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Studying Canadian Baptists of Yesterday, Today: Editor's Introduction

Taylor Murray

The past year has been a significant one for the Canadian Baptist Historical Society (CBHS). Alongside our friends at the Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, our small learned society hosted the Canadian Baptist Symposium, which was a national academic conference that featured two plenary addresses and 16 parallel paper presentations at two separate locations.[1] Many of these papers will be published at a later date.

Stepping back and evaluating this event (as historians love to do), the shared interest in this conference suggests that the field of Baptist studies in Canada is in a good place. There are certainly gaps historians still need to address, and there is no shortage of uncovered stories worth exploring; yet, it is encouraging to know that there are so many scholars studying Baptist heritage in Canada.

The articles published in this edition of the *Bulletin* reflect a small

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1. For more information on this event (including pictures), visit the CBHS website.

sample size of the diversity of research projects currently in the works for historians of various backgrounds and locales. The first article, written by Brittany Goetting, explores nineteenth-century cross-border experiences of women in Maine and the Maritime Provinces, and demonstrates that they helped shape Baptist culture in that region through voluntary societies and the printed word. Next is an article written by Catherine Fancy, Ciaran Purdome, and Jennifer Richard on the state of the Atlantic Baptist Archives, based out of Acadia University in Nova Scotia. In it, they talk about the exciting opportunities ahead for the archives—and the challenges that come along with them.[2] This edition of the *Bulletin* includes a tribute to Stanley K. Fowler, a significant Canadian Baptist theologian and longtime professor at Heritage College and Seminary, who passed away this past year.

Finally, this edition of the *Bulletin* features its first ever book forum. We invited three scholars—Elizabeth Newman, Colin Godwin, and Spencer Miles Boersma—to engage with the argument in Mark G. McKim's *The Secularization of Baptism*, which explores the views of baptism among Baptists since the 1600s.[3] In addition to the three contributors, we also have a response from the author. We are pleased to host such a rich and interesting discussion in the pages of the *Bulletin*.

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McKim, Mark G. *The Secularization of Baptism: How Baptists Took God out of Baptism, and How to Fix the Problem.* McMaster Theological Studies Series 9. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2025.

2. The *Bulletin* published a similar article on the Canadian Baptist Archives in Hamilton last year. See McCulloch and Heath, "Canadian Baptist Archives, 24–37.

3. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*.

"And She Threw in Two Mites": Maine and Canadian Maritime Female Baptist Voluntary Societies and the Development of Religious Community, 1800–1830

Brittany Goetting

The first number of *Zion's Advocate*, a Baptist magazine based in Portland, Maine, enthusiastically contended that "the free circulation of religious intelligence has the tendency to disclose the state and wants of mankind—to excite Christians to exertion—and to direct them to their proper field of labor."[1] The *Christian Messenger*, a Baptist magazine published in Halifax, Nova Scotia, made a similar argument a decade later. Its editor insisted that "the most persevering efforts should be made by friends of Religion to accompany any attempt to cultivate the human mind, with a simultaneous endeavor to diffuse also the precepts and principles of the unerring word."[2]

Brittany Goetting is an Assistant Professor of History at University of Pikeville in Kentucky. She was awarded a PhD in history from the University of Maine in 2022, where she completed her dissertation on nineteenth century Maine and Canadian Maritime Baptist print culture. She continues to study the significance of North American religious print upon the development of culture and identity.

1. *Zion's Advocate*, 11 November 1828, 2.
2. *Christian Messenger and Repository of Religious, Political, and General Intelligence for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick*, 6 January 1837, 1.

Maine and Maritime Baptists recognized and valued the potential impact of the written word. They used publications throughout the early nineteenth century to assert that Christians were obligated to spread the gospel and aid others. Yet, not all Christians were expected or permitted to expand the Redeemer's Kingdom in the same way. Contemporary gender expectations limited the activities of Baptist women.

Women constituted the majority of members within most churches in New England and the Maritime Provinces. Historians such as Susan Juster estimate that women outnumbered men by two to one in many congregations.[3] However, women could not hold leadership positions in churches. The role of minister, deacon, or even representative to a sister association was reserved for male members.

Women were still able to influence the theology and culture of their churches and the wider Baptist community through their participation in voluntary societies. Voluntary societies were groups of individuals who united to pursue a common goal for public benefit. Baptist women regularly joined groups that were devoted to the spread of the gospel or biblical values. They initially led and aided societies that focused on the distribution of Bibles and religious tracts, the encouragement of domestic missionary work, and the promotion of Sabbath schools and ministerial education in the early nineteenth century. Baptist women especially supported the controversial topic of foreign missions. This particular ministry was not always encouraged by Baptist male leaders and yet Baptist women continued to champion the cause. Their perseverance eventually led to the general acceptance of foreign missions among Maine and Maritime Baptists in the mid-nineteenth century.

Baptist women's commitment to the aforementioned ministries may have been relegated to the margins of obscure church records if it were not for a robust religious print culture. Women shared their beliefs and updates about their work in voluntary societies in annual Baptist association meeting notes and periodicals. Their letters, articles, and records clearly outlined their theology and priorities, and

3. Juster, *Disorderly Women*.

encouraged Baptists of each gender to join them. They shaped Baptist culture and created a community of like-minded Christians through their participation in voluntary societies and the use of print.[4]

Historiography

The history of Baptist laypeople in the early-nineteenth century, especially the history of Baptist women, can be challenging to uncover. Much of the existing work on Baptists during this period highlights male Baptist leadership. This is especially evident in the works created by scholars of Maritime Baptist history. George Rawlyk, Daniel Goodwin, Barry Moody, and D. G. Bell have all made significant contributions to our understanding of Maritime Baptist development.[5] Nevertheless, these works predominately concentrate on Baptist ministers and missionaries. American scholars have produced a greater variety of works as well. Shelby Balik and Stephen Marini have studied the complicated evolution of the Northern New England religious landscape, while David Paul Nord's *Faith in Reading* explored religious print culture.[6] Even so, the voices of laypeople, particularly Baptist women, are often still obscured by more general discussions of religious evolution. Early nineteenth-century societal gender norms and varying access to printing presses and publishers

4. The phrase "and she threw in two mites" comes from Mark 12:41–44, "And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." (King James Version)

5. See Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit*; Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*; Goodwin, *Into Deep Waters*; Moody, ed. *Repent and Believe*; and Bell, "Religious Liberty and Protestant Dissent in Loyalist New Brunswick," 146–62.

6. Balik, *Rally the Scattered Believers*; Marini, *Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England*; and Nord, *Faith in Reading*.

contribute to this difficulty. Religious print, such as printed association meeting notes and periodicals, can reveal the unique perspectives of women and the ways they used print to foster connection and community.

Early nineteenth-century Maine and Maritime Baptists offer a particularly fascinating lens through which one can analyze religious print culture. They were not alone in their appreciation of publications, but they utilized them slightly differently than other denominations such as the Congregationalists and Methodists. Baptist churches were comprised of a small number of baptized "professors" who had undergone full-immersion baptism as an adult. Baptist numbers could not increase through childbirth or infant baptism but instead necessitated significant evangelization. Baptist print culture produced opportunities for this deeply necessary networking and promotion. Baptist women from an early stage in this process of evangelization produced written materials that celebrated and endorsed missionary work.

The evolution of Maine and Maritime Baptists bore many similarities. Calvinistic Baptists gained a foothold in Maine and the Maritimes through the migration of southern New Englanders in the late eighteenth century. These communities were initially rather isolated and communication outside of their local churches was limited. Correspondence increased between Maine and Maritime Baptists as their populations steadily grew and they increasingly appreciated the benefits of collaboration. Their printed materials also indicate frequent partnerships and even an affection for one another. Their religious print culture consequently can be studied together due to these resemblances and connections.

Early Baptist Records

Maine and Maritime Baptist ministers and laypeople sent personal correspondence to one another, churches kept record books for local use, and missionaries wrote down their experiences in private journals throughout much the late-eighteenth century. However, Baptist religious print began to blossom in the region in the 1790s due to the formation of associations. Baptist associations were overarching regional organizations that connected individual churches. They served several purposes such as sending missionaries to less developed

communities and providing funding and support to small, secluded churches. One of their most visible and influential ministries was their annual meeting. These meetings were hosted at one of the churches affiliated with the association and typically lasted two to three days. Representatives from churches within the association and "messengers" from other neighbouring associations were invited to attend. Association annual meetings resolved theological debates, provided opportunities for Baptists to bond with one another, and overall unified the denomination under shared principles and goals.

Unfortunately, not every Baptist was able to enjoy the "refreshing season from the presence of the Lord" that one could encounter at these meetings.[7] Maine and Maritime Baptists, therefore, shared news and discussions from their annual meetings with printed meeting notes. These records ranged from ten to thirty pages in length and featured an account of the meeting, missionary and committee appointments, notices of donations, and "circular" and "corresponding" letters that highlighted the denomination's recent successes and concerns.

Printed association meeting notes often included information about local voluntary societies and their entreaties for aid. The earliest voluntary societies devoted themselves to domestic and international missionary work and the distribution of Bibles and religious tracts. Ministers who were assigned by the associations to evangelize in more distant regions desperately needed money and supplies. These ministers often lamented the lack of reading materials available to those living in rural areas and argued that these individuals "suffered for the want of instruction."[8]

Maine and Maritime Baptists were not immune to these calls for help. Donations were frequently collected during Baptist association annual meetings, but they needed a more consistent solution. One of the first recorded Maine Baptist societies was a group of women dedicated to raising money for missionary purposes. Margaret Barnwell, the treasurer of the Female Donary Society of North-Yar-

7. *Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association held in Fayette, September 24th and 25th, 1817*, 10.

8. *The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine,* May 1804, 35.

mouth, Maine, sent a letter to the Cumberland Association in southern Maine in 1811. Her letter addressed both the "male and female members of the Churches of Maine" and was intended to persuade Baptists to support missionary work. She remarked, "We think it will not be taken in disdain that we should attempt to excite your emulation, we presume not to dictate, but we fain would arouse your attention to so glorious a cause."[9] The next meeting of the Cumberland Association in 1813 recorded donations from five voluntary societies, three of which were specifically led by women.[10] A similar instance occurred in the Maritimes in the early nineteenth century. The Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Baptist Association recorded a donation of roughly four pounds from the Female Mite Society in the City of St. John in 1818. The association complimented the Female Mite Society by stating that they "hath done-well, may God incline the hearts of many to follow their example."[11]

Maine and Maritime Baptist women's contributions were also frequently printed in newspapers and magazines. The periodical industry experienced explosive growth throughout the nineteenth century. Sociologist Heather Haveman, in her work *Magazines and the Making of America*, estimated that there were a few dozen periodicals in the United States during the American Revolution. By 1860, there were over one thousand. She attributed this change to growing literacy rates, innovations in print technology that made printing presses cheaper and easier to use, and improved postal systems and roads.[12] Christians throughout North America took advantage of these changes to formulate their own periodicals that promoted their interests and spread the gospel.

Religious newspapers were four to eight pages in length and were

9. *Minutes of the Cumberland Association Holden at the Baptist Meeting-House in North-Yarmouth, October 2, & 3, 1811, Together with Their Constitution, Circular, and Corresponding Letters.*

10. *Minutes of the Cumberland Association Holden at the Baptist Meeting-House in Jay, (Me.), September 29 & 30, 1813, Together with Their Circular and Corresponding Letters.*

11. *Minutes of the Nova-Scotia and New-Brunswick Baptist Association Held at the Baptist Meeting-house in Newport* (1818).

12. Haveman, *Magazines and the Making of America.*

published on a weekly or biweekly basis, while magazines usually ranged from twenty to forty pages in length and were published anywhere from once a month to twice a year. The length and frequency of both newspapers and magazines permitted them to publish heftier articles. They usually included several pages dedicated to detailed accounts of voluntary societies' activities, meetings, and philosophies.

Periodicals were typically financed through reader subscriptions and distributed through "agents." Editors, therefore, needed to publish content that would appeal to readers, convince them to pay anywhere from one to two dollars or pounds a year for a subscription, and induce agents to disseminate the periodicals. Editors certainly had their own interests and agendas, but they could not ignore the topics that fascinated their readers.

Periodicals were also more widely distributed than association meeting notes. Associations reported printing between a few hundred to nearly three thousand copies of their minutes each year.[13] This number greatly varied depending on the size of the association and general interest in the minutes. They were most circulated among the members of the association, with a few copies being sent to sister associations. Periodicals were delivered to a larger number of readers spread out over a sizeable distance. For example, the *American Baptist Magazine* noted that it had printed 134,000 copies between 1817 and 1819.[14] It is more difficult to determine the number of people who read Maine and Maritime Baptist periodicals, but at least one editor bragged that they had secured over one thousand subscribers.[15]

Baptist women published in diverse kinds of periodicals ranging from interdenominational and national publications with a widespread audience to denomination-specific and regional ones with a smaller readership. Early periodicals were published by editors who resided in centres of the printing industry, such as Boston and Philadelphia. For instance, the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*

13. These numbers are collected from Maine and Maritime Baptist associations between 1790 and 1840.

14. *The American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer*, January 1819, 3.

15. *Maine Baptist Herald*, 8 May 1827, 1.

was one of the most prominent publications among Northeastern Baptists, and it was published in Boston.[16] However, periodicals were eventually published in more remote areas, such as Maine and the Maritimes, as printing presses became less expensive and more accessible. These included the *Maine Baptist Missionary Register*, *Waterville Intelligencer, Maine Baptist Herald*, *Eastern Baptist*, and *Zion's Advocate* in Maine; and the *Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick* and *Christian Messenger and Repository of Religious, Political, and General Intelligence for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick* in the Maritimes.

Baptist women's submissions included testimonies of faith, records of their voluntary society meetings, and personal letters that persuaded readers to adopt specific beliefs and practices. An 1813 letter from the Boston Female Primary Society entreated their "dear sisters scattered in the wilderness" to share information about their efforts to spread the gospel. They remarked,

> We cannot be willing to remain in a state of neutrality in a cause which demands so much zeal and activity; nor can we feel satisfied with being partakers of the grace of the gospel ourselves, without desiring to be instrumental of conveying the knowledge of it to others.[17]

Denominational leaders recognized the impact that Baptist women not only had on their local churches, but also on the spread of Christianity throughout the world. An 1811 article from the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* remarked, "let me thereby attempt to stimulate [females] to employ their influence in diffusing [the gospel's] healing beams."[18]

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16. The *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* eventually became the *American Baptist Magazine*.

17. "An Address from 'the Boston Female Society, for Missionary Purposes' to Females professing godliness," *The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*, March 1813, 252.

18. "Females exhorted to aid Missionary exertions," *Massachusetts Baptist Magazine*, September 1811, 88.

Post-War 1812 Development

Baptist women remained dedicated to a multitude of ministries throughout the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, foreign missions began to capture the attention of the Baptists during the War of 1812. Maine and Maritime Baptists donated some money to British foreign missions in India in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. However, this became an impossibility, at least for American Baptists, during the war. American Baptists, therefore, formed the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions (later called the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions) in May 1814. They developed 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."[19]

Many Maine Baptists quickly embraced the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions. The Bowdoinham Association in southern Maine reported in their association meeting notes just a few months after the formation of the society that they hoped to "promote the laudable designs of the 'Baptist board for foreign missions.'"[20] The remaining Maine Baptist associations and their members, including Maine Baptist women, quickly voiced these same aspirations.

Maritime Baptists supported foreign missionary causes as well. The Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Baptist Association remarked at their 1814 annual association meeting that, "The Missionary Societies, and the success that has attended them, and the large field that presents, particularly in the East for the spread of the glorious gospel of the Grace of God, are subjects which cannot fail to engage your hearts at the throne of grace." They furthermore collected £8.13 for the "poor Heathen."[21] Nevertheless, the Maritime Baptists found

19. *The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*, September 1814, 66.

20. *Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association Held in Litchfield, September 28th & 29th, 1814.*

21. *Minutes of the Nova-Scotia and New-Brunswick Baptist Association Held at the Baptist Meeting-house in Chester, Nova Scotia, June 27 & 28,*

themselves in quite a different predicament. They were a smaller group than their southern brethren and more geographically spread out. The Church of England and other British authorities often treated them with suspicion, especially during the War of 1812. They also were pressured to donate to both American and British Baptist institutions. Maritime Baptist leaders consequently encouraged laypeople to donate to domestic missionary endeavours within the Maritimes. Their goals regularly conflicted with the desires of Baptist laypeople, especially Baptist women. Many Maritime Baptist women were incredibly interested in foreign missions and donated funds with or without a full blessing from Baptist leadership.

Maine Baptist women did not abandon causes such as the distribution of Bibles, Sabbath schools, and temperance. Association meeting notes and periodicals recorded the activities and sentiments of the numerous voluntary societies dedicated to these initiatives. For example, the Cumberland Association noted in their 1820 printed meeting notes that "Missionary, Bible, Tract and Humane Societies, have multiplied without number; a deep and broad stream of charity has been flowing into the treasury of the Lord."[22] Nevertheless, the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions was one of the most popular recipients among Maine Baptist women. The Readfield Primary Society specifically bemoaned, "we feel to blush at the feeble efforts we have made for the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom. The following circumstance has made us blush for ourselves and the Baptist denomination."[23] Baptist women confidently sent their commentary to publications even while the causes and beliefs they held dear were being questioned. A vicious debate over foreign missions and the leadership of the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions broke out in 1827 in the *Maine Baptist Herald*. David Nutter, a prominent Baptist minister, accused the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions of nepotism, poor money management, and a disregard for the spiritual needs of Indigenous people in North America. Joseph Griffin, the editor of the *Maine Baptist Herald* echoed this view and contended that there were "many unwise zealots

1814; Together with their Circular and Corresponding Letters.

22. *Minutes of the Cumberland Association* (1820), 13.
23. *Zion's Advocate*, 5 March 1829, 68.

in prosecuting the various religious objects of the present day."[24]

Maine Baptist women were undeterred in their love of both foreign missions and the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions during this debate. The year 1826 had been a landmark one for Maine Baptist women, who formed forty new female mite societies.[25] The First Female Primary Society of Sedgwick reflected in October 1826 that their "mite devoted to the cause of Missions, is the fruit of industry and self-denial." They further expressed that they hoped their donation "may be blest to the salvation of some poor Burman or Hindoo, who is now in slavish fear and heathenish darkness, worshipping gods of their own hand-making."[26] These donations and letters continued to pour in after the debate. *The American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* recorded that Maine Baptist female voluntary societies dedicated to foreign missions donated approximately $166 in 1827 alone.[27] This number does not include the donations from voluntary societies that featured a mixture of male and female members. Maine Baptist women remained deeply committed to foreign missions as illustrated by a letter from the First Female Society in Sedgwick. The author stated, "We should have been much pleased had our abilities been such that we could have enclosed a much larger sum, for so precious a cause, as the cause of mission."[28]

Maritime Baptist women also repeatedly struggled against the leadership of their denomination. Maritime Baptist leadership were not entirely opposed to foreign missions and did praise those who

24. *Maine Baptist* Herald, 31 July 1827, 50.

25. This information was compiled from a various periodicals and association meeting notes, but the following was the most comprehensive: *The American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer, Published by the Board of Managers of the Baptist General Convention*, January 1827, 29.

26. *The American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer*, October 1826, 307.

