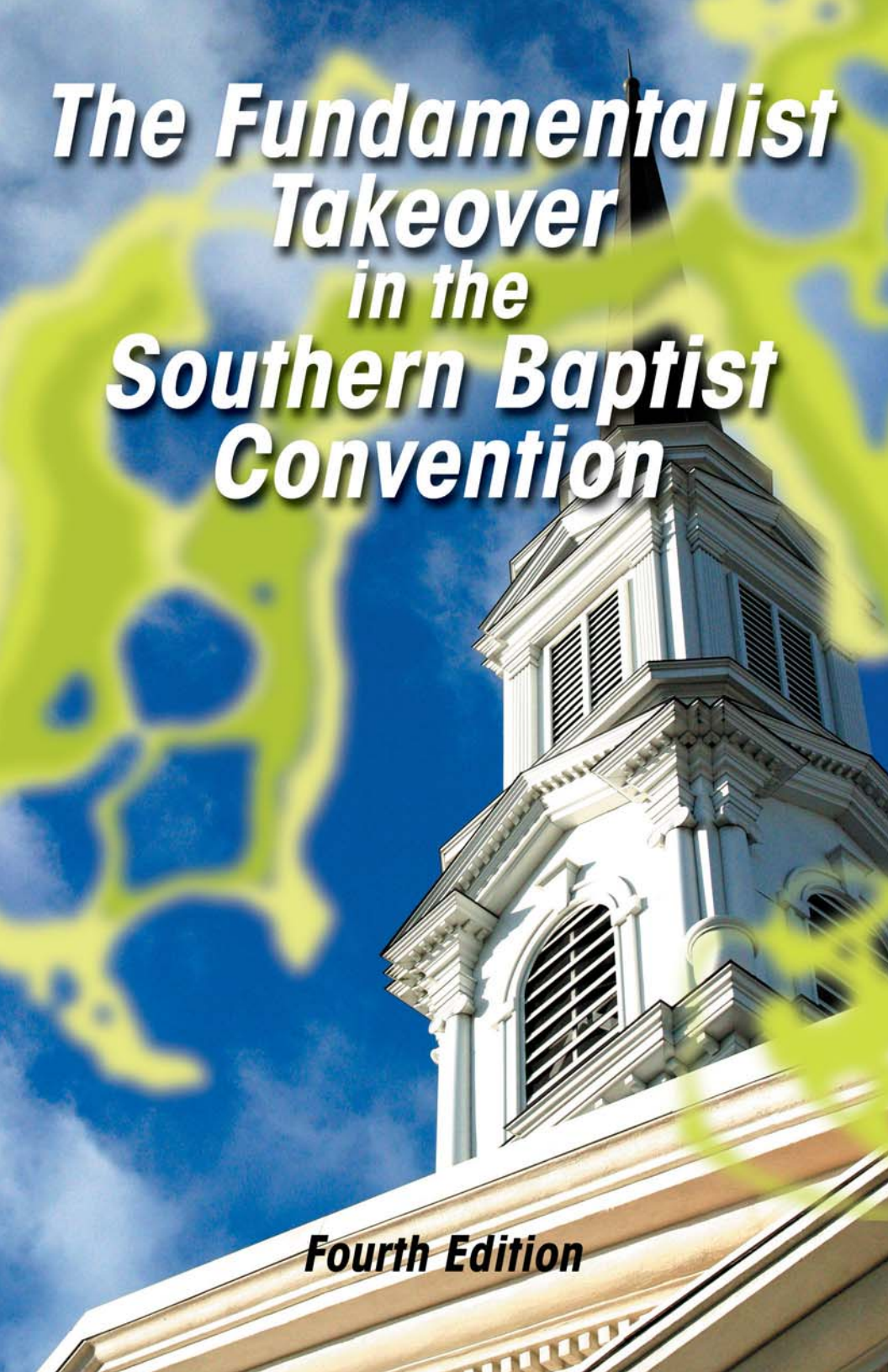
The Fundamentalist Takeover in the Southern Baptist Convention



Fourth Edition

THE FUNDAMENTALIST TAKEOVER IN THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

A BRIEF HISTORY

Fourth Edition

Macon, Georgia
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia
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First Edition

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Table of Contents

Foreword

For more than a quarter century, the Southern Baptist Convention has experienced "The Controversy." These sixteen million Southern Baptists comprise one of the largest, wealthiest, and most powerful denominations in the world.

What is euphemistically called The Controversy erupted among Southern Baptists in 1979. It is also called a Fundamentalist Takeover by those labeled (by themselves or others) as "liberal," "moderate," or "Mainstream." The same Controversy is called the "Conservative Resurgence" by those labeled (by themselves or others) as "conservatives" or "Fundamentalists."

Why after more than twenty-five years of The Controversy is this book needed?

Those of us who have watched this painful Controversy wonder who could possibly still fail to understand what has been happening in the Southern Baptist Convention. Still, as wise sage Cecil Sherman has often quipped: "The sun is always rising somewhere."

For you the SBC Controversy sun may just be rising. It is for you and your church this book is offered.

The Takeover in the Southern Baptist Convention was first produced in 1989. It had its beginnings in a report of the Denominational Relations Committee of River Road Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. Reworking that report, four authors produced the first edition of this work for a larger audience: Barbara Jackson, Robert E. Shepherd, Jr., Cornelia Showalter, and editor Robison B. (Rob) James. Dr. James did much of the final writing and re-writing and so was listed on the front of the first edition as editor.

A second updating of the book was produced under the auspices of *Baptists Today,* this time by Dr. Gary Leazer. Dr. Leazer, an employee of the Home Mission Board, was dismissed for explaining the Southern Baptist Convention's vote regarding Freemasonry to a Masonic lodge meeting. Needless to say, Dr. Leazer was well ac-

quainted with the events of the Takeover and did a skillful job of updating.

The third edition of the book was updated by James Shoopman, pastor of the Indigo Lakes Baptist Church in Daytona Beach, Florida, and published in 1999. Thousands of the third edition have been studied by churches concerned with events in the Southern Baptist Convention. Shoopman's introduction provides background perspective into the "why" of the Controversy. There is also an updated chronology of events as the Takeover or Resurgence (depending on your perspective) has tightened its control of the SBC system.

This fourth edition presents variations from the earlier editions:

1. **To Provide a Perspective for the Events of the Last Twenty-five Years**: Many of us have lived through pain of the last quarter century. But for a younger generation, our recollections can sound like stories of the Civil War — interesting, but not all that relevant today. This edition provides a coherent chronology of the most significant events since the Takeover began, plus useful "so what?" information.
2. **To Include/Present the Viable Option for 21st Century Moderate Baptists:** The emergence of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship began in 1990. For thousands of individuals and churches, it has "become a denominational home" as testified by Jimmy Carter, one of America's best-known Baptists and former U.S. President. Out of pain and difficulty can come hope and health. If you are a moderate Baptist, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship may also become a denominational home for you.
3. **To Provide a Resource for Individual and Small-group Use:** Baptists are at our best when we pray and talk freely with one another. We encourage you and a small group to read and discuss this book together. We believe "present the facts and trust the people" works.

This fourth edition is a collaborative effort.

- CBF of Missouri coordinated condensing and editing previous editions and adding updated resources.
- North Carolina CBF reviewed the document.
- CBF of Georgia provided the funding and made the final revisions.

