

Doctrine – Baptist Distinctives

God's Foreknowledge – Adopted 2000

From the Edgren Fellowship to the 2000 Annual Meeting (introduced by Larry Adams) Passed by a large majority on 6/28/2000.

Whereas the Bible reveals and affirms that God knows all of the past, present and future exhaustively, and

Whereas both Presidents Ricker of the BGC and Brushaber of Bethel College and Seminary have made it clear that the BGC and Bethel are no "safe havens" for open theism and that no new professors espousing such a view would be hired, and

Whereas an increasing number of districts and churches have taken action to affirm God's exhaustive foreknowledge and rejection of open theism, and

Whereas Dr. Ricker and the entire BGC Executive Ministry Team (Jerry Sheveland, Ron Larson, Ray Swatkowski, Lou Petrie and Steve Schultz) have already unanimously stated that open theism is not consistent with the BGC's biblical or historical understanding of God's omniscience, and

Whereas the Bible teaches there can be no real unity apart from the unity of the truth of God's person.

I therefore move that the following resolution be adopted by the delegates of the BGC annual meeting:

Be it resolved that we, the delegates of the Baptist General Conference (who are also the delegates of Bethel College and Seminary)* affirm that God's knowledge of all past, present and future events is exhaustive; and, we also believe that the "openness" view of God's foreknowledge is contrary to our fellowship's historic understanding of God's omniscience.

A Reaffirmation of our Heritage – Adopted 1977

We thank God for the past 125 years of existence of the Baptist General Conference and for the committed and spiritually sensitive men and women who have helped shape the Conference over these years, remembering also our debt to the Reformation Anabaptist movement, and the encouragement and support of other Baptist groups on the American continent.

Because we recognize the richness of our heritage and its relevance for the present day, we seek to identify some of the distinctives that have contributed to our vitality in the past, and to reaffirm them as a continuing part of our life and ministry together.

1. The Centrality of the Word of God. Having their origins in the widespread revival movements of nineteenth century Europe in which the Bible had such a prominent role,

the early Swedish Baptist immigrants had a deep hunger to understand and obey the Word of God as their sole authority for faith and practice.

2. **The Necessity of Personal Conversion.** The immigrant church held as one of the most basic teachings of Scripture that all persons are sinners deeply in need of salvation that can be found only through confession of sin and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior.
3. **The Practice of Believer's Baptism.** For them the clear teaching of the Bible made believer's baptism by immersion both a natural response and a necessary witness to their conversion experience.
4. **A Commitment to Godly Living.** These believers were characterized by a strong desire that their lives reflect the person of Christ and the teachings of the Scriptures in their daily walk, both in personal conduct and in concern for others.
5. **A Witness to the World.** From the beginning, the Conference Baptists spontaneously shared their new faith in Christ. To a great extent, the early churches grew as a result of enthusiastic witnessing by the lay people. Their evangelistic concern carried them to the most difficult and remote places in this country and then overseas.
6. **An Active Concern for the Needy.** Many pioneer Conference Baptists, although generally extremely poor, made hospitality a way of life, sharing out of their poverty with anyone in need. As their numbers and resources grew, they began to establish institutions of mercy, including homes for the aged, children's homes and hospitals.
7. **A Growing Irenic Spirit.** This positive thrust of their faith led many of the early Conference leaders to combine strong doctrinal convictions with loving concern for persons of divergent views. This ability to speak the truth in love increasingly became a distinguishing mark of the Conference Baptist fellowship.
8. **The Importance of the Local Church and the Conference Fellowship.** Early Conference Baptists felt the necessity of gathering together in local church bodies for worship, mutual encouragement, fellowship and evangelism. At the same time, they regularly sought to meet with other Swedish Baptist churches for further fellowship, inspiration, teaching and missionary effort.

As we commit ourselves afresh to these Biblical principles, be it resolved that we seek to implement them for our time in the following ways:

1. That our churches emphasize the Bible as their central textbook and also seek to stimulate individual and family Bible study.
2. That our churches provide frequent opportunities for people to make decisions for salvation, recognizing the sinfulness of man and the richness of the new life offered in Christ's name.

