to regeneration" and the latter do not (see *The Christian Baptist*, 5, 3 [March 1971], 8). For the situation in England a generation ago, see Ben A. Warburton, "A Brief Outline of the 'Strict and Particular Baptist' Churches of England," in W. J. Berry, ed., *The Primitive Baptist Yearbook for 1947* (Elon College, N. C.: The Primitive Baptist Publishing House and Library, 1948), pp. 68—76.

⁴² The number of adherents is likely to be much larger. Reportedly, the number of actual participants in worship services may on occasion

The number of churches is probably in the neighborhood of 3,000. The number of associations may be as great as 300.⁴³

be as much as five or six times the actual membership. — There have been black Primitive Baptists from the beginning. Relations between black and white Primitive Baptist associations and churches are cordial, but the races tend to be segregated.

⁴³ In the circumstances, dependable statistics are difficult to come by.

With no claim for completeness, the 1967 edition of *The Primitive Baptist Directory* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Baptist Bible Hour, 1967) listed 1,080 Primitive Baptist churches in 34 states and the District of Columbia (without indication of the association to which the individual church belongs). Of these churches 707 (65.46%) are in eight states: Georgia (142), Alabama (111), Texas (107), Tennessee (97), Mississippi (77), Virginia (63), North Carolina (57), and Kentucky (53).

In addition to the 76 associations surveyed in this study, the present writer was able to compile a list of 174 other Primitive Baptist associations in existence in the summer of 1969, either from the lists of associations with which the associations under study "corresponded" or from other sources with whom this writer was engaged in correspondence. Of these additional 174 associations, the state in which two of them concentrated their activity was not determinable. The remainder were distributed as follows: North Carolina, 24; Alabama, 20; Texas, 17; Georgia, 16; Arkansas, 13; Kentucky, 12; Mississippi, 11; Virginia, 11; Ohio, 7; Tennessee, 7; West Virginia, 7; Florida, 6; Indiana, 4; Louisiana, 4; Missouri, 3; Oklahoma, 3; California, 2; Illinois, 2; Maryland, 1; Michigan, 1; New York, 1. (The total of 174 is not altogether firm. Quite separate associations in different states may have the same name. In the case of a division both groups sometimes continue to use the same name. Two separate associations with similar names may be referred to by the same designation. Thus the number of associations may actually be greater than 174.)

Adding these 174 associations to the present writer's basic 76 gives a total of 250 Primitive Baptist associations known to exist in 1969. Given the circumstances attending the compilation of the rosters, the estimate of a total of 300 associations is not improbable.

The 76 associations in the present writer's

More and more churches are not in associations, but maintain a strict independence.⁴⁴

study listed a total of 696 churches as belonging to them. (The range in the number of churches per association was 2 to 31, the mode 3, the median 8, the average 9.16.) The total membership of these 76 associations was 27,218 (8 churches did not report). The range of membership in the individual associations was 27 to 1,875, the mode 101-150, the median 265, the average 358; there were 7 associations with a total reported membership of more than 1,000. The average number of members in the 688 reporting churches was 39.56.

Assuming that the number of churches in all of these associations is close to the average of 9.16 in the 76 associations studied, 300 associations would include about 2,750 churches. The number of independent Primitive Baptist churches that do not belong to an association is considerable and indeterminable; it may be as high as 250. Applying the average of 39.56 members per church in the basic group of association to the total of 3,000 churches thus achieved would suggest that the total number of persons actively affiliated with Primitive Baptist churches in the United States may be as great as 120,000. Another estimate sees the number of churches ranging from 3,200 to 4,000 and the membership ranging from 140,000 to 180,000 (cited letter of Elder Pyles [fn. 3]).

⁴⁴ The present writer acknowledges the kindness of Mr. W. J. Berry, of the Primitive Baptist Publishing House and Library, Elon College, N. C., in providing him with a great deal of printed material pertaining to the Primitive Baptists; of the Rev. Gary M. Arp, pastor of the Church of Our Savior, El Dorado, Ark., who interviewed Elder W. H. Cayce, editor of the *Primitive Baptist*, Thornton, Ark.; and of the Rev. Monte E. Frohm, now in Mobile, Ala., then seminarian assistant at the Church of the Ascension, Charlotte, N. C., who interviewed Elder C. M. Mills of Charlotte. — An important depository of Primitive Baptist materials is the Primitive Baptist Library and Historical Foundation, Route 2, Elon College, N. C., managed by nine trustees representing different Primitive Baptist traditions. Elder S. T. Tolley has announced the projected establishment of *The Christian Baptist* Library of Primitive Baptist history and literature at Arwood, Tennessee (*The Christian Baptist*, 5, 2 [February 1971], 11).