We are indebted to each person involved in these previous editions. We are especially grateful to Charles DeWeese and the Baptist History and Heritage Society, whose resources provide the bulk of Chapters One through Six. We commend the Baptist History and Heritage Society as a valuable resource for your church.

We agree with Dr. Shoopman's comments in the third edition:

> This work is an excellent tool for helping people understand what has happened to the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979. If our small contribution has made it any clearer to the average reader, we are grateful for the opportunity to help fellow Christians toward a better understanding of the truth. The real credit for this work still belongs to the initial authors and the editors, Rob James and Gary Leazer, who did the original research and writing. We have made every effort to preserve the integrity and the spirit of their work. We pray the blessing of the Holy Spirit, who will guide us into all truth, for all who read this book.

Finally, we are personally grateful to countless Sunday School teachers, Church Training leaders, missions leaders, youth ministers, pastors, deacons, and Southern Baptist institutions. Those men, women, and institutions nurtured within us a passion for missions and Baptist principles that are deeper and stronger than denominational labels and programs. We hope you join us in a chorus of gratitude for the past and hope for the future.

Frank Broome, coordinator, CBF of Georgia
Larry Hovis, coordinator, North Carolina CBF
Jeff Langford, associate coordinator, CBF of Missouri
Harold A. Phillips, coordinator, CBF of Missouri

Introduction

By Dr. James G. Shoopman, Editor of the Third Edition

The purpose of this book is to inform readers about the history of important changes that have occurred in the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979. The thesis of this work is that Fundamentalist leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention organized and carried out a political campaign that has changed the character of the Southern Baptist Convention, and not for the better. It is our conviction that many good and well-intentioned conservatives were misled by this political activity. The goal of this misleading campaign was to place extreme Fundamentalists in the seat of power and to drive from the Convention those who think differently from Fundamentalists. The writers and editors of this volume believe:

1. That this campaign has changed the character of our Convention, from one of openness to one of restricted thought, from one of spiritual liberty to one of fear to differ from the leadership.
2. That the political campaign has been carried out in a sinful and mean-spirited fashion, using innuendo, glittering generalities, and exaggerations (all the usual tools of worldly politics) to achieve the ends of power.
3. That resulting changes have defied the perfect will of God, while hurting fellow Christians and defaming the noble tradition of what it means to be Baptist.

The reader should know that this work has been written and edited by traditional Baptists who accept Jesus Christ as personal Lord and savior. We honor the Holy Bible as the sacred and divinely inspired word of God, and we believe in the priesthood of all believers: meaning that all Christians are free under God to interpret the scripture according to their conscience and according to the best insights of biblical scholarship.

The political campaign described in this book was launched by Fundamentalists with the charge that the seminaries and denominational agencies were dominated by liberals. Fundamentalist leaders often

implied a meaning for the term "liberal" that far exceeded the truth about seminary professors and denominational executives. For some, the term "liberal" is intended to describe an individual who:

1. Does not believe in the divine inspiration or spiritual truth value of the Bible.
2. Does not believe in the divinity of Jesus.
3. Does not believe in salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

Given such a definition of liberal, it can be firmly asserted that there were never many true liberals in the Southern Baptist Convention. To put it another way, if a liberal-eating lion were set loose in Southern Baptist institutions prior to the Fundamentalist Takeover, he would soon have starved to death.

Yes, there were serious disagreements between some seminary professors and some Fundamentalist leaders, disagreements that Fundamentalists saw as dangerous. It is, however, another thesis of this booklet that in the larger context of all Christian churches, the theological differences between Baptists were never so great that all Baptists could not have continued working together. Fundamentalist leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention forced the issue, demanding a fight, but not as a matter of theological debate. Rather, they turned their disagreements into a political conflict for power. I have said there were few real liberals in the SBC prior to the Takeover. This does not mean that there weren't some Baptists who were more liberal than others. Of course there were. However, most of those who are more liberal than the Fundamentalists would not call themselves liberals because in Baptist life the use of that word conjures up the unbelieving bogeyman described above. Rather, the persons responsible for this booklet prefer to refer to themselves as moderates. It is impossible to give the following account without using such terms, so it would be wise for the reader to know how we are using these words from the start.

First, it's important to know what we are being conservative, moderate, or liberal about. We are not talking about the politics of Republicans and Democrats. Perhaps the most useful way to define our disagreement would be to say that conservatives, moderates, and

liberals disagree on how much change there should be in traditional church teachings. The church teaches on a wide variety of subjects. Among them are the following:

- The nature of God, the person of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit;
- The nature of the Bible — its authorship, styles of study, and interpretation;
- Marriage, divorce, sexuality, abortion, prayer in public schools, and separation of church and state; and
- The place of women in the workplace and the church.

Conservatives maintain that there should be little or no change in how the church teaches on these subjects, unless it is to make that teaching even more strict.

Liberals maintain there should be a great deal of flexibility in how the church teaches on these subjects, usually in the direction of greater liberty (thus connecting with the other definition of liberality, which is generosity).

Moderates prefer a middle way, taking a more liberal approach to some things and a more conservative approach to others — that some teachings should change and some teachings should stay the same. Moderates assume that newness or oldness does not make an idea good or bad. Instead, an idea is good or bad depending on whether it is consistent with the Bible, our conscience, and sound study. If an idea is truthful and useful, it may lead to change, but not all "modern" ideas are sound, and not all "traditional" ideas are sound either.

This, of course, still leaves us with the term, "Fundamentalist." The most useful definition of a Fundamentalist is a person who is angered by any changes in the world or in church teaching. A Fundamentalist is a person of very strict belief and behavior who requires absolute certainty about his or her beliefs and is willing to fight for that certainty.

Fundamentalists cannot abide any challenge to their beliefs through either the behavior or the beliefs of others. They tend to regard any

deviation from their norm as dangerous. There are Fundamentalists in all of the major world religions that have been affected by modernity, and they are characterized by anger at modernity, strict legalism, and a desire to fight for more control of their environment.

This book tells the story of how Fundamentalists in the Southern Baptist Convention carried out a fight for control of the denomination. Although they claimed this was a fight against dangerous "liberals," it was actually a fight to disenfranchise the moderates who later formed the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. There were no unbelieving bogeymen hidden in the closet of Southern Baptist leadership. Unfortunately, however, many good and effective Christian leaders have been driven from the institutions they loved and served with distinction because of the irrational and fanatical hatred set loose in the Fundamentalist holy war. This book is the story of how that happened.

For that reason I have included in this introduction a chronology of some of the major events. To understand this chronology and the ensuing story, it is helpful to review a short glossary of names and abbreviations:

SBC: The Southern Baptist Convention. When referring to the annual meeting which determines denominational policy I will spell out the word, or refer to "the Convention." When referring to it as a denominational entity, I will usually use the abbreviation.

SBC Executive Board: Between annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention, necessary denominational business is carried on through occasional meetings of elected representatives to the Executive Board.

Alliance of Baptists: The first nationwide splinter group to organize moderates and more liberal Baptists outside the SBC. It was originally organized in 1986 as the "The Southern Baptist Alliance."

CBF: The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship: The second nationwide splinter group to organize moderate and conservative Baptists to do missions and ministry outside the SBC. It first met in 1990 and organized as the CBF in 1991.

HMB: **The Home Mission Board** of the Southern Baptist Convention, now called the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

FMB: **The Foreign Mission Board** of the Southern Baptist Convention, now called the International Mission Board (IMB).