27. Amounts collected from *The American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer*, January-December 1827.

28. "Letter to the Treasurer of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, enclosing $21.87 for Foreign Missions, Sedgwick, Aug. 28, 1828," *The American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer*, *Published by the Board of Managers of the Baptist General Convention*, October 1828, 312.

contributed to them. Nevertheless, they were fearful that foreign missions and other benevolent causes could distract from the spread of the gospel in their own provinces. They instead tried to induce Baptists to donate their money and energy to domestic missions. The New Brunswick Baptist Association praised British and American foreign missionaries in their 1822 printed annual meeting notes but observed, "we are surrounded by thousands of our fellow-men who are yet in a perishing condition."[29] This sentiment was also reflected in their local periodicals. An article in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick* remarked that the author hoped that Maritime Baptists could "be brought to feel that on the church collectively, and on each member, rests the duty of proclaiming . . . the words of eternal life to every destitute region of the province."[30]

Maritime Baptist women, like their Maine counterparts, devoted their time and abilities to several ministries. The *Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick* mentioned in 1827 that "many of the Ladies present, cheerfully came forward and expressed [a] willingness to form themselves into a Bible Association," in New Brunswick.[31] Yet, Maritime Baptist women were overwhelmingly committed to raising money for foreign missions. The treasurer of the Windsor Female Mite Society noted in a letter that "[The Burman Mission] has very strong claims upon the sympathy and active support of all Baptist churches."[32] The Canso Female Mite Society argued that their dearest wish was that the "cheering beams of the sun of righteousness" would reach a "disconsolate soul" through

29. *Minutes of the New Brunswick Baptist Association, Held at Fredericton, N.B., July 8th and 9th, 1822.*

30. *Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Published Under the Board of the Missionary Society of New Brunswick*, March 1834, 47.

31. "The New Brunswick Auxiliary Bible Society," *Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Published Under the Board of the Missionary Society of New Brunswick*, January 1827.

32. *The Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Published Under the Board of the Missionary Society of New Brunswick*, July 1833, 91.

their contributions.[33] The beliefs of Maritime Baptist women were the ones that ultimately came to dominate the denomination. Maritime Baptist publications assiduously reported the activities of all voluntary societies by the late 1830s. The newly formed *Christian Messenger and Repository of Religious, Political, and General Intelligence for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick* contended that one of its central objects was to recommend "plans of operation in the various departments of labor in the kingdom of Christ."[34] There was little concern by the late 1830s that foreign missions would consume all Baptist resources.

Alternative Publications

Baptist women often wrote as representatives of an organization and these letters promoted the goals of these institutions. However, there are a few published letters and articles that were written by individuals with their own motivations. *Zion's Advocate* published a lengthy article by a woman who identified herself as "the Wife of a Baptist Preacher." The woman traveled with her husband as they visited numerous churches, associations, and the homes of welcoming Christians. She focused primarily on whether the people she visited seemed interested in the "advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom" through revivals, missionary work, or other ministries. She exclaimed, "O how light, did all the toils, labors, and obstructions to doing good then appear, when compared to the eternal weight of glory that awaits the followers of Jesus." She was especially impressed by an elderly man who lectured younger laypeople on timeless criticisms such as "their superfluities in dress."[35] However, her overall interest lay in whether laypeople promoted foreign missions, and she diligently recorded their comments and behaviour.

There are even a few instances in which Christian women struck

33. *The Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Published Under the Board of the Missionary Society of New Brunswick*, July 1833, 91.

34. "For Christian Messenger," *Christian Messenger and Repository of Religious, Political, and General Intelligence for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick*, 6 January 1837, 7.

35. *Zion's Advocate*, 22 January 1829, 41.

out and published their own works. They were often published by religious printers such as James Loring of Boston, a prolific publisher and devout Baptist. These included works such as Jane Taylor's *Reciprocal Duties of Parents and Children* and Hannah More's *Sacred Dramas*.[36] Their works were commonly edited by Baptist men, but the content was written by the women themselves. Rebekah Porter Pinkham of Sedgwick, Maine and Eliza Ann Chipman of Cornwallis, Nova Scotia are particularly stand-out cases.

Rebekah Pinkman's Writings

Rebekah Pinkham was born in Freeport, Maine to a Congregational family. She became a Baptist in 1808 and married a Baptist preacher. Pinkham and her husband moved several times but spent most of their lives in Sedgwick, Maine.

Pinkham wrote letters to religious periodicals as she served in leadership positions in multiple voluntary societies. The funds she donated came from these societies and from her own purse. The American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions stated in 1828 that she had donated one dollar from the profits she had made from selling religious tracts.[37] She even boldly wrote letters directly to Baptist missionaries in modern-day Myanmar. Her letter to missionary Ann Hasseltine Judson not only commended the mission but offered unsolicited updates about the spread of the gospel in eastern Maine.[38]

Pinkham's most notable publications were memoirs of distinctive local Christians. These included works about Lucy Cole of Sedgwick and Simeon Milliken of Mount Desert Island. These memoirs often revealed more about Pinkham's own faith than they did about the people she wrote about. Both Cole and Milliken were depicted as exceedingly pious Christians who recognized their utter depravity and sought out the hope and salvation that they believed only God could provide. They lived full yet short lives dedicated to the spread of Christianity. Each narrative emphasized Cole and Milliken's commitment to voluntary societies and the growth of God's kingdom.

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36. Taylor, *Reciprocal duties of parents* and More, *Sacred Dramas*.

37. *The American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer, Published by the Board of Managers of the Baptist General Convention,* June 1828.

38. Garrison, *Memoir of Mrs. Rebekah P. Pinkham.*

Both actively participated in Sabbath Schools and championed missionary work. For example, Pinkham noted that Cole "manifested an unusual interest in the Burman Mission. She had read, when able, Mrs. Judson's Memoirs, and such other communications as she could obtain, respecting Missions."[39] Cole furthermore believed that she would meet the missionaries in heaven. Pinkham argued that both Cole and Milliken should serve as examples to the living. She remarked, "And if YOU, my dear young friends, who have put on Christ by an outward profession, would be ornaments in the Christian church, useful and happy in your lives, and joyful in your death, adopt simply the measure which [Cole] adopted."[40] Pinkham's own biographer observed that she "took a deep interest in every department of benevolent effort."[41] She used her publications to share what she believed would lead to a righteous life and attempted to guide others to follow that calling.

Eliza Ann Chipman's Writings

Eliza Ann Chipman was born in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia in 1807. Her parents were active in the local Baptist church and her father served as a deacon. She experienced her own conversion in 1823 and related her encounter to the well-known Nova Scotian Baptist minister, Edward Manning. Chipman was baptized in 1824 and joined the same church her family attended. She married her first cousin, William Chipman, in 1827, and he became a minister in 1829. He took charge of the Second Cornwallis Baptist Church in 1829, and Eliza Chipman lived out the remainder of her days in modern-day Berwick.

Eliza Ann Chipman used publications to inspire others as well. She was unable to be as active in her community as she was preoccupied with raising thirteen children, only eight of whom lived to adulthood. There are fewer letters or publications from her than from someone like Pinkham. Nevertheless, she was able to influence her community through the publication of her memoirs. She maintained a diary throughout her life, beginning with her conversion in

39. Pinkham, *Narrative of the Life*, 44–45.
40. Pinkham, *Narrative of the Life*, 86.
41. Garrison, *Memoir of Mrs. Rebekah P. Pinkham,* 126.

1823.

Chipman did not live to see her memoir published but instead instructed her husband a few days before her death to publish it on her behalf. She allegedly stated that she had "enjoyed much comfort in reading Christian Diaries, and therefore, if there could be a selection of gleanings from her own, which might be useful to others, she was willing that her friends and the public should have the benefit."

Her diaries outlined her conversion experience, struggles with her faith, confidence in her salvation, and her opinions about the many sermons she attended and publications she read. Chipman frequently participated in prayer groups, taught Sunday School, and attended association meetings. For instance, Chipman witnessed "preaching, praying, and other religious duties...performed, solely for the good of Zion's cause," at the 1826 Nova Scotia Baptist Association annual meeting. Like Pinkham, Chipman felt a deep connection to foreign missions. She habitually praised God for the safety of the missionaries and was especially joyful when she learned that "war is no more heard among the Burmans, where Missionaries have been cruelly tortured and expecting death." She even expressed a desire to become a missionary when she wrote in her diary that "my better part would gladly unite with them, in teaching the tawny Hindoos the way of life and salvation." She remained in Nova Scotia but never gave up her love of foreign missions and excitedly praised every sermon she attended the promoted the cause.[42]

Conclusion

Baptist women could not lead their denominations in the same ways as their male counterparts, but their impact was undeniable. They joined voluntary societies that represented their interests, sent letters to associations and periodicals, and even published their own individual works. Their perseverance and publications ultimately influenced both the short-term and long-term evolution of their denomination and created a powerful sense of community.

42. Robertson and Robertson, ed. *Memoir of Mrs. Eliza Ann Chipman.*

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Treasures of Faith: Researching the Atlantic Baptist Archives at Acadia

Catherine Fancy, Ciaran Purdome & Jennifer Richard

Introduction

Acadia University's Library and Archives is the center of historical research on the Baptists of Atlantic Canada. Baptist publications in Special Collections, together with church, denominational, and private records preserved in the Atlantic Baptist Archives and the Esther Clark Wright Archives, position Acadia's collections as a significant resource for research into denominational history, Baptist life, genealogy, missionary activity, and theological debates.

The Atlantic Baptist Archives may be the oldest Baptist archival repository in Canada and represents a significant documentary resource for the study of Baptist life in the Atlantic Provinces. Its holdings encompass denominational records, congregational histories, personal papers, and other materials that illuminate the social, edu-

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cational, and cultural presence of Baptists in the region. Like the Canadian Baptist Archives at McMaster Divinity College, it serves as an important resource for scholars, clergy, and community members concerned with the religious and social history of Atlantic Canada. This article examines both the historical significance of the collection and its capacity to support further research into Atlantic Baptist history.

Historical Background

The Atlantic Baptist Archives are one of three archival collections held at Acadia University. This collection contains records deposited by Baptist churches from across Atlantic Canada, as well as the records of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada. The origins of the Atlantic Baptist Archives predate the founding of the university, and the development of archival collecting at Acadia in general originates with Baptist collecting practices.

The Nova Scotia Baptist Education Society founded Horton Academy in Wolfville in 1828 as an educational institution for young men. Discussions of a college for higher learning began in 1838 after Edmund Crawley was denied a professorship at Dalhousie College partially because of his affiliation with the Baptist denomination.[1] Though the college would not require students to be affiliated with the Baptist denomination, it was intended to be a place of Christian learning. Crawley wrote of the importance of the college being placed under the guardianship of a religious community to prepare students for future work within "Christian ministry" so that the institution could "become a direct instrument of moral and religious good."[2] Twenty-one students began classes in January 1839, and the first degrees were awarded to four students in 1843.

In 1845, Silas Tertius Rand and Isaac Chipman were tasked by the Baptist Convention with acquiring "whatever they [could] ob-

1. "Article regarding Dalhousie College," *Christian Visitor*, 26 October 1838, 337, Acadia University Library.

2. Edmund A. Crawley, "Article regarding a Baptist College," *Christian Visitor*, 9 November 1838, 354, microfilm, Acadia University Library.

tain relating to the history of the Baptist denomination in Nova Scotia and depositing these records at the College Building at Horton."[3] This marked the beginning of collecting what would become the core of Acadia's Archives and Special Collections.

Isaac Chipman died in 1852, and after his death attention fell away from the collecting of historical records for some years. However, in 1875 the Baptist Convention of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island returned to collecting as they appointed a committee consisting of Revs. J. M. Cramp, W. P. Everett, and Joseph Murray. The mandate of the committee was to "report some plan whereby the Minutes of this Convention and our Associations, and other journals and denomination papers of historical value may be prepared."[4] The Convention fulfilled its mandate, and in 1876 they reported that they had received contributions and, like contributions of the past, deposited them at Acadia.[5]

Between 1876 and 1903 collecting practices are unclear, and the Committee may have gone dormant. Still, the passing of two decades did not dull the desire to collect historical material, and the subject of historical records remerged yet again in 1903. At the annual meeting of the Convention of that year, Rev. J. W. Brown presented a motion to form a Baptist Historical Society for the Maritime Provinces.[6] The Society would consist of the Librarian of Acadia University and three members from each of the eight regional associations in the Maritime Provinces to have broad geographic representation of Baptist records.

The Society submitted its first report to the Convention the following year, noting that since membership had not been finalized,

3. Nova-Scotia Baptist Association, *Minutes of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association* (1845), 18.

4. Baptist Convention of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, *The Baptist Year Book for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island: 1875*, 21.

5. Baptist Convention of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, *The Baptist Year Book for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island: 1876*, 23.

6. Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1903*, 26.

the Society had not been able to proceed with much work. Still, they emphasized the importance of this work in their report:

> the efforts made to unearth the early history of some sections of the provinces . . . have been so rewarded that we are led to believe that much valuable history, that would be inspiring to the church of today and almost priceless to the church of the future is being gradually covered up and lost. We are persuaded that continued systematic efforts would rescue from oblivion much valuable material that would greatly enrich our present historical treasury.[7]

In 1905, the Society began collecting annual letters from churches to the association, identifying these as a good source of information on annual business conducted by churches.[8] The collecting initiative was successful enough that by 1906 the Committee referred to "our repository at Wolfville." The Society also began to publish historical sketches, the majority of which were also collected at Acadia.[9]

A transition took place in 1920. The Committee on Historical Records was founded, as the Society was determined to be ineffective due to geographic challenges of meeting regularly. The Committee would consist of a member from each association and two members from Wolfville, who would be chairman and secretary. It was hoped that reducing the number of members and centralizing the committee in the Wolfville area would help make it easier to meet and conduct the work of the Society.[10] In 1921, the Secretary of the Committee, J. W. Manning, requested that all United Baptist Associations in the Maritime Provinces forward their record books

7. Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1904*, 131–32.

8. Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1905*, 126.

9. Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1906*, 134.

10. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1920*, 146–47.

to Acadia.[11]

As the collection continued to grow, the library needed to accommodate the physical materials and create a plan for providing access to them. During this period, materials collected by the Convention were held in the Canadian Room of Acadia's Library—a room in the fireproof part of the building closed to the general public.[12] These materials were catalogued and available "at five minutes notice when required," but there was no publicly available list of the materials, and researchers needed to visit (or read reports from the Committee published in the Year Books) to know what was available.[13] There was a discussion of indexing all information related to Maritime Baptist history including creation of a system for facilitating ready reference for Baptist and Free Baptist newspapers, in addition to the on-site catalogue.[14] In 1927, more than fifty years after the Convention first appointed a committee to collect materials, a list of items in the collection was finally prepared for publication by Helen Beals, Assistant Librarian in charge of Canadiana, though there were no funds available to publish and circulate the list.[15]

Outside of collecting conducted by the Committee on Historical Records, Acadia's Library pursued acquisitions more broadly related to Baptist life. President George B. Cutten facilitated the purchase of a large collection of Baptist periodicals from the Samuel Colgate Baptist Collection at Colgate University in 1937.[16] In 1938, a Canadian Baptistiana Collection was established in Acadia's Library, which would become the contemporary Baptist Collection in the Library's Special Collections, firmly establishing the University as a

11. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1922*, 110.

12. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1921*, 51.

13. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1921*, 51.

14. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1924*, 131.

15. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1927*, 158.

16. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1937*, 160.

centre for Baptist research.[17]

The retirement of Librarian Mary Kinley Ingraham, who had been heavily involved in the work of maintaining the Baptist Historical Collection through her professional work and role as Secretary of the Committee on Historical Records from 1920 to 1944, led to a period of stagnation related to the collection.[18] Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, Historical Committee Chair George Levy made continuous pleas for cataloguing of the collection, particularly incoming material that was not captured in the list prepared by Helen Beals in 1927. After many years of advocacy, "A catalogue of the Maritime Baptist historical collection in the library of Acadia University" was published in 1955.[19]

The relationship between the Convention and the University faced a tumultuous period in the 1960s after concern surrounding the appointment of President James R. Beveridge in 1964 and the potential loss of Baptist leadership and the Christian orientation of the institution.[20] The Convention's Committee on Higher Education recommended that the Convention reaffirm the importance of Christian leadership and recommend that faculty members at Acadia be Christian.[21] This led to outcry across the Acadia community. When the dust settled, Acadia's Act of Incorporation was amended by the Nova Scotia Legislature and the Convention influence over the Board of Governors was reduced to 9 of 37 members of the Board of Governors, with the Convention retaining control over the School of Theology, which became the Acadia Divinity College.[22]

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17. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1939*, 166.

18. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1944*, 190.

19. *A Catalogue of the Maritime Baptist Historical Collection in the Library of Acadia University*.

20. "Executive Committee Report" in *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1964*, 46.

21. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1965*, 200.

22. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1966*, 49.

Despite these major changes in governance, the Committee on Historical Records continued to facilitate the deposit of Baptist church records from across the region at Acadia.

Still, cultural changes in the late 60s and the increased secularization of the University during this period reshaped the orientation of Acadia's Archives more broadly. In 1970, the first formal archives service was established in the library, with E. M. Findlay being appointed to a part time position with responsibility for the Acadia University Archives and the Atlantic Baptist Historical Collection.[23] This reflects an increasing effort to collect secular and university-related materials outside the scope of the Baptist collection. Deposits from churches continued to be received by the Archivist, and in 1973, the name of the collection was changed from the "Maritime Baptist Historical Collection" to the "Atlantic Baptist Historical Collection" to correspond with the name and territory of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces.[24]

In 1979, the Committee on Historic Records changed its name to the "Baptist Historical Committee" (BHC), which the body is known by today.[25] The Committee continued to solicit records from churches and pursue other projects of historical nature. In recognition and appreciation of the free service of accessioning, preserving, and providing access to the records of the Convention and Convention churches, in 1981, the Baptist Historical Committee began providing a modest annual sum to the library.[26] In 1988, the Baptist archival collection became the "Atlantic Baptist Archives," which consisted of Baptist church records deposited by churches in Atlantic

23. *The Report of the University Librarian*.

24. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1973*, 111.

25. United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada: 1979*.

26. "Baptist Historical Committee Budget Submission Form," 1983, Baptist Historical Committee Assorted Materials (1979–1990), Accession 2001.005-ZEM/014, Jarold K. Zeman Fonds, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, NS.

Canada, convention records belonging to convention, and early Baptist materials under the custodianship of Acadia University.[27]

The formalization of the Atlantic Baptist Archives in 1988 marked the culmination of nearly a century and a half of collecting activity, from Rand and Chipman's 1845 mandate to gather whatever they could find, through work of committees and societies, to a professionally managed archival entity with a defined scope and institutional home. What had begun as an act of denominational memory-keeping—an effort to ensure that the history of Baptist life in Atlantic Canada would not be lost—had become, over time, a collection of significant historical breadth. The following section describes what that collection contains today.

The Collection

The Archives

The principal strength of the Atlantic Baptist Archives lies in the breadth of its holdings. Taken together, the records document denominational administration, associational governance, congregational life, higher education, missionary activity, and the papers of individuals and families whose lives shaped Baptist communities across the region from the late-eighteenth century onward. Recent acquisitions and processing initiatives, including the W. P. and Pearleen Oliver family fonds (1875–1999), the Gullison family missionary records (1885–1987), and the Miriam Ross fonds (1940–2006), have added depth in areas such as Black Baptist history, women's leadership, missionary activity, and intergenerational religious identity. The collection supports not only the study of Baptist institutional history but also broader work on community, mobility, education, memory, and religious culture in Atlantic Canada.

At the denominational and associational level, the Archives preserves a substantial record of the corporate life of Atlantic Baptists.

27. "Report of the Joint Committee to Determine the Future of the Baptist Historical Collection," 1988, Acadia University Archives Committee (1987–1990), Accession 2001.005-ZEM/036, Jarold K. Zeman Fonds, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, NS.

The records of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada and its predecessor bodies include convention minutes, annual reports, board and committee records, and the files of affiliated ministries and organizations, with convention records extending back to 1846. Particularly significant are the records of associations in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland, with surviving association records beginning in 1850. These materials document ordination, discipline, pastoral oversight, church extension, and missions, while also reflecting regional variation in Baptist practice. They are especially valuable because associations often stood between local congregations and denominational structures, preserving a level of governance that was at once regional and intensely local. Records of Baptist women, youth organizations, camps, and other initiatives further show that Baptist identity was shaped through formal governance, education, service, fellowship, and family connection.

