

# ***The Baptist General Conference***

## ***A Fundamentalism File Research Report by Mark L. Ward Jr.***

This report is intended to be a resource to help Fundamentalist Christians in studying and evaluating religious leaders and movements. It draws primarily upon materials housed in the Fundamentalism File in the J. S. Mack Library on the campus of Bob Jones University.

Although every effort has been made to provide an impartial study of the topic, this work will naturally reflect the interpretations and viewpoint of its author. ***This report should not be taken as representing an official statement of the position of Bob Jones University.*** The University's theological position is well expressed by its creed.

The staff of the Fundamentalism File would welcome any questions or comments concerning the content of this report.

# ***The Baptist General Conference***

## **National Origin and History**

The Baptist General Conference traces its roots distinctly to Sweden, a place where Christianity got a late start. Catholics had built a strong presence there by the twelfth century, even establishing themselves on the site of the country's major pagan temple. Protestantism took four hundred more years to arrive, doing so primarily as the result of a Reformation-era political revolution and a subsequent need for governmental appropriation of church assets. When in 1523 Sweden's king broke with Rome, the Church of Sweden became Lutheran almost by default.<sup>1</sup>

The early 19th century saw the rise among these Swedish Protestants of a movement dubbed the *läsare*, or "Readers," because of their emphasis on Bible reading. Their appeal to the Scriptures prepared the way for groups which were to dissent from the state church, including the Baptists. Today, the website of the Baptist General Conference proudly details its roots among these evangelical, pietist *läsare*, who, deploring "the general aridity that had gradually crept over post-Reformation Protestantism," had to "seek elsewhere for spiritual nourishment."<sup>2</sup>

Such spiritual food came in part with the birth and growth of the Baptists. A Swedish sailor, Gustavus Schroeder, returned from a trip to the United States of America in the mid-1840s and told fellow Christian Frederic O. Nilsson about the baptism he had undergone there. Nilsson soon (1848) became Sweden's first Baptist leader after he sought the ordinance himself, and it was Nilsson who disseminated Baptist views in his land and won converts. However, the Church of Sweden did not regard Nilsson's actions as healthy for the staidly Lutheran commonwealth and in 1850 banished him from the country.<sup>3</sup> The minutes of his trial, however, were published throughout the nation, exposing Baptist views countrywide for the first time. Nilsson wrote, "Let now the poor sailor be banished from the realm! What matters that! The truths that by his trial

have been disseminated in Sweden can never be banished."<sup>4</sup>

A former Lutheran clergyman immersed by Nilsson, Anders Wiberg, soon arose to lead the Baptists in Sweden, while Nilsson left for Denmark. After a brief stay there, he set sail with twenty-one other Swedish Baptists for the United States of America, landing in New York in June of 1853.<sup>5</sup>

At least one Swedish Baptist had established himself in the New World already. Gustaf Palmquist, the son of a devout Swedish woman, came early in his adult life to assurance of salvation and began spreading his faith in his native country. He came to America to head a congregation of Swedes, only to find that they had scattered across several states, leaving him unemployed. He found himself in a Baptist revival meeting in Illinois and was baptized and ordained within a few weeks. The church commissioned him as an unpaid missionary to American Swedes, and he headed off to perform his task in his adopted hometown of Rock Island, Illinois. Despite determined opposition to this religious upstart, Palmquist founded a church on August 13, 1852, with just two men and a woman in attendance.

Nilsson soon made his way to Rock Island and joined with Palmquist. He then began a period of wide travel throughout the Swedish immigrant communities of the Midwest, preaching, evangelizing, and founding churches. This was the seed of the Baptist General Conference. By 1871, the Swedish Baptists numbered 1,500 and spread throughout seven states.<sup>6</sup> The coming wave of Swedish immigration was to push that number ever higher.

## **Denominational Identity**

The denomination as a formal entity began in 1879, after early attempts to gather Swedish Baptists together in conference faltered because of the distance some pastors had to travel. State Swedish Baptist conferences and even a few general conferences had met since 1856, but 1879 saw the first general conference which was to last.

Attendees to that conference set out four objectives:

1. To promote missionary work among the Swedes in America.
2. To encourage and support foreign missions.
3. To support the denominational Training School for preachers.
4. To supply and spread denominational literature.<sup>7</sup>

That meeting went for several years by the name the “Scandinavian Conference.”<sup>8</sup> At that point, the membership numbered three thousand in sixty-five churches spread from the Atlantic to the Dakotas, though focused in the Midwest. An annual conference has occurred each year since that date. Canada, too, saw the growth of Swedish Baptists and the Baptist General Conference, beginning with an 1894 revival in Winnipeg, Manitoba.<sup>9</sup>

Personality played only a small role in the founding of what was to become the Swedish Baptist General Conference of America (and today the Baptist General Conference). Certainly, the trio of early leaders (Nilsson, Palmquist, and Wiberg, the last of whom also performed some work among the Swedish Baptists in America, especially by theological writing) were important in the formation of the denomination. But none developed a cult following or became a religious demagogue.

Neither did the Swedish Baptists form by splitting off from another similar group. Instead, it is important to note how the denomination today describes its own founding: “Reaction against the patterns of the established churches led Swedish Baptists and other evangelicals to demand a regenerate clergy and a regenerate church membership. Believer’s baptism provided the best assurance of that kind of membership, and the scriptural mode of baptism was for them clearly immersion.”<sup>10</sup> It was a uniting pietistic, evangelical, and Baptist theology and a response to the formality of the Swedish state church which led the early Swedish Baptists to form their own denomination.

The central and primary uniting factor for the early Swedish Baptists in America, and for their successive generations, was neither personality nor a common enemy; it was the group’s ethnic

and linguistic heritage. The denominational paper (the result of the 1918 union of the official denominational organ the *Svenska Standaret* [The Swedish Standard] and the semi-official *Nya Wecko-Posten* [The New Weekly Mail]<sup>11</sup>) was printed in Swedish till 1941, when a compromise created an eight-page English section. Four pages of Swedish filled out the rest of the paper, and lasted there for thirteen more years. The Swedish Baptists were facing a debate that many immigrant churches have faced: “How long will we use our native language?” One old woman in a Swedish Baptist church answered that question emphatically (in Swedish), “You have never heard of anyone being converted in English!”<sup>12</sup> and others likely shared her sentiments. But when immigration from Sweden ran dry after World War II, the Swedish Baptist General Conference of America had to shift its focus away from ministry and mission to the immigrant community. They dropped “Swedish” from their title, and later the word “America” also, so as not to offend their Canadian brothers. Today, BGC churches no longer hold services or offer publications in Swedish. Swedish ethnicity held on as a major component of denominational identity until the 1960s and 70s, but then it began a rapid drop-off.<sup>13</sup>

Not all are pleased. “Swedish Baptist ethnicity has just about disappeared,” laments Virgil Olson, Baptist General Conference historian. “Many of the recent members who have joined the ... churches have never heard a word about the BGC Swedish heritage. A large number of pastors make no effort to learn about BGC history.... Many, including some pastors, say that they are tired of hearing about the BGC Swedish ethnic connection.”<sup>14</sup> But, adds Olson, this erosion of common heritage has come with a price.

The ethnic Baptist churches from 1850 to 1950 ... had a strong sense of cohesiveness. These churches had a commonality in language and in culture, which, in a sense, fenced them into a uniform biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical model.... Now these newly emerging, assimilated American churches are looking for some new polarizing, captivating mission. But ... they find it difficult to discover a new center that affects

all of denominational church life like ethnicity did for the forefathers.<sup>15</sup>

Programs and slogans do not have the force that the Swedish language had in keeping the denomination focused on a unified mission. Being a Baptist is no longer polarizing nor captivating. The BGC, then, faces the challenge of keeping some uniting purpose set out before the eyes of the coming generation.<sup>16</sup>

### **Demographics**

That generation is likely to be large and diverse. Today, the BGC's Internet home page lists ethnic diversity among its seven major values (right under the glory of God, ministerial training, and evangelism). "From a movement by and for Swedish immigrants," reads the site, "God has transformed us into a diverse family of 19 ethnic cultures. With all the life, vigor and challenges this implies" [*sic*].<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, BGC churches spread across the United States and into the Caribbean. The denomination claimed 238,920 "adherents" (baptized members) in 2000, found in 866 congregations in 346 counties. That showed a 10.2% gain in members over ten years.<sup>18</sup> The latest figures show that the state with the most BGC congregations is California, with 167. Following closely is Minnesota (159 churches), and other Midwest states round out the top six, reflecting the denomination's original Midwestern focus. In all, 36 U.S. states have BGC congregations, and 13 churches scatter throughout the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, and the West Indies.<sup>19</sup> The BGC has certainly broadened its geographical base since Gustaf Palmquist began its first congregation in Rock Island, Illinois (a state which is now home to 89 BGC congregations).

### **Doctrinal Emphases**

The Baptist General Conference's official affirmation of faith (adopted 1951, reaffirmed 1990, amended 1998<sup>20</sup>) is very much evangelical and Baptist. The affirmation countenances no liberal theology and contains no statements unique to the BGC. The Conference expresses belief in the infallibility and authority of the Bible; the trinity; the substitutionary death of Christ; the necessity of holy living for the believer; the two ordinances of the church, baptism and the Lord's supper; the separation of

church and state; the independence of the local church from interference by ecclesiastical or political authority; church cooperation within a denomination; and the visible and personal return of Christ. The statement is sparse and appears to allow for Calvinism or Arminianism within the ranks of the denomination.

### **Characteristic Attitudes**

A large group dispersed throughout an even larger country is difficult to describe in the aggregate, especially after the erosion of Swedish identity the Baptist General Conference has undergone. Attitudes which characterized the Swedish Baptist General Conference of America may not describe today's BGC. Today, the denomination lists seven values on its web site, but these are not distinctive among evangelical and Baptist denominations, and neither are they especially characteristic of the denomination. However, it is noteworthy that the BGC's official voice elects certain descriptors by which it would like to be characterized. "We are a people," reads the site, "who have a passion to glorify God, are committed to the Bible's authority, fervently practice evangelism and church planting, debate issues with a peacemaking spirit, are committed to training godly leaders and fostering healthy churches, are reaching the lost around the globe, and are an ethnically diverse community of faith."

The BGC certainly has many other values, and these manifest themselves in annual conference resolutions, in social action, in music choice, and in choice of ecclesiastical association.

### ***Attitude Toward Education: The Story of Bethel Theological Seminary***

Toward education Swedish Baptists were quite slow to show real affinity. "In fact," records the centennial history of the denomination, "it required the work of several decades to uproot a deep-seated prejudice against book-learning."<sup>21</sup> Early preachers were rough-hewn, living as they did on the frontier. Early Swedish Baptist pew-sitters were wary of ministerial education because their only experience with an educated clergy was in the Swedish state church. Those were the men that had harried the Baptists out of Sweden! However, within twenty years of the birth date of Swedish Baptist work in America, those who saw the need for ministerial education were able to

overcome popular prejudice enough to start a school. John Alexis Edgren, pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago, put an advertisement in his paper in 1871, calling for “countrymen who feel called of God to the gospel ministry” to come to his new school. The school was to be housed in, affiliated with, and supported by the Baptist Union Theological Seminary. It was to train Swedes to reach Swedes, and was to aid churches so that they “need no longer be without well prepared ministers.”<sup>22</sup> One student came. Another joined after the New Year. Edgren invested himself body and soul in his work as seminary professor and promoter, and despite terrible trial he succeeded in keeping the seminary from folding for seven years. Then help began to multiply and within a few more years the seminary had over two dozen students. By 1884, Edgren was able to lead the seminary to independence, supported only by Swedish Baptists.

That independence did not last, and the seminary returned in 1888 to affiliation with the Baptist Union Theological Seminary. Edgren, broken in health, moved out to California and resigned from the school he had sacrificed his best years to build. The period 1888-92 the seminary spent as “The Swedish Department of the Baptist Union Theological Seminary.” Till 1914 they were “The Swedish Theological Seminary, The Divinity School in the University of Chicago.” In 1914 the school achieved independence once more, and has held on since. The flagship of school of the Baptist General Conference today bears the name Bethel College and Seminary, and resides in St. Paul, Minnesota.

#### ***Attitude Toward Moral Issues and Social Action***

The Baptist General Conference lists on its web site standing resolutions dating back to 1965. Social action is a constant theme in these resolutions, starting with the first, which takes a stand against social evils such as alcohol and the use of narcotics and urges churches to employ non-radical means to combat these evils.<sup>23</sup> Further 1960s resolutions tap the major cultural issues of the times. The BGC took a 1965 stand against racism,<sup>24</sup> three years later proclaimed its opposition to Communism,<sup>25</sup> and that same year took an ambiguous position on war.<sup>26</sup> A 1971 resolution on abortion is also ambiguous, only

“recognizing the necessity of periodic reevaluation of laws [such as those regarding abortion] which are so intimately related to human well-being”<sup>27</sup> and making a general comment that a reinstatement of Christian morality would obviate the problem.

The broader topic of the relationship of social action to gospel proclamation the BGC takes up directly in a 1978 resolution. The statement laments the dereliction of social activity of which twentieth-century Fundamentalism has been guilty but expresses the BGC’s theological proximity to that conservative movement. The statement notes that Fundamentalism’s neglect was a reaction to Modernist overemphasis on social action and urges BGC churches to strike a balance between the social gospel and social negligence. The BGC points to Jesus’ example and to other passages of Scripture which call upon Christians to minister to man’s physical needs.

As for politics, the BGC’s repeated call for social action accords with its view of the relationship of politics and Christianity. “The Bible does not prohibit Christians from involvement in political activities, but rather commands us to oppose injustice and oppression and to protect life and to stand for what is right and good.”<sup>28</sup> The resolution encourages members of the denomination to pray, vote, write letters to public officials, serve in political organizations, and run for public office as God leads the individual.

#### ***Attitude Toward Modern Theology and Science***

The Baptist General Conference’s doctrinal affirmation stands firmly against modern theology, but as early as the 1960s at least one Fundamentalist outside the denomination was complaining that they took a too- generous view of modern science.

Myron J. Houghton took “A Look at the Baptist General Conference” in a 1964 article, complaining that the BGC violated Baptist principles of church autonomy and allowed too much latitude to its seminary teachers at Bethel. He quotes the then (1964) president of Bethel Seminary, Carl H. Lundquist, who affirms that “the teacher must ... be free,” with the caveat that such freedom must remain “within the stated

limits of the religious objectives of the school.”<sup>29</sup> Lundquist said that he believed “teachers should be free to hold and teach views differing from the majority in matters not central to our Christian faith.” He singled out the issues of pacifism, the Revised Standard Version, and welfare policies as areas in which faculty might disagree.<sup>30</sup>

But Houghton charged that Bethel professors were going further, quoting the mimeographed lecture notes of one Dr. Moberg, who reportedly told his students, “I personally am not disturbed, as some of my fundamentalist friends are, by the increasing evidence from the physical and biological sciences that the earth is extremely old, that biological species indeed may be linked in a chain of progressive development, and that man may have evolved gradually to his present biological form.... If [God] chose to create man by a progressive process, why not praise Him for it?”<sup>31</sup> A brief 1981 BGC resolution merely affirms the denomination’s “confidence in the authority of the Word of God and in God as the Creator,” without elaborating.<sup>32</sup> A 1987 resolution regarding “Creation Sunday,” a Lord’s day set aside in a local church to celebrate God’s creation of the world, also avoids affirming six-day young-earth creationism.

The Baptist General Conference seems to take stands consistent with that stream of Christianity called the “New Evangelicalism.” One of its prominent pastors, Leith Anderson, served as interim president of the National Association of Evangelicals,<sup>33</sup> and the denomination has been a member of that association since 1966.<sup>34</sup> Professor David Howard of Bethel Seminary served as the president of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), a generally conservative evangelical group founded on the platform of biblical inerrancy.

### **Present Issue: Open Theism**

The prominent issue facing the denomination today is one that already threatens to splinter the Evangelical Theological Society. The issue is no less serious in the Baptist General Conference. The issue is an increasingly popular theological view called “Open Theism,” or “Free-will Theism.”

This theology is essentially hyper-Arminianism,<sup>35</sup> stressing that man’s free-will

must be preserved at all costs. A basic presentation of the view generally starts with this argument: God does know everything, but the future is an unknowable no-thing. Therefore God does not know the future. This does no damage to God’s omniscience, say open theists, because God still knows everything there is to know. Those passages in which God speaks of the future are part of a “motif of future determinism”;<sup>36</sup> that is, they are “predictions of God’s unilateral determination that require for their fulfillment no future free human choices.”<sup>37</sup> Positing that God is as ignorant of the future as man is evades some sticky Bible problems (the problem of evil for one), but is it biblical? Prominent open theists say yes, and have with no qualms maintained their membership both in the Evangelical Theological Society and in the Baptist General Conference. Open theist Gregory Boyd is both the pastor of a large BGC church and was a faculty member at Bethel College.

But Boyd and Open Theism have titanic opponents both within and without the BGC. Open Theism has caused a stir throughout evangelicalism, and raised a storm of periodical articles.<sup>38</sup> One of the strongest crusaders against the view is the pastor of another large BGC church, himself a former teacher of biblical studies at Bethel College, John Piper.<sup>39</sup> Piper has been a well known and prolific author in evangelicalism for nearly two decades, and he emphasizes a firmly conservative, Calvinistic and inerrantist theology.<sup>40</sup>

The 2000 annual meeting of the Baptist General Conference brought the issue to a vote. BGC delegates considered two resolutions, the first affirming that “God’s knowledge of all past, present and future events is exhaustive” and asserting that “the ‘openness’ view of God’s foreknowledge is contrary to our fellowship’s historic understanding of God’s omniscience.”<sup>41</sup> This resolution passed “by a large majority.”<sup>42</sup> The other resolution, however, passing narrowly, showed that not all delegates considered Open Theism an issue of great doctrinal importance, even if they opposed it. This resolution was one previously adopted by the trustees of the BGC’s St. Paul school, Bethel, regarding faculty member Gregory Boyd’s teaching of Open Theism. The trustees acknowledged that “the debate regarding

Open Theism is of critical importance in seeking truth and unity,”<sup>43</sup> and they promptly opted for the latter. “We affirm,” the trustees wrote, “the unanimous vote of the Committee for Theological Clarification and Assessment occurring on May 13, 1998, that Dr. Boyd’s views did not warrant his termination as a member of the Bethel College faculty and by inference that his views fall within the accepted bounds of the evangelical spectrum.”

The trustees asked Boyd not to present his view as the dominant one in the BGC and enjoined that all major evangelical positions be given a fair hearing in Bethel classrooms. In addition they said, Bethel must use classic-theist textbooks. Delegates to the 2000 annual meeting of the BGC reaffirmed this resolution.

John Piper viewed the passing of the second Open Theism resolution as a grave error, especially considering the BGC’s approval of the first:

In order for the two resolutions to cohere, open theism must be viewed as an insignificant aberration from the Biblical norm. But this is a profound mistake in theological and historical judgment, for open theism is a massive re-visioning of God. This is clear from Dr. Boyd’s published works and will become increasingly clear with those yet to be published. If the Baptist General Conference does not wake up to the magnitude of the distortion of God being powerfully promoted in the writings and classrooms of one of Bethel’s most popular teachers, the Conference of fifty years from now will probably not be the faithful evangelical institution it is today.<sup>44</sup>

## Future Prospects

John Piper is certainly correct. The issue of Open Theism has remained controversial since the 2000 assembly’s vote, but Gregory Boyd, although no longer a teacher at Bethel, is still pastor of a BGC megachurch.<sup>45</sup> At a time when unity is extremely important for a denomination which has in large part lost the (Swedish) cultural heritage so prominent in its formation, Open Theism has come as a wedge dividing at least some prominent BGC members. Though Boyd complains that “some people are beginning to toss around the alarmist label ‘heresy,’”<sup>46</sup> in describing his theology, it is the fact that not enough are

using this label which bodes ill for the Baptist General Conference. The future success of the BGC lies in theological fidelity to Christian orthodoxy and in maintenance of its own denominational identity. As the grandchildren of the last wave of Swedish immigrants themselves die, the Baptist General Conference must find a “new polarizing, captivating mission,” or at least a reason to stay together. Now is a key time for the Conference to decide against doctrinal aberration and call its members to the Bible focus of the *läsare*, the only truly worthy captivating mission.

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1975), pp. 737-38.

<sup>2</sup> “Deep Spiritual Hunger,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>3</sup> Virgil Olson. “Neither Jew Nor Greek: A Study of an Ethnic Baptist Group, the Swedish Baptists, 1850-1950.” *Baptist History and Heritage*, 25 (1990): 32.

<sup>4</sup> Adolf Olson, *A Centenary History As Related to the Baptist General Conference of America* (Baptist Conference Press, 1952; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1980), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> “Devotion to God, the Word, Evangelism,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>7</sup> Olson, p. 415.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 407.

<sup>9</sup> Almost a century later, the Canadians left the Baptist General Conference, though promising to maintain close ties. They mentioned that they planned to take a more conservative position on Bible inerrancy than the American churches. See Lloyd Mackey. “Canadian Churches Gain Independence from Their U.S. Counterparts” *Christianity Today*, 14 Dec. 1984, p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> “Devotion to God, the Word, Evangelism,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>11</sup> “Social Needs and Publishing,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>12</sup> “Neither Jew Nor Greek,” pp. 37-38.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp.41-42.

<sup>17</sup> “Values,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>18</sup> “Religious Groups,” <http://ext.nazarene.org/rcms/groupnumbersandchange.html>.

<sup>19</sup> “Index to Baptist General Conference Churches,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>20</sup> “An Affirmation of Our Faith,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>21</sup> Olson, p. 153.

<sup>22</sup> Olson, p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> “Social Evils,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>24</sup> “Human Relations,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>25</sup> “Religious Liberty,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>26</sup> “War and Peace,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>. The BGC resolution seems to oppose war, but makes no clear statement that the denomination is pacifist.

<sup>27</sup> “Abortion,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>. Later 1980s statements condemn “abortion on demand” and urge BGC members to contribute to Operation Rescue, a pro-life organization.

<sup>28</sup> “Political Involvement,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>29</sup> Myron J. Houghton, “A Look at the Baptist General Conference,” *Central Conservative Baptist Quarterly* 7 (1964.): 23.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> “God as the Creator,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>33</sup> “The National Association of Evangelicals,” <http://www.nae.net>.

<sup>34</sup> “Member denominations,” <http://www.nae.net>.

<sup>35</sup> Elesha Coffman, “Did Open Debate Help the Openness Debate?” *Christianity Today*, 19 Feb. 2001, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce A. Ware, “Defining Evangelicalism’s Boundaries Theologically: Is Open Theism Evangelical?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002): 202.

<sup>38</sup> See list of resources at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/003/3.42.html>.

<sup>39</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God, Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1996), p. 233.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 267ff.

<sup>41</sup> “Resolution: God’s Foreknowledge,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> “Resolution in Support of Bethel College & Seminary,” <http://www.bgcworld.org>.

<sup>44</sup> “We Took a Good Stand and Made a Bad Mistake: Reflections on the Baptist General Conference Annual Meeting, St Paul,” <http://www.desiringgod.org>.

<sup>45</sup> The church’s web site (<http://www.whchurch.org/whc/>) proclaims its purpose: “Tearing down the walls between races, genders, social classes, and denominations.”

<sup>46</sup> Boyd, *God of the Possible*, p. 12.