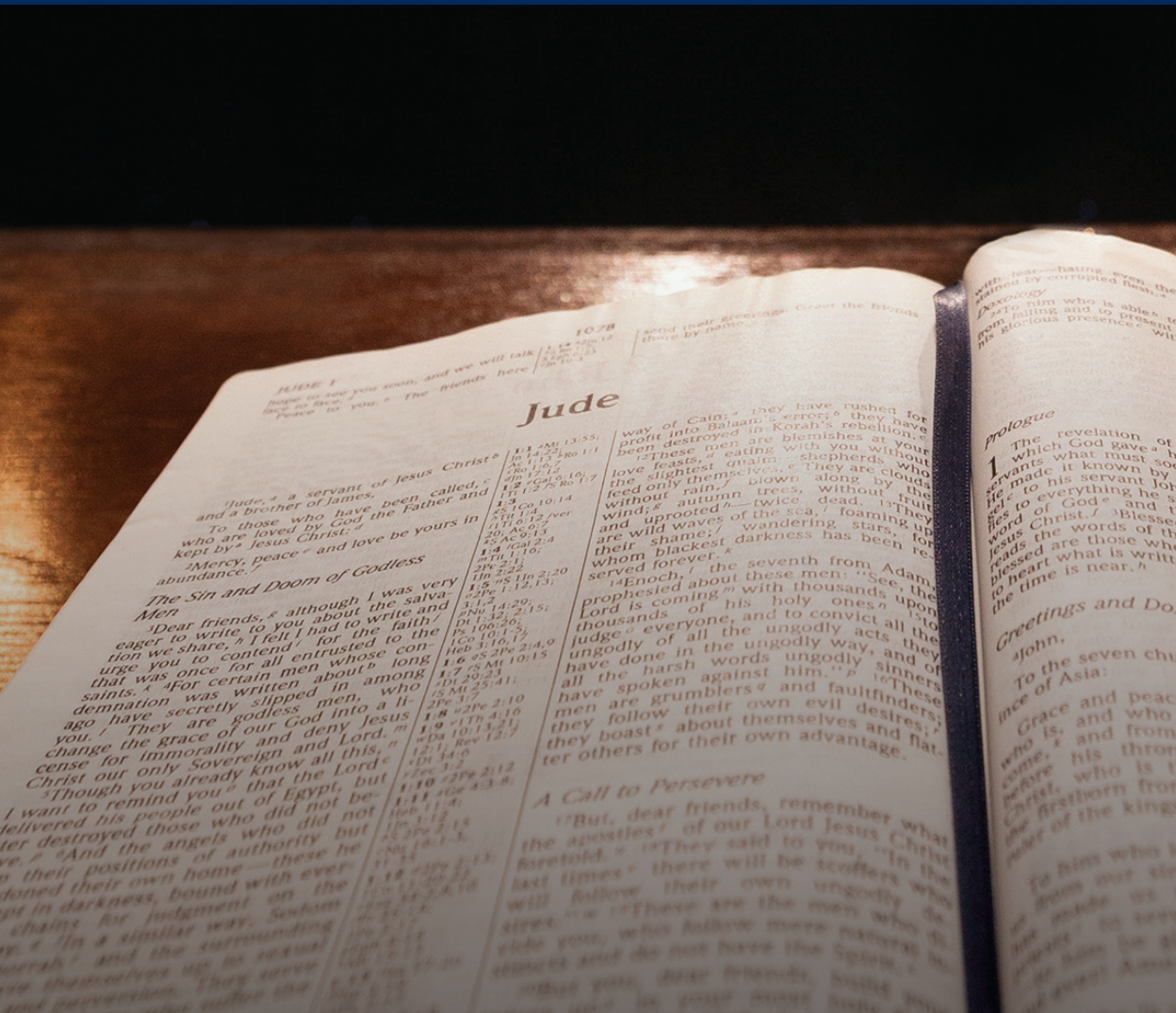


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Who is the True Revisionist? A Response to Steve W. Lemke

Thomas Ascol
Pastor, Grace Baptist Church
Cape Coral, Florida
tomascol@mac.com

Thomas J. Nettles
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky
tnettles@sbts.edu

The Reason for This Article

In the Spring 2015 issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, Steve W. Lemke, Provost of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, contends that the claim of an evangelical Calvinism constituting the theological consensus among Southern Baptists at their founding in the nineteenth century is “revisionist history.”¹ He argues against two historical claims that he asserts are often made by modern Calvinistic Baptists: (1) “that the overwhelming majority of Baptists were five-point Calvinists from the time before the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention until the early twentieth century” and (2) “that the Baptist confessions before the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* were overwhelmingly five-point Calvinist confessions.”² The first of these reported claims we believe is cogent and has an abundance of evidence to incline one’s view in that direction, but is not precisely the claim being made. The second is nebulous and, unfortunately, not documented by Lemke as a claim we make but nevertheless employed as theological foil against which he attempts to make his charge of revisionism appear reasonable. In spite of his confusion, however (specifically the generalization “the Baptist Confessions before” etc.), we would be willing to claim that the *specific* stream of confessions that informed the doctrinal development and position of Baptists in the South through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was Particular Baptist, providing a Calvinist confessional field of play.

Lemke has done Baptists a service by calling attention to the important historical question of our theological roots. As a signer and defender of “A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation” he wrote his article in part to give historical credibility to

¹Steve Lemke, “History or Revisionist History? How Calvinistic Were the Overwhelming Majority of Baptists and Their Confessions in the South until the Twentieth Century?” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 57 (2015): 227–54.

²Lemke, “History or Revisionist History?” 227.

that position. His article is well-written, structured in a clear way designed to convince the reader, and reflects a familiarity with many sources from American and Southern Baptist history. Familiarity, however, does not necessarily mean understanding. His misappropriation of sources will be demonstrated below in a more extensive look at the nature and context of his citations. At times this will involve investigation of the broader setting and concerns of nineteenth-century American and Southern Baptist life. Initially, however, we must investigate his construction of the premise that he intends to disprove.

A Classic Straw Man Syndrome

Lemke has set a context within which the discussion can continue. He recognizes there is no need to pursue the issue of infant baptism and certain other aspects of ecclesiology. We can all agree that infant baptism is not a part of Baptist confessional history and the discussion about Calvinism has never had anything to do with that in our present context. The discussion among us is now, and never has been aught else, concerning soteriology, specifically its ground and the means of effecting it.

Lemke presents the thesis that he is seeking to disprove as an affirmation that Baptists in the South in the nineteenth century were “univocally and overwhelmingly five-point Calvinists.”³ In doing so, he seeks to disprove what was never claimed. The claim he should disprove is “that Calvinism, popularly called the Doctrines of Grace, prevailed in the most influential and enduring arenas of Baptist denominational life until the end of the second decade of the twentieth century.”⁴

To give substance to his argument, therefore, he sets the historical stage for the acrostic TULIP. He is satisfied to use those five points in the discussion as to the Calvinistic status of early Baptist confessions and of Southern Baptists in the nineteenth century. TULIP unexceptionally embraced, in his argument, constitutes the only way in which one can be Calvinistic. He supports this principle by garnering the published convictions of some contemporary Reformed scholars that consider any apparent amalgamations as “logically inconsistent,” “unstable,” and not truly Calvinistic and imposes their arguments on the Southern Baptist discussion.⁵

Lemke proceeds, therefore under the conviction that if he can dislodge even one of the “five points” he has destroyed our thesis. Most vulnerable in this case is the issue of “limited atonement” which he isolates as “specifically the point” that divided Particular Baptists from General Baptists.⁶ The difference is important, but these Baptists also established polarities on election, total depravity, the nature of the call to salvation and its relation to regeneration, and the eternal safety of all those who have repented of sin

³Ibid., 247.

⁴Tom J. Nettles, *By His Grace and For His Glory* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2006), ix.

⁵Lemke, “History or Revisionist History?” 231.

⁶Ibid., 230.

and placed faith in Christ as their only hope for eternal life. Consistent with his thesis, however, Lemke considers the inclusion of a four-, or even three-, point Calvinism as “disingenuous” and “simply not appropriate.”⁷

His success depends on the viability of this definition residing in the opinions of theological purists, both Calvinist and Arminian, that rejection of any of the so-called five points either of Calvinism or Arminianism means that such hybrids do not “count within their fold.”⁸ This allows him to make the claim that, both for himself and for others past and present, neither Calvinism nor Arminianism is their position.

