

Abstract

In 2023, the people of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Baptists (CABC) celebrate 260 years of Christian mission in their region. Their sense of ministry through community enabled the growth of their movement and the resources they developed and grew. Their unity in doctrine and purpose partially enables their missional successes. A survey of their current clerical leaders shows they are not as united in values and beliefs as their predecessors appear to have been. Widespread individualism in the West, including religious individualism, is a critical factor in divisions appearing in many faith communities. The people of the CBAC are not immune to these forces. Organizational behaviorists note that shared corporate values and purposes are essential to corporate health.

In the first chapter of this work, I outline the historical emergence and growth of the churches of the CBAC. In the second chapter, I report on a survey of CBAC clergy that shows signs of disunity in belief, values, and purpose. In the third chapter, I discuss the pervasiveness of individualism in the West and religious individualism in Canadian Protestant churches. I also begin to define a counterforce to individualism, namely the *ordinary*. In the fourth chapter, I offer a biblically *ordinary* ecclesiology suitable for the people and churches of the CBAC. This statement may initiate conversations necessary to renew bonds through shared values, beliefs, and purposes. In the final chapter, I conclude that their cultural setting requires such a renewal if the people of the CBAC are to experience denominational and missional health and success in their shared future. Individual and collective autonomies are forces neither sufficient nor suitable to propel their movement through a post-Christian twenty-first-century Atlantic Canada.

Keywords: Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, Baptist, Ecclesiology, Individualism, Culture

Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project Approval Form

Date of Defense: June 20, 2023

Location: Online

Candidate: Paul D. Worden

Title of Project: Atlantic Canadian Baptists: An Ecclesiology for Christian Mission in the Twenty-first Century

Anticipated Graduation Year: 2023

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2023/08/23

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2023/08/23

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to the people of First Baptist Church Truro. You helped me think differently about ministry.

Thank you Colin Godwin. I am grateful for your guidance and foresight and I am indebted to you.

Thank you Reverend Tammy Giffen. Thanks for going where Christ leads. I know the journey has not been easy. You are an inspiration.

Thank you to the late Bill Brackney. He was a brilliant man, a friend and mentor, and I am sad he will not read this first. He would have known where I am about to go wrong!

Thank you Garth Williams. You are a dear friend, a deep thinker, and an amazing sounding board.

Thank you Reverend Lillian Ruth Tonn. Your partnership and friendship has meant more than I can express.

Thank you to Frank Guinta, Jr. You are a friend, mentor, and partner in ministry. Perhaps more importantly, you are my pastor and I am grateful for your love, wisdom, and nudging.

Thank you Gary and Diane Acker. Your years of encouragement and love are treasure to me.

Thank you Debbie and Peter Worden, mom and dad. Your love for Christ enabled me to see our Lord in action.

Thank you Paul, Maria, Eleanor, Georgina, and Rebecca. You make me want to better with each new day. I love you and your determination and excitement.

Deb, no thanks I can offer will ever repay the debt I owe you. Thank you for your boundless love and for always being there. The adventure continues.

Glossary

BUGB: Baptist Union of Great Britain

CBAC: Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada

CBOQ: Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Québec

CBWC: Canadian Baptists of Western Canada

NB: New Brunswick

NL: Newfoundland and Labrador

NS: Nova Scotia

NT: New Testament

OT: Old Testament

PEI: Prince Edward Island

USA: United States of America

“There are problems arising out of our present system — some people would say lack of system — that we must face.”

~ Reverend Doctor Henry Cook (former General Superintendent of the London Baptist Association and Acting Secretary for the European Baptist Federation, 1947)

A Transitioning Community

Introduction

The people of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada (CBAC) are encountering previously unexperienced perils to the sustainability of their denominational life. Historically they were a community drawn together by shared convictions, common values, and joint missions. United in beliefs and purposes, they grew their community from fewer than a dozen members in the mid-eighteenth century to over 60,000 members at the beginning of the twenty-first. Now, challenged by external cultural pressures and unresolved internal debate, their community risks being fractured by forces they have historically ignored. In some ways, they are already irreversibly split.

In this work, I will first show how Atlantic Baptists founded and grew their regional faith community. Bound together by shared understandings and goals, they welcomed newcomers to their community under those same auspices. In the second chapter, I will show that today's CBAC clergy are not as united in belief as their predecessors once were. A trend of religious individualism has emerged among their clerics, its force endangering their work together. Indeed, the faith expressions of some members of the CBAC clerical community are not historically Baptist.

In the third chapter, I will discuss the nearly ubiquitous proliferation of individualism in the twenty-first-century West and the insurgence of religiously individualist forces in the Western church. I will show that individualism poses a grave danger to the sustainability of any organization that chooses to ignore it — including the churches of the CBAC. Subject experts agree that corporate values and purposes, such as those shared by earlier generations of Atlantic

Baptists, are foundational to organizations striving for cohesion and missional success. As a counterforce to the trend of individualism, I will introduce a set of values in the form of a biblically *ordinary* Baptist ecclesiology, appealing to the biblically real or actualized rather than the imagined or potential.

Possibly irreconcilable differences in values have already surfaced among the people of the CBAC. Preserving the organization in its current shape is an almost certain impossibility. Still, renewing the binding agencies of shared beliefs and purposes will reveal new opportunities for missions in their post-Christian Atlantic-Canadian settings. Today's CBAC community is neither the same as it was at its inception 225 years ago nor at its rebirth more than a century ago. Their community has always been in transition. Nearly a quarter of the way through the twenty-first century, they are reshaping their community once again.

The Baptist Emergence in Canada

The first known Baptist clerical émigré to Canada was Ebenezer Moulton, who arrived in the southern Nova Scotia coastal community of Chebogue (near modern Yarmouth) in 1760. Ordained as a Baptist pastor in Brimfield, Massachusetts on November 4, 1741¹, Moulton was part of a larger migration of Congregationalist, Baptist, and other non-conformist "Planters" who fled religious intolerance and persecution at the hands of colonial officials. Starting in 1755, Nova Scotia's Lieutenant-Governor Charles Lawrence forcibly expelled that province's French Acadian population and began advertising land ownership opportunities to potential New English homesteaders. Upon his arrival Moulton immediately began an itinerant evangelistic

1. Edward M. Saunders, *History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces* (Halifax: Press of John Burgoyne, 1902), 62.

ministry, eventually arriving in Horton Landing (now Wolfville), where he planted the first Baptist church in that area in 1765. The church struggled for about six years before going quiet, but in 1778 its core people reorganized the church which remains today, making Wolfville Baptist “the first indigenous Baptist church in Canada; in its renewal, the oldest continuing church.”²

Around that same time, in 1763, Rev. Nathan Mason led thirteen settlers from Swansea, Massachusetts, to settle in the “the Township of SacVill,” present-day Middle Sackville, NB. The church they planted survived until 1771 when most of the members moved back to Massachusetts.³ Dormant until 1798, Baptists reconstituted the church in Middle Sackville under the leadership of Joseph Crandall. The church and its pastor played significant roles in developing relationships with other churches and fostering cooperative Baptist mission efforts in the Maritimes. Today, both the Wolfville and Middle Sackville churches remain active in the life of the Atlantic Baptist community.

Following the conclusion of the American Revolution in 1783/84, thousands of displaced Loyalists migrated from the newly formed United States of America to the still British-controlled provinces of Nova Scotia and the Canadas. Most Loyalists were members of the Church of England who “viewed religious liberty and republicanism as the soil from which the rebellion against the crown had sprung.”⁴ Their suspicions fueled their desire to set Anglicism as the state church in the Maritime provinces, leading to nearly eight decades of regional and national

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2. Harry A. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon: The Baptist Story in Canada* (Mississauga: Canadian Baptist Federation, 1988), 16.
 3. Ingraham E. Bill, *Fifty Years With the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (Saint John: Barnes and Company, 1880), 27.
 4. David T. Priestley, “Canadian Baptists in National Perspective: A Narrative Attempt,” *Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 7 (1988), 311.

conflicts between Loyalists and non-conformists (including Baptists), affecting political, cultural, and educational opportunities for all who did not share Loyalist views.

Establishing Community Values

Nearing the end of the eighteenth century, New Light Congregationalists began accepting Baptist convictions in the authority of Scripture the practice of believers' baptism.⁵ Individuals and entire churches began adopting Baptist beliefs and sought baptism as believers. At that same time, an antinomianism spread throughout the region, birthed by what historian Harry Renfree calls a form of "perverted Calvinism."⁶ If Christ was intent on spiritually preserving his own, they asked, what prevented believers from satisfying the lusts of their flesh? Even more, self-declared visionaries and seers began to proclaim prophecies that they often intended to supersede Scripture.⁷ Concerned, a group of Baptist and Congregationalist pastors formed a conference to pray for and attend to the spiritual health of their communities. They held these mixed-fellowship gatherings in June of 1798 and 1799, but a significant shift for Baptists occurred the following year.

Eight Nova Scotia Baptist churches and one from Sackville, New Brunswick, met at Second Annapolis Baptist Church in Lower Granville on June 23 and 24, 1800, for the first Baptist association convened in present-day Canada. While reinforcing their commitment to local church independence, the churches bound together to maintain the faith more effectively;

5. Harry A. Renfree, "Heritage and Hope: Reflections on the Canadian Baptist Pilgrimage," in *Costly Vision: The Baptist Pilgrimage in Canada*, ed. Jarold K. Zeman (Burlington: Welch Publishing, 1988), 242.

6. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 52.

7. George Edward Levy, *The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces 1753–1946* (Saint John: Barnes-Hopkins, 1946), 69.

provide an avenue for council, advice, and assistance in times of challenge; and be “better able to promote the cause of God.”⁸ They adopted the 1742 *Philadelphia Confession* as their guide for “the Faith and Order of [the] Association,” and agreed to several other principles that continue to shape Atlantic Canadian Baptist ecclesiology today.⁹

The Calvinistic *Philadelphia Confession* is an adaptation of Benjamin Keach’s 1697 version of the *Second London Confession*.¹⁰ Many elements of the *Philadelphia Confession* remain as core ecclesiological beliefs of the people of the CBAC today. The *Confession* speaks of Christ’s lordship and supremacy in the church and over all creation (chs. 8.1; 8.2; 8.9; 27.4), and of the salvation he earned and bestows through his death and resurrection (chs. 3.6; 8.1; 8.4). The *Confession* describes Scripture as “the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience” (ch 1.1). It states that the Bible has authority over the faith and practice of the church and its people because God inspired it (chs. 1.1; 1.2; 1.4; 1.6).

The *Philadelphia Confession* reveals the esteem its subscribers have for the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They regard these corporate acts of worship as Christ-ordained and instrumental in the development, expression, and maturation of the Christian faith (chs. 14.1; 22.5; 29.1; 30.1; 32.1). They see baptism as a sign and proclamation of fellowship in Christ’s death and resurrection, eligible to believers alone, conducted by immersion, and following the Matthean trinitarian formula (ch. 30; see also Matt 28:19). The Lord’s Supper is a bread and wine memorial to Christ’s sacrificial crucifixion, a symbol in which participants enter a

8. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 54.

9. Ingraham Bill shares the rules of that first association, reproducing them from Silas Rand’s 1849 “Jubilee Sketch.” See Bill, *Fifty Years*, 36–39.

10. William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought: With Special Reference to Baptists in Britain and North America* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004), 32–35. See also William H. Brackney, *Baptist Life and Thought: A Source Book* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1998), 97–99.

nourishing spiritual encounter with the mysteries of their Lord's death and resurrection (chs. 32.1; 32.2; 32.7).

The *Confession* speaks of regenerate churches consisting of members “visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience unto that call of Christ” (ch. 27.6). Each of these churches has authority and power under Christ to carry out its local mission, determine its governance, provide for its affairs, and appoint its leaders (chs. 27.7; 27.8). While each local congregation remains independent, churches should be in communion with each other for mutual support, discernment, and moral guidance (ch. 27.15). Furthermore, even though God has ordained civil magistrates over the nations, their authority does not extend to the lives of the churches except in the laws of their lands (chs. 24.2; 25.1; 25.3).

Early Atlantic Baptist historian Ingraham Bill recalls the three principles and eight rules adopted by the nine churches to shape their association. The founding members had looked fondly on Baptist associations in Britain and the newly founded United States:

...such a combination of Churches is not only prudent but useful...Some of its most obvious benefits are — union and communion among the several Churches, — maintaining more effectively the faith once delivered to the saints, — obtaining advice and counsel in cases of doubt and difficulty, and assistance in distress, — and in general being better able to promote the cause of God.¹¹

They respected a tension inherent in associating independent churches, saying that the larger body was only ever able to advise the lesser. Their final principle was that the delegates sent by each church to form the association should be mature Christians, well-versed in Scripture, and able to advise from scriptural foundations.

11. Bill, *Fifty Years*, 36.

Their first of eight rules was that the Association was to consist of delegates chosen by the member churches. Although pastors were automatically considered delegates, churches could also send other representatives who met the criteria of their third principle. Second, delegates were to carry letters of commendation and church reports to the Association along with any questions or business items their congregations wanted to be raised. Their third rule outlined the parliamentary procedure they were to employ in their deliberative process; each delegate received a vote on matters not “plainly determined by Scripture, which are never to be put to the decision of votes.”¹²

Their fourth rule noted the process churches not yet affiliated could use to petition the Association for membership. The fifth rule fixed the days, times, and general outline of their annual assemblies and detailed the communications they would send to the member churches after each meeting. Rule six enabled the Association to correspond and fellowship with Baptist associations in the United States and Great Britain. The seventh rule recorded their acceptance of the 1742 *Philadelphia Baptist Confession*, much of which has already been noted. The eighth rule outlined the Association’s way of dissolving fellowship with any churches which no longer aligned with the values or practices of the Association.

The formation of the Association was not without challenges. Notably, Rev. John Burton of Halifax was absent, perhaps due to his adoption of “the policy of the churches in the United States in respect to communion”¹³ — that the Lord’s Supper was to be limited to only baptized believers. This position made it difficult for Burton to band with many of the others in the newly formed association who had been in open communion with Congregationalists. The matter

12. Bill, *Fifty Years*, 37.

13. Saunders, *History of the Baptists*, 89.

remained unresolved and by 1805 had come to the delegates of that year's assembly. Participation in the Lord's Supper occupied a central place of consideration for the Association until the 1809 assembly passed a resolution "to withdraw fellowship from all churches who admit unbaptized persons to what is called occasional communion, and to consider themselves as a Regular close-communion Baptist Association."¹⁴

The resolution was not without consequence; four of the association's eighteen churches withdrew fellowship.¹⁵ Renfree suggests that while the delegates may have been shortsighted from a vantage more than two centuries removed — in that Canadian Baptists do not generally practice close communion today — perhaps the course they took was "vital to saving the infant Baptist body from gradual dilution and decline that would have resulted from persisting 'mixed' membership and lack of common purpose."¹⁶ The issue resolved, the way was open for those churches which had previously abstained from associating to join freely, which they did immediately.

Community Expansion

Church sizes continued to grow, as did the Baptist reach in the region. An evangelistic zeal for missions was at the heart of the Baptist people who first planted churches in Atlantic Canada. While the promises of religious and social freedom brought them to Nova Scotia, "it was concern for the souls of men that soon moved them out from their pioneer homesteads to tramp through the backwoods of the Maritimes."¹⁷ By 1810 the association had grown to

14. Handwritten association minutes taken from its June 26–28, 1809 meetings. See Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 60.

15. Bill, *Fifty Years*, 41.

16. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 61.

17. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 20.

represent fourteen churches consisting of 924 members.¹⁸ In the following decade, the number of association churches and pastors doubled. Atlantic Canadian Baptists, who first associated to ensure orthodoxy among their churches and pastors, began to turn their attention to developing Christian educational resources and to home and overseas missions.

Table A — Self-Reported Annual Association Memberships (1810–1821)¹⁹

Year	Population	Year	Population
1810	924	1816	993
1811	1,221	1817	1,104
1812	1,371	1818	1,367
1813	1,605	1819	1,570
1814	1,494	1820	1,785
1815	1,207	1821	1,827

By 1817 the assembly delegates agreed to consider a proposal to split the association in two. The effect was not immediate, but in 1820 separate committees were formed to oversee missions in each of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The following year, with seventeen churches of 1,401 members in Nova Scotia and thirteen others consisting of 565 members in New Brunswick,²⁰ the assembly delegates unanimously and amicably agreed to form two distinct associations — a move Bill declares as “very important...[with] the interests of the denomination” demanding it.²¹ The now separate groups continued in fellowship, exchanging delegates between the associations, promoting unity and better work together in common cause.²²

18. Saunders, *History of the Baptists*, 153.

19. See Bill, *Fifty Years*, 42–53.

20. See Bill, *Fifty Years*, 53 and 573–574.

21. Bill, *Fifty Years*, 53.

22. E. R. Fitch, ed. *The Baptists of Canada: A History of Their Progress and Achievements* (Toronto: Standard Publishing Company, 1911), 32–33.

In about 1811, Scottish émigré missionary Alexander Crawford visited Prince Edward Island and started a well-received ministry of preaching and baptizing. By 1814 he decided to move there permanently and helped plant churches at Three Rivers, East Point, Tryon, and Bedeque. Even though Crawford was not a Baptist,²³ in 1825, he extended an invitation to the Nova Scotia association, seeking their missionary presence, to which Rev. Charles Tupper responded. The following year both Maritime associations sent missionaries to the Island: Theodore Harding of Nova Scotia and Joseph Crandall of New Brunswick. By 1827 the Baptist presence in Prince Edward Island was strong enough that the Bedeque church called Tupper to pastoral ministry while simultaneously seeking a relationship with the Nova Scotia association.²⁴

As the Baptist presence grew in the Maritime provinces, their demand for ordained pastors increased. One of the primary reasons Baptists first associated in 1800 was to evaluate and ensure the orthodoxy of their pastors and churches. Until 1826 the Association appointed the council to examine ordinands and acted as the ordaining body. They often ordained successful candidates on the same day or within days of successful examinations. Since 1827 the associations reorganized their ordination process in a way still recognizable to Atlantic Baptists today. Churches sent their ordination candidates for examination before a council convened from among association churches. Following the examinations, the council sent recommendations back to each candidate's local church. This process demonstrated the attention they gave to the delicate balance of independence and interdependence that existed then and is widely maintained today.

23. Saunders, *History of the Baptists*, 221.

24. Levy, *Maritimes*, 96.

Community Causes

The 1828 NS Association assembly called for the establishment of the Nova Scotia Baptist Education Society. They believed they were responsible to develop the educational streams necessary to prepare members for ministry, seeking to dispel a growing public impression that “Baptists and Baptist ministers were...ignoramuses.”²⁵ Up to then, they were effectively shut out of the Church of England’s King’s College, as “[r]eligious test were required of faculty and students.”²⁶ I. E. Bill joyously recalls the decision to commission the Society’s work of establishing a theological school:

In the course of the proceedings a special meeting for consultation was called to consider the Educational question. It took place in a large room in Fowler’s Hotel. Solemn prayer was offered for Divine guidance, and then the matter was duly considered. Not a dissenting voice! All agreed to submit to the Educational plan for Associational action. The Fathers wept for joy. The young men preparing for the ministry gave glory to God that a brighter day was dawning upon them. All felt that God was present to bless.²⁷

Edward Manning, the school’s first president, was zealous to establish the seminary, believing that “in the onward march of the denominations, the Baptists, without an educated ministry, would be left in the rear, and would lose the power and influence they had already obtained.”²⁸ The Society purchased a farm in Horton (Wolfville) for the school’s location and began teaching Horton Academy’s first class of approximately fifty students on May 1, 1829. The mandate of the school was to give “a major emphasis to theological training...[also providing] matriculation requirements in English literature, classics, science, and other studies.”²⁹ Historian Edward Manning Saunders says that the “founding of the Academy added

25. Saunders, *History of the Baptists*, 180–181.

26. Priestley, “Narrative Attempt,” 312.

27. Bill, *Fifty Years*, 66–67. The “Fathers” of whom Bill writes are the early founders of the first Baptist Association in 1800.

28. Saunders, *History of the Baptists*, 181.

29. Fitch, *Baptists of Canada*, 116.

life and power to the churches” of the Nova Scotia association.³⁰ To fund their new educational venture, the association offered subscriptions to interested Baptists, in an effort to raise \$1,240.³¹

New Brunswick Baptists also felt driven to provide local ministerial education. In 1833 that province’s association began conversations that nearly immediately led to the formation of the Baptist Education Society of New Brunswick. In just under three years the work of this society led to the introduction of an initial class of seventy students at the New Brunswick Baptist Seminary in Fredericton, on January 4, 1836.³² The school in Fredericton remained open until 1871, while Horton closed its doors in 1959.

Shortly after the War of 1812, Presbyterian Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia George Ramsay, the ninth Earl of Dalhousie, recognized “how the Anglican exclusiveness of King’s [College] had proved detrimental to the colony.”³³ Following the war, the crown presented Nova Scotia a grant of between ten and twenty thousand pounds that had been collected as custom tariffs from the captured United States port of Castine, Maine — “a reward for [Nova Scotia’s] hearty devotion to Britain’s flag.”³⁴ With further financial support from the legislature Ramsay began the building of a new non-denominational college in Halifax named for his earldom. In 1818 Dalhousie founded his college, with the House of Assembly recognizing and accrediting the school in 1821. In 1838 Baptist minister, lawyer, and educator Edmund Crawley was denied a vacant Chair at the college, seemingly because “those in charge of the college felt themselves

30. Saunders, *History of the Baptists*, 206.

31. Fitch, *Baptists of Canada*, 49.

32. Levy, *Maritimes*, 121

33. Renfree, “Heritage and Hope,” 115.

34. Bill, *Fifty Years*, 110. Renfree says the the grant was £10,750 and Bill says it was £20,000.

bound to connect it exclusively with the Kirk of Scotland.”³⁵ It appeared that Dalhousie would not afford Baptists any more educational opportunities than King’s already had.

On November 15, 1838, the Nova Scotia Baptist Education Society resolved to establish its institution of higher learning. Perhaps Baptists had already been preparing for this move, for within two months, on January 21, 1839, and with twenty students, they opened Queen’s College on the grounds of Horton Academy. The following year, recently crowned Queen Victoria, the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, insisted that the college change its name, and “Acadia” was adopted. Four years later, in 1844, the college opened a Department of Theology, using a £100 endowment from the Baptist Missionary Society of England, a gift which was matched by the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces.³⁶ In 1947, a year after the unification of Maritime Regular Baptists, delegates voted to regard Acadia as the official college of the Convention.³⁷

Atlantic Baptists had shown their commitment to both preserving the integrity of their ministries and developing educational resources for the spiritual growth of the region. They also dedicated themselves to reaching the world for Christ through domestic and overseas missions. In 1814, the New Brunswick and the Nova Scotia associations collected funds for overseas missions, the latter collecting £8 13s at its annual assembly in Chester.³⁸ In 1827, a Baptist mission society was formed in Saint John and the first Atlantic Baptist women’s mission collectives, the Female Mite Societies, dedicated \$70 to overseas mission work.³⁹ A fervor for international mission work was peaking in both associations. By 1838 the two associations

35. Levy, *Maritimes*, 117.

36. Levy, *Maritimes*, 119.

37. Fitch, *Baptists of Canada*, 37.

38. Saunders, *History of the Baptists*, 209.

39. Bill, *Fifty Years*, 579.

agreed that their mutual interest in overseas missions should draw them into a joint effort of commissioning missionaries. In 1839, the associations' joint committee called Richard E. Burpee and arranged for his education at Queen's (Acadia) College. They fully funded Burpee's education and five-year Burmese mission, demonstrating that "from the very outset the Baptists were pledged to provide the support their missionaries required of the field, never expecting them to be responsible personally for raising the necessary funding."⁴⁰

On the home front, the 1830s saw rapid growth in Sunday School attendance, with hundreds of participants reported. Both associations began to establish formal structures to support the efforts of their churches' Sunday Schools and by 1840 the two associations began plans to work together in the development of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Sabbath School Union. Another concern, a temperance movement, also bound the two associations. Nearing the end of the 1820s societies dedicated to the cause of total alcoholic abstinence emerged throughout Nova Scotia's Baptist churches, with efforts soon mirrored throughout New Brunswick. By the summer of 1833 almost every Baptist church in the Maritimes had a society dedicated to the cause,⁴¹ among them I. E. Bill's Nictaux church stood apart, recognizing over 1,000 society members. The Baptists of Nictaux led an 1832 charge, seeking for the Legislature to ban the sale of alcohol. Historian Gerald Harrop indicts Maritime Baptists of that era and since, saying that it was in this "field of sumptuary legislation, *and only here*, that Maritime Baptists have made their social contributions."⁴²

40. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 86.

41. Fitch, *Baptists of Canada*, 50.

42. G. Gerald Harrop, "Canadian Baptists: An Historical Sketch," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 6, no. 2 (1964), 29; *emphasis added*.

Strategic Community Reorganization

The shared goals and common causes of home and overseas missions, Sunday School, and temperance “highlighted the need for closer co-operation among Baptists of the three provinces and particularly for greater integration of supporting fund-raising efforts.”⁴³ In 1844 Nova Scotians sent Charles Tupper as a messenger to the New Brunswick association meetings with an invitation to consider uniting all Maritime Baptists under a common banner.⁴⁴ In 1845 representatives of both associations began drafting a ten article constitution for a new joint effort.⁴⁵ On September 21, 1846 at First Baptist Church (Saint John, NB), the Baptist Convention of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island held its inaugural meeting, making their members “the first bona fide Convention of Baptists in British North America.”⁴⁶ At its nascence, this Convention represented 169 churches comprised of 14,177 members throughout the Maritimes. For the next fifty years they experienced average growth of approximately 28.6% per decade, growing to close to 49,000 members by 1896.⁴⁷ By 1904, on the eve of a move that has shaped their union since, Convention Baptists’ self-reported membership had grown to 51,463.

43. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 88.

44. Fitch, *Baptists of Canada*, 35.

45. The constitution outlined the purposes and administrations of the Convention, but made no mention of any doctrinal or confessional position. See Bill, *Fifty Years*, 351–353.

46. Renfree, “Heritage and Hope,” 88.

47. For years 1848–1879, see Bill, *Fifty Years*, ch. 10, “The Convention and Its Mission.” Statistics for 1880–1904 have been retrieved from annual copies of *The Baptist Year Book*, held at the Acadia University Archive.

Table B — Self-Reported Membership Growth by Decade (1846–1904)

Year	Population	Growth
1846	14,177	
1856	18,831	32.8%
1866	25,362	34.7%
1876	35,535	40.1%
1886	45,535	28.1%
1896	48,743	7.0%
1904	51,463	5.6%

Toward the Current Community

The Regular (or Calvinistic) members of the Convention were not the exclusive representatives of the Baptist expression in the region. Among the early Maritime Baptist churches were those who held to an Arminian or Free Will theology. Barrington in Nova Scotia represents one of the earliest churches to hold to such a position, its founding predating 1795.⁴⁸ In 1832 a Free Will Conference was formed in New Brunswick, which permitted its churches to practice open communion and was a strong proponent of the temperance movement. As the nineteenth century neared its conclusion increasing numbers of Free Will Baptists began to enter New Brunswick, predominately migrating from Maine. Soon the distinction between Free Will and Regular Baptists began to blur to such a degree that the once separate factions initiated conversations about uniting their efforts. But a major outstanding issue of significant disagreement between the two groups remained — that of closed or open communion.

Historian George Levy says that initial steps between the two groups were taken in 1845 when the Convention sent two delegates to visit Free Baptist churches in Queens and Shelburne

48. Priestley, “Narrative Attempt,” 310.

Counties.⁴⁹ Renfree notes the “first hints of a *comprehensive* union”⁵⁰ between Maritime Regular and Free Will Baptists were evident in 1882 when the two sects partnered to reopen the New Brunswick Baptist Seminary. Their relationship continued to develop and two years later the Maritime Baptist Convention invited the Free Baptist Conference of New Brunswick to a partnership in promoting overseas missions. By 1886 the two bodies established a joint committee to determine the terms under which their organizations might unite. The following year their hopes stalled when the Free Baptists elected to defer a decision. Divisions arose among the Free Baptists — some espousing a doctrine of holiness leading to entire sanctification through a second blessing. Nova Scotians and many in New Brunswick rejected this teaching. Out of this controversy, two groups left the Conference: the Reformed Baptists and the Primitive Baptists.

In 1900 New Brunswick Free Will Baptists corresponded with the Convention Baptists expressing their hopes that there may still be interest in forging the type of union they had discussed in 1887. Again in 1903, a joint committee was formed to consider the merger, with the delegates of both the Convention and the Conference accepting a proposed *Basis of Union* that same year. Finally, on October 10, 1905, the two groups came together in Saint John, New Brunswick, to declare the formation of the United Baptist Convention of the Maritimes; first at Waterloo Street Free Baptist Church then at Main Street Baptist Church.

The new Convention’s founding document, the *Basis of Union*, is “a carefully crafted document composed of a succinct eighteen-clause statement of faith and four simple articles

49. Levy, *Maritimes*, 269.

50. Renfree, “Heritage and Hope,” 205; *emphasis added*.

concerning polity”⁵¹ based on the 1833 New Hampshire Confession of Faith.⁵² Harrop, perhaps not as complimentary, calls the document a “masterpiece of doctrinal latitudinarianism.”⁵³ Free Will Baptists of Nova Scotia joined the others on September 3, 1906, during a service held at Zion Baptist Church in Yarmouth, NS, uniting them with the rest of the Convention churches.⁵⁴

Seemingly the primary barrier to an earlier union between Maritime Baptists had been issues concerning the Lord’s Supper. In 1886 and 1887 a joint committee of Conference and Convention leaders had presented an initial version of a *Basis of Union*, which included a statement on the Lord’s Supper that most of the Free Will Baptists could not accept. For a group that widely practiced open communion, a statement that restricted the Supper to baptized believers in Christ was untenable.⁵⁵ At the beginning of the twentieth century, several Convention churches in southwestern Nova Scotia began practicing open communion, opening the groups to renew discussions. The final 1905 version of the *Basis of Union* afforded the widest possible berth for both sects in the understanding of the communion celebration: “The Lord’s Supper is an ordinance of Christ, to be observed by the churches in the manner indicated by Him in Matthew 26:26–30.”⁵⁶

The current iteration of the convention they formed, the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, continues to rely on the *Basis of Union* as a unifying document, along with their “General Operating Bylaw.” The force of the *Basis* is notable. Those seeking ordination within

51. Renfree, “Heritage and Hope,” 208–209.

52. Significant portions of the *Basis of Union* are verbatim reproductions of the *New Hampshire Confession*.

53. Harrop, “Canadian Baptists,” 28.

54. Levy, *Maritimes*, 280–281.

55. Levy, *Maritimes*, 272–273.

56. CABC, *1905/06 Basis of Union: A Statement of Agreed Doctrine and Polity* (Saint John: Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, 2017),

the CBAC must demonstrate “their understanding of and substantial agreement”⁵⁷ with it, as do its member associations. The *Basis* serves not only to link Baptists who often diverge in biblical and theological understandings but also as a bridge between the Convention’s earliest and present days.

The founders of the early-nineteenth-century Nova Scotia Baptist Association, along with their twenty-first-century counterparts, would be able to see common values expressed in the *Philadelphia Confession*, the CBAC’s *Baptist Distinctives*, and the *Basis of Union*. The *Basis* speaks of Jesus as the redeemer of the world, whose sacrificial death and resurrection reveal him to be “the savior of all who believe.” The authors of the *Basis* regarded the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as divinely inspired, infallible, and the sole sufficient standard for faith and practice. While their statement concerning the Lord’s Supper is conciliatory, the authors of the *Basis* shared their predecessors’ convictions that baptism is reserved for believers, who are immersed in the Matthean trinitarian formula, in an act symbolizing Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.

The *Basis* describes churches as composed of regenerated and baptized members whose lives show “a disposition to joyful obedience to Christ and to holy conduct in life.” The authors of the *Basis* carefully described the relationship between local church independence and associational interdependence. Each congregation is called to the oversight and advancement of its local mission and simultaneously to fellowship with other churches of like faith and practice for mutual advice, assistance, and moral influence. Perhaps the place of civil government was a

57. CABC, *Regulations Concerning the Ministry* (Moncton: Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, 2021), section 2.1.C.1. See also sections 1.3.A.3; 2.5.B.2; and 2.5.B.2. Also note CABC, *General Operating Bylaw: A Bylaw Relating to the Transaction of the Affairs of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada* (Moncton: Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, 2021), sections 3.04.c.ii and 13.01.b.

point of contention between the late eighteenth-century Free Will and Regular Baptists. Both the *Philadelphia* and the *New Hampshire* confessions contain statements concerning the separation of church and state — an ideal that is absent from the *Basis of Union*.⁵⁸

Twenty-first Century Community Stressors

Two ecclesiological issues emerged among CBAC churches in the latter half of the twentieth century that continue to influence the Convention. These are the place of women in ordained and lead-pastoral ministry and the appropriate place for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community⁵⁹ within the church. Superficially these may appear to be simple questions of biblical interpretation rather than separate categories of ecclesiological thought. But, as Convention members continue decades-old conversations on both subjects, they show the distinction and weight each issue has within the CBAC. These two issues already serve as tests of fellowship within the associational lives of other churches across Canada, including among Baptists. If they are not yet fully regarded as sectarian distinctives, they may rightly be considered as closely approaching that status.⁶⁰ The debate on these matters reveals contention

58. See CABC, *Baptist Distinctives* (Saint John: Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, 2011), for a CBAC statement concerning the separation of church and state.

59. 2SLGBTQIA+ is an acronym that means 2 Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, plus other persons who explore sexual and gender identity.

60. Among others, Fellowship Baptists (Article 4.1.a.III) and the Canadian National Baptist Convention (CNBC; Bylaw 1.VI) prohibit female pastoral leadership as a test of fellowship. Among others, the North American Baptist Conference (NABC; “Constitution,” Article 3.2.1.1 and “Beliefs and Affirmation”) and the CNBC (Bylaws 1.XV and 1.XVIII) prohibit fellowship to churches permitting same-sex marriage. The CBAC prohibits its credentialed clergy from officiating or co-officiating in a same-sex marriage ceremony (CABC, *Regulations*, 22). Broadening to the global West, in late 2022, an Australian Baptist association resolved to “require not only its member churches but all clergy accredited by the association to affirm a belief in marriage as “a covenant relationship ordained by God as a lifelong faithful union of one man and one woman” and that “sexual intimacy outside such a marriage relationship is incompatible with God’s intention for us as his people.”” See Mark Wingfield, “Australian Baptist Association Requires Agreement on Its Statement on Marriage for All Affiliated Churches and Ministers.”

among CBAC churches and shows that both issues seemingly may have enough force to reshape their fellowship.

In this work's third and fourth chapters, I will show that Baptists have always rooted their ecclesiology in the two core convictions of the *Lordship of Jesus Christ* and the *Authority of Scripture*. An integral aspect of their identity is that Baptists strive to understand and follow the ways and will of Jesus while employing the Bible as God's divinely inspired guide and test for every aspect of their faith and practice. Any ecclesiology grounded in a base other than *Christ's Lordship* and *Scriptural Authority* is one "other-than-Baptist." Further, I will argue later that a Baptist ecclesiological model acknowledges God's sovereignty and comports with his will, guided and tested by an *ordinary* understanding of Scripture. I will show that the *ordinary* is that which is real and objective in the biblical texts, rather than that which is extraordinary or unreal.

The matters of female-ordained pastoral leadership and 2SLGBTQIA+ community member inclusion are different issues: one of membership segregation and castes, the other of redefining and normalizing sin. Still, Baptists understand that both are discernible through an *ordinary* read of the Bible. Female leadership among God's people is a consistent thread throughout Scripture. Their presence as persons with divinely appointed authority and voice is not extraordinary but real and objective to the biblical texts. Likewise, Scripture repeatedly prohibits same-sex activities, pronouncing them as sinful. Further, the Bible provides no alternative to or alleviation from this *ordinary* read of Scripture.

(2022): Baptist News Global. accessed December 18, 2022, <https://baptistnews.com/article/australian-baptist-association-requires-agreement-on-its-statement-on-marriage-for-all-affiliated-churches-and-ministers/>.

Church history professor Melody Maxwell⁶¹ traces the cautious twentieth-century approach Atlantic Baptists took as they debated the ordination of women within their movement. She shows that starting in the nineteenth century a few women preached but were discouraged by others who claimed that such ministries were unbiblical. In 1954 the United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces⁶² ordained their first female ordinand, Josephine Kinley Moore⁶³ — one Maxwell regards as an outlier and pioneer in ministry.⁶⁴ Moore was the sole woman recommended for ordination by the Atlantic Baptist's examining council in the 1950s and only one other was put forward in the 1960s. In 1971 the Convention amended the guidelines to its examining council to include women as candidates. Still, a 1979 poll showed that 53 percent of Convention pastors opposed female ordination. Nevertheless, nine women were recommended for ordination in the years between 1970 and 1986.