Local church records constitute the core of the collection. These holdings developed through a largely voluntary deposit model, and as a result the surviving record is both extensive and uneven. Some congregations transferred materials regularly; others retained local custody until closure or dispersal. As in many Maritime church archives, losses have occurred through fire, environmental damage, building deterioration, and inconsistent recordkeeping by successive clerks or members. Even so, the holdings are considerable. The earliest congregational records in the collection are those of Wolfville Baptist Church, beginning in 1778, and the church holdings extend across more than two centuries. The Archives presently holds records representing 810 congregations across the region: 428 in Nova Scotia, 335 in New Brunswick, 39 in Prince Edward Island, and 8 in Newfoundland. Within Nova Scotia, the collection is especially strong in Kings, Halifax, Annapolis, and Yarmouth Counties; in New Brunswick, the largest concentrations are in Westmorland, Kings, Queens, and York Counties. The records include membership rolls, baptismal registers, minutes, financial ledgers, photographs, and some audiovisual material. Together, they offer an unusually rich foundation for the study of congregational life, local governance, devotional culture, and community memory. They are also indispensable for the study of rural associational life, kinship

networks, migration, and the local social worlds in which Baptist practice was embedded.

The Archives also holds substantial material relating to Acadia University, whose history is closely bound to that of Atlantic Baptists. Founded in 1838 under Baptist auspices, Acadia emerged from a denominational commitment to higher education and ministerial formation. The Archives preserves the records of the Baptist Education Society, founded in 1828, with surviving records beginning in 1829. Together with Acadia's governance records, administrative files, and Acadia Divinity College records, these materials shed light not only on the University's own development, but also on the educational ambitions of Baptist communities in the region. For scholars of religion and education, they open important lines of inquiry into class formation, intellectual culture, curriculum, ministerial training, philanthropy, and the place of denominational institutions in the making of Atlantic Canadian public life.

Missionary and global records form another important part of the collection. Holdings relating to both foreign and home mission work, including mission board records, correspondence, and diaries, extend back to the mid-nineteenth century and are especially strong for the twentieth century. They document the participation of Atlantic Baptists in wider transnational Protestant networks. They also reveal the central role of women's organizations in producing missionary knowledge, raising funds, and sustaining international engagement. Such records make it possible to see Atlantic Baptist communities not simply as regional actors, but as participants in national, imperial, and global circuits of religion, information, and reform.

Personal papers further deepen the institutional record. Ministers' papers, family fonds, and the records of prominent Baptist figures from the late-eighteenth century onward preserve evidence of preaching, pastoral labour, theology, education, reform, and community leadership. Material relating to Black Baptist leaders, women's leadership, and missionaries is especially important because it often preserves perspectives less visible in formal minutes and reports. These collections therefore function as essential sources for the lived and relational dimensions of Baptist history. They enable scholars to move from formal structures to everyday practice and from

corporate decision-making to the textures of vocation, family life, correspondence, memory, and dissent.

Special Collections, Periodicals, Print Culture

In addition to its archival holdings, Acadia University Library's Special Collections preserves a substantial body of printed Baptist material that significantly enriches the Atlantic Baptist Archives. These collections support research into denominational life, theology, worship, and print culture across the region. Read alongside the manuscript record, they demonstrate the extent to which Baptist identity in Atlantic Canada was produced not only through meetings and committees, but also through reading, circulation, and devotional print.

Among the most relevant are the Baptist Collection, which gathers newspapers, periodicals, yearbooks, newsletters, church histories, and denominational reports; the Bible and Hymnbook Collection, which includes many items connected to Baptist worship and devotional practice; the Jarold K. Zeman Collection, with its strengths in European Protestant movements and North American Baptist history; the Henry Bell Collection, which reflects Maritime Baptist fundamentalist perspectives; the John Mockett Cramp Collection, which offers context for nineteenth-century Baptist intellectual life; and the Frederick C. Burnett, Jr. Collection, which is especially valuable for Free Baptist history in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Together, these holdings complicate any narrow understanding of the Atlantic Baptist Archives as a repository of administrative records alone. They instead position Baptist history within wider histories of reading, theology, polemic, piety, and religious publishing.

Particularly important within these holdings are long runs of Baptist periodicals and printed associational minutes, which provide crucial evidence for print networks, denominational communication, public debate, and the circulation of ideas across Atlantic Canada. Periodicals such as the *Christian Visitor*, the *Baptist Year Book*, and later denominational publications make it possible to trace how news, doctrine, institutional priorities, and reform campaigns travelled between local congregations and the wider Baptist public. They also offer a vital counterpoint to manuscript sources by preserving

the public face of Baptist argument, aspiration, and self-representation.

This print record is especially significant for historians interested in the formation of religious publics. Editorials, reports, correspondence columns, associational notices, and serialized historical sketches reveal the mechanisms through which Baptist readers encountered one another across distance and came to imagine themselves as participants in a shared regional and denominational world.

Title	Date range
Tidings	1906–present
Christian Visitor	1847–1884
Baptist Missionary Magazine	1836–1849, 1871–1909
Home Mission Journal	1898–1904
Christian Watchman	1819, 1821–1848
Messenger and Visitor	1885–1905
Baptists Yearbooks	various
The Kings Highway	1890–1967
The Maritime Baptist	1905–1964

The periodical and printed record therefore extends the evidentiary range of the Archives. It allows researchers to connect internal governance to public communication, private conviction to published argument, and local church life to broader debates over education, mission, theology, reform, and culture.

Minutes of the session of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association	1846–1850
Minutes of the African Baptist Association of Nova Scotia	1854–1916
Minutes of the Eastern Baptist Association of Nova Scotia	1851–1896
Minutes of the Nova-Scotia Baptist Association	1822–1845

Minutes of the Central Baptist Association of Nova Scotia	1851–1882
Minutes of the Baptist Nova-Scotia and New-Brunswick Association	1810–1821
Minutes of the Western New-Brunswick Baptist Association	1848–1882

Digitization & Preservation Initiatives

Digitization has become an increasingly significant component of the Atlantic Baptist Archives' work. In recent years, these efforts have centred particularly on published Baptist resources and reference tools that serve both scholarly research and wider public engagement. In a repository serving researchers across a geographically dispersed region, digitization now functions as a central means of expanding access, supporting preservation, and encouraging sustained scholarly use of the collections.

A major area of activity has been the digitization of Baptist periodicals in partnership with the Baptist Historical Committee and, in some cases, the University of New Brunswick. Current digitized resources include the African United Baptist Association minutes, selected Baptist images, modern Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada yearbooks, and a range of individual manuscripts and documents, including materials relating to Edward Manning, Silas Rand, and an early Henry Alline letter. Work on the *Christian Visitor* is also underway, while future projects may include the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* through Young Canada Works or other grant support, and the possible scanning of *Tidings* in collaboration with Atlantic Baptist Women. These initiatives matter because they target sources that are both heavily used and historiographically significant, particularly for work on denominational communication, associational culture, and Black Baptist history. They also demonstrate how collaborative digitization can reshape the visibility of collections that were previously difficult to consult except through travel or highly mediated reference access.

The Archives has also developed tools to improve digital discovery, including an interactive map of Baptist churches that helps users

visualize the geographic spread of the collection. There is clear potential to extend this work by integrating the map more closely with descriptive metadata and file-listing platforms, as well as through collaboration with researchers in digital humanities and historical mapping. Such projects suggest that digital access can do more than reproduce analogue holdings online; it can also generate new research questions about spatial distribution, denominational geography, and regional change over time.

Looking ahead, there is considerable potential for expanded digitization of unpublished materials, especially church minute books and association records. These are among the most valuable and frequently consulted sources in the collection, and digitization would both reduce handling of fragile originals and improve access for researchers at a distance. Such work, however, depends on staff capacity, technical infrastructure, metadata creation, and external funding. Digitization, in other words, is never a neutral technical exercise. It requires appraisal, prioritization, descriptive labour, and decisions about what kinds of access a repository is institutionally prepared to sustain.

At the same time, the long-term preservation challenge is no longer limited to paper. Recordkeeping has shifted decisively toward digital formats, and born-digital records require distinct preservation workflows, software tools, storage, and technical expertise. Although Acadia University Archives has strengthened its capacity for preserving born-digital university records, extending that capacity to churches and denominational bodies represented in the Atlantic Baptist Archives would require further financial and personnel support. The issue is not only one of storage, but also of authenticity, file integrity, migration, privacy, and the risk that contemporary Baptist life will become less rather than more visible to future researchers if born-digital records are not intentionally preserved.

Issues Facing the Atlantic Baptist Archives

The long-term stewardship of the Atlantic Baptist Archives is shaped not only by the richness of the collection but also by practical, demographic, and structural challenges common to many denominational repositories. Among the most persistent is the question of

space. The Archives has grown steadily over time, and further expansion is likely as churches close, merge, or transfer their records into archival custody. Such transfers are essential if Baptist documentary heritage is to be preserved, but they intensify pressure on storage, staffing, and long-term planning. Space, in this context, is not merely a logistical concern. It is one of the material preconditions of historical preservation. Decisions about what can be accepted, processed, stored, and described ultimately shape what later scholars will be able to know.

These pressures are closely tied to demographic change. Many congregations are aging or declining, which affects both record creation and record transfer. Older members may no longer have the physical ability, transportation, or institutional continuity needed to organize and move records, particularly when a church is facing closure or amalgamation. Geography further shapes the collection. Because the archives are in Wolfville, it is naturally easier to receive records from within Nova Scotia than from elsewhere in Atlantic Canada. Distance, cost, and coordination can make transfers from Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island more difficult, contributing to uneven regional representation. The Convention-affiliated character of the repository also creates gaps: churches outside the Convention, congregations that disaffiliated earlier, or communities with looser ties are often absent from the record. These absences are not incidental. They shape the historical picture available to researchers and remind us that archival survival is always conditioned by structures of geography, affiliation, and institutional capacity.

Preservation concerns remain acute within the analogue holdings themselves. Many church records were created on inexpensive acidic paper and are increasingly brittle. Photographs often arrive without adequate housing, identification, or environmental control. At the same time, many records carry privacy, confidentiality, or access restrictions, especially where membership, pastoral, or disciplinary matters are concerned. Balancing preservation with responsible access is therefore a constant part of stewardship, particularly because these records serve genealogical, legal, administrative, denominational, and scholarly purposes alike. The work of the repository is thus simultaneously custodial, ethical, and interpretive.

Genealogical research presents a recurring challenge. Church records are of great interest to family historians, but the ability of the archives to support this work is limited by uneven survival of records, inconsistent church recordkeeping practices, and staff capacity for reference service. These difficulties are compounded by geography, since many researchers cannot consult materials in person. The archives are therefore often expected to provide meaningful access to records that are fragmentary, restricted, or labour-intensive to retrieve. This is one of the clearest points at which public expectations of access meet the practical limits of archival labour.

Questions of funding and responsibility have accompanied the collection for much of its history. As early as 1946, George Levy observed in a report of the Committee on Historical Records that "more care should be given our historical collection than it can receive from Library staff." The remark anticipated later discussions about staffing, custodial responsibility, and the shared obligations of denominational preservation. Archival records suggest that one of the first modern instances of direct financial support from the Baptist Historical Committee came in 1983, when it contributed $250.00 in "appreciation of the work of cataloguing and servicing the Baptist collection, at no cost to the Convention."[28] Discussions about more formal support, including the possibility of appointing an archivist, continued in the 1980s and later evolved into annual contributions toward archival assistance and preservation supplies. Grant-funded projects have improved access and addressed selected preservation needs, but they remain episodic and cannot substitute for stable, ongoing support. The history of the collection therefore underscores a broader truth about denominational archives: preservation depends not only on goodwill, but also on sustained institutional commitment and material investment.

Opportunities

If the Atlantic Baptist Archives preserve a substantial documentary record of Baptist life in the region, they also point toward a wide

28. *The United Baptist Year Book of the Maritime Provinces of Canada*, 204.

range of future scholarly possibilities—many of which extend beyond the boundaries of traditional Baptist or religious history. The collection is especially rich in areas that remain underexplored and supports work in religious history, social history, print culture, gender studies, educational history, and regional studies. Materials relating to Black Baptist history in Nova Scotia, Baptist missions, women's organizations and leadership, Acadia University and Baptist education, rural congregational culture, and denominational print networks all provide strong foundations for further study. The holdings also support research into Baptist responses to Confederation, war, temperance, theological controversy, and broader movements for moral and social reform.

The collections provide research opportunities for interdisciplinary scholars who may not ordinarily turn to a denominational archive. Mission records document the entanglement of missionary activity with British imperial networks, Indigenous dispossession, and colonial logics of the nineteenth century, making them valuable to historians of the mixed and contested legacies of mission work. Periodical networks and associational records trace how ideas circulated across the Atlantic world, offering opportunity for scholars of transnational history and early globalization interested in how non-state institutions influenced cross-border exchange. Black Baptist history in Nova Scotia opens onto questions of African-Atlantic diaspora, loyalist migration, and religious self-determination with implications beyond denominational history. Temperance campaigns, church discipline records, and moral reform networks also speak directly to scholars of moral regulation and social surveillance, for whom denominational archives document how communities defined, monitored, and enforced the boundaries of respectable life. The archival record itself and the ways communities preserved, organized, and narrated their own pasts also invite work in collective memory and heritage studies.

Methodologically, the Archives supports scholarship able to move among institutional records, personal papers, and print culture rather than treating those bodies of material in isolation. It is equally well-suited to work attentive to race, gender, class, mobility, and the changing relations between religion and public culture in the Maritimes. Because they span local, regional, national, and international

scales, the holdings are especially well suited to research asking how religious identities participated in the making of the modern Atlantic world.

Collaboration is equally important to the future of the collection. The vitality of the Atlantic Baptist Archives depends on sustained relationships with denominational bodies, congregations, donors, and partner organizations. Groups such as the Baptist Historical Committee, the Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, and individual churches continue to shape collecting, outreach, preservation, and access. In a region where records are geographically dispersed and often remain in local custody for many years, such partnerships are indispensable. They also remind us that denominational archives are collective enterprises, sustained through networks of care rather than by repositories alone.

Digitization remains one of the most significant opportunities ahead. Recent projects have already expanded access to periodicals, association records, yearbooks, photographs, and other frequently used materials. Continued digitization would reduce barriers for distant researchers, protect fragile originals, and increase discoverability, even as it raises important questions about prioritization, infrastructure, metadata, copyright, and born-digital stewardship. For a repository serving a geographically dispersed constituency, digital access is increasingly central rather than supplementary. The next stage of this work lies not simply in scanning more material, but in building sustainable systems through which digitized content can remain searchable, contextualized, and responsibly managed.

Archival Description, Colonial Context, and the Silas Rand Papers

The Esther Clark Wright Archives holds the papers of Silas Rand, a Baptist missionary who worked among Mi'kmaq communities in the nineteenth century. The collection includes extensive Mi'kmaw-language materials, including Bible translations, dictionaries, and legends recorded in Mi'kmaq and English, along with photographs, correspondence, and related documents. These records come from a Baptist missionary perspective and were subsequently arranged and described according to archival practices that centre Rand rather

than the Mi'kmaq communities whose language and knowledge they contain. In that sense, the present form of the collection participates in a longer history of colonial extraction. There is a clear opportunity to rethink how these materials are arranged, described, and presented to researchers, but such work must be undertaken in partnership with Mi'kmaq communities and with appropriate humility, care, and sustained commitment. This work would not simply add contextual nuance; it would require a reorientation of descriptive authority and an acknowledgement that archival stewardship includes responsibility for the interpretive frameworks through which records are made legible.

Conclusion

The Atlantic Baptist Archives represents both a substantial historical inheritance and an ongoing institutional responsibility. Shaped by nearly two centuries of collecting and custodianship, it preserves a documentary record of remarkable breadth, encompassing denominational governance, congregational life, missionary activity, print culture, education, reform, and the papers of individuals and families rooted in Baptist communities across Atlantic Canada. Together, these holdings show how deeply Baptist institutions and networks have been intertwined with the social, cultural, and intellectual development of the region.

The breadth of the Atlantic Baptist Archives makes it a significant resource for the study of Atlantic Canada more broadly. Records of this scale make it possible to trace patterns of settlement, associational life, reform, print culture, education, and local leadership across generations. They reveal how religious communities shaped everyday life and public culture in ways that extended beyond the church itself. Baptist records preserve the history of a denomination while also providing essential evidence for reconstructing the wider historical experience of the region.

At the same time, the significance of the Atlantic Baptist Archives lies not only in the records it holds, but also in the work required to sustain them. Questions of preservation, space, staffing, digitization, born-digital stewardship, access, and description make clear that archival care does not happen on its own. It depends on ongoing work: appraisal, interpretation, relationship-building, and accountability.

If the collection has endured because earlier generations saw the value of preserving Baptist records, its future will depend on whether institutions and communities are willing to renew that commitment under changing material and technological conditions.

The Atlantic Baptist Archives is, therefore, best understood not simply as a repository of the Baptist past, but as an ongoing site of stewardship and scholarship. Its strengths invite new research, while its silences raise important interpretive questions. Its future development depends on sustained collaboration among Acadia University, Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, the Baptist Historical Committee, congregations, donors, and researchers. As Baptist communities in Atlantic Canada continue to change, so too will the archival work needed to document them. The task ahead is not only to preserve these records, but to keep them accessible and useful for future generations. In this way, the Atlantic Baptist Archives safeguards not only denominational memory, but also an important body of evidence for understanding Baptist history and the wider history of Atlantic Canada.

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In Memoriam

Stanley K. Fowler (1946–2025)

Jonathan N. Cleland

Stanley Keith Fowler is well known for his doctrinal precision and his irenic posture. He was generous in his engagement with others, yet firm in his convictions. He is often remembered as "A Theologian in the Service of the Church," and rightly so. However, this is not meant to be taken to mean he was only a theologian for lay people and pastors. To the contrary, he was an esteemed Baptist scholar and theologian who made a significant contribution to the scholarly field of the history of Baptist sacramentalism.

Fowler was a committed Baptist in his ecclesiology.[1] He grew up in a Baptist church, pastored in Baptist churches, taught at Baptist schools, and wrote on Baptist theology and history. He was a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, where he received a Master of Theology in 1972—along with a critical eye toward dispensational theology. His move away from dispensationalism led him to relocate from his home in the United States to Ontario in 1978. Fowler spent

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1. For a biography of Fowler, see Dash, "Stanley K. Fowler."

the remainder of his life serving in Ontario and left a lasting impact on the Ontario Baptist context.

Fowler began teaching part-time at Central Baptist Seminary in 1980, and in 1985 he resigned from his pastoral position at Runnymede Baptist Church in Toronto to begin studying at Wycliffe College, Toronto School of Theology, University of Toronto. Fowler began his studies under the supervision of John Webster (1955–2016), an esteemed Anglican theologian who joined the Wycliffe faculty in 1986.[2]

The papers written by Fowler during his studies display his clear theological acumen. He had an ability to engage with the great tradition of the Christian faith. He had a willingness to critically interact with historical figures on their own terms and to then respond to their arguments with logical precision and exegetical insight. Such careful scholarly work shows Fowler entered Wycliffe as a mature theologian who knew how to do serious and constructive theological work.