Two issues drive us to a contrary viewpoint. One is the consideration of the overall tendency of individual doctrines. Despite his absolutism on the issue of atonement, a point-by-point examination is not “inappropriate” but quite revealing as to the theological orientation of an individual. We think that the process of such discreet delineation, contrary to the Reformed scholars he quotes, may establish with clarity the acceptability of receiving “four-point Calvinists as legitimate Calvinists.”

Wherein Lies the Real Difference?

Something deeper is at stake, however, in his isolation of differences among Calvinists on the atonement as evidence for his thesis. This betrays a critical misunderstanding of the difference between Calvinism and non-Calvinism. The fundamental difference is this: Calvinists believe that God’s eternal purpose extends to creation, providence, revelation, and redemption in such a way as to bring to pass all that he set his heart upon. That God has a specific purpose cannot be denied (2 Tim 1:9; Rom 8:28; Eph 1:5–6; Eph 1:11; 3:11). Both Calvinists and non-Calvinists use the biblical word “foreknowledge” to define this eternal purpose and describe its operations. That such a thing existed cannot be denied and is sealed by such Scriptures as Romans 8:29; 11:2, 5; 1 Peter 1:2, 20.

Calvinists believe that there is perfect symmetry, consonance, and fullness between God’s foreknowledge, his resultant purpose, and his effecting his purpose. Calvinists’ differences on the atonement have to do with their understanding of the entire range of results that accrue to the means by which God affects his eternal purpose in the world; they do not disagree on the particular sovereignty of his purpose nor the immutable aspects of his nature from which this purpose flows. God’s eternal nature of love is vitally related to foreknowledge. God’s love as an eternal attribute dependent on nothing outside of himself consists of the intrinsic perfection of knowledge of himself and infinite joy in this knowledge, an eternal dynamic that is fundamental to the eternal generation of the Son and the consequent perfect belovedness of the Son. God’s foreknowledge consists of his eternal perception of an order outside of himself, an order that he will create, the end of which will be the demonstration of his love for his Son and the perfect

⁷Ibid., 230.

⁸Ibid.

return of the Son's love for Him, in the particular created moral agents who will receive expressions of this love. Calvinists unanimously affirm, therefore, that God's foreknowledge is a determined love that manifests itself in an eternal purpose to save specific individuals, provide all the necessary means by which they will be brought safely and justly and in accord with operations of mercy and grace to his presence in an eternal kingdom of love. As Silas Mercer summarized, cited below, "Election, or God's love to his people, is the very foundation of our salvation."

The non-Calvinists do not accept unconditional particular election built upon this understanding of foreknowledge. They interpret foreknowledge as pre-cognition, an eternal awareness of all that will happen, but absent of any determination, or moral right, to employ effectual means to accomplish a desire, univocally defined, for universal salvation. Rather, they have suspended this purpose on the will of the creature. They do not, therefore, affirm a pre-mundane election of individuals to salvation, an effectuality in God's purpose of salvation either in atonement or in the operations of the Holy Spirit, and, were they consistent, they would not affirm it in the certain preservation of those who have believed. With the means provided, ineffectual in themselves, non-Calvinists affirm a resident power and surviving moral propensity, or by prevenient grace universally restored, in the human affections (or will) to receive the proffered salvation apart from effectual calling and prior to regeneration.

How This Relates to Specific Historical Evidence

Contrary, therefore, to Lemke's most formative assumption, all those that believe in particular election, the unity of the race with Adam in his condemnation and corruption, the necessity of an effectual operation of the Spirit to fit the human will for repentance and faith, and the preserving and protective grace of God in producing perseverance we heartily accept as Calvinists or Calvinistic. The discussions on the atonement introduced by Andrew Fuller's gravitation toward the view of the Synod of Dort do not signal a departure from the fundamental Calvinist soteriology, but continue a dialogue present within the framework of Calvinism from the time of Calvin to the present.

Lemke's citations of Francis Wayland's observation from 1857 that Baptists had an "honest but not unkind difference" on the extent of the atonement does not help his thesis.⁹ Among the Baptists at the time Wayland wrote, this concerned the formula of "sufficient for all, but efficient for the elect," as promoted by Andrew Fuller. Concerning Fuller, Lemke, when trying to distance the *Abstract of Principles* from consistent Calvinism, asserted that it "was written with a sensitivity to . . . the four-point Calvinism of Andrew Fuller."¹⁰ Previously, Lemke had affirmed that the "most commonly

⁹Ibid., 235–36.

¹⁰Ibid., 248.

used measuring stick of how ‘Calvinistic’ a theologian or confession might be is the ‘five points’ of Calvinism as defined in the Canons of Dort.”¹¹

Fuller’s self-perception, however, makes this juxtaposition awkward. Fuller did not consider himself as having departed from a historically Calvinistic position on this issue. In describing his own historical pedigree, Fuller articulated his position in terms of the Synod of Dort.¹² Fuller described his position relative to Dort in these terms.

The Calvinists who met at the Synod of Dort have expressed their judgment on redemption in nine propositions. Were they not too long for transcription, I would insert the whole. The following extracts, however, will sufficiently express their sentiments on the points in question. “The death of the Son of God is the only and most complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins, of infinite value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world. The promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life; which promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought promiscuously and indiscriminately to be published and proposed to all nations and individuals to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel. The reason why many who are called by the gospel do not repent and believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, is not through any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ offered upon the cross, but through their own fault.”—“All those who truly believe, and by the death of Christ are delivered and saved, have to ascribe it to the grace of God alone, which He owes to no one, and which was given them in Christ from eternity.”—“The gracious *will* and *intention* of God the Father was, that the life-giving and saving efficacy of the precious death of His Son *should exert itself in all the elect, to endue them alone with justifying faith, and thereby infallibly bring them to salvation.*”

I would wish not for words more appropriate than the above to express my sentiments.¹³

With the exception of the fine points of that discussion, Wayland, in 1857, testified, “In other respects there has ever been, I believe, *an entire harmony*” on doctrinal issues among the Baptists. Other elements of the position of Baptists in “the northern and eastern states” include: “The whole

¹¹Ibid., 228.

¹²Ibid., 228–29.

¹³Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of his Life by Andrew Gunton Fuller*; ed. Joseph Belcher, 3rd ed. in 3 vols. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845), 2:712.

human race became sinners in consequence of the sin of the first Adam . . . so steeped are men in sin, that they all, with one consent, begin to make excuse, and universally refuse the offer of pardon." In infinite mercy, however, God "has elected some to everlasting life, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit, renders the word effectual to their salvation and sanctification." His offer of mercy is honest and sincere, "for the feast has been provided, and it is spread for all." Nevertheless, salvation comes only in his "gracious purpose to save by his sovereign mercy such as he may choose. There is here sovereignty, but no partiality. There can be no partiality, for none have the semblance of a claim." The refusal of any to come arises not from the lack of provision, Wayland repeats, but "from his own willful perverseness."¹⁴

If we understand Lemke's argument correctly, according to his estimation of Wayland, he would not consider as a Calvinist a person who believed in the election of some to eternal life, the guilt and corruption of will of the entire human race as a result of the whole's covenantal connection with Adam, the justness of their condemnation arising from this wholistic connection, the compatibility of individual and personal responsibility with this prevailing disinclination to holiness, and the consequent necessity of effectual grace according to sovereign mercy to bring a person to faith. This supposed non-Calvinist also believes that by its nature the atonement is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world but, according to God's purpose, redeems particularly only the elect. We heartily embrace such a non-Calvinism.

Not only does Lemke fail adequately to enter into the full-orbed connections of these Baptist doctrinal discussions, he introduces a false issue to cloud the doctrine of the Regular, or Charlestonian, Baptists with the issues of slavery, education, leisure time, etc. This is a surprisingly *ad hominem* argument in which he seeks a prejudice against the so-called Charleston Tradition. We are pushed to a bias against Calvinistic Baptists because, by Lemke's profile, they were more educated, lived in more urban areas, were more prosperous economically, had leisure time for study, and argued for slavery. According to his prodosis, it is much more consistent with baptistic non-Calvinistic doctrine to be agrarian, bucolic, illiterate, and non-slaveholding.

At least for the sake of this discussion, let us agree up front that slavery was wrong then and is wrong now and we have no desire to excuse any Baptist who defended that error although we think that it is self-righteous to dream that had we been there we would have conducted ourselves far differently.¹⁵

¹⁴Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, & Co., 1857), 20; Lemke, "History or Revisionist History?" 236.

¹⁵It was, as a matter of record, the more Separate Baptist tradition of Georgia that first set forth the test case as to whether slaveholders would be appointed as missionaries when they submitted the name of James Reeve to the Home Mission Society as a candidate for missionary, volunteering the information that he was a slaveholder. In his last will and testament, Abraham Marshall (son of the pioneer Separate Baptist minister, Daniel Marshall), in outlining how his debts were to be paid after his death, designated money from the crop

Lemke's attempt to lay claim to the moral high ground for non-Calvinists on this issue is non-demonstrable and also irrelevant to the argument.