The issue remained unresolved as the Convention gathered in 1986. That year a group opposed to women in ministry brought a notice of motion to the assembly floor that "the examining council be directed, in keeping with biblical principles, no longer to examine women for Ordination to Pastoral Ministry."⁶⁵ The motion was put to the 1987 Convention assembly and defeated by a margin of nearly four to one. Of the 719 delegates who voted, 570 or 79.3 percent voted against the proposed prohibition. Though there had seemingly been a significant shift in

61. Maxwell also serves as the Director of the Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, Canada.

62. An earlier name for the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada.

63. Port Williams United Baptist Church brought Moore forward for ordination.

64. Melody Maxwell, "Proceed With Care: Atlantic Baptists and Women's Ordination in the 1980s," *Baptist History and Heritage* 55, no. 1 (2020), 53.

65. Maxwell, "Proceed With Care," 57 (esp. n. 36). Maxwell recalls the minutes of the 1986 assembly: *Minutes*, Executive Meeting of the Atlantic United Baptist Convention Council, Esther Clark Wright Archives, Acadia University, Wolfville, NS, August 1986, 45.

opinion in the eight years since 1979,⁶⁶ the issue remained unresolved. The 1986 notice of motion had spurred the Convention to task a committee to study the issue more closely. The committee acknowledged that both sides offered biblical support for their positions and “refused to take an official position on it, in effect leaving the decision about whether to ordain women to the local church.”⁶⁷ The Convention has not addressed the matter since 1987, the 1986 committee’s non-position is still that of the CBAC, and the matter of women in ministry remains unresolved among them today.

At the same time, Atlantic Baptists last addressed the issue of ordaining women they first expressed themselves on matters directly related to what is now known as the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. The 1987 assembly passed a resolution affirming biblical understandings of heterosexual marriage and of condemnation of and rejecting homosexual relationships. While the assembly respected the principle of local church independence, they urged their member church and associations “not to grant licenses to preach or ordain practicing homosexuals.”⁶⁸ Nearly ten years later in 1996, in response to Canadian federal law protecting against discrimination based on “sexual orientation,”⁶⁹ the assembly of Atlantic Baptists passed a resolution affirming the one they had issued in 1987.

Over the next decade, Atlantic Baptists passed four more resolutions either affirming heterosexual, monogamous marriage or denouncing same-sex relationships.⁷⁰ In 2005 they

66. A reduction in opposition from 53% in 1979 to 20.7% in 1987.

67. Maxwell, “Proceed With Care,” 60.

68. CABC, “Homosexuality,” *1987 Assembly* (1987),

69. CABC, “Homosexuality: Reaffirmation of Position,” *1996 Assembly* (1996),

70. See “Statement Affirming a Christian View of Marriage” (1999), “Resolution on the Distinction Between Marriage and Same-Sex Relationships” (2002), “Resolution: Public Witness and Same-Sex Unions” (2003), and “Resolution Re. Same Sex Marriage” (2005). All are available online to CBAC registered users at <https://baptist-atlantic.ca/login/cbac-resolutions/>.

passed a resolution voicing their position that “God’s design for the expression of human sexuality is the union of a man and a woman in a lifelong marriage relationship” and that this design is disrupted by sin which has “led to various kinds of unnatural sex acts.”⁷¹ They reiterated their understanding of biblical condemnation of same-sex relationships and commended their churches to adopt policies and procedures aligned with the values expressed in the resolution. The 2005 resolution also contained an exclusivity statement directed toward the Convention’s accredited members of clergy:

BE IT RESOLVED that the solemnization of same-sex marriage is inconsistent with the interpretation of the Scriptures and contrary to the faith and practice of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, and therefore we believe that pastoral leaders serving in the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches should not officiate or co-officiate at any same-sex marriage ceremony.⁷²

This resolution continues to shape CBAC identity as its effect prohibits pastors accredited with the Convention from officiating or co-officiating same-sex marriage ceremonies.⁷³

As Atlantic Baptists move toward the two-hundred, twenty-fifth anniversary of their church association, the issues of women in ministry and the place of 2SLGBTQIA+ persons appear to be able to shape the Convention as much as historical distinctives have. Tammy Giffen, the lead pastor of Groundswell Church, believes that the CBAC should move toward a united position on women in ministry. She says, “Baptist women have been ordained in Atlantic Canada since the 1950s. But we’re still holding to the idea that each local church should have the right to discriminate and come to their own position on this. I think it’s time that we rethink this and make an agreement that, as an association, all the churches of the CBAC welcome women in ministry.”⁷⁴ Garth Williams, Associate Executive Minister of the CBAC also contemplates a

71. CABC, “Same Sex Marriage,” *2005 Assembly* (2005),.

72. CABC, “Same Sex Marriage,” 1.

73. CABC, *Regulations*, section 2A, pg. 22.

74. Tammy Giffen, interview by author, Truro (online), November 28, 2022. Tammy Giffen is the

unified Atlantic Baptist position on the matter. He says, “I wonder if the CBAC will eventually head toward a more centrist-conservative view in which all our churches agree on a more egalitarian framework and a common recognition and acceptance that God has equipped both women and men equally for pastoral ministry. And, if we do, what would the impact of that type of decision mean for pastors and churches who hold to a complementarian interpretation of scripture?”⁷⁵

In the next chapter I will expand on a 2022 survey in which I asked CBAC pastors their perspectives on same-sex relationships. It is enough here to state that their openness to same-sex relationships and ordaining members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community may be widening. In an interview, John Jeffries⁷⁶ was asked about how the issue of same-sex relationships is affecting fellowship within the CBAC. His response is ominous for the future of the current shape of the CBAC, “I know pastors in my zone,⁷⁷ not all exactly my age but maybe in that upper Gen X down to Gen Z zone, who have already decided they can't keep their home here because they're not willing to operate in a non-affirming environment.”

In their nearly two-and-a-quarter centuries of associating together, the churches of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada have partnered for the spiritual well-being of their people and the organizational health of their denomination. As they continue through the first half of the twenty-first century in an increasingly post-Christian Canada, they face new ecclesiological

ordained lead pastor of Groundswell Church in Truro, NS — a member church of the CBAC.

75. Garth Williams, interview by author, Truro (online), November 11, 2022. Garth Williams is an Associate Executive Minister with the CBAC and is responsible for denominational leadership development.

76. John Jeffries, interview by author, Truro (online), July 27, 2022. John Jeffries is a pseudonym for a CBAC ordained lead pastor in an urban Nova Scotia setting, who asked not to be identified by name.

77. By “zone,” Jeffries appears to intend “age bracket” or “generation.”

decisions that will surely reshape their association. In 2019, the last full year before the global COVID-19 pandemic, CBAC churches reported memberships of 36,226, down from 40,101 members the previous year.⁷⁸ Unity in both theological positions and objectives saw an early-nineteenth-century movement of fewer than 1,000 members explode to over 60,000 in just over a century.⁷⁹ Perhaps as Atlantic Baptists rediscover what they have in common, they will find a new basis and purpose for their union.

78. CBAC statistics for the decade leading in 2019 show steady declines in membership population, which are partially confirmed by church givings to the denomination. In 2010 churches self-reported 58,924 members. The CBAC reported financial receipts from the churches of \$2,485,227 that same year. In 2019, their membership had decreased by 38.5% since 2010; their financial contributions to the CBAC falling by 22.5% in the same span, to \$1,925,923.

79. The last year CBAC reported memberships exceeding 60,000 was 2008.

Discovering Current Atlantic Canadian Baptist Beliefs

Introduction

The community of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada does not enjoy the same solidarity of theological conviction its eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century predecessors once did. As I showed in the first chapter, they initially organized their movement around their stated purposes of clerical integrity, desires for spiritual strength in fellowship, and evangelistic fervor to proclaim Christ and his kingdom. As they grew in numbers they shared a commitment to have increased Christian impacts, both in Atlantic Canada and overseas. They dedicated themselves to developing Christian education and higher learning in their region and were intentional about growing and supporting missions, locally and abroad. Their community enabled their missions.

Atlantic Baptists living in an increasingly post-Christian, twenty-first-century Canada are straining to meet their cultures with a unified voice. Previously unassailable convictions in every aspect of Baptist ecclesiological thought once united Atlantic Baptist as a community of shared values and purposes. A new picture is emerging from CBAC clergy — an image that may represent their movement on the whole. A surprising number of clerics express individualized perspectives that rely on influences other than historic or modern Baptist biblical interpretations. Indeed, many of these developments follow cultural trends rather than the teachings of the church — a theme examined in the next chapter. Increased disunity will lead to further schisms than are already surfacing and will disable their ability for future missions.

To better understand current beliefs among CBAC pastoral leaders, I conducted two stages of research probing their perspectives on ecclesiological matters. The first was an online

survey of CBAC pastors and scholars conducted between April 1 – May 31, 2022. Respondents voluntarily self-selected to participate in the research; thirty-nine were from New Brunswick, forty-six were from Nova Scotia, and ten were from Prince Edward Island. Ninety respondents identify their primary ministry as pastoral and five indicate theirs is in scholarship. Nine respondents identify as female, eighty-one identify as male, and five did not to reveal their gender. Respondents also provided their ages, ranging from 25 to older than 75 years, and the level of theological education they have completed.

In the second part of this research, I conducted a series of one-hour interviews with thirty-seven individual members of the CBAC clerical community. These members include both survey respondents and others who otherwise volunteered. Several of those interviewed asked that I hide their identities due to their concerns about the nature of the material and publicly sharing their perspectives.¹ I asked interviewees a series of questions focusing on ideas in six areas concerning current and future Baptist identity within the CBAC.² Together, the survey and the interviews offer significant insights into how leaders either apply or want to apply their ecclesiological views within a Baptist context.

In this chapter, I will predominately draw on the survey to show that today's CBAC leaders continue to place a high value on many traditional Baptist beliefs yet show signs of division and individualized ecclesiological movement. These shifts may be related to how leaders respond to their relationships with their constantly developing surrounding cultures.

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1. In reporting on these interviews I may leave pastors "unnamed" or use pseudonyms where appropriate. One question that arises from the desire for anonymity is: "What does the desire for pastoral leaders to remain anonymous when answering questions related to their perspectives of denominational beliefs and values mean for unity within the denomination?"
 2. The questions that formed the basis of the interviews are shown in Appendix D — "Interview Questions."

While Christ's Lordship remains their paramount value, their understanding of how he desires them to engage their time and place is not as unified as it once appeared. The place of Scripture in the Baptist community remains high but CBAC clerics show signs that they are beginning to displace it with other influences.

Atlantic Baptist leaders are signaling changes in their understanding of "belonging" within their communities of faith. Some question the ideal of regenerate church membership, even the construct of church membership, as meaningful or essential. The matter of membership is complicated all the more as debate continues concerning the place 2SLGBTQIA+ community members should have in the life of the church. These leadership conversations are often complicated by relational and emotional factors of family and friends who are part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Still, as Atlantic Baptists attempt to answer these and other questions they may be prepared to reemphasize their denominational interconnectedness and interdependence.

In the following sections, I discuss each of CBAC's ten published distinctives³ individually. In the first part of the survey, I asked respondents to rate (1, the lowest – 5, the highest) how important each distinctive is to them currently.⁴ In the survey's second part, I asked respondents to provide their views of how important they believe each of those distinctives would be to their visions of an ideal CBAC future. I also asked survey respondents about their levels of agreement⁵ with twenty statements gleaned from the Basis of Union and twenty-eight statements gleaned from various resolutions adopted by historic CBAC assemblies. Further,

3. See Appendix A — "Definitions of Baptist Distinctives" for definitions.

4. See Appendix B — "How Important are the Distinctives?"

5. Respondents chose from: "Strongly Disagree," "Somewhat Disagree," "Neutral," "Somewhat Agree," and "Strongly Agree."

while the interviews were not isolated to survey respondents, they also provide significant insights into potential developments in the ecclesiological thinking of CBAC clergy. In the fourth chapter, I will integrate portions of those interviews with historic and contemporary Baptist thought and scholarship as I present a conservative ecclesiology suitable for Atlantic Baptists on mission in a post-Christian, twenty-first-century Canada.

Surveying Beliefs

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

The sovereign supremacy of Jesus Christ remains the single most important belief among the people of the CBAC. They claim that “Jesus is Lord of both the church and the individual” and that “every area in the believer’s life and the life of the church is to be subject to the Lord...[who is] the supreme authority.”⁶ In evaluating their current beliefs, survey respondents are nearly unanimous in ranking *Christ’s Lordship* as their highest ecclesiological priority. One individual from Nova Scotia’s Silent Generation (75+), who has attained a master’s level theological degree is the only respondent to score this category four out of five.

Looking to the future of their movement, respondents showed diversity in their agreement that an understanding of Christ’s supremacy is important to their ideal vision for the CBAC. Just over 92% of New Brunswick participants stated that it was *completely important* to them, while in Nova Scotia almost 98% responded the same, as did all Prince Edward Island respondents. Frank Guinta, a former CBAC Regional Minister with close to six decades of

6. See CABC, *Baptist Distinctives* (Saint John: Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, 2011), “The Lordship of Jesus Christ.”

pastoral experience, excellently articulates the primacy of *Christ's Lordship* for the expressions and actions of faith among the people of the CBAC:

I'm happy to make the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, both of the Church and the individual. And so, he is central to who we are as a fellowship. Most importantly, he's the one to whom we give our allegiance. His principles are what we follow as a community of faith. And in the same manner and within the context of the fellowship, there is the expectation that as an individual, whether I'm with the fellowship or outside the fellowship, that the confession of Christ causes me to be in submission to Him wherever I am.⁷

While all respondents say that it is important, the weakest response is from Millennial (35–44) clergy, with only 86.67% of them agreeing that *Christ's Lordship* is *completely important* to the CBAC moving forward. All four respondents who agree that the distinctive is *somewhat important* have master's degrees.

Those surveyed offer another perspective through their responses to *Basis of Union* statements concerning *Christ's Lordship*. All of them agree that “Jesus is Lord of both the church and the individual.” Their unity diminishes to 95.8% agreement in the CBAC claims of the exclusivity of salvation in Christ alone, with 6.67% of Millennials (35–44) and 4.55% of younger Baby Boomers (55–64) in strong disagreement. All who dissent have master's degrees. The survey also reveals that some do not necessarily see an affiliation between Christ's lordship and the salvation he offers. Only 91.6% of respondents agree that personal salvation is contingent on permitting Jesus to personally lead as Lord. Those who disagree are between the ages of 45 and 64 years, possessing master's and doctoral degrees.

7. Frank Guinta, Jr., interview with author, Truro (online), October 13, 2022. Frank Guinta is a former pastor and Regional Minister within CBAC, CBOQ (Toronto), and CBWC (Edmonton) communities and is ordained within the CBAC.

The Authority of Scripture

Members of the CBAC say that “the scriptures are inspired by God” and are “the only perfect, supreme, infallible and sufficient standard of faith and practice.”⁸ Respondents rank this understanding 4.78 out of five and fourth highest in the set. While those in NB and PEI hold this distinctive in second position, scoring it 4.95 and 4.90 respectively, Nova Scotians make it their fifth-highest conviction with a score of 4.61. Generation X and Millennial clergy give *scriptural authority* its lowest scores, scoring it 4.76 and 4.53, respectively. Possessors of bachelor’s degrees score this area 4.69; lowest among educational sectors.

Perhaps leaders in NS perceive different paths forward for the CBAC than their counterparts. In their visions for the future, 95.6% of Nova Scotians state that *scriptural authority* is important moving forward, while all PEI and NB respondents regard it as such. One Nova Scotian respondent states that *scriptural authority* is unimportant for the future of CBAC churches; that person is a member of Generation X (45–54) with a doctoral degree.

Baptists have historically afforded near-supreme respect to Scripture as their sole guide and test for faith and practice. Atlantic-Baptist show moves away from this position in the levels of agreement respondents have to statements originating in both the *Basis of Union* and several Convention resolutions. Respondents are unanimous that “the Scriptures are inspired by God.” However, they are not as unified in their understanding of the Bible as “the only perfect, supreme, infallible, and sufficient standard of faith and practice,” with only 91.6% agreement. Cross-referential analysis on the topics of abortion and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community supports this movement. On abortion, 89 of the 95 respondents say that they agree that the “Scriptures speak abundantly clear of the sanctity of every human life from the moment of conception.” Of

8. CABC, *Distinctives*, “The Authority of the Scriptures.”

those 89, nineteen do not agree that abortion should be opposed except for maternal-health reasons and sixteen do not agree that the Bible speaks clearly against abortion.⁹

The nineteen clergy members who agree that Scripture reveals a sanctity of life from conception yet who see abortion as permissible give *biblical authority* a score of 4.53, a result 0.25 less than the overall average. Those who agree that Scripture holds life as sacred from conception give this distinctive an average score of 4.80. Those who do not so agree give the distinctive a score of 4.50. Clergy who agree that abortion should be restricted to situations of grave maternal risk give *scriptural authority* an average score of 4.87. Those who do not agree with that position on abortion score it 4.50.

Respondents also demonstrate shifts in their regard for Scripture when considering issues related to members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Seventy-one of the clergy surveyed say that they agree that the “Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament condemn the practice of homosexuality.” Of those 71, five do not agree that persons involved in same-sex relationships should not be considered for either church licensing or ordination. They score *biblical authority* 4.80 out of five. Six of them do not agree that CBAC churches should develop policies that affirm marriage exclusively as a union between one woman and one man, and they give the distinctive a score of 4.67. Five of them also do not agree that CBAC pastors should refrain from officiating in same-sex marriage ceremonies, and they score the distinctive 4.60.

9. This constitutes 20% of all respondents on the first matter and 16.8% on the second.

Table C — *Biblical Authority* scores by resolution agreement

Resolution	Agree	Not Agree
Scripture prohibits homosexual practice	4.86	4.54
CBAC affirms biblical marriage as one man and one woman	4.88	4.29
Churches should develop policies to affirm biblical marriage	4.88	4.50
Same sex marriage is contrary to Scripture	4.89	4.32
CBAC Pastors should not solemnize same sex marriages	4.87	4.50

Overall, the data show that clergy members whose values align closely with those expressed by the CBAC community have a higher regard for the *Authority of Scripture* than those whose views diverge from the community norms. The data show, on at least the matters of abortion and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, those who diverge appear to be governed by influences other than Scripture in making decisions of faith and practice. Tim Johnson serves on the Leadership Administration Team of Bridge Church, in Marysville, NB. His perspectives on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion show the complexities some see in the matter and demonstrate how extra-biblical sources shape his position. He says:

It's my personal belief that those who demand "right doctrine" over "right action" should be avoided. As Baptists, we're placed in a negative light by the beliefs of the dominant Southern Baptist Convention related to women in ministry, and by the negative press of groups like Westboro Baptists on matters of homosexuality. When conflicting values of Scripture and practice occur, ethics issues must be handled in a wise and delicate manner — with Arminianism and Calvinism both demand the *Lordship of Christ* and the inspiration of *Scripture*. And we as the Atlantic Baptists have learned to, to disagree without being disagreeable. It is best in my opinion for a local church to withdraw from an association than for it to be voted out over disagreements on faith and practice.

And on the topic of homosexuality in our Convention right now, I think everyone should read Marlene Knowles' dissertation *Opening the Door* published this spring, on homosexuality, and be having a discussion in our Convention about it...How do I navigate this? [A friend] recommended that I read a book called *People to be Loved*. Anyway, I read it and had a great conversation with a particular person who identifies himself as "they/them." And it was very enlightening. And I was so grateful that [my friend] put me on to that book. Because the practice of a person's sexuality when they're open with it can be a major barrier for them being able to use their gifts, talents, and expressions of creativity in our local churches — in particular roles, like teaching.¹⁰

10. Timothy Johnson, interview by author, Truro (online), June 17, 2022. Timothy Johnson is an

Roland Bench is a pseudonym for a pastor in an urban setting. In the survey, Roland is neutral on all resolution statements regarding same-sex relationships, including that of the biblical prohibition on such activity. He shares a perspective that bears the signs of religious individualism, shaped by extra-biblical forces, and leading to an extraordinary and novel read of Scripture (and reinterpretation of regeneration). He notes that he continues in ministry following divorce and that several of his family members self-identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ community members.

There's six passages, roughly, that talk about homosexuality. And I think when I read some of those, I now am asking, "Have we actually understood those? Do they actually say what we think they say?" And, I'm not convinced they say what I think. Can we come to understand them in a better way? For me what I am compassionately considering is not a full acceptance of an LGBTQ lifestyle, with no holds barred. What I'm open to considering is the possibility that God might still honor relationships that are mutual, consensual, loving, committed, even in marriage. And, I'm not saying I'm there. But I'm neutral, because I think that there's a possibility that God might actually allow for that. I was preaching on Acts, chapters 10 and 11, where the early church is totally scandalized by the possibility that Gentiles could have the Holy Spirit. So what I say to myself is, if someone who's LGBTQ can be formed in the image of God, which every Christian would affirm, and if it's possible for them to be filled by the Spirit of God — well, if God says they're clean, who am I to stand in the way and say no?¹¹

Johnson and Bench highlight that conversations about inclusion are abstract for virtually no one in the West, let alone the CBAC. Almost everyone in Atlantic Canada has beloved friends

ordained member of the Leadership Administrative Team of Bridge Church in Marysville, NB — a member church of the CBAC. Without debating Pitman-Knowles (Marlene Pitman-Knowles, "Opening the Door: To the Possibility of Changes in the CBAC With Respect to Homosexuality and Same-Sex Relationships," diss., Acadia University, 2022).), her perspective appears to partially emerge from an extraordinary reading of Scripture. She asks her reader to consider factors not apparent in the biblical texts. She reasons that the OT prohibitions refer to unmentioned forms of sexual worship of gods other than Yahweh, undisclosed assumptions of procreative-necessity inherent to the text, or aspects of a male-dominant patriarchy (pg. 92); the OT stories that support same-sex prohibitions should be regarded as fables about hospitality (pgs. 97–98); and she reads the NT admonishments against same-sex behavior to mean whatever the reader desires for themselves personally (pgs. 99–103). Pitman-Knowles' final appeal to Scripture is to a supposed and biblically-extraordinary homosexual relationship between a young David and his best friend Jonathan (pg. 103). Pitman-Knowles' attempt to redefine the meaning of Scripture is one of religious individualism, a subject treated in depth in the next chapter.

11. Roland Bench, interview by author, Truro (online), June 23, 2022. Roland Bench is a pseudonym for a CBAC ordained pastor in an urban setting, who asked not to be identified by name or location.

and family who self-identify as members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. These types of questions are most often personal and emotional. Still, from an ecclesiological perspective, the factors of divergence from their community orthodoxy (expressed through their *Basis of Union* and *Baptist Distinctives*) and their lower regard for Scripture independently indicate growing religious individualism among CBAC clergy. Together, they assuredly confirm its harmful presence.

Religious individualism is a form of self determination that is governed by one's personal understandings of religious texts or perceived divine encounters. It is a force antithetical to the collectivist perspectives of religious institutionalists who subscribe to the language, rites, and traditions of their communities of faith. The next chapter will largely focus on the insurgence of forms of individualism in the West. Individualism is an organizational infection that, if left untreated, threatens the very existence of the communities that are its hosts.

Priesthood of Believers

Atlantic-Canadian Baptists believe that “all believers share as equals in the church, and, in turn, have a priestly role toward each other.”¹² In the survey they place this second highest among their current convictions, scoring it 4.84 overall. Prince Edward Island and NB members rank it third, scoring it 4.70 and 4.90 respectively, while NS participants score it 4.82, ranking it second for them. Generations X (45–54) and Y (25–34) clergy give this distinctive its lowest scores (4.71 for each), while older Baby Boomers (65–74) unanimously score it five. Those with bachelor and doctoral degrees have high regard for a *believers' priesthood* within their existing churches, scoring it five and 4.89 respectively.

12. CABC, *Distinctives*, “The Priesthood of the Believer.”

Looking to their ideals, all respondents state that this understanding will remain important in their ecclesial future. Still, just under 74% of those from NS regard it as *completely important*, compared to about 87% in NB 90% in PEI. This subtle shift is most obvious among Millennial (35–44) clergy — 40% of them say that an understanding of *believers' priesthood* is *somewhat important* to their visions for Atlantic Baptist futures. Those with advanced degrees appear to be reconsidering their view of this distinctive as they look to the future of their movement. Nearly twenty-three percent of those with a master's degree and just over twenty-one percent of those with a doctoral degree say it is *somewhat important*.

Reflecting on their *Basis of Union*, 96.8% of respondents say that “[d]ifferences in education, wealth, gender and so on do not disqualify a person from service or from serving God through ministry to others.” Somewhat surprisingly, only 93.7% of them agree that all Christians share as equals in the church. The dissenting clergy are older than 45 years and hold either a master's or doctoral degree. Their view of Scripture is consistent with the survey average; they score it 4.67.

Their dimming view of equality within the church may be related to individualized perspectives of community initiation. The overall average score for *believers' baptism* is 4.47. The clergy who do not agree with church-member equality score that distinctive 4.17. Further, only half of them agree that believers' baptism must precede entry to the local church, while overall agreement with that position is 73.40%. Communities of faith that exhibit internal cohesiveness insist on incorporating sets of shared traditions and rituals into the faith practices. Individualistic religious expressions place no such mandates on their members. These and related matters are the subject of the next chapter.

For now, it is enough to say that those clergy who do not agree that all are equals in the church show signs of religious individualism. Their view of their community's ritual of initiation, the very ritual for which their movement is named, is significantly less than that of their peers. These data offer only the smallest of clues to their perspectives. Could it be that their views on baptism affect their understanding of member equality? If all members do not share the same initiation, does the movement inadvertently create community castes or classes? These factors may underlie the views of the dissenting clergy, who score *Priesthood of Believers* 4.33; 0.51 points lower (or -10.5%) than the overall average of 4.84.

Soul Liberty

Baptists in Atlantic Canada hold that every person has "direct access to God through Jesus Christ...that no group has the right to force others to believe or worship as it does...and that God has given all people freedom of choice."¹³ Those surveyed make this distinctive their third highest priority, giving it an overall score of 4.81 out of five. Leaders in PEI and NS followed that trend with scores of 4.70 and 4.78 respectively, while those in NB saw this as their fourth highest priority with a score of 4.87. Younger Baby Boomers (55–64), score *soul liberty* highest among age brackets, making it second highest in their own set behind *Christ's Lordship* with 4.95 out of five. Among their peers, Millennials score it the lowest at 4.60. From an educational perspective, those with doctoral degrees give the distinctive a low rating of 4.63.

Looking ahead, all but one of the respondents see soul liberty as important to the future of their movement, with a single *neutral* response emerging from a member of Generation X (45–54) who possesses a doctoral degree. Signs of potential changes in how Atlantic Baptists

13. CABC, *Distinctives*, "Soul Liberty."

regard this distinctive appear in younger and the highest educated clergy. Forty-two point eight percent of Generation Y (25–34) and 40% of Millennial (35–44) clergy consider *soul liberty somewhat important* for their ideal visions of their movement’s future. Thirty-six point eight percent of those with doctoral degrees consider it *somewhat important* or remain *neutral*.

While Baptists, including those of Atlantic Canada, have been champions of religious freedoms from their inception, they also understand Scripture to reveal that God is accessible through Jesus alone. This understanding of *solus Christus*, once impervious to internal attack or question, is now seemingly open to reconsideration. Surprisingly, respondents share only 93.7% agreement that Christ is the sole “path to God.” Disagreement is among those aged 35–64 years, all of whom have either master’s or doctoral degrees and are from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Those who see other “paths to God” signal that they are, at least partially, religious individualists. They not only diverge from historic Baptist thought, but break from two millennia of orthodox Christian teaching. Eight distinctives of the ten are collectivist in nature — they incorporate and develop the community. They are *Christ’s Lordship*, *Biblical Authority*, *Priesthood of Believers*, *Regenerate Membership*, *Believers’ Baptism*, *the Lord’s Supper*, the *Associational Principle*, and the *Separation of Church and State*. Two distinctives are individualist in nature — they inform and foster the growth of persons and congregations as individualized selves. These are *Soul Liberty* and *Local Church Independence* or *Autonomy*. Those who see other “paths to God” score seven of the eight “collectivist” distinctives lower than the overall averages. Further, they score the two “individualist” distinctives higher than the overall.

Table D — Comparative scores (Overall / “Other Paths”)

Distinctive	Overall	Other Paths
Collectivist		
Lordship	4.99	5.00
Scripture	4.78	4.00
Priesthood	4.84	4.50
Membership	4.62	4.33
Baptism	4.47	3.83
Lord’s Supper	4.73	4.50
Association	4.36	4.17
Church/State	4.56	4.33
Individualist		
Soul Liberty	4.81	4.83
Autonomy	4.15	4.33

Indeed, those who see “other paths” dissent from positions held by the CBAC while simultaneously agreeing with widely held societal norms on issues significant to an increasingly post-Christian Atlantic Canadian culture. They depart from the perspectives of their faith community and adopt those of the surrounding culture in their opinions on euthanasia, abortion, and 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion (including ordination and same sex marriage). Religious individualists, or progressives, tend to be conformed to their surrounding cultures rather than influence them; a theme opened further in the next chapter.

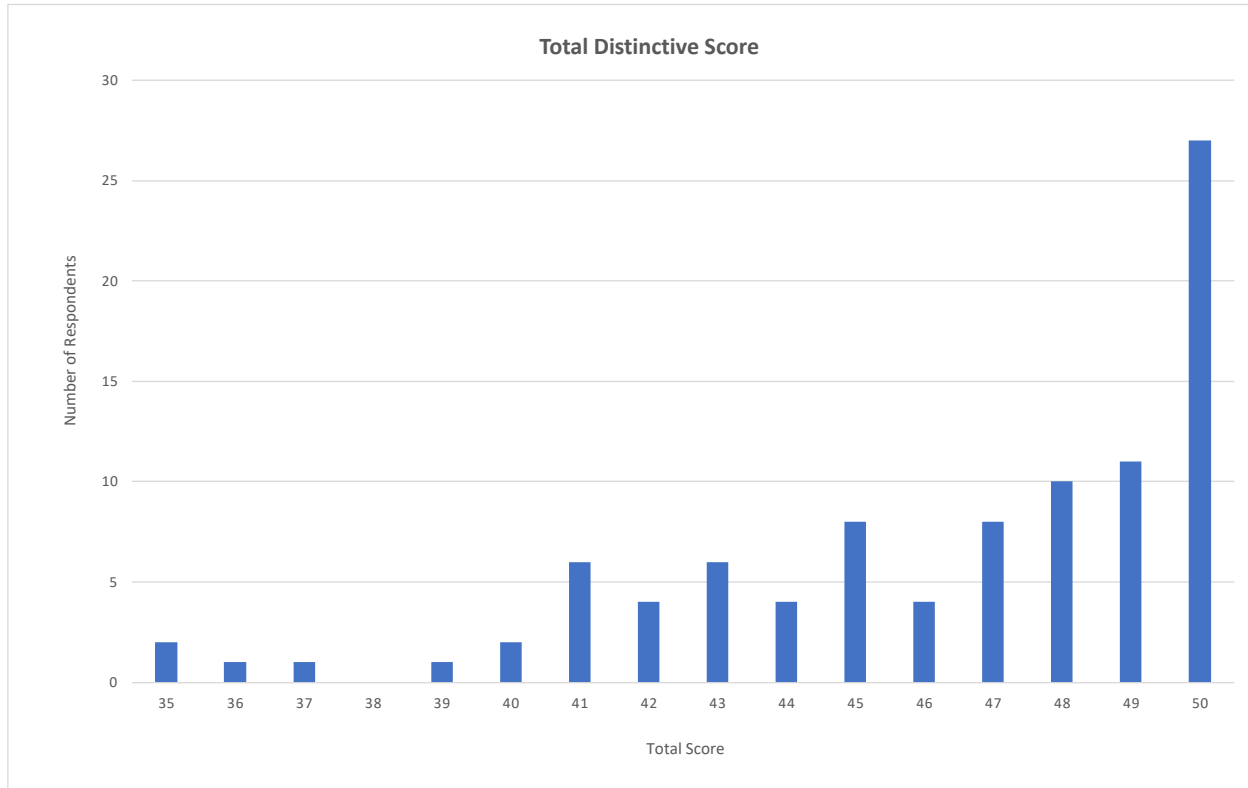
One “other paths” respondent presents an interesting case. He is a millennial (35–44) with a master’s degree. He places low values on *Scriptural Authority* (3), *Believers’ Baptism* (2), and the *Lord’s Supper* (3). He is neutral to or disagrees with the *Basis of Union* on the matters of

the necessity and sufficiency of Christ's crucifixion, Christ's lordship over Christian life, the place of believer's baptism as an initiatory rite, the composition of the church as those baptized, the eternal damnation of the unsaved, and the independence of local churches. He constructs an ideal ecclesiological future in which regenerate church membership, the Lord's Supper, and believers' baptism are unimportant. Finally, he disagrees with the CBAC's positions on the issues of abortion, 2SLGBTQIA+ community inclusion, and euthanasia. Two questions are unavoidable. How does this clergy member truly fit into the CBAC and why does he continue to affiliate with a community with which he so disagrees?

The discovery of this respondent prompted analysis to understand levels of CBAC-identity satisfaction among the clergy members. The previously described respondent is not alone in having multiple areas of disconnection with CBAC doctrine. Another Millennial with a master's degree gives scores of three to six of the ten distinctives. Two others, a member of Generation X (45–54) and a Younger Baby Boomer (55–64), also give low scores to six distinctives, and one Generation Y (25–34) cleric gives four distinctives low scores. Each of these show disconnections from CBAC corporate values in different ways.

To further examine the levels of potential disjoint among Atlantic Baptists, I calculated the aggregate scores for all distinctives for each respondent. While 28.4% of all respondents' aggregate scores are 50 (fives for all distinctives) and an additional 22.1% have scores of 48 or 49, 5.3% of respondents' aggregate scores are less than 40 (average of four for all distinctives). Encouragingly for the people of the CBAC, 94.7% of respondents' aggregate scores are 40 or higher (demonstrating average scores of at least 4 out of 5), and 71.6% are 45 or higher.

Table E — Aggregate Distinctive Scores



In the another part of this analysis, I reviewed responses from fifty-nine respondents whose scores for each of the ten distinctives was four or five. The table below shows their absolute data and percentage those data represent to each sub-category.

Table F — Demography of respondents who score all distinctives 4 or 5

Distinctives 4 or 5 (n=59)	Absolute	Sub-category Percentage
Age		
25–34	4	57.1%
35–44	5	33.3%
45–54	11	52.4%
55–64	16	72.7%
65–74	12	66.7%
75+	11	91.7%
Education		
No Degree	4	66.7%
Bachelor's	9	69.2%
Master's	35	61.4%
Doctoral	11	57.9%
Province		
New Brunswick	26	66.7%
Nova Scotia	26	56.5%
PEI	7	70%
Gender		
Female	2	22.2%
Male	52	64.2%
Prefer Not Say	4	80%

From the perspective of placing high value on Baptist distinctives, a picture begins to emerge of a version of a prototypical members of clergy in the CBAC. She or he is between the ages of 55 and 74 years, has a bachelor's or master's degree, and lives in New Brunswick or PEI. Further analysis shown in the table below reveals that these respondents are not as unified on cultural issues confronting their churches.

Table G — Resolution agreement of respondents who score all distinctives 4 or 5

Distinctives 4 or 5 (n=59)	Absolute	Percentage
Oppose abortion	47	79.7%
Oppose euthanasia	41	69.5%
Scripture prohibits homosexual conduct	45	76.3%
Oppose ordaining 2SLGBTQIA+	47	79.7%
Oppose solemnizing same-sex marriage	46	78.0%

Of the 59 respondents who score each of the distinctives four or five, 33 oppose abortion, euthanasia, the ordination of members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and same-sex marriage; and believe that Scripture prohibits same-sex relationships. If one of these respondents represents a type of ecclesologically ideal Baptist, unswayed by cultural pressures, this pastor is older than 65 years (40%), has a bachelor's or doctoral degree (53.8%) and lives in Nova Scotia (37%).

Regenerate Church Membership

Baptists of the CBAC have historically said that Christian life “requires a personal acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord,” permitting Christ “to control your life as Lord [in an] act of faith and believer’s baptism, [which] must precede membership in the local church.”¹⁴ While respondents in all three provinces differ on the place of importance for *regenerate church membership*, overall they score it 4.62, making it sixth among their priorities. New Brunswick leaders make it their fifth priority, Nova Scotians regard it as sixth, and those in PEI see it as tied for seventh. Older Baby Boomers (65–74) not only give *regenerate church membership* its highest generational score (4.89), but among themselves they also see it as a

14. CAB, *Distinctives*, “Regenerate Church Membership.”

second highest priority, tied with *scriptural authority*. Generation X (45–54) clergy members give the distinctive its lowest generational result (4.43), making it their sixth highest priority. Those with advanced degrees hold *regenerate membership* in higher regard than their peers with less theological education. The highest (4.80) and lowest scores (4.50) are given by those with doctoral degrees and those with no degrees respectively.