While studying at Wycliffe, Fowler started teaching full time at Central in 1987 and then paused his studies in 1989 as he became the dean. Fowler's decision to pause his ThD studies clearly portrays his servant heart. The school needed someone to serve in the capacity of dean, and he undertook it. The school was in a dire position. If no one stepped in, the school would close. And over the next few years, Fowler was instrumental in leading the merger of Central Baptist Seminary and London Baptist College and Seminary, which united to form Heritage Baptist College and Heritage Theological Seminary in 1993. From a human perspective, it is without question that apart from Fowler, this merger would never have happened. Knowing what needed to be done, Fowler put his own pursuits aside for the wellbeing of Central, and ultimately, for Baptist theological education in Ontario.[3]

With the commencement of Heritage, Fowler served as the dean from 1993 to September 1996, when he took a leave to return to

2. On Webster's time at Wycliffe, see Davidson, "John Webster (1955–2016)," 4–6.

3. On the history of Central, the merger, and Heritage, see Haykin and Cleland, *"A Priceless Heritage."*

Wycliffe and finish his ThD. Webster left Wycliffe in 1996 to teach at the University of Oxford, so Fowler found a new supervisor in William H. Brackney, the Principal at McMaster Divinity College. From the start of his leave until the end of it in August 1997, Fowler completed the bulk of his thesis. He later graduated in 1998.[4]

Fowler published his dissertation in 2002 as *More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism*. Without question, this work is Fowler's most important contribution to the scholarly world. It has been reviewed, read, and engaged with substantially. This book argued that a sacramental vision of baptism had been lost in the Baptist tradition, as early Baptist figures taught a sacramental view. In light of his historical work of retrieval, he argued that Baptist should return to a sacramental position, where baptism is meant to be the means by which one experiences the spiritual realities of conversion. This was a bold argument at the time, and the fact that the sacramental position is more widely held today is no doubt in part due to the influence of Fowler's work.

After returning to Heritage in 1997, Fowler continued to have an important role both at the school and in the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Canada (FEBCC). He continued to publish and present papers—a number of which continued to advance his argument in favour of Baptist sacramentalism. He also wrote on a more popular level as well. Fowler wrote ten entries for the FEBCC magazine, *The Evangelical Baptist*, which were a part of a series entitled "Facing the Issues." The entries in this series portray perfectly Fowler's commitment to engaging with contemporary issues in a way that is charitable yet critical. They display Fowler's commitment to always speak the truth, regardless of the controversial nature of the topic. He was also willing to take the minority position, if he believed it to be the most biblically faithful and consistent. Fowler also published a popular level work of his thesis, *Rethinking Baptism*, in 2015. This book enabled Fowler to present his intricate and detailed arguments in a way that was more easily accessible. Such an act shows how relevant Fowler's argument continued to be seventeen years

4. See Fowler, *More Than a Symbol*, xv–xvi and Fowler, "Baptism as a Sacrament."

later and how this argument needed to be more widely acknowledged.

In honour of his 70th birthday in 2016, Fowler was presented with a festschrift.[5] Two years later, Fowler retired with plans for future publications. He published three papers between 2019 and 2021, one of which was an essay on Baptist soteriology for Brackney's festschrift.[6] Fowler had plans for further research, but tragically, a life-threatening stroke in 2021 left him without the ability to speak or write. Not wanting his many unpublished papers to be lost, Michael Haykin and I had the privilege and honour of publishing a two-volume work with Heritage Seminary Press that included all of Fowler's essay length writings, both those previously published and unpublished. It was wonderful to have Fowler involved in the compiling of these volumes and to have him read through the full drafts before they were published. These volumes serve as a testimony to Fowler's gifting as a historical, systematic, and exegetical theologian, and his undying commitment to being a servant of the Church.[7]

After a battle with cancer, Fowler died in Cambridge, Ontario on Tuesday, 26 August 2025. He left a tremendous legacy as a husband, father, papa, son, and brother.[8] He is remembered as "Dr. Fowler" to many students and pastors who sat under his teaching and learned to be careful theologians under his guidance. And for many, he is remembered as "Stan," a friend.

Fowler's legacy in Canadian Baptist studies is multifaceted. His influence on former students has a wide-ranging effect, as many look to follow in his footsteps and uphold his theology of Baptism. A significant component of his legacy also lives on through Heritage College and Seminary, an institution that he had a tremendous role in shaping. However, as mentioned in the introduction of this memoriam, he will also be remembered for his contribution to the field of

5. See Barker, Haykin, Howson, eds., *Ecclesia Semper Reformanda Est*.

6. Fowler, "Neither Calvinist nor Arminian, but Baptist?"

7. See Fowler, *A Theologian in Service of the Church: Volume One* and *Volume Two*. The different essays referenced in this memoriam can be found in these volumes.

8. See "Dr. Stanley K. Fowler Obituary."

Baptist studies. His scholarly publications are significant and continue to be engaged with seriously.[9] Thus, whether it is through his students, Heritage, or his academic writings, his legacy and scholarship will continue to have a significant impact in the years ahead.

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9. For example, Fowler's work is a major interlocutor in McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*.

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Book Forum

Forum Introduction: *The Secularization of Baptism*

Taylor Murray

The following four articles comprise the first-ever forum in the pages of the *Bulletin of the Canadian Baptist Historical Society*. It is fitting, then, that the topic for this forum revolves around a concept that some might call a "first-order theology" for Baptist identity—baptism. As one denominational official from Ontario put it: "Any discussion of Canadian Baptists has to begin with a discussion of baptism."[1] In that spirit, this forum focuses on a recently published book, *The Secularization of Baptism: How Baptists Took God out of Baptism, and How to Fix the Problem* by Mark G. McKim.[2]

From a historical perspective, the practice of baptism predates Christianity. In the ancient world, it was sometimes used in a metaphorical sense meaning to be overwhelmed, whether that was with drink, worry, or some other thing. For Greeks and Romans, it was a

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1. Jones, *What Canadian Baptists Believe*, 17.
2. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*.

concept used to describe a ritual cleansing before entering a temple or other holy place. In some contexts, it was used as a rite of initiation, perhaps into a secret cult. For the Hebrews, a similar concept emerged as a ceremonial cleansing, as stipulated in Leviticus.

For the earliest Christians, baptism was more than an ongoing process of purification. Instead, in the New Testament, baptism was administered as a one-time event during which time a believer repented of their sins and looked ahead to the return of Christ. Throughout the history of Christianity, exactly what baptism was and what it accomplished has been the subject of scholarly debate and theological scrutiny.

With the emergence of the Baptists in the seventeenth century, this conversation persisted. While Baptists generally agree on the mode (i.e., immersion) and who it is for (i.e., believers), they have not been able to come to terms on various theological nuances that surround it. Even the vocabulary around baptism has stirred debate. Is it an "ordinance" or a "sacrament"? Both? (Neither?) Allison Trites, the long-time Professor of New Testament at Acadia Divinity College, once described the language surrounding baptism by writing:

> Understandably the word *ordinance* was born of reaction to superstition, but it is hardly a suitable word to articulate the mysteries of the faith. In the fear of saying too much, it has said too little, for it tends to become a barren euphemism that conveys little more than the simple dimensions of sentimental memory.[3]

How should Baptists handle this concept? Have Baptists said "too little" because they fear saying "too much"? What, exactly, happens during baptism?

Through his study, McKim addresses these issues and related ones. He rejects the symbolic view, which has stripped baptism of its spiritual elements (thereby, in McKim's words, "secularizing" it), but he is unwilling to follow sacramentalists who suggest baptism is something of a capstone experience in which saving grace is imparted to the believer. Instead, since salvation precedes baptism, McKim

3. Trites, "An Assessment." Emphasis in original.

suggests that baptism is an act wherein the believer receives *non-saving* grace.

While the scholarly contribution of this volume alone makes it a worthy candidate for a focused discussion like this one, there is another reason why it serves as a suitable book for a forum in the *Bulletin of the Canadian Baptist Historical Society*—namely, its Canadian perspective. McKim is writing as a Baptist in Canada, and through the pages he has dialogued with Baptist voices throughout Canadian history, from Calvin Goodspeed to Jarold K. Zeman, Clark Pinnock, and Stanley K. Fowler, among many others. Of course, not all of these individuals were born in Canada, but they did have a profound influence on the Canadian Baptist world and beyond. Therefore, it brings a rich theological conversation with important historical depth that is highly relevant to the interests of the Canadian Baptist Historical Society.

The following three articles—written by Elizabeth Newman, Colin Godwin, and Spencer Miles Boersma—explore McKim's work. Each scholar brings their own questions and points of discussion to the table. The final article in this book forum is written by McKim as a response to the reviewers. The editors of the *Bulletin of the Canadian Baptist Historical Society* deeply appreciate each of these contributions and the rich discussion they have stirred.

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Book Forum

"The Fire of Love": Divine Agency, Baptism, and Salvation

Elizabeth Newman

In *The Secularization of Baptism: How Baptists Took God out of Baptism and How to Fix the Problem*, Mark G. McKim offers a thorough historical and theological analysis of English and North American understandings of baptism, but finds himself on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, McKim argues that Baptists have all too often interpreted baptism as merely symbolic of a prior human action, hence its secularization. On the other hand, McKim rejects understandings of baptism as essential for salvation. "Is God present in baptism?" McKim asks, "If so, how can God's presence and action be more fully recognized, marked and celebrated?"[1] McKim argues that while baptism is not necessary for salvation, it is a means of nonsaving grace. While I agree with McKim's affirmation of divine agency in baptism, I think that baptism is a means of saving grace,

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1. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 9.

not in an automatic sense but as part of a whole divine salvific pattern. I engage three topics McKim raises: baptism and synecdoche, baptism and divine agency, and the meaning of necessary.

Overview of McKim's Theology of Baptism

McKim joins a chorus of Baptist pastors and theologians today who argue that language of "merely symbolic" has stifled the Baptist imagination, turning baptism into no more than an "optional add-on to the Christian life."[2] If baptism only symbolizes a prior experience, then its practice easily becomes ornamental, devoid of any account of divine agency. While avoiding this reduction, McKim equally wants to steer clear of the "new" Baptist sacramentalists whom he identifies as mostly twentieth- and twenty-first-century English Baptist theologians (H. Wheeler Robinson, Neville Clark, George Beasley-Murray, Anthony Cross, John Colwell, among others). According to McKim, Baptist sacramentalists hold that baptism is the "the culminating (and normally necessary) piece of a process of conversion."[3] McKim finds their position untenable for two reasons. First, McKim objects to any claim that baptism is necessary for salvation, a position that makes baptism a work and negates salvation by grace alone. If salvation is

> *solely* a matter of God's grace, it would be deeply incongruent also to argue that baptism is in any sense regenerative, or even the culmination of the process of regeneration. This would mean that a *human* performed action—baptism—performed by one human being for another, is in some sense contributory to salvation.[4]

Secondly, McKim argues that Baptist sacramentalists are mistaken in claiming that their position is well represented in Baptist history. Their understanding is at best that of a "*tiny*" minority.[5] McKim thus seeks to provide a path between the Scylla of mere symbolism that

2. Citing Timothy George in McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism,* 462.
3. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 387.
4. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 447. Emphasis in original.
5. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 135. Emphasis in original.

denies Divine agency and the Charybdis of baptism as necessary that denies salvation by grace alone.[6]

McKim helpfully notes how key modern Enlightenment assumptions have often shaped this either-or dilemma. Seeing baptism as only an expression of a prior experience aligns with an Enlightenment individualism where the self's personal experience is "foundational for obtaining reliable knowledge."[7] Likewise, the suspicion of God working *through* creation—while in part a reaction against Catholicism—owes a debt to an Enlightenment banishment of divine agency from the physical world. For some Baptists, such as E. Y. Mullins (1860–1928), for example, genuine Christianity "was spiritual and inward, and outward/external/physical expressions of faith, at least by themselves, meant nothing."[8]

McKim's resolution to this baptism-as-merely-symbolic versus baptism-as-necessary-for salvation conundrum is to affirm that God *can* work through creation, and particularly through baptism. This affirmation aligns with the theological conviction that in the incarnation, God is "present, physically, with humanity—hence Jesus was called Emmanuel, 'God with us'."[9] McKim thus supports an understanding of baptism as a means of grace, though not a means necessary for salvation since the "Rubicon for receiving salvation" is crossed before baptism.[10] Baptism is rather a means of non-saving grace. "It would be odd indeed to argue that in Believers' Baptism, a rite *explicitly* ordered by Jesus, that grace of some kind, at least for the genuine believer, will *not* be found. Baptism must instead be understood as among the *primary* means by which God conveys non-saving grace to us."[11]

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6 . While the Baptist sacramentalists "go too far by making baptism at least normally essential to a conversion process, thus casting doubt on the Protestant principle of sola gratia, the symbolic-only position goes too far in the opposite direction, denying (or by lack of any mention, effectively denying) any divine presence in believers' baptism, thereby calling into question God's omnipresence," McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 450.

7. Citing Mark Noll in McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 196.

8. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 282.

9. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 451

10. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 67.

11. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 448. Emphasis in original.

Baptism and Synecdoche

In developing his position, McKim engages of range of Biblical passages, one of which is Acts 2:38-41 where, "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' "(v. 38). McKim notes about this passage that in "the New Testament repentance, faith and baptism are so closely linked that the word 'baptism' sometimes 'stands in' for the words 'repentance and faith' with both of these assumed when the word 'baptism' is used by itself."[12] In linguistic usage, he helpfully observes, this is called a "synecdoche," where one part represents the whole, as when "I have wheels" means "I have a car."[13] In Acts 2, Peter follows this linguistic usage; he "thought of repentance-faith-baptism as being so closely associated—as indeed was the case in the early church—that he was urging all three upon his listeners." Yet McKim adds that we cannot draw any conclusions about the relation between baptism and salvation from this passage. Peter "was not concerning himself with questions, relevant only for generations which would not be born for centuries, about *whether baptism was essential to salvation*."[14]

Anthony Cross likewise turns to the significance of synecdoche, but he does so to make a different point. While some might be unfamiliar with the word "synecdoche," Cross notes its common usage. Baptists and other Christians, for example, quite frequently use "blood" or "cross" to mean the whole of Christ's death and resurrection.[15] Like McKim, Cross too describes how in Scripture "baptism" or "faith" often represent a larger whole. The testimony of Acts is that the order of faith/baptism/Spirit can differ. Occasionally the Spirit is given before baptism, sometimes after. Most often, as in Acts 2:38, these are together. Cross notes that

> recognizing baptism as a synecdoche . . . frees us from trying to determine which is the normative order of becoming a Christian. There is not one, because the Spirit comes to people differently

12. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 411.
13. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 411.
14. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 412. Emphasis in original.
15. Cross, "Baptizing Churches," 101.

> and brings them into God's kingdom by a process which can be long and protracted or swift, even sudden. The need to keep trying to determine the sequence of these events is obviated once we stop seeing conversion in sudden, punctiliar terms rather than as a process.[16]

Rather than concluding that Acts 2 does not address whether baptism is essential for salvation as McKim does, Cross emphasizes how a part (faith) belongs to the whole (repentance, baptism, the gift of the Spirit). More fully, the part leads to the whole when the "spirit is willing." Cross is not here arguing for infant baptism; "personal faith is *always* implicit, otherwise the action is meaningless."[17] He is, however, emphasizing how faith, repentance, baptism and forgiveness are interrelated ways that the Spirit initiates us into communion with the Triune God who is our salvation.

By contrast, McKim appears to equate salvation with a single act of repentance. Thus, baptism is *subsequent* to salvation. To understand faith/repentance/baptism as part of a whole, however, is to affirm that the Spirit works through the interiority of the heart as well as the waters of baptism. True, the thief on the cross is saved by faith alone: "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43, RSV). In the case of the thief, as the saying goes, hard cases make poor law. That is, a death bed conversion, which we rightly celebrate, cannot provide a full picture of how faith/repentance/baptism constitute a whole. Had the thief lived, "What is to prevent [him] from being baptized?" (Acts 8:38).

McKim rightly observes how certain Enlightenment assumptions have sometimes led to diminished understandings of baptism. Is the desire to reduce salvation to a part (individual faith) not also a modern impulse? H. A. Nielsen, for example, in his essay "A Meeting of Minds on Water," challenges the modern assumption that water is essentially H_2O. The "standard account of what water consists of *abstracts* . . . from everything it does and can do."[18] He notes that when

16. Cross, "Baptizing Churches," 101. Emphasis in original.
17. Cross, "Baptizing Churches," 99.
18. Nielsen, "A Meeting of Minds on Water," 77. Emphasis in original.

we look at water through such stripped-down notations the full truth of water's magnificence and beauty is obscured. Citing George McDonald, Nielsen describes how real water "comes bubbling fresh from the imagination of the living God, rushing from under the great white throne of the glacier."[19] The truth of water rests ultimately in God.[20] Similarly salvation reduced to individual faith alone easily obscures its full reality.

Baptism and Divine Agency

McKim acknowledges that "God is, at least usually, present and doing *something* in baptism."[21] McKim is here specifically referring to Romans 6:1–4, where Paul states, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (v. 4). *What* God is doing, according to McKim, "while not salvific, is not specified" in this passage.[22] More generally, McKim states that "there is no text which directly answers the question 'Can an unbaptized person be saved?' . . . Neither are there any texts which explain, specifically and in detail, what, if anything, God is doing in baptism. To answer such questions requires thinking, in an organized manner, about the broad teaching of Scripture as a whole."[23] As McKim rightly indicates, a rule for reading Scripture is to read specific verses in light of the whole (Old and New Testaments).

When we read Romans 6 in light of the whole, wider Scriptural patterns shed light on divine agency. Consider, for example, the relation between God's parting the waters of the Red Sea and God's agency in baptism, a connection drawn in Scripture: "I want you to

19. George MacDonald cited by Nielsen, "A Meeting of Minds on Water," 81.

20. Nielsen cites MacDonald's conclusion: "Let him who would know the love of the maker become sorely athirst and drink of the brook by the way—then lift up his heart—not at that movement to the maker of oxygen and hydrogen, but to the inventor and mediator of thirst and water, that man might foresee a little of what his soul may find in God," Nielsen, "A Meeting of Minds on Water," 81.

21. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 427. Emphasis in original.

22. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 427.

23. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 444.

know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:1–2). Paul is here noting a pattern between passing through the Red Sea and passing through the waters of baptism. In both, it is not the water that saves, but God acting on behalf of his people. It would be odd to ask, "Is the Hebrew saved by faith alone?" True, the Hebrews have faith, but the faith is a response to God's saving deeds in and through creation on their behalf. "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night" (Exod 14:21). God separates the waters, leading his people from captivity to freedom. In light of this pattern a distinction between God's saving and non-saving grace makes little sense.

One similarly sees a pattern of divine agency when the Spirit hovers over the waters, a pattern that is present in both creation and new creation. When God creates the world, "the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2), giving the earth form and dispelling the darkness. As Saint Basil states, the Spirit "cherished the nature of the waters as one sees a bird cover the eggs with her body and impart to them vital force from her own warmth."[24] Analogously in baptism, the Spirit dispels the darkness of sin and evil and gives form to Christ's body. When Paul states, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4), he is describing the Spirit-filled form that faith/repentance/baptism makes possible. In light of this Scriptural pattern of creation and new creation, the question of divine agency, while always mysterious, becomes less opaque. The Holy Spirit, always present and preveniently so, breathes over the waters of baptism making possible new creation.

The Meaning of Necessary

Does this understanding of "baptism" as a synecdoche and as fulfilling wider Scriptural patterns mean that baptism is necessary for salvation? McKim uses "necessary" in what Thomas Aquinas would

24. Magnus, "The Hexaemeron," 241.

call an absolute sense. In addressing the question, "Whether it necessary for the restoration of the human race that the Word of God should become incarnate?"[25] Aquinas offers two ways to understand necessary. The first is an absolute necessity and the second is a "fitting" necessity. Aquinas argues that the incarnation was not absolutely necessary; God is free from absolute necessity except as pertains to his nature. Yet, Aquinas argues that the incarnation was necessary in the second sense; it is the most fitting or harmonious way for God to heal our misery, restore human nature and make our human good possible.[26]

Aquinas' distinction between two kinds of necessity helps make sense of what tradition has typically called the "simplicity" of God. God is simple in that God has no need of anything outside himself; God is already fully who he is. While humans have potential—a God given end to which we aim—God is already complete in himself. God has no need but freely chooses to become incarnate; out of love he binds humanity to himself in the incarnation. It is the necessarily "fitting" way that God saves the world.