3. That, through our Christian education programs, we teach that believer's baptism by immersion is a clear New Testament principle.
4. That both our churches corporately and our members individually, re-examine their positions on Christian lifestyle and personal holiness.
5. That our churches recognize and assist the witness of lay people as it expresses itself through their gifts, personalities and conversations, emphasizing that all members are called to be on mission for Christ.
6. That we seek to follow the example of Jesus in responding to people's needs as we meet them, both in an immediate personal sense and in organized social ministries at home and around the world.
7. That our churches encourage their members to hold their doctrinal convictions with confidence, while at the same time maintaining an attitude of love and concern for those of divergent views, both within and without the church.
8. That our churches underscore the importance of the local body of believers as God's unique instrument for ministry, realizing also the need and value of churches cooperating or fellowship and outreach.

The Christian and Freedom – Adopted 1976

Inasmuch as the political and social patterns of the world in which we live are undermining the worth of the individual, depriving him of his freedoms,

And, inasmuch as the institutional church of which we are a part often reflects the patterns of our society,

And, inasmuch as each person is of infinite worth, having been created in the image of God and is the object of Christ's redeeming love,

And, inasmuch as the people of God are to be the light of the world, and not a reflection of its patterns,

Therefore be it resolved:

That we encourage our churches to resist conformity to those patterns of the world which are detrimental or prohibitive to individual worth and freedom,

And be it further resolved that our churches be encouraged to recognize, cherish and demonstrate the biblical teaching of the worth of the individual by:

Reaffirming the biblical teaching of the priesthood of the believer, in which each individual has personal access to God and is privileged and responsible to share in the ministry of the church.

Providing opportunities whereby the God-given gifts of the individual can be discovered, developed and employed.

1. Recognizing the freedom of the individual to be led by the Holy Spirit in the making of decisions in areas wherein the Scriptures are either silent or not specific.
2. Informing our people that there are brethren in Christ who differ from us in their interpretation and application of some portions of the Word of God, and that we are responsible before God to live them too.

Inasmuch as we live in a society in which the uniqueness of the person and work of Jesus Christ is being compromised.

Therefore, be it resolved that our churches reaffirm that authentic freedom is realized only in submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ (John 8:36; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16).

And be it further resolved that in the total life and ministry of our churches we will express our submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ through obedience to the Written Word of God.

Inasmuch as we also live in a society in which the exercise of individual freedom often interferes with the equal rights of other individuals.

Therefore, be it resolved that in Christian love we shall limit the exercise of our personal freedoms whenever it infringes upon the rights and well-being of others.

And be it further resolved that as concerned Christians we will also work through governmental structures to insure that individual freedoms are protected from those who demonstrate a disregard for the equal rights of others.

Religious Liberty – Adopted 1968

In accordance with Article X, "Religious Liberty," in the Baptist General Conference Affirmation of Faith, the following amplification is made:

We believe that God created man in His own image and endowed him with the freedom to respond to His redemptive love; that man is responsible to God for his Christian convictions and practices; and that Christian commitment and participation must be voluntary to be real.

Therefore we maintain that it is a human right as well as a prerogative of Divine grace that man be free to worship God; that the state should guarantee the right of all citizens to believe, to worship, to teach, to evangelize, to change their religious affiliations, and to serve their God as their consciences dictate; that this is best effected when state and church are separate in program, administration and support.



Furthermore we believe that the Christian citizen has a responsibility to his government in defending and promoting human liberties and rights by opposing discriminatory practices based on religion, race, economic or social status; by resisting any forms of totalitarianism, such as communism or fascism, that deny these basic rights; and by positively fulfilling the goals of religious liberty by being obedient to the first and great commandment: To love the Lord our God with all our heart, our soul, our mind, and our neighbor as ourselves.

START. STRENGTHEN. SEND.