The six Southern Baptist Seminaries owned and operated by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979 were:

- **Southern,** in Louisville, Kentucky.
- **Southeastern,** in Wake Forest, North Carolina.
- **Southwestern,** in Fort Worth, Texas.
- **Midwestern,** in Kansas City, Missouri.
- **New Orleans,** in New Orleans, Louisiana.
- **Golden Gate,** in Mill Valley, California.

Baptist Press: The Southern Baptist Convention's official news agency funded by the SBC Executive Committee.

Condensed Chronology of the Southern Baptist Convention Takeover

The following is a condensed outline of the step-by-step resurgence/ Takeover of the SBC by an element within the Convention. Dr. Leon McBeth, a noted Baptist historian, says Fundamentalism "tends to be unable to tolerate diversity and often seems determined to 'rule or ruin' its group."

1976: Paul Pressler, a Houston judge, and Paige Patterson, then president of Criswell College in Dallas, met in New Orleans and planned a political strategy to elect a president who would nominate like-minded people to the Convention's Committee on Committees. This Committee would nominate like-minded people to the Committee on Nominations. This second committee would nominate like-minded trustees and directors to Southern Baptist agencies and institutions who would hire only like-minded staff members. Pressler called this strategy "going for the jugular." Fundamentalist candidates have won the Convention presidency every year since **1979.** By early **1989** nearly every one of the SBC boards had a majority of Takeover people on it.

(In **1998:** the same Takeover strategy was used successfully to Takeover the Missouri Baptist Convention. Along the way it was also used in Georgia and Kentucky.

(In North Carolina, Fundamentalists secured control of the state convention's Board of Directors and its powerful Executive Committee, but the convention-related agencies and institutions have so far avoided a Fundamentalist Takeover of their boards of trustees.

(Other state conventions have more peacefully transitioned "from free to subjected" — Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

(The strategy failed in Virginia and Texas where Fundamentalists then set up new state conventions.)

1984: The SBC voted in Kansas City to adopt a strongly worded

resolution against women in church leadership roles "because man was first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall."

1987: The president of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, resigned after the trustees voted to hire only faculty members who follow their interpretation of the *Baptist Faith and Message.*

1987: The SBC voted in St. Louis to adopt a report from “The Peace Committee” that had been set up in 1985.

1988: The *Baptist Faith and Message* became a creed for hiring new staff members rather than a guideline — a stark deviation from historical Baptist roots.

1988: At the SBC Convention in San Antonio, a resolution was passed critical of the cardinal Baptist belief in the “priesthood of the believer” and “soul competency” and elevated the pastor to the position of authority in the church he serves. W. A. Criswell told a group of pastors that “the man of God who is the pastor of the church is the ruler."

1990: Roy Honeycutt, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was accused by a twenty-five-year-old new trustee of “not believing the Bible.” A new president, Al Mohler, was appointed in **1993** and hailed as “a hero of SBC Fundamentalism.”

1990: Al Shackleford and Dan Martin of the Baptist Press, the official news service of the SBC, were fired for "persecuting” the Fundamentalists in their news coverage. Don McGregor, editor of the *Baptist Record* of Mississippi, wrote: “Today we have seen the final destruction of freedom of the press among Southern Baptists.” Immediately the Associated Baptist Press was established to offer free-flowing, objective, and accurate news coverage.

1991: At their October meeting, the Foreign Mission Board trustees voted to defund the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, thus breaking a contract the SBC had with the seminary.

1992: After years of trying to please Fundamentalist trustees, Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board, resigned under pressure. In his thirteen years as president, missionaries entered forty new countries with a total of 3,918 missionaries.

1992: Lloyd Elder, president of the Sunday School Board, resigned under pressure and was replaced by a Fundamentalist Texas pastor, Jimmy Draper. A total of 159 employees retired (voluntarily or involuntarily) in November 1992 alone.

1994: Russell Dilday, president of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth for fifteen years, was fired abruptly and trustees changed the locks on the president's office immediately, thus denying him access. The day before, these same trustees gave Dilday a favorable job performance evaluation. These trustees sent 40,000 letters to pastors and directors of missions to explain their reason for firing Dilday. They said he failed to support the Takeover in the Convention and that he "held liberal views of the scripture." The Seminary faculty refuted all these charges against Dilday.

1997: In October a forty-year staff member was fired at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for writing a private letter to the President of the SBC disagreeing with a statement he had made while speaking in chapel. Also in October **1997,** a professor of systematic theology at Southwestern Theological Seminary was relieved of his teaching duties because he "voiced dissent about actions of the administration of the institution." Obviously there is still no room for diversity or disagreement.

1998: In June, Paige Patterson was elected president of the SBC without opposition. The man who helped plot the Takeover strategy of the Southern Baptist Convention was now its leader. Jerry Falwell, a long-time critic of Southern Baptists, attended his first SBC Convention as a messenger along with others from his church in Lynchburg, Virginia. Falwell has become the most visible SBC spokesperson. Also the SBC amended the *Baptist Faith and Message* statement by adding a wife is to "submit herself graciously" to her husband.

2000: The SBC adopted a new *Baptist Faith and Message* statement. It eliminated the preamble that had been part of the 1963 statement. This version, used as a creedal statement by SBC agencies, elevates the Bible to a position above that of Jesus himself and downplays the doctrines of priesthood of each believer and local church autonomy.

It is now used as a creedal statement by SBC agencies.

2002: Jerry Rankin and the IMB trustees undermined missionary morale by requiring them to sign the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message*.

2004: SBC withdrew as a member of the Baptist World Alliance.

2005: The SBC voted to discontinue its boycott of Disney.

2005: The Baptist World Alliance celebrated its 100th Anniversary in Birmingham, England, with 13,000 Baptists from throughout the world, and minus its former largest member group. BWA leaders prayed "that unity may one day be restored."

CHAPTER 1

Baptist Beginnings[1]

"Who was the first Baptist, and where was the first Baptist church? When did Baptists begin, and who was their founder?"

Dr. H. Leon McBeth, retired professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has attempted to face these issues.

"A lot of people ask these questions. We want to know about our denominational roots. To know our beginnings will help us understand ourselves today.

"These sound like simple questions, and one might expect brief and simple answers. The story of Baptist beginnings, however, is surprisingly complicated; and not everyone agrees on the conclusions. Perhaps this is one reason such questions have been so controversial in the past.

"Some people try to trace organized Baptist churches back to New Testament times or to John the Baptist. One writer even suggested that Adam was the first Baptist! Certainly we believe that our doctrine and faith root in the New Testament, but we first meet our organized denomination considerably this side of Adam.

"Our best historical evidence says that Baptists came into existence in England in the early seventeenth century. They apparently emerged out of the Puritan-Separatist movement in the Church of England. Some of these earnest people read the Bible in their own language, believed it, and sought to live by it. They formed separate congregations which accepted only believers into their membership, and they baptized converts upon their profession of faith. Their opponents nicknamed them 'Baptists,' and the name stuck . . . .

"The English Background. No one knows who first brought Christianity to England or when. An old tradition suggests that Paul the

apostle or one of his converts may have preached in Britain. By the seventh century most English people were at least outwardly Roman Catholics. In the following centuries some evangelical groups flourished, and some remnant of these groups may have survived in the sects which later opposed Romanism, such as the followers of John Wycliffe (sometimes called Lollards).