NATIONAL PRIMITIVE BAPTIST
CONVENTION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The division of Baptists into "Missionary" and "Primitive" Baptists involved black Baptists as well as white Baptists. The Huntsville (Alabama) African Baptist Church (now the St. Bartley Primitive Baptist Church), organized in 1820, entered the white Flint River Baptist Association the following year. When the split came in the late 1820s, the Huntsville African Baptist Church sided with the Primitive party. In 1865, following the War Between the States, the white membership forced the black churches out of the association; the latter formed the Indian Creek Primitive Baptist Association in 1869. The same process took place elsewhere in the American South. Around 1906 sentiment for a national convention of black Primitive Baptists reached the point where Elder Clarence Francis Sams of Key West, Fla., Elder George S. Crawford of De Land, Fla., Elder James H. Carey of Charlotte, N. C., and others called on interested ministers to attend an organization meeting in Huntsville the following year. In July 1907 eighty-eight elders from seven southern states responded to the invitation and organized the National Primitive Baptist Convention.¹

The convention reflects Primitive Baptist positions in its very loose organization,

¹ C. P. Allen and Terry M. Batts, "Brief History of the National Primitive Baptist Convention of the United States of America," in Terry M. Batts, ed., *Souvenir Program, Golden Jubilee Session (1907—1957), Primitive Baptist National Convention, U.S.A. . . . August 21 to 25, 1957* (Huntsville, Ala.: National Primitive Baptist Convention of the United States of America, 1957), pp. [5]—[6].

without centralization of authority. Again, the black Primitive Baptists have been less rigid theologically than their white counterparts. No common confession of faith binds the local congregations and associations together, so that there is some variation in doctrine within the convention, chiefly in the degree of stress on social action. A shift in thinking about missions has likewise been going on; the 1967 convention at least had before it a proposal to begin foreign mission work, even though it did not act favorably on the proposal.²

The convention's 16 Articles of Faith affirm belief in the Trinity; the Bible; "the doctrine of eternal and particular elections of a definite number of the human race . . . chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world"; a "covenant [of] redemption between God the Father and God the Son"; and the fall of man and "the communication of Adam's sinful nature to his posterity by ordinary generation." They hold that all chosen in Christ shall hear His voice and "be effectually called, regenerated, and born again." They teach justification "in the sight of God alone by the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to them by faith"; good works as the fruits of faith that "justify us in the sight of men and angels as evidences of our gracious state"; the final perseverance of the saints; the general judgment of both the just and the unjust followed by eternal joys and punishment respectively; the visible church as a complete and independent congregation of baptized believers adhering to a special covenant "which recognizes Christ as their only lawgiver and ruler"; pastors and deacons as Biblical officers of the

² Letters from the Rev. Terry M. Batts, Mobile, Ala., dated Aug. 14 and 28, 1967.

church; and believer's baptism by immersion in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Only ministers who have been regularly baptized, called, and "come under the imposition of a presbytery by the majority of the Church of Christ" have the right to administer the ordinances of the Gospel and only baptized and orderly church members have a right to communion at the Lord's Table. They affirm belief in "washing the saints' feet in a church capacity immediately after the Lord's supper."³

The convention reports 2,196 churches with an inclusive membership of 1,465,000 (1970).⁴ The headquarters of the convention are at 2116 Clinton Avenue, West, Huntsville, Ala.⁵

³ *Discipline of the Primitive Baptist Church*, 4th rev. ed., 3d printing (Huntsville, Ala.: National Primitive Baptist Publishing Board, 1966), pp. 3—5.

⁴ *Yearbook of American Churches for 1970*, p. 54. The membership total is apparently an error. This would average out at 667 members per church. (The average membership of Primitive Baptist churches generally is slightly under 40.) The number of ordained clergy is given as 623. For 1957 the convention reported 1,100 churches, 80,983 members, and 500 ordained clergy having charges (*Yearbook of American Churches for 1961*, p. 22). The *Yearbook of American Churches for 1964*, p. 22, records 1,125 churches, 85,983 members, and 700 clergy having charges. The figures reported in the *Yearbook of American Churches for 1970* would imply an increase of 95.2% in the number of churches, an increase of 1,605% (!) in the number of members, and a decline of 11% in the number of ordained clergy over a 6-year period.

⁵ This writer gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Rev. Kenneth Holdorf, pastor of the Church of the Ascension, Huntsville, Ala., who interviewed the Rev. Amos Robinson, pastor of the St. Bartley Primitive Baptist Church, Huntsville, on this writer's behalf.

THE COVENANTED BAPTIST CHURCH OF CANADA

The Covenanted Baptist Church of Canada represents the Primitive¹ Baptist tradition in the Dominion of Canada. The members chose the name because they "believe in a covenant of grace ordered in all things and sure." The church is concentrated in the vicinity of Dutton, Ontario, and is composed of descendants of emigrants from Scotland and from Caledonia, N.Y. The first elder, Dougald Campbell of North Knapdale, Scotland, came to Canada in 1818 and settled at Aldborough, near Dutton. The Covenanted Baptist Church of Canada teaches the absolute predestination of all things and fellowships the Baptist churches of the United States that stand by the doctrine adopted at the Black Rock gathering in 1832.² Services are conducted in six communities in the area.³ The total active membership is estimated at about 30 (1969).⁴

St. Louis, Mo.

¹ In Canada the term "Primitive Baptist" describes a group that came into being late in the 19th century in a controversy over the doctrine of holiness. They have no historic connection with the "Primitive Baptists" of the United States.

² On the early history and faith of the Covenanted Baptist Church of Canada see Hassell and Hassell, pp. 880—85.

³ Letter from Elder George Ruston, senior elder, Covenanted Baptist Church of Canada, Dutton, Ontario, dated Dec. 16, 1969.

⁴ Letter from Mr. W. J. Berry, Primitive Baptist Publishing House and Library, Elon College, North Carolina, dated Nov. 19, 1969.

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