Divergence from traditional Baptist structures begins to surface in how those surveyed envision the future of belonging in their churches, with only 87.4% regarding *regenerate church membership* as important to the denomination's next chapters. While most of those who are neutral on the matter are from NS (n=6), proportionally 20% of those from PEI do not hold it as important. Those who regard it as unimportant for their futures are in all three provinces. Further, all who see *regenerate church membership* as unimportant to the future of the Atlantic Baptist community are Millennial (35–44) and Generation X (45–54) clergy with master's degrees.

Regenerate Membership is the understanding that persons must be converted Christians who have enacted their faith through believers' baptism preceding their entry to membership in a local church. *Believers' Baptism* is the covenantal initiatory act that proclaims the faith of those baptized while demonstrating their unity with and commitment to the body of Christ. *Soul Liberty* is the understanding that each person is able and free to directly access God, without the aid of any other person. *Regenerate Membership* and *Believers' Baptism* are collectivist distinctives and *Soul Liberty* is individualistic. Those who do not regard *Regenerate Church Membership* as important for the CBAC's future give lower average scores for these three distinctives and amplify their religious individualism. While they are almost consistent with the overall average on *Soul Liberty*, scoring it 4.75 ($\mu=4.81$), they score *Regenerate Membership* and

Believers' Baptism remarkably lower than their peers, giving the distinctives 3.75 ($\mu=4.62$) and 3.58 ($\mu=4.47$) respectively.

Respondent considerations of their *Basis of Union* amplify this shift in historic Baptist understandings of belonging. Less than three-quarters, 73.4% of respondents, agree that believers' baptism is required to enter local church membership. These clergy score *Regenerate Membership* 4.82, while those who do not agree with a baptismal requirement score it 4.08. Only 60% envision Christian churches as congregations of baptized believers. These score *Regenerate Membership* 4.72, while their peers who do agree score it 4.47.

These are not the only indicators of changes occurring in how CBAC members are beginning to understand church belonging. Reflecting on statements from their historic resolutions, 25.3% of respondents do not agree that the Bible condemns same-sex relationships and 24.2% do not agree with restricting members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community from serving in ordained pastoral ministry. While not direct parallels to this work, other CBAC work seems to corroborate that shifts are underway. A CBAC survey conducted in 2014 shows that, at that time, about 15% of their clergy thought the Bible had been misunderstood on the matter of same-sex relationships. That survey's 2021 follow-up shows that that figure had grown to about 35%.¹⁵

These shifts in scriptural interpretation appear to be fostering changes in how CBAC clergy understand sin and righteous living — 31.3% do not reject an increasing acceptance of gay lifestyles. This trend of increasing alignment with twenty-first-century, post-Christian, Western, secular values is also seen in the previously mentioned CBAC surveys and is symptomatic of progressive, or individualistic, religious expressions. In 2014 about 87% of their

15. CABC, "Leadership Survey (2020) & Taking Stock Survey (2021)," (2021), 18. See "Scripture Has Been Mis-interpreted."

respondents said same sex sexual relationships are sinful. That figure had dropped to about 74% in 2021.¹⁶ Returning to the current survey, 25.3% of the respondents do not object to CBAC clergy solemnizing same-sex marriages. This openness is strongest among Millennials (35–44) and Generation X (45–54) clergy, with them showing 26.7% and 19% disagreement with the current CBAC prohibition. None of the Generation Y (25–34) clergy surveyed share that perspective. All those surveyed who are open to CBAC solemnization of same-sex marriages possess advanced degrees. The previously mentioned CBAC surveys show a trend toward this acceptance. In 2014 approximately 90% of that survey’s respondents said that they “fully support the [CBAC] affirmation of marriage” — a figure that dropped to about 79% in their 2021 results.¹⁷

Some within the CBAC appear ready to make other significant moves to affirm same-sex relationships as biblically normative. Twenty-four point two percent of respondents say they are prepared to discuss or move forward with the licensing and ordination of members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This includes 40% of Millennials (35–44), 23.8% of Generation X (45–54), and 33.3% of Silent Generation (75+) clergy, with nearly all openness among those with master’s and doctoral degrees.

Those who reimagine Atlantic-Baptist belonging are either reconstructing ideas of regeneration or dismissing them altogether. What could this mean for the future of their movement? Reflecting on CBAC origins is instructive. At the inception of their regional organization, nine churches formed their first association. But these were not the only nine churches in their province. Others in Halifax refused to join that 1800 association because of

16. CABC, “Leadership / Taking Stock,” 18. See “Acting on Same-Sex Attraction is a Sin.”

17. CABC, “Leadership / Taking Stock,” 20. See “Fully Support Affirmation of Marriage.”

differences in theological understandings of baptism and the Lord's Supper. In 1809 the association adopted the position of the Halifax Baptists and welcomed those churches. Still, the move was not unopposed, and four churches withdrew from the association.

Nearing the beginning of the twentieth century, Regular Baptists (who first associated in 1800) began a dialogue with Free Will Baptists about ideas of associating together. For more than 15 years, the groups discussed the possibilities of uniting their groups, but again, differences in theological perspectives on baptism and the Lord's Supper kept them apart. The Regular Baptists insisted on close communion, while the Free Will Baptists practiced open communion. By 1905 they found a solution that satisfied most and presented a *Basis of Union* to unite the two groups. This document was widely based on the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* but not in its statement on the Lord's Supper. This conciliatory move did not satisfy everyone — several churches withdrew from the proposed amalgamation. More troubling, the article on the Lord's Supper written into the *Basis of Union*, intended to forge a union between Christian sects, is theologically empty.

New Hampshire Confession	Basis of Union
...[believers' baptism] is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation, and to the Lord's Supper; in which the members of the church by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ; preceded by solemn self-examination.	The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Christ, to be observed by the churches in the manner indicated by Him in Matt. 26:26–30.

The history of the CBAC shows that its people have always been willing to strive for unity in belief and purpose. When necessary, they have spent years attempting to bridge differences toward cooperative efforts and belonging. But they have not been boundless in their attempts. The churches that founded the first Atlantic Canadian association at the start of the

nineteenth century struggled to bridge differences with Halifax Baptists on the issues of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Nearing the beginning of the twentieth century, Free Will Baptists found the prospects of a merger with Regular Baptists unacceptable and separated from their sister churches. In 2012, First Baptist Halifax withdrew from the CBAC, ostensibly over the rights of churches to exercise local autonomy. Atlantic Baptists understand that theirs is first a Christian mission. Their primary call is to Christ and his will expressed through Scripture. When differences in religious conviction have been untenable, they have braved the consequences of remaining separate or breaking fellowship. They have always understood that their Christian witness to the world is their key initiative and the focus of their movement. It was and is their purpose.

Baptism

The Clergy of the CBAC holds less regard for *believers' baptism* than their statements of faith indicate.¹⁸ Surveyed leaders place baptism as their eighth priority, giving the rite an overall score of 4.47. This trend holds across provincial lines, with leaders in PEI and NB ranking it seventh in their considerations (4.60 and 4.67, respectively), while those in NS score it 4.28, placing it ninth. Millennial (35–44) clergy shows the most divergence from the CBAC's stated positions on *baptism*, scoring it 4.13, making it their second lowest priority behind local church independence. Those with no degree give *believers' baptism* a low score of 4.33.

18. From CABC, *Distinctives*, "Regenerate Church Membership": "...believer's baptism must precede membership in the local church" and "Baptists practice believer's baptism by immersion. It is one of the first significant acts through which the believer proclaims personal faith in Christ and is initiated into church life and ministry." From CABC, *1905/06 Basis of Union: A Statement of Agreed Doctrine and Polity* (Saint John: Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, 2017), "A Gospel Church": "We believe that a church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers..."

An interesting trend is apparent in the scoring between the two ordinances of *believers' baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*. In all but two sectors across regional, age, and educational lines (Age: 25–34 and Education: No Degree), respondents score the *Lord's Supper* higher than *believers' baptism* — in the other two they tie the results. Indeed, a similar trend shows that respondents also consistently rank *regenerate church membership* lower than the *Lord's Supper*, often placing it between the two ordinances. These trends raise further questions concerning congregational composition that cannot be answered here. Could this be more evidence of shifts in Atlantic Baptist understandings of belonging within the context of CBAC churches? Scripture reveals that believers' baptism is a one-time act of entry into both the universal and local church. The Lord's Supper is given as a repeated act, intended to draw local congregations back together and toward their Lord. Why do CBAC clergy place a higher value on a rite of community reaffirmation than they do on the qualifications for and initiation into their communities?

Looking into their future, 91.6% of the Atlantic Baptist leaders surveyed state that they see that *believers' baptism* will play a significant role in their ideal ecclesiologies. Two respondents, a Millennial (35–44) and older Baby Boomer (65–74), both with advanced degrees, say that it will be unimportant to the future of CBAC churches. As noted in “Regenerate Church Membership,” 26.6% of respondents do not agree that believers' baptism should be compulsory for membership in a CBAC church.¹⁹ Generation X (45–54) and Millennial (35–44) clergy with

19. Confusingly, considering the historic importance Baptists of the CBAC have placed on believers' baptism for both local church and denominational belonging, merely 69 respondents (72.6%) agree that believers' baptism must precede local church membership and only 57 respondents (60%) say that a church is a congregation of baptized believers. Surprisingly, only 47 respondents (49.5%) agree with both statements — showing that 17.5% of respondents who envision the church as a congregation of the baptized do not see believers' baptism as a necessary aspect of entry to those congregations (note: this represents 10.5% of all respondents).

higher levels of education offer the strongest voices against compulsory baptism, 23.8% and 13.3% of them respectively disagreeing with any such mandate.²⁰

Beyond their dissent from their faith community's norm, these clergy further accentuate their individualistic tendencies, scoring *Soul Liberty* higher than the average, 4.85 ($\mu=4.81$). They deemphasize the role of the Bible, scoring *Scriptural Authority* 4.53 ($\mu=4.78$) and *Regenerate Church Membership*, giving it 4.08 ($\mu=4.62$). The displacement of believers' baptism in their faith expression is confusing, especially considering the religious movement is named for the ritual. Those who do not agree with its place in their community's life score it 3.71; 0.76 points lower or 17% less than the average.

The Lord's Supper

The *Lord's Supper* and its proper place within faith communities have been a matter of discussion, if not contention, among Atlantic Canadian Baptists since they first associated in 1800. Their surveyed current leaders rank the *Lord's Supper* as their fifth highest priority, giving it an overall score of 4.73 out of five. That scoring is consistent across provincial lines, with NS, NB, and PEI ranking it as fourth, fifth, and tied for third respectively. Age appears to be a factor in how clergy members view the rite. The three highest scores are from the older generations (55–75+) while the three lowest scores are from younger clergy (25–54). Those with a bachelor's degree score the *Lord's Supper* 4.92 and those with no degree give it 4.33.

20. As noted in the section above "Regenerate Church Membership," 40% of respondents do not agree with the *Basis of Union* statement, "A church is a congregation of baptized believers." Disagreement with that statement is seen in all sectors except one: older Baby Boomer (65–74) respondents.

Almost 96% of all respondents agree that the *Lord's Supper* will continue to play an important role in the ecclesial lives of CBAC churches moving into the future. Millennial (35–44) clergy with master's degrees are the only respondents to diverge from this perspective. While their numbers are small, those who do not regard the *Lord's Supper* as important for the future of the CBAC are unanimous in their ambivalence and disagreement concerning the place of baptism in the life of the local church. Of the 92 respondents who do see the *Lord's Supper* as important moving forward, 69 agree that “[b]elievers’ baptism must precede membership in the local church” and only 57 agree that a “church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers.”²¹ The discrepancy between these data shows a slim majority of respondents do not relate the ordinance of the *Lord's Supper* to either *believers’ baptism* or to Baptist congregational life in ways that once were unquestionable.

Local Church Independence

Despite the historic place *local church independence*, or *autonomy*, has had in the Atlantic Baptist community, today's leaders are deprioritizing it. Respondents rank *autonomy* tenth in their ten-item list, giving it an overall score of 4.15. This result is similar along provincial lines. New Brunswick and NS leaders position it tenth and those in PEI rank it ninth with a score of 3.80. While all age brackets provide low scores in this area, the three youngest generations score is lower than the three older — Millennials (35–44) giving it 3.93. Those with advanced degrees also score *church independence* lower than their peers — holders of doctoral degrees score this area 3.89.

21. Only 47 of the 95 clergy respondents (49.5%) regard the Lord's Supper as important to the future of CBAC churches AND agree that believers' baptism is mandatory for church entry AND agree that local churches are congregations of the baptized.

Looking to their *Basis of Union*, CBAC clergy members show their relationship with *local church autonomy* is complex. While 86.3% of respondents say that individual churches are competent to govern and administer the affairs of their particular local contexts, only 54.7% agree that “[e]ach church is independent.” Indeed, only 50 respondents (52.6%) say that churches are both locally competent and also independent of each other. Millennials (35–44) share the dimmest view of local church capabilities — 13.3% of them disagree with the idea of congregational competency. While clergy of all ages disagree with the independence of each church, the most pronounced dissent is seen in 42.9% of those from Generation X (45–54). The most rigorous defense of both local church competency and *autonomy* emerges from those of lower education, with those possessing no degree expressing the least disagreement with both constructs.

Eighty-one of the responding clergy (84.4%) say that *autonomy* is important to their vision for the future of the church. The value of *autonomy* appears highest in NB, where 87.2% of leaders see its importance for what is ahead. Support for its future is weakest among Millennial clergy (35–44), with only 66.7% of them regarding it as important to how the CBAC moves forward. As if to exaggerate generational divides, 91.7% of the Silent Generation (75+) see *autonomy* as important for the future of the CBAC and present the distinctive’s strongest defense. Clergy with a bachelor’s degree seemingly have the highest regard for *local church independence*; 100% saying it is important to the future of the CBAC.

Inter-church Association

The churches of the CBAC are united together by an *associational principle*, which they express as their recognition of “the importance of cooperation [among] churches of ‘like faith and order.’”²² Surveyed leaders rank it as their ninth highest priority, scoring it 4.36. Leaders from all three represented provinces score *association* low on their surveys: NS ranking it eighth, NB, ninth, and those in PEI position it last. Still, across all sectors, they afford it greater value than *local church independence*. The two exceptions are among clergy in PEI and from those with no degree. On near-opposite ends of the age spectrum, both Millennials (35–44) and older Baby Boomers (65–74) give *association* approximately 12% higher scores than they do *autonomy*. This same 12% differential is also apparent in how those with doctoral degrees view the two distinctives.

Despite the lower prioritization clergy place on *association* when considering their denominational distinctives, their engagement with the *Basis of Union* indicates that they may be receptive to efforts to reemphasize their togetherness. With near unanimity, 94.7% of respondents agree that cooperating with churches of like faith and order is important. Those with doctoral degrees and those with no degree are unanimous in their agreement on the importance of cooperative efforts. Further, 91.6% of them agreed that their “churches are interdependent” — an affirmative response nearly 40 percentage points higher than their agreement on *church independence*! Among the generations, the only dissent emerges from 9.1% of younger Baby Boomers (55–64), while 7.7% of those with bachelor’s degrees also disagree.

Prospects appear favorable for tighter affiliation within the associated community of the CBAC. Ninety-two point seven percent of respondents say that *association* is important to their

22. CABC, *Distinctives*, “Local Church Autonomy.”

ideal visions for that body's future. Generation X (45–54) and Silent Generation (75+) clergy are unanimous in regarding this principle as important to the future of their denomination. The authors of the previously mentioned 2021 CBAC survey asked two questions in their section on church and 2SLGBTQIA+ community relations that help understand desires among clergy for stronger associational ties. The first asked respondents if churches should be obligated to uphold decisions made at denominational levels. The second asked if the CBAC should interfere with local-church decisions made on related matters.²³ While comparing the 2021 data to 2014 showed some inclinations toward *autonomy*, the majority of respondents signaled their desires for greater associational unity and strength. In 2021, approximately 62% of respondents said they agreed that churches should be obligated to uphold CBAC decisions and about 58% said they approved of denominational interference on the 2SLGBTQIA+ issue.²⁴

Separation of Church and State

Baptist origins are rooted in the idea that everyone should be free to worship according to his or her understanding; the state should not compel any religious position.²⁵ Today's CBAC leaders continue to uphold these beliefs, scoring them 4.56, and ranking them seventh in the survey. Clergy in PEI give the ideal its highest provincial score of 4.70, followed by New Brunswickers with 4.62, and Nova Scotians at 4.48. Baby Boomers show the most appreciation

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23. An extension of the question's logic is to ask to what extent are Baptists, such as those of the CBAC, willing for their denominations to interfere with local-church decisions on *any* issue, within the context of associational life, values, and policy.
 24. These results are down from 2014, with 66% and 67% agreement on the first and second questions respectively in that year.
 25. Thomas Helwys, co-founder of the Baptist movement in 1609, wrote *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* in 1611/12, in which he petitioned English King James I to refrain from setting spiritual laws and governors over the people of the nation.

for a *separation of church and state*, with both the younger (55–64) and older (65–74) scoring the distinctive 4.82 and 4.78, respectively. Each of the three youngest generations scores it lower than the three older sets; Generation Y (25–34) clergy scoring it 4.14. Scoring along educational lines remains consistent with the overall average, with those with no degree providing the lowest score: 4.33.

Overall 93.7% of respondents see that the *separation of church and state* will remain important to the CBAC futures they envision. The only dissent is from a solitary younger Baby Boomer (55–64) with a bachelor’s degree. Those surveyed show that while they are prepared to enter the arena of public morality and policy formation, they continue to respect the church’s role as different than the government’s. Where once their predecessors fronted a “united stand against any tendency to commercialize Sunday,” now approximately only a quarter (25.3%) of respondents agree that Sunday should be a day reserved for the church. This impression is highest among the mere 6.7% of Millennials (35–44) and 14.3% of Generation X (45–54) clergy who so agree.

While not directly related to church and state separation, responses to several historic CBAC resolutions show next generational leaders interact with their surrounding cultures in different ways than older generations. The churches that formed the CBAC once took tremendous pride in their roles of initiating and growing the Canadian Temperance movement. Today, only 16.3% of clergy aged 25–54 (*including* no Millennials) agree with the CBAC’s 1971 protestation against the promotion of alcoholic beverages, compared to 59.6% of those aged 55 and older.

Forty-one point nine percent of respondents between 25–54 years agree that alcoholic consumption compounds societal and moral ills, while 80.8% of their peers aged 55 and older

share the same concern. Considering perceptions on how the consumption of cannabis adds to cultural detriments, 51.2% of those aged 25–54 are concerned, as are 69.2% of their older peers. Sixty-seven point four percent of younger clergy and 86.5% of their older peers oppose the generation of governmental revenues through legal gambling. Finally, 82.7% of clergy aged 55 and older regard abortion as a form of killing and against God’s law — a number that falls to 72.1% of their younger peers. The authors of the previously mentioned 2021 CBAC survey asked if their denomination should be more politically active on the issue related to abortion. In 2014, approximately 54% of respondents were agreeable to such a position, a figure that tumbled to about 33% in their 2021 follow-up.

Conclusion

Unity among the Atlantic Baptist clergy is strained, at least partially, by divergence in ecclesiological perspectives. Some may wonder if the CBAC is moving toward divisions. The data indicate that a split of sorts has already occurred. But what is the root of these divisions? Some might suggest generational or educational divides, and they are partially correct. Indeed, Millennial (35–44) clerics are developing a different faith expression than their peers or predecessors. In the next chapter, in a discussion on the effects of individualism, I will show that Millennials (35–44) place lower value on Baptist identifiers than their peers. They provide the lowest scores for the collectivist distinctives *Scriptural Authority*, *Regenerate Church Membership*, *Believers’ Baptism*, and the *Lord’s Supper*. Simultaneously, they even give the lowest scores for the individualist distinctives *Soul Liberty* and *Local Church Independence*.

Age alone does not explain this discrepancy with Baptist identity. In the following two chapters, I will show that the community identity of the CBAC is a construct of shared values

and purposes. For Baptists, those values historically emerge from two central convictions: Jesus Christ is Lord, and the Bible is the authoritative guide and test for faith and practice. Departures from either of these two foundational beliefs are forms of religious individualism that necessarily lead to the development of faith expressions other than Baptist.

All respondents, but one, place the top value of five on the distinctive *The Lordship of Jesus Christ*. Clerics do not differ on this. But they are not unified in how they regard *Scriptural Authority*. Only 79 (or 83%) of respondents score the distinctive 5. All others give *Scriptural authority* a lower score. This devaluation of the place of Scripture is unmistakably connected to the shifts away from Baptist and CBAC values and identity. Those who give *Scriptural Authority* a score less than five also afford every other Baptist distinctive (except *Christ's Lordship*) lower scores than their peers who place top value on the Bible. The table below shows this troubling trend.

Table H — Average value of each distinctive by *Biblical Authority*

Distinctive	All (n=95)	Score 5 (n=79)	Score < 5 (n=16)
Priesthood	4.84	4.89	4.63
Soul Liberty	4.81	4.85	4.63
Membership	4.62	4.75	4.00
Baptism	4.47	4.66	3.56
Lord's Supper	4.73	4.78	4.44
Autonomy	4.15	4.23	3.75
Association	4.36	4.43	4.00
Church/State	4.56	4.58	4.44

The differences between those who place top value on Scripture and those who do not are only accentuated in analyzing their agreement with Atlantic Baptist ecclesiological and cultural

perspectives. The table below outlines clergy agreement with CBAC positions on issues important to the church and wider society, based on their views of Scripture. The data show that clergy who score *Scriptural Authority* five out of five are consistently, and often significantly, more aligned with historic CBAC values than their peers.

Table I — Statement agreement by *Biblical Authority*

Statement / Resolution	Score 5 (n=79)	Score < 5 (n=16)
Only through Christ can salvation be known	96.2%	93.8%
There is only one path to God	97.5%	75.0%
Scripture is infallible standard for faith and practice	98.7%	56.3%
Believers' Baptism must precede membership	78.5%	43.8%
Church is congregation of baptized believers	64.6%	37.5%
Scriptures clearly articulate life's sanctity from conception	94.9%	87.5%
Oppose abortion except for maternal health	81.0%	43.8%
Scripture prohibits abortion	82.3%	56.3%
Scripture prohibits homosexual practice	79.8%	50.0%
2SLBTQIA+ members should not be licensed or ordained	82.3%	43.8%
CBAC affirms biblical marriage as one man and one woman	89.9%	43.8%
CBAC Pastors should not solemnize same sex marriages	81.0%	43.8%
Euthanasia is never acceptable	64.6%	56.3%
Trends toward MAiD are wrong	69.6%	50.0%

Further analysis shows that younger clergy members do not value Scripture to the same degree as their older peers. The table below shows the percentage of respondents who see top value in *Biblical Authority*, by age bracket. The low result for Millennials (35–44) partially explains that generation's previously noted moves to develop an “other-than-Baptist” faith expression. But it does not explain why emerging CBAC leaders are displacing this core

conviction from its proper priority in their ecclesiological constructs. The sociological study of Western individualism provides insights into the dynamics seen in these twenty-first-century leaders who increasingly move in their own directions. Further research is required to understand their reasoning more fully.

Table J — Score *Biblical Authority 5*, by age bracket

Age	Score 5		
25–34 (n=7)	85.7%	72.7%	76.7%
35–44 (n=15)	66.7%		
45–54 (n=21)	81.0%	86.0%	
55–64 (n=22)	90.9%		
65–74 (n=18)	88.9%	86.7%	86.7%
75 or older (n=12)	83.3%		

Once unquestionable Baptist distinctives are now debated — their place in the Atlantic Baptist future seems to be a freshly opened discussion. Clerical leaders contest the significance of Jesus and question the veracity of his word. They turn to sources other than Scripture to find and test doctrinal truth. They are transforming their churches from bodies of wholistic mission-focused believers into evangelistic outposts on a supposed frontier. They want a connection to their past — a taste of the holy. They abandon the costs of baptism and maintain the celebration of the Eucharist.

The glimmer of hope is that they value stronger connections with each other. Something inside them knows they should not — they cannot — walk the Christian road alone. But they are not truly united. If they continue the same trajectory, they will find that their identity is no longer Baptist in any historical sense. Even as Jacob and Esau blessed each other and went separate ways to occupy the land (Gen 33:4–17), the people of the CBAC must now confront decisions

about their shared, or distinct, futures. Atlantic Baptists wanting missional effectiveness in their increasingly post-Christian settings will need to unify around organizational values and purposes grounded in *Christ's Lordship* and the *Authority of Scripture*. Is this their moment to bless each other then travel separate paths?

In the next chapter, I will trace the roots and effects of individualism, a cultural force that threatens the fabric of communities, churches, and even nations. I will show how religious individualism prevents even the most well-meaning churches from advancing their causes in effective ways. Near the chapter's end, I will define the *ordinary* — a perspective of biblical interpretation that I hope will serve the people of the CBAC as they strive for renewed unity in their mission together.

The Self and the Church

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I showed that CBAC clergy are not as unified around their expressed values, that is, their stated ecclesiological beliefs, as they once were. In this chapter, I will trace the roots and growth of cultural individualism, a societal movement that is a significant factor in the value shifts among the members of the CBAC. Decades of research show tighter bonds among collectivist communities of faith, such as Jewish synagogues or the Roman Catholic church, than in more individualistically oriented, post-Reformation Protestant expressions. If I am correct, Atlantic Baptists, whose ecclesiological understanding affirms forms of autonomous individualism, face possibilities of denominational peril. Should this force remain unchecked among them, the people of the CBAC should expect increased levels of dissonance as an aspect of their community's experience.

In the second part of this chapter, I will define an *ordinary biblical interpretative* model appropriate for Baptist Christians living in an increasingly secularized post-Christian, twenty-first-century Atlantic Canada. Perhaps the moves that see Western churches, including those of the CBAC, immersed in widespread individualistic ideologies¹ have been and continue to be unintentional. I will proceed under this assumption: Atlantic Canadian Baptists want their movement, that is, their organized local church and associational (denominational) collectives, to continue their Christ-centered missions into the future. If this assumption is correct, they will

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1. Uecker and Froese refer to *expressive* (do what make you feel happy), *utilitarian* (do what you think helps you prosper), and *religious* (do what you think God wants you to do based on your own personal feelings or perceptions of God) individualism. See Jeremy Uecker and Paul Froese, "Religious Individualism and Moral Progressivism: How Source of Religious Authority is Related to Attitudes About Abortion, Same-Sex Marriage, Divorce, and Premarital Sex," *Politics and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2019), 316 for a helpful flowchart to better understand sources of moral authority.

need to collectively and intentionally provide counterforces to the pervasiveness of individualistic consumerism.

The journey to self-sovereignty has been one of many decades. Any attempt to reclaim a “culture of community” within the church and denominational life of the CBAC may be multi-generational. A biblically *ordinary* ecclesiology could help express their shared corporate values, possibly leading to a fresh articulation of the basis for their union. This is an early intervention against the destructive forces of individualism so apparent in the changing and disjointed, even “other-than-Baptist,” religious expressions growing within the CBAC. Atlantic Baptist leaders wanting these cultural changes in their denomination’s future should begin the transitions necessary to guide their people toward such a perspective. It is not too much to state that unity in belief and purpose is essential to the health and effectiveness of their churches and denomination.

Individualism: The End of Community (or, Me not We)

The Self’s Claim to Sovereignty

Individualism is a cultural or societal force that promotes each person’s self-interests, self-expression, and self-governance above those of all others, including those of the societies in which those persons participate.² It is a force harmful to any organization striving for the corporate strength and unity necessary to achieve community objectives. Co-leaders of McKinsey’s Organizational Effectiveness practice Robert Waterman and Thomas Peters say that

2. Jonathan Weiser, “Collectivism or Individualism? The Tower of Babel as a Sociolinguistic Metaphor With Implications for the Theory and Practice of Messianic Redemption,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 57, no. 1 (2022), 135.

organizations are far more than their structures and strategies.³ Effective organizations are bodies of people striving for common superordinate, or higher-order, goals. These “guiding concepts...[sets] of values and aspirations...are the fundamental ideas around which [an organization] is built.”⁴ The powerful effects of cultural-wide individualism make the discovery of shared values, perhaps, coincidental and the establishment of community goals a daunting leadership challenge.

Atlantic Baptists are a faith community who have long held to theological convictions that, in the least, tacitly affirm forms of individualistic religious experience. They say that “each person...[has] direct access to God”⁵ and that each individual possesses inherent freedom to understand God’s will through Scripture. While their *Basis of Union* envisions a community of faith in its discussion of *Believers’ Baptism*, the CBAC’s distinctives document outlines baptism as an act of the individual “believer [who] proclaims personal faith in Christ.”⁶ Further, their *Basis of Union* says that “each church is independent”⁷ and their distinctives hold that “each church is competent under Christ to look after its own affairs and has freedom from coercion from other bodies.”⁸ While the people of the CBAC have biblical support for these beliefs, such positions are susceptible to the abuses of selfish human nature, especially in an individualistic-consumer culture.

3. Robert H. Waterman Jr, Thomas J. Peters, and Julien R. Phillips, “Structure is Not Organization,” *Business Horizons* 23, no. 3 (1980), 14–15.

4. Waterman Jr, Peters, and Phillips, “Structure,” 24.

5. CABC, *Baptist Distinctives* (Saint John: Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, 2011), “Soul Liberty.”

6. CABC, *Distinctives*, “Baptism.”

7. CABC, *1905/06 Basis of Union: A Statement of Agreed Doctrine and Polity* (Saint John: Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, 2017), “Article I.”

8. CABC, *Distinctives*, “Local Church Autonomy.”

Carl Trueman is a church historian whose scholarly theological work focuses on the relationships between communities of faith and their surrounding cultures. His 2020 monograph *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* is a thorough examination of the origins and insurgence of individualism in Western society. Trueman's work is helpful to any attempting to understand cultural relocations of authority, moves toward relativism as the only absolute, and plasticities of self-understanding and -identity. Trueman draws on his understanding of sociologist Philip Rieff's work to trace the origins of modern Western individualism to nineteenth-century Europe — the birthplace of the West's current therapeutic age.

Rieff saw the present shift away from “community” and toward individualized self as advancing through two cultural reversals. First, new perspectives have transformed the roles of therapy. Historically, therapists helped their patients understand and adapt to their communities, enabling them to fit and live better in them. This promotion of the whole led to an increased commitment to the community than it did to the individual within it. Within the church, pastors and priests served this function, training individuals in communal symbolism, rituals, and language, encouraging higher levels of participation in their communities of faith.⁹

In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, political and social philosophers, such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche, began to regard that understanding of community as repressive and needing to be overthrown. Twentieth-century philosophers, such as Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, expanded on those earlier ideas, saying that the community is oppressive, and requires revolutionary change — especially as it understood its sexual ethic. The community and its conformities were no longer good for the individual. Accordingly, therapists, including those

9. Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central, 43.

in the church, should focus their attention on individualized persons, protecting them against the interests and homogeneity of the community. These developments press forcefully against the Baptist convictions of *Regenerate Church Membership* and *Believers' Baptism*, which assert all members should at least conform to Christian identity expressed through the initiatory rite of baptism as a believer. Merely 76.6% of the surveyed clergy say that *Believers' Baptism* must precede membership in a local church.

This led to the second reversal: the individual's commitment turning away from the community to "first and foremost to the self...inwardly directed."¹⁰ Once, collections of individuals were bound together through common practices, beliefs, and institutions to find meaning in a community outside themselves. Indeed, this deteriorating historical understanding of community is at the core of Baptist ecclesiology. Now the increasingly isolated individual strives to establish purpose in the self, mostly disassociated from the institutions that serve as merely "platforms for performance, where individuals are allowed to be their authentic selves precisely because they are able to give expression to who they are 'inside.'"¹¹ In pursuit of forms of self-aggrandizement, the individual turns to the church as another venue well-suited for their own performance, rather than intended for their formation.

The shift in which the institution now serves the individual's needs of self-fulfillment necessarily leads to the reduction, even elimination, of perceived objectivity. Trueman explains, "unhindered by outward pressure to conform to any greater reality, the individual is king,"¹² with institutions, including education, forced to bend to a sovereignty of the self. Rejecting the external authorities on which education relies, the individual forms meaning according to the

10. Trueman, *Rise and Triumph*, 44.

11. Trueman, *Rise and Triumph*, 44.

12. Trueman, *Rise and Triumph*, 45.

wants and needs of the self, viewing objectivity as an external construct devised by the institution to restrain the weak masses. Sociologist and anthropologist James Spickard says that within faith communities, religious individualism “is the notion that individuals are the primary judge of their own religious lives and need not bow to any external authority.”¹³ The ancient teachings of the church, based in Scripture and the council of generations of Christian scholarship, are set aside as factors of institutional oppression and truth becomes a matter of personal taste.

Society and institutions do not disappear. In pursuit of self-actualization, the individual must perform — must be seen as self-sufficient and self-sovereign. Ironically, the individual turns to self-devised pseudo-communities for affirmation. But a major shift in the purpose of those communities is necessary for its many and varied individuals. Once facilitators of the individual's growth within a framework external to and greater than the self, now society and institutions are regarded as subservient to psychological needs and promotion of the self. The individual demands that its sovereignty must be recognized and affirmed by all others in these loosely knit groupings, while strangely and simultaneously acknowledging the sovereignty of all other selves.

With the individual placed at the top of the societal hierarchy, the “society” is obliged to significant reversals in long-held, even ancient, mores. Borrowing from Nietzsche, Trueman calls this “a transvaluation of values...[in which] that which was previously deemed good comes to be regarded as bad; that which was previously regarded as healthy comes to be deemed sickness.”¹⁴ Every aspect of the community-rule and the institution, including its moral code, is

13. James V. Spickard, “The Dark Side of Religious Individualism: A Marcusian Exploration,” *Critical Research on Religion* 7, no. 2 (2019), 131.

14. Trueman, *Rise and Triumph*, 49.

regarded as part of a problem standing in opposition to the sovereignty of the self. The CBAC is not immune to these types of shifts. Twenty-five point three percent of survey respondents do not oppose abortion, 24.2% are open to the licensing and ordination of members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and 25.3% are open to same-sex marriages within the CBAC.

In perhaps the oddest of twists, the individuals within the “society”¹⁵ demand limitless personal freedoms while simultaneously erecting fresh boundaries on the expressions of the self. Every individual must have the liberty to speak as they please unless their speech is counter to the prevailing ideology of self-governed morality. Indeed, nearly every self-determined identity must be accepted, except those regarded as “off-limits,” such as appropriating cultural markers of racial heritages other than one’s own or being sexually attracted to children. This leaves questions that seem culturally unanswerable. In a “society” composed of self-sovereigns, who determines these boundaries, and why should any of those limits persist? Baptists, who believe Christ is sovereign, turn to Scripture for answers to these questions.

Purchasing Religious Experience

The move to position the individual at the societal pinnacle enables a further insidious force; namely, consumerism. Anthropologist Anne Meneley would almost certainly agree with Trueman’s explanation of the performative requirements of the modern individualist. She reviews the near-globe-wide marriage between consumerism and expressions of the individual self. Meneley notes that within North American Protestant cultures assumptions are made by

15. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines “society” as “people in general, living together in communities” and “a particular community of people who share the same customs, laws, etc.” Can happenstantial groupings of individuals, each one pursuing self-interest as a top value, be considered as “together” or a “community” — that is, a “society”?

“linking appropriate consumption to income earned by hard work.” As part of what Meneley refers to as a societal “bluff,” these self-promoters “seek to acquire brand-name items to wear, consume, or display, which operate with magical efficacy...[and are] essential to the success of one’s public appearance.”¹⁶ Indeed, within the modern West, the concepts of *individualism* and *consumerism* draw increasingly close to synonymy.

Spickard notices a similar trend of individualized brand promotion of the self occurring within the North American church. He says that religious individualism is spiritually healthy neither for the individual selves who adopt it nor for the churches who accept — even embrace — its near-ubiquity. Religious understanding, expression, and participation have morphed into self-indulgent, self-promotional consumer choice — displays that, at best, serve as virtue signals, and at worst, are little more than aspects of fortune-building strategies. This partially explains discrepancies emerging between the Atlantic Baptists who founded their current convention and those today. In 1905 they shared the belief that “a church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant,”¹⁷ while only 60% agree with such a construction today. Indeed, today’s leaders accentuate their form of individualism. Twelve point six percent of those surveyed do not think that *regenerate church membership* is important to the future of the CBAC. Almost all (98.9%) say that the individual’s *soul liberty* will remain highly valued.