We can apply these understandings of necessary to baptism as well. Baptism is not necessary in an absolute sense; God alone ultimately knows who will be saved. Yet, baptism is necessary in the *second* sense as most "fitting." Ordained by Christ, baptism is the most fitting way to enter *fully* into the body of Christ. To cite "Holy Spirit, Dove Divine," a hymn McKim describes as a "a perennial favourite among Baptists in the US,"[27]

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25. Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching*, 166.

26. As Aquinas states, this use of necessity describes "when a goal is achieved in a better and more fitting [*convenientius*] manner . . . " Thus, "The incarnation may be considered with regard to our furtherance in good. First, with regard to faith, which is made more certain by believing God himself who speaks . . . [W]ith regard to charity . . . 'What greater cause is there of the Lord's coming than to show God's love for us?'," in Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching,* 167 and 168

27. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 323. The hymn was written by Adoniram Judson (1788–1850).

We sink beneath Thy mystic flood;
O bathe us in Thy cleansing blood; . . .
And as we rise, with Thee to live,
O let the Holy Spirit give
The sealing unction from above,
The breath of life, the fire of love.

Through the Spirit, one becomes a member of the church (which has been grafted onto Israel) and thus receives the wonderful freedom of new life in Christ. This new life made possible by the Spirit's "fire of love" is a life in communion with God and others for the sake of the world. As such baptism is "necessary" or most fitting (Aquinas' second sense).

Conclusion

McKim invites his readers into a lively and ongoing debate about the nature and theology of baptism. To this end, he engages a wide range of Baptist writings—sermons, popular denominational resources, hymns, pamphlets and so forth, including those by lay men and women—bringing to light many lovely and rich descriptions of baptism. He likewise helpfully highlights different Baptist understandings of baptism, particularly between Particular and General Baptists, and how these influences have played out in Baptist life today. Especially compelling is McKim's concluding chapter: "Ideas and Resources," which includes discussion of baptismal architecture, preparation for baptism, mentorship, preaching on baptism, post-baptism care and so forth. The reader will thus discover thoughtful and imaginative ways that Baptists can concretely strengthen the practice of baptism in the church today. It is my hope that *The Secularization of Baptism: How Baptists Took God out of Baptism and How to Fix the Problem* will be widely read and discussed.

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Book Forum

Spirit and Grace: Recovering Divine Agency in Baptism

Colin Godwin

Through careful historical work, Mark G. McKim's *The Secularization of Baptism* details how a Baptist appreciation for divine action in baptism was replaced by a human preoccupation with personal faith, experience and connection with the local church. This shift, shaped by Enlightenment individualism, revivalist pragmatism, and the interiorization of belief, has truncated baptism's spiritual significance. In response, McKim calls for a Baptist recovery of baptism as a moment in which God is truly present and active, not regenerating, but imparting what he terms "non-saving grace," consistent with historic Reformed Baptist theology.[1]

One of McKim's more intriguing observations opens a path he does not fully explore. Several contemporary Baptist theologians who were not Reformed, namely Stanley Grenz, Roger Olson, and Clark Pinnock, have independently expressed views of baptism that affirm

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1. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 445–61. My own view of baptism is consistent with the Reformed non-salvific understanding that McKim retrieves.

God's action in the rite through the Holy Spirit. As McKim notes, their conclusions sometimes echo early Reformed Baptist instincts, despite their differing soteriological frameworks. These theologians do not adopt sacramental categories, nor do they attribute regenerative power to the rite. Instead, they describe baptism as a moment in which the Spirit admonishes, gifts, calls, strengthens, washes, or incorporates believers into the life of Christ.[2] This convergence is significant, and in what follows I suggest that McKim's attempt to recover divine action in baptism will be more compelling, especially to Baptists outside the Reformed tradition, if framed not primarily in the theological idiom of "grace," but in the Spirit's concrete and active presence, echoing how Scripture and many early credobaptists speak of God's activity in baptism.[3]

When this contemporary development is set alongside the broader biblical and historical record, a consistent pattern becomes clear. The New Testament most often describes God's action in baptism in relation to the Holy Spirit rather than in the theological vocabulary of grace. When they did address what God was doing in baptism, the same instinct is visible in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century credobaptist traditions, including among the Anabaptists, early English General Baptists, and Particular Baptists. They spoke of baptism in biblical terms, pointing to the Spirit's renewing and strengthening work. A similar pattern appears in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, now the largest family of credobaptist Christians globally, for whom baptism is ordinarily associated with the Spirit's active presence.[4] Across these contexts,

2. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 296–97, 376–78, 383–84.

3. McKim does note the Spirit's role and cites numerous Baptist authors who speak of the Spirit in baptism, especially related to the baptism of Christ. My argument is simply that this theme deserves greater prominence.

4. McKim's study is intentionally limited to Baptists in the anglophone world and does not attempt to account for the global expansion of credobaptist Pentecostalism, a limitation entirely appropriate to his project. It bears noting, however, that the global Pentecostal-charismatic movement has developed the very kind of Spirit-forward baptismal instinct that complements his retrieval. For overviews, see Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*; and Anderson, "Spreading Fires," 9–10. I myself observed the

McKim's central question, "What is God doing in baptism?" is clarified by the biblical and credobaptist witness: whatever God does in baptism, he does by his Spirit. Rooted in the Father's purpose, established by the Son's saving work, and brought to life in believers by the Spirit, baptism manifests the united action of the triune God. Recovering this emphasis offers Baptists a stronger antidote to the secularization of baptism than (Reformed) theological appeals to grace alone.

This essay therefore affirms McKim's constructive proposal while suggesting that it may be strengthened by foregrounding the Spirit as the one through whom God communicates his non-saving grace in baptism. Such an emphasis remains fully compatible with McKim's Reformed retrieval, reflects Scripture's dominant vocabulary, and places his work in closer conversation with the broader family of credobaptist traditions.

The Scriptural Emphasis: Baptism and the Spirit

Drawing on a comprehensive survey of every major New Testament baptismal text,[5] McKim rightly resists symbolic-reductionist accounts of baptism as mere testimony and urges Baptists to recover a Reformed and anti-secularized sense that God "does something" in baptism. He also acknowledges that this divine action is communicated by the Holy Spirit. Yet the New Testament itself does not ordinarily use the vocabulary of grace to explain God's activity in and around baptism. While grace permeates Paul's soteriology, the New Testament rarely uses the language of grace to describe God's action in baptism itself. When the biblical writers explain God's action in and around baptism, they overwhelmingly do so in terms of the Holy Spirit's personal presence and power.

This pattern is consistent across the biblical narrative. In the Gospels, the Spirit descends upon Jesus at his baptism (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32–33), establishing a paradigm for understanding subsequent Christian baptism. In Acts, the Spirit repeatedly

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rise of Pentecostalism in Belgium, including its influence on Baptist churches, while I served there as a church planter. Godwin, "The Recent Growth of Pentecostalism in Belgium," 90–93.

5. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 389–444.

arrives, fills, empowers, incorporates, or confirms believers in close relation to baptism (Acts 2; 8; 9; 10; 19). Sometimes the Spirit precedes baptism, sometimes follows it, and sometimes accompanies it at the moment itself; in every case, the Spirit is the active divine agent.

Even in texts cited to support baptismal soteriology (such as Acts 2:38–39, Rom 6:1–4, Col 2:11–12, and 1 Peter 3:21), God's action in baptism is described not in terms of grace as a theological category, but through Spirit-gift, Spirit-renewal, or Spirit-union. Paul summarizes this pattern explicitly: believers are "baptized in one Spirit into one body" (1 Cor 12:13).

The pattern is consistent when viewed across all major baptismal passages. It should not be taken to isolate the Spirit from the triune action of God, for the New Testament presents baptism as the work of the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Passage	Mentions Grace?	Mentions Spirit?	Brief Note
Matt 3:11–17	No	Yes	Baptism of Jesus establishes paradigm: Spirit descends; God acts.
Mark 1:8–11	No	Yes	Same pattern.
Luke 3:15–17, 21–22	No	Yes	Same pattern.
John 1:29–34	No	Yes	Same pattern.
Acts 2:38–41	No	Yes	Baptism linked with forgiveness and gift of Spirit.
Acts 8:12–17	No	Yes	Spirit given after baptism through laying on of hands.
Acts 9:17–18	No	Yes	Saul filled with Spirit; baptism follows.
Acts 10:44–48	No	Yes	Spirit precedes baptism.

Passage	Mentions Grace?	Mentions Spirit?	Brief Note
Acts 19:1–7	No	Yes	Spirit received through apostolic prayer, not water.
Rom 6:1–4	Yes	No	Grace mentioned in 6:1 & 6:14, but not tied to baptismal act, which is described as union with Christ.
1 Cor 12:13	Yes, χαρίσματα	Yes	Spirit-baptism; identity-forming action; in vv. 4, 9, 28, 31, the Spirit graciously gives gifts for service.
Gal 3:26–27	No	No	Baptism presupposes faith; no grace/Spirit term used. (Spirit mentioned in 3:2–5; grace for salvation throughout)
Eph 4:5–6	No	No	The unity formula ("one Lord . . . one baptism") is framed by explicit reference to the Spirit (4:3–4) and Christ's gracious gifting (4:7), but the baptism statement itself does not attach agency to either.
Col 2:11–12	No	No	Baptism is tied to union with Christ and "the powerful working of God" who raises the dead. No explicit reference to grace or the Spirit in these verses, though divine agency is central.
1 Pet 3:18–22	No	No	Baptism "saves" figuratively; God's agency grounded in Christ's resurrection.

Taken together, these texts reveal a broad and consistent witness: the Spirit is the New Testament's primary way of describing God's action in and around baptism. Wherever divine agency is present, it is the Spirit who descends, renews, empowers, incorporates, or confirms believers as belonging to Christ. Grace, though central to salvation, and certainly conveyed in baptism, is not the New Testament's dominant frame for what God does *in baptism* itself. When

biblical writers explain baptism's efficacy, they ordinarily do so in explicitly pneumatological or Christological terms.

Because the earliest credobaptists built their doctrine directly from Scripture, this biblical idiom shaped the theological grammar they inherited. In my judgment, this should shape not only what Baptists say about baptism but the very grammar in which we say it. To speak biblically about God's action in baptism is therefore to foreground the Spirit, not because grace is absent, but because Scripture typically describes God's baptismal work through the Spirit's agency.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that God is not communicating his grace in baptism (he does), nor that McKim overlooks the Spirit's activity (he does not), only that the biblical and credobaptist witness consistently speak of God communicating his grace *by his Spirit* in baptism. In other words, where McKim rightly affirms divine action in baptism, Scripture and many of the earliest Baptist interpreters give that action a personal shape: what God does in baptism, he does through Christ and *by his Spirit*. The issue is not whether grace and Spirit can be conceptually separated. I agree with McKim that they cannot. At issue is which term functions as Scripture's primary baptismal category and therefore should guide Baptist retrieval.

This biblical pattern strengthens rather than weakens McKim's project. He is right that Baptists must resist secularized accounts of baptism as merely human. Yet framing baptismal retrieval primarily through the term "grace" adopts a vocabulary that Scripture seldom applies to baptismal events. Beginning with the Spirit offers a more directly biblical framework, aligns with the deepest strands of Baptist theology, and provides a more compelling basis for revitalizing baptism in a secular age.

Early Credobaptist Witness: Baptism and the Spirit

If the New Testament emphasizes the Spirit's activity in baptism, the same pattern emerges within the earliest credobaptist traditions. In this brief section, I highlight a few historical examples of how two distinct historically Arminian credobaptist traditions recognized that God was "doing something" in baptism through his Spirit.[6]

6. The argument advanced here is not that Anabaptists, General and

Anabaptist Foundations

Balthasar Hübmaier, writing a century before the rise of English Baptists, offers the earliest extended and systematic defences of believers' baptism in the Reformation period. In his *On the Christian Baptism of Believers* (1525), Hübmaier does express a characteristic Anabaptist "inner Spirit conversion vs. outer water testimony" understanding of baptism. He grounds the rite of baptism in the prior and continuing work of God, which will enable the believer "to live according to the Rule of Christ as far as God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit will give him grace and strength."[7] Hübmaier's 1527 baptismal liturgy is more explicit: during the ceremony, the congregation prays that God would "impart . . . the grace and power of his Holy Spirit" and "complete in him what he has begun through his Holy Spirit and divine Word," a prayer that assumes God's present activity in and around the rite.[8]

Like Hübmaier, Menno Simons explicitly rejected baptismal regeneration: "We are not regenerated because we are baptized . . . but we are baptized because we are regenerated by faith in God's Word."[9] The Anabaptist rejection of sacramental regeneration and insistence on baptizing only believers often led them, like later Baptists, to describe baptism more in symbolic, ethical, or communal terms, where they emphasized the Spirit's action in baptism as continuous with God's work begun at conversion. Dirk Philips wrote *The Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (1564) to the Dutch Anabaptists in the Low Countries. After insisting that the new birth cannot take place without God's Word, without faith and without the Holy Spirit, he states that those new believers who are baptized, "shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from God through Jesus Christ, to a renewal of their

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Particular Baptists held identical views of baptism, but that across their differences one encounters a recurring biblical instinct to describe baptism in relation to the work of the Spirit.

7. Hübmaier, "On the Christian Baptism of Believers (1525)," 142. See the similar language in "A Christian Catechism (1526)," 349.

8. Hübmaier, "A Form for Water Baptism (1527)," 388.

9. Simons, "Christian Baptism (1539)," 264–66.

hearts, a transformation of their minds, and as a seal of their salvation."[10] Here again, baptism is ordered toward the Spirit's indwelling at conversion and continued renewing presence through a principal act of obedience, which is baptism. Sacramental efficacy is excluded. True believers are born of the Spirit before they are baptized; yet all true believers will seek baptism because they are born of the Spirit.

Even these few Anabaptist voices gathered here do not yield a uniform or systematic doctrine of God's activity in baptism. But they do display a shared hermeneutic based on their reading of Scripture. They insisted that baptism could not be separated from confession and conversion. Their accounts are not sacramental, but neither are they purely symbolic. They regularly interpreted baptism as a moment that signifies, and in some sense participates in, the Spirit's renewing and confirming work. And in the rare places of their writing where they are not providing an apologetic against infant baptism but instructing their churches on their actual practice of baptism, such as Hübmaier's baptismal liturgy above, it is clearer that they expected the Holy Spirit to be dispensing grace and power to the person baptized during the rite.

Early English Baptists

Early English Baptists continued the pneumatological instinct visible in the sixteenth-century continental tradition. As McKim observes, early General Baptists such as Edward Barber, John Griffith, Henry Danvers, and William Foot identified the Spirit's activity in baptism. They were diverse in their understandings, but they did speak of baptism in a manner that assumed the active presence of God's Spirit rather than his absence, whether granting the baptized believer a fuller measure of spiritual strength, sealing them in Christ, or confirming in obedience.[11]

This pattern reappears in Arminian Baptist confessional texts. The *Standard Confession* of 1660 describes how prayer and the laying

10. Philips, "The Enchiridion (Handbook) (1564)," 95.

11. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 33–37, 48–49, 66–67. I am not suggesting that the English Baptists built their views directly on those of the Anabaptists, only that they drew their baptismal theology from the same biblical texts.

on of hands should follow baptism "that they may receive the promise of the holy Spirit."[12] The *Orthodox Creed* of 1678 likewise directs that baptism be accompanied by prayer and laying on of hands for "the reception of the holy, promised spirit of Christ."[13] Across these texts, baptism is ordered toward the Spirit's work of sanctification, renewal, and empowerment rather than limited to a human profession of faith.

Taken together, these sources confirm McKim's larger historical narrative. Many sixteenth-century Anabaptists and seventeenth-century General Baptists may have struggled to speak of divine action in baptism. But they did assume it. Their biblical instincts led them to describe baptism as a moment in which the Spirit actively strengthens and confirms believers. This theological instinct did not disappear with the close of the seventeenth century. It surfaces whenever credobaptists read the biblical witness and attempt to describe God's action in baptism.

A Global Credobaptist Pneumatological Witness

Perhaps McKim's call for a renewed recognition of God's action in baptism is already underway. A final line of evidence comes from the early Pentecostal and charismatic movements. These traditions, though staunchly credobaptist, frequently testify to a vivid experience of the Spirit's agency in and around the act of baptism, often describing believers receiving fresh empowerment, cleansing, gifting, or healing as they emerged from the water.[14] I raise this not to suggest

12. Article 12, "The Standard Confession*" (1660)*, in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 229. Noted by McKim, The *Secularization of Baptism,* 39.

13. Article 32, "The Orthodox *Creed" (1678)*, in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 320–21. Noted by McKim, The Secularization of Baptism, 40.

14. Williams, "Washed in the Spirit," 35, 120–21. Edward George's analysis of twenty-one Pentecostal periodicals (1906–1931) documents baptismal services marked by shouting, dancing, prophecy, tongues, visions, and healing occurring in direct connection with immersion. See George, "Revisioning a Pentecostal Theology of Water Baptism," 110, 128, 245.

that Baptists adopt Pentecostal theologies of salvation, sanctification, or the attendant charismatic ecclesiological practices. Instead, I wish to recognize what their "Spirit in baptism" retrieval reveals: apart from any Reformed theology of grace, Pentecostal practice instinctively re-centres baptism around the active presence of the Spirit, following the same trajectory as contemporary non-Reformed Baptists like Pinnock, Olsen, and Grenz.

Again, this evidence does not require Baptists to imitate Pentecostal liturgy. Rather, it strengthens the central claim of this essay: that when credobaptists attempt to name God's action in baptism, the most natural, biblically resonant, and historically grounded vocabulary is the language of *Spirit-grace*. For Baptists today to resist the secularization of baptism, this wider credobaptist testimony suggests that the path forward is already visible, leading not through sacramental regeneration but through renewed confidence in the Spirit's active presence in the baptismal event.

Conclusion

Mark G. McKim has provided Baptists with an important and carefully argued reminder that baptism must not be surrendered to the pressures of secularization, psychological reduction, or mere symbolism. His call to recover baptism as a divine act is both theologically necessary and pastorally wise. This essay has sought not to correct McKim but to deepen the appeal of his proposal.

A close reading of the New Testament reveals that the biblical idiom for divine action in baptism is overwhelmingly pneumatological. The Spirit descends, renews, indwells, empowers, incorporates, and confirms believers in their union with Christ. Anabaptists and early English Baptists regularly used the same vocabulary, locating baptismal meaning in the Spirit's regenerating, sanctifying, and empowering presence. Arminian Baptists, entirely apart from Reformed categories, often rediscover this same pattern. And global Pentecostal and charismatic movements, though theologically diverse, continue to emphasize that the Spirit meets believers in baptism.

In light of this threefold witness, biblical, historical, and global, the most fully Trinitarian, fully Baptist, and fully biblical way to describe God's non-saving action in baptism is to name the Spirit as

communicating that grace in baptism. This *Spirit-grace* grammar honours the Reformed Baptist concern for divine initiative, resonates more easily with Arminian Baptist theology, and reflects the lived experience of millions of credobaptist Christians today. Far from threatening credobaptist distinctives, it enriches them by restoring baptism's vertical dimension without adopting sacramentalist accounts of regenerative efficacy.

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Book Forum

Between Symbol and Sacrament?

Spencer Miles Boersma

The scene is all too familiar. There is a baptism day at the local Baptist church. A candidate comes forward. They give a testimony of how they came to faith and how they are now ready to take the next step in baptism. The pastor shares that it has been their pleasure to walk this journey of faith with them. Additionally, just for clarity's sake, the pastor notes that the water *actually* does nothing: baptism is merely a symbol of the person's commitment to Jesus. The person is asked to confirm their profession of faith; they are plunged into the water under the triune name; and they come up to the jubilation of the congregation. The pastor announces that there will be a potluck luncheon after the service. "There is just one problem," pastor and theologian Mark G. McKim notes, "a problem so widespread few even notice it. Baptism has been secularized; God, for all intents and purposes, is shuffled to the sidelines."[1]

McKim's book feels like it should not have to be written. Its contention, strangely obvious in so many ways, is that baptism is not merely a human action: God is *actually* doing something in baptism.