"By the sixteenth century, multitudes of English Christians were demanding reform in their church. They sensed that the church had become corrupt and selfish, and that it had largely left the simple message of the Bible. Several factors contributed to this clamor for reform: the teachings of such great reformers as Martin Luther in Germany and John Calvin in Geneva; the new translations of the English Bible, which allowed the common people once again to read the Word of God; and social and political changes that led people to want more participation in their church.

"Several English rulers in the sixteenth century sought to reform the Church of England to some extent. However, none of these reforms went far enough to satisfy those who wanted to return to the simple teachings and practices of the Bible.

"One militant group within the Church of England genuinely desired to recover biblical teachings and practices. Deeply influenced by the reforms of John Calvin, they became known as 'Puritans,' perhaps because they insisted upon more purity of doctrine and practice in the church.

"Another group seeking reform was called 'Separatists.' Most of the Separatists were frustrated Puritans who had given up hope of reforming the church from within. Separatists decided to separate from the Church of England and form their own independent congregations. By 1600, there were already several of these congregations in England, and they mushroomed by 1625.

"The Separatists included many groups holding a variety of views. Some of them later helped populate such diverse churches as Quakers, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and assorted independents and

nonconformists. Some of these Separatists, studying the Bible, adopted believer's baptism and became known as Baptists."

CHAPTER 2

Two Kinds of Baptists

Continuing his discussion, Dr. McBeth writes: "Baptists came into existence as two distinct groups, with somewhat different beliefs and practices, but with believer's baptism in common. The two main strands were known as General Baptists and Particular Baptists . . . .

"General Baptists: The General Baptists got their name because they believed in a general atonement. They believed Christ died for all people generally, and that whoever would believe in Christ could be saved. The first General Baptist church, led by John Smyth, was founded in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1608/09. Its members were English refugees who had fled England to escape religious persecution.

"John Smyth was a minister in the Church of England. As a student and later as a pastor and teacher, he developed Puritan and Separatist views and sought to bring biblical reform to the church. When this failed, he joined a small Separatist congregation in Gainsborough, near London. As these Separatists grew so that it became dangerous for them to meet openly, they divided into two groups for convenience. One group moved to Scrooby Manor, where they were led by John Robinson, William Brewster, and William Bradford. Later, this little band became the nucleus of the 'Pilgrim Fathers' who sailed to America on the *Mayflower*.

"The Gainsborough remnant, led by John Smyth, was in daily danger. English law prohibited such independent or dissenting churches, and King James I had vowed to deal harshly with any who refused to attend the Church of England. By 1607, the Gainsborough group had decided to migrate across the English Channel to Amsterdam, a city that provided religious liberty.

"When these English exiles, led by John Smyth and a layman named Thomas Helwys, left England, they were not yet Baptists. In Amsterdam, they came into contact with Dutch Mennonites, a branch of the Anabaptist family that taught religious liberty and baptism of believers only . . . . The Smyth-Helwys congregation continued to

study the Bible and sought to follow the way of the Lord more completely.

"By 1608/09, Smyth was convinced his Separatist church was not valid. Most of the members had only infant baptism, and the church was formed on the basis of a 'covenant,' rather than a confession of faith in Christ. Smyth therefore led the church to disband in 1608/09 and re-form on a new basis—a personal confession of faith in Christ, followed by believer's baptism. Since none of the members had been baptized as believers, Smyth had to make a new beginning. He baptized himself and then baptized the others. His baptism was by sprinkling or pouring, but it was for believers only.

"In 1611, Thomas Helwys led a portion of this church back to London, where they set up the first Baptist church on English soil. By 1650, there were at least forty-seven General Baptist churches in and around London. They believed in a general atonement, baptism of believers only, religious liberty, and other doctrines still associated with Baptists. The General Baptists also believed that it was possible for one to fall from grace or lose his salvation.

"Particular Baptists: The Particular Baptists came into existence a generation later than General Baptists. Named for their view of particular atonement, they believed that Christ died only for a particular group, the elect. They were deeply influenced by the teachings of John Calvin.

"Particular Baptists emerged out of an Independent congregation. While Separatists, as the name implies, separated totally from the Church of England, the Independents sought to maintain autonomous congregations without a radical break with the state church. most of the Independents were driven to more complete separation. Ultimately, early as 1616, Henry Jacob was leader of a small Independent congregation in London . . . .

"By 1650, there were a number of Particular Baptist churches in and around London. In 1644, seven of them had drafted a confession of faith which showed some of their distinctive views. In addition to

particular atonement, they taught believer's baptism by immersion and insisted that a person who is once saved is always saved."

CHAPTER 3

Early Baptist Practices

Dr. McBeth concludes with an extended treatment of early Baptist customs and usages.

"Believer's Baptism by Immersion. English Baptists recovered the practice of believer's baptism in two steps. By 1608/09, the General Baptists insisted that baptism was for believers only, and by 1638 the Particular Baptists reached the same conclusion. At first, English Baptists baptized by sprinkling or pouring. Immersion came a few years later. Some of the General Baptists may have immersed as early as 1614, but if so it was not yet customary . . . . By 1640, there were at least two Particular Baptist churches, and both became convinced that baptism should be by immersion . . . . Immersion was a new practice, for their old records speak of 'none having then so practiced it in England to professed Believers.' . . . The First London Confession of Particular Baptists, adopted in 1644, says of baptism, 'The way and manner of the dispensing of this Ordinance the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under the water.' The General Baptists were probably practicing immersion by 1650, but their first confession specifically calling for baptism by immersion only appeared in 1660."

"The Baptist Name. Many people assume that Baptists got their name from John the Baptist. This is not the case. Like most religious groups, Baptists were named by their opponents. The name comes from the Baptist practice of immersion [*baptizo* in Greek].

"The first known reference to these believers in England as 'Baptists' was in 1644. They did not like the name and did not use it of themselves until years later. The early Baptists preferred to be called 'Brethren' or 'Brethren of the Baptized Way.' Sometimes they called themselves the 'Baptized Churches.' Early opponents of the Baptists often called them Anabaptists [re-baptizers] or other less complimentary names . . . .

"Perhaps the most startling practice of early English Baptists was

their practice of total immersion for baptism after 1640. Crowds would often gather to witness a Baptist immersion service. Some ridiculed, as did Daniel Featley, describing the Baptists as people who 'plung'd over head and eares.' The nickname 'Baptist' was given to describe the people who practiced this strange form of baptism."

"Baptist Worship. Baptist styles of worship have changed considerably since 1609 . . . . The earliest Baptist worship was lengthy and dealt primarily with Bible exposition. There was no singing, and Baptists put great value on spontaneity and audience participation.

"By the 1670s, some Baptist churches were singing both the Psalms and 'man-made' songs. This was quite controversial, and many churches split over the 'singing controversy.' Benjamin Keach, a London pastor, led his church to sing a hymn after the Lord's Supper, and within a few years they were also singing during regular worship services. In 1691, Keach published the first Baptist hymnal, *Spiritual Melody*, a collection of over three hundred hymns."

"Baptists Organized for Witness. An observer today may find it hard to imagine Baptists before they were organized! However, the Baptist structure or denomination evolved gradually over a period of years to meet needs as they arose.

"The Association. The oldest form of organization, beyond the local church, was the association, and it remains a vital part of Baptist denominational structure today.

"From the first, Baptists entered into fellowship and common cause with other believers who shared their faith. As early as 1624 and again in 1630, several General Baptist churches in London acted together in discussing doctrine and in corresponding with other believers. Though they had no formal association, they showed a sense of cooperation and common identity.

