

The *Abstract of Principles* written by James Boyce, Crawford Toy, and others of and for the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the mid-19th century served as the first official creedal-like statement of Southern Baptists as a denomination. As you will see, the current *Baptist Faith and Message* has its historical roots in the *Abstract of Principles*. A comparison of language, rhetoric, and historical nuance of five issues within these statements will help explain the legacy of the current confession, the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.

The Abstract of Principles	2000 Baptist Faith and Message
One	
<p>I. The Scriptures. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.</p>	<p>I. The Scriptures The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.</p>
<p>Issues Addressed in <i>The Abstract of Principles</i> but not in <i>2000 Baptist Faith & Message</i> ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Old and New Testaments are seen as separate entities and are noted separately as authoritative. Of course, “all Scripture” in the <i>2000 Baptist Faith & Message</i> assumes the reader understands that “all Scripture” includes both “Old” and “New” Testaments, does not include the apocrypha (even though many KJV Bibles at the time did include said apocrypha) nor any pseudoepigrapha like <i>The Gospel of Thomas</i> or <i>The Shepherd of Hermes</i>. With the recent popularity of <i>The Gospel of Thomas</i>, I might predict a specific list of the Protestant “canon” in future BF&M documents. Recent efforts at the Westar Institute, where the Jesus Seminar¹ wants II Peter, along with Revelation, out of the canon, I can see other reasons to specify the canon, <i>as a list</i> in an upcoming revision of the <i>Baptist Faith & Message</i>. ✓ Why? It is clear that Boyce et al. did not see any need to operationalize further the notions of “sufficient, certain, and authoritative.” They ignored the influence of German historical-critical textual analysis and neo-orthodoxy to push for a more concrete definition. Toy should not have toyed with <i>The Abstract of Principles</i>. While he gained a seat at Harvard, he lost Lottie Moon as a wife, and his position at Southern Seminary. She declined to marry him because of his epistemological interpretations of Isaiah 53, and because she wanted to stay in missions in China. 	

¹For more information, see <http://www.westarinstitute.org> and for an example of one of their articles, see “The Road to the Jesus Seminar,” by Perry V. Kea at http://www.westarinstitute.org/Periodicals/4R_Articles/RoadtoJS/roadtojs.html.

Issues Addressed in *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* but not in *The Abstract of Principles* ...

- ✓ The differences are almost too numerous to mention, but some of the key issues addressed are the authors relationship with Holy Spirit (“*written by men divinely inspired*”) and the totality of Scripture; to wit, it is *all* valid, not just on theological matters—hence, the phrase “all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.”
- ✓ Scripture is touted to be the supreme epistemological standard by which all other statements are to be evaluated; thus, all other interpretative and declarative texts are to be considered valid only to the extent they match the facts, principles, and original meaning of Scripture.
- ✓ Why? As the world continues to reject not only a revelatory notion of truth, it is also aborting modern science as a reliable epistemology. As post-modernism seduces the person in the pew, and then abandons them to a reality of sur-reality then ir-reality, it will be good that the BF&M articulates an epistemology that overwhelms and consumes its rivals. Therein lies the future success of a Christian worldview—if we proclaim same.
- ✓ Silence? Neither documents deal with the precise nature of the *locality* of textual inerrancy; for example, is it in the translation? By allowing truth within translation we comfort the KJV-only folk, and we recognize Jesus the Christ used LXX language to make a doctrinal point. Or, more apologetically useful, perhaps inerrancy is in the “original” autographs? Hot topic, big debate, little fire, and perhaps a demonstrative manifestation of human-centeredness? That is, if *we* know enough, *we* find God. I am sure Holy Spirit is grieved when we create these Babels of knowledge. He knows who finds who, and who guides who to truth.

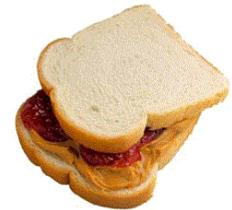
The Abstract of Principles	2000 Baptist Faith and Message
Two	
<p>XV. Baptism.</p> <p>Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of his giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. It is prerequisite to church fellowship, and to participation in the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>XVI. The Lord's Supper.</p> <p>The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and wine, and to be observed by his churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate his death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with him, and of their church fellowship.</p>	<p>VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper</p> <p>Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.</p> <p>Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12</p>

Issues Addressed in *The Abstract of Principles* but not in *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* ...