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1. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 1.

However, what is this "something"? McKim argues for a middle view between two views. The first view is that baptism is nothing more than a symbolic act of obedience, a human response to what God has already done. The other is a sacramental view, and it holds "that baptism is necessary, or normally necessary, to complete the process of salvation."[2] McKim sees this as a recent, novel view espoused by a set of Baptist thinkers such as H. Wheeler Robinson, George Beasley-Murray, Neville Clark, Stanley K. Fowler, John Colwell, and others. So, he argues,

> God is present, conveying strengthening grace and declaring his love and loyalty to the one being baptized. Believers' baptism is a means of grace, and one of the appointed means by which we may meet with Christ. Neither extreme, that baptism is strictly symbolic, nor that it is the culmination of a process of salvation, has biblical support. It is the historical Particular/Regular/Calvinistic Baptist understanding which best reflects Scripture (and also challenges the widespread secularization of believers' baptism).[3]

Whether McKim's notable contribution is entirely successful in moving between a purely symbolic approach and a sacramental approach is the question of this review.

McKim's argument is for Christ's spiritual presence in baptism, an act that communicates non-salvific grace—faith, repentance, and regeneration all precede baptism. To this end, McKim undergoes an extensive historical survey. This cannot be overstated as his sweeping survey occupies pages 15–389 of the 485-page book. In it, he charts the views of Baptist thinkers in Britain, the United States, and Canada. A minor worry about this delimitation is that it neglects European Baptists and the now significant Baptist groups in places like Nigeria and Nagaland, India; but, I admit, given the vast information to survey, this is understandable. Still, how much longer can theologies of the Global North appeal to this kind of historical delimitation and not treat voices from the Global South (who have been around for quite some time)? He then moves on to an exegetical

2. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 17.
3. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 14.

treatment of the relevant scriptures and then a theological chapter. The theological chapter spells out how baptism is connected to grace, God's omnipresence, and how material things can be used in sacramental ways as sites of divine encounter. Lastly, McKim ends with helpful practical considerations, reflecting on the procedure of baptism, the look of the baptistry, the preparation of the one being baptized, follow-up discipleship and mentoring, and other matters.

The book, however, left me with the following questions. First, is the title, "The Secularization of Baptism," misleading? The thesis is well documented that Baptists increasingly favour the symbolic view, but their dominant concern is scriptural and, in a secondary sense, is influenced often by a kind of anti-Roman Catholic prejudice (or reaction to the Oxford movement and the Campbellites). As McKim observes, there have always been those who take a purely symbolic view, quite apart from any Enlightenment secularizing sensibility (although there were some). It would be more accurate to say that baptism further "anti-Catholicized" or "anti-sacramentalized" rather than "secularized" (which admittedly does not make for quite as catchy a title). Many proponents of the symbolic view certainly would hold to God's omnipresence, but fail, more accurately, to integrate this conviction with their doctrine of baptism due to these prejudices. On the other hand, the title gives the impression that the main worry is only the symbolic view, yet McKim spends much of the book combating a sacramental interpretation of baptism. McKim's concern is two-fold, rather than singular, as the title suggests. Taking issue with the title may sound like a persnickety criticism, but this leads into my next question.

Second, does McKim successfully distinguish himself from the "sacramentalists"? Afterall, McKim admits he is comfortable with the term "sacrament"[4] and that baptism is indeed a "means of grace,"[5] and so, more pointedly, perhaps he is really critiquing what could be called—for lack of a better term—"hard-sacramentalists," ones who have much more salvific dimensions to how they talk about baptism. Even still, this distinction has problems. In his historical survey, McKim surveys Baptist sacramentalists as a separate section but then

4. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 8–9.
5. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 14.

discusses thinkers such as Paul Fiddes or Stanley Grenz as outside this group. Why? They also consider themselves sacramentalists and have even, for instance, contributed essays to *Baptist Sacramentalism* (edited by Cross and Thompson).[6] Is it because these thinkers do not hold that baptism is connected to salvation? McKim constantly objects to sacramental notions of baptism as implying that baptism is what causes salvation or implying that only those who are baptized by immersion are saved. However, on the whole, Baptist sacramentalists do not make this argument. Some come close, such as Colwell and Cross, but they usually immediately qualify their statements.

While this review cannot do a comprehensive comparison, a few examples will illustrate that McKim has created a strawman regarding the sacramentalist position, all to end up saying something quite similar. Indeed, McKim's project is remarkably akin to the work of my esteemed professor, Stanley Fowler. Fowler's book, *More than a Symbol*,[7] offers a historiography account that shows baptism shifting to a largely purely symbolic account, much like McKim. Fowler, like McKim, claims to be in line with the Particular Baptists who held that baptism is a means of grace. Fowler quite adamantly denies that baptism causes salvation or that God saves only the baptized. In fact, he even argues against re-baptism even of those baptized as infants, believing God's grace is not formulaic or boxed in. Fowler's contention is that baptism is sacramental only because of faith, and the water merely offers a kind of solidification of salvation in the person's experience. He espoused that baptism experientially "seals" a believer in relationship to God, but even then, he states that salvation is a lifelong process: One was saved, is being saved, and will be saved. Baptism aids in marking that first, initial tense.[8] In fact, he is quite content, very similar to McKim, that those who are baptized well

6. See essays in Cross and Thompson, eds., *Baptist Sacramentalism*.

7. Fowler, *More than a Symbol*.

8. Fowler, *Rethinking Baptism*, 35. The fact that Fowler spoke this way, as I stated in a review of this book, seems to describe a soteriology that is less Calvinistic than he let on and that the New Testament's way of speaking about salvation is multi-faceted in a way theologians often fail to appreciate when they employ a traditional soteriology. See Boersma, Review of *Rethinking Baptism*, R4.

after they profess faith and take up responsible discipleship, etc., are going to merely experience more generalized "spiritual benefits."[9]

Admittedly, I (in concert with McKim) have often been frustrated with Fowler and others when their claims give the impression that baptism causes or is required for salvation, but I am also similarly frustrated with McKim's language that makes claims, then engages in the same kind of qualifications, only from the other direction. For instance, McKim, despite the above thesis, summarizes his exegesis and states that there is "no such thing as an unbaptized follower of Jesus" and that "repentance, faith, and baptism are so closely linked that when one is mentioned the others are assumed" and "Baptism was simply the universal norm for those who repented of sin and confessed Jesus as Lord."[10] One could merely ask in the same way he presses the sacramentalists: Is this assumption of a bundling of repentance and faith with baptism in such a way that is a "universal norm" not the very argument the sacramentalists are making? Or more facetiously, one would ask, is he implying that if there are no unbaptized followers of Jesus, but baptism is not salvific, one could be saved but not a follower of Jesus? Of course, McKim nowhere makes that claim and these sorts of quandaries illustrate a deeper conundrum in bringing together all the passages on baptism into a singular teaching.

Third, then, does a Reformed soteriology makes sense of all the ways the New Testament talks about baptism? McKim often makes the argument for a sequential distinction between faith and baptism. Since faith precedes baptism, baptism is not salvific, merely communicating grace. Contra the sacramentalists, McKim is keen to cite the different narratives like how individuals like Zaccheus are pronounced saved without baptism or how in Acts the narrative shows the Spirit coming before baptism in one place and after baptism in another rather than through baptism. However, on the other hand, sacramentalists look at the same texts and grant these anomalies because of the generalized manner in which they describe the normative nature of baptism.[11] Instead, they look to the baptism of Christ,

9. Fowler, *Rethinking Baptism,* 39.
10. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 443–44.
11. For instance, Fowler, *Rethinking Baptism*, 18–21.

where the Spirit descends in the event of water-baptism, implying a normative coincidence (which, actually, McKim also appeals to as well). And so, while McKim stresses the texts that showcase this sequence of believing then being baptized (such as Acts 8:12), this sequential distinction is not explicit for some other scriptures that speak of baptism. A good example of this is Matt 28:18–20, where baptizing and disciple-making seem to be a similar action, or 1 Peter 3:21 that states that "baptism now saves you," not through the water per se but as a "pledge of a clear conscience." These passages seem best read as concurrent with the profession of faith or commitments to discipleship.

How does McKim solve this problem? He often forces a sequence into the passage. For instance, in Gal 3:27, he suggests, "If, like Luther, one might be permitted the insertion of a word not in the actual text for the sake of clarity, Paul wrote, 'As many of you as were baptized into Christ have *previously* clothed yourselves with Christ.'"[12] Or, more ironically, he resorts to the same defence someone like Anthony Cross does: McKim treats one of the favoured texts of the sacramentalists, Acts 2:38, where repentance, baptism, forgiveness of sin, and the promise of the Holy Spirit at the very least happen close together, and in order to preserve the sequential distinction, he describes baptism as a "synecdoche," citing Stanley Grenz, who remarks that there is often the appearance of saving significance to baptism because faith and baptism form an inseparable whole.[13] Cross makes an identical argument about baptismal language but for his position.[14] Thus, the two perspectives are quite similar and sound like they are emphasizing different aspects: McKim emphasizes a Reformed sequential soteriology (anomalies to the contrary are due to the synecdoche-like nature of baptism language), while the sacramentalists see baptism and the other elements of Christian initiation in more a concurrent manner (anomalies to the contrary are due to the deeply generalized nature of this claim and the mysterious, unformulaic way the Spirit acts).

Fourth, however, in McKim's characterization, one is left with

12. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 434. Emphasis in original.
13. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 411–12.
14. Cross, *Recovering the Evangelical Sacrament*, 72–84.

the distinct impression as one nears the end of the book that McKim still has not answered the question: what is God doing in baptism? In fact, he says, "Neither are there any texts which explain, specifically and in detail, what, if anything, God is doing in baptism."[15] This line is curious as he uses it to set up his theology chapter, where he argues that God can and does use material things to be sites of encounter with him in order to deepen the believer's relationship with him. At the end of this, he states that baptism bears the focused presence of God, where God is "declaring his love and loyalty to the believer, strengthening faith, and encouraging service."[16] This is true, but this feels like a low-ball. If this were all there was to it, would not reading Scripture be the more effective way one receives those assurances? God is forgiving, washing, sealing, and raising the believer to new life in the Spirit. Baptism is the normative (although not exclusive) means that the believer does things like express repentance, professes faith, identifies with Christ's cross and resurrection, dying with him and rising into new life in the Spirit, etc. Why is McKim so allergic to talking this way?

Fifth, is the coinciding of baptism with these other elements of conversion really a violation of *sola gratia*? McKim thinks so;[17] however, I think this is reading a first-century text through the lens of the debates in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Reformed theology—despite its many virtues—so often dichotomizes faith and action or faith and obedience based on its disagreements with Roman Catholicism centuries ago, and in so doing, it sees any action on the part of the believer as a violation of *sola gratia*. However, this mentality is foreign to the biblical mindset. As Paul says, there is the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5, NRSV). Or to put it this way: Is giving mental assent to the truth that Christ is lord a violation of *sola gratia*? Is having to say the prayer, "Christ have mercy," a violation of *sola gratia*? Is reading about the words of the Gospel using the materiality of the Bible a violation of *sola gratia*? Is responding to Christ's command to "repent for the kingdom of God is near" by indeed repenting of sin, making salvation conditional on obedience?

15. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism,* 444.
16. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 460.
17. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 447.

Surely not, grace always precedes. So why would the use of water to help make tangible the spiritual truth of sin being washed clean be a violation of *sola gratia*, either (provided, again, that this is not causing salvation nor is it the exclusive order in which it happens)? These questions around grace and action might signal to us the need to read closer just how Jesus and Paul critiqued the Pharisees and the Judaizers regarding the role the law played, rather than reading later conflicts between Protestants and Catholics into these texts. While it is not discussed in much detail here, water baptism is an appropriation of the Old Testament's *mikveh* rituals (see the study by William Jones),[18] which functioned to assure the cleansing of the participant. Perhaps, there is a kind of Protestant allergy to ritual, despite it being a God-sanctioned means to help believers understand their faith and salvation, which propelled the secularization of baptism against sacramental characterizations, that still lingers in McKim's understanding despite his willingness to grant that baptism is a "means of grace."

Sixth, what then should be our practice? McKim emphasizes salvation in the prior moment of faith before baptism, and because of the diversity of patterns in Acts, it seems he plays it safe and merely insists it bears a sense of grace and divine presence. Meanwhile, as a concurrent act, sacramentalists are much more content to see baptism as the occasion of repentance, profession of faith, commitment to discipleship, and receptivity to the Holy Spirit, although they admit the order can vary. Put this way, these two begin to sound like two sides of the same coin, and perhaps their real differences are practical: It sounds like McKim wants to emphasize catechesis prior to baptism, while sacramentalists see catechesis as something that happens after baptism. If this is the case, both are actually sacramentalists, seeing baptism as a means of grace; however, for one side, the pattern is conversion-baptism, while the other is something more like—for lack of a better term—catechesis-baptism.

Sacramentalists sometimes sound like baptism is to be practiced in a John the Baptist-esque manner of an evangelist preaching in the water with a crowd on the beach, calling sinners into the waters of repentance right there. However, I would have to say that McKim's description squares better with the wisdom of church history as it

18. Jones, *Jewish Ritual Washing*.

moved out of the Jewish context and most believers' experiences today in emphasizing a time of catechesis in order that a person has at least some proper understanding of the gospel, in order that the decision to be baptized is not done fleetingly.

I have to admit that I have used both in my pastoral practice. When I pastored First Baptist Church of Sudbury, we would hold a baptism event with about six other churches in town at Lake Ramsey. In 2018, the event saw the largest mass baptism in the history of the city with 78 people. Most of the people who were being baptized came from our sister church, All Nations Church; however, our church had a few each year. My usual practice was to work with candidates in the weeks leading up to the event. I required that I hear their testimony, that we read a book of the New Testament together (usually the Gospel of John), and that they answer four questions: "Is Jesus your Lord and Savior? Do you repent of your sins, trusting in Christ's mercy? Do you understand you are being joined to a church as your spiritual family? And are you prepared to give up everything for the one who has given his everything for you?" (That last question was my attempt to approximate in some small way the radical change of allegiance the confession "Christ is Lord" would have been in the Roman world). In practice, I did delay people's baptisms who hesitated on these questions. However, when we did the baptisms on that day gathered at the lake, there was always a general call by the leader of the event (who, if I recall, was Pastor Jeremy Mahood, who spoke from a boat with all the AV equipment while the pastors performing the baptisms stood in the lake): "Will anyone else come forward and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ?" To my surprise and delight, one woman came forward, who I had invited, who worked at the Tim Hortons around the corner from the church. I asked her the same questions on the spot, and she was baptized. I say all this to suggest that just as the Bible does not have one exclusive way of talking about baptism and salvation, neither do Baptist churches need to be limited to a single practice.

In conclusion, it is a strange irony that Baptists can often have a watered-down view of baptism (pun very intended). McKim's book, which is nothing short of encyclopedic, insists that God's grace is indeed acting within baptism, and I welcome this as a desperately needed corrective to the all too problematic talk of baptism being

"only a symbol." I question whether McKim really is all that different from the sacramentalists. A part of this is my own skepticism that one systematic description can explain all the passages on baptism. I see McKim and the sacramentalists often emphasizing different passages and themes, the application of these today simply requires wisdom. I suspect that we are still learning how to more accurately describe the relationship of ritual to faith that the New Testament mindset took for granted in appropriating Jewish water purification rites in the service of faith in Christ. The continued refining leads to another irony: that those who do take baptism seriously and seek a fleshed-out theology for it often struggle to articulate its exact nature. Baptism, the rite of our faith tradition's namesake, still continues to perplex me: How is it best done? Why is it done? Why does the Bible talk about it in the way that it does? Perhaps God is up to something in this. Baptism, like many points of Christian theology, has its ambiguities that perhaps encourages us in yet one more way to remember that this beautiful gift God has given the church must always point back to the giver, whose mercies thankfully always exceeds our efforts and explanations.

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Book Forum

Response to Reviewers

Mark G. McKim

Each of the reviewers took time to read and comment on my book. As each undoubtedly has a busy schedule of teaching, writing, and other responsibilities, I am most grateful to them.

Response to Elizabeth Newman

Despite her writing that baptism is a means of saving grace—a view which I reject—I suspected as I read further in her review that Dr. Newman and I are far more in agreement than not.

Newman's explanation of the distinction Thomas Aquinas made between "absolute" and "fitting" necessity is both fascinating and helpful. I do, with respect to baptism, use the word "necessary" in what Aquinas describes as a "fitting necessity" as opposed to his "absolute" sense of the word. That is, baptism is indeed a *fitting* necessity for a believer, but not necessary—in the absolute sense—for salvation. Newman is apparently using the *fitting* necessity understanding with reference to baptism as well; consequently, I suspect we are not far apart in our thinking. However, I do think one of her early comments, "I think that baptism is a means of saving grace," really

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needed, then and there, to have the Aquinian distinction made as without such I thought her words sailed perilously close to something akin to baptismal regeneration.

Newman expresses concern about my conclusion (in contrast to that of the late Anthony Cross) that Acts 2 does not explicitly deal with the question of whether baptism is essential for salvation. But why would one expect an early first century sermon to address an issue which would not become relevant or pressing for at least two centuries? It was only when repentance/faith and believers' baptism became separated that the question about the necessity (or non-necessity) of such baptism became acute.

My understanding of Romans 6:1–4, particularly in light of 1 Corinthians 10:1–4, is also a matter of concern for Newman. She suggests that Paul's drawing a connection between the children of Israel passing through the parted sea and Christian baptism shows a pattern of God acting on behalf of his people both then and now. She affirms it is "not the water that saves, but God acting on behalf of his people." This is clearly biblically sound exegesis. But I cannot see that this pattern logically means questions about saving and non-saving grace are senseless.

Newman's remarks about the final chapter ("Ideas and Resources") were most kind. I have long believed that, at times, the disciplines of theology/church history and the practice of pastoral ministry, have become far too separated from one another. I appreciate Newman's hope that this chapter might help strengthen Baptist practices of baptism. That is my hope and prayer as well.

Response to Colin Goodwin

Colin Goodwin makes a careful and well-reasoned point in suggesting that my argument that "attempt[s] to recover divine action in baptism" might be "more compelling, especially to Baptists outside the Reformed tradition, if framed not primarily in the theological idiom of 'grace,' but in the Spirit's active presence." I concur that placing greater emphasis on the Spirit (although not necessarily "framing" the debate around the work of the Spirit) is not only "fully compatible" with my thesis, but would strengthen it, making it more appealing to those outside the Reformed tradition—whether Baptist or otherwise.

However, I would be reluctant to reorient the *entire* discussion around the Spirit's work. My intended readership was fellow Baptists. The bulk of my book is about how, historically, *Baptists* have framed questions around baptism, and for the most part they have done so in terms of grace—or the lack of it—in baptism. Consequently, that is how I framed things in both the chapter examining the biblical texts on baptism, and the chapter which discusses theology of baptism. Certainly, if my intended readership had been *beyond* a specifically Baptist audience, it would have made sense to place much more emphasis on "the Spirit's renewing and strengthening work." Perhaps another book might try to reorient or at least add to the historic (and present) Baptist conversation focused on grace toward the Spirit? That, I think, would be a most useful contribution to the ongoing conversation.

Response to Spencer Boersma

I chuckled at Boersma's addition to the opening lines of my book—the pastor's announcing a potluck luncheon after a Sunday service that included a baptism. Sometimes there is a sad lack of such humour in Baptist circles![1]

Boersma questions, on several grounds, whether my book provides a good argument for a middle way between the sacramentalist position and the symbolic view of baptism.