If Lemke's proposition that the Charleston tradition actually initiated the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention, reductionist though it is, represents a concession that the Southern Baptist Convention was originally fully consistent with the Charleston Tradition theologically, we are happy for him to make the point. We hesitate to take the advantage, however, for the fact is, the two remaining streams of Separates and Regulars united in forming the convention after almost half a century of associational cooperation and theological purging. At that point, they essentially united in only one stream of theology. We will try to show how.

John Leland

Lemke bolstered his claim concerning the Regulars and the Separates that "these groups could hardly have been more different socially, economically, or by doctrine and practice" with the oft-cited quip from John Leland for evangelistic success, "doctrines of sovereign grace in the salvation of souls, mixed with a little of what is called Arminianism."¹⁶ This factoid misrepresents the reality.

Leland was thoroughly consistent in what he meant by "the doctrines of sovereign grace in the salvation of souls," and isolated "what is called Arminianism" as the appeal to repent and believe. That practice was seen as Arminian by some of his strongly Calvinistic Separate Baptist brethren in Virginia, but was not at all opposed to his own understanding of the consistency between depravity and duty. He recognized that, at least on the issue of human responsibility, evangelical Arminians were useful in the conversion of sinners. His personal doctrinal stance, however, is no where close to that kind of fusion, and he was equally as committed to the biblical truth of human responsibility. On several occasions he thought through the various options on the issue of salvation, seeking to push each option to its logical conclusion. In 1832 after fifty-seven years of active ministry, he wrote his friend James Whitsitt concerning his articles of faith on these issues. We fail to see any "mixture of Arminianism" at any point. He wrote

That all men were guilty sinners, and that God would be just and clear, if he damned them all. That Christ did, before the foundation of the world, predestinate a certain number of the human family for his bride, to bring to grace and glory. That Jesus died for sinners, and for his elect sheep only. That those for whom he did not die, had no cause to complain, as the law under which

on his 575 acres for the purpose "and if necessary that my negro Woman Liddy & her child be sold for the same purpose." Abraham Marshall, "Last Will and Testament of Abraham Marshall," in Thomas Ray, *Daniel and Abraham Marshall: Pioneer Baptist Evangelists to the South* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist, 2006), 253.

¹⁶Lemke, "History or Revisionist History?" 233.

they were placed was altogether reasonable. That Christ would always call his elect to him while on earth, before they died. That those whom he predestinated, redeemed and called, he would keep by his power, and bring them safe to glory.¹⁷

Benedict on Virginia

A second source of “evidence” that Lemke cites is Benedict’s observation concerning the Separates of Virginia. Benedict claims “a majority of them, however, were Calvinists.”¹⁸ This assessment, combined with the fact that all of the “Regulars” were Calvinistic seems to make the case, even in this limited and somewhat exceptional sphere of observation, that a good majority of Baptists were Calvinistic Baptists.

When another contextual theological reality is considered, however, the evidence becomes even more opposed to the use Lemke makes of Benedict. William Fristoe’s account entitled *A Concise History of the Kettocton Baptist Association* gives a more detailed doctrinal and historiographical picture.¹⁹ The first Baptist church in Virginia “when constituted, joined the Philadelphia Baptist Association, being of the same religious sentiments.”²⁰ In 1766 they petitioned the Association to dismiss the churches that they might become a separate association. In 1808 Fristoe noted that the “small system” in which their doctrines were expressed was the *Baptist Confession of Faith* [*Philadelphia Confession of Faith*]. He summarized its thoughts and inserted a “few of the leading doctrines of the same” for the perusal of the reader. He summarized it in eleven articles including the following:

Fifthly—That in eternity, God out of his own good pleasure chose a certain number of Adam’s progeny to eternal life, and that he did not leave the accomplishment of his decrees to accident or chance, but decreed all the means to bring about the event; therefore they are chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Their calling was decreed in the purpose of election. . . .

Sixthly—That the covenant of redemption was between the Father and the Son—that the elect were given by the Father to the Son, as head and representative of his people, engaged to perform everything necessary or required to carry their complete salvation into effect. . . .

¹⁷John Leland, *The Writings of John Leland*, ed. L. F. Greene (New York: n.p, 1845; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), 625. Leland has each point articulated as discreet expressions. We have pressed the articles into this paragraph.

¹⁸Lemke, “History or Revisionist History?” 234.

¹⁹William Fristoe, *A Concise History of the Kettocton Baptist Association* (Staunton, VA: n.p., 1808; reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 2002), 5–13.

²⁰Fristoe, *A Concise History of the Kettocton Baptist Association*, 6.

Seventhly—That in the fullness of time, the Son of God was manifested by taking human nature into union with his divine person, in which capacity he wrought out a righteousness for the justification of his people; yielding a perfect and spotless obedience to all the requisitions of the divine law, and submitted himself to a shameful and ignominious death on the cross, as an atonement for their sins, and reconciliation of their souls to God.²¹

Fristoe also summarized the call of God to salvation as an “effectual calling . . . accomplished by the agency of the Holy Ghost operating in a free irresistible [*sic*] and unfrustrable manner, by which the understanding is enlightened, and the will subjected to Christ.”²² Those that are so effectually called “by efficacious grace” are “freely justified by God” in which “their sins are pardoned,” the “righteousness of Christ being imputed to them,” and the “good work of grace begun in them” continued to “the complete salvation of their souls.”²³ When the Separates and Regulars united in Virginia, they did so after some years of common fellowship, hearing one another preach and conversing about ordinances and church government. Hesitant at first about a confession of faith, the Separates softened and consented to unite on the basis of the Philadelphia Confession.

“We do not mean,” they explained, “that every person is to be bound to the strict observance of everything therein contained, yet that it holds forth the essential truths of the gospel and the doctrine of salvation by Christ, & free unmerited grace alone, which ought to be believed by every Christian, and maintained by every minister of the gospel.”²⁴ When these phrases are used in the context of affirming union on the basis of the Philadelphia Confession, no reasonable doubt can be entertained as to what they mean. Lemke construes this as evidence for his thesis that the majority of these Baptists were not five-point Calvinists. Though some might fit his model, the evidence certainly is not clearly consistent with his contention. It provides no evidence, however, against the thesis he should be seeking to disprove, that Baptists held “nothing less than historic, evangelical Calvinism.”²⁵

When one contemplates, moreover, the interrogatories concerning the process of ordaining ministers of the gospel, Lemke’s evidence loses more ground. Fristoe summarized the ordination event with a charming simplicity. When a church desired to set apart a person to the gospel ministry, it would call for assistance of ministers from neighboring congregations and state

²¹Ibid., 16–17.

²²Ibid., 17.

²³Ibid., 18.

²⁴Robert Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia*, ed. G. W. Beale, rev. and exp. ed. (Richmond: Pitt & Dickinson, 1894), 100. This passage is cited by Lemke, “History or Revisionist History?” 246.

²⁵Lemke, “History or Revisionist History?” 227n1.

before those ministers in the presence of the candidate that “they are satisfied with his gifts, his knowledge of divine truth, and the goodness of his moral conduct, of which they have had satisfactory trial, and that in their judgment such an one promises public usefulness.”²⁶ Then, in concurrence with the church, they proceed to question the candidate concerning his personal experience of the new birth and his consequent faith in the Son of God and reliance on his righteousness and strength as the hope of eternal life. If this is deemed satisfactory,

they proceed in asking questions concerning some doctrinal points, such as the being of the one living and true God—his existence and perfections—of the Holy Trinity—of the incarnation of God’s dear Son, and the great work of salvation accomplished by his mediation—of particular election and particular redemption—of the fallen and degenerate state of Adam’s progeny—of effectual calling by unfrustrable grace—justification by imputed righteousness—protection of the saints and their certain perseverance in grace, their everlasting rest in ultimate glory, and the entire ruin of the wicked in everlasting destruction.²⁷

Such a line of examination further challenges Lemke’s thesis.

When Robert Semple reported on the portion of history to which Lemke refers in his brief quotes from Benedict, he saw the dynamic of doctrinal relationship in these terms: “Some of the preachers, likewise, falling unhappily into the Arminian scheme, stirred up no small disputation, and thereby imperceptibly drove their opponents to the borders, if not within the lines of Antinomianism.”²⁸ Arminianism was seen as a disturbance and not as a happy alternative within the Baptist fold.