"By 1650, the Baptist association was well established. The name and geographical concept probably were adaptations of a civil unit in England, much like a county. During the English Civil War (1642-

45), much of the country was divided into ‘associations’ for political purposes. After the war Baptists continued to use this concept and name for their regional fellowship of churches.

“The associations were extremely important to early Baptists. They provided Christian fellowship, a forum for discussion of Baptist concerns, a means to propagate Baptist teachings, and an effective way to monitor and maintain correct Baptist doctrine among the churches. Associations also participated together in common causes, such as issuing confessions of faith and working for religious liberty.

“The General Assembly. Each branch of English Baptists called its national organization the General Assembly. Composed of representatives from the various churches and associations, these General Assemblies usually met in London. General Baptists were first to develop this national organization, with evidence of such a body by 1653. This would correspond roughly to a national convention today . . . .

“Baptists New and Old. The story of Baptist beginnings forms a paradox. On one hand, Baptists are deeply convinced that theirs is a Bible faith, rooted in the message of Jesus Christ and the apostles. To that extent, Baptists can be called a New Testament church.

“On the other hand, the historical evidence clearly states that Baptists originated, as a distinct denomination, in the early seventeenth century. How does one harmonize the sense of continuity from Bible times with the factual reality of more recent beginnings?

“Some have so emphasized the sense of continuity from Bible times that they find it difficult to face up to historical facts about Baptist origins. Some have even erected elaborate schemes, or ‘Trails of Blood,’ seeking to trace Baptists through all the centuries from Christ to the present. These theories are based upon assumptions, unreliable or nonexistent historical data, or faulty interpretation of Jesus’ promise that the gates of death should never prevail against his church. A Baptist today can have a real sense of identification with the teachings of Christ without trying to prove historical succession.

“Other Baptists, however, may so emphasize the recent origin of Baptists that they lose the sense of continuity in faith and practice from Jesus himself. The earliest Baptists recovered and proclaimed anew the old faith that has come down the centuries from the Lord and his apostles. The Baptist denomination dates from the seventeenth century; the Baptist faith, we believe, dates from the first century.

“Conclusion. Baptists originated in England in a time of intense religious reform. They sought to recover and proclaim the faith of the New Testament as first given by Jesus and his apostles. Since then they have spread their teachings and churches in many lands and many cultures. They have never wavered from that original desire to hold and proclaim the simple faith of the New Testament church.”

CHAPTER 4

Baptists in America

Dr. Robert A. Baker, longtime professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and now deceased, took delight in recounting the story of Southern Baptists. He wrote: "Southern Baptist beginnings were filled with exciting events. To capture this excitement requires describing Baptist beginnings in America, why the Southern Baptist Convention was organized, why some call it a different kind of Baptist body, and how it got so large. The story will go as far as the founding of the Sunday School Board in 1891, which was a very important event in Southern Baptist life.

"The First Baptists in America. Most early Baptists in America originally came from England in the seventeenth century when the king and the state church persecuted them for holding their distinctive religious views. Baptists like Roger Williams and John Clarke migrated to New England in the 1630s; Elias Keach and others entered the Middle Colonies in the 1680s; and still others purchased land in the Southern Colonies in the 1680s and 1690s.

"The oldest Baptist church in the South, First Baptist Church, Charleston, South Carolina, was organized in Kittery, Maine, in 1682, under the leadership of William Screven. The church moved to South Carolina a few years later. A Baptist church was formed in the Virginia colony in 1715 through the preaching of Robert Norden, and one in North Carolina in 1727 through the ministry of Paul Palmer. By 1740, there were probably only eight Baptist churches in these three colonies with a total of no more than 300 or 400 members.

"A great revival affecting all denominations swept through the American colonies about 1740. Shortly thereafter, Baptists in the South began a period of rapid growth. The principal Baptist leaders in this revival were Shubal Steams and Daniel Marshall, who were called Separate Baptists. In 1755, these two Baptist preachers from Connecticut and a few of their followers organized a church at Sandy Creek, North Carolina. During the next few years they preached

zealously in all the southern colonies, stormed the new western frontier, and provided patterns of church life that Southern Baptists still follow.

"This rapid spread of Baptists in the South was strongly opposed by the churches supported by public taxes. In Virginia, especially, many Baptist preachers were whipped and imprisoned in the decade before the American Revolution. [In spite of such treatment,] Baptists soon became active patriots in the Revolutionary War. With their demands for religious liberty, they included a cry for political liberty. They loyally supported patriots like Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Washington, and received their praise. Baptists in the South played an important role in securing the adoption of religious liberty in Virginia. Like their fellow Baptists in the North, they helped lay foundations for the national Bill of Rights, which guaranteed religious liberty for all in the new Constitution of the United States.

"After the close of the Revolutionary War, Baptists in the southern states grew steadily during the remainder of the 1700s. A second great revival broke out among several denominations west of the Allegheny Mountains just at the turn of the century. Baptist churches in the South gained many new members as a result of this revival."

Baptist Associations. "Baptists in America, like their English Baptist forefathers, desired the larger fellowship and united strength for Christian tasks that could come only through joining hands. In 1707, Baptists around Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, organized the first [continuing] Baptist association in America by sending messengers from nearby churches. The second [continuing] association, a daughter of the first, was formed in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1751. After this, the number of associations began to increase rapidly.

"At first the principal functions of the associations were to provide a larger fellowship and to allow counsel concerning common problems facing the churches. By common understanding, associations had no authority over the churches which affiliated with them. Some Baptists, however, were not willing to relate to an association for fear that their churches might lose some of their freedom and authority.

When the Philadelphia Association began a home missions program in 1755, many churches viewed this as another way in which the associations might rob them of their freedom. They began to consider other ways to do mission work which would safeguard the authority of the churches.

"One of these new methods came into being in 1792 when William Carey led in the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in England. This kind of missionary body would make it possible for individuals to work together in missions or any other Christian task without surrendering any church authority. Called the society method, it differed from the older associational method by removing the churches from the supervision of the associations in missionary activity. Under this new plan, any Baptists interested in foreign missions could organize an independent society for foreign missions whose membership would consist of those who would make a financial gift for foreign missions. Similarly, those Baptists interested in home missions could organize another independent society for that purpose, or another society could be organized in this way for any kind of Christian work. Massachusetts Baptists adopted such a plan in 1802. Within a decade, most of the associations had turned their missionary programs over to independent missionary societies."

Baptist Missionaries. "A larger challenge soon faced Baptists in America. In 1812, Adoniram and Ann Judson and Luther Rice sailed to India as missionaries for another denomination. En route, they studied the Bible and other books carefully, concluding that Baptist beliefs were closer to the New Testament teachings than their former views. All three were baptized in India. They desired to become missionaries for Baptists of the United States, but at this time there was no Baptist foreign mission society in the nation. Local societies were formed in the North and the South to meet the immediate needs of these new Baptist foreign missionaries.

"Then, on May 18, 1814, thirty-three messengers representing Baptists in America met at Philadelphia and formed a national foreign mission society called the General Missionary Convention. Meeting only once every three years, this body was sometimes called the Triennial Convention. The Convention was organized on the society

pattern (that is, organizing a separate society for each Christian ministry), although southern leaders sought for several years to change it into the associational type (that is, one denominational body fostering several different Christian ministries). Baptists in America formed a second society in 1824 for tract publication and distribution. In 1832, they organized a home mission society. Seemingly, these Baptists had permanently united on the society model for Christian work."