From yoga retreats to Shamanistic warrior weekends, from choosing between Zen Buddhism or Eastern Orthodoxy, from the “spiritual healing of the inner goddess” to the wanton self-expression of Burning Man, and from a decision to covenant with a small local church of

16. Anne Meneley, “Consumerism,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 47, no. 1 (2018), 124.

17. CABC, *Basis of Union*, “A Gospel Church.”

little means to one involving traveling hundreds of kilometers for the experience of near anonymity in the latest mega-model church — all are choices exploited by individuals in their attempts to purchase opportunities to perform their self-identities. Spickard's indictment is sobering:

...today's religious consumerism is as much a matter of identity as of purchasing. Our religious 'purchases' tell us and others who we are. Identity matters in the contemporary world, but the 'best' identities are earned, not given. At least in the rich countries, we choose our religious identities, they no longer choose us...Moreover, in celebrating our new religious diversity, we celebrate the current socio economic system. Aren't we the society that offers choices? Don't we give each person the freedom to be religious or spiritual in her or his own way? How nice that we are rich and successful enough to have time for higher concerns?¹⁸

The realities of religious consumerism drive spiritually harmful tendencies in individuals while simultaneously propelling even the best-intentioned churches to enter forms of the competitive marketplace. Economic realities related to shrinking church-participation numbers¹⁹ are complicated by the pervasiveness of self-indulgent selection on the part of those who do opt-in. In the best possible light, churches believe that their particular ministries are meaningful, providing blessings to their surrounding communities. They do what they must to attract a tiny number of customers not yet acquired by neighboring, yet competing, communities of faith. At the same time, they do what they must to draw clients whose egos have been left unsatisfied with another church — or other churches. Their operational viability demands it.

Their expressions are vapid — hollowed caricatures of what once was or could have been of the Western church. There is no nostalgia in this. In their push to compete within — even

18. Spickard, "Dark Side," 140.

19. According to Statistics Canada, the percentage of Canadians who attend to a group religious activity at least once a month declined from 43% in 1985 to 23% in 2019. In 2003, 71% of Canadians said that religious or spiritual beliefs were important to them. In 2019 that number had fallen to 54%. See Louis Cornelissen, "Religiosity in Canada and Its Evolution From 1985 to 2019." (2021): Statistic Canada. accessed Jan 16, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00010-eng.htm>.

win — the competitive marketplace they dare not offend a single client. Their messaging is nearly empty, demanding little or nothing of its receiver. “Come as you are,” is their call. “You do you, and I’ll do me,” is their message. Seemingly they forget or forsake Christ’s call to the cross: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Theologian Kenda Dean says these churches do not instill and pass-on the faith. Rather, in the marketplace they attend to the insatiability of their consumers’ selves who are no longer recognizable as God’s people. Instead of being formed in the image of Christ, spiritual customers are “unwittingly being formed into an imposter faith that poses as Christianity, but that in fact lacks the holy desire and missional clarity necessary for Christian discipleship.”²⁰

Christ’s “High Priestly Prayer” reminds his people that while they are in the world, they are not of it (John 17:16). The Lord’s call to his church is not that they are to be constantly bent and reshaped by their surrounding cultures, but that they are to inspire and encourage godly shifts within those societies. But in the marketplace, consumers of pseudo-Christianity, aware of their highest-order status, must never be confronted, agitated, or discomforted. Dean offers critical insight into the church of the religious individual:

...churches seem to have offered...a kind of ‘diner theology’: a bargain religion, cheap but satisfying, whose gods require little in the way of fidelity or sacrifice. Never mind that centuries of Christians have read Jesus’ call to lay down one’s life for others as the signature feature of Christian love (John 15:13), or that God’s self-giving enables us to share the grace of Christ when ours is pitifully insufficient. Diner theology is much easier to digest than all this...So who can blame churches, really, for earnestly ladling this stew...filling them with an agreeable porridge about the importance of being nice, feeling good about yourself, and saving God for emergencies? We have convinced ourselves that this is the gospel, but in fact it is much closer to another mess of pottage, an unacknowledged but widely held religious outlook among American[s]...that is primarily dedicated, not to loving God, but to avoiding interpersonal friction.²¹

20. Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6.

21. Dean, *Almost Christian*, 10.

Sociologists Jeremy Uecker and Paul Froese define religious individualism as “a belief that religious authority is rooted in the individual—or perhaps more precisely, one’s personal relationship with God.”²² They say that religious individualism is a form of progressivism in which moral authority is found in personal experience, individual choice, and prevailing cultural preferences. In this environment, traditional religious institutions and norms, along with the sacred texts that are foundational to both, are delegitimized to make way for continuous cultural shifts.²³

Uecker and Froese review previously published data and present findings of their own to conclude that religious individualists (or progressives) seemingly draw their religious understandings from their surrounding cultures in ways that conservatives do not. Rather than attempting to engage their societies with their previously held religious values and norms, they continuously reshape their value systems in ways instructed by their surrounding cultures. Religious individualists are more open to abortion and same-sex marriage than their institutionalist counterparts. They are also more agreeable to the acceptability of divorce and are more permissive concerning pre-marital sex than conservatives.²⁴ Further, not only do progressive attitudes on these matters differ from those of religious institutionalists, but they tend toward the same perspectives within their wider communal settings. The individualist does not appear to be part of a transformative community of faith but is a consumer of a momentary emotional-quieting self-prescription called church. In other words, religious individualism enables people to “stay in touch” with religion without having to actually adopt it.²⁵

22. Uecker and Froese, “Religious Individualism,” 285.

23. Uecker and Froese, “Religious Individualism,” 284.

24. Uecker and Froese, “Religious Individualism,” 298–302.

25. Uecker and Froese, “Religious Individualism,” 310.

In the previous chapter, I showed that the surveyed clerics who devalue the place of Scripture in their ecclesiologies tended to agree with current societal norms rather than stated CBAC positions on cultural issues.²⁶ Eighty-one percent of respondents who place top value on *Biblical Authority* “oppose abortion for any reason other than the death of the expectant mother.” This agreement falls to only 43.8% of respondents who score the distinctive less than 5. Similarly, among those who afford *Biblical Authority* a score of 5, 82.3% agree with a prohibition on licensing or ordaining members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and 81% agree that CBAC pastors should not solemnize same-sex marriages. Only 43.8% of those who score the distinctive less than 5 agree with these two positions.

Inverting the analysis of these data yields results that further agree with Uecker and Froese’s conclusions. The three CBAC resolution statements noted above were sorted by respondents who agree and those who do not agree with each of them. Average scores for each of three collectivist and two individualist distinctives were calculated. Respondents who agree with the CBAC resolutions place higher values on all three collectivist distinctives than their peers who do not agree (differences ranging from 0.32 – 0.68; variances of 7.6% – 14.2%). The same trend is not evident in the individualist distinctives. Results in all fields were similar, with respondents not in agreement with CBAC positions twice providing higher scores for *Soul Liberty* (differences ranging from 0.03 – 0.14; variances of 0.6% – 3.3%). The combination of resolution agreements noted above and the variant distinctive scores shows that the phenomenon of “cultural agreement” described by Uecker and Froese is apparent among the clergy of the CBAC.

26. See Table I — Statement agreement by *Biblical Authority*.

Table K — Scoring of several distinctives by resolution agreement

Resolution and Distinctives	Agree	Not Agree	Variance
Oppose abortion except for maternal health			
<i>Biblical Authority</i>	4.87	4.50	−0.37
<i>Regenerate Church Membership</i>	4.73	4.29	−0.44
<i>Believers' Baptism</i>	4.68	4.00	−0.68
<i>Soul Liberty</i>	4.78	4.88	+0.10
<i>Local Church Independence</i>	4.18	4.04	−0.14
2SLBTQIA+ members should not be licensed or ordained			
<i>Biblical Authority</i>	4.88	4.48	−0.40
<i>Regenerate Church Membership</i>	4.72	4.30	−0.42
<i>Believers' Baptism</i>	4.63	4.00	−0.63
<i>Soul Liberty</i>	4.82	4.78	−0.04
<i>Local Church Independence</i>	4.17	4.09	−0.08
CBAC Pastors should not solemnize same-sex marriages			
<i>Biblical Authority</i>	4.87	4.5	−0.37
<i>Regenerate Church Membership</i>	4.70	4.38	−0.32
<i>Believers' Baptism</i>	4.62	4.04	−0.58
<i>Soul Liberty</i>	4.80	4.83	+0.03
<i>Local Church Independence</i>	4.18	4.04	−0.14

The Religious Individualism of Protestantism

Psychologists Adam Cohen and Peter Hill examine earlier studies concerning religious identity and experience. First, they point to religious sociologist Paul Morris' 1997 research, which focuses on how Protestants differ from Jewish people in understanding their acquisition and practice of faith. Morris asked participants to evaluate their understandings of their religious expressions against five primary factors. He describes *assent* as faith or religion regarded as a

matter of what is in a person's heart, how religion cares for personal faith, and the extent to which religion emphasizes the individual's personal relationship with God. *Belief controllability* is the idea that individuals can or cannot control their own faith. *Ritual* is explained as legalistic traditions, very structured expression, and special attention to personal behavior. *Descent* focuses on ethnicity as a contributing factor in religious identity, and *Community Responsibility* examines understandings of faith-community belonging and responsibility.²⁷

Morris' research shows that Protestants construct faith as propositional and established on "personal belief" significantly more than their Jewish neighbors. Likewise, Protestants are more likely to say that faith is individually controllable than members of Jewish communities. Conversely, Jewish respondents emphasize *Ritual* in their faith expressions and view those expressions as passed generationally through *Descent* more than Protestants. These four factors, indicative of individualistic and collectivistic expressions of faith, seemingly culminate in constructs of *Community Responsibility*, which Jewish respondents value more than their Protestant counterparts.²⁸

Cohen and Hill also review psychologists G. W. Allport and J. M. Ross' 1967 study on the intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity of Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic faith practitioners. Cohen and Hill wanted to determine if correlations exist between how people inwardly perceive

27. Adam B. Cohen and Peter C. Hill, "Religion as Culture: Religious Individualism and Collectivism Among American Catholics, Jews, and Protestants," *Journal of Personality* 75, no. 4 (2007), 718–719.

28. Cohen and Hill, "Religion as Culture," 717–720. Morris' survey afforded participants a range from –7 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). In the *Assent* category, the overall Protestant mean (M) is 5.2 while for members of Jewish communities it is 2.1. For *Belief Controllability*, Protestant M = 2.4 and Jewish M = 1.7; for *Ritual*, Protestant M = 0.5 and Jewish M = 3.7; for *Descent*, Protestant M = –4.9 and Jewish M = –2.3; and for *Community Responsibility*, Protestant M = 1.8 and Jewish M = 3.0. See also Paul Morris, "Communities of Assent and Descent," *Journal of the New Zealand Council of Christians and Jews* 3 (1997), 2–4.

their faiths and how they outwardly express those understandings. Their analysis shows that Protestants have a more internalized religious expression that they do not especially demonstrate through rites and rituals. Cohen and Hill reproduced Allport and Ross' earlier research, achieving similar results. They conclude that "for Catholics and Jews, religious identity seems collectively grounded in that extrinsic religiosity items are more strongly endorsed. Furthermore...we replicated the finding that extrinsic (collectivistic) religious motivations are antithetical to the more individualistic, intrinsic motivations for Protestants."²⁹

I replicated neither Morris' nor Allport and Ross' work in the survey of CBAC clergy members. Nevertheless, cross-data analysis of that survey's results shows signs of the intrinsic and extrinsic religiosities they describe. I used respondent scoring for *Regenerate Church Membership* as a benchmark. This distinctive, when employed, presents the most significant differentiator for collective-inclusion among all the distinctives. Its threshold for community inclusion is a personal belief in, relationship with, and submission to Jesus Christ; lived evidence of that belief, relationship, and submission; and initiation by immersive baptism as a believer.

I separated all the respondents who score *Regenerate Membership* with a top mark of 5 from those who give it less. I then measured the value those segregated groups place on the *rituals* of believers' baptism and the Lord's Supper. Those who give *Regenerate Membership* top scores highly value these *rituals*. They score the distinctives of *Believers' Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper* 4.79 and 4.87, respectively (overall averages: 4.47 and 4.73). Their peers who place a lower value on *Regenerate Membership* also hold the community's *rituals* in lower regard, scoring *Baptism* 3.6 and the *Lord's Supper* 4.32. Looking to the future of the CBAC, 98.6% of

29. Cohen and Hill, "Religion as Culture," 730–731. See also G. Allport and J. Ross, "Personal Religious Orientation and Prejudice," *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 5, no. 4 (1967), 432–443.

those who score *Membership* 5 say that *Lord's Supper* will remain important to their faith community, as do 95.7% on *Believers' Baptism*. Those figures decline to 92% and 80% for respondents who place less value on *Regenerate Membership*.

I employed the same groupings based on responses to *Regenerate Church Membership* to test against two *Basis of Union* statements that relate believers' baptism with congregational inclusion. As I noted in the previous chapter, the CBAC's *Basis of Union* statement concerning the Lord's Supper is devoid of ecclesiological significance. I did not include it in the survey. The trend of higher value on the combination of community and *ritual* remains evident. Of those who place top value on *Regenerate Membership*, 67.1% agree that churches of Christ are comprised of baptized believers and 82.9% say that believers' baptism is to precede entry to church membership. Forty percent of their peers who score *Membership* lower than 5 agree that churches are formed by baptized believers and 44% agree with an entry mandate of believers' baptism. Conversely, those who agree that church composition consists of the baptized score *Regenerate Membership* 4.72, and those who agree with baptismal entry requirements score it 4.82. Their other-minded peers score the distinctive 4.47 and 4.08, respectively. The data show a positive correlation among Atlantic Baptists between understandings of community formation and its *rituals*. Those who value their expression's historic bounds to community inclusion place a higher value on the *rituals* of their community than their peers who do not value community boundaries as highly.

In another study, Cohen and Hill asked participants if they had ever had a life-changing experience. Respondents who answered affirmatively were further asked to describe those experiences in their own words. The participants were also measured on intrinsic, extrinsic, and identity scales. Independent coders reviewed each of the responses to determine if the accounts

involved God or connections with other people. Protestants scored higher in intrinsic religiosity than both Jews and Catholics and were lower in extrinsic religiosity than both other groups. In the analysis of the life-changing experiences, approximately 30% more Protestant stories contained ideas of God than did Catholic accounts and approximately 57% more than Jewish accounts. Conversely, over 28% more Jewish accounts involved connections with a community than did Protestants and nearly 17% more than Catholics.³⁰ The data show that Protestants are more individualistic than their Catholic and Jewish neighbors and are more apt to express their religious experiences as those of personal encounters with God.

The growing insurgency of religious individualism within the Western church is evident among Atlantic Baptists. The survey data widely discussed in the second chapter provides fresh insight into the growth of religious individualism among the clergy of the CBAC. Respondents graded each of the ten sectarian distinctives published by the CBAC on a five-point scale. In one analysis, these responses were averaged by age bracket.³¹ The averages by age bracket were then ranked first through last (1 to 6) within each sectarian distinctive, with the highest average ranked first and the lowest ranked last. As an example, all age brackets gave the distinctive *The Lordship of Jesus Christ* an average score of 5, except the Silent Generation (75+), who scored 4.92. Accordingly, five age brackets were ranked first for this distinctive, and those older than 75 years were ranked second. A remarkable trend emerged in the data. Apart from *Christ's Lordship* (which was a nearly unanimous tie), each of the three older generations rank first or second in all of the distinctives, while each of the three younger generations rank fifth or sixth in all of them.

30. Cohen and Hill, "Religion as Culture," 735.

31. See Appendix B, Table P — Average value of each distinctive by age.

Older Baby Boomers (65–74) place first or second in nine of the ten categories, while Generation Y (25–34) and Millennials (35–44) each place second to last or last in six of the ten.

Table L — Ranking average value of each distinctive by age

Distinctive	25–34 (n=7)	35–44 (n=15)	45–54 (n=21)	55–64 (n=22)	65–74 (n=18)	75+ (n=12)
Lordship	1	1	1	1	1	2
Scripture	2	6	5	4	1	3
Priesthood	5	3	5	2	1	4
Soul Liberty	4	5	4	2	1	3
Membership	5	3	6	4	1	2
Baptism	2	5	3	4	1	1
Lord’s Supper	5	6	4	3	1	2
Autonomy	5	6	4	2	3	1
Association	5	3	6	4	1	2
Church/State	6	5	4	1	2	3
Aggregate	40	43	42	27	13	23

Further analysis shows how the generations align overall with the CBAC-stated distinctives. First, the rankings were tabulated as aggregate scores. The lower the aggregate score, the closer that generation’s alignment is to the lowest possible score of ten. The three older generations were the top performers, with Older Baby Boomers (65–74) providing the lowest overall score of thirteen. The three younger generations were the lower performers, with Millennials (35–44) delivering the highest score of 43. Continuing analysis of overall generational alignment, all scores given to all distinctives were averaged as a single function, by age bracket. The highest possible score, demonstrating complete alignment with the CBAC distinctives, is 5. Again, the three older generations show greater alignment with the CBAC’s historic values than their younger peers.

Table M — Average of all distinctives as single function, by age

All Distinctives Combined (average)	25–34 (n=7)	35–44 (n=15)	45–54 (n=21)	55–64 (n=22)	65–74 (n=18)	75+ (n=12)
Average Score	4.53	4.45	4.52	4.68	4.82	4.69
	4.51			4.73		
	4.50		4.60		4.77	

Cohen and Hill describe Protestants as more intrinsic and individually religious than their Jewish or Catholic neighbors. They partially conclude that faith expressions that employ rituals as aspects of their practice are extrinsic and community-centered. The survey results show that the clergy of the CBAC place moderate value on the community's single repetitive ritual, the *Lord's Supper*, scoring it 4.73. All the older generations score this distinctive higher than the average, while all three sets of the younger clerics score it below the average. Older Baby Boomers (65–74) score the ritual 5, and Millennials (35–44) score it 4.40.

Cohen and Hill also see that *Community Responsibility*, understandings of faith-community belonging and responsibility, is more highly valued in community-focused faith expressions. The surveyed members of the CBAC place their fifth lowest value on the distinctive *Regenerate Church Membership* (4.62), historically regarded by Baptists as the pre-requisite to their community. They also give their third lowest value to the distinctive *Believers' Baptism* (4.47), historically regarded as the method of entry to that community. Older Baby Boomers (65–74) give *Regenerate Membership* its highest score of 4.89, while Generation X clerics (45–54) give it the lowest with 4.43. All three younger generations were below the average. Further, Older Baby Boomers (65–74) and members of the Silent Generation (75+) equally give *Believers' Baptism* its high score of 4.67, while Millennials (35–44) provide its lowest of 4.13.

Similarly, 91.7% of the Silent Generation (75+) and 83.3% of Older Baby Boomers (65–74) agree with the CBAC's *Basis of Union* statement: "Believer's baptism must precede membership in the local church," while only 46.7% of Millennials so agree.

Atlantic Baptists are witnessing the growth of religious individualism within their denomination. Younger generational leaders have a lower regard for the corporate values of the CBAC than their older counterparts. Their younger leaders, particularly Millennials (35–44), are already reshaping their ecclesiological identity to something other than historically Baptist. For a Christian movement already structured by forms of intrinsic religiosity, heightened levels of religious individualism among their next generations of denominational leaders present grave dangers for their community.

Atlantic Canadian Baptists and their churches must recognize and address the forces of religious individualism active within their movement. Their organizational life depends on it. They are denominational descendants of the Protestant reformation, having jettisoned much of the binding agency of church tradition, ritual, and language in favor of individualized encounters with God and intrinsic faith. Their people are products of their surrounding consumer cultures — and in many ways, producers of it as well. They own businesses, work in banking, and purchase their children's forms of recreation. They are sold to and they sell at nearly every public turn. There is no mystery as to why they shape their churches according to these principles. There is little or no mystery in their churches. God is propositional.

Perhaps the most undesirable human attribute is selfishness. Atlantic Canadian Baptists, a people (increasingly now persons) immersed and active in consumer culture, must be all the more diligent as they counter the destructiveness of individualism. Rightly rooted in their understandings of Scripture, the people of the CBAC still widely hold to the competency and

freedom of every person to individually encounter and interact with God. They extend and expand that rationale to say that each local church can discern God's will for itself and has a divine right to its own direction. The culmination of these two constructs is that each person must choose to belong to each church and each church must choose to belong to the denominational whole. At every level, these are individualized and voluntary associations. Surely, given human nature, the persons of the CBAC are not impervious to selfish tendencies.

In anticipation of the next chapter, I now turn to define what I refer to as a *biblically ordinary* Baptist ecclesiology. I hope that such a confessional model may serve to ignite new examinations of the values shared among the people of the CBAC and to initiate new conversations among them about possibilities for the shape and future of their work together.

What is a Biblically Ordinary Baptist Ecclesiology?

In the previous chapter's conclusion, I showed that the surveyed clergy members who place top value on the *Authority of Scripture* exhibit significantly greater alignment with historic Baptist and CBAC values and ecclesiological beliefs.³² Previously, I noted the primacy *Scriptural Authority* has in Baptist identity and beliefs, bound closely to the *Lordship of Jesus Christ*. Baptists identify as communities of faith who are governed by Christ's will, guided and tested by the revelation of Scripture. If the people of the CBAC are to renew a sense of mission within a framework of Baptist identity, they will need to turn again to the Bible for direction in their values, beliefs, and expressions.

32. See Table H — Average value of each distinctive by Biblical Authority

In the next chapter, I present a twenty-first-century biblically *ordinary* ecclesiology consistent with the nearly 420-year history of the Baptist movement, their almost 260 years in Canada, and their almost-120-year-old current Atlantic Canadian iteration, the CBAC. Thomas Helwys said that God has given the gospel so that, through hearing and understanding, the church is able “to repent, believe, turn back to God, and persevere in the faith.”³³ Adopting the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* in 1800, the churches of the first Baptist association in Canada agreed that the “Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience” from which God declares “his will unto his church.”³⁴ Today, the people of the CBAC attest, through their *Basis of Union*, that the Scriptures “are the only perfect, supreme, infallible and sufficient standard of faith and practice.”³⁵

Some may ask what I intend by the biblically *ordinary*. In short, it is an essentially apolitical, non-polemic view that asserts that Baptist beliefs and ways must be objectively and solely grounded in a submission to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ and the mandates of scriptural revelation. It is neither an advancement of political ideologies (is neither right nor left) nor the preservation of institutional symbolism, rituals, and language — tradition — for the sake of preservation. A biblically *ordinary* Baptist ecclesiology emerges from the divine will and purposes that are revealed through the realities of Scripture as understood by the historic and contemporary Baptist community.

33. Antony D. Rich, “Thomas Helwys’ First Confession of Faith 1610,” *Baptist Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2009), 239. See Article 8.

34. *A Confession of Faith Put Forth By the Elders and Brethren of Many Congregations of Christians (Baptized Upon Profession of Their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: 1677), Chapter 1. As noted in the first chapter, the *Philadelphia Confession* is a revised version of Keach’s 1697 edition of the *Second London Confession*.

35. CABC, *Basis of Union*, “The Scriptures.”

An Appeal to the Ordinary

To help better explain what I intend by *biblically ordinary interpretation*, I turn to Daniel Korman's explanation of the philosophically conservative. This is not a political perspective, but an appeal to reality. In due course, I will show that Korman's explanation is helpful for Baptists who desire to restore their ecclesiological framework to one that is *biblically ordinary*. Conservatism has been explained as a form of political protectionism committed to "securing entrenched arrangements...[and] opposing positions that seek to bring about unwelcome change."³⁶ Political scientists Pamela Conover and Stanley Feldman say that conservatism and liberalism have been thought of as merely opposite sides of a common perceptual framework used to discern meaning and identification.³⁷ They point to much research showing that those who label themselves according to this bipolarity may not show such clear demarcations when evaluating matters of public policy. When tested "liberals" often choose typically "conservative" solutions and *visa versa*. They conclude that for most, these "ideological labels, and consequentially self-identifications, have largely symbolic, nonissue-oriented meaning."³⁸

If Atlantic Canadian Baptists are primarily concerned with discerning their Lord's will and with submitting their lives to Christ's sovereignty, then they are not focused on adopting nearly empty political labels or protecting their shared past from any potential future. Accordingly, they will want to move community values and perspectives forward in apolitical, non-protectionist ways. A biblical *ordinary* ecclesiology demonstrates that the people of the

36. Richard Bourke, "What is Conservatism? History, Ideology and Party," *European Journal of Political Theory* 17, no. 4 (2018), 453.

37. Pamela J. Conover and Stanley Feldman, "The Origins and Meaning of Liberal/conservative Self-Identifications," *American Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 4 (1981), 619.

38. Conover and Feldman, "Liberal/conservative," 641.

CBAC respect and embrace the ontology of their movement, and enables them to maintain and advance their Baptist identity into their post-Christian settings.

Professor of Philosophy Louis deRosset examines his peer Daniel Korman's construct of conservatism or more specifically ontological conservatism.³⁹ In Korman's view conservatism is the rational view and embrace of the ordinary and simultaneous dismissal of the extraordinary. It is the acceptance of the real — that which exists — and the rejection of the unreal — that which does not exist.⁴⁰ According to this view, conservatives acknowledge, that given the *ordinary*, both salmon and trombones exist and that salmbones (an extraordinary combination of a salmon and a trombone) do not. Korman's perspectives will later be shown to be helpful in the pursuit of an ecclesiology for Atlantic Canadian Baptists venturing further and further into twenty-first-century cultures.

deRosset provides an excellent explanation of how Korman's perspective differs from non-conservative views, which are not necessarily grounded in reality. Permissivists or universalists hold that for every set of objects there must also be a reality in which there are objects composed of the set's components. These might imagine a pasture with a cow standing beside a fence and say that there must be a reality in which there are fields sodded with barbed wire and surrounded by a fence made of cattle. Conservatives are not nihilists who reject the existence of the material or organicists who say reality is only found in life. The ordinary view of conservatism sees both the living cow and the inanimate fence but does not recognize the possibility of a fence composed of cows.

39. Louis deRosset, "What is Conservatism?," *Analysis* 80, no. 3 (2020), 514, n. 1. See also Daniel Z. Korman, *Objects: Nothing Out of the Ordinary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

40. deRosset, "Conservatism," 532.

Conservatism is not populism. While populist perspectives may incidentally agree with reality, they are not necessarily aligned. Most have never considered a salmbone or sods of barbed wire. While the popular view may agree with the conservative that the cow and the fence are separate things, cultural and social pressures shape the *vox populi*. This aspect of Korman's conservatism is important to Atlantic Canadian Baptists developing a biblically *ordinary* ecclesiology to engage their increasingly post-Christian and relativistic societies. The most benign example should suffice to help see its importance. Many Atlantic Canadians have elevated their pets (animals), personifying them to the emotional status of *fur-baby*. Dogs, ferrets, rabbits, and cats now regularly fly first-class, dine at fine restaurants, and stroll the aisles of shopping centers. Seemingly new and endless imaginary "realities" enter the populist expression almost daily.

Conservatism is not a "sort of mental state...[of] intuition."⁴¹ Intuition may be helpful in the process of discovery, but it is fallible. One may intuit that the greatest depths of the ocean are void of the light, oxygen, and warmth necessary to permit any life. Or another may intuitively say that the Library of Congress curates all the books published in the United States. But neither is true. The ocean floor teems with strange creatures scientists are eager to study and the Library of Congress acknowledges that despite their millions of volumes, they do not have a copy of every book published in the USA.⁴²

Conservatism is not communitarianism. The communitarian view is that the real must be regarded as connected and unified among its parts, rather than scattered or disconnected. While this view of interdependence is a helpful guide toward the ordinary, it does not quite meet the

41. deRosset, "Conservatism," 518.

42. "Library of Congress: Frequently Asked Questions." Library of Congress. accessed February 3, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/about/frequently-asked-questions/>. Question 3.

conservative perspective of reality. deRosset rightly points to the modern example of the Kaliningrad Oblast, separated from the rest of Russia by more than 520 km and hidden behind Latvia, Lithuania, and Belarus. Political intrigue aside, the conservative sees this disjoint and still recognizes that Kaliningrad exists as a part of Russia. While communitarian perspectives do not necessarily describe the ordinary, a biblically *ordinary* ecclesiology is unified in its parts and is without disconnect.

I acknowledge that some may look to Korman and his construct of the *ordinary* and suggest that it is similar to a Scottish Common Sense (Common Sense) hermeneutical approach widely employed by historical and current Atlantic Baptists. In the first chapter, I briefly traced the history of the denomination now known as the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, including their initial formation as an association of churches in June 1800. The third rule of their fledgling denominational constitution stated:

All matters at the Association are to be determined by the suffrages of the messengers composing the body, except such as are plainly determined by Scripture, which are never to be put to the decision of votes.⁴³

Indeed, with the growing influence of Common Sense in early-nineteenth-century North American philosophy and theology, the framers of that 1800 Atlantic Baptist constitution may have had it or something similar in mind. I will briefly outline the Scottish Common Sense hermeneutic and show how Korman's ordinary varies from it. Later, I will also show that Korman's is a more fitting approach for reconsidering those founders' words and for a twenty-first-century, post-Christian Atlantic Canadian setting.

Eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher and preacher Thomas Reid of the University of Glasgow, is widely held as the founder of the Scottish School of Common Sense. Reid's was a

43. Ingraham E. Bill, *Fifty Years With the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (Saint John: Barnes and Company, 1880), 37.

response to David Hume's skepticism of human perception, sense, and reason, articulated in his 1739 *A Treatise of Human Nature*. University of Hyderabad philosopher B. Anand Sagar explains Hume's skeptical position. Hume said that what humans regard as senses and sensations (movement, color, taste, smell, touch, etc.), that is, the external world, is merely individual perception. Since each person has a different perception and since each individual's perceptions are interrupted or constantly changing, Hume rejected the objective reality of the external world.⁴⁴

Hume extended this view to reject the notion of "cause and effect." Causation is simply the occurrence of objects in frequent conjunction with each other. Humans perceive a relationship between the objects, but those perceptions are fleeting or faulty, even if later remembered. Accordingly, in Hume's view, inductive reasoning is not justifiable. Humans perceive that they can induce, but this is only a habit of the mind. Anand Sagar offers an example of thirst and water. A thirsty person may repeatedly consume water to help quench thirst. But according to Hume, the sensations of thirst and its quenching are mutable perceptions. Further, the historical perception of quenching is unreliable and does not guarantee future successes or similar outcomes.⁴⁵ Even the construct of identity is nothing more than a series or collection of quickly and constantly shifting perceptions of the self.⁴⁶ Anand Sagar concludes:

It is clear that in Hume's philosophy, perceptions play a major role. They are the foundational truths of Hume's philosophy. Hume has given the existence of perceptions so much importance that their existence is sufficient to oust substances.⁴⁷

44. B. Anand Sagar, "David Hume's Mitigated Skepticism," *Tattva Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (2021), 61–62.

45. Anand Sagar, "Hume's Skepticism," 64–66.

46. Anand Sagar, "Hume's Skepticism," 68.

47. Anand Sagar, "Hume's Skepticism," 67.

It was to this skepticism of reality that Reid responded. Reid saw that Hume's position threatened the very idea of human knowledge. If often-faulty, constantly moving perceptions are the substance of reality, accurate images or knowledge of the world cannot be attained. Reid saw that Hume's philosophy "called into question the existence of the entire external world, including the existence of other human beings."⁴⁸ Historian Mark Granquist says that Reid developed a counter theory to Hume's that put several principles of human self-awareness at the root of all perception. This framework of these common-sense principles is "so deeply ingrained in us that, although it cannot be deductively proved, it is the basic assumption of all our actions."⁴⁹ Indeed, this common-sense structure is constantly proved by human experience, even if it is doubted intellectually.

Scottish philosopher Alexander Broadie says that these principles, while not fully defined, are "characterised as part of the original constitution of our nature,"⁵⁰ are innate, and universally recognizable among human belief systems. Further, they are unprovable. Any attempt to prove them would presuppose them. First, human contemplation of the external world is the mental act of consciousness rather than mere perception. If an object is real, a person's consciousness may be drawn to it. Second, even as consciousness reveals the reality of the present, memory gives knowledge of the past. Even if the memory is faulty, the sane person trusts its record. Third, each person's consciousness constitutes them as a "thinking agent" whose continuing self-identity extends back to the beginning of their memories. Fourth, intellect

48. Kenneth R. Walters, Jr., "Scottish Common Sense Realism," in *Why Tongues? The Initial Evidence Doctrine in North American Pentecostal Churches* (Dorset: Deo Publishing, 2016), 9–10.

49. Mark Granquist, "The Role of "Common Sense" in the Hermeneutics of Moses Stuart," *Harvard Theological Review* 83, no. 3 (1990), 309.

50. Alexander Broadie, "The Scottish School of Common Sense Philosophy," in *A History of Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 236.

demands the existence and presupposition of things Hume declared to be merely perceptions, such as movement, color, taste, and texture. No real object can exist without these (and other) qualities.⁵¹

Historian Kenneth Walters, Jr. says Reid's position was in direct contradiction to Hume's skepticism. He says:

Scottish Common Sense Realism affirmed that human beings can trust their senses and perceptions; that we can rely on what our faculties reveal to us; indeed, to call any natural faculty into question was to call them all into question – there could be no justification for trusting any one faculty as opposed to any other. We do trust our faculties. We can do no other, and even those who would call such trust into question, like Hume, nonetheless trust their own faculties. Because of this trust, CSR posits that one can conclude three things: that what we call the 'self' is real, that cause and effect are real, and that the external world is real.⁵²

Innate to all human existence is the realization of, interaction with, and acceptance of the external world, or the real. Due to this presupposition, humans have no reason to doubt the reality surrounding them, inductive reasoning, or their self-existence.

Granquist explains that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Scottish Common Sense dominated Scottish, English, and French philosophical schools. Through its introduction at Princeton, it rapidly became the dominant perspective in American theological settings, quickly taking root at Harvard, Andover, and Yale.⁵³ Moses Stuart was an early-to-mid-nineteenth-century biblical scholar widely regarded as one of the fathers of American exegetical studies. His interpretive process employed a Common Sense approach and relied on the content of Scripture as a form of memory. He said that readers wanting to understand the meaning of the Bible should dedicate themselves to looking beyond the texts to see the historical circumstances of the words and their authors. The meaning of Scripture is knowable, "biblical revelation came to humanity

51. Broadie, "Common Sense," 248–250.

52. Walters, "Why Tongues?," 14–15.

53. Granquist, "'Common Sense' Hermeneutics," 309.

in an intelligible form and is accessible to our interpretive powers.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, due to the knowability of Scripture, humans can confidently discern the truths of God’s will and the Christian faith.

Korman’s view of ontological conservatism (from which I derive the *ordinary*) would not necessarily disagree with Reid’s Scottish Common Sense Realism. Korman would agree with the realities of presuppositional object qualities, such as color, movement, and sound. Likewise, Korman would also agree that thinking persons possess real self-identities extending back to the beginning of their memories. But Korman’s view does not necessarily agree with Reid’s first two principles: those of consciousness and memory as the bases of knowledge.

Reid said that humans gain knowledge of the external world through conscious contemplation. He also said that sane persons must trust their memories as records of past realities to help guide decisions in their present. Still, Reid would have to admit that conscious contemplation and memories are susceptible to error, resulting in incorrect understandings of reality. A person may see a friendly dog while walking a path, only to discover a wolf as they approach the animal to pet it. Another may see a river running low and intuit that an upstream dam has been closed when a breached levy caused the river’s source to empty in another direction. Still, others may look to Scripture and see an imaginary homosexual relationship between a young David and his best friend Jonathan. Every year I mistakenly wish my parents “happy anniversary” three days early of their actual wedding date. My memory, for that record, is faulty.

Korman’s view of the *ordinary* is the acceptance of what is real — what exists — and the simultaneous rejection of the unreal — what does not exist. Korman would dismiss the faulty-

54. Granquist, ““Common Sense” Hermeneutics,” 311.

conscious contemplation and memory as errant, illusionary, or extraordinary. They do not represent Korman's understanding of reality. Returning to the example of David and Jonathan, one populist view sees a romantic relationship between the two men. Its proponents employ this understanding as a partial apology for same-sex permissiveness in the church. But that homosexual relationship is not presented in the biblical text. Rather, some progressive interpreters infer its presence. That is, it is not *ordinary* to the Bible, regardless of any conscious contemplation of the text.

Korman's explanation of conservatism (the *ordinary*) is most helpful in the development of an ecclesiological statement intended for Atlantic Canadian Baptists. Baptists emerged in the early-seventeenth century from the Puritan branch of the Church of England. Baptists are trinitarian, monotheistic Christians, along with all other Christian sects that have essentially followed in the path initiated by the Holy Spirit through the apostles during the first days of the Jerusalem church (Acts, chapters 1 and 2).⁵⁵ The first explanation of Baptist beliefs was provided by one of the movement's founders, Thomas Helwys. He said that Baptists root their belief structures in their understanding that the trinitarian and sovereign God was incarnated in Jesus Christ and that his divine will is found in "the Scriptures off [*sic*] the Old and New Testament [and] are written for our instruction" and that "everie soule ought to bee [*sic*] subject to it."⁵⁶

In the first chapter, I showed that these views have been universally upheld in Baptist confessions for nearly 420 years and by Canadian Baptists since their eighteenth-century Atlantic emergence. Those who first associated in 1800 agreed that in God's "divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance...the

55. This is not intended to affirm any theory of successionism.

56. Thomas Helwys, *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining At Amsterdam in Holland* (Amsterdam: 1611), Article 23–24. See also Articles 1–3, 7–9, 12.

essence undivided” and that God has inspired and given Scripture “to be the rule of faith and life.”⁵⁷ Since 1905, the people of the CBAC articulate their conviction that in “the Godhead there are three persons in one: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” and that God has given humanity the Holy Scriptures as his authoritative word.⁵⁸

The base reality for Baptists is that God’s nature is trinitarian, he was incarnated in Jesus Christ, and he is sovereign over every actual and conceivable aspect of all creation. Jesus is King. Further, God’s will for his people — Christ’s will for his church — is found in the principles of Scripture as understood by the body of believers under the leading of the Holy Spirit. These two realities are the foundations in which a biblically *ordinary* ecclesiology for Atlantic Canadian Baptists is grounded. That is, I intend this Baptist ecclesiology as one *ordinary* to Christ’s sovereignty and the authority of Scripture. The next chapter is dedicated to outlining my proposal for a set of shared values for the CBAC — a unifying ecclesiological framework. I hope that it may be used as a tool to dislodge the individualism now prevalent in their movement while simultaneously serving to help rebuild a deteriorating community.

57. *Second London Confession (1677)*, Chapters 1.2 and 2.3.

58. CABC, *Basis of Union*, “God” and “The Scriptures.”

A Biblically Ordinary Ecclesiology for Atlantic Baptists

Why Atlantic Baptists Need Shared Values

The shared values of its member churches are the fundamentally essential components of a CBAC desiring to advance its common cause and mission.¹ Professors of Management and Business Strategy Humphrey Bourne and Mark Jenkins say that values are the “enduring beliefs that are personally or socially preferable to converse beliefs, which transcend specific situations, and which guide selection or evaluation of behaviour”² within organizations. Intrinsically tied to corporate culture and institution, values shape organizations by governing personnel fits, management approaches, functional activities, leadership decision-making, member commitment, and strategic choice and change.³ In short, collective values “are a set of beliefs that guide organizational members in the choice and evaluation of action...are related to a wide range of organizational processes, characteristics, and outcomes...[and are] the prominent block of corporate culture, [which] exert strong influence on the standards of behavior that permeate all levels of an organization.”⁴

Ivan Malbašić is a professor of Management and Organizational Behavior at the University of Zagreb. He and his co-authors surveyed research on organizational values dating back nearly six decades. They say that readers should conclude, “organizations radically committed to the business based on values are more successful than organizations that do not pay

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1. Ivan Malbašić, Carlos Rey, and Vojko Potočan, “Balanced Organizational Values: From Theory to Practice,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 130, no. 2 (2015), 437. This statement presupposes the absolute necessity of Christ’s call and guidance to the advancement of any cause or mission.
 2. Humphrey Bourne and Mark Jenkins, “Organizational Values: A Dynamic Perspective,” *Organizational Studies* 34, no. 4 (2013), 497.
 3. Bourne and Jenkins, “Organizational Values,” 495–496.
 4. Maria Fotaki, Spyros Lioukas, and Irini Voudouris, “Ethos is Destiny: Organizational Values and Compliance in Corporate Governance,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 166, no. 1 (2020), 19–20.

attention to the importance of [organizational values].”⁵ Maria Fotaki, Spyros Lioukas, and Irini Voudouris, professors at Athens University of Economics and Business, say that strong, positive, and enacted organizational values profit their corporate bodies in two significant ways. First, members and other close stakeholders of such organizations demonstrate that they regard themselves as stewards of their organizations. Second, aligned around common values and causes, these members and stakeholders develop closer, trust-based relationships.⁶ These values form the very DNA of their organizations and shape every facet of corporate culture and governance structures.⁷

Organizational behaviorists Gry Espedal and Arne Carlsen discuss the relationship between corporate values and organizational sacredness, which they define as the stories, symbols, and practices in which members place high value — even as sacred.⁸ They show that when the sacred (whatever it might be) intersects with corporate values, those values and their effects are positively accentuated within organizational life.⁹ Even as members measure and govern their current practices and purposes through lenses of the sacred, gradual developments in corporate practices and values also tend toward members’ hermeneutical approaches to the sacred.¹⁰ Surely Baptists, who regard Jesus as the incarnate manifestation of God and the Bible as God’s divinely-inspired revelation, must view Jesus Christ and Scripture as the most sacred subjects conceivable.

5. Malbašić, Rey, and Potočan, “Balanced Values,” 438.

6. Fotaki, Lioukas, and Voudouris, “Ethos is Destiny,” 22.

7. Fotaki, Lioukas, and Voudouris, “Ethos is Destiny,” 30–31.

8. Gry Espedal and Arne Carlsen, “Don’t Pass Them By: Figuring the Sacred in Organizational Values Work,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 169, no. 4 (2021), 768–769.

9. Espedal and Carlsen, “Don’t Pass Them,” 782.

10. Espedal and Carlsen, “Don’t Pass Them,” 780–781.

In this chapter, I will attempt to define and present a set of values, expressed through a biblically *ordinary* ecclesiology for Baptist Christians living in an increasingly secularized post-Christian, twenty-first-century Atlantic Canada. I will offer a so-defined ecclesiology by interacting with historical and contemporary Baptist scholars and thinkers, as well as with members of the Atlantic Baptist community who were interviewed for this research. Corporate values, such as those articulated in this statement, serve as critical elements in moving an organization from being an assembly of individuals to one of community. Perhaps this ecclesiology and the values it advances will serve the CBAC community positively as it continues conversations concerning ongoing developments of its identity and purpose.

Historically and today, Baptists base their faith expression on two convictions — their two highest values. First, and most importantly, Jesus Christ is Lord of the individual, the church, and all creation. Jesus is the incarnate manifestation of the eternal and almighty God and his will in every aspect of life is to be obeyed. Second, God's will and ways are determinable through the prayerful reading and exposition of the divinely-inspired words of Scripture found in the Holy Bible. Baptists regard the Bible as the exclusive and sufficient guide and test for all matters of faith and practice, both for the individual and the church as a corporate body. The *Lordship of Jesus Christ* and the *Authority of Scripture* are the foundations of both the Baptist movement and all other ecclesiological distinctives to which Baptists adhere.

I will present a set of beliefs showing that Baptist values, identity, unity, and missional ability are rooted in these two primary convictions. A biblically *ordinary* Baptist ecclesiology is not scattered or disjointed. Its pieces are interconnected by Christ's Lordship and scriptural authority. Each local church is competent to respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit, with its members dedicated Christians who have shared the common experience of Christ's baptism as

believers. By divine empowerment, all believers are in direct communion with their Lord, called to discern his will for their own lives and those of their churches. Christ has given his diverse communities the Lord's Supper — a symbol of thanksgiving, remembrance, solidarity, and anticipation to which they must attend as an act of witness and reunification.

Every human is a bearer of the divine image — persons whose religious freedoms should be valued by both people of faith and the state alike. Still, church memberships must be composed exclusively of those people who have committed themselves to Christ as Lord. Localized congregations who share mutually submissive respect for one another, based on common and compelling understandings of faith and practice, should associate together in united missions. These larger collections of associated churches also have corporate identities — and for Baptists, these images must be rooted in their obedience to *Christ's Lordship* and submission to *Scriptural Authority*, given common understandings of the Bible.

As I mentioned earlier, biblical understandings of the role of women in ministry and the place of members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community within the life of the church already appear as sectarian distinctives. I will include ecclesiological statements on these two matters. The people and churches of the CBAC will need unified, biblically-grounded positions on these significant issues as they strive to forge a biblically *ordinary* identity in their mission of engaging their post-Christian Atlantic setting. Women should be regarded as worthy and capable of being called to senior church — even pastoral — leadership. Answering important cultural questions being asked by their surrounding communities, churches are called to respond in love and truth. Congregations of the CBAC are challenged to abide by Christ's law of love while submitting to the biblically explicit and traditionally held definitions of marriage and community belonging.

The people and churches of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada are at a historical juncture. The recent and unprecedented cultural effects of the information age coupled with a form of gnostic insatiability emerging from a nascent era of innovation are transforming Atlantic Baptist resolve and communities. For the associated churches of the CBAC to advance their common cause and mission in an increasingly post-Christian twenty-first-century Atlantic Canadian setting, they will first need to recommit to a set of organizational values that unites them. Reminded of and reimagining their sense of identity, they will renew their understanding of that very cause and mission, preparing them to engage their particular historical moment and place.

The Bases of Baptist Ecclesiology and Expression

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is Lord of the individual, the church, and all creation. Jesus is the incarnate manifestation of the eternal and almighty God the Son. Eternally begotten of the essence of God the Father, Jesus is fully divine. All creation was created through him and for him, and in him, all creation is sustained. By the power and work of God the Spirit, he took on flesh and was born of Mary; Jesus is fully human. He is sinless, yet he was crucified, he died and was buried, and in his death, Jesus atoned for the sin of the world. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead and he is alive. Through his sacrificial death and by his merciful grace, Jesus offers his same everlasting life to all who submit their lives to him as Lord in the belief of his resurrection. He ascended to the Father where he serves his church as the sole and sufficient mediator between God and humanity. Lord of the universe, of the church, and of every person, Christ's will is to be

sought, prayerfully discerned, and employed in all matters as the world anticipates his return and final judgment.

(Matt 1:18–23; 27:33–50, 57–61; 28:1–10, 18; Mark 14:61–62; 15:21–37, 45–47; 16:1–8; Luke 1:26–35; 4:18–19; 6:46–49; 23:32–46, 50–56; 24:1–12, 50–51; John 1:1–5; 5:19–24; 14:6–7, 15; 19:16–42; 20:1–18, 28–29; Acts 1:9–10; 5:27–32; 10:39–43; Rom 2:16; 3:21–27; 5:12–21; 8:32–34; 10:9–13; 2 Cor 5:10, 18–21; Gal 6:14; Eph 1:5–8; 2:4–10; 4:14–24; 5:6–10; Phil 2:9–11; Col 1:9–10, 15–20; 2:8–10; 3:12–17; 1 Tim 2:3–6; 6:3–5, 11–15; 2 Tim 4:1; Heb 1:1–4; 2:14–18; 7:26–28; 10:11–14; 1 Pet 1:3–5, 18–19; 2:21–22; 3:21–22; 1 John 2:1–2; 4:9–10; Jude 24–25; Rev 1:8, 17–18; 20:11–12)

Baptists have always held Jesus Christ as the object of their worship, the cause of their movement, and the center of their expression. They join all Christians who proclaim the earliest and most persistent confession of the church: “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11; 2 Pet 1:2; Jude 25). He is Lord of life, all creation, and of the church (Matt 16:18–19; 28:18; Col 1:18; 2:10; Eph 1:22; 5:23). Every other facet of how Baptists organize their lives and their churches rests on the foundational reality of Christ’s lordship, coupled with understandings of the scriptural (particularly New Testament) message of his life, death, resurrection.

Thomas Helwys, a founder of the Baptist movement, wrote in his first public statement of faith that Jesus alone is the King who possesses all power of heaven and earth and who alone is able to declare absolute law for the church and all people at all times.¹¹ Later Baptists of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries repeated this confession, saying Christ’s authority is

11. Thomas Helwys, *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining At Amsterdam in Holland* (Amsterdam: 1611), Article 9.

irreducible and non-transferable; he alone declares the law for the church.¹² The words of the Second London Confession excellently articulate historic and modern understandings of Christ's lordship among Baptists:

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, in whom by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order, or Government of the Church, is invested in a supreme & sovereign manner.¹³

Theologian John Hammett examines Scripture and sees a dual significance in Christ's headship within the church.¹⁴ The first and most obvious is Christ's authority: the New Testament describes Jesus as the supreme, unrivaled, and eternal being who created and sustains all things by himself for himself, and whose command over all creation, including the church, is complete (John 1:1–4; Heb 1:1–3; Eph 1:20–23; Col 1:15–20; 2:9–10). Second, as head of the church, Christ is its provider. Jesus referred to himself as the true vine who sustains his fruitful branches — his churches (John 15:1–8; 17:20). The apostle Paul said the body, the church, is nourished by its head, Jesus, to be prepared for its ambassadorial role as Christ's earthly agency (Eph 4:15–16; Col 2:19).

Global Baptist leader Henry Cook goes further, saying the church's Lord is also its provision. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matt 18:20), a reminder that his role within the church extends beyond that of founder, guide, and ruler. Cook says, "[it] is his presence, in fact, that makes the church...Christ's presence in the

12. See *The Confession of Faith, of Those Churches Which Are Commonly (Though Falsly) Called Anabaptists; Presented to the View of All That Feare God, to Examine By the Touchstone of the Word of Truth: As Likewise for the Taking Off Those Aspersions Which Are Frequently Both in the Pulpit and Print, (Although Unjustly) Cast Upon Them* (London: Matthew Simmons, 1644), Articles 10, 11, 13, 33; *The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations, Gathered According to the Primitive Pattern* (London: William Larnar, 1651), Articles 19, 21, 23, 27; *Second London Confession (1677)*, Articles 8.1, 8.9, 8.10; John Newton Brown, *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (Baptist State Convention of New Hampshire, 1833), Articles 8, 13.

13. *Second London Confession (1677)*, Article 26.4.

14. John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005), 41–42.

midst...gives his church its power. Unless his presence can be felt by his people as a vital reality, worship becomes an empty ritual and the sacraments nothing more than dramatic symbols.”¹⁵ Biblical scholar Roger Good also sees that Christ’s lordship is the sustaining force of the church, which is now entrusted with God’s eternal plan to draw the world to himself. (Eph 3:7–12). Submission to Christ is more than “mere lip service to an objective Lord telling us what to do, but obedience in the principle of faith.”¹⁶ Trusting Jesus as Lord propels the body in its mission of engaging the world with the good news of God’s intentions for reconciliation.

Harry Gardner has served in pastoral ministry, denominational missions leadership, as the Executive Minister of the CBAC, and as President of Acadia Divinity College. He echoes the conviction of the complete and unique nature of Christ’s Lordship. He says, “Jesus is Lord of all. In Jesus, we find the expressed image of the invisible God, He is the pre-existent son. He is Lord, yes, of the church, and yes, of the individual, and he’s the Lord of the universe. He’s the Lord of all.”¹⁷ Gardner’s decades of local church and denominational leadership afford him a view of the CBAC shared by few. He sees a people wanting to live the reality of Christ’s sovereignty, but who struggle, due in part to a diminishing sense of direction. He says,

When I think of living under the Lordship of Christ, I think of his two major commands: to make disciples of all nations and to live in the the great commandment to love God and to love neighbor. Those are my criteria for living under the Lordship of Christ. So I if you think organizationally, I think there’s a desire to live out the great commandment and in practical ways. I don’t know if we know as much these days about how we share our faith in a way that will influence others to come under the Lordship of Christ — both individually, and through wider evangelism. So I don’t have confidence that we’re doing that well. And I think it’s not because we don’t want to — it’s that we don’t always know how to.¹⁸

15. Henry Cook, *What Baptists Stand for* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1961), 35.

16. Roger Good, “The Lordship of God in Christ as the Gospel,” *Affirmation & Critique* 16, no. 2 (2011), 76.

17. Harry Gardner, interview by author, Truro (online), August 22, 2022. Harry Gardner is a former pastor, denominational missions leader, Executive Minister of the CBAC, and President of Acadia Divinity College. He is ordained within the CBAC community.

18. Gardner, interview.

Carolyn Steeves is the lead pastor of The Crossing Church, in Newfoundland. Her sobering reflection on the sovereignty of Jesus may serve to correct sometimes-held ideas of self-importance within the church. She says Christ's lordship must impact every aspect of congregational life and decision-making, but human nature often makes submission a struggle.

I've noticed in ministry that people are eager to receive Jesus as their Savior. But maybe in our teaching, and even in our sinful nature, we resist the idea of Jesus being Lord. That Jesus is Lord in our church means that we're surrendering both our mission and our vision to his leading, and under his authority. So he is Lord, and we need to acknowledge that Jesus is the owner of our church.¹⁹

Steeves continues, saying that individual Christians must permit Christ to have authority in their lives, leading to congregations that do the same. But, she says, submission is a difficult transition that, when permitted in Christian lives, can change individual and collective perspectives.

It's a challenge when our churches are filled with individuals who resist Jesus authority in their own lives. Instead, they come with their own agenda, where they think that they're the owners. Yes, I'm also that person who resists the Lordship of Christ. Jesus is the Lord of my life...mostly. If I'm honest, it's a challenge to allow every area of my life to be subjected and surrendered to the Lordship of Christ. But as I become closer to him, as I grow in my relationship to him, and as our church comes closer as well, I recognize that the Lordship of Christ means that I'll value what he values. Our church will value what he values. I will love others as he does. I'll suffer as he does. I'll forgive as he does. I'll love my enemies as he does and I'll be seeking to serve the poor as he does. Everybody I look eyes with, I will see as a bearer of the image of God who is of great value to him. It just changes things.²⁰

As embassies of Christ's kingdom, the local churches of the CBAC serve integral roles in the earthly completion of God's eternal plan by providing witness of and opportunity for others to enter the community of faith. In affirming Christ's sovereign position, Baptists prioritize no person or matter before Jesus. In looking to the cross, experiencing the presence of his Spirit, and anticipating his return, Baptist proclamation and mission focus on Jesus.²¹ Christ's earthly

19. Carolyn Steeves, interview by author, Truro (online), September 14, 2022. Carolyn Steeves is the ordained lead pastor of The Crossing Church in St. John's and Gander, NL — a member church of the CBAC.

20. Steeves, interview.

21. Shawn D. Wright, "Five Preliminary Issues for Understanding the Ordinances," in *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*, ed. Mark E. Dever, and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 81–82.

mission was incarnational and anticipatory. Through the Lord Jesus, God has introduced the world to a new understanding of his kingdom — one not yet fully realized in human hearts. Today, the continued mission of the people and churches of the CBAC is the declaration of their king and the realization of his kingdom on earth.

The Authority of Scripture

The divinely inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the sufficient, trustworthy, and authoritative guide and test for all matters of faith and practice. God, inspiring human authors in diverse places and times, has given the words of the Holy Bible to teach his will, to learn the ways of the Lord, and for correction and realignment toward godliness. The prayerful reading of Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit leads to the good news of Jesus Christ and the salvation he offers. Christ's body, the church, is likewise able to discern their Lord's will through prayer, attention to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and prudent examination of principles established in Scripture.

(Pss 19:7–10; 119; Prov 22:17–21; Matt 5:17; John 5:39–40; 16:13–14; Rom 1:16–17; 15:4; 1 Cor 10–12; 2 Cor 1:19–20; 2 Thess 2:13–14; 2 Tim 3:15–17; Heb 1:1–2; 2 Pet 1:19–20; 3:14–18)

If Baptists hold Jesus as the lord of all creation and the head of the church, and regard their mission to declare and invite others into his kingdom, where do they turn to understand his message and will? In short, the Bible. Since their emergence, Baptists have always regarded Scripture as divinely inspired, understandable by the guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13; 2

Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pet 1:20–21), and (as God’s word) serving as the “only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving Knowledge, Faith and Obedience.”²²

The interviewed Pastors unanimously agree that inspiration means a form of initiation or prompting from God and a voluntary response from the biblical authors. All the pastors say that God spoke into or stirred in the hearts and minds of the authors without overwhelming their senses in such a way as to dictate the texts. Stephen Bedard says, “inspiration means that the Holy Spirit was working through the situations and personalities of the writers, the social contexts, and the historical context to provide a revelation of what God wants us to know.”²³ Christopher Drew adds that divine inspiration is not forceful, rather “God interacts with people, but he doesn't overwrite their individuality. Their personalities come through...And to me, that's wonderful, because it's not saying that a beam of light came down from heaven, and whomever it touched, just began dictating verbatim. God allowed us to participate in this in this process of transmission.”²⁴

Theologian Jeff Pool explains how Christ’s Spirit works in the human heart and mind to inspire scriptural understanding:

The Christian scriptures, whatever intrinsic or objective authority they possess as primary attestations to the history of God’s self-disclosure in and to creation, derive their subjective trustworthiness or authority for the Christian from the human’s experience of divine love through Christ.²⁵

22. *Second London Confession (1677)*, Article 1.1. Also Helwys, *Declaration (1611)*, Article 23; *First London Confession (1644)*, Articles 7–8; *First General Confession (1651)*, Article 50; *Second London Confession (1677)*, Articles 1.4, 1.6, 1.9, 1.10; Brown, *New Hampshire Confession (1833)*, Article 1.

23. Stephen Bedard, interview by author, Truro (online), July 21, 2022). Stephen Bedard is the ordained pastor of Brookfield Baptist Church in Brookfield, NS — a member church of the CBAC.

24. Christopher Drew, interview by author, Truro (online), September 12, 2022). Christopher Drew is the ordained pastor of Stevens Road United Baptist Church in Dartmouth, NS — a member church of the CBAC.

25. Jeff B Pool, “Christ, Conscience, Canon, Community: Web of Authority in the Baptist Vision,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 24, no. 4 (1997), 420.

Even as Scripture's original inspirations were experiential, so its consumption and interpretation are today. The living presence of Christ's Holy Spirit dwells within each Christian — a dynamic, personal, living being guiding each one in biblical understanding.²⁶

Pastor Aaron Kenny also sees Scripture as “lived” through the church, even though today's church enters the biblical story in its own way. Remembering the teaching of noted New Testament scholar N. T. Wright,²⁷ Kenny speaks of the biblical narrative as a five-act play. Act One is of the Lord's creation, and Act Two introduces God's relationship with and promise to his people, Israel. Act Three reveals the main character and purpose of Jesus, while the fourth introduces the beginning of Christ's continued work through his church. Kenny explains that today's church is the fifth act, with a foundation in Scripture:

The challenge for the church is that we have the first four acts, and that we immerse ourselves in them. We understand the direction that the play is going, and the characters, and we understand the author. The more we know and are connected with the first four acts, it empowers us to get onto the stage of our lives and live out the fifth act. We're the ones on stage doing the fifth act. And so we're now trying to live it out in fidelity to what's in the first four.²⁸

The consequence of this ongoing fifth act, the inner working of the Holy Spirit for both the believer and the community of faith, is that new understandings remain discoverable through prayer. Baptists turn to Scripture for godly instruction, knowing the continuous guidance of the Holy Spirit ensures that “human understanding of the Bible is never final or complete or finished.”²⁹ This openness to new insight demonstrates the biblical authority that Christians have

26. Pool, “Web of Authority,” 425.

27. See N. T. Wright, *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture* (San Francisco: Harper, 2005) and *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (New York: Harper, 2013).

28. Aaron Kenny, interview by author, Truro (online), July 20, 2022. Aaron Kenney is the ordained lead pastor of Bridgewater Baptist Church in Bridgewater, NS — a member church of the CBAC.

29. Walter Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1993), 13 as cited by George D. Younger, “The Authority of Scripture for Baptists,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (2002), 148.

claimed since the apostolic age. As churches have encountered ever-changing missional situations, they have sought Christ's direction, turning to a living word (i.e., Scripture) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.³⁰

Local Churches of Believers

Religious Freedom and a Separation of Church and State

As each person has a competency to access God directly through Jesus Christ, and as each person must ultimately stand individually before the Lord in the final judgment, God has given each person an inherent free will to respond to the divine calling as compelled by their conscience and as led by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, each person should be free to practice their religious or irreligious identity according to their understanding. God has ordained his church and the states (governments) of the world for different purposes. God has appointed state leaders to oversee and administer the civil affairs of their peoples, and he has given the church to serve as salt and light among the nations as his agency of grace, pointing the world to his Kingdom.

(Gen 2:16–17; 4:7; Deut 30:11–20; Ps 72; Dan 2:36–38; 7:9–14; Matt 5:13–16; 19:16–22; 25:31–33; Mark 12:13–17; John 6:60–69; 14:6; 16:7–11; Acts 4:18–20; 5:27–32; Rom 5:1–2; 13:1–7; 2 Cor 5:9–10; Phil 3:20; 1 Tim 2:1–4; Heb 4:14–16; 10:15–24; 1 Pet 1:13–16; 2:11–17; Rev 19:11–16; 20:11–14)

30. Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2012), 240–241.

Co-founder of the Baptist movement Thomas Helwys dedicated a significant portion of his 1612 *A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity* to a call for universal religious freedom. His handwritten inscription to King James I has since inspired Baptist understandings of religious liberty:

The king is a mortall man and not God therefore hath no power over the immortall soules of his subjects, to make Lawes and ordinances for them, and to set spirituall Lords over them.

If the king have authority to make spirituall Lords and Lawes, then he is an immorall God, and not a mortall man.³¹

The writers of the *Second London Confession* affirmed their belief in religious freedom, saying God alone compels human conscience and is the sole judge of each individual's response to that compulsion (Rom 14:4; Gal 5:13; Col 2:20–23; Jas 4:12; 2 Pet 2:18–21).³² Today's Baptists agree. Sam Barnes has decades of CBAC leadership experience. He says the *separation of church and state* is a natural and necessary effect of the *Lordship of Jesus Christ*. He says, “Christ is Lord of the church — not a man, nor a king, nor political leader, nor a pastor.”³³

Baptists regard each individual as possessing dignity, competency, and standing before God — each with a liberty to respond (or not) to God's inner working in her or his life.³⁴ Historian Charles Deweese notes that this understanding of and advocacy for religious freedom represents the most significant and enduring contribution to humanity Baptists have made throughout their history. Looking forward, he says “[s]uch thrusts will serve as defining

31. Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity* (Spitalfields: 1612), handwritten inscription on inside cover.

32. *Second London Confession* (1677), Ch. 11.2–11.3.

33. Sam Barnes, interview by author, Truro (online), September 13, 2022. Sam Barnes is a pseudonym for a CBAC ordained pastor in a Nova Scotia setting, who asked not to be identified by name.

34. H. Leon McBeth, “God Gives Soul Competency and Priesthood to All Believers,” in *Defining Baptist Convictions: Guidelines for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Charles W. Deweese (Franklin: Providence House Publishers, 1996), 63.

characteristics of Baptists in the future if Baptists are to remain a viable body of Christians.”³⁵ Baptists are most culturally meaningful when they pursue what is best for their neighbors.

Historian Edwin Gaustad soberly examines the harm being wreaked on the Western church by relationships between religious freedom and advancing forms of individualism. On the Christian right are those who idealize an imaginary historic North American bastion of Christian migration and settlement. They raise their misdirected voices decrying what they regard as moral plagues while calling for their neighbors’ repentance so God will bless the land again. The left guards what remains from their former glory days of larger memberships and stable funding. Afraid of failures and subsequent losses, they manage their existing resources without a sense of or drive for a mission. In the middle are expressions “often sustained more by inertia and tradition than by compelling call and energizing vision.”³⁶ These long assumed they were at peace with, or were even central to, the cultural fabrics of their surrounding communities and are now left answerless as their influence wains.

The Baptist vision of universal religious freedom has been seemingly misshapen by incredible egocentric forces. What they intended for communal well-being has been transformed into an excuse for attempted satiation of personal desires. Gaustad continues, saying individualistic understandings of religious liberty drive forms of consumerism in which church ministry “has become a matter of selling to the highest bidder or playing games with the tax collector or disguising a club as a church.”³⁷ Baptist historians Norman Maring and Winthrop Hudson also see this divisiveness in the church, with many proudly claiming their own versions

35. Charles W. Deweese, “The Lordship of Christ, Biblical Authority, and Religious Liberty in Baptist World Congresses, 1905-1955,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33, no. 1 (2006), 70.

36. Edwin S. Gaustad, “The Great Tradition and ‘the Coercion of Voluntarism’,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 30, no. 3/4 (1982), 302.

37. Gaustad, “Voluntarism,” 303.

of the faith, doctrine, and tradition. Sadly, what Baptists once recognized as a divinely appointed law of the human conscience, many adopted as an idol of “extravagant variance” and declarations of self-indulgent freedom.³⁸ Ruth Tonn, a pastoral leader in Nova Scotia shares a perspective to counter ideas of individualistic freedom. Speaking from a personal perspective, she says, “as a pastor...my liberty of conscience needs to be submissive to the voice of my local body. So I don't get to make decisions for the church in isolation from the church.”³⁹

William Brackney reflects on what he sees as “the strange world of ‘marketplace religion’ and ‘post-denominationalism’ of the late twentieth century.”⁴⁰ He sees three important missional implications for Baptists in their voluntary submission to the Holy Spirit. First, recognizing the human freedom to follow God’s leading (or not), Baptists congregate voluntarily in expressions of their love for Christ and desire to assemble. Their assemblies can present their hope and joy to a watching world. But Canadians are not investigating the church in ways previous generations did. This same volunteerism drives a contagious missionary spirit for outward projection and engagement with communities who turn to the church less and less.

Second, voluntary membership within a faith community demands awareness and acknowledgment of diverse perspectives. This respect for the religious views of others, foundational to their movement, guides modern Baptist communities as they share and shape their scriptural understandings. Third, the voluntary principle emphasizes individuals whose commitment is born out of their acknowledgment that *they need fellow disciples* in the Christian

38. Maring and Hudson, *Baptist Manual*, 7–8.

39. Ruth Tonn, interview by author, Truro (online), July 13, 2022. Ruth Tonn is the ordained pastor of families and outreach with Wolfville Baptist Church in Wolfville, NS — a member church of the CBAC.

40. William H. Brackney, “Voluntarism is a Flagship of the Baptist Tradition,” in *Defining Baptist Convictions: Guidelines for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Charles W. Deweese (Franklin: Providence House Publishers, 1996), 91.

life. This realization births unity and accountability between believers, their faith communities, and God. Unity in (if not through) diversity is central to a discernment model typical to many Baptist congregations: each member contributes to corporate decisions on equal footing as each other member (i.e., one member, one vote).⁴¹

The Priesthood of Believers

All of Christ's people share as equals within the church. Each one individually, congregations collectively, and the church universally have direct access to God through their Lord. Through Christ Jesus believers are called to live sacrificially and use their gifts to serve as ministering agents in their churches and the world. Congregations also are called to serve as Christ's agency of grace to a broken and dying world. As priests and as a priesthood, believers bring God's message and action of reconciliation to the world while simultaneously advocating on behalf of the world before God.

(Exod 19:5–6; Mark 9:33–35; 10:41–43; John 13:12–17; 14:6; Rom 5:1–2; 8:9–17; 12:1–8; Eph 2:17–18; 3:8–12; Heb 4:14–16; 10:19–24; 1 Pet 2:1–10; Rev 1:4–6; 5:6–10; 20:6)

Baptists reserve church membership and missional decision-making for competent individuals who have voluntarily committed to Jesus Christ. They believe their people and churches are individual and collective members of the body of Christ.⁴² Addressing those who have experienced the “new birth” of regeneration (1 Pet 1:3, 23), the apostle Peter referred to the church as a holy and royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:5, 9). Likewise, John the Revelator, recorded

41. Brackney, “Voluntarism,” 91–92.

42. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 101.

messages for Christ's servants and saints, referring to the church as God's priests (Rev 1:6; 5:10). Accordingly, Baptists are among many since the Reformation in viewing the church and its people as a priesthood of all believers.

Historian H. Leon McBeth says all Christ's people carry priestly duties and describes Christians as a collective of equals, each with equal access to God. They share as much responsibility to bring the world before God as they do to carry God to the world.⁴³ This is a special relationship that all Christians have with the Lord and their neighbors. Henry Cook, in dated language, rightly explains: "No one is excluded or exempted from this twofold ministry of intercession and witness; of intercession as priests for men before God, and of witness for God before men."⁴⁴ Still, while each Christian is a priest in his or her own right, each one is fallible and in need of the body — the priesthood — to discern God's will for the church.⁴⁵ New Testament scholar Gordon Fee explains that this priesthood is not an individual pursuit, "with each person's being his or her own priest with God, without need of an external priesthood."⁴⁶ The church as a whole bears the priestly function, ministering to the world, God, and one another.

Regenerate Church Membership

Scripture reveals that the universal church is composed exclusively of those who believe in Jesus Christ. Membership within each local congregation is likewise to be composed solely of those who have confessed their sin and need of Christ, who show the effectual transformative working

43. McBeth, "Competency and Priesthood," 65.

44. Cook, *Baptists*, 101.

45. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 149.

46. Gordon D. Fee, "Laos and Leadership Under the New Covenant," *Crux* 25, no. 4 (1989), 12, n. 16.

of the Holy Spirit in their lives, who have been baptized as believers, and who remain committed to Christ's work through their local congregational fellowship. All of Christ's people share as equals in the church. Members are bound together in common belief, Christian experience, and local mission. Further, they discern the Holy Spirit's leading and Christ's will for their purposes together. In a spirit of unity and faithful stewardship, congregations rely on the godly leadership of elders, including pastors. These men and women, mature in the faith and regarded as trustworthy, are set aside to help guide the church in spiritual and practical matters.

(Matt 16:13–20; 18:15–20; 28:19–20; Mark 10:35–45; Luke 9:23–26; Acts 1:20–26; 2:14–42; 15:22–29; Rom 1:7; 8:9–17; 12:9–21; 1 Cor 1:2; 10:14–17, 20–21; 2 Cor 5:16–17; Gal 2:19–20; 5:16, 22–26; Eph 1:3–14; 2:18–22; 4:11–14; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1–13; 5:17–22; Titus 1:5–9; Heb 12:1–3; 1 Pet 4:1–11; Jude 3; Rev 5:8–10)

From their beginning, Baptists have affirmed that church membership is reserved exclusively for persons who have consciously confessed their sin and need for Jesus, were baptized as believers, are indwelt by the Spirit, and remain faithful to Christ through his church.⁴⁷ Baptists practice regenerate church membership — at least, in theory. The biblical warrant for regenerate membership is its assumption throughout the New Testament. Church members are consistently called “saints” in contexts that make it plain they are Jesus’ followers (ἅγιοι, lit. “holy ones”; e.g., Acts 9:13; Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 6:2; Eph 1:18; 4:12; Heb 13:24; Jude 3; Rev 22:21). Scripture describes them as being built into a spiritual house and holy priesthood (1 Pet 2:5), and a body with various roles given by the Holy Spirit for Christian service (1 Cor

47. Helwys rejected mixed membership in favor of regenerate church membership in his *Synopsis fidei, veræ Christianæ Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ, Amsterodamiæ*, Article 9 (1610). See Rich, “Thomas Helwys’ First Confession of Faith 1610,” 239.

12:1–12). The exclusivity of believers' membership is amplified by passages calling for the excommunication of those who profess wrong gospels or live persistently in ungodly ways (Matt 7:21–23; 18:15–20; Rom 16:17–18; 1 Cor 5:9–13; 11:18–19; 1 John 2:19).

While regenerate church membership is a Baptist ideal, pervasive *de facto* mixed membership presents significant challenges for the future of the Baptist movement. Visible mixed membership was not a part of the Christian experience until the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 made Christianity the Roman state religion. For a movement striving to recapture the essence of the New Testament church, mixed membership is antithetical to Baptist motives. Still, within North American Baptist churches, mixed membership is not new.

Historian James Garrett, Jr., writing on the 1769 formation of the Carolinian and Virginian Kehukee Association, notes some of the inaugural member churches had not insisted on “conversion prior to baptism.” This caused friction with other Baptists until 1777, when the Kehukee Association produced a confession of faith, including the requirement for believers' baptism as a demonstration of regeneration.⁴⁸ Seminal Canadian church historian Ingraham Bill describes how the issue of mixed membership caused disunity among the first Canadian Baptist churches. Surrounded and influenced by Congregationalist churches, late eighteenth-century Nova Scotian Baptists permitted membership of those who had received only paedobaptism. Discord between the province's Baptists persisted until the mixed churches moved to exclusive regenerate membership and believers' baptism in the early nineteenth century.⁴⁹

48. James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009), 126–127.

49. Ingraham E. Bill, *Fifty Years With the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (Saint John: Barnes and Company, 1880), 27–35.

Hammett reflects on the nearly perfunctory function of membership among many modern Baptists; little substance is demanded of potential members or offered by churches. His complaint is of commitment — churches increasingly welcome new members based on cursory information or evidence of Christian identity, while failing to ensure basic levels of congregational contact and cohesion. Hammett is right to ask, “When membership is treated so carelessly and cavalierly by the churches themselves, why should attenders think it matters much at all whether they become members or not?”⁵⁰ This lack of bilateral commitment is devastating North American churches. Pew Research reports younger generations are distancing themselves from religious ties at increasing and faster rates than previously experienced. Lifeway Research shows emerging generations are not making meaningful connections through faith-based communities or developing trust in church leaders.⁵¹

With mixed or non-membership in Baptist churches neither novel nor isolated, are there pathways to reclaiming the central Baptist ideal of regenerate church membership? Theologian Mark Dever says that finding the correct answer to that question “is a key step in revitalizing our

50. John S. Hammett, “The Why and Who of Church Membership,” in *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*, ed. Mark E. Dever, and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2015), 168.

51. See Alan Cooperman and Gregory Smith, “The factors driving the growth of religious ‘nones’ in the U.S.” Pew Research Center: Fact Tank: accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/14/the-factors-driving-the-growth-of-religious-nones-in-the-u-s/>. Cooperman and Smith report that the levels of commitment to religious communities among Gen X and Millennial persons is in steeper decline than of previous generations. See also Kevin Singer and Lauren Rink, “Gen Z Has Friends, Just Not Many From Church.” Lifeway Research: accessed March 25, 2021, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2021/03/01/gen-z-has-friends-just-not-many-from-church/> and Kevin Singer, “3 Trends Pastors Must Understand to Reach the Next Generation.” Lifeway Research: accessed March 25, 2021, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2021/02/05/3-trends-pastors-must-understand-to-reach-the-next-generation/>. The data shows that only 28% of Gen Zs are developing friendships in faith communities; of those who are involved, more than 50% expressed distrust in the institution (leadership); only 8% would trust a religious leader in a time of need; and less than 1% of 18–25 year old adults have experienced a trusted clergy member check in on their well-being.

churches, evangelizing our nation, furthering the cause of Christ around the world, and so bringing glory to God.”⁵² Dever outlines a compelling missional vision for why regenerate membership matters and how it helps draw others to Jesus, saying interpersonal commitment is the primary responsibility of all Christians and a key to sharing Christ with the world.

Dever reviews the biblical picture of Christians in committed relationships with God and their fellow congregation members. Unity in any relationship, often hard to forge and maintain, emerges from love. Members of the first churches cared for each other’s needs, were patient with one another, worked toward mutual spiritual maturity, and prayed for each other (Matt 25:40; Mark 11:25; Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 16:1–2; Phil 2:1–18; Col 3:12; Jas 5:16). Those first Christians not only proclaimed the gospel of Christ’s love, but they also lived it in ways that drew their neighbors toward God.⁵³ First-century congregations serve as role models to modern Christians who desire to be effective messengers of God’s love found in Jesus.

First, membership in a faith community is the primary vehicle for discipleship growth and mutual accountability. Christians who expose themselves to mutuality through life’s difficulties, frustrations, and temptations, experience liberating forms of personal vulnerability (found in genuine and maturing relationships) while rejecting the West’s widely embraced forms of individualism. Second, Christians bound in a common cause are better equipped to share the gospel of Jesus Christ through their cooperation. Further, the Holy Spirit prepares communities of committed believers with group discernment, enabling them to identify and reject false versions of the gospel and incorrect interpretations of Scripture. Finally, membership in the local church brings glory to Jesus, as neighborhoods see God’s love enacted through people who are

52. Mark E. Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 156.

53. Dever, *Nine Marks*, 160–161.

the Lord's and whose lives offer him praise.⁵⁴ An ancient proverb notes that iron sharpens iron (Prov 27:17). Atlantic Canadian Baptists wanting a future for their movement must recognize that they influence emerging generations with today's local churches. As with iron, commitment today will sharpen tomorrow's resolve.

Congregational Inclusion

Believers' Baptism

Baptism is a sacred act of Christian obedience and solidarity in which communities of faith and believers mutually commit themselves to each other and the Kingdom of God. Baptism of the believer by immersion emblemizes the significance of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the covenantal new life between the Lord, his universal and local church, and the baptized believer. Baptism is to be reserved exclusively for believers who confess their sinful nature and need of Christ. Likewise, all those who come to Christ are to be baptized as believers, declaring their death to self and life in the Lord.

(Matt 3:13–17; 28:19; Mark 1:9–11; Acts 3:37–42; 8:12, 35–38; 9:17–19; 10:44–48; 16:14–15, 30–33; Rom 6:3–4; 1 Cor 12:12–13; Gal 3:26–28; Gal 4:4–6; Col 2:11–12; 1 Pet 3:17–22)

In 1609 a group of English Separatists led by former Puritan priest John Smyth was exiled to Amsterdam. Convinced either by the New Testament or the Waterlander Mennonite community that gave them refuge, Smyth rejected his infant baptism in favor of baptism as a believer. Smyth baptized himself, then Helwys, before they baptized the remaining adults in their

54. Dever, *Nine Marks*, 163–170.

group. Thus, the movement known as Baptists, so-called by their English opponents, was born. Helwys explained their understanding of the local church as “a company of faithful people separated from the world by the word and Spirit of God, being knit unto the Lord and one unto another, by baptism upon their own confession of the faith and sins.”⁵⁵ Smyth soon left the church he had founded, wanting to join the Mennonites, while Helwys led many of the group back to London (Spitalfields) in 1612.⁵⁶

Early Baptists continued the pattern initiated by Smyth and Helwys. They looked to Scripture, seeing baptism as symbolic of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection and representing the believer’s new life (Rom 6:3–5). Accordingly, they forbade infant baptism, reserving the rite exclusively for believers who had confessed their faith following their conversions to Christ. They regarded baptism as a sign of regeneration in the lives of new believers and a symbol of initiation into the community of faith. Almost midway through the seventeenth century, they adopted immersion as the biblically modeled mode for baptism. Finally, they affirmed baptism as a demonstration of the believer’s conscious decision to follow Christ’s commandments (Matt 28:19), saying those who do not obey that command do not show their regard for Christ as Lord and are not yet part of his body.⁵⁷

Perhaps it is enough to say that today’s Baptists hold the same baptismal perspectives as their early forerunners. But that does not truly address the significance Baptists see in baptizing exclusively those who consciously express and demonstrate their faith in Jesus Christ. Believers’

55. Helwys, *Declaration (1611)*,

56. Paul L. Gritz, “The Decline and Recovery of Believers’ Baptism,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 43, no. 2 (2001), 49.

57. Helwys, *Declaration (1611)*, Articles 10, 13–14; *First London Confession (1644)*, Articles 39–41; *First General Confession (1651)*, Articles 46–49; *Second London Confession (1677)*, Articles 29.2, 29.4; Brown, *New Hampshire Confession (1833)*, Article 14.

baptism is nearly central to Baptist faith expressions for three primary reasons. First, in baptism, believers forge unions with Jesus and other Christians as they enter the *community* of Christ. Second, as Newfoundland pastor Mitchell Foley rightly offers, “baptism declares your public *commitment* to Christ...[serving] to confirm the reality of our faith.”⁵⁸ Third, through baptism, believers join the *cause* of Christ, publicly declaring their Lord’s gospel.

Baptists join all of orthodox Christianity in saying “the church is the *community* of the baptized.”⁵⁹ In baptism, believers are bound to Christ in an expression of the Lord’s forgiveness of sin through his death and burial (Col 2:9–14). While the Holy Spirit works in the lives of non-believers, drawing them to God, the Spirit seals believers as members of his community through baptism, unifying them with the resurrected Lord and his people. Baptism unites believers with all other believers, both those of the past and present (Gal 25–27; Eph 4:4–5). Harry Renfree says Baptists also connect baptism to the communion and mission of each local congregation. The rite not only represents initiation into the universal body of Christ but “it [signifies] admission into the local church, the local being an essential ‘outcrop’ of the universal...unattached Christians [are] not found in the New Testament; all were linked to a fellowship.”⁶⁰ Thomas Gold, a pastor in New Brunswick speaks for many of his current CBAC peers in agreement with Renfree, saying, “We should be raising the bar so that we see that membership and baptism become synonymous — they happen at the same time because the idea of being saved and not being part of the church is incompatible with Scripture.”⁶¹

58. Mitchell Foley, interview by author, Truro (online), June 20, 2022. Mitchell Foley is the ordained lead pastor with Corner Brook Baptist Church in Corner Brook, NL — a member church of the CBAC.

59. Maring and Hudson, *Baptist Manual*, 167.

60. Harry A. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon: The Baptist Story in Canada* (Mississauga: Canadian Baptist Federation, 1988), 59–60.

61. Thomas Gold, interview by author, Truro (online), September 7, 2022. Thomas Gold is a

McBeth correctly notes the “Christian faith is intensely personal in that each of us must make our own decision about our relation to God.”⁶² New believers express their own growing *commitment* to Jesus and his church through baptism. Baptism is counter-cultural and political action: believers publicly declare their submission to God, their allegiance to Christ’s kingdom, and their citizenry in heaven (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:9–13; 1 Cor 12:11–12; 1 Pet 3:21–22). Early Christians and early Baptists alike experienced pressures and often deadly persecutions resulting from their Christian commitment. Edward Manning Saunders recalls the religious persecution the first Canadian Baptists faced as they settled in Nova Scotia. With poetic license he explains how their faith in Jesus, expressed through believers’ baptism, enabled them to endure:

In the symbolic might of apostolic baptism was the hiding of their fortitude, undaunted courage and irresistible power. Unless the judgment has been perverted and prejudiced against believers’ baptism, the new birth brings with it a yearning to follow Christ in this blessed ordinance. The new-born soul gets spiritual light and strength, as the doctrine of the cross and personal salvation are revealed in its vivid symbolism — dead to the world, buried with Christ, to walk with him in the new life.⁶³

The proclamation and living out of Christ’s gospel stand at the center of the purpose and work of the church. Baptists recognize believers’ baptism as essential to that evangelistic *cause*. Through baptism, believers publicly declare their understanding and acceptance of the gospel: Christ alone atones for sin through his sacrificial death; salvation is found exclusively through repentance from personal sin and faith in Jesus; and Christ’s resurrection shows his ultimate supremacy and the truth of his claims. In baptism, believers demonstrate their allegiance to Jesus.⁶⁴ Believers’ baptism also protects and promotes the church’s mission in another way.

pseudonym for a CBAC ordained lead pastor in a suburban New Brunswick setting, who asked not to be identified by name.

62. McBeth, “Competency and Priesthood,” 65.

63. Edward M. Saunders, *History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces* (Halifax: Press of John Burgoyne, 1902), 65.

64. Shawn D. Wright, “Baptism in History, Theology, and the Church,” in *Baptist Foundations:*

Deweese says by limiting baptism (and so membership) exclusively to believers, churches help ensure they comprise their congregations with mission-minded followers of Christ who share a common experience and commitment to the gospel.⁶⁵

Even the Baptist practice of immersion as their normative mode of baptism demonstrates their high respect for Scripture and mission. The Greek word βαπτίζω means *to plunge, to sink*; or metaphorically, *to be soaked in wine*;⁶⁶ it does not mean *to sprinkle*. Furthermore, Jesus was baptized by immersion (Mark 1:9–10). Moreover, baptism by immersion symbolically echoes Christ’s burial and resurrection (Rom 6:3–5; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 3:21).⁶⁷ In its enactment, the “symbolism of baptism by immersion is compelling”⁶⁸ as a witness for Christ. In immersion, observers witness a voluntary acknowledgment of sin and reliance on God — the immersed demonstrate their resolution to bury their previous lives below the water, in exchange for lives with Jesus. Rising, they show their hope in the resurrection and everlasting life in God’s kingdom. Baptism by immersion is incarnational evangelism.

The pseudonymous Sam Barnes’ beautiful image of the relationship between Jesus, baptismal candidates, and baptizing congregations serves as a reminder that the Christian walk is one of community:

With most of our Baptist churches, we have not tied baptism and membership closely enough together...I disagree with separating the two...Yes, it’s symbolic. I know how it pictures death and burial and resurrection with Christ, and you come to faith in Christ first, then you’re baptized, I get that. But it’s not just a personal individual act...that’s a sign of North American Western individualism. [Baptism] is also something that church does...you’re added to the church...you get the support of the church family, but you’re

Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age, ed. Mark E. Dever, and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2015), 124–125.

65. Charles W. Deweese, “Believer’s Baptism is Covenant,” in *Defining Baptist Convictions: Guidelines for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Charles W. Deweese (Franklin: Providence House Publishers, 1996), 105.

66. Henry G. Liddell, *et al.*, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 305.

67. For more, see Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 274.

68. Maring and Hudson, *Baptist Manual*, 180.

also accountable to the family...It should be more of a communal act, not just an individual saying, “Hey, look, what I did I. This is my testimony that I'm following Jesus.” Well, it’s not just your testimony. It’s about the church embracing you now and taking responsibility for you, as a fellow believer.⁶⁹

The Lord’s Supper

The Lord’s Supper (or Communion or Eucharist) is a sacred act of Christian obedience and remembrance in which believers and the communities of faith they compose recommit themselves to each other and the Kingdom of God. The Lord’s Supper symbolically represents the spiritual realities of Christ’s presence among his people and their unity in continuing his work in their setting. The bread and cup emblemize the Lord’s broken body and shed blood, given on the cross for the remission of sin. By partaking in the elements, congregations affirm their need for Christ’s salvation while enacting a proclamation of that need. In each congregation, the Lord’s Supper is simultaneously a celebration of Christ’s continuous work among the communion of believers and a reminder of the immanency of his return. The Lord’s Supper is for baptized believers who have confessed their sin and need of Christ.

(Matt 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–25; Luke 22:7–20; John 6:47–58, 63; 1 Cor 10:14–17, 20–21; 11:17–34)

Baptists stand with the universal church in partaking of the Lord’s Supper to remember Christ’s sacrificial death and give thanks for the atonement he secured (Matt 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–30; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor 10:14–21; 11:17–34). But, as historian John Finley points out, Baptists communities have not always treated the Eucharist⁷⁰ with the respect

69. Sam Barnes interview.

70. *Eucharist*, from the Greek εὐχαριστία (“thanksgiving”), *Communion*, and *the Table* are used

it is due. He protests, “in far too many instances the practice has been performed so carelessly as to make it a mere addendum to the worship service, or followed so narrowly as to divide, rather than unite, believers.”⁷¹ If Baptists have mishandled the Lord’s Supper in recent years, how might they reclaim a sense of its meaning, significance, and place in local mission?

Early Baptists regarded the Eucharist as a divinely appointed symbol of the communion Christ initiated between himself and his people. They held that this union was forged both within their local bodies and with the universal church. The Lord’s Supper, they said, stands as a memorial to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross — a living and active telling of the gospel. Desiring godly living for all, they carefully served the elements, insisting the Table was exclusively reserved for baptized believers in good standing before God and the church (Matt 26:26–27; 1 Cor 5:1–12; 10:16; 11:23–26; 2 Cor 6:14–15).⁷² But do seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century Baptist eucharistic attitudes have anything to offer today’s missional churches? Yes.

Jesus initiated the Eucharist as an enduring symbol of his new covenant of forgiveness and restored relationships with God (Luke 22:20; Heb 9:14–15). Christ’s church is a people who place their faith in Jesus and who enter into his covenant. Ultimately, Christ gave the Supper for his people — the church (Luke 22:28–30; 12 Cor 10:16–17). Christians who vulnerably approach and partake of the Lord’s Supper open themselves to experience forms of spiritual and relational renewal.⁷³ First, believers renew their worship of Christ, remembering and giving

synonymously with *Lord’s Supper*.

71. John M. Finley, “Worship Culminates in the Lord’s Supper,” in *Defining Baptist Convictions: Guidelines for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Charles W. Deweese (Franklin: Providence House Publishers, 1996), 112.
72. Helwys, *Declaration (1611)*, Article 15; *First General Confession (1651)*, Articles 52, 54; *Second London Confession (1677)*, Articles 30.2, 30.5, 30.7, 30.8; Brown, *New Hampshire Confession (1833)*, Article 14.
73. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 282–283.

thanks for his sacrifice and its significance for their salvation (1 Cor 11:24). Second, in Communion, disciples renew their commitment to Jesus and their fellow Christians. Consuming the bread, the single loaf, they are reminded of and returned to unity in the body, both locally and universally (1 Cor 10:17). Finally, in taking the Eucharist, believers anticipate their Lord's return, renewing their mission of proclaiming Christ's love for and to a lost world (1 Cor 11:26).

Carolyn Steeves says the Lord's Supper is important to maintaining unity within congregational fellowships. Those who participate in the Supper must confront the enormity of the price Christ paid for their atonement. They also must recognize that the Lord paid that same price for all who are his, including their fellow church members. In light of the cost, the faithful can better see the worth God places on them and the others of their congregations. If there are outstanding conflicts within a church, coming to the table requires the self-examination necessary to extend forgiveness. Steeves eloquently notes, "the Lord's supper is like a marker for us every time we take it; we are remembering what God did for us in this moment. It's essential, because of how it affects our relationships with each other and with God."⁷⁴

Many modern Baptist congregations seemingly have forgotten the significance of the Lord's Supper to their evangelistic missions. With a genuine love for Christ and their neighbors, churches can restore the Lord's Supper to its high place within their communities while ensuring it amplifies their evangelistic efforts. New Testament scholar Thomas Schreiner reminds readers that the Supper requires believers to look to their past, present, and future. The Eucharist, a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice and its sufficiency for all, spiritually draws the church together with

74. Carolyn Steeves, interview by author, Truro (online), September 14, 2022. Carolyn Steeves serves as the ordained lead pastor of The Crossing Church in St. John's and Gander, NL — a member church of the CBAC.

him while proclaiming Christ's goodness until his return.⁷⁵ Finley rightly points out, "the church at table presents a visual sermon to the world"⁷⁶ — the Lord's Supper is an enacted gospel.

The Lord's Supper encourages believers "to remember what God has done, in order to be more vividly aware of what God continues to do and has promised yet to do."⁷⁷ At the same time, it speaks to unbelieving observers, proclaiming Christ's incarnation, death, burial, resurrection, and promise of eternal life. The Eucharist serves at least a dual purpose in Christian mission: the renewal and moral support of the church with each other and their Lord, and the declaration of the good news of Jesus Christ to an observing world. As believers serve the Christian mission in their specific contexts, local congregations must also consider to whom they extend invitations to the Table.

While Baptists vary with forms of open and close communion, Hammett presents a noteworthy argument that Baptists should reserve the Eucharist for regenerate Christians who have received believers' baptism. He correctly says that only believing church members are in communion with Christ and each other, bound together by the Holy Spirit. In the strictest sense, Christians are members of and in covenant with their local communities of faith (i.e., local congregations and denominational bodies). Noting fellow baptized believers of other congregations are part of the universal church who may come to the table, he sees that the Lord's primary intentions are in renewing relationships between himself and members of each local church.⁷⁸

75. Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Lord's Supper in the Bible," in *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*, ed. Mark E. Dever, and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2015), 134, 140–142.

76. Finley, "Lord's Supper," 113.

77. Maring and Hudson, *Baptist Manual*, 187.

78. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations*, 104–105, 287.

From a missional perspective, Hammett's ideas are helpful. Baptists believe that Jesus commands his followers to be baptized as believers, into his covenantal community. Consequentially they also believe in a divinely appointed correct way to approach God and enter his community. Churches practicing a form of close communion evangelize unregenerate attenders, at least in part, by calling them to Jesus on Christ's terms. Still, the apostle Paul noted that the Corinthian church had inauthentic members who participated in the Lord's Supper alongside genuine believers (1 Cor 11:17–22). Perhaps the best way forward is for Baptists to teach the meaning, significance, and scope of the Table while leaving its attendance to the heart of each individual.

Inter-congregational Relationships

Local Church Independence

Christ's church, universal and local, is composed of his followers who are equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit to continue his redemptive work in the world and their communities. Universally, the church consists of all Christian believers of many diverse settings and congregational expressions. Locally, Christ has empowered every particular congregation with the competency and responsibility to discern and govern its affairs and determine how to conduct its Christian mission within its setting. With Christ as their head and prayerfully led by the Holy Spirit, local congregations are responsible to appoint elders, receive and dismiss members, administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, lead the growth of Christian discipleship through worship, service, and evangelism, and determine their willingness to associate with other churches in binding and mutual submission.

(Matt 16:13–20; 18:15–20; 28:16–20; John 17:17–18; Acts 1:8; 2:47; 6:1–7; Rom 12:1–8; 16:1–2; 1 Cor 1:10; 2:14–16; 5:3–5; 12; 2 Cor 2:5–11; Eph 4:1–16; 5:31–32; Col 1:18, 24; 1 Thess 5:11–14; 1 Tim 3; 4:12–14; 5:17–22; Titus 1:5–10; Heb 6:1–2; 13:17; 1 Pet 5:1–10)

Early Baptists saw that Scripture shows that God has equipped and given the responsibility to each congregation for mission and ministry in its local context. In his 1611 *Declaration of Faith*, Helwys said each church has access to Christ and must interpret Scripture (1 Cor 14:36; 2 Cor 2:7; Col 1:5–6). Therefore no congregation is hierarchically superior to others. Later seventeenth-century Baptists examined Scripture and insisted the Lord has gifted and entrusted each congregation with the duty of appointing qualified pastors, teachers, and deacons for their local missions (Acts 1:2; 6:3; 15:22–25; Rom 12:7–8; 16:1; 1 Cor 12:8–28; 1 Tim 3; Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 5:1–3). They also said God has given each local church the “power and authority” necessary to govern its affairs, shape its forms of worship, and disciple its members (Matt 18:17–18; 1 Cor 5:4–5, 13; 2 Cor 2:6–8).⁷⁹ The Baptist understanding of local church independence (or autonomy) originates in these biblically-rooted principles.

Modern Baptists hold to the same convictions of *autonomy* as their denominational ancestors. Hudson recalls that seventeenth-century English Baptists became known as “Independents” because of their form of congregational church government. While today the concept of *independence* is preferable to *autonomy*,⁸⁰ these Baptists regarded identification with

79. Helwys, *Declaration (1611)*, Article 12; *First London Confession (1644)*, Article 36; *Second London Confession (1677)*, Article 26.7.

80. The word *autonomy*, from the Greek αὐτός (“self”) and νόμος (“law”), means “self governed.” Baptists, considering themselves governed under the law and sovereignty of Christ, should be first to reject such a concept.

independence as derogatory. They said they were not independent at all — they relied on relationships with God and each other.

Elias Mutale is a former CBAC Regional Minister who currently serves in senior pastoral ministry. He cautions that the exercise of *liberty* is susceptible to human faultiness and a tendency toward isolationism. He sees that Baptists take seriously their “right and ability” to directly interact with God. Perhaps they overemphasize this quality on individual or local church levels, losing sight that God calls them to community life. Mutale continues, “local church governance is very important and very significant. But it must always be balanced, in my view, with interdependence.”⁸¹

Today’s Baptists share a historical belief that while no one church is the whole of Christ’s body on Earth, neither is it merely a fraction of it. Each congregation is equipped with Scripture, capable and orthodox preaching and teaching, the administration of Baptism and the Eucharist, and is duly and divinely appointed for its own mission, government, and discipline as a true representation of Christ’s Church.⁸²

Even as each believer has dignity, competency, and standing before God, possessing the liberty to respond (or not) to God’s inner working in their life, so too are local congregations so equipped. Active Christian mission is always performed in a community. Denominational leader Garth Williams shares his concern that an overemphasis on church independence coupled with types of spiritual apathy transforms local congregations into societies with little to distinguish

81. Elias Mutale, interview by author, Truro (online), July 21, 2022. Elias Mutale is a former CBAC Regional Minister, currently serving as the ordained lead pastor of Southend Baptist Church in Dartmouth, NS — a member church of the CBAC.

82. Winthrop S. Hudson, “The Associational Principle Among Baptists,” *Foundations* 1, no. 1 (1958), 11–12.

them from any number of benevolent clubs in their neighborhoods. His words are a reminder of the importance of the Spirit-led discernment function of the body:

...in our business meetings, or in even our leadership team meetings, I've often seen more of a business model of making the best decisions based on Xs and Os or numbers and budget lines, as opposed to really spending time corporately in prayer, and seeking more of a collaborative sense of where the Spirit is leading and taking the church and making those decisions.⁸³

Associational Relationships

While each local congregation discerns and governs its own affairs and Christian mission, the Lord calls churches of like faith, expression, and vision to support each other in their godly work. Associated churches are interconnected by their foundations rooted in Scripture and interrelated by their common heritage and mission. Their interdependence is experienced as the unity of their associations. Mutually submitting to one another, associated churches are grounded in and compelled by common beliefs and value systems. In their independence, each local church maintains liberty to remain in or withdraw from association, as led by the Holy Spirit. Notwithstanding this independence, associations are responsible to receive and dismiss member churches and to maintain unity in matters of faith, expression, vision, and values.

(Matt 18:15–20; 28:19–20; Acts 1:8; 15; 20:1–2; Rom 15:14–32; 1 Cor 5:3–5; 16:1–4; 2 Cor 8:1–9:15; Col 4:10–17; Phlm 4–7, 10–18; 1 Tim 3:15; 6:13–14; 3 John 5–10)

Baptists, who have always actuated local missions through their independent churches, have also regarded wider missions with associated churches as essential to their biblical identity and witness. In 1612 Thomas Helwys returned to England from Amsterdam with approximately

83. Garth Williams, interview by author, Truro (online), November 11, 2022.

ten others and planted the first General Baptist church in the Spitalfields district of London. Within a decade, their church was associated with at least five other newly formed English Baptist churches.⁸⁴

In 1644 seven Particular Baptist churches in London forged an association “to have the counsell and help one of another in all needfull affaires [*sic*] of the Church.”⁸⁵ Maintaining their congregational independence, their churches worked together for the purposes of the common Christian mission.⁸⁶ Thirty-three years later, with their association more than five times as large, these same Baptists looked to the example of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. In the apostles, they saw role models who respected each church’s localized mission while remaining in communion with each other for mutual support and advice.⁸⁷

Church historian Carolyn Blevins says the Jerusalem Council remains “the biblical model for associations in Baptist life. Churches which care about each other listen to each other.”⁸⁸ She explains how Baptists of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century desired to explore and explain their Christian faith and unity. Relegated to cultural fringes, they needed to rely on each other for fellowship and encouragement. They met the emotional, spiritual, and practical challenges experienced by one congregation through the support of others. Moreover they were motivated by their zeal for Christian missions. They could strengthen each other, develop the

84. Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London 1616–1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 70–71. The effectiveness of their association and the value they placed on proclaiming biblical truth through sound Christian doctrine is seen in the association’s excommunication of the Southwark church on the latter’s acceptance of Socinianism.

85. *First London Confession (1644)*, Article 47.

86. *First London Confession (1644)*, “Preface.”

87. *Second London Confession (1677)*, Article 26.15.

88. Carolyn D. Blevins, “The Associational Spirit Promotes Cooperation,” in *Defining Baptist Convictions: Guidelines for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Charles W. Deweese (Franklin: Providence House Publishers, 1996), 141.

next generations of pastoral leaders and other educational resources, and commission their own missionaries. Do twenty-first-century Baptist churches need to associate with others of like mind and mission? Given their challenges and hopes, which appear similar to those experienced by their denominational predecessors, Blevins says yes. Cooperation for mission in a post-Christian world, rooted in shared values and purposes, is perhaps more necessary now than ever.⁸⁹

Brackney looks to the example of the Jerusalem Council and says there are several positive missional benefits to churches working together. First, by working together, associated churches provide their surrounding communities “an important kind of social currency...[a] visible reminder of the largeness of the Body of Christ.”⁹⁰ Second, associations permit increased inter-church communication, cooperation, and bases for relational healing when needed. Third, associated churches can learn to trust each other and can discuss and address issues that challenge their shared Christian missions. No one church stands as the “totality of the Body of Christ”⁹¹ and associated churches work together to preserve and continually develop theological understanding. Finally, associated churches can combine resources for their missions as they discern the voice of the Holy Spirit within their fellowship.

Ecclesiological scholar Jonathan Leeman outlines how integral the familial relationships and mutual supports between New Testament churches were to their first-century Christian mission. Churches loved and had joy in each other (Eph 1:15; Col 1:4). They were careful to support one another when necessary (Rom 15:25–26; 1 Cor 16:1–3; 2 Cor 9:12). They prayed for their fellow churches and their common mission in Christ (2 Cor 9:14; Eph 6:18; 1 Thess 5:25).

89. Blevins, “Associational Cooperation,” 144–146.

90. William H. Brackney, “Philadelphia’s Great Contribution to Baptist Life and Thought,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2008), 18.

91. Brackney, “Philadelphia,” 17.

They strove to serve each other as Christian role models (1 Thess 1:7; 2 Thess 1:4). Importantly, they worked together to examine the pastors and teachers among them, sharing human resources as needed (2 Cor 8:18; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 7–8; 3 John 5–6).⁹²

All of this was feasible, even necessary, in their pre-Christian settings because of their shared confession, “Jesus is Lord.” Within their surrounding communities, they were committed to demonstrating their ultimate political allegiance to Christ and were bound together by the mandates of his Great Commission. Their partnerships equipped them better to prepare leaders for ministry and missions, even while they continued to work through the significance of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. Leeman astutely says, “[the] point is impossible to evade: local congregations of the New Testament were very much integrated with one another.”⁹³

Maring and Hudson go further, placing the biblical mandate for churches to associate on the lips of Jesus himself. In the Lord’s command “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another,” (John 13:34), they see that even as Christians are called to voluntary communion with other believers, churches are called likewise to each other.⁹⁴ Baptists who have always insisted that each congregation is divinely equipped and entrusted for its local mission, have also equally affirmed spiritual communities broader than any of those individual bodies alone. Twenty-first-century missional Baptists will prioritize associational revival (where declines have occurred). As churches serve, minister, and mature together theologically, the fruit of their cooperative efforts will be the “building [of] trust and ultimately interdependence.”⁹⁵

92. Jonathan Leeman, “A Congregational Approach to Catholicity: Independence and Interdependence,” in *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*, ed. Mark E. Dever, and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 374–375.

93. Leeman, “Independence and Interdependence,” 375.

94. Maring and Hudson, *Baptist Manual*, 230.

95. Maring and Hudson, *Baptist Manual*, 227.

An unnatural and unbiblical focus on local church independence (or autonomy) permeates much of the Canadian Baptist movement. Henry Cook, having served in associational, national, and international executive denominational leadership, sees losses of connection, vision, and mission in churches that highly esteem their independence. His challenging and corrective words are necessary for and instructive to today's mission-focused leaders:

There are problems arising out of our present system — some people would say lack of system — that we must face. There is, for instance, the question of isolationism, or better perhaps, atomism, to which reference has already been made. Churches are scattered up and down a city or countryside like grains of sand, each a unit in itself and each apparently convinced that it can enjoy existence if it so desires, without any very definite connection with its neighbours. It is a self-governing and self-sufficient entity, and the sense of churchmanship in the wider sense is almost non-existent. The one Church of Christ, in other words, is lost in a multiplicity of individual churches, and there is no inward compulsion — in scientific language no centripetal force at work to counteract the centrifugal force that seeks to drive them apart. It is this lack of a common churchmanship that...is more than anything else the cause of our denominational weakness.

It may be questioned, indeed, whether our present system is really suited to some conditions. It does wonderfully well in suburban districts where we get a good community of middle-class people. But what about the mission field? What about slum areas? What about many of our villages? Leadership there is often lacking, and economic conditions make the maintenance of a full-time ministry impossible. Yet we persist in thinking — and the struggling local community probably persists in thinking most of all — that independency is the thing we must aim at, and we seem to cherish the strange idea that the local body of believers cannot truly be a church unless it is completely self-sufficient.

It is this idea that creates our problem.⁹⁶

96. Cook, *Baptists*, 82–83.

Inclusive Leadership

God has given and continues to give his people spiritual gifts for various services and ministries, blessing both women and men for his purposes. Among these, God calls some to leadership ministries within the church and its affiliated agencies. Scripture reveals that the Lord prepares various women and men with wisdom, compassion, knowledge, competency, and authority to serve in all areas of church leadership.

(Gen 1:27; 5:1–2; Exod 15:20–21; Judg 4:4–9; 2 Kgs 22:11–20; 2 Chr 34:22–28; Joel 2:28–29; Matt 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 2:36–38; 24:1–11; John 20:1–18; Acts 2:17–21; 21:8–9; Rom 12:6–8; 16:7; 1 Cor 11:4–16; 12:4–11, 28; 14:1–5, 22; Gal 3:27–28; Eph 4:11–13; Heb 1:1; Rev 18:20)

As has already been noted, the churches of the CBAC have been preparing and blessing women for pastoral ministry since Port Williams Baptist Church received the 1954 Ordination Council's commendation to ordain Josephine Kinley Moore. In 1987, 79.3% of convention delegates voted in opposition to a motion to ban the examination of women for ordained ministry. In short, while the CBAC has not yet presented a policy favoring egalitarianism, the denomination's practice is one of a *de facto* position favoring that perspective — and it has increasingly been so for nearly 70 years.

The ecclesiological statement I provide here is consistent with the breadth of scriptural revelation. That is, it is *ordinary* to the Bible. Furthermore, it is ordinary to the faith and practice of the people of the CBAC. Its inclusion here affirms its ordinariness and advances an organizational value common to the people of the CBAC. It is placed within this ecclesiological

statement as an expression of Atlantic Baptist identity and organizational unity as they continue among increasingly changing cultures.

Raphael Iluyomade is the lead pastor with New Beginnings Ministries in Dartmouth, NS. His exuberance for understanding the role of women in ministry is apparent. Iluyomade explains, “The Bible is very clear that there were even apostles who were women. The Bible is very clear that even the gospel of resurrection was given to a woman.”⁹⁷ Phil Woodworth is the lead pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in PEI. His emphatic response to those who would deny women pastoral leadership roles is worth its length:

When I see the whole of the Scriptures, God and women, it seems very weird that there comes a moment when women can go no further in leadership in local church. How do you deal with Chloe, who had a house church? How do you deal with the named women who had house churches, whose husbands are not named, and [think that] all they did was open the door and serve coffee to the guests. I think that’s weird stick handling around that. How do you how do you downplay Priscilla’s role?...I know what it says in Timothy. But that one single verse is the only place where that’s there. And that one verse, I think, is to a very unique moment in time that’s unfolding in that particular church, that Paul is addressing. Because it doesn’t undo Junia, like it just doesn’t undo all the other places in the Scriptures and in early church history where women played a vital role in leadership...And someone tries to suggest that none of them held leadership positions, it just it doesn’t make any sense to me.⁹⁸

Harry Gardner’s decades of CBAC leadership experience meet his passion for advancing the cause of women in ministry through his continued service in the Atlantic Society for Biblical Equality. He remembers the denomination’s “non-position” on the matter — the issue unresolved since the mid-1980s. With the wisdom of his vantage and years, Gardner offers a better way forward:

We have a choice to either repeat our history and practice or to take a different route. I would be a strong proponent of moving us forward as a people — as the CBAC — to say

97. Raphael Iluyomade, interview by author, Truro (online), July 26, 2022. Raphael Iluyomade is the lead pastor of New Beginnings Ministries, in Dartmouth, NS — a CBAC member church.

98. Phil Woodworth, interview by author, Truro (online), July 18, 2022. Phil Woodworth is the ordained lead pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church, in Cornwall, Stratford, and Montague, PEI — a CBAC member church.

that as we receive our new churches, we want to be receiving churches that are affirming to women and men in ministry and all aspects of the life of the church.⁹⁹

Gardner's excellent ideas for a patient approach on this matter will serve the people of the CBAC well as they continue their journey of denominational-cultural change.

Christian Sexual Expression

Scripture reveals that God created humanity according to the divine image and in the forms of female and male. Part of God's purposes for the male and female is that through their union, they are able to fulfill aspects of their creative instinct and expression by bearing children of their own. God intends for and blesses all human sexual enjoyment expressed exclusively between females and males united in monogamous, covenantal, publicly-affirmed, heterosexual marriages. Christ's people must honor their call to love their neighbors as themselves. Still, neither is it for humanity to intentionally distort the image bearer of God's design nor for the church to bless what God does not.

(Gen 1:27–28; 2:7, 18, 21–25; 5:1–2; Exod 20: 14, 17; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Deut 5:18, 21; 22:5; Mal 2:13–16; Matt 5:27–30; Mark 7:20–23; 10:5–9; Rom 1:26–27; 1 Cor 5:9–13; 6:9–10; 7:2–5; Eph 5:3–5; Col 3:5–6; 1 Tim 1:8–11; 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6; Heb 13:4)

This is not a platform from which I intend to amplify a debate on the place of belonging for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community within the lives of CBAC churches. Neither will I perform a scripturally interpretive exercise to explain the ecclesiological statement above. Rather

99. Gardner, interview.

I will simply state the foundational rationale for that statement and note several views that emerged from the interviews with CBAC clergy.

My primary appeal is to Scripture and its expression of the *ordinary*. The Scriptures of both Old and New Testaments prohibit homosexual relationships within the context of God's people. Furthermore, Scripture does not ever overturn such a ban or encourage such relationships. Similarly, Scripture prohibits Christians from engaging in heterosexual relationships outside matrimonial monogamy. Again further, the scriptural revelation is that God created humanity as male and female and intends that binary. Scripture provides sufficient evidence of God's disapproval of same-sex and common-law relationships, as well as presentations of transgenderism among his people. These ways are extraordinary to Scripture. Accordingly, under Christ's lordship, the church is not positioned to bless that which God does not.

The eternal life of any individual is far more significant than his or her ease of inclusion into a community of faith. Christians should be caring with members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community who look in and are interested in Christ and his church. Atlantic Canadian Baptists are likely to encounter an increasing number of potentially curious non-believers as they progress further into the twenty-first century. The people of the CBAC will need to intentionally understand and apply Christ's law of love as they engage in ever-changing cultures.

During the interviews, I spoke with clergy members about the latitudes CBAC churches should afford each other in their scriptural interpretation and application. I asked them to consider what they view as the appropriate limits of those latitudes for churches wanting to remain associated together. The matters of same-sex marriage and 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion appear to have the potential to reshape CBAC membership in the near future.

In chapter one, I noted a concern offered by the pseudonymous Millennial pastor John Jeffries. He sees that if the CBAC does not address the issue directly, the organization risks losing younger and progressive pastoral leaders.

So I think the gravitational force is toward leaving the status quo and letting the more affirming leading people just get frustrated and move on, which is already happening. I know people my age who used to go to Baptist churches — they're self deporting, to use an American political term...we'll just move along, recognizing this isn't going to change here.¹⁰⁰

Fellow Millennial pastor Christopher Drew says that one possible solution is respecting local church autonomy on the matter. He sees that by working through any disagreements, while respecting all perspectives, the people of the CBAC may find greater unity. Still, Drew sees a perhaps overwhelming hurdle to his idea: “I think we’re probably going to have to acknowledge the fact that, as far as I can tell, every denomination that has had [this conversation] before us and has had it earnestly, has gone in two different directions.”¹⁰¹

Greg Jones is an Associate Executive Minister with the CBAC. He imagines communities of faith as peoples gathered in tents; Roman Catholics under one tent, Presbyterians under another, and Anglicans under yet another. Jones continues to say that each of these tents is defined partially by its edges — the boundaries of the tent. While varying faith traditions set different boundaries — Catholics believe in eucharistic real presence and Baptists believe in symbolism — both tents may fit inside the Kingdom of God. Jones says that the issues concerning the 2SLGBTQIA+ community form a boundary such that those who affirm a position of inclusion are outside the CBAC tent.

Jones questions whether or not the churches of the CBAC might move to adopt a position comparable to that of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). In their document providing

100. John Jeffries, interview.

101. Christopher Drew, interview.

guidance on same-sex marriage, the BUGB clearly state that they do not regard it as a matter of denominational concern:

It would not be appropriate for our MRC [Ministerial Recognition Committee] or for our Council to step in and say on this particular matter of pastoral practice or theological conviction we have the mind of Christ and impose that on the local church. For this reason we have concluded that decisions relating to presiding at a SSM [same-sex marriage] or not, should reside with the local church meeting, rather than our MRC.¹⁰²

Essentially, the position of the BUGB is that same-sex marriage is an issue left to the local church. Jones represents voices who also wonder if the BUGB model is a solution to the CBAC question. Jones ponders aloud, “Can we find a unity and leave it up to the local church, and that church can still belong? And, if the church declares themselves to be welcoming and affirming that their pastor is entitled to be able to do same-sex marriages and still be in good standing with CBAC?”¹⁰³ Jones continues to say that unity within the CBAC is one of his primary concerns and that while such a solution may work in the short-term, it most likely is “not going to work indefinitely.” Looking ahead to how the people of the CBAC may address the matter and the possible futures those solutions may birth, Jones painfully ponders the survivability of the CBAC through what he sees as an impending period of intense intra-denominational conflict.

Wayne Hagerman is a long-time pastor and chaplain within the CBAC community. While he is sensitive, even compassionate, to the human issues involved, Hagerman is emphatic that leaving decisions concerning same-sex marriage to the local church is not a satisfactory solution. He calls on the people of the denomination to resolve the matter together: “If you stand

102. “Guidance for Accredited and Nationally Recognised Ministry: The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.” (2017): Baptist Union of Great Britain. accessed January 25, 2023, <https://www.baptist.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=187836&view=browser>.

103. Greg Jones, interview by author, Truro (online), July 20, 2022. Greg Jones is an Associate Executive Minister with the CBAC and is responsible for congregational renewal.

for nothing, you fall for everything...All I ask is what is next? I don't think the local church has the kind of autonomy to make those kinds of decisions without forfeiting that relational submission to the greater body.”¹⁰⁴

Hagerman's question, “What's next?” has merit. In June 2022, the BUGB published an open letter with 129 ordained and 71 lay-leader signatories, supporting “the removal of the bar to Baptist ministry for those in same-sex marriages.”¹⁰⁵ This move has only amplified tensions and widened divisions already present in the BUGB. The Reverend Nigel Coles is the Regional Team Leader of the West of England association and a member of the BUGB's Core Leadership Team.¹⁰⁶ Speaking on the matter of 2SLGBTQIA+ member ordination, Coles said that if the openness sought in the letter is adopted, “I think we'd be looking at the dissolving of the Baptist Union as we have understood it, and known it...Because it would be a decision that would be made without reference to the basis of our faith, which is the Bible.”¹⁰⁷ Certainly, the Atlantic Baptists who abstained from the initial association of 1800, those who withdrew from an early-twentieth-century merger, and even those who departed in the first years of the twenty-first century would have agreed that no fellowship is without limits.

Danny Smith has served in ministry for nearly two decades as the lead pastor of Middleton Baptist Church (NS). He sees clear lines, or “camps,” already formed within the

104. R. Wayne Hagerman, interview by author, Truro (online), July 18, 2022. R. Wayne Hagerman is an ordained pastor and chaplain within the New Brunswick CBAC community.

105. “Open Letter to Baptist Union Council.” (2022): Baptist Union of Great Britain. <https://www.baptist.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=317090>.

106. See “Nigel Coles.” Baptist Union of Great Britain. accessed January 17, 2023, https://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/220615/Nigel_Coles.aspx.

107. Tola Mbakwe, “‘We Would be Looking At the Dissolving of the Baptist Union’: Warning Over Considerations to Allow Ministers to Marry Their Same-Sex Partner.” (2022): Premier Christian News. accessed November 15, 2022, <https://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/baptist-minister-we-would-be-looking-at-the-dissolving-of-the-baptist-union-if-it-allows-ministers-to-marry-their-same-sex-partner>.

CBAC on the issue of human sexuality. Smith says that if the denomination does nothing or affirms its historic *ordinary* view in new ways, then those who desire greater levels of 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion will be left dissatisfied. Should the CBAC develop policies leaving the matter in the hands of local churches, another group will be upset.¹⁰⁸ Smith's view of the future is one with serious consequences for the shape of the CBAC:

I think in general, one side is not going to get what they want...one side or the other will either form a subgroup within the CBAC — which already exists with the CABF [Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms]. And all that there is left is a final break to take place...[and] now you have another Baptist denomination in this part of the world.¹⁰⁹

Inevitability is upon the CBAC. Their movement appears to be on the verge of significant shifts that will change their shape as they move further into their twenty-first-century, post-Christian Atlantic Canadian mission.

108. The survey results show this latter group would be the far larger.

109. Danny Smith, interview by author, Truro (online), August 30, 2022. Danny Smith is the ordained lead pastor of Middleton Baptist Church, in Middleton, NS — a CBAC member church.

Conclusion

The Lord calls the people of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada to a mission of engaging their twenty-first-century post-Christian societies and the seemingly endless cultural variants of their region. Religious and social dynamics in their neighborhoods have changed rapidly and significantly over the last decades. Churches have poorly identified these trends — a primary step in being able to navigate them. Forms of consumeristic individualism have permeated almost every area of what once was “society.” Churches are not immune. They are not only products of this organizationally destructive force — in many cases, they are also actors within, even producers of, it.

In this study, I have shown how individualism contributes to forms of disunity among the people of the CBAC. A survey of their clerical leadership reveals signs that they are not as cohered around shared values as they historically appeared. While surveyed clergy members are nearly unanimous in their agreement concerning the conceptual importance of *Christ's Lordship*, they are not as unified in their understanding of the significance of that lordship. Is it possible to dismiss Christ's claims of exclusivity while maintaining beliefs in his sovereignty? They say they want Scripture as the basis for their faith and practice. But in practice, some permit other forces to serve as their guide. Baptists should be concerned that some of their clergy appear to form decisions on important socio-religious issues that consistently align with surrounding cultural norms and disagree with historically held biblical principles.

Shifts in congregational qualifications, entrance, and composition appear to be leading to changes in long-held beliefs concerning congregational equality and competency. Emphases are moving toward forms of open-inclusiveness at the expense of fellowships of common faith and cause. Other motives may be at play, but among them is a desire to welcome all and exclude

none. Others with anxieties about the long-term organizational sustainability of their churches fear offending anyone who might contribute. These churches and their associations are becoming nebulous in their attempts to adopt the shapes of all who might attend.

Something within their leaders knows these are no longer congregations of common belief, experience, and cause. They are gatherings of another sort. They may be evangelistic endeavors — but they are something not quite church. They feel they cannot rely on the people of their assemblies to approach life's many decisions and challenges through a lens of prayer and Scripture. So, they begin to jettison congregational discernment in favor of forms of hierarchal structures — they no longer regard the body as composed of equal individuals before the Lord.

They signal fear and desperation. They fear they will be alone. If they stand for anything that could be off-putting, their churches will empty, leaving them standing alone. If their associations make any definitive statements on the boundaries of their fellowship, they will cause disruption as once-sister churches depart from the body. In their local and denominational desperation to have a people to call their own, they adopt principles of individual and corporate autonomy that splinter any collective identity they might otherwise attain.

The situation in which the churches find themselves is not entirely their fault. Powerful societal forces have raised-high the individual while simultaneously all but disregarding the community. For more than a century and a half, Western culture has gradually moved away from the collective — the community — and toward incidental societies of individualists. Perhaps the rapid domination of individualism was unforeseeable 70 years ago. Perhaps Atlantic Canadian Baptists could not have imagined how consumer culture would affect their churches. Still, since the beginning of the information age (60 years ago), the individual has steadily been usurping the place of the community.

Indeed, the self now regarding the community as its oppressor must liberate itself from its submission to the masses. Once freed, the self controls the individual. Decisions are made by the self, considering what is in the best interests of the self or what makes the self happy. The individual is self-sovereign and the community is the arena in which the individual performs. Still, the individual must concede that other individuals share their space. In a strange societal contract, each self-sovereign must begrudgingly feign an acknowledgment of all other self-sovereigns.¹ These incidentally assembled selves lend each other room but they do not form community.

The individualized self has an insatiable appetite. It does what it must and purchases what it can to present its desired image to the other selves before whom it performs. For the religious individualist, the church becomes another purchase — a consumable that enables the self to send virtue signals to those it chooses. Accordingly, churches become assemblies of self-sovereign individuals, each performing for others with no impetus to submit to the ways of a community of faith.

Individualism is neither in keeping with the nature of God nor his people. God's essence is that of a trinitarian being in communion with his creation. God calls his people to love each other, to love their neighbors, and to assemble in collective worship. Individualism, religious or otherwise, is not part of God's plan for the church. Individualism is not part of God's plan for the people of the CBAC. Atlantic Baptists need not accept the continued shaping by the destructive forces of individualized self-sovereigns. An inner voice — a divine stirring — leads them to desire something more. They want their churches to thrive together. They yearn for genuine

1. How can any individual who regards his or her self as the highest order being in a society truly acknowledge the same status of any other self?

Christ-centered connections and relationships within and among their churches. They want to know that their bonds are strong and that Jesus forges their local and associational identities at the foot of the cross. They hope for renewal in collective purpose and unity in mission, reestablishing their movement's sustainability and resiliency — qualities they presently see as elusive.

The societal walk to the current setting of individualism has been one of decades. The path to restoring community may require multi-generational determination. The means and ways that once worked for the churches of the CBAC may not prove effective moving forward. Carl Trueman is concerned that many churches will try to tweak the edges of their ministries in attempts to meet, even embrace, their surrounding cultures. Others will want to be “counter-cultural” without first recognizing that they are culturally immersed. Regardless of our view of the Western individualist consumer culture, as has already been noted, each of us in Atlantic Canada is a product of it. Trueman rightly says “the task of the church [is] extremely difficult at this point in time because the framework for identity in wider society is deep rooted, powerful, and fundamentally antithetical to the kind of identity promoted as basic in the Bible.”²

Trueman concludes his lengthy examination of the self's apparent (if momentary) victory in the West with three ideas to help communities of faith recapture the shape of their biblically described collectives.³ First, he says churches recommit to collective identities. This will not be easy. The cultures that surround the churches of the CBAC are saturated with the message that the self is the highest order. Television ads are hyper-sexualized to draw attention to even the

2. Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central, 340.

3. Trueman, *Rise and Triumph*, 349–351.

most mundane products. Car stereos are tuned to any number of satellite radio stations — each one dedicated to a narrow consumer band. The internet, as well as its various search engines and social media platforms, follow individuals so closely that online advertising is specific to the dreams, hopes, and needs of each user.

Communities help their members recognize the reality that they are part of something larger than their individualized selves. Each one of us requires the context of genuine and vulnerable relationships with God and others to enable us to grow emotionally and spiritually. Further, if we are to mature as Christians and draw closer to our Lord, we must recognize our behavioral and doctrinal accountability to God and each other (Rom 14:12; 1 Cor 12:12–28; 15:33; Heb 4:13). I hope that CBAC churches will intentionally focus their energies on developing communities of Christian discipleship rooted in worship, serving neighbors, and evangelism.

Christian discipleship — growing a friendship with God and helping others meet and develop closer friendships with him — is the very purpose of the church. If discipleship is the platform of the church, that platform rests on the pillars of worship, service to neighbor, and evangelism. Worshiping with the communities of our churches renews our relationships and strengthens our faith. Living in the Great Commandment of loving God energizes us to love our neighbors. Our Atlantic Canadian communities are populated by people who need God's grace and love in the same ways we each do. Christ calls his people to be active in our demonstration of that love. Bringing the community of the church to its surrounding culture through service enables opportunities to share the message of God's goodness found in Jesus.

Trueman's second idea is that "Protestants need to recover both natural law and a high view of the physical body."⁴ His view of this is not necessarily for the wider cultures in which churches exist, but is a concern for the people of the churches themselves. The church is the vehicle Jesus ordained to help people grow their relationship with him. An aspect of the genuineness of that relationship, one between the Creator and the created, is that humans and their perspectives are subordinate within it. Regardless of the fleetingness, self-determination, and relativity ubiquitous to almost all Atlantic Canadian cultures, God's ways are eternal, objective, and absolute. The people of the CBAC must strive to live by the truth of God's ways.

Third, Trueman calls the church to an appropriate recommitment to Christian doctrine. Much cultural "truth" is rooted in forms of expressive individualism. The people of our societies are often swayed by arguments rooted in little more than sympathies for personal narratives and individualized self-understandings. The great trouble with these bases is that they are both nearly formless and seemingly constantly shifting. Shared Christian doctrine connects local churches to the church worldwide and throughout history. The shared distinctives of the CBAC bind its people together through shared values and understandings. These positions, shared by the universal church on one level and by our denominational community on the other, are informed by intentional, prayerful, Spirit-led reading of the Holy Bible.⁵ Grounded in their understanding of the eternal truth of God's word, Atlantic Baptists are better prepared to live in and engage their twenty-first-century post-Christian communities.

In the fourth chapter, I introduced two ecclesiological statements that serve as additions to already established Atlantic-Baptist values and doctrine. These are the recognition of women

4. Trueman, *Rise and Triumph*, 350.

5. Trueman, *Rise and Triumph*, 349.

in ordained pastoral ministry and the limits of 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion within the CBAC. In the context of denominational confusion and disunity, some may ask, “Is this the time to (re)litigate the previously (un)resolved?” Given their increasingly post-Christian setting, there could be no more important time for any community of faith to be unified in its beliefs, values, and practices than this.

In the first chapter I noted that while the issues of female leadership and 2SLGBTQIA+ community inclusion are not the same, Baptists can discern them through an *ordinary* read of Scripture. The biblical texts of the Old and New Testaments clearly and repeatedly show women leading and speaking with divinely appointed authority. Scripturally, same-sex relationships are only regarded as sinful, with no biblical alteration or alleviation from that definition. I concede that some may present limited biblically *ordinary* counter-arguments to female leadership, but none can provide any biblical text providing a redefinition of same-sex relationships as other-than-sinful.

Atlantic Baptists seek unity within a framework of *Christ’s Lordship* and the *Authority of Scripture*. A fitting step for them to express and advance their shared values is to adopt a binding ecclesiology similar to the one I presented in the fourth chapter. Harry Gardner’s idea, shared in that chapter is wise. While existing churches could remain within the fellowship as they move toward the community’s egalitarian understanding of Scripture, all new churches would be required to affirm women in leadership as a compulsory aspect of their entry to the denomination. As no *ordinary* reading of the biblical texts redefines the sinful nature of same-sex relationships, the ecclesiological statement on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion should be adopted by all who want to remain in or enter the CBAC.

This work has revealed growing disunity among CBAC clerics. Two areas of further research would be beneficial to discover the reasons behind that phenomenon. First, what is the effect of the people and institutions who train and approve emerging leaders? What role do theological educators have in shaping current thinking among younger and less-experienced clerics? From the perspectives of organizational behavior and sustainability, what are the appropriate limits to academic freedom for educators bound to a denominational body? Also, what is the role of the CBAC's Examining Council for Ordination in these developments? How can such a body help nurture and ensure community values and unity? A second area for further research is to measure alignments in values between clerics and their churches. Do CBAC clergy members and the people they serve agree on these issues?

I conclude with a sober and personal final thought for my peers and many friends within the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada community. Striving for unity is worth its struggles — especially within a community of more than two and half centuries of Christian fellowship, mission, and accomplishment. But indications are that Atlantic Baptist voices are diversified and continuously diversifying enough that the shape of our movement is morphing, even in significant ways. We are already splintered. Our people and churches desire a future marked by Christ-centered relationships, common ecclesial identity, and meaningful joint missions. To continue our mission and reach our goals in new forms of togetherness, we will soon need to enter a period of difficult conversations and decisions leading toward once again identifying our shared values, understanding, and expression.

To borrow once more from Henry Cook, it is time we face the problems arising out of our present system.

Appendices

Appendix A — Definitions of Baptist Distinctives

The following table contains definitions of ten distinctives that were provided to participants in a survey on Baptist beliefs. The definitions and order of presentation were adapted from the document "Baptist Distinctives" published by the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada.¹ While “Local Church Autonomy” and “The Associational Principle” form a single statement in the CBAC “Baptist Distinctives” document, they have been separated here for clarity.

Table N — Definitions of Baptist Distinctives

Distinctive	Definition
The Lordship of Jesus Christ “Lordship”	Baptists believe that Jesus is Lord of both the church and the individual...[meaning] that what a Christian says is also evident in his/her action - every area in the believer’s life and the life of the church is to be subject to the Lord. God is the supreme authority.
The Authority of the Scriptures “Scripture”	Baptists believe the scriptures are inspired by God. They are the only perfect, supreme, infallible and sufficient standard of faith and practice.
The Priesthood of the Believer “Priesthood”	Baptists hold that all believers share as equals in the church, and, in turn, have a priestly role toward each other. Every member is called to be a minister. Differences in education, wealth, gender and so on do not disqualify a person from service or from serving God through ministry to others.
Soul Liberty	Inherent in the worth of each person is also the ability of the soul to have direct access to God through Jesus Christ. Baptists believe that no group has the right to force others to believe or worship as it does. God has given all people freedom of choice and as such Baptists have championed the cause of religious liberty.

1. Available online at https://baptist-atlantic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Baptist_Distinctives.pdf.

Regenerate Church Membership “Membership”	To become a Christian requires a personal acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as both Saviour and Lord. You cannot say Christ has saved you from judgment unless you also allow him to control your life as Lord. This act of faith and believer’s baptism must precede membership in the local church.
Baptism	Baptists practice believer’s baptism by immersion. It is one of the first significant acts through which the believer proclaims personal faith in Christ and is initiated into church life and ministry.
Lord’s Supper	Baptists celebrate the Lord’s Supper or Communion commemorating and remembering Christ’s death.
Local Church Autonomy “Autonomy”	Baptists believe government in a local church is controlled by the principles of the priesthood of believers, the Lordship of Christ, the authority of the Scriptures, and the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, present in the lives of congregational members, leads them corporately to discover and obey his mind and will. As a result, it is important that each church verify each potential members statement of faith to make sure that their claim is valid. Each church is competent under Christ to look after its own affairs and has freedom from coercion by other bodies.
The Associational Principle “Association”	Church Interdependence. Baptists recognize the importance of cooperation with churches of "like faith and order."
The Separation of Church and State “Church/State”	Baptists have championed the right to freedom in spiritual matters under the lordship of Jesus Christ. They believe there must exist a separation between the church and civil governments. There should not be a church-controlled state, nor a state-controlled church. God has given legitimate roles to both, but neither is to encroach upon the rights or obligations of the other. They are, however, under obligation to recognize and reinforce each other as each seeks to fulfill its divine function.

Appendix B — How Important are the Distinctives?

Today

The following table represents average value survey respondents assigned to each of ten Baptist distinctives. They were asked:

“How important to you are each of the following faith statements, commonly held among Baptist churches and often called ‘Baptist Distinctives’?”

A value of 1 (one) indicated that the distinctive was not important at all to the respondent and a value of 5 (five) indicated that it was extremely important.

Table O — Average value of each distinctive by region

Distinctive	All (n=95)	NS (n=46)	NB (n=39)	PEI (n=10)
Lordship	4.99	4.98	5.00	5.00
Scripture	4.78	4.61	4.95	4.90
Priesthood	4.84	4.82	4.90	4.70
Soul Liberty	4.81	4.78	4.87	4.70
Membership	4.62	4.54	4.72	4.60
Baptism	4.47	4.28	4.67	4.60
Lord’s Supper	4.73	4.74	4.72	4.70
Autonomy	4.15	4.13	4.26	3.80
Association	4.36	4.37	4.51	3.70
Church/State	4.56	4.48	4.62	4.70

Table P — Average value of each distinctive by age

Distinctive	25–34 (n=7)	35–44 (n=15)	45–54 (n=21)	55–64 (n=22)	65–74 (n=18)	75+ (n=12)
Lordship	5	5	5	5	5	4.92
Scripture	4.86	4.53	4.76	4.82	4.89	4.83
Priesthood	4.71	4.87	4.71	4.91	5	4.75
Soul Liberty	4.71	4.60	4.71	4.95	5	4.75
Membership	4.57	4.60	4.43	4.59	4.89	4.67
Baptism	4.57	4.13	4.48	4.41	4.67	4.67
Lord's Supper	4.57	4.40	4.62	4.77	5	4.92
Autonomy	4.00	3.93	4.05	4.27	4.22	4.33
Association	4.14	4.40	4.10	4.27	4.72	4.50
Church/State	4.14	4.33	4.38	4.82	4.78	4.58

Table Q — Average value of each distinctive by level of theological education

Distinctive	No Degree (n=6)	Bachelor's (n=13)	Master's (n=57)	Doctoral (n=19)
Lordship	5	5	4.98	5
Scripture	5	4.69	4.74	4.89
Priesthood	4.83	5	4.79	4.89
Soul Liberty	4.83	5	4.82	4.63
Membership	4.50	4.54	4.58	4.84
Baptism	4.33	4.46	4.44	4.63
Lord's Supper	4.33	4.92	4.68	4.84
Autonomy	4.20	4.31	4.19	3.89
Association	4.00	4.54	4.37	4.32
Church/State	4.33	4.77	4.58	4.42

Future

Respondents were asked to envision their “ideal future for the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada.” These tables represent the value given to each distinctive by number of respondents.

Table R – Value of Distinctives for CBAC Future (all respondents; n=95)

Distinctive	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
Lordship	91	4			
Scripture	81	12	1	1	
Priesthood	77	18			
Soul Liberty	73	21	1		
Membership	62	21	9	3	
Baptism	57	30	6	1	1
Lord's Supper	81	11	2	1	
Autonomy	43	38	10	4	
Association	48	41	6		
Church/State	69	20	5	1	

Table S – Value of Distinctives for CBAC Future (NS; n=46)

Distinctive	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
Lordship	45	1			
Scripture	36	8	1	1	
Priesthood	34	12			
Soul Liberty	33	13			
Membership	26	13	6	1	
Baptism	24	19	3		
Lord's Supper	40	4	2		
Autonomy	22	16	6	2	
Association	23	20	3		
Church/State	32	10	3	1	

Table T — Value of Distinctives for CBAC Future (NB; n=39)

Distinctive	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
Lordship	36	3			
Scripture	35	4			
Priesthood	34	5			
Soul Liberty	32	7			
Membership	30	7	1	1	
Baptism	27	8	2	1	1
Lord's Supper	33	5		1	
Autonomy	19	16	3	1	
Association	22	15	2		
Church/State	28	9	2		

Table U — Value of Distinctives for CBAC Future (PEI; n=10)

Distinctive	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
Lordship	10				
Scripture	10				
Priesthood	9	1			
Soul Liberty	8	1	1		
Membership	6	1	2	1	
Baptism	6	1	2	1	
Lord's Supper	8	2			
Autonomy	2	6	1	1	
Association	3	6	1		
Church/State	9	1			

Value of Distinctives for CBAC Future by Age and Level of Theological Education

Table V — Value of Christ's Lordship for CBAC Future

Age	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	13	2			
45–54 (n=21)	20	1			
55–64 (n=22)	22				
65–74 (n=18)	17	1			
75 or older (n=12)	12				

Education	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
No Degree (n=6)	6				
Bachelor's (n=13)	13				
Master's (n=57)	53	4			
Doctoral (n=19)	19				

Table W — Value of Scriptural Authority for CBAC Future

Age	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	11	3	1		
45–54 (n=21)	17	3		1	
55–64 (n=22)	19	3			
65–74 (n=18)	16	2			
75 or older (n=12)	11	1			

Education	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	12	1			
Master's (n=57)	47	9	1		
Doctoral (n=19)	17	1		1	

Table X — Value of Believers' Priesthood for CBAC Future

Age	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
25–34 (n=7)	6	1			
35–44 (n=15)	9	6			
45–54 (n=21)	17	4			
55–64 (n=22)	19	3			
65–74 (n=18)	16	2			
75 or older (n=12)	10	2			

Education	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	13				
Master's (n=57)	44	13			
Doctoral (n=19)	15	4			

Table Y — Value of Soul Liberty for CBAC Future

Age	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
25–34 (n=7)	4	3			
35–44 (n=15)	9	6			
45–54 (n=21)	17	3	1		
55–64 (n=22)	19	3			
65–74 (n=18)	16	2			
75 or older (n=12)	8	4			

Education	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
No Degree (n=6)	4	2			
Bachelor's (n=13)	11	2			
Master's (n=57)	46	11			
Doctoral (n=19)	12	6	1		

Table Z — Value of Regenerate Church Membership for CBAC Future

Age	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
25–34 (n=7)	4	3			
35–44 (n=15)	7	6		2	
45–54 (n=21)	14	3	3	1	
55–64 (n=22)	14	3	5		
65–74 (n=18)	14	3	1		
75 or older (n=12)	9	3			

Education	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
No Degree (n=6)	4	2			
Bachelor's (n=13)	9	2	2		
Master's (n=57)	34	15	5	3	
Doctoral (n=19)	15	2	2		

Table AA — Value of Baptism for CBAC Future

Age	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
25–34 (n=7)	6	1			
35–44 (n=15)	8	4	2		1
45–54 (n=21)	13	7	1		
55–64 (n=22)	10	11	1		
65–74 (n=18)	12	3	2	1	
75 or older (n=12)	8	4			

Education	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	8	5			
Master's (n=57)	33	17	6		1
Doctoral (n=19)	11	7		1	

Table AB – Value of the Lord's Supper for CBAC Future

Age	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	11	1	2	1	
45–54 (n=21)	16	5			
55–64 (n=22)	19	3			
65–74 (n=18)	18				
75 or older (n=12)	10	2			

Education	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	12	1			
Master's (n=57)	48	6	2	1	
Doctoral (n=19)	16	3			

Table AC – Value of the Local Church Independence for CBAC Future

Age	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
25–34 (n=7)	3	3	1		
35–44 (n=15)	2	8	3	2	
45–54 (n=21)	10	8	2	1	
55–64 (n=22)	11	10		1	
65–74 (n=18)	10	5	3		
75 or older (n=12)	7	4	1		

Education	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
No Degree (n=6)	4	1	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	7	6			
Master's (n=57)	23	24	7	3	
Doctoral (n=19)	9	7	2	1	

Table AD – Value of the Associational Interdependence for CBAC Future

Age	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
25–34 (n=7)	1	5	1		
35–44 (n=15)	8	5	2		
45–54 (n=21)	12	9			
55–64 (n=22)	10	11	1		
65–74 (n=18)	11	5	2		
75 or older (n=12)	6	6			

Education	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
No Degree (n=6)	3	2	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	7	6			
Master's (n=57)	24	29	4		
Doctoral (n=19)	14	4	1		

Table AE – Value of Church/State Separation for CBAC Future

Age	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
25–34 (n=7)	5	1	1		
35–44 (n=15)	11	3	1		
45–54 (n=21)	12	8	1		
55–64 (n=22)	19	1	1	1	
65–74 (n=18)	15	2	1		
75 or older (n=12)	7	5			

Education	Completely Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Completely Unimportant
No Degree (n=6)	5		1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	10	2		1	
Master's (n=57)	42	12	3		
Doctoral (n=19)	12	6	1		

Appendix C – Agreement to CBAC Statements

The *Basis of Union* (1905/06) is the founding confessional statement of the Baptist Convention that is now known as the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada (CBAC). It remains an important document expressing the positions of faith that unite that denomination's churches. Respondents were asked their levels of agreement on statements gleaned from the *Basis of Union*. These data are presented by region, age, and level of theological education.

Table AF – *Basis of Union* Statements Related to Christ's Lordship

"Jesus is Lord of both the church and the individual."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	42	4			
NB (n=39)	36	3			
PEI (n=10)	9	1			
Total (n=95)	87	8	0	0	0
Percentage	91.58%	8.42%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

"Jesus is Lord of both the church and the individual."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	14	1			
45–54 (n=21)	20	1			
55–64 (n=22)	20	2			
65–74 (n=18)	16	2			
75 or older (n=12)	10	2			

"Jesus is Lord of both the church and the individual."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	12	1			
Master's (n=57)	52	5			
Doctoral (n=19)	18	1			

"It is only through Jesus Christ's sacrificial death, burial and resurrection that a person can know salvation or eternal life with God in heaven."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	37	7	1		1
NB (n=39)	35	3	1		
PEI (n=10)	8	1			1
Total (n=95)	80	11	2	0	2
Percentage	84.21%	11.58%	2.11%	0.00%	2.11%

"It is only through Jesus Christ's sacrificial death, burial and resurrection that a person can know salvation or eternal life with God in heaven."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	6	1			
35–44 (n=15)	12	1	1		1
45–54 (n=21)	15	6			
55–64 (n=22)	21				1
65–74 (n=18)	17	1			
75 or older (n=12)	9	2	1		

"It is only through Jesus Christ's sacrificial death, burial and resurrection that a person can know salvation or eternal life with God in heaven."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	13				
Master's (n=57)	44	9	2		2
Doctoral (n=19)	18	1			

"There aren't many paths to God, only one."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	33	8	2	2	1
NB (n=39)	33	5	1		
PEI (n=10)	9	1			
Total (n=95)	75	14	3	2	1
Percentage	78.95%	14.74%	3.16%	2.11%	1.05%

"There aren't many paths to God, only one."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	2			
35–44 (n=15)	11	2	1		1
45–54 (n=21)	15	4	1	1	
55–64 (n=22)	21			1	
65–74 (n=18)	15	3			
75 or older (n=12)	8	3	1		

"There aren't many paths to God, only one."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	12	1			
Master's (n=57)	41	11	3	1	1
Doctoral (n=19)	17	1		1	

"You cannot say Christ has saved you from judgment unless you also allow him to control your life as Lord."

Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	28	17	1		
NB (n=39)	21	11	5	2	
PEI (n=10)	7	3			
Total (n=95)	56	31	6	2	0
Percentage	58.95%	32.63%	6.32%	2.11%	0.00%

"You cannot say Christ has saved you from judgment unless you also allow him to control your life as Lord."

Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	2			
35–44 (n=15)	9	5	1		
45–54 (n=21)	7	10	3	1	
55–64 (n=22)	15	6		1	
65–74 (n=18)	13	4	1		
75 or older (n=12)	7	4	1		

"You cannot say Christ has saved you from judgment unless you also allow him to control your life as Lord."

Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	4	2			
Bachelor's (n=13)	10	2	1		
Master's (n=57)	30	21	5	1	
Doctoral (n=19)	12	6		1	

"There is only one true and living God."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	46				
NB (n=39)	37	2			
PEI (n=10)	10				
Total (n=95)	92	2	0	0	0
Percentage	97.89%	2.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

"There is only one true and living God."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	14	1			
45–54 (n=21)	20	1			
55–64 (n=22)	22				
65–74 (n=18)	18				
75 or older (n=12)	12				

"There is only one true and living God."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	6				
Bachelor's (n=13)	13				
Master's (n=57)	56	1			
Doctoral (n=19)	18	1			

"In the Godhead there are three persons in one: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	46				
NB (n=39)	37	2			
PEI (n=10)	10				
Total (n=95)	93	2	0	0	0
Percentage	97.89%	2.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

"In the Godhead there are three persons in one: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	14	1			
45–54 (n=21)	21				
55–64 (n=22)	22				
65–74 (n=18)	17	1			
75 or older (n=12)	12				

"In the Godhead there are three persons in one: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	6				
Bachelor's (n=13)	13				
Master's (n=57)	55	2			
Doctoral (n=19)	19				

"The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in every divine perfection."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	40	5	1		
NB (n=39)	35	3			1
PEI (n=10)	8	2			
Total (n=95)	83	10	1	0	1
Percentage	87.37%	10.53%	1.05%	0.00%	1.05%

"The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in every divine perfection."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	14	1			
45–54 (n=21)	15	5			1
55–64 (n=22)	19	2	1		
65–74 (n=18)	17	1			
75 or older (n=12)	11	1			

"The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in every divine perfection."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	11	1	1		
Master's (n=57)	53	4			
Doctoral (n=19)	14	4			1

Table AG – *Basis of Union* Statements Related to Scriptural Authority

"The scriptures are inspired by God."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	40	6			
NB (n=39)	35	4			
PEI (n=10)	10				
Total (n=95)	85	10	0	0	0
Percentage	89.47%	10.53%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

"The scriptures are inspired by God."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	13	2			
45–54 (n=21)	19	2			
55–64 (n=22)	22				
65–74 (n=18)	15	3			
75 or older (n=12)	9	3			

"The scriptures are inspired by God."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	6				
Bachelor's (n=13)	12	1			
Master's (n=57)	49	8			
Doctoral (n=19)	18	1			

"[The Scriptures] are the only perfect, supreme, infallible and sufficient standard of faith and practice."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	27	11	5	1	2
NB (n=39)	33	6			
PEI (n=10)	6	4			
Total (n=95)	66	21	5	1	2
Percentage	69.47%	22.11%	5.26%	1.05%	2.11%

"[The scriptures] are the only perfect, supreme, infallible and sufficient standard of faith and practice."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	2			
35–44 (n=15)	10	3	2		
45–54 (n=21)	14	4	1	1	1
55–64 (n=22)	16	5			1
65–74 (n=18)	14	3	1		
75 or older (n=12)	7	4	1		

"[The scriptures] are the only perfect, supreme, infallible and sufficient standard of faith and practice."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	4	2			
Bachelor's (n=13)	11	1			1
Master's (n=57)	38	14	4	1	
Doctoral (n=19)	13	4	1		1

Table AH – *Basis of Union* Statements Related to Priesthood of Believers

"Differences in education, wealth, gender and so on do not disqualify a person from service or from serving God through ministry to others."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	32	13	1		
NB (n=39)	30	8	1		
PEI (n=10)	7	2	1		
Total (n=95)	69	23	3	0	0
Percentage	72.63%	24.21%	3.16%	0.00%	0.00%

"Differences in education, wealth, gender and so on do not disqualify a person from service or from serving God through ministry to others."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	2			
35–44 (n=15)	9	5	1		
45–54 (n=21)	16	3	2		
55–64 (n=22)	19	3			
65–74 (n=18)	14	4			
75 or older (n=12)	6	6			

"Differences in education, wealth, gender and so on do not disqualify a person from service or from serving God through ministry to others."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	10	3			
Master's (n=57)	38	18	1		
Doctoral (n=19)	16	1	2		

"All believers share as equals in the church."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	30	11	4	1	
NB (n=39)	24	15			
PEI (n=10)	7	2	1		
Total (n=95)	61	28	5	1	0
Percentage	64.21%	29.47%	5.26%	1.05%	0.00%

"All believers share as equals in the church."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	2			
35–44 (n=15)	11	4			
45–54 (n=21)	10	10		1	
55–64 (n=22)	14	5	3		
65–74 (n=18)	15	3			
75 or older (n=12)	6	4	2		

"All believers share as equals in the church."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3	3			
Bachelor's (n=13)	10	3			
Master's (n=57)	38	15	3	1	
Doctoral (n=19)	10	7	2		

Table A1 – *Basis of Union* Statements Related to Regenerate Church Membership

"A church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	12	12	16	4	2
NB (n=39)	14	13	7	2	3
PEI (n=10)	1	5		3	1
Total (n=95)	27	30	23	9	6
Percentage	28.42%	31.58%	24.21%	9.47%	6.32%

"A church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	2	2	2	1	
35–44 (n=15)	1	3	8		3
45–54 (n=21)	5	6	4	4	2
55–64 (n=22)	8	6	4	3	1
65–74 (n=18)	8	5	5		
75 or older (n=12)	3	8		1	

"A church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3	2		1	
Bachelor's (n=13)	4	5	2	1	1
Master's (n=57)	16	15	16	5	5
Doctoral (n=19)	4	8	5	2	

Table AJ – *Basis of Union* Statement Related to Baptism

"Believer's baptism must precede membership in the local church."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	14	14	13	5	
NB (n=39)	19	15	3	2	
PEI (n=10)	1	6	2		
Total (n=95)	34	35	18	7	0
Percentage	36.17%	37.23%	19.15%	7.45%	0.00%

"Believer's baptism must precede membership in the local church."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1	6			
35–44 (n=15)	1	6	6	2	
45–54 (n=21)	8	6	2	4	1
55–64 (n=22)	9	6	7		
65–74 (n=18)	8	7	2	1	
75 or older (n=12)	7	4	1		

"Believer's baptism must precede membership in the local church."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	4	1	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	5	5	3		
Master's (n=57)	17	22	12	5	1
Doctoral (n=19)	8	7	2	2	

Table AK – *Basis of Union* Statements Related to Local Church Independence

"Each church is independent."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	11	15	9	10	1
NB (n=39)	7	12	4	12	4
PEI (n=10)	1	6		3	
Total (n=95)	19	33	13	25	5
Percentage	20.00%	34.74%	13.68%	26.32%	5.26%

"Each church is independent."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1	4		2	
35–44 (n=15)	4	2	5	4	
45–54 (n=21)	4	7	1	8	1
55–64 (n=22)	4	10	3	2	3
65–74 (n=18)	4	6	2	5	1
75 or older (n=12)	2	4	2	4	

"Each church is independent."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	2	1	1	
Bachelor's (n=13)	3	5	2	2	1
Master's (n=57)	14	18	8	15	2
Doctoral (n=19)		8	2	7	2

"Each church is competent under Christ to look after its own affairs and has freedom from coercion by other bodies."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	21	19	3	3	
NB (n=39)	18	15	4	2	
PEI (n=10)	5	4	1		
Total (n=95)	44	38	8	5	0
Percentage	46.32%	40.00%	8.42%	5.26%	0.00%

"Each church is competent under Christ to look after its own affairs and has freedom from coercion by other bodies."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	3	3	1		
35–44 (n=15)	4	7	2	2	
45–54 (n=21)	8	10	2	1	
55–64 (n=22)	13	7	2		
65–74 (n=18)	10	6	1	1	
75 or older (n=12)	6	5	0	1	

"Each church is competent under Christ to look after its own affairs and has freedom from coercion by other bodies."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	4		2		
Bachelor's (n=13)	5	8			
Master's (n=57)	28	20	5	4	
Doctoral (n=19)	7	10	1	1	

Table AL – *Basis of Union* Statements Related to Associational Interdependence

"The churches are interdependent."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	18	23	4	1	
NB (n=39)	16	20	2		1
PEI (n=10)	3	7			
Total (n=95)	37	50	6	1	1
Percentage	38.95%	52.63%	6.32%	1.05%	1.05%

"The churches are interdependent."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	2	5			
35–44 (n=15)	5	8	2		
45–54 (n=21)	11	10			
55–64 (n=22)	7	11	2	1	1
65–74 (n=18)	9	8	1		
75 or older (n=12)	3	8	1		

"The churches are interdependent."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	1	4	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	5	7		1	
Master's (n=57)	20	31	5		1
Doctoral (n=19)	11	8			

"It is important to cooperate with churches of 'like faith and order.'"					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	22	22	2		
NB (n=39)	22	14	3		
PEI (n=10)	2	8			
Total (n=95)	46	44	5	0	0
Percentage	48.42%	46.32%	5.26%	0.00%	0.00%

"It is important to cooperate with churches of 'like faith and order.'"					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	2	5			
35–44 (n=15)	8	5	2		
45–54 (n=21)	11	10			
55–64 (n=22)	10	10	2		
65–74 (n=18)	11	7			
75 or older (n=12)	4	7	1		

"It is important to cooperate with churches of 'like faith and order.'"					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	4			
Bachelor's (n=13)	7	5	1		
Master's (n=57)	27	26	4		
Doctoral (n=19)	10	9			

Table AM — Miscellaneous *Basis of Union* Statements

"The first day of the week, the Lord's day or Christian Sabbath, is to be kept sacred to religious purposes by abstaining from all secular labour and sinful recreations."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	4	7	21	10	4
NB (n=39)	2	9	16	9	3
PEI (n=10)		2	6		2
Total (n=95)	6	18	43	19	9
Percentage	6.32%	18.95%	45.26%	20.00%	9.47%

"The first day of the week, the Lord's day or Christian Sabbath, is to be kept sacred to religious purposes by abstaining from all secular labour and sinful recreations."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)		2	4		1
35–44 (n=15)	1		8	2	4
45–54 (n=21)	1	2	8	7	3
55–64 (n=22)	0	5	11	5	1
65–74 (n=18)	4	5	6	3	
75 or older (n=12)		4	6	2	

"The first day of the week, the Lord's day or Christian Sabbath, is to be kept sacred to religious purposes by abstaining from all secular labour and sinful recreations."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	1		1	3	1
Bachelor's (n=13)	1	3	5	3	1
Master's (n=57)	3	13	26	5	5
Doctoral (n=19)	1	2	11	4	1

"[At death] the wicked are cast into Hades."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	13	18	13		2
NB (n=39)	11	22	4	1	1
PEI (n=10)	2	7	1		
Total (n=95)	26	47	18	1	3
Percentage	27.37%	49.47%	18.95%	1.05%	3.16%

"[At death] the wicked are cast into Hades."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1	4	2		
35–44 (n=15)	3	7	3		2
45–54 (n=21)	4	12	3	1	1
55–64 (n=22)	9	11	2		
65–74 (n=18)	7	10	1		
75 or older (n=12)	2	3	7		

"[At death] the wicked are cast into Hades."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	2	2		
Bachelor's (n=13)	3	7	3		
Master's (n=57)	16	26	12	1	2
Doctoral (n=19)	5	12	1		1

"The only scriptural officers [of a church] are bishops (pastors) and deacons, whose qualifications, claims and duties are defined in the epistles of Timothy and Titus."					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	10	12	17	5	2
NB (n=39)	5	12	11	8	3
PEI (n=10)	1	2	4	3	
Total (n=95)	16	26	32	16	5
Percentage	16.84%	27.37%	33.68%	16.84%	5.26%

"The only scriptural officers [of a church] are bishops (pastors) and deacons, whose qualifications, claims and duties are defined in the epistles of Timothy and Titus."					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	3	1	2	1	
35–44 (n=15)	1	3	8	2	1
45–54 (n=21)	3	4	5	5	4
55–64 (n=22)	5	6	8	3	
65–74 (n=18)	3	5	6	4	
75 or older (n=12)	1	7	3	1	

"The only scriptural officers [of a church] are bishops (pastors) and deacons, whose qualifications, claims and duties are defined in the epistles of Timothy and Titus."					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	1	1	2	
Bachelor's (n=13)	4	4	4	1	
Master's (n=57)	9	13	25	7	3
Doctoral (n=19)	1	8	2	6	2

Throughout the years, delegates to the annual assemblies of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada (CBAC) have passed a number of resolutions expressing their views on social and cultural issues, as well as on policy-formation. Respondents were asked their levels of agreement on statements gleaned from several of those resolutions. These data are presented by region, age, and level of theological education.

Table AN – CBAC Resolution Statements Related to Race Relations

"We strongly object and oppose the practice of racial discrimination prevalent within our society." (1963)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	41	4		1	
NB (n=39)	33	6			
PEI (n=10)	9	1			
Total (n=95)	83	11	0	1	0
Percentage	87.37%	11.58%	0.00%	1.05%	0.00%

"We strongly object and oppose the practice of racial discrimination prevalent within our society." (1963)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	2			
35–44 (n=15)	14	1			
45–54 (n=21)	19	2			
55–64 (n=22)	19	2		1	
65–74 (n=18)	17	1			
75 or older (n=12)	9	3			

"We strongly object and oppose the practice of racial discrimination prevalent within our society." (1963)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	4	2			
Bachelor's (n=13)	11	1		1	
Master's (n=57)	51	6			
Doctoral (n=19)	17	2			

"We believe the biblical concept of human equality to be true." (1963)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	43	2		1	
NB (n=39)	31	7			1
PEI (n=10)	9	1			
Total (n=95)	83	10	0	1	1
Percentage	87.37%	10.53%	0.00%	1.05%	1.05%

"We believe the biblical concept of human equality to be true." (1963)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	6	1			
35–44 (n=15)	15				
45–54 (n=21)	15	4		1	1
55–64 (n=22)	21	1			
65–74 (n=18)	17	1			
75 or older (n=12)	9	3			

"We believe the biblical concept of human equality to be true." (1963)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	10	2		1	
Master's (n=57)	54	3			
Doctoral (n=19)	14	4			1

"Racism is a sin." (1991)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	38	8			
NB (n=39)	30	8	1		
PEI (n=10)	10				
Total (n=95)	78	16	1	0	0
Percentage	82.11%	16.84%	1.05%	0.00%	0.00%

"Racism is a sin." (1991)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	14	1			
45–54 (n=21)	17	4			
55–64 (n=22)	18	3	1		
65–74 (n=18)	16	2			
75 or older (n=12)	6	6			

"Racism is a sin." (1991)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	4	1	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	11	2			
Master's (n=57)	47	10			
Doctoral (n=19)	16	3			

"We desire to seek avenues of contact with other Christian churches or groups who do not share our same race, origin, or language." (1991)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	29	13	4		
NB (n=39)	23	15	1		
PEI (n=10)	7	3			
Total (n=95)	59	31	5	0	0
Percentage	62.11%	32.63%	5.26%	0.00%	0.00%

"We desire to seek avenues of contact with other Christian churches or groups who do not share our same race, origin, or language." (1991)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	3	3	1		
35–44 (n=15)	7	7	1		
45–54 (n=21)	16	5			
55–64 (n=22)	12	7	3		
65–74 (n=18)	14	4			
75 or older (n=12)	7	5			

"We desire to seek avenues of contact with other Christian churches or groups who do not share our same race, origin, or language." (1991)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3	3			
Bachelor's (n=13)	8	5			
Master's (n=57)	35	17	5		
Doctoral (n=19)	13	6			

Table AO — CBAC Resolution Statements Related to the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community

"The Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament condemn the practice of homosexuality." (1987)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	24	9	9	1	3
NB (n=39)	21	11	5	1	1
PEI (n=10)	3	3	4		
Total (n=95)	48	23	18	2	4
Percentage	50.53%	24.21%	18.95%	2.11%	4.21%

"The Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament condemn the practice of homosexuality." (1987)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	1	1		
35–44 (n=15)	6	3	3		3
45–54 (n=21)	8	8	4		1
55–64 (n=22)	13	5	4		
65–74 (n=18)	12		4	2	
75 or older (n=12)	4	6	2		

"The Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament condemn the practice of homosexuality." (1987)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3	2	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	9	3	1		
Master's (n=57)	25	14	14	1	3
Doctoral (n=19)	11	4	2	1	1

"God ordained heterosexual marriage as the place where our natural instincts for love, companionship, permanence and procreation would be satisfied." (1987)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	27	9	6		4
NB (n=39)	28	8	1	1	1
PEI (n=10)	6	1	2	1	
Total (n=95)	61	18	9	2	5
Percentage	64.21%	18.95%	9.47%	2.11%	5.26%

"God ordained heterosexual marriage as the place where our natural instincts for love, companionship, permanence and procreation would be satisfied." (1987)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	2			
35–44 (n=15)	7	3	2	1	2
45–54 (n=21)	13	5	1	1	1
55–64 (n=22)	12	6	3		1
65–74 (n=18)	14	1	2		1
75 or older (n=12)	10	1	1		

"God ordained heterosexual marriage as the place where our natural instincts for love, companionship, permanence and procreation would be satisfied." (1987)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	10	3			
Master's (n=57)	34	10	8	2	
Doctoral (n=19)	12	4	1		2

"We reject the increasing acceptance of practising homosexuality as a viable alternative lifestyle." (1987)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	26	3	8	5	4
NB (n=39)	22	9	5	2	2
PEI (n=10)	4	2	3	1	
Total (n=95)	52	14	16	8	6
Percentage	54.17%	14.58%	16.67%	8.33%	6.25%

"We reject the increasing acceptance of practising homosexuality as a viable alternative lifestyle." (1987)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	1	1		
35–44 (n=15)	6	2	3	1	3
45–54 (n=21)	10	4	1	4	2
55–64 (n=22)	14	2	6		
65–74 (n=18)	11	1	3	2	1
75 or older (n=12)	5	4	2	1	

"We reject the increasing acceptance of practising homosexuality as a viable alternative lifestyle." (1987)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	3	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	10	3			
Master's (n=57)	27	7	12	6	5
Doctoral (n=19)	12	1	3	2	1

"We encourage regular prayer for those who are involved in homosexual behaviour, for their healing, restoration and salvation." (1996)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	18	8	12	6	3
NB (n=39)	11	18	7	2	1
PEI (n=10)	2	3	4		1
Total (n=95)	31	29	23	8	5
Percentage	32.29%	30.21%	23.96%	8.33%	5.21%

"We encourage regular prayer for those who are involved in homosexual behaviour, for their healing, restoration and salvation." (1996)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	2	4	1		
35–44 (n=15)	3	3	5	1	3
45–54 (n=21)	5	7	5	2	2
55–64 (n=22)	8	6	7	1	
65–74 (n=18)	10	3	3	2	
75 or older (n=12)	3	6	1	2	

"We encourage regular prayer for those who are involved in homosexual behaviour, for their healing, restoration and salvation." (1996)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	3	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	4	8	1		
Master's (n=57)	18	13	16	6	4
Doctoral (n=19)	7	5	4	2	1

"We understand and affirm the biblical view of marriage to be a union between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others." (2002)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	29	8	5	1	3
NB (n=39)	32	3	3		1
PEI (n=10)	6		4		
Total (n=95)	67	11	12	1	4
Percentage	70.53%	11.58%	12.63%	1.05%	4.21%

"We understand and affirm the biblical view of marriage to be a union between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others." (2002)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	6	1			
35–44 (n=15)	8	1	2	1	3
45–54 (n=21)	14	3	3		1
55–64 (n=22)	15	4	3		
65–74 (n=18)	14	1	3		
75 or older (n=12)	10	1	1		

"We understand and affirm the biblical view of marriage to be a union between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others." (2002)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	12	1			
Master's (n=57)	36	7	10	1	3
Doctoral (n=19)	14	2	2		1

**"Our constituent churches should develop and implement policies which celebrate and affirm marriage as a covenant union between a man and a woman, to the exclusion of all other forms."
(2005)**

Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	25	7	9	4	2
NB (n=39)	24	8	3	3	1
PEI (n=10)	6	3		1	
Total (n=95)	55	18	12	8	3
Percentage	57.29%	18.75%	12.50%	8.33%	3.13%

**"Our constituent churches should develop and implement policies which celebrate and affirm marriage as a covenant union between a man and a woman, to the exclusion of all other forms."
(2005)**

Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5		2		
35–44 (n=15)	6	3	3	1	2
45–54 (n=21)	11	3	3	3	1
55–64 (n=22)	14	4	3	1	
65–74 (n=18)	11	2	3	2	
75 or older (n=12)	7	3	1	1	

**"Our constituent churches should develop and implement policies which celebrate and affirm marriage as a covenant union between a man and a woman, to the exclusion of all other forms."
(2005)**

Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	9	4			
Master's (n=57)	27	9	11	8	2
Doctoral (n=19)	13	1	4		1

"We urge member churches and Associations not to grant licenses to preach or ordain practising homosexuals." (1987)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	24	10	5	3	4
NB (n=39)	23	8	5	2	1
PEI (n=10)	5	2	3		
Total (n=95)	52	20	13	5	5
Percentage	54.74%	21.05%	13.68%	5.26%	5.26%

"We urge member churches and Associations not to grant licenses to preach or ordain practising homosexuals." (1987)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	6	1			
35–44 (n=15)	6	3	2	1	3
45–54 (n=21)	10	6	2	1	2
55–64 (n=22)	13	5	3	1	
65–74 (n=18)	12	2	3	1	
75 or older (n=12)	5	3	3	1	

"We urge member churches and Associations not to grant licenses to preach or ordain practising homosexuals." (1987)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5		1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	10	3			
Master's (n=57)	27	13	9	4	4
Doctoral (n=19)	10	4	3	1	1

"The solemnization of same-sex marriage is inconsistent with the interpretation of the Scriptures and contrary to the faith and practice of the CBAC." (2005)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	27	8	5	3	3
NB (n=39)	25	10	3		1
PEI (n=10)	6		3	1	
Total (n=95)	58	18	11	4	4
Percentage	61.05%	18.95%	11.58%	4.21%	4.21%

"The solemnization of same-sex marriage is inconsistent with the interpretation of the Scriptures and contrary to the faith and practice of the CBAC." (2005)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	6	1			
35–44 (n=15)	7	2	3		3
45–54 (n=21)	11	4	2	3	1
55–64 (n=22)	14	6	2		
65–74 (n=18)	14	1	2	1	
75 or older (n=12)	6	4	2		

"The solemnization of same-sex marriage is inconsistent with the interpretation of the Scriptures and contrary to the faith and practice of the CBAC." (2005)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	10	3			
Master's (n=57)	31	12	9	2	3
Doctoral (n=19)	12	2	2	2	1

"The solemnization of same-sex marriage is inconsistent with the interpretation of the Scriptures and contrary to the faith and practice of the CBAC." (2005)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	24	10	6	3	3
NB (n=39)	25	6	5	2	1
PEI (n=10)	6		3	1	
Total (n=95)	55	16	14	6	4
Percentage	57.89%	16.84%	14.74%	6.32%	4.21%

"The solemnization of same-sex marriage is inconsistent with the interpretation of the Scriptures and contrary to the faith and practice of the CBAC." (2005)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	2			
35–44 (n=15)	7	2	2	1	3
45–54 (n=21)	11	4	2	3	1
55–64 (n=22)	14	5	3		
65–74 (n=18)	12		4	2	
75 or older (n=12)	6	3	3		

"The solemnization of same-sex marriage is inconsistent with the interpretation of the Scriptures and contrary to the faith and practice of the CBAC." (2005)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	5	1			
Bachelor's (n=13)	11	2			
Master's (n=57)	27	11	11	4	4
Doctoral (n=19)	12	2	3	2	

Table AP – CBAC Resolution Statements Related to Abortion

"The Scriptures speak abundantly and clearly of the sanctity of every human life from the moment of conception." (1982)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	32	11	3		
NB (n=39)	29	8	1	1	
PEI (n=10)	7	2	1		
Total (n=95)	68	21	5	1	0
Percentage	71.58%	22.11%	5.26%	1.05%	0.00%

"The Scriptures speak abundantly and clearly of the sanctity of every human life from the moment of conception." (1982)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	4	3			
35–44 (n=15)	9	3	2	1	
45–54 (n=21)	14	7			
55–64 (n=22)	17	4	1		
65–74 (n=18)	15	2	1		
75 or older (n=12)	9	2	1		

"The Scriptures speak abundantly and clearly of the sanctity of every human life from the moment of conception." (1982)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3	1	2		
Bachelor's (n=13)	12	1			
Master's (n=57)	40	14	2	1	
Doctoral (n=19)	13	5	1		

"We oppose abortion for any reason other than the death of the expectant mother." (1982)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	21	13	4	5	3
NB (n=39)	17	13	4	3	2
PEI (n=10)	3	4	2	1	
Total (n=95)	41	30	10	9	5
Percentage	43.16%	31.58%	10.53%	9.47%	5.26%

"We oppose abortion for any reason other than the death of the expectant mother." (1982)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	5	2			
35–44 (n=15)	5	5		2	3
45–54 (n=21)	6	8	4	1	2
55–64 (n=22)	11	5	3	3	
65–74 (n=18)	10	4	2	2	
75 or older (n=12)	4	6	1	1	

"We oppose abortion for any reason other than the death of the expectant mother." (1982)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	1	3		
Bachelor's (n=13)	10	3			
Master's (n=57)	21	20	6	6	4
Doctoral (n=19)	8	6	1	3	1

"God's word is clear: abortion is killing and killing is against God's law." (1991)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	22	13	6	4	1
NB (n=39)	22	11	2	3	1
PEI (n=10)	2	4	4		
Total (n=95)	46	28	12	7	2
Percentage	48.42%	29.47%	12.63%	7.37%	2.11%

"God's word is clear: abortion is killing and killing is against God's law." (1991)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	3	2	2		
35–44 (n=15)	5	5	2	1	2
45–54 (n=21)	8	8	1	4	
55–64 (n=22)	12	6	3	1	
65–74 (n=18)	12	3	2	1	
75 or older (n=12)	6	4	2		

"God's word is clear: abortion is killing and killing is against God's law." (1991)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3		3		
Bachelor's (n=13)	7	6			
Master's (n=57)	25	18	7	5	2
Doctoral (n=19)	11	4	2	2	

Table AQ – CBAC Resolution Statements Related to Euthanasia

"Taking medical steps, such as administering deadly drugs, to shorten or end life (i.e. active euthanasia) is never acceptable." (1991)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	19	13	8	3	4
NB (n=39)	14	9	8	7	1
PEI (n=10)	1	4	3	1	1
Total (n=95)	34	26	19	11	6
Percentage	35.42%	27.08%	19.79%	11.46%	6.25%

"Taking medical steps, such as administering deadly drugs, to shorten or end life (i.e. active euthanasia) is never acceptable." (1991)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1	3	3		
35–44 (n=15)	5	5	3		2
45–54 (n=21)	8	3	3	5	2
55–64 (n=22)	9	5	4	4	
65–74 (n=18)	8	4	4	2	
75 or older (n=12)	3	6	2		1

"Taking medical steps, such as administering deadly drugs, to shorten or end life (i.e. active euthanasia) is never acceptable." (1991)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	1	3		
Bachelor's (n=13)	6	5	2		
Master's (n=57)	16	15	11	11	4
Doctoral (n=19)	10	5	3		1

"Any trend toward acceptance of assisted suicide and active euthanasia is wrong and must be opposed." (1991)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	18	15	9	2	2
NB (n=39)	15	9	8	7	
PEI (n=10)	2	4	3	1	
Total (n=95)	35	28	20	10	2
Percentage	36.84%	29.47%	21.05%	10.53%	2.11%

"Any trend toward acceptance of assisted suicide and active euthanasia is wrong and must be opposed." (1991)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1	4	2		
35–44 (n=15)	5	6	2	1	1
45–54 (n=21)	9	5	2	4	1
55–64 (n=22)	10	4	4	4	
65–74 (n=18)	8	4	5	1	
75 or older (n=12)	2	5	5		

"Any trend toward acceptance of assisted suicide and active euthanasia is wrong and must be opposed." (1991)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	1	3		
Bachelor's (n=13)	7	4	2		
Master's (n=57)	17	17	12	10	1
Doctoral (n=19)	9	6	3		1

"Artificial life support to enable donation of organs at the time of death is acceptable and such donations should be encouraged." (1991)

Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	18	16	9	2	1
NB (n=39)	17	16	5	1	
PEI (n=10)	3	5	2		
Total (n=95)	38	37	16	3	1
Percentage	40.00%	38.95%	16.84%	3.16%	1.05%

"Artificial life support to enable donation of organs at the time of death is acceptable and such donations should be encouraged." (1991)

Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	2	2	2		1
35–44 (n=15)	6	8	1		
45–54 (n=21)	9	10	2		
55–64 (n=22)	7	9	5	1	
65–74 (n=18)	9	4	4	1	
75 or older (n=12)	5	4	2	1	

"Artificial life support to enable donation of organs at the time of death is acceptable and such donations should be encouraged." (1991)

Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	1	2	1	
Bachelor's (n=13)	4	6	3		
Master's (n=57)	25	20	10	1	1
Doctoral (n=19)	7	10	1	1	

Table AR – CBAC Resolution Statements Related to Pornography

"Pornography degrades and devalues human dignity by portraying another person's body as an object of use and titillation." (1990)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	37	9			
NB (n=39)	31	7	1		
PEI (n=10)	7	3			
Total (n=95)	75	19	1	0	0
Percentage	78.95%	20.00%	1.05%	0.00%	0.00%

"Pornography degrades and devalues human dignity by portraying another person's body as an object of use and titillation." (1990)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	12	3			
45–54 (n=21)	14	7			
55–64 (n=22)	17	4	1		
65–74 (n=18)	16	2			
75 or older (n=12)	9	3			

"Pornography degrades and devalues human dignity by portraying another person's body as an object of use and titillation." (1990)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3	2	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	13				
Master's (n=57)	45	12			
Doctoral (n=19)	14	5			

"The teachings of Scripture oppose pornographic activity." (1990)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	34	10	2		
NB (n=39)	23	14	2		
PEI (n=10)	7	2	1		
Total (n=95)	64	26	5	0	0
Percentage	67.37%	27.37%	5.26%	0.00%	0.00%

"The teachings of Scripture oppose pornographic activity." (1990)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	7				
35–44 (n=15)	9	4	2		
45–54 (n=21)	12	9			
55–64 (n=22)	17	4	1		
65–74 (n=18)	13	5			
75 or older (n=12)	6	4	2		

"The teachings of Scripture oppose pornographic activity." (1990)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3	1	2		
Bachelor's (n=13)	12	1			
Master's (n=57)	35	19	3		
Doctoral (n=19)	14	5			

Table AS – CBAC Resolution Statements Related to the Cultural Morality

"We believe that Convention churches should give serious thought to exploring the needs of their communities with the idea of providing the use of their buildings and the help of their members." (1986)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	24	20	2		
NB (n=39)	24	15			
PEI (n=10)	5	5			
Total (n=95)	53	40	2	0	0
Percentage	55.79%	42.11%	2.11%	0.00%	0.00%

"We believe that Convention churches should give serious thought to exploring the needs of their communities with the idea of providing the use of their buildings and the help of their members." (1986)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	2	5			
35–44 (n=15)	7	7	1		
45–54 (n=21)	13	8			
55–64 (n=22)	12	9	1		
65–74 (n=18)	14	4			
75 or older (n=12)	5	7			

"We believe that Convention churches should give serious thought to exploring the needs of their communities with the idea of providing the use of their buildings and the help of their members." (1986)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	4			
Bachelor's (n=13)	9	3	1		
Master's (n=57)	34	22	1		
Doctoral (n=19)	8	11			

"We take a united stand against any tendency to commercialize Sunday and teach the observance of the Lord's Day as a day of rest and worship." (1963)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	6	15	18	4	3
NB (n=39)	7	12	15	5	
PEI (n=10)	1	5	1	3	
Total (n=95)	14	32	34	12	3
Percentage	14.74%	33.68%	35.79%	12.63%	3.16%

"We take a united stand against any tendency to commercialize Sunday and teach the observance of the Lord's Day as a day of rest and worship." (1963)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1		4	2	
35–44 (n=15)		3	6	5	1
45–54 (n=21)	3	6	7	4	1
55–64 (n=22)	2	12	7		1
65–74 (n=18)	6	5	6	1	
75 or older (n=12)	2	6	4		

"We take a united stand against any tendency to commercialize Sunday and teach the observance of the Lord's Day as a day of rest and worship." (1963)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	1	2	2	1	
Bachelor's (n=13)	2	5	5		1
Master's (n=57)	9	18	19	10	1
Doctoral (n=19)	2	7	8	1	1

"Legalized gambling soon degenerates into vicious corruption bringing crime and poverty, while obscuring and misrepresenting the true aim of life which is to contribute rather than to possess." (1964)

Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	15	17	8	6	
NB (n=39)	12	14	8	4	1
PEI (n=10)	4	2	4		
Total (n=95)	31	33	20	10	1
Percentage	32.63%	34.74%	21.05%	10.53%	1.05%

"Legalized gambling soon degenerates into vicious corruption bringing crime and poverty, while obscuring and misrepresenting the true aim of life which is to contribute rather than to possess." (1964)

Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1	3	3		
35–44 (n=15)	1	5	5	3	1
45–54 (n=21)	3	10	4	4	
55–64 (n=22)	11	6	4	1	
65–74 (n=18)	10	4	3	1	
75 or older (n=12)	5	5	1	1	

"Legalized gambling soon degenerates into vicious corruption bringing crime and poverty, while obscuring and misrepresenting the true aim of life which is to contribute rather than to possess." (1964)

Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3		3		
Bachelor's (n=13)	5	3	2	3	
Master's (n=57)	16	22	12	6	1
Doctoral (n=19)	7	8	3	1	

"We oppose the use of gambling as a means of securing government revenue." (1993)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	22	16	8		
NB (n=39)	14	16	6	3	
PEI (n=10)	4	2	4		
Total (n=95)	40	34	18	3	0
Percentage	42.11%	35.79%	18.95%	3.16%	0.00%

"We oppose the use of gambling as a means of securing government revenue." (1993)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1	2	4		
35–44 (n=15)	5	8	2		
45–54 (n=21)	6	7	6	2	
55–64 (n=22)	10	10	2		
65–74 (n=18)	12	3	2	1	
75 or older (n=12)	6	4	2		

"We oppose the use of gambling as a means of securing government revenue." (1993)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3	2	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	4	6	3		
Master's (n=57)	23	22	9	3	
Doctoral (n=19)	10	4	5		

"There are serious moral and ethical questions about governments that seek prosperity by preying on the weakness of some of its citizens, through casino gambling." (1992)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	22	19	4	1	
NB (n=39)	17	18	4		
PEI (n=10)	5	4	1		
Total (n=95)	44	41	9	1	0
Percentage	46.32%	43.16%	9.47%	1.05%	0.00%

"There are serious moral and ethical questions about governments that seek prosperity by preying on the weakness of some of its citizens, through casino gambling." (1992)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	2	4	1		
35–44 (n=15)	4	9	1	1	
45–54 (n=21)	4	15	2		
55–64 (n=22)	15	5	2		
65–74 (n=18)	13	4	1		
75 or older (n=12)	6	4	2		

"There are serious moral and ethical questions about governments that seek prosperity by preying on the weakness of some of its citizens, through casino gambling." (1992)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3	2	1		
Bachelor's (n=13)	5	7	1		
Master's (n=57)	25	27	4	1	
Doctoral (n=19)	11	5	3		

"We protest the promotion of alcoholic beverages and educate our people concerning their detrimental effects upon the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit." (1971)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	11	7	18	8	2
NB (n=39)	8	8	13	6	4
PEI (n=10)		4	2	1	3
Total (n=95)	19	19	33	15	9
Percentage	20.00%	20.00%	34.74%	15.79%	9.47%

"We protest the promotion of alcoholic beverages and educate our people concerning their detrimental effects upon the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit." (1971)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1	1	3		2
35–44 (n=15)			11	2	2
45–54 (n=21)	2	3	7	5	4
55–64 (n=22)	5	6	6	5	
65–74 (n=18)	6	6	3	2	1
75 or older (n=12)	5	3	3	1	

"We protest the promotion of alcoholic beverages and educate our people concerning their detrimental effects upon the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit." (1971)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	2	2		1	1
Bachelor's (n=13)	5	2	3	2	1
Master's (n=57)	9	11	23	8	6
Doctoral (n=19)	3	4	7	4	1

"We believe that the alarming increase in the use of alcoholic beverage is contributing to and compounding the many moral and social problems which now affect the lives of individuals, their families, and our communities." (1989)

Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	15	16	11	4	
NB (n=39)	7	17	8	5	2
PEI (n=10)	3	2	3	2	
Total (n=95)	25	35	22	11	2
Percentage	26.32%	36.84%	23.16%	11.58%	2.11%

"We believe that the alarming increase in the use of alcoholic beverage is contributing to and compounding the many moral and social problems which now affect the lives of individuals, their families, and our communities." (1989)

Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1	3	2	1	
35–44 (n=15)	1	4	6	3	1
45–54 (n=21)	2	7	6	5	1
55–64 (n=22)	6	10	5	1	
65–74 (n=18)	9	7	1	1	
75 or older (n=12)	6	4	2		

"We believe that the alarming increase in the use of alcoholic beverage is contributing to and compounding the many moral and social problems which now affect the lives of individuals, their families, and our communities." (1989)

Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3		1	2	
Bachelor's (n=13)	4	4	4	1	
Master's (n=57)	13	24	12	6	2
Doctoral (n=19)	5	7	5	2	

"We believe that the alarming increase in the use of cannabis is contributing to and compounding the many moral and social problems which now affect the lives of individuals, their families, and our communities." (2022 by author, adapted from 1989)					
Region	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NS (n=46)	11	14	15	5	1
NB (n=39)	11	14	11	3	
PEI (n=10)	2	6	1	1	
Total (n=95)	24	34	27	9	1
Percentage	25.26%	35.79%	28.42%	9.47%	1.05%

"We believe that the alarming increase in the use of cannabis is contributing to and compounding the many moral and social problems which now affect the lives of individuals, their families, and our communities." (2022 by author, adapted from 1989)					
Age	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25–34 (n=7)	1	2	3	1	
35–44 (n=15)		5	7	2	1
45–54 (n=21)	2	12	5	2	
55–64 (n=22)	8	6	6	2	
65–74 (n=18)	8	6	3	1	
75 or older (n=12)	5	3	3	1	

"We believe that the alarming increase in the use of cannabis is contributing to and compounding the many moral and social problems which now affect the lives of individuals, their families, and our communities." (2022 by author, adapted from 1989)					
Education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
No Degree (n=6)	3	1	2		
Bachelor's (n=13)	5	5	2	1	
Master's (n=57)	12	21	17	6	1
Doctoral (n=19)	4	7	6	2	

Appendix D — Interview Questions

Survey respondents were asked to voluntarily self-identify if they wanted to further add to the research by participating in an interview focused on their perspectives of several Baptist beliefs. The following are the questions that formed the basis of those interviews.

1. Traditionally Baptists have shared the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord of both the church and the individual and that every area of the believer's life and the life of the church is to be subject to Jesus. What are your beliefs on that statement? How do you realize that belief on your own life? How do you see it lived out in your church's life and the life of the CBAC?
2. Baptists have taught that the Bible is "inspired by God." What does "inspired by God" mean to you? What do you believe the is correct place for the Bible to take in the life (i.e. "faith and practice") of the local church? How should decisions about what are "correct biblical interpretations" be made?
3. What are your beliefs about the place of baptism in Christian life? What are your beliefs about believers' and infant baptisms? How does baptism relate to membership in the local church?
4. What are your beliefs about the place of membership in the life of the church? How relevant is membership to church life? If you believe membership is relevant, what should be the qualifications for membership in a local church?
 - a. Baptists have traditionally taught that all believers have equal, direct access to God and that all are called to minister (serve) to each other, the world, and before God. If you believe membership is relevant, should all members have equal say in the decisions of their local church?

5. What place should the Lord's Supper have in the life of the local church? What frequency is appropriate for its celebration? Who do you believe should be eligible to participate in the Lord's Supper?
6. Baptists have traditionally held that each local church is "competent under Christ to look after its own affairs," free from coercion from other bodies. They have also banded together with other churches of "like faith and order" in cooperative efforts. What are your perspectives on the relationship between the ideals of local church independence and associational interdependence?
 - a. The member churches of the CBAC have afforded each other latitude in interpreting and applying the Bible differently on a variety of matters (e.g. same-sex union, women in ministry, the Lord's Supper, Arminianism/Calvinism, etc.). What do you believe should be the limits of these types of latitudes for churches who remain associated together?

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