Perhaps the most notable example of this occurred in the ministry of John Waller. Waller had been converted in 1767, in the twenty-sixth year of his life. He had given himself to gambling, profanity, and harassment of the Baptists. Called the “devil’s adjutant” he was on a grand jury that indicted Lewis Craig for preaching as a Baptist. Craig’s calmness, resignation, and confidence in the face of such malicious treatment soon worked conviction in Waller’s conscience and resulted in his conversion in 1767. In that year Waller submitted to the ordinance he formerly had passionately hated, baptism by immersion. This experience loosed his tongue, not for swearing, but for witness and soon numbers in his neighborhood were converted. When a church was constituted in his neighborhood in 1770 Waller was ordained as the minister. Robert Semple recounted, “In this bright and burning way, Waller continued until 1775 or 1776, when he formed an acquaintance

²⁶Fristoe, *A Concise History of the Kettocton Baptist Association*, 32.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 33.

²⁸Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia*, 60.

with one Williams, a preacher of some talents, apparent piety, and in Mr. Wesley's connexion, consequently an Arminian."²⁹ By conversation and books, Williams wrought a change in Waller's mind so that he adopted the "Arminian system." Invited to preach at the Association's meeting in 1776, Waller, aware that all of his brethren differed with him on this point, decided that he would seek to convert them all or be dismissed from their fellowship. He preached from 1 Corinthians 13:11, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." According to Benedict, the impact was not what Waller had hoped. "In his exordium he stated, that when young and inexperienced in religion, he had fallen in with the Calvinistick plan; but that, becoming more expert in doctrine, or in the language of his text, when he became a man, he put away these childish notions."³⁰ After a lengthy argument, as Semple stated, "For want of truth, or for want of talents, he made few if any converts to his opinions, and of course had to confront the whole host of preachers and members now assembled."³¹ Waller dismissed himself from their fellowship, declared himself an independent Baptist, continued as an evangelist and organizer of camp meetings, and ordained ministers within his independent fellowship. He had notable success in this endeavor, but soon regretted his departure.

A partial restoration occurred between his independents and the Separate Baptist General Association in 1783, at which time, ironically, the association adopted the Philadelphia Confession of Faith as a "standard of principles."³² Though its use was to be with discretion so as not to usurp "a tyrannical power over the conscience of any," yet it was judged as "the best human composition of the kind now extant."³³ In 1787, a full union of Separates, Regulars, and Independents took place, the adoption of the confession having paved the way. An interesting anecdote about Waller's return to his brethren concerns the effect of one of the Arminian independent preachers he ordained, Mr. Mastin who "was a confirmed Arminian." Not only is the anecdote revealing, but the language used by Semple reveals much concerning the disesteem in which Arminianism stood in his mind.

Most of those who have been proselyted by his [Mastin's] ministry received the stamp of his principles, whilst a respectable part of the church, who had been illumined through the ministry of others, were of Calvinistic sentiments. This diversity of opinion was a source of great unhappiness among them. The Arminian party were most numerous, and were not only unsound in principle

²⁹David Benedict, *History of the Baptist Denomination*, 2 vols. (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1813; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 2:396.

³⁰Benedict, *History of the Baptist Denomination*, 396.

³¹Ibid.

³²Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia*, 92.

³³Ibid., 93.

but negligent in discipline. It seems, indeed, that Mr. Mastin, in receiving and baptizing members was too remiss, which, together with the slackness of his discipline after they were received, proved of much confusion and disorder. There were a few who were much chagrined at these things. They took opportunities to remonstrate against them with the pastor, as also against his legal doctrines. He was displeased. In 1801, Elder Hipkins Pitman, who was a supporter of Calvinism, moved into the bounds of this church, His ministry being acceptable to that part of the church who coincided with him, Mr. Mastin grew jealous and almost declined preaching among them. Finally, the contest rising to a great height, the church withdrew from the care of Mr. Mastin, and chose Messrs. Waller and Pitman to attend them jointly. The ensuing year Mr. Waller was called to take charge of the church as a stated minister. Under him as their preacher they have been a happy people, and the church has increased.³⁴

Benedict on Kentucky

Lemke cites Benedict's narrative of the South District Association in Kentucky that contained "those who inclined to the Arminian scheme, as well as those who adopted some of the Calvinistic creed in a qualified sense."³⁵ He neglects, however, the continuing narrative of Benedict who described how the Second Great Awakening brought about a union between the two sections of Baptists in Kentucky after several earlier failed attempts at union. This ended the nomenclature Regular and Separate. The Terms of Union between the Elkhorn and South Kentucky associations designated that the "preaching *Christ tasted death for every man*, shall be no bar to communion."³⁶ The South Association, formerly so-called Separate, divided into two associations, the South District and the North District, for the sake of convenience. Benedict noted that troubles immediately began to arise in the South District which

was most miserably torn asunder by religious discords, shortly after it was organized. It soon appeared that in the southern department of the old Separate community, there were a number who had gone far into doctrinal error. Some were decided Arminians, and others had adopted Winchester's chimerical notion of universal restoration. But they had all acceded to the terms of union, &c. lately mentioned. But it soon appeared that they did it with much mental reservation. When these things came to be

³⁴Ibid., 201–02.

³⁵Benedict, *History of the Baptist Denomination* 2:237. This passage is cited by Lemke, "History or Revisionist History?" 234.

³⁶Benedict, *History of the Baptist Denomination*, 2:239–40.

known in the Association, they produced much confusion and distress.³⁷

Several ministers declared themselves no longer part of that association and the two parties laid claim to the original title. No other associations would admit into fellowship the district that had conceded to the errors of Arminianism and restorationism. Benedict sought information from them but could receive no response. They began to decline rapidly after 1804 and Benedict surmised, "I know not but it has by this time become extinct."³⁸ So much for the vibrancy and acceptability of Arminianism among the Baptists of Kentucky.

The southern district mentioned here as troubled in the year 1813, laid the foundation for the success of Alexander Campbell among the Baptists of Kentucky, with similar dynamics in Virginia and elsewhere. Many of those that had hesitations about confessions and the doctrines of grace were purged from Baptist life under the influence of Alexander Campbell beginning in 1823 and climaxing in 1829–30. As J. H. Spencer summarized concerning one association, so it could be said of virtually all of those in Kentucky, "The introduction of Campbellism found the churches . . . illy prepared to meet the plausible sophistries of that system."³⁹ Very attractive to Baptists that had qualms concerning a confessional basis of fellowship, Campbell's affirmation "We take the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, as the foundation of all Christian union and communion."⁴⁰

Indeed what Baptist, what Protestant, would not profess the same conviction? Campbell extrapolated from that the conclusion that all confessional language and construction was to speak the "language of Ashdod" and that one must avoid "preaching up the opinions of *saint* Arius or *saint* Athanasius."⁴¹ Campbell said that his "opposition to creeds arose from a conviction that, whether the opinions in them were true or false, they were hostile to the union, peace, harmony, purity, and joy of Christians, and adverse to the conversion of the world to Jesus Christ."⁴² Because he considered all creeds and confessions mere human constructions, he continually asserted on many occasions and in many places, "We have no new creed to form, no rules of discipline to adopt. We have taken the Living Oracles as our creed, our rules and measures of faith and practice; and, in this department, have no additions, alterations, or amendments to propose."⁴³ Well and good, if

³⁷Ibid., 2:240–41.

³⁸Ibid., 2:242.

³⁹J. H. Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: J. R. Baumes, 1885), 2:93,

⁴⁰Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System in Reference to the Union of Christians and a Restoration of Primitive Christianity, as Plead in the Current Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati: Central Book Concern, 1839), 12. Hereinafter referred to as *Christian System*.

⁴¹Campbell, *Christian System*, 6.

⁴²Ibid., 9.

⁴³Ibid., 274.

this means that they proposed no additions to Scripture. Nor did any of the confessional Baptists. But did this mean that he would never seek to say in any systematic form what he believed the sacred oracles do in fact teach? Of course not, as his voluminous comments of Scripture and his systematically arranged book *The Christian System* clearly reveal. His faux biblicism merely made a confusing nebulousity attach itself to many of the major interpretive and doctrinal issues that had been sorted out for centuries among Christian thinkers.