- ✓ Clarifies that the Lord's Supper is not a substantive ritual by saying it "is in no sense a sacrifice." It is a bond, pledge and renewal of communion with Christ, and church fellowship. This language segregates the celebration of the Lord's Supper from the Roman view of transubstantiation.
- ✓ Why? The Lord's Supper appears to have been more important to the writers of *The Abstract of Principles*. The Lord's Supper then served multiple functions, currently not articulated in the *2000 Baptist Faith & Message*.

Issues Addressed in *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* but not in *The Abstract of Principles* ...

- ✓ The *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* relegates it to a *symbolic act of obedience* (not mentioned in *The Abstract of Principles*), and of course eliminates the use of wine in the Lord's Supper—it is now "fruit of the vine" a legacy from the temperance and prohibition movements. Intriguingly, nothing about the Lord's Supper is actually symbolic, it is iconic.
- ✓ Why? Baptists seem to be uncomfortable with the nature of artifacts used in the Lord's Supper. The artifacts of the Lord's Supper are clearly not symbolic (i.e., capriciously arbitrary). We instinctively recognize a problem were we to use peanut butter & jelly on wonder bread to represent "the body." Nor, will coca-cola ever be used comfortably to represent "the blood."



As human beings we understand that some representations are symbolic. The word "one" is no more accurate to represent the idea of "one" than "jedo" is, provided we agree that "jedo" represents the idea of one. Similarly, we are instinctually comfortable with the oral *icon* "buzz" representing the sound of a bee; "uipoleiq" does not work as well.

Finally, then we are in reality only comfortable with *icons* of the body and the blood; i.e., *unleavened* bread and "fruit of the vine." We do not believe in actual artifacts (e.g., transubstantiation), nor comfortable with genuine symbols. Note the figure on the next page regarding this principle.

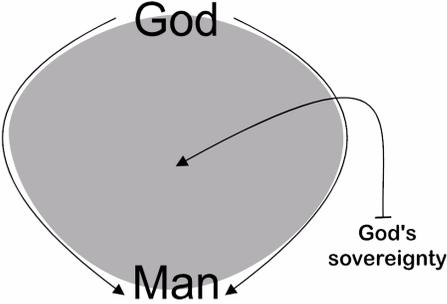
The Abstract of Principles	2000 Baptist Faith and Message
Three	
<p>XVII. The Lord's Day.</p> <p>The Lord's Day is a Christian institution for regular observance, and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, resting from worldly employments and amusements, works of necessity and mercy only excepted.</p>	<p>VIII. The Lord's Day</p> <p>The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.</p> <p><i>Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.</i></p>
<p>Issues Addressed in <i>The Abstract of Principles</i> but not in <i>2000 Baptist Faith & Message</i> ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sabbatarians were an important sub-element of Baptists in the 19th century. Recognizing a Sabbath-like commemoration of the “Lord’s Day” <i>without</i> special reference to it being the “<i>first day</i>” surely comforted the Sabbatarian element within Baptists. ✓ Both confessions make it clear that the “Lord’s Day” is not the Sabbath, but do so obliquely. “The Lord’s Day [note the capitals] is a <i>Christian</i> institution for ...” The BF&M allows other activities commensurate with “conscience,” whereas <i>The Abstract of Principles</i> describes the principle of the Sabbath, period. ✓ 7th Day Adventists might accept <i>The Abstract of Principles</i> but would recoil at the <i>2000 Baptist Faith & Message</i>. Messianic Jews would smile at <i>The Abstract of Principles</i> for it is not a statement of a <i>Christian</i> celebration, but simply an extension of Sabbath being celebrated as the “Lord’s Day.” ✓ Today’s pew proprietor wonders why Sunday (“First Day?”) evening is really necessary. The pulpit proprietor wants as many opportunities to proclaim and disciple as possible; thus, “first day” evening and “mid-week” activities are added. Of course, our behavior speaks volumes beyond our talk. A comparison of dress between Sunday morning and Sunday evening, even by the pulpit proprietor, shows our real colors regarding the “Lord’s Day.” The morning is clearly more holy than the evening or afternoon. 	

The Abstract of Principles	2000 Baptist Faith and Message
	Four
<p>IX. Repentance. Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being, by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbleth himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things.</p>	<p>Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.</p> <p>Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.</p>

Issues Addressed in *The Abstract of Principles* but not in *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* ...