First, Boersma takes some issue with the book's title, wondering if it is "misleading." It is not. A secular approach to life, by definition, means taking the view that God, if he exists at all, has little or nothing to do with daily life, and little to no involvement in it. By that definition—which is explained clearly very early in my book (pp. 3–4)—the symbolic-only understanding of believers' baptism does indeed secularize the rite since the focus becomes almost entirely oriented toward what the baptized is doing, thinking, or saying.

Second, Boersma questions whether I have adequately distin-

1. Constant dourness and humourlessness are odd given that the Kingdom Jesus spoke of so often involved joy, and so many of his stories involved humour, especially in the form of extreme contrasts and exaggerations.

guished the "middle position" held by Regular/Reformed/Calvinistic/Particular Baptists from the position of Baptist sacramentalists, and wonders how I can put people like Stan Grenz and Paul Fiddes outside that latter group even though they consider themselves sacramentalists. Very simply, the line is drawn between those who hold that baptism is (at least normally) required for salvation, and those who, while holding to a "high" view of baptism, do not insist that it is, normally or otherwise, so required.

I must strongly disagree that "on the whole, Baptist sacramentalists do not make" the argument that baptism is required for salvation. In my view, they clearly do. Readers will have to decide for themselves, of course. But one notes that even Stanley K. Fowler, himself a sacramentalist, pointedly asked of H. Wheeler Robinson if by faith a person is forgiven and regenerated what is then added by baptism?[2] Robinson himself simply refused to answer this question, avoiding it by noting "the New Testament never considers them [faith and baptism] apart in this detached manner."[3] The problem is, while the New Testament did not directly address the question because there was no such thing as an unbaptized Christian *then*, there *are* unbaptized followers of Christ *now*. While believers' baptism was the "universal norm"[4] in the early church, for many centuries we have been faced with hundreds of millions of followers of Jesus who either did not receive believers' baptism or were not baptized at all. Avoiding the question is not reasonable. Fowler himself fell into a similar difficulty as Robinson. Fowler insisted that baptism was the way a penitent sinner says yes to God.[5] But does that not mean, logically, there is no other way to say "yes," and therefore baptism must be seen as necessary for salvation? How else can one interpret George Beasley-Murray other than regarding baptism as (at least normally) necessary for salvation when he insisted, "The primitive Church knew not simply a '*fresh* experience of grace' in baptism, but *the* experience of grace by the Spirit: union with Christ, death and resurrection, new

2. Fowler, *More Than a Symbol*, 93.
3. Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 3.
4. McKim, *The Secularization of Baptism*, 443–44.
5. Fowler, *More Than a Symbol,* 233.

creation . . . by the Spirit"?[6] or Cross when he wrote, "baptism is not *mere* sign—or just a symbol even—of what God has done, but actually *effects* what it signifies/symbolizes,"[7] or John E. Colwell who writes that the gift of the Holy Spirit is "a consequence of baptism rather than its precursor"[8] and further that "We are saved *by God through* faith and *through the sacraments*."[9] There is in fact a notable consistency amongst all these scholars on the subject.

Third, Boersma asks if Scripture supports a "sequential distinction between faith and baptism." He writes that I "often force a sequence into a passage." I would demur that any forcing has occurred, and, moreover, would observe that during the four centuries of Baptist existence, the overwhelming majority of Baptist biblical scholars and clergy in England, Canada, and the United States have seen the same sequence as I have: repentance, faith, baptism.

The fourth issue raised in Boersma's response is that he feels it is a "low ball" answer to conclude that in baptism God's presence is particularly focused, and that I "play it safe . . . merely insist[ing]" that [baptism] bears a sense of grace and divine presence." It is true that God may choose to declare his love and loyalty to the believer through any means—including by means of any physical element. But I am arguing for *more* than that for baptism. My point is that we should *expect* that presence to be *especially* focused or more powerful in a rite which Jesus himself explicitly commanded. This is as opposed to the symbolic only understanding which can virtually remove God from the proceeding entirely. In this, I am closely aligned with English theologian Paul Fiddes, who, while insisting that God is "always present," refers to baptism as a "special place of encounter" and a place of God's "deeper presence."[10] Is there a need, and is it even possible to define precisely how such a more focused presence operates or to what specific degree God's presence may be more focused in baptism than elsewise?

Fifth, Boersma questions whether making baptism a prerequisite

6. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, *277.*
7. Cross, *Recovering the Evangelical Sacrament*, 172.
8. Colwell, *Promise and Presence*, 120.
9. Colwell, *Promise and Presence*, 130.
10. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, 107.

for salvation is a violation of *sola gratia*. Emil Brunner, in cutting the Gordian knot of the relationship between divine sovereignty and human capability/freedom, argued that the two concepts were a paradox, and that both elements had to be affirmed and held together in a creative tension. Overemphasize that salvation is entirely God's gift, and humans become automatons, denied that relationship of responsibility which make us human. Overemphasize the importance of the human response of "yes" or "no" to God and one runs the danger of making salvation, at least partly, a result of human effort.[11] As Scripture does not resolve this tension, Brunner argued we dare not attempt to do so. How to keep the tension balanced has long been a matter of debate in Protestant theology. My "call" on this—in line with the overwhelming majority of Baptists over four centuries—is that making believers' baptism a prerequisite for salvation overemphasizes the human response part of the paradox.[12]

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Cross, Anthony. *Recovering the Evangelical Sacrament: Baptisma Semper Reformandum*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013.

11. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 1:314–15, 332–33.

12. I suspect those who know me personally would be greatly bemused by Boersma's suggestion that "a kind of Protestant allergy to ritual" lingers in my understanding, given that I have been referred to, many times over the years (sometimes as a compliment, often not) as a "Anglo-Baptist," "high Baptist," or "Baptican!"

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BOOK REVIEWS

Prentice, Roger H., ed. *Wolfville, Nova Scotia*. Baptists in Early North America Series 11. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2024.

The Baptists in Early North America series, published by Mercer University Press, and now complete at twelve volumes, is shaped by a "continental approach to North America," advancing a "North American thesis of Baptist development and community life, at least until the political upheavals of the American Revolution (pp. ix, viii). This volume, edited and introduced by the late Roger Prentice, contains the records of the Baptist Church in Horton Township, Nova Scotia, in what is now the town of Wolfville. Though the series as a whole frames Baptists as a cross-border, continental community, this is the sole entry dedicated entirely to a congregation in what is now Canada.

The Horton church was gathered in about 1766 by Ebenezer Moulton and other New England Planters on New Light principles as an open communion Baptist congregation. The church was reconstituted in 1778, still as an open communion fellowship, when Nicholas Pierson was ordained as its pastor. During the years of the American War of Independence, the church was significantly influenced by the preaching of New Light itinerant Henry Alline. The oldest extant church record book begins at this date and was used continuously until 1819; this volume presents the entire record of these formative years in transcript. Prentice put those records in context with a carefully researched introduction of about ninety pages.

The transcribed records themselves convey the regular rhythms of a congregational church. From the minutes, we see individuals meeting at Saturday conferences to tell their spiritual experiences, and then gathered for Sabbath morning worship and afternoon outdoor baptisms. We read of the regular administration of the Lord's supper and the periodic renewal of the church's covenant. The pages

bear witness to the scrupulous discernment of breaches of congregational discipline by disorderly behaviour, and in some cases the restoration of those members to full communion. While the records are often spare in their details of such cases of discipline, the fine-grained account of Daniel Sanford and Anne Emmerson gives readers a case study of such communal discernment and moral regulation (pp. 10-16, 39). There are also a few welcome, if tantalizing, traces of the presence of Black members of the congregation (p. lxx).

As Prentice's introduction explains, there was a longstanding tension in this and other Nova Scotia congregations between baptistic beliefs and New Light piety—a tension that was most keenly felt at the communion table. Would the church restrict its membership to those who had been baptized by immersion, or would it be open to all who could give an experience of conversion? This is an issue that the congregation itself considered and debated many times over the years. Early in its history, the church decided by vote that "the mode of Baptsam is No Bar of Communcion" (p. 18). By the early nineteenth century, however, as pastors, churches, and the provincial association wrestled with this question, tending toward moderate Calvinism, regularized Baptist order, and closed communion, Horton was no exception. In 1808, "the Church Met in Order to Consider & Setel the difficulty Consaring Curch Cummunon. A Vote Caled & a magoraty for Clost Cummunen" (p. 47). As Daniel Goodwin has argued in *Into Deep Waters: Evangelical Spirituality and Maritime Calvinistic Baptist Ministers, 1790–1855* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), this shift to closed communion and order should be seen as a Baptist adaptation of the New Light tradition, rather than its abandonment. The Horton church book provides a real-time working out of these tensions.

A few quibbles might be mentioned. Although it would have expanded the scope of the project, one could imagine the usefulness of a joint volume that also contained the records of the Cornwallis Township church across the river from Horton. The histories of the two churches were intertwined, at times functioning as a single church. Thankfully, Prentice includes the covenants for both congregations for comparison (pp. 53–60, 89–99). One might also wish for a bit more engagement in the introduction with scholarship on

Planter communities in the Atlantic world, or the robust historiography on Baptists and evangelicals beyond the region. Less substantively, the volume could have benefited from some additional proofreading and copyediting, to catch some of the distracting typos and errors that remained (e.g., the Esther Clark Wright Archives at Acadia University is misnamed in several places).

None of this, however, undermines the value of the volume, which demonstrates that local congregations and leaders in this British North American township participated in continental (and sometimes transatlantic) debates and communities. As the final collaboration of the late Roger Prentice and the series editor, the late Bill Brackney, both of whom were known for their wide networks and ecumenical dispositions alongside their love of the Annapolis Valley, this volume is a significant, useful, and fitting legacy.

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Emerson, Matthew Y. and R. Lucas Stamps. *The Baptist Vision: Faith and Practice for a Believers' Church.* Hobbs College Library. Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2025.

The allure of Anglicanism is real. For those who have an historical bent and are theologically minded, the pull toward the beauty and theological specificity of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the continuity with the ancient and historic church, the draw can be almost irresistible. Couple this with a seeming lack of historical knowledge and the often-pragmatic bent among Baptists, and one wonders if this group of Christians is particularly susceptible to the draw of Canterbury. Matthew Barrett, former Professor of Theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, is one recent and relatively high-profile example of a Baptist who found the pull toward Anglicanism too strong to resist. The struggle is real.

Enter Matthew Y. Emerson and R. Lucas Stamps and their timely volume, *The Baptist Vision: Faith and Practice for a Believers' Church.*

This brief but important book from two of the directors of the Center for Baptist Renewal serves as an inoculation for all those who feel drawn toward the Anglican Vision. Written by two scholars educated in Southern Baptist institutions and working within that context, it provides an excellent introduction to the Baptist Way.

This slim volume is divided into three parts: (1) foundations, (2) distinctives, and (3) practices. The authors do an excellent job showing how the foundations determine the distinctives, and how these, taken together, shape key Baptist practices. The first part clearly shows how the Baptist tradition is heir to classical Christian orthodoxy, reformational truths, evangelical commitments, and a particular covenantal hermeneutic. Baptists affirm the Trinity and classical Christology; Baptists were birthed out of the Reformation and affirm the five *solas*; Baptists are at home in the "Bebbington quadrilateral"; and Baptists affirm a particular view regarding the Biblical covenants that serve as their hermeneutic. This final point deserves further discussion.

One question that has plagued Baptists is this: What is the key Baptist trait? In other words, what does it mean to be a Baptist? What core belief can make sense of the whole? Through the centuries, answers have varied. Believer's baptism? The Lordship of Christ? Emerson and Stamps, for their part, place the emphasis on the Baptist understanding of covenant theology. They write: "the Baptist understanding of the relation between the covenants is truly our defining theological commitment" (p. 49). The authors rightly point out that there are several versions of covenant theology that Baptists hold (Federal Theology, New Covenant Theology, and Progressive Covenantalism); however, all share the major point, that a shift has taken place between the Old Covenant and the New. One was a member of the Old Covenant community by birth and, therefore, received the sign of the covenant (circumcision) eight days later. With the arrival of Jesus, admittance into the covenant community is now by faith, which also means that the sign of the covenant (Baptism) is for those who, by the power of the Spirit, exercise saving faith. It is this understanding of the covenants, the authors contend, that "is the foundation of Baptist theology and practice" (p. 49). This is perhaps the unique contribution of the book—if not for originality, then for presenting it in such a clear, accessible, and understandable way and

showing how Baptist distinctives and practices flow from this key foundation stone.

Perhaps the most surprising part of the book is their section on Baptists and liturgy (references in this paragraph are from pp. 123–31), which this reviewer found to be both enjoyable and refreshing. Baptists are certainly known for their low liturgy, which Emerson and Stamps—drawing on James F. White—refer to as the "frontier liturgy." This liturgy includes three elements: (1) music, (2) sermon, and (3) invitation. After discussing the strengths and limitations of this liturgical tradition, they outline the fact that Baptists, as members of the broader Christian tradition, "are also inheritors of an older tradition of historic Christian liturgy." The authors contend that traditional liturgical elements such as creeds, several scripture reading, and saying the Lord's Prayer "can be a most welcome addition to Baptist liturgy."

For such a short book, *The Baptist Vision* could at times be a bit repetitive. This was most clearly on display with the inclusion of the same footnote twice (see footnote 3, p. 41; and footnote 13, p. 151). The authors acknowledge that this book is written by Southern Baptists situated in a Southern Baptist context, and this clearly shows. However, it will repay any Baptist from any context the small effort it takes to read it—particularly by those who feel themselves being drawn from the Baptist Vision to the Anglican Way.

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Burnett, Richard E. *Machen's Hope: The Transformation of a Modernist in the New Princeton*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024.

In this monumental and ground-breaking intellectual biography, Richard Burnett takes his reader on a journey through J. Gresham Machen's life, intellectual and vocational struggles, and migration from modernist to antimodernist. Machen's intellectual life, Burnett argues, has been largely overlooked and understudied. In contrast to

other scholars—such as George Marsden, Darryl Hart, and Henry Coray, who have primarily examined various aspects of Machen's personality—Burnett deepens and widens one's understanding by focusing on Machen's "thoughts, words, and deeds" (p. 7) and how these transformed his views, restored his hope, and positioned Machen as a significant defender of the faith in the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920s and 1930s.

Structurally, this book has three discernible sections. The first four chapters cover Machen's early life, including his upbringing in an Old School Presbyterian church, his student years at Johns Hopkins University, Princeton University, and his studies at the German Universities of Marburg and Göttingen. Machen's student years were a period characterized by an ongoing struggle to determine what he truly believed and what vocational path he should pursue. In Germany, he was exposed to modernist views and the hermeneutical methodologies of the higher critics, some of which he adopted for a time. But, as Burnett demonstrates, Machen was far more committed to embracing modern methods of university education, over pursing the adoption of modernist theology. Eventually in 1906, after extensive interactions with his parents, that included objections from his mother, Machen accepted a position as an Instructor in New Testament for a year at Princeton Seminary and returned to the United States.

Chapters 5–8 form the second section of this book. This section focuses on Machen's work as a teacher and scholar amidst the intellectual changes, challenges, and divisions that emerged at Princeton between 1906 and 1912. Machen found the rise and triumph of modernist views at Princeton disturbing. Increasing, he expressed his opposition to such views.

The final section that includes chapters 9–12, covers the fundamentalist-modernist controversies and Machen's progress to and articulation of antimodernist views. Burnett argues that the death of B. B. Warfield in 1921 "appears to have triggered something in Machen . . . and he felt obliged to take up the banner and fight more zealously than ever for the principles (e.g., the rational defense of the faith) for which his esteemed and recently fallen comrade had stood" (p. 527). Thus, Machen's move from modernist to antimodernist entered its end stage.

As one evaluates this book, it is apparent that Burnett's research is particularly noteworthy. His arguments and conclusions are based on a meticulous mining of Machen's personal correspondence (largely unexplored), his published works, relevant primary material from those who interacted with Machen, and much of the available secondary scholarly material. This extensive and deeper exploration of Machen's life and thought enables Burnett to both confirm and challenge previous views and effectively sustain his thesis.

Still this book is not without its weaknesses. For example, there is a frustrating lack of specific and complete dating of events within his narrative. One often encounters statements like: "On October 18 . . .". At times, the omission of the year becomes a frustration for the reader. For example, when Burnett notes the death Warfield, he makes no mention of the day, month, or year of Warfield's death. One has to figure this out by looking at information in a quotation and combining that with information in a footnote. There are also a few places where quotations are overly lengthy. But these weaknesses are minor.

Overall, Burnett's intellectual biography achieves its objectives. The thesis of this book is sustained by comprehensive research and persuasive argumentation. This book will undoubtedly become essential reading for anyone who desires a deeper understanding of Machen's life, thought, and contributions to North American evangelicalism at a pivotal time in its history.

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Canadian Baptist Historical Society

Blumhofer, Edith L. *Songs I Love to Sing: The Billy Graham Crusades and the Shaping of Modern Worship*, edited by Larry Eskridge. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023.

Today, digital technology platforms such as Spotify and YouTube are common ways (notably, not without issues) to access and popularize new and favourite Christian music from across the globe. In

past decades, however, a vital path for sacred music circulation was live attendance at services and events and viewing event broadcasts on radio and television. Illustrating this point are the Billy Graham evangelistic crusades, which form the focus of Edith Blumhofer and Larry Eskridge's *Songs I Love to Sing*.

This posthumous publication expands Blumhofer's previous research in *Billy Graham: American Pilgrim*. After her death in 2020, Larry Eskridge, another Graham scholar, was asked to finish and edit her mostly complete work. Reflecting Blumhofer's activity with the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, the book explores the significance of the music and musicians featured in Graham's crusades, especially the roles of conductor/emcee Clifford Barrows and soloist George Beverly Shea (although many others are also examined). Due to Graham's broad ecumenical reach and his team's flexible approach while maintaining certain consistent factors, crusade music has had significant role in Christian culture, from the migration of songs and arrangements into congregational use outside of Graham events. *Songs I Love to Sing* recognizes this music's historical impact on evangelical and mainline Protestant and Catholic churches, and the book explores how crusade music reflects broader cultural trends and differs from or echoes other models of evangelistic outreach.

As a Canadian congregational music researcher, I appreciated mention of Canada's link to the popularization of the Swedish hymn, "How Great Thou Art," with Barrows and Shea premiering the hymn in the first Toronto crusade in 1955, and Shea's lyric alterations becoming today's oft sung North American version. Other Canadian connections of interest include the discussion of Shea's Canadian roots in the Ottawa area. The connection to Oswald J. Smith's hymnody is also explored, with details on the history behind the popularity of "Then Jesus Came" for Shea. Such narratives are typical of the book's approach, with an interweaving of people, place, and (musical) program that is neither strictly chronological nor exhaustive. For example, there is no examination of the 13 Canadian Graham crusades occurring over 1955–1998, which is understandable given the book's focus and Graham's extensive global activity.

Popular and scholarly interest in the life and legacy of American Baptist evangelist Billy Graham is undeniable. The musical impact

of Graham's crusades has been discussed to some extent previously by church historians such as Larry Eskridge, Chris R. Armstrong, Grant Wacker, and in Leah Payne's recent extensive treatment (*God Gave Rock and Roll to You: A History of Contemporary Christian Music*). Music scholars have also noted the broader influence of Graham's music outside of North America (e.g., June Boyce Tillman and Frances Wilkins). However, none have the extensive focus given by Blumhofer and Eskridge.

Thus, *Songs I Love to Sing* takes a rightful place in this growing body of literature, with nine engaging and accessible chapters that facilitate readers from various backgrounds examining and newly appreciating Graham's ministry and musical contributions across multiple decades and contexts. A small photograph section visibly depicts the long ministry of key figures, and two indices (organized by song title and by names/subject) highlight specific topics and repertoire. While there is a small bibliography, the book surprisingly has no foot or endnotes, which Eskridge states reflects the challenge of working from Blumhofer's incomplete manuscript.