The Separate Baptists of Kentucky that had misgivings about creeds and defining and disciplinary confessions of faith fully embraced Campbell's deceptive "No creed but the New Testament" message. Having severed themselves from any confessional stability, they easily fell for the new creed of Campbellism. John Smith, a Baptist preacher newly minted as a true "Reformer" of the Alexander Campbell coinage, preached among the churches and "exerted his full strength in opposing Calvinism, as he termed it, and advocating Campbellism" and also plied his new trade killing with one stone, not only the bird of confessions but the bird of Calvinism, by remonstrating against the Philadelphia Confession of Faith.⁴⁴

Silas Noel, pastor in Frankfort, Kentucky, wrote a strong letter of warning to the Franklin Association saying, "

By our forbearance, and [the Campbellites'] partial success among the Baptists, they have become vain and impudent. They have, as they think, waged a war of extermination against our altars, our church constitutions, and our faith; they blaspheme the Holy Spirit, by denying and deriding his direct and invincible influence in the work of regeneration, before baptism. [They deny] that sinners are saved by grace, sovereign and free, and justified by the righteousness of Christ, imputed. Even these fundamental doctrines are ridiculed, reviled; and the final perseverance of the saints is made the subject of a jeering, taunting sneer.⁴⁵

Noel had seen defection before from "latitudinarian Baptists" during times of theological challenge and he expected the same in this instance. "Even now," he observed, "they are seen casting a leering, wishful eye towards the enemy's camp. How often have they mutinied and become our worst enemies!" At the turn of the century, during the "Arian war, many of them went out from us." Now, as Noel characterized it, in "this war with the Pelagians, and Sandemanians, called Campbellites, many of them may in like manner desert us." With profound, and even hopeful, insight he noted, "God has his own way to cleanse his sanctuary."⁴⁶ Noel's assessment probably represents reality. Those among the Baptists that squirmed under the pressure of a

⁴⁴Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists*, 2:619.

⁴⁵Ibid., 2:612.

⁴⁶Ibid.

confession and were perplexed by the doctrines of unconditional election and regeneration by a sovereign and effectual operation of the Spirit found the release provided by Campbell's attack on creeds and Calvinism a welcome refuge.

It must also be noted that Benedict recognized that some of the nomenclature of *Arminian* referred only to the Fuller kind of Calvinism as perceived by the followers of John Gill.⁴⁷ While Benedict reaffirmed the differences in the degree to which the Calvinist system was stated and preached by the strict Calvinists in relation to those that had been the products of the new light movement, about both of these he stated that the kind of preaching

now much in vogue [1860] . . . would have been considered the quintessence of Arminianism, mere milk and water, instead of the strong meat of the gospel. Then, and with our orthodox Baptists [note: He did not consider the preaching "much in vogue" as coming from "orthodox Baptists."], a sermon would have been accounted altogether defective which did not touch upon Election, Total Depravity, Final Perseverance, etc.⁴⁸

As Free Will Baptist life developed, and Methodists became more vocal, Benedict observed, "I was often not a little surprised at the bitterness of feeling which, in many cases, was displayed by the anti-Calvinists against the doctrine of Election, and of their readiness, in season and out of season, to assail it by reason and ridicule."⁴⁹

Abraham Marshall

Lemke's evidence continues to thin in his appeal to Abraham Marshall as a representative of his thesis. His reference to Marshall's statement to Jesse Mercer that he was "short legged and could not wade in such deep water" referred, not to his personal doctrinal position, but to his hesitance to become involved in controversy over the disputes between Arminians and Calvinists.⁵⁰ This hesitance ended when Georgia Baptists were faced with a two-fold Arminian challenge. The first was from Jeremiah Walker's move away from Calvinism to a more Arminian profession, in which he was followed by four other pastors. Jeremiah Walker was very active in the Virginia association that experienced the Arminian defection of John Waller and probably had been influenced by his argument before Waller was restored. In his 1894 republication of Semple's *History of Virginia Baptists*, G. W. Beale inserted this note about Jeremiah Walker:

⁴⁷David Benedict, *Sixty Years Among the Baptists* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1860), 135.

⁴⁸Benedict, *Sixty Years Among the Baptists*, 138.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 139.

⁵⁰Lemke, "History or Revisionist History?" 235.

Jeremiah Walker was a native of Bute county, North Carolina. He was born about the year 1747; became pastor of Nottoway church in 1769. This church under his ministry not only had large prosperity, but over twenty churches south of James River were gathered mainly through his labors. Later in life he fell into immorality and adopted erroneous views of doctrine, which cast a blemish on his character and impaired his usefulness. He died November 20, 1792.⁵¹

Thus, one hundred years after his death (1894), Beale viewed not only Walker's moral fall but his rejection of Calvinism as debilitating difficulties.

One of Walker's works bore the title *The Fourfold Foundation of Calvinism, Examined and Shaken*. During Walker's Arminian days in Georgia prior to the division, Semple records that he "went through various parts of the State, leaving his pamphlets and his verbal arguments in favour of Arminianism, whithersoever he went. In this journey of Mr. Walker, those who associated with him found him still the same pleasant, sensible, instructing, genteel character, that he had formerly been." Semple then added, "Alas, alas! That so splendid a garment should be so spotted!"⁵²

The second challenge to the prevailing Calvinism was the movement of the Wesleyan Methodists into Georgia. In 1790, at the May association meeting, the Georgia Baptist Association took the challenge and appointed a committee to write articles of faith and a statement of gospel order. Abraham Marshall served as moderator at that meeting and was elected to the committee to draw up the articles of faith along with Silas Mercer and three other men. When they were presented at the October meeting, Abraham Marshall was again elected as moderator and the two-fold document was adopted. It is basically an abstract of the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith*. The Georgia Baptist Association in distancing itself from the Arminian intrusions mentioned above stated, "And as we are convinced, that there are a number of Baptist churches, who differ from us in faith and practice; and that it is impossible to have communion where there is no union, we think it our duty, to set forth a concise declaration of the faith and order, upon which we intend to associate, which is as follows." The relevant doctrinal articles to the controversy immediately under consideration stated:

4th. We believe in the everlasting love of God to his people, and the eternal election of a definite number of the human race, to grace and glory: And that there was a covenant of grace or redemption made between the Father and the Son, before the world began in which their salvation is secure, and that they in particular are redeemed.

⁵¹Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia*, 28.

⁵²Benedict, *Sixty Years Among the Baptists*, 2:388-92.

5th. We believe that sinners are justified in the sight of God, only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them.

6th. We believe that all those who were chosen in Christ, will be effectually called, regenerated, converted, sanctified, and supported by the spirit and power of God, so that they shall persevere in grace, and not one of them be finally lost.⁵³

Theological harmony was an issue of paramount importance from the earliest days of the Association. The covenant of the Kiokee church fueled this concern from the beginning. Prior to the associational meeting in 1787 at Greenwood meeting house, Silas Mercer wrote about his confidence in their common faith and the converting and sanctifying power of it.

We are fully convinced that Salvation is all of grace, or all of works; for they cannot be mixed in this business; and if it be by grace, then the doctrine of Election, or God's love to his people, is the very foundation of our salvation; and is that foundation of God which standeth sure. And we think it will keep all them safe who stand upon it; but should this foundation be removed, what would the righteous do? For with it go their vocation and perseverance, together with their justification. For we think, the doctrine of imputed righteousness stands or falls with the doctrine of election, and if Christ's righteousness be not imputed to us, we have none but our own, which is no more than filthy rags, and therefore, altogether insufficient to justify us in the sight of God. And if so, we are all undone, for we are all under the law and under the curse, and not a single soul can be saved. There is no medium between these extremes. Therefore, we believe it to be the duty of every gospel minister, to insist upon this soul comforting, God honoring doctrine of Predestination, as the very foundation of our faith.⁵⁴

Daniel Marshall and his son Abraham had part in three confessional documents including the Georgia Association articles of faith. The articles of the Kiokee Baptist Church, the first such in Georgia, written by Daniel Marshall promised to

keep up and defend all the articles of Faith, according to God's word, such as the great doctrine of Election, effectual Calling, particular redemption, Justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, sanctification by the spirit of God, Believers

⁵³Ray, *Daniel and Abraham Marshall*, 247–49.

⁵⁴Jesse Mercer, *History of the Georgia Baptist Association* (Washington, GA: Georgia Baptist Association, 1838), 141.

Baptism by Immersion, the saints absolute final perseverance, the resurrection of the dead, future rewards and punishments, & c. all according to scripture which we take as the rule of our faith & practice . . . denying the Arian, Socinian, & Arminian errors, & every other principle contrary to the word of God.

The covenant of the Flint Hill Baptist Church written by Abraham Marshall began, “Holding to the doctrines of believers baptism by immersion, & particular election, effectual calling, final perseverance of the Saints & eternal redemption through Jesus Christ our Lord” and ended with the affirmation, “And this covenant we make, with the free and full consent of our souls, hoping through rich, free, and boundless grace, we shall therein be accepted of God, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom be glory and majesty, power & dominion, everlasting. Amen.”⁵⁵ Certainly the supposed evidence provided by the “short-legged” quip concerning Abraham Marshall is null and void.