- ✓ Reflecting a more Calvinistic thread, *The Abstract of Principles* asserts that repentance is grace—a person is “made sensible” regarding his sin and then purposes (“endeavors”) to please God. Holy Spirit makes the person repent. In contrast, the *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* emphasizes a less-Calvinistic, more Armenian-like, behavioral approach: “a genuine turning from sin toward God.”
- ✓ *The Abstract of Principles* also makes no distinction regarding to whom said repentance is directed nor its acceptance of the entirety of Christ, not only as Saviour² [*sic*], but as “Lord,” implying acceptance of His authority.
- ✓ *The Abstract of Principles* also speaks more of the psychology of the inner person—this sensibility to the multi-branching evil of one’s sin leads to humility, sorrow, detestation of same, and self-abhorrence, with a new purpose to walk pleasingly before God in all things. The *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* relegates repentance to a “genuine” behavior change, specifically to a commitment to the Lordship of Christ.
- ✓ Why? *The Abstract of Principles* appears to be more Eastern in thought; the *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* more Western. Perhaps the writers of the *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* were from Missouri, exclusively. Perhaps the 19th century writers more focused on piety than our late 20th century brethren. *The Abstract of Principles* is clearly more focused on the inner state of the person caught up by “evangelical grace.”
- ✓ Silence? The chronology of the elements of salvation is a thorn in the brain of many pew, pulpit, and pedagogical proprietors. Which comes first? Must any element come first? The *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* notes “faith and repentance” are inextricably linked, but can one turn toward God without faith—e.g., stopping gluttony? Or can one have faith in God and still not turn away from sin and toward God—e.g., continuing to eat/drink/sleep/work too much? People want to systematize everything—the holistic nature of salvation is not a particularly comfortable thought for most Westerners.

²It is noteworthy to see the *2000 Baptist Faith & Message* continues to use 19th century spellings (e.g., Saviour for Savior)? Incidentally, neither the word “Savior” nor “Saviour” are found in *The Abstract of Principles*.

The Abstract of Principles	2000 Baptist Faith and Message
Five	
<p>IV. Providence. God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures.</p>	<p>The word “Providence” does not appear in the <i>2000 Baptist Faith & Message</i>.</p>
<p>Issues Addressed in <i>The Abstract of Principles</i> but not in <i>2000 Baptist Faith & Message</i> ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ When one is in the midst of a rejection of revelatory truth and celebrating the modernism of the 19th century, proclaiming God’s control of “all creatures and all events” becomes paramount. ✓ The times also called for clear delineation of the “responsibility of intelligent creatures”³ to decide. Thus, the phrase “free will” is used in <i>The Abstract of Principles</i>; although the concept occurs in the <i>2000 Baptist Faith & Message</i>,⁴ the phrase “free will” occurs no where in the <i>2000 Baptist Faith & Message</i>. ✓ Why? The debate between about whether a person can freely choose when his/her eternal destiny is foreordained was, and is, a “hot issue.” <p>It was, and is, of course a bogus issue. The debate has been focused on the wrong resolution—“Resolved that the sovereignty of God is stronger than the sovereignty of mankind,” which is a rather useless debate, assuming both parties agree that God is God. Or, sometimes the question debated is—“Which is stronger? God’s sovereignty or mankind’s freedom to choose?” The better question is—“Where does mankind have freedom to choose, and where does mankind not have the freedom to choose?” Mankind only has freedom of choice <u>within</u> God’s sovereignty. The drawing above illustrates this construct.</p>  <p>Man, in other words, can only choose within the constraints of God’s sovereignty; he can not choose, freely or otherwise, beyond the constraints/parameters/boundaries of God’s will.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The failure of the <i>2000 Baptist Faith & Message</i> to articulate directly the notion of Providence needs to be addressed for the root argument behind recent work with the Intelligent Design Movement is that a designer, an intelligent designer developed and is controlling the universe which we can observe. Providence. 	

³If this phrase were to be used today in the *2000 Baptist Faith & Message*, additional language would be needed to exclude intelligent animals (e.g., symbol using apes, some parrots, and perhaps bottle-nosed dolphins) and perhaps to expand (at denominational peril) the nature of sentience; yes, the ever troubling notion of the “age of accountability,” baptistese for spiritual sentience may come to the forefront. See Deuteronomy 1:39 for Biblical support of this idea.

⁴See Section IV on Salvation where the notion of “free will” can be inferred.