Hymn stories abound in print and digital form, but the authors' contribution to the genre successfully locates significant hymn stories and their performers within a broad, historically important narrative of noteworthy commitments to revival and spreading Christ's good news across the globe.

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Association of Canadian Women Composers

Lee, Wang Yong. *The Doctrine of the Covenant of Redemption According to John Gill (1697–1771)*. Monographs in Baptist History 30. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2025.

John Gill is an important Baptist figure and his life and thought has been the source of many secondary sources. Wang Yong Lee looks to add to this field of study by expounding on Gill's theology of the covenant of redemption (also known as the *pactum salutis*). This

work looks to engage with Gill's texts in order to argue that the *pactum salutis* holds "a central locus in his systematic theology, with time and eternity carefully related to the various loci, especially the doctrine of God (the Trinity), Christology, and soteriology" (p. 18). However, as the book itself makes evident, Lee's desire is not simply to make an historical argument, but also to give contemporary readers an example of how to think about the *pactum*. As Lee puts it in the conclusion of the book, "Gill's conviction with the *pactum* and his method based on Scripture teach contemporary Christians how to receive the word of God, how to understand the heart of God in his Word, and how to work with theology as a systematician" (p. 219).

Following an introduction (chapter 1), the book is divided into chapters on Gill's theology of time and eternity (chapter 2), the covenant of redemption (chapter 3), the Trinity (chapter 4), and on Christology and soteriology (chapter 5). Chapter six offers a brief conclusion to the work as a whole.

Throughout, Lee shows the important place the *pactum* holds in Gill's thought and displays two distinctives present in Gill's theology of the *pactum*. The first distinctive concerns his twofold view of the *pactum* rather than a threefold view. Reformed theologians have often held to a threefold understanding of the *pactum* that involves a covenant of redemption, a covenant of works, and a covenant of grace. However, for Gill, there is only "the everlasting council and the everlasting covenant of grace" (p. 65). The second distinctive concerns Gill's emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the *pactum*. On this point, Lee states, "Contrary to most preceding covenant theologians, especially to the Reformed, Gill argued for the *pactum* defined and formulated by the three divine persons in the Godhead, not just made by the Father and the Son" (p. 17).

Lee's focus in the book is more than to simply introduce people to the historical theology of Gill. Instead, there is an emphasis on the theological topics themselves—both during Gill's time and in other periods of church history, including contemporary theological discussions. Therefore, one thing the reader will notice throughout the book is the consistent engagement of theological discussions beyond Gill himself. For example, in the chapter on time and eternity, Lee spends the first fifteen pages surveying three different models for how

eternity has been understood. While this may be an interesting read for understanding the theme of eternity more generally, it is not as explicitly tied to Gill's thought until later in the chapter. With these points in mind, Lee's desire to make a volume that is both historical and theologically applicable to contemporary readers is evident.

Regarding the writing style and methodology, the length of footnotes throughout the book is staggering. Many pages are filled mostly, if not entirely, with footnotes. While some of these footnotes detail Gill's historical context, many others deal primarily with contemporary theology. This means that many of the footnotes contain content that is written alongside the body of the text and involve numerous side discussions. Some of these footnotes are informative and helpful; others seem distracting and unnecessarily disruptive from the flow of Gill's thought.

Consequently, the reader should know that Lee's book is a bridge between historical theology and theological retrieval. On the one hand, this will make the volume more attractive to non-historians. On the other hand, it may have led Lee at times to overlook some of Gill's more criticized points of theology, as, for example, discussions concerning Gill's disputed views in line with high Calvinism are mostly avoided.

In the end, this book is a worthy read for those interested in Gill, eighteenth-century Baptist theology, and views on the *pactum* more generally. One should recognize that this book is not purely focused on historical theological matters but also engages with contemporary theological debates through the lens of Gill. While this does not diminish the book in any way, it does let the reader know the methodological convictions of Lee and that this book is not just about what Gill said, but why Lee believes what Gill said continues to be applicable for Christian life and practice today.

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BOOK NOTES

Barr, Beth Allison. *Becoming the Pastor's Wife: How Marriage Replaced Ordination as a Woman's Path to Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2025.

In this *New York Times* bestseller, Baylor University professor Beth Allison Barr argues that women historically served as ministers, but over time this role was replaced with that of the pastor's wife—an ancillary role involving unpaid domestic and ecclesial tasks that did not fully utilize women's gifts. Barr writes from a Southern Baptist perspective, detailing that convention's controversies related to women in ministry. She also references Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec in a chapter detailing the unfortunate story of a minister and his wife. Overall, Barr's passionate plea for women to be taken seriously and equally in the church is worth a read, no matter your theological persuasion.

Melody Maxwell, PhD
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Cleland, Jonathan N., Matthew Maw, and Christian Clement-Schlimm, eds. *Fellowship Baptist Trailblazers: Life Stories of Pastors, Missionaries and Church Leaders, Book 4*. Guelph, ON: Fellowship Baptist Press, 2025.

From 2001 to 2004, three volumes were published in the *Fellowship Baptist Trailblazers* series. Originally edited by Fred Vaughan, the series is now in new hands. Indeed, more than twenty years later, editors Jonathan N. Cleland, Matthew Maw, and Christian Clement-Schlimm have resurrected the series. This book is comprised of

twenty-six sketches that tell the stories of individuals of various influence in the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches (appropriate for the first volume published in the newly formed "Fellowship Baptist Press," which is an imprint of H&E Publishing). Like the original series, some entries are written by the subjects themselves, while others are composed by someone close to them. One drawback of the earlier trilogy of books was a general lack of diversity. They focused largely on pastors, while omitting other noteworthy individuals, especially visible minorities and women. Does this new volume fall into this same trap? Like the earlier volumes, it tends to focus on men. If there are future volumes in the series (and hopefully there will be), one hopes that the editors will address this imbalance. Either way, this fourth entry shows that the series is in good hands. As with the earlier set of books, this volume is an excellent resource, and a very helpful starting point for someone looking to learn more about Fellowship Baptist history.

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Tyndale University

Elliott, David R. *From Anvil to Pulpit: P. W. Philpott's Spiritual Journey, his Family, and his Struggles for Ethical Integrity*. Parkhill, ON: Theological Resources, 2023.

Despite the number of studies published on fundamentalism in Canada in recent years, there are still many gaps in the literature. David R. Elliott (whose name will be familiar to anyone who has studied fundamentalism in Canada) has addressed one of these gaps with this accessible study of P. W. Philpott, an evangelist and the founder of the Christian Workers' Churches (later the Associated Gospel Churches of Canada). There are several notable features about Elliott's approach in this volume. For example, he nuances the definition of fundamentalism by presenting a less aggressive or militant version of the movement. Perhaps the volume's greatest strength, however, is the attention it gives to Philpott's family, which provides

a much more wholistic perspective of the fundamentalist evangelist. Elliott makes good use of the available primary materials, even opting to reprint some in full, and the photographs and illustrations throughout add life to the study. There are some regrettable typesetting issues, and there are some sources that are not properly cited (presumably interviews), but those do not detract from the usefulness of the volume.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

CBHS Announcements

Canadian Baptist Symposium: On 26 April 2025, the Canadian Baptist Historical Society and the Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies co-sponsored the Canadian Baptist Symposium. Thanks to the available technology, it took place concurrently at McMaster Divinity College (MDC) in Ontario and Acadia Divinity College (ADC) in Nova Scotia. In total, eighteen papers were presented throughout the one-day conference (two plenary addresses and sixteen papers in parallel sessions).

After a few opening comments from Melody Maxwell and Carol Anne Janzen, the conference opened with a plenary address from David Bebbington, who presented from ADC. His paper was titled "Conservatism, Liberalism, and Baptists in Canada."

Following the first plenary session, the symposium hosted parallel sessions at both ADC and MDC. Attendees had the option of listening to presenters in person or streaming the papers from the other location. We heard from Baiyu Andrew Song ("Chinese Student Experience at Central Baptist Seminary, Toronto"), Robert Revington ("The Canadian Baptist Heritage of Shirley Jackson Case"), and Jonathan Cleland ("Stanley K. Fowler's Theological Engagement with Clark H. Pinnock") at MDC; and from Keith Grant ("Remembering Richard Preston: Historiography and Public Memory"), Melody Maxwell and Hannah Roberts ("Called to Ministry: Atlantic Baptist Women's Call Narratives"), and Pat Townsend ("Maritime Baptist Women and Toronto Bible College") at ADC.

The afternoon started with a presentation from our second plenary speaker, Michael Haykin, who presented from MDC. His paper was titled "Being Baptist: Two Iterations in Ontario, 1810s–1910s."

After the second plenary session, we heard from speakers during our second parallel session, including Dudley Brown ("First Baptist:

The First Black Baptist Churches in Canada"), Seidel Abel Boanerges ("Canadian Reverse Baptist Mission: The Legacy of A. B. Masilamani as 'India's Missionary to Canada' in the 1970s"), and Sandeep Sinha ("Baptist Medical Missions in India: A 'Goodly Heritage' Put Into Those Hands By God Himself") at MDC; and Scott Kindred-Barnes ("'Bigots Differ Widely': More on Henry F. Waring's Use of the Bible in Educating Laypeople"), Spencer Boersma ("Reading for Future Light: Portraits of a Baptist Theological Hermeneutic"), and Jon Dixon and Dan Pyke ("Atlantic Baptists and Camping Ministry") at ADC.

Finally, the third parallel session included papers from Christopher Crocker ("An Historical Theology of Ontario Baptist Confessionalism") and James Mwendia ("Resonant Spiritualities: A Comparative Analysis of Henry Alline's Ministry and Contemporary Sub-Saharan Christianity") at MDC; and Joel Murphy ("Theo-Futures Triangle: A Tool for Exploring Plausible Futures") and Jodi Porter ("Playful Polity: Leveraging our Baptist Identity as a Unique Resource for Innovation in the Church and Academy") at ADC.

After a few closing comments from Taylor Murray, Paul R. Wilson (President of the CBHS) closed the conference in prayer. If you were unable to join us, the Canadian Baptist Historical Society has plans to publish a collection of papers from the day.

Annual General Meeting: This year's Annual General Meeting took place during the lunch hour of the Canadian Baptist Symposium. President Paul R. Wilson chaired the meeting. He took the opportunity to provide an update on the *Bulletin of the Canadian Baptist Historical Society* and announce the publication of the *Black Baptist Experience in Canada*. He also expressed his gratitude to the organizing committee of the Canadian Baptist Symposium. Finally, he outlined the details of the treasurer's report.

Paul also announced the resignation of our current treasurer, Doug Adams, and offered his gratitude for all of Doug's work over the past eight years in that role. The meeting closed with the re-election of officers. In lieu of our usual paper presentations, we enjoyed a day of presentations at the Canadian Baptist Symposium.

Memberships: Membership dues for the Society are as follows: Life Membership, $500.00; Membership, $30.00 annually; Student Membership, $5.00 annually.

Book Series: The Canadian Baptist Historical Society published its latest volume, *The Black Baptist Experience in Canada* (edited by Gordon L. Heath and Dudley A. Brown), in 2025. To date, the CBHS Series has five volumes in print: *Baptists and Public Life in Canada*, edited by Paul R. Wilson and Gordon L. Heath (2012); *Baptists and War*, edited by Gordon L. Heath (2015); *Canadian Baptist Women*, edited by Sharon Bowler (2016); *Canadian Baptist Fundamentalism*, edited by Taylor Murray and Paul R. Wilson (2022); and *The Black Baptist Experience in Canada*, edited by Gordon L. Heath and Dudley A. Brown (2025). Several other volumes are in various stages of development.

Executive Committee: Mark Steinacher has stepped down as Vice Present of the CBHS. As a recognition of his many years of fruitful service to the CBHS, the other members of the Executive Committee voted to name him Honorary Past President. Thank you for your many years of dedication to the CBHS, Mark! We look forward to many more.

Washington Christian Monument: The CBHS is looking to raise $2627.25 in order to erect a monument to Washington Christian, pastor of the First Coloured Calvinistic Baptist Church of Toronto (1834). Christian is buried in the Necropolis Cemetery, though his grave marker has not been well preserved. The proposed flat marker would measure 24"x18". The CBHS has already pledged $700.00. Might you consider making a donation to fund this project? If sufficient money can be raised, we hope to erect the monument this summer (2026). To donate, you can email canadianbaptisthistsociety@gmail.com. Charitable receipts will be issued to all who provide a mailing address.

Conference Announcement and Call for Papers: In May 2027, the CBHS and the Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies are hosting

a conference at Heritage Theological College and Seminary in Cambridge, Ontario, to commemorate the centenary of the 1927 fundamentalist-modernist schism in Ontario and Quebec. We invite papers that examine subjects related to this event that historians have either overlooked or under-analyzed. Possible topics include: The issues at McMaster that predisposed this conflict (e.g., the confession of faith, early professorial appointments, socio-cultural factors); the theology of L. H. Marshall; the larger North American scene; proto-fundamentalists; the impact of the schism on the pastoral and theological trajectory of various pastors after the controversy; and the role of laypeople in the schism. If you are interested in presenting a paper, email proposals to tmurray@tyndale.ca by 1 November 2026. More information about the conference (including registration details) will be available on the CBHS website at a later date.

Other Announcements

International Conference on Baptist Studies in Hamilton, Ontario: The eleventh meeting of the International Conference on Baptist Studies (ICOBS) is scheduled for 4 to 7 August 2027 at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, which will coincide with the one-hundredth anniversary of the significant denominational schism that divided Baptists in Ontario and Quebec during the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. For more information, visit: baptiststudies.org.

Julian Gwyn Essay Prize in Baptist and Anabaptist History and Thought: The Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies invites submissions for the Julian Gwyn Prize, which is awarded for the best article-length essay (between 5,000 and 10,000 words) by a doctoral- or masters-level student, in French or English. The winner of the prize will receive $500.00 CAD. For more information, visit: acadiadiv.ca/acbas/essay-prize.

Atlantic Baptist Built Heritage Project: In partnership with the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, the Atlantic Baptist Built Heritage Project is a catalogue of historic Baptist church buildings from across New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. It includes photographs, historical descriptions, and key information for hundreds of churches—some that are no longer standing, some that have been moved, and many that are still active today. Visit atlanticbaptistheritage.ca to learn more.

Called to Serve: Hear the voices of dozens of ordained Baptist women through this project from Melody Maxwell at Acadia Divinity College. Called to Serve preserves, shares, and analyzes the stories of women ordained to ministry by Baptist churches in Atlantic Canada between 1954 and 2024. If you are interested in learning more, visit calledtoserve.ca, search for "Called to Serve" on Spotify or Apple Podcasts, or purchase the book *Called to Serve* (Wipf & Stock, 2026).

Fellowship Baptist Press: The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches recently launched a new press, the Fellowship Baptist Press, and published its first volume, *Fellowship Baptist Trailblazers: Life Stories of Pastors, Missionaries and Church Leaders*, edited by Jonathan N. Cleland, Matthew Maw, and Christian Clement-Schlimm. This first publication is a continuation of a book series that ran from 2001 to 2004.

Dr. Samuel J. Mikolaski: The CBHS mourns the passing of Dr. Samuel J. Mikolaski, who died on 24 January 2026 at the age of 103. Mikolaski ("Dr. Sam") was a Baptist theologian who served as the fourth president of Crandall University (then Atlantic Baptist College) from 1980 to 1983. Many of his works (published and unpublished), including many on Baptists in Canada, are publicly available on his personal website: drsamstheology.com.

** If you have an announcement that would be of interest to the broader CBHS community, please submit it to the Managing Editor (tmurray@tyndale.ca).

RECENT WORKS

** If you have a book or dissertation/thesis to submit to this list, email its title and bibliographical information to the editor. Studies marked (*) indicate those works that prominently feature Canadian Baptist subjects.

For information on older publications, see:

Griffin-Allwood, Philip G. A., et al. *Baptists in Canada, 1760–1990: A Bibliography of Selected Printed Resources in English*. Hantsport, NS: Lancelot, 1989; and Murray, Taylor. "Against 'Historical Amnesia': A Bibliography of Baptists in Canada, 1990–2017." *Journal of Baptist Studies* 9 (2018) 77–113.

Barker, David G., Joel Barker, Jonathan N. Cleland, and Michael A. G. Azad Haykin, eds. *"Nourished on the Truths of the Faith": A Festschrift in Honour of Barry H. Howson*. Cambridge, ON: Heritage Seminary Press, 2026.*

Brown, Dudley A. *On a Foundation of Faith: William Andrew White, Jr., and Black Uplift in Nova Scotia*. William H. Brackney Memorial Series 4. Wolfville, NS: ACBAS, 2024.*

Cleland, Jonathan N., Matthew Maw, and Christian Clement-Schlimm, eds. *Fellowship Baptist Trailblazers: Life Stories of Pastors, Missionaries and Church Leaders, Book 4*. Guelph, ON: Fellowship Baptist Press, 2025.*

Haykin, Michael A. G. Azad, and Jonathan N. Cleland. *"Learn with us of Jesus' love": A Celebration of the History of Maple Avenue Baptist Church, Georgetown, Ontario 1955–2025*. Georgetown, ON: Maple Avenue Baptist Church, 2025.*

Haykin, Michael A. G., and Jonathan N. Cleland, eds. *The Collected Writings of Stanley K. Fowler, Volume 1: Soteriology, Moral Theology, and Contemporary Issues*. Cambridge, ON: Heritage Seminary Press, 2025.*

——., eds. *The Collected Writings of Stanley K. Fowler, Volume 2: Ecclesiology, Sacramentalism, and Eschatology*. Cambridge, ON: Heritage Seminary Press, 2025.*

——., eds. *"The Maples Clap Their Hands": A Celebration of the Bicentennial of Dalesville Baptist Church, 1825–2025*. Dalesville, QC: Dalesville Baptist Church, 2025.*

Heath, Gordon L. and Dudley A. Brown, eds. *The Black Baptist Experience in Canada*. Canadian Baptist Historical Society Series 5. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2025.*

Hunt, Hannah, Joetta Fernando, and Melody Maxwell, eds. *Called to Serve: Stories of Atlantic Baptist Women in Ministry*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2026.*

Ludlow, Peter. *Baptist-Catholic Relations in Nova Scotia: The Ecumenism of David Graham "D. G." Whidden and his 1935 History of the Town of Antigonish*. William H. Brackney Memorial Booklet Series 5. Wolfville, NS: Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, 2025.*

McKim, Mark G. *The Secularization of Baptism: How Baptists Took God out of Baptism, and How to Fix the Problem*. McMaster Theological Studies Series 9. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2025.*

Prentice, Roger, ed. *Baptists in Early North America, Volume XI: Wolfville, Nova Scotia*. Baptists in Early North America 11. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2024.*

Seki, Yuta. "'Long May Thy Servant Feed Thy Sheep': Pastoral Ministry in the Life and Thought of Benjamin Beddome." DEdMin Thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2025.

——. *Long May Thy Servant Feed Thy Sheep: The Pastoral Theology of Benjamin Beddome*. Monographs in Baptist History. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2025.

Sparks, David W. *Reclaiming the Oral Tradition of the African Baptist Church*. Altona, MB: Friesen, 2024.*

Tomlinson, Glenn V. *Washington Christian (1776–1850) & the Dissolution of the Dividing Wall*. Sarnia, ON: Independently Published, 2026.*

Wilson, Paul R. *Baptists and Business: Central Canadian Baptists and the Secularization of the Businessman at Toronto's Jarvis Street Baptist Church, 1848–1921*. Monographs in Baptist History 30. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2025.*

Wu, Edmund Kin Man. "Preparing Canadian Baptist Ministry Family Units for Missional Engagement in Collectivist Cultures." DMin Thesis, Acadia Divinity College, 2025.*

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