E. E. Folk

Lemke’s use of the quotation from E. E. Folk used by Broadus in his *Memoir of J. P. Boyce* simply points out what everyone in theological education knows.⁵⁶ Students for the most part need to be taught the foundations of theological reasoning. Lemke supposedly does not rely strictly on the doctrinal position that students bring with them as fully sufficient for their call to gospel ministry. They probably will need instruction in principles of interpretation of Scripture for *rank* Biblicists do not necessarily grasp the meaning of the analogy of faith or the differences of literary genre, or the character of progressive revelation within the canon. To teach these things is not to deny the authority of Scripture or call into question the fundamental trustworthiness of the biblical convictions in which a new student has been disciplined. Perhaps he has not thought about how to construct and defend the doctrine of the Trinity or the pivotal nature of the doctrine of eternal generation of the Son. Though the experience of salvation has been clearly attested, and faith in Christ alone is a matter of former instruction and personal conviction, they might need to be instructed in the power of and biblical character of the doctrine of imputed righteousness and be warned against the destructive effects of the “new perspective.”

Neither Folk nor Broadus is arguing that “rank” Arminianism was the informed and confessionally embraced position of these students or the pastors who “discipled” them. Rather, Broadus points out the necessity of theological education, for such ill-construed doctrinal ideas seem to be the default perception of those who have an experiential understanding of

⁵⁵Ray, *Daniel and Abraham Marshall*, 244, 250–51.

⁵⁶“The young men were generally *rank* Arminians when they came to the seminary” until they encountered the “strong Calvinistic views” of Boyce.” Lemke, “History or Revisionist History?” 237.

the necessity of repentance and faith and a heightened sense of the reality of human responsibility. This was one of Boyce's original goals, to provide theological education for those that had little formal training even in the area of common English education and had been influenced by the residual effects of Campbellism and the revivalistic simplicity of Wesleyan Arminianism. Lemke could have gone even further back, therefore, with his evidence to 1856 when Boyce presented his *apologia* for theological education pointing to the inroads of Arminianism in some of the churches as evidence of a crisis in Baptist theology. He spoke of the "leaven" of Campbellism and of the "distinctive principles of Arminianism" that had been "engrafted upon many of our churches" and even "some of our ministry." In light of a possible "crisis in Baptist doctrine," Boyce appealed to "those of us who still cling to the doctrines which formerly distinguished us." The guarding against such errors, seen as departures from Baptist doctrine, was precisely the intent of Boyce in recommending the adoption of a clear confessional statement that professors would "hold *ex animo* and teach in its true import."⁵⁷ Those who heard him, understood his concern and through the work of three Education Conventions approved of the curriculum and the *Abstract of Principles*. The teaching to which Folk referred, and of which he approved, manifests Boyce's consistency in pursuing one of the originally conceived purposes of the Seminary.

A. H. Newman

A. H. Newman's comments cited by Lemke are at one level basically irrelevant as evidence on the issue under discussion, but at another he provides a testimony in support of our thesis.⁵⁸ As an example of anti-Augustinian influence, Newman mentions the medieval sects, and the sixteenth-century Anabaptists that were influenced by them. For Lemke, this is significant because of his personal predisposition to ally himself with Anabaptist ideas but it has no historiographical connections with Baptists in the southern United States in the nineteenth century. One could point to Newman's observation more relevant to the nature of this discussion as bearing against Lemke's thesis: "those that owe their origin to English Puritanism, . . . have been noted for their staunch adherence to Calvinistic principles, not, of course, because of any supposed authority of Calvin or of the English Puritan leaders, but because they have seemed to them to be Scriptural."⁵⁹

Newman's evaluation of the condition of Baptists in 1894 is precisely the position for which we are arguing, given the nature of the moniker *moderate Calvinism*. The extremes of fatalism and antinomianism Newman

⁵⁷J. P. Boyce, *Three Changes in Theological Institutions* (Greenville: C. J. Elford's Book and Job Press, 1856), 38. This is presently in print in Tom J. Nettles, *Stray Recollections, Short Articles, and Public Orations of James P. Boyce* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2009), 60–106.

⁵⁸Lemke, "History or Revisionist History?" 237.

⁵⁹A. H. Newman, *A History of Baptist Churches in the United States*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1898), 5–6.

mentioned as one period of development among Calvinistic Baptists were corrected by the theological discussions surrounding developments in the evangelical awakening of the eighteenth century and extending through the theological dynamics of the early nineteenth century.⁶⁰ According to our reading, Wesleyanism was of minimal positive influence on Baptists, most often fomenting division and negative response. Edwardsean thought was much more influential during the time of the evangelical awakening and afterwards than Wesleyanism. The Anti-mission society movement eventually took away both the hyper-Calvinists who became Primitive Baptists, and by strange coincidence, the followers of Alexander Campbell. His arduous opposition to the mission societies combined with his assault on confessions and Calvinism took away a sizeable number of ostensible adherents to Baptist churches and, ironically, helped create a more coherent movement among Baptists both as a denomination and in doctrinal unity. Campbellism had a healthy theological culling effect on Baptists in the South.

By the mid 1830s both the hyper-Calvinists and the unhappy non-Calvinists had found other places to express their views, leaving Baptists as committed evangelical, missionary, denominationally-centered Calvinists. By 1894 it looked that way to A. H. Newman also. In light of more amicable days at the last part of the nineteenth century, Newman listed four doctrinal areas that still would inhibit a reunion between the Disciples and the Baptists. He lists four of these.

1. In the stress laid upon baptism and the way in which it is connected with the remission of sins.
2. In representing faith as too exclusively an intellectual act of belief in the divine sonship of an historical personage.
3. In eliminating, or not sufficiently emphasizing, the emotional element in conversion.
4. In not sufficiently emphasizing the doctrines of grace, or, in other terms, inclining toward Pelagian or Arminian rather than Augustinian or Calvinistic conceptions of theology and anthropology.⁶¹

⁶⁰One should also see Newman's discussion of Campbellism on pages 487–94. Using J. B. Jeter's observations in *Campbellism Examined*, Newman points to the perfect storm of frustration created by the strongly confessional hyper-Calvinist antinomian movement in the minds of the confessionally challenged low- and non-Calvinists when they heard the straightforward biblicism of Campbell that rejected the legitimacy of creeds for the simple language of Scripture, repudiated Calvinism for a more easily manageable, objectively obtained salvation, and jettisoned all examination of spiritual experience for a simple affirmation of Jesus as the Son of God and submission to immersion as constituting justification and the new birth. Freedom from supposedly humanly contrived efforts in denominational missions and education had appeal at another level so that "there were few churches in the regions traversed by Campbell and his followers that were not more or less affected by his views." Newman, *A History of Baptist Churches in the United States*, 489–90.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 493.

The Case of Z. T. Cody

Lemke's reference to Z. T. Cody's comments in 1911 to the effect that Baptists are not Calvinists has grave historiographical problems. First, the representation is completely out of harmony with the theological summaries given by E. C. Dargan, F. H. Kerfoot, and W. T. Conner.⁶²

Nor is it consistent with the more elaborate theological expressions or historical perceptions of Cody himself.⁶³ In 1933, Cody wrote an article as editor of the *Baptist Courier* entitled "Election, a Practical Doctrine." He noted that the differences "between pulpits of today [1933] and the pulpits of one hundred years ago is to be seen in the way the two periods treat the doctrine of election." "The fathers believed it and preached it, the sons have it in their creeds but say nothing about it. For the one it was bread to be eaten, for the other it was good as a foundation but no need to dig down to look at it."⁶⁴

The 1911 article (cited by Lemke) also noted the absence of Calvinistic preaching, with the exception of the doctrine of perseverance, but had no lamentation at the loss. In fact, the article called unconditional election, "particular predestination" and said that the doctrine was "repugnant to our people."⁶⁵ For Cody (in his 1933 article), however, "the Scriptures not only assert the existence and truth of this doctrine, but make great use of it." He viewed it as particularly useful to give assurance of salvation. He argued that for Calvin ["no man in modern times has been called on to endure a harder fight or bear greater burdens"] it provided great assurance and fortitude in his battle with the sacramental dominance of Roman Catholicism. Election freed men from the church and put them in direct contact with the God who chose them. The 1911 article also has a similar observation asserting that "the tyrant as well as the priest went down before Calvin." Calvin's doctrine established a foundation for "freedom in the modern world."⁶⁶

In 1911, the author went on to say, "Now because freedom is also the very soul of the Baptist faith it is often said that we are Calvinists," an impression that is not true. Cody, in 1933, however, recognized that man's sense of freedom depended on a combination of doctrines set within the Calvinist system. Since justification is put on the foundation of personal faith instead of the assurance given by the church's authority, his security must be shaken, given the "weak, defective, and wobbly," condition of the

⁶²E. C. Dargan, *The Doctrines of our Faith* (Nashville, Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1905), 143–44; F. H. Kerfoot, "What We Believe According to the Scriptures," in Dargan, *The Doctrines of our Faith*, 230–31; W. T. Conner, *Gospel Doctrines* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1925), 93–96.