CHAPTER 5

Southern Baptist Beginnings

Dr. Baker continued his narration: "When Baptists in this country formed the first of their three national societies in 1814, many of their leaders recognized that there were numerous social, cultural, economic, and political differences between the businessmen of the North, the farmers of the West, and the planters of the South. These differences had already created much rivalry between the several sections of the new nation. Each section continued to revive old colonial disagreements and wrestled with questions about how the new constitution should be interpreted, what constituted the final legal power, and similar problems.

"Perhaps most critical of all was the slavery issue. This practice had been forced upon the colonies by England early in the seventeenth century against the protests of Northerners and Southerners. Northern merchants, however, soon sought the profit involved in importing slaves from Africa. Southern planters, the only ones able to use large numbers of unskilled laborers on large plantations in a relatively warm climate, helped to prolong this evil. At the height of this system, however, two-thirds of the white families of the South owned no slaves at all, and Baptists (who were generally of the lower economic status) were probably less involved than this.

"The same moral blindness that caused a minority of northern businessmen to purchase and import slaves from Africa and finance their sale to southern planters was displayed in the South in continuing this evil institution. The same arguments concerning the right of secession from the federal union that were debated by the South in 1860 had been vigorously used by the northeastern states a generation earlier in the Hartford Convention. The same political frenzy that finally brought all of these issues into civil conflict in 1861 dominated equally the New England merchant, the western farmer, and the southern planter.

"These tensions were already building at the very time when Baptists united in the three national societies for Christian work. Naturally,

Baptist unity was affected by such tensions. Furthermore, the meetings of these societies between 1814 and 1845 revealed some basic differences in the thinking of northern and southern Baptists.

"Southern leaders, for one thing, desired a stronger denominational unity than the society plan afforded, but were unable to achieve it. In addition, just three years after the organization of the national home mission body in 1832, many Baptist leaders of the South openly urged the formation of a separate southern body for home missions. They believed that southern mission needs were not being met by the northern-based society.

"A separate southern home mission body was actually organized in 1839, but it died after three years. In his history of the Southern Baptist Convention, W. W. Barnes expressed the view that these differences between northern and southern Baptists would have brought separation eventually, even if there had been no slavery-abolition issue. However, when the 'slave states' voted as a bloc in Congress (and particularly in the Senate), threatening to upset the political balance, the slavery issue became a political football as well as a moral issue.

"The meetings of the three Baptist national societies in the 1840s brought angry debates between Northerners and Southerners. These debates concerned the interpretation of the constitutions of the societies on slavery, the right of Southerners to receive missionary appointments, the authority of a denominational society to discipline church members, and the neglect of the South in the appointment of missionaries. The stage was set for separation.

"In 1844, Georgia Baptists asked the Home Mission Society to appoint a slaveholder to be a missionary in Georgia. After much discussion, the appointment was declined. A few months later, the Alabama Baptist Convention asked the Foreign Mission Society if they would appoint a slaveholder as a missionary. When the society said no, Virginia Baptists called for Baptists of the South to meet at Augusta, Georgia, in early May, 1845, for the purpose of consulting 'on the best means of promoting the Foreign Mission cause, and other interests of the Baptist denomination in the South.'"

Separation of North and South. "On May 8, 1845, about 293 Baptist leaders of the South gathered at the First Baptist Church, Augusta, Georgia, representing over 365,000 Baptists. They concluded, with expressions of regret from their own leaders and from distinguished northern Baptist leaders, that more could be accomplished in Christian work by the organization in the South of a separate Baptist body for missionary work. The Methodists in the South had already separated over the issue of slavery, and southern Presbyterians would do so later.

"Southern Baptist leaders noted that Paul and Barnabas had disagreed over the use of John Mark in mission service, and 'two lines of service were opened for the benefit of the churches.' These leaders hoped that 'with no sharpness of contention, with no bitterness of spirit . . . we may part asunder and open two lines of service to the heathen and the destitute.'

"On May 10, 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention was provisionally organized under a new constitution, which was ratified the following year in Richmond, Virginia. In their address to the public, Convention president William B. Johnson and other Southern Baptist leaders pointed out that Baptists North and South were still brethren; that separation involved only the home and foreign mission societies and did not include the third national society for tract publication; and that this new organization would permit them to have a body that would be willing to appoint Southerners to home and foreign mission fields.

"At the 1845 meeting, Southern Baptists were faced not only with the question of whether to organize a separate body but also with the problem of what kind. Baptists, like other denominations which give final authority to the local churches, have had difficulty in trying to form an effective general body without threatening the local authority. This was the reason that the association-type plan had been viewed with suspicion by some churches, resulting in the adoption of the society plan for missionary and other Christian work.

"In safeguarding the authority of the churches, however, the society plan made it difficult to secure unity and effectiveness in denomina-

tional work. Southern Baptists, at their meeting in 1845, deliberately rejected the method of having a separate society for each kind of Christian service. They chose instead to follow the more centralized pattern of the older associational plan to form only one general convention closely related to the churches for all Christian ministries. They felt that they could provide safeguards in Convention operation that would protect the authority of the local churches. Rather than form independent societies for Christian ministries, Southern Baptists elected a board of managers to supervise foreign missions and another to supervise home missions, both under the authority of the Convention. Other boards for additional Christian ministries would be formed later by the Convention."

CHAPTER 6

The Southern Baptist Convention Grows

Describing the emergence of a viable denomination, Dr. Baker observed: "The Civil War, Reconstruction, continued sectional rivalry, depressions and inflation, the withdrawal of blacks from the white churches, internal doctrinal conflicts, perplexing organizational questions, and — despite these things — remarkable growth and expansion in Christian ministries made up the story of Southern Baptists until 1891."

The Home Mission Board. "Civil war totally disrupted all of the programs of the Convention, while Reconstruction (until 1877) delayed the return to normalcy. Although the slavery-abolition issue had disappeared, sharp sectional differences . . . continued to mar the fellowship and cooperation of all Baptists in America. The question of reunion was raised by Northern Baptists after the civil conflict had ended, but Southern Baptists declined to return to the society-type denominational bodies they had left in 1845. Despite this, the Home Mission Society of the North carried on a fruitful program of missions, education, and church assistance among both blacks and whites in the South during this period. This active work in the South by the northern society provided a formidable rival for the Southern Baptist Convention. Not until the 1880s was the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board able to claim the southern field as its base. In its first year, it reported seven missionaries and receipts of $1,824, but by 1891 the number of missionaries had increased to 407 and the receipts for that year to $199,251."

The Foreign Mission Board. "Meanwhile, the work of the two original boards of the Convention showed good progress. In 1846, after the first year of operation, the Foreign Mission Board reported that only two missionaries had been appointed to one field (China) and that receipts had totaled only $11,735. By 1891, however, the board had raised a total of almost $2,000,000 and had increased the number of missionaries to ninety-one serving in six fields: China, Africa, Italy, Mexico, Brazil, and Japan.

“One of these missionaries in China was Lottie Moon. In 1887, she appealed to Southern Baptist women to make a special Christmas offering for foreign missions. In the following year, the newly-organized Woman's Missionary Union set a goal of $2,000 for this cause and raised $3,315. This was the small beginning of an annual Christmas offering that has raised over one billion dollars for foreign missions.”

Baptist Seminary. “In 1859, an Education Convention opened the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Greenville, South Carolina. Forced to close during the Civil War, the seminary resumed classes at the close of hostilities, moving to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1877.”

Women’s Missionary Union. “The fourth organization . . . was Woman's Missionary Union, Auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention. After many years of activity on the local and state levels, in 1888 Southern Baptist women formed a southwide organization, with Annie W. Armstrong as the first executive secretary. In the following three years, this organization demonstrated its deep commitment to missions, a harbinger of great things to come in the next period.”

Sunday School Board. The close of this period of Southern Baptist beginnings occurred in 1891. After many debates and some sensitive confrontations, Southern Baptists formed their present Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) with headquarters at Nashville, Tennessee.

“The formation of this board marked a new era for Southern Baptists. It signaled the move of the Convention toward becoming a truly denominational body. Through its promotion and financing of many ministries, its development of effective methods for church growth and training, and its unifying effect by providing a common literature for all Southern Baptists, the Sunday School Board rapidly fostered a strong denominational unity that became an important factor in the geographical expansion of Southern Baptists in the twentieth century.

“Meanwhile, the growth of the constituency of the Convention between 1845 and 1891 was substantial. From 365,346 members in 4,395 churches in 1845, Convention affiliation increased to 1,282,220 members in 16,654 churches by 1891. Scores of new ministries had been undertaken by the Convention, and a developing denominational unity gave the promise of effective cooperation through the years ahead.”

CHAPTER 7

Two Visions in Conflict

> *The famed Southern Baptist unity in the past has been more functional than theological. Southern Baptists have banded together to minister in missions, evangelism, and Christian education. So long as they emphasize functional ministry, the "rope of sand," as one called it, holds; when they switch from function to doctrine, unity is threatened*—Baptist historian, H. Leon McBeth.

The Southern Baptist Convention began by building on the foundation laid by earlier, freedom-loving Baptists. When the SBC was formed in 1845, the founders issued the following statement: "We have constructed for our basis no new creed; acting in this matter upon a Baptist aversion for all creeds but the Bible." A creed is an authoritative statement of doctrinal belief. Baptists have generally avoided creeds in the past because "authoritative" statements always invest "authority" in someone other than the believer — usually a denominational or governmental authority. The creed becomes a list of beliefs one must subscribe to in order to belong, and can be used against a believer who does not conform to the demands of the authorities. Instead of creeds, Baptists have historically used "confessions of faith." Confessions are usually arrived at by group consensus, rather than handed down by higher authorities, and are not used to enforce conformity. They simply describe what the confessors already agree upon. Confessions of faith were preferred because "creeds" had been used against Baptists all too often in Europe and in the days of the colonies.

If not a creed, then what would be the basis for unity in the new denomination? In words that are still found in the preamble to the SBC constitution, the 1845 founders said the Convention they were creating was "a plan for eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the denomination in one sacred effort, for the propagation of the Gospel."[2]

Those words identified the unifying principle of the SBC as a coop-

erative effort toward evangelism and missions. Sharing the gospel remained the unifying drive of the Convention for the first 153 years of its life. It has hardly been better explained than in two lectures delivered by the Baptist historian Walter B. Shurden, then dean and professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and now Callaway professor of Christianity and executive director of The Center for Baptist Studies at Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.[3]

As Shurden put it, "The new denomination was not to be united by theological uniformity." The unifying reality, he explained, "was missionary, not doctrinal, in nature."[4]

H. Leon McBeth's statement which serves as the epigraph to this chapter illustrates his agreement with Shurden's analysis.

In other words, the unity of the SBC is basically functional rather than doctrinal.

Almost the opposite view was asserted in February 1988 by four SBC presidents who had been elected by the Takeover movement from 1979 to 1987. In a formal statement, they declared their commitment to "doctrinal unity in functional diversity."[5] In a strong break from the past, they placed strict doctrinal uniformity ahead of cooperation in the mission.

These are the two conflicting visions about what unifies Southern Baptists. The collision between these two visions has been the essence of the struggle among Southern Baptists since 1979.

On one side of the conflict, Southern Baptist traditionalists were struggling to ensure that those within the SBC can continue to work together to carry the saving gospel to the homeland and to the world, to educate, and to do benevolent work — and to do all this in a way that respects the freedom of their brothers and sisters in Christ, cherishes considerable diversity, and refrains from imposing narrow doctrinal tests.

On the other side of the struggle is the tendency to use narrow tests of orthodoxy in a militant fashion. The Takeover leadership make

one human view of the Bible a prerequisite for anyone who would assume a leadership role within the SBC.

CHAPTER 8

The Takeover Breaks Ground

In June 1979, the annual meeting of the SBC was held in Houston, Texas. A few months earlier, Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson had announced that they and their colleagues were going to elect a "conservative" SBC president and restore the SBC to its "historical roots."

Pressler, a state appeals court judge in Houston (now retired), and Patterson, then president of Criswell College in Dallas, had adopted an overall strategy for controlling the Convention. These two men had met years earlier while Patterson was a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Pressler had proposed a political strategy to Patterson to elect a president in sympathy with their objectives. The president would, in turn, nominate like-minded people to the Convention's committee on committees. This committee would nominate like-minded people to the committee on nominations. This second committee would nominate like-minded trustees and directors to Southern Baptist agencies and institutions who would hire only like-minded staff members.

Adrian Rogers, pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, was selected by the Pressler-Patterson coalition as their candidate for president of the SBC in 1979.

Largely due to a large get-out-the-vote campaign Pressler and Patterson conducted in fifteen states prior to the Convention, Rogers was elected on the first ballot, even though there were six candidates, several of them very conservative.[6] Fundamentalist candidates have won the Convention presidency every year since 1979, although Jim Henry was not the hand-picked candidate in 1994-1995.

Going for the Jugular. In the strictest sense, the Southern Baptist Convention exists for only a few days each year — while the annual meeting is in session. The work of the Convention is carried out by

staff members who are employed by the approximately twenty agencies of the Convention.

The best known of these SBC agencies are the Foreign Mission Board/ International Mission Board, the Home Mission Board/ North American Mission Board, the six seminaries, and the Sunday School Board/ LifeWay Christian Resources, an immensely profitable self-supporting enterprise that publishes and markets literature mainly for Southern Baptists. Most powerful, but probably less well known, is the SBC Executive Committee.

Each of these agencies and institutions is governed by trustees or directors nominated and elected by messengers to the annual meeting of SBC. These trustees set policy, adopt budgets, and employ or fire at least the top level of staff in their respective agencies or institutions. Pressler referred to these individuals in his often-quoted statement in 1980: “We are going for the jugular. We are going for . . . trustees of all our institutions, who are not going to sit there like a bunch of dummies and rubber stamp everything that's presented to them.”

By early 1989, nearly every one of the SBC boards had a majority of Takeover people on it. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, would not “tip over” until 1990. The Home Mission Board, the first agency to be taken over, had a majority of Takeover directors by 1984.

CHAPTER 9

Blueprint of a Takeover

How was it possible for the Pressler-Patterson group to accomplish their goal? The key was the immense appointive powers concentrated in the office of the SBC president.

The SBC president is elected in June for a one-year term and a can be re-elected for a second term. In the spring of the each year, about nine months after he is elected, the president appoints a committee on committees.

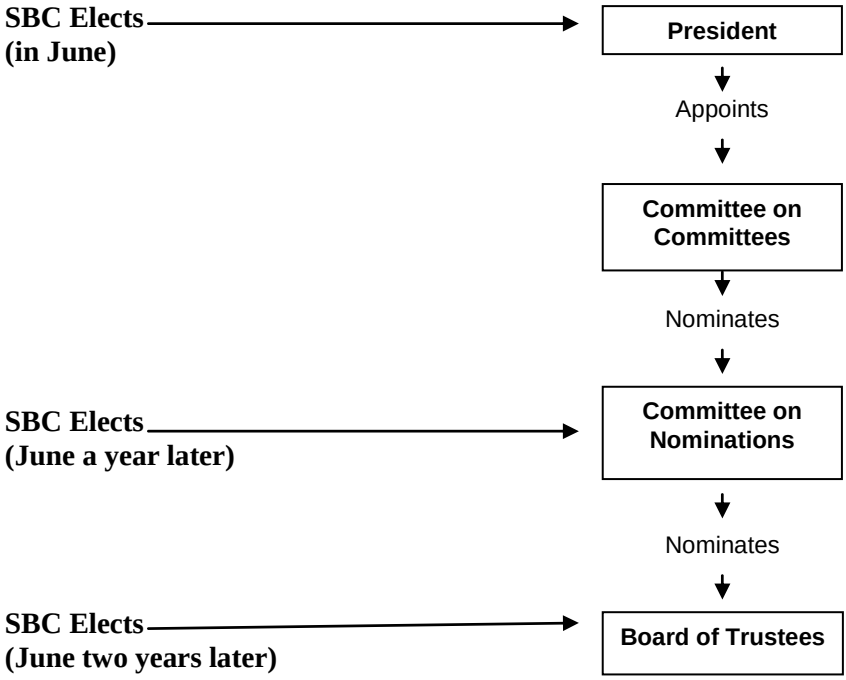
This seventy-member committee on committees fulfills its responsibility several weeks later at the annual SBC meeting in June. At that time, it nominates (and the messengers elect) a second large committee, the all-important committee on nominations. (Until 1987, this committee was named "the committee on boards.")

This powerful committee shows its importance a year later at the next annual meeting of the SBC. At that time (two years after the election of the president who "stands behind it"), this committee nominates a person for every vacancy on every one of the twenty boards of trustees/directors that govern the Convention's agencies and institutions. (See diagram on page 43.)

Not all trustees/directors are replaced in a single year. They serve staggered terms. Some terms are four years, while some are five years, depending upon the agency or institution. Trustees/directors may succeed themselves for a second term at the will of the committee on nominations. Normally they do. It could take ten years to completely recycle a board of trustees/directors. It requires several years to shift the majority on any given board, but a series of presidents can bring that change about if each follows a single plan. That is precisely what happened.

While messengers at the annual meeting of the SBC elect the trustees/directors, the committee on nominations, almost without exception, dictates who will be elected. It's easy to understand why this

would be so. The thousands of messengers at an annual meeting would be hard pressed to change more than a handful of the nearly 250 nominations made by this committee, even if a majority of the messengers wanted to do so. Sufficient time is not allowed.



CHAPTER 10

A Peace Committee, But No Peace

We looked for peace, but no good came—Jeremiah 9:15a.

The 1985 Southern Baptist Convention at Dallas elected a "Peace Committee" of twenty-two persons. That committee's task was "to determine the sources of the controversy in the denomination, and make findings and recommendations regarding these controversies so that Southern Baptists might effect reconciliation" and continue cooperating.[7]

Moderates and Fundamentalists were elected to the committee, as well as persons publicly unaligned. The committee's balance of power, however, was unmistakable. Judging from the results, moderates consistently lost the key votes, though they were usually able to somewhat moderate the results.

The Peace Committee recognized that the controversy in the Convention was rooted in both theological and political concerns. The committee recognized the great diversity within Southern Baptist life, but said that "this diversity should not create hostility towards each other, stand in the way of genuine cooperation, or interfere with the rights and privileges of all Southern Baptists within the denomination to participate in its affairs."[8]

While diversity is acknowledged in the report's "recommendations," the "findings" of the report are presented in a manner suggesting support for a Fundamentalist creed rather than an inclusive Baptist confession of faith. In the "findings," the report gives examples of what "most" Southern Baptists think the *Baptist Faith and Message* means when it says the Bible has "truth without mixture of error for its matter":

1. They believe in direct creation and therefore they believe Adam and Eve were real persons.
2. They believe the named authors did indeed write the biblical books attributed to them by those books.

3. They believe the miracles described in Scripture did indeed occur as supernatural events in history.
4. They believe that the historical narratives are indeed accurate and reliable as given by those authors.

> We call upon Southern Baptist institutions to recognize the great number of Southern Baptists who believe in this interpretation of our confessional statement and, in the future, to build their professional staffs and faculties from those who clearly reflect such dominant convictions and beliefs held by Southern Baptists at large.[9]

These beliefs may or may not represent what "most" Southern Baptists believe. Certainly many moderate Baptists were and still are comfortable with the above listed beliefs. What really separates confessional moderates from creedal Fundamentalists is the moderate's tendency to allow fellow Christians greater freedom to differ.

Fundamentalists insist that they cannot support nor have fellowship with any Christian who disagrees at any point with their list of "commonly held beliefs." In such an atmosphere, "commonly held beliefs" become a creed that members must affirm or else they will not be given a place in the denomination's leadership.

To illustrate, at the North American Mission Board (formerly the Home Mission Board), these "findings" are used as guidelines for hiring new staff members.[10] In June 1988 and October 1990, Home Mission Board president Larry Lewis sent HMB staff copies of the Peace Committee report at the request of the SBC Executive Committee.[11]

CHAPTER 11

Building a Takeover: Southwestern Seminary
(one example)

> *We don't need a reason. We can do it. We have the votes, and we will [fire Dilday]* — Trustee chair Ralph Pulley to Russell Dilday before the trustees voted to fire him.

Dilday Dismissed. The premier achievement of the Takeover faction at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was the dismissal of seminary president Russell H. Dilday. Named president at Southwestern (SWBTS) in 1977, Dilday considered himself a thoroughgoing theological conservative, but he objected to the harsh spirit and the assault on Baptist freedoms associated with the Takeover faction. As a result, he became a target as the Fundamentalist uprising gained speed in the mid-1980s.

Dilday and SWBTS trustees reached a compromise over his role in the denominational controversy during a six-hour closed-door session in October 1989. Ken Lilly, a trustee from Arkansas who had mailed eighty-six pages of press clippings which he claimed were "political" statements by Dilday, said after the meeting, that Dilday was "one of the premier leaders in the SBC," and that "Dilday is free to speak his conscience."[12] A few months later, in early 1990, *Christianity Today*, named Southwestern Seminary the top theological seminary in the United States.[13]

While at the 1990 SBC in New Orleans, Dilday was quoted as saying the "crass, secular political methodology used in the Takeover of the Convention these past twelve years has satanic and evil qualities to which I am desperately opposed." Seminary trustee chair Jimmy Draper was reported to have called other trustees about a possible meeting to "deal with Dilday." Dilday explained he was not implying that fellow believers were satanic.[14]

Trustees lauded Dilday for fifteen years of "able leadership and administration" at the seminary during his March 1993 evaluation.[15] He was then abruptly fired March 9, 1994, only one day after he had

received the favorable job-performance evaluation and trustees said no action was planned against the embattled president. Trustees gave no official reasons for the firing. Trustee chair Ralph Pulley, a member of First Baptist Church in Dallas, told Dilday: "We don't need a reason. We can do it. We have the votes, and we will."[16]

Trustees voted on preprinted ballots. Two letters were also pