

## THE EQUIP INSTITUTE

Theme: Baptist Beliefs

Topic: BF&M (2000): Article XV: The Christian and the Social Order

Spring 2026

### Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and his Word for the sake of living rightly before God in his world. The topic this week is Article XV in the Baptist Faith and Message (2000), which is on the Christian and the Social Order.

### Article XV

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

*Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12:14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.*

### Key Biblical Texts

The Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:3-17)

<sup>12</sup> "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good? (Deut. 10:12-13)

<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8)

<sup>16</sup> These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace. (Zech. 8:16)

The Sermon the Mount (Matt. 5-7)

<sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. <sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a

stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 5:13-16)

<sup>35</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? <sup>38</sup>And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? <sup>39</sup>And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' <sup>40</sup>And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (Matt. 25:35-40)

<sup>18</sup>"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." <sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:18-21)

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:27-37)

<sup>1</sup>Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. <sup>2</sup>Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. <sup>3</sup>For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, <sup>4</sup>for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup>Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. <sup>6</sup>For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. <sup>7</sup>Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. (Rom. 13:1-7)

<sup>31</sup> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)

<sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. (James 1:27)

## Observations

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## Exposition of Article XV

### *Historical Context*

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Baptists were engaged in matters of public witness, which focused on three areas early on: lobbying for prohibition, promoting democracy, and advocating for religious freedom. All three editions of the Baptist Faith and Message have included an article on cultural engagement, though in 1925 it was titled "Social Service." There were only a few minor changes between the 1925 and 1963 editions. Most Southern Baptists were socially conservative, and prior to the early 1980s a majority supported the conservative wing of the Democratic Party in state and national elections.

As American society embraced more socially progressive values after 1963, Southern Baptists moved toward a more consistent social conservatism in most areas, especially toward the hotly contested issues of elective abortion and euthanasia, sexual ethics, homosexuality, marriage and other domestic partnerships, and religious freedom. From the late-1970s onward, around the same time the Inerrancy Controversy was beginning, Southern Baptists became increasingly identified with the Religious Right in general and the socially conservative wing of the Republican Party in particular.

Southern Baptist social conservatism was clarified in the revision of Article XV in the BF&M 2000. Moderate Baptists tended to be critical of the Religious Right, and they protested social conservatism being codified in the confession. Conservatives responded that the vast majority of Baptists had not changed their views, but were simply expressing them more clearly in response to progressive trends in the broader culture.

### *Key Ideas*

The Christian faith has implications for both individuals and cultures, including American culture, and we are obligated to seek to conform both to biblical truth

Our strategies to promote civic righteousness are only lasting when they accompany the proclamation of the gospel to unbelievers

There will be no meaningful national renewal without spiritual revival

As Christians, we should oppose all personal and public evils that are tolerated or even celebrated in American culture

Such evils include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following: racism, greed, selfishness, vice (generally sinful behaviors), and all forms of sexual immorality (adultery, homosexuality, pornography)