⁶³Greg Wills pointed me [Nettles] toward the newspaper articles by Cody as well as those of A. J. S. Thomas. His synopses and summaries have been helpful in opening the historiography on this issue. I do not impute to him my conclusions, however, but shoulder responsibility for them myself.

⁶⁴Z. T. Cody, "Election, a Practical Doctrine," *Baptist Courier*, 30 March 1933, 2.

⁶⁵Lemke, "History or Revisionist History?" 239.

⁶⁶Z. T. Cody, "Are Baptists Calvinists?" *Baptist Courier*, 16 February 1911, 4.

human will, always “liable to err and fall.” Precisely here “the living truth of election” met this “great problem of our weakness” with the assurance that “God had chosen him, that God was with him, that God supported him in every trial, that God attended him in all his weakness and failures with forgiving, correcting, and rescuing love, and that God was conducting with infinite wisdom and certitude to that glorious destiny which God himself had created and redeemed him for.” Cody saw within the doctrine of election, as Calvinists regularly do, an outworking of eternal love and, thus, the controlling reason for God’s creation and his redemptive work in Christ.

In the 1911 article, the author argued that for Calvinists, not Baptists, the doctrine of election served to free them from the church’s tyranny and from political absolutism but at the same time made them “conscientiously intolerant” of the non-elect. In contrast to that doctrinal foundation, “the Baptists derived freedom from their doctrine of the Spirit.” “The Spirit as they believed,” so the article claimed, “was the source of authority;” and “God has given his Spirit *to man as man* and not to some few elect men” (*italics ours*). That served as the basis, so the article continued, for “that universal liberty which became the glory of the Baptists and which Calvinism, untaught by the Baptist faith, could not attain to.” The Spirit’s authority, so it seems, may be discerned independent of Scripture.

Cody’s documented view of the work of the Spirit has a far more precise Christian orientation than that which is reflected in the 1911 article. In his lectures on the Holy Spirit at Southern Seminary in the 1918 Gay Lectures, Cody does not even come close to affirming a gifting of the Spirit to “man as man” as a foundation for the Baptist view of liberty.⁶⁷ To a suggestion that the “Holy Spirit was in Mohammed and imparts all that is true in that religion; that the Holy Spirit is in science, in all movements for humanity, and in all that is true and beautiful wherever it can be found,” Cody responded with quite a different perspective. “Such a statement may have a grain of truth,” he conceded;

but it certainly misses all I have been talking about this morning. If the Holy Spirit was *incarnated* in Jesus, He was not also in something else. When the Holy Spirit took Christ and Christ’s work as the body in which He would forever make His abode, He limited Himself to that sphere as certainly as the Second Person of the Trinity limited Himself when He became incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth. Henceforth and forever what He did for other things could be done for them only as they are related to Christ and His redemption. If the Holy Spirit is incarnated in Christ and Christ’s redemption, we cannot know Him anywhere

⁶⁷See Z. T. Cody, “The Work of the Holy Spirit,” *Review and Expositor* 15 (1918): 437–49; Idem, “The Spirit’s Work of Grace,” *Review and Expositor* 16 (1919): 81–96; Idem, “The Work of the Paraclete,” *Review and Expositor* 16 (1919): 164–80.

else or in any other way than as we see that character and that redemption reproduced.⁶⁸

The February 1911 *Baptist Courier* article thus summarized three areas of Calvinism and rejected in turn all three as inconsistent with Baptist life: baptism and issues of church and state, the doctrinal system itself, and the affirmation of freedom in the modern world. From Cody in 1933, however, we read “We doubt if the enslaving power of the church, whether Catholic or some other church, can ever be overthrown by any other truth than that of Election; and it is certain that those who hold to justification by faith must rest in the electing purpose and love of Christ if they are to have the certainty and assurance of victory in their Christian lives.”⁶⁹ These virtually antithetical views of the relation of Calvinism to Baptist thought can hardly have been written by the same author.

This presents a question the answer to which has some elements of speculation. Who wrote the article arguing the point and what theological disposition led him to such a claim? A. J. S. Thomas served as editor of the *Baptist Courier* from June 1891 until his death in April 1911. Cody came as an associate editor on January 19, 1911. Since the article “Are Baptist Calvinists?” (appearing February 16, 1911) is unsigned, the default assumption is that the editor, Thomas, not the newly appointed contributing editor, Cody, wrote it. Had there not been a subsequent paper trail, that conclusion would be virtually certain. The initial attribution to Cody came when the *Baptist World* reprinted the article on April 12, 1911, after the death of Thomas. A possible explanation is that, without consulting Cody, it mistakenly attributed it to him. Cody clearly was in line for the editorship and was occupied with some massive issues of transition during that time and perhaps could not be contacted. He resigned the church in Greenville on April 20 to become full time editor of the *Baptist Courier*, not entering on official duties until June 15, 1911.

Four years later, Frost picked the article up with Cody’s name on it from the *Baptist World* and reprinted it in *Christian Union Relative to Baptist Churches*. This book is a potpourri of articles from Baptist papers that affirm something distinctive about Baptists. Frost noted in his foreword, “It is nothing new to issue in book form what has been published previously.” Accordingly, these articles initially appeared in religious weeklies. “The source of each piece,” Frost explained, “and for the most part their authors are indicated each in its proper connection.”⁷⁰ Warrant for publishing, if any was actually sought, probably came from the periodicals from which Frost borrowed them, not from the authors. It is plausible that Cody’s name remained attached without his knowledge.

⁶⁸Cody, “The Work of the Holy Spirit,” 448.

⁶⁹Cody, “Election, a Practical Doctrine,” 2.

⁷⁰J. M. Frost, *Christian Union Relative to Baptist Churches* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1915), 5.

Frost printed the article because of its affirmation of the irreducible distinctiveness of freedom in Baptist witness. He had no intention of highlighting its rejection of Calvinism. This is clear from the fact that Frost included an article by J. B. Gambrell that maintained a clear difference from the article attributed to Cody (but probably written by Thomas). “The large matters of the Baptist faith have been condensed into two creedal statements,” Gambrell affirmed, “the New Hampshire and Philadelphia Articles of Faith.” He continued with confidence, “there is no vital difference between the two. They have had wide use among our people and have done much to clarify the thinking of Baptists. They have fixed the Baptist mind on the nerve centers of revealed truth.”⁷¹ The name of Cody seemed to have been perpetuated only because of the mistaken attribution to Cody in the *Baptist World* and its emphasis on freedom constituted the rationale for using it.

At this point, in the absence of hard evidence, the attempt to give a reason for the attribution to Cody must have the certainty only of plausibility. There is no doubt, however, that the article breathes of the spirit of Thomas and contradicts the views of Cody. It is possible, but with only the lowest degree of probability, that Cody lapsed into a Thomasian funk for one article and then came back to his senses. Thomas used the paper as a clearing house for all Baptist ideas, including conservative, but with an emphasis on the progressive element in Baptist life whose purpose was to overcome the restrictions of an inherited confessional orthodoxy. He sought release from slavery to a view of the Bible that affirmed verbal plenary inspiration resulting in an inerrant text and a consequent infallibility in its teaching in every circumstance, whether historical or doctrinal. Thomas is particularly confrontive toward the *Western Recorder* and its support of Calvinism and confessional orthodoxy. Interpreters of God’s Word do not need “to be perpetually repeating the name of the autocrat and tyrant of Geneva” and we must embrace the truth that “the essence of Baptist doctrine is not coincident with Calvinistic faith.”⁷² To the *Western Recorder’s* observation that the doctrine of election is full of comfort and consolation, Thomas retorted that, if so, it is only because “they [i.e. Calvinists] are full of a fierce, revengeful spirit.”⁷³ When questioned forcefully concerning the confessional history of Baptists and the teaching of Calvinism at Southern Seminary, Thomas grudgingly consented that it was so but “it does not follow that they must be Calvinists in order that they may be Baptists.”⁷⁴

In giving positive words concerning Charles Briggs in his confrontation with the Presbyterians and countenancing his call for “breadth of thought, liberty of scholarship, intelligent appropriation of the wealth of modern

⁷¹J. B. Gambrell, “Uses and Abuses of Creedal Statements,” in Frost, *Christian Union Relative to Baptist Churches*, 52.

⁷²A. J. S. Thomas, “Brag Will Out,” *Baptist Courier*, 16 March 1893.

⁷³A. J. S. Thomas, “Beloved, Prove the Spirits,” *Baptist Courier*, 17 May 1894, 2.

⁷⁴A. J. S. Thomas, “Bro. Covington Says a Few Things,” *Baptist Courier*, 19 October 1893, 1.

science," Thomas depicts Baptists as "the most liberal of all denominations, possessing a boundless, fathomless creed, unformulated, with places left open for every truth that may be discovered in the heavens above, in the earth or under the earth." Baptists have not "built a pen to put the truth in; they have not made a hot house in which to coddle it."⁷⁵ Just a month later, Thomas wrote, "we tolerate Arminianism, we tolerate Calvinism" while asserting that "few men care for predestination" and attesting that much more revolting than Arminianism is the "spirit of intolerance that would bind a Baptist to any theory or system of theology."⁷⁶ Thomas wanted less formula in doctrine and more of the personal element in religion⁷⁷ combined with rationality. Scripture always is acceptable, even if not accepted, when it is rationally conceived. So, the sovereignty set forth in Scripture must be less of the "mere pleasure" sort and conceived as a "rational sort of sovereignty."⁷⁸ Thomas's combination of feeling and rationality made him surmise that people reject Calvinism because they instinctively recoil at the "cold, unfeeling, impersonal deity" of Calvinism.⁷⁹

Thomas's antipathy to confident, confessional Calvinism arose, not from a disposition toward Arminianism as a system, but from the assumption of modernism that manifested itself theologically as liberalism. For him, theology is the interpretation of religious experience. He was miles beyond Mullins on the appropriation of experience, for, though Mullins looked at experience as a pragmatic verification of evangelical exegesis and as an apologetic for the persistence of the Christian truth of conversion, Thomas looked at experience as the chief operative in the interpretation of religion. This comes across clearly in his exuberant review of William Newton Clarke's *An Outline of Christian Theology*.⁸⁰ On all the great issues of Christian theology, Clarke looked for "an affectionate solution . . . rather than an intellectual solution." He did, in fact, discourage the "intellectual approach to religious subjects," and though thought is inevitable, "the heart must guide thought." Thomas commended Clarke for such an approach for the heart has "its rights in the matter of religion." Those that approach theology in a more traditional style "may be shocked by many things in this volume" as he bypasses "the exact theological style and thought of Aquinas, of Calvin's *Institutes*, of Dick, Hodge, Dagg, Boyce and some others." Clarke transcended, however, not only their style, but the "view of the Scriptures, of man, of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, the view of inspiration, evolution, reconciliation (or atonement), of a possible future probation, etc. may all have a foreign air and a heretical ring." Nevertheless, from such a seedbed of energetic, throbbing, experiential

⁷⁵A. J. S. Thomas, "A Typical Argument," *Baptist Courier*, 3 August 1893, 2.

⁷⁶A. J. S. Thomas, "Dogmatic Choler," *Baptist Courier*, 21 September 1893, 2.

⁷⁷A. J. S. Thomas, "Calvinism or Arminianism," *Baptist Courier*, 12 October 1893, 2.

⁷⁸A. J. S. Thomas, "Rational Sovereignty," *Baptist Courier*, 28 May 1896, 2.

⁷⁹A. J. S. Thomas, "The Divine Sovereignty and Human Rebellion," *Baptist Courier*, 5 March 1896, 2.

⁸⁰William Newton Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898).

reflections, “a large number of warm, effective sermons” could be developed. Thomas reached virtually celebratory heights of appreciation for Clarke, as his work offers such a distinct alternative to Calvin, Hodge, Dick, and Boyce. “Our religion does not depend upon our theology, but theology depends upon our religion.” Each person must find a theology “that interprets his religious experience in the light of God’s self-manifestation in the world.” He believed that many people would find Clarke to their advantage, for “all theologies are individual in nature, private property offered to any who can appropriate them and use them.”⁸¹

It is this approach of Thomas, not that of Z. T. Cody, that supports the statement in “Are Baptists Calvinists?” in February 1911, “But it may be said that Calvinism is a spirit and not a system; that its essence is not to be sought in a mummified creed but in the undying spirit of freedom which it called forth.”⁸² Given the slight uncertainty as to how Cody’s name came to be associated with the article, certainties remain. One, the article does not reflect the known theology of Z. T. Cody, but is clearly at odds with it on several strategic points, such as the value of Calvinism, the nature of the Baptist understanding of freedom, the work of the Spirit. Two, the article does clearly reflect the theology of A. J. S. Thomas in his resistance to Calvinism, his cavalier stance toward confessions, his latitudinarian approach to the work of the Spirit, and in his highlight of freedom as the most distinctive aspect of Baptist identity. Three, the historiography of the article is precisely that used by the Moderate historians and denominational leadership in the controversy over the historic Baptist view of the Bible. They made a theological claim that simply was not borne out by the clear burden of Baptist documents. That coincides with the method and intent of Thomas.

It cannot be strong support for Lemke’s thesis, that in this source we find a trajectory embedded that eschewed, not only Calvinism, but propositional revelation, the disciplinary use of confessions, and affirmed the relativity of historical orthodoxy and an aggressive argument for absolute openness in the development of theological ideas. The decline of Calvinism and the decline of orthodoxy walked hand in hand through six decades of the twentieth century.

A Final Word about Lemke’s Evaluation of his Own Article

First, the analysis Lemke provides on the power of his sources is a moot point, for none of his supposed compelling sources demonstrate the point for which he commandeers them. Second, his efforts to show that confessions were not clearly and univocally five point Calvinist documents only work if his presentation of our thesis is accurate. It is not. If, however,

⁸¹A. J. S. Thomas, “An Outline of Christian Theology,” *Baptist Courier*, 6 September 1900, 4–5.

⁸²Cody, “Are Baptists Calvinists?” 4.

our argument about the major assumption of Calvinism is correct, then his garnering of so many confessions demonstrates our point.

Confirming the overall impetus of Baptist doctrinal commitment at the time of the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention would be the observation on the necessity of effectual calling given by C. D. Mallary, first Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, in 1843 in the *Christian Index*:

Every man that is not regenerated, born of the Spirit of God, is in the flesh, under the control of a depraved and rebellious heart, and therefore . . . whatever power may be granted, or whatever influence may be exerted upon the hearts of men, it does not rise higher than the rebellion of the human bosom, and so operate on the perverse will as to determine it to that which is good, this influence will never be rightly improved, nor result in the salvation of one single soul.⁸³

Mallary also provides us with a definition of election fully consistent with our thesis: “God’s free, sovereign, eternal and unchangeable purpose to glorify the perfections of His character in the salvation of a definite number of the human family by Jesus Christ, without regard to any foreseen merit or good works on their part, as the ground or condition of this choice.”⁸⁴

While we believe that the five-point position is more internally consistent theologically, and is a compelling synthesis of sound exegesis, we maintain that the most distinctive affirmation of the Calvinist system is the character of divine foreknowledge as an infallible purpose resident within divine love set forth for magnifying the attributes of the triune God in the salvation of chosen sinners. This view is accurately expressed by Basil Manly, Sr., a nineteenth-century Southern Baptist whose claim, along with Mallary, to represent a received expression of Baptist doctrine prior to the decline of the twentieth century is clearly justified.

It relates to a purpose of God, in eternity, respecting individual human beings who are the subjects of it; who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, -elect according to the foreknowledge of God. Yet this election did not proceed on the ground of either faith or works foreseen in them; it is an election of grace and not caused by the moral character of the subjects. It is distinguishing, choosing some and not others; it fixes on persons, not on states nor conditions; the number of the elect is, to the mind of God, necessarily definite and certain; but within the gracious purpose, are inseparably included both the means and the end. Jesus Christ was chosen to be the Head

⁸³C. D. Mallary, “Election,” *The Christian Index*, 29 January 1843, 43–44.

⁸⁴Mallary, “Election,” 42.

of the Church, and all his people were chosen in him; and this choice of them in him, a fact transpiring in eternity, is the source of all the spiritual gifts and graces exercised by them in time.⁸⁵

⁸⁵Basil Manly, Sr., Circular letter on "Election," printed in *Minutes of the Twelfth Session of the Tuscaloosa Baptist Association* (Tuscaloosa: Printed by M. D. J. Slade), 7–8. The quote omits a large number of proof texts inserted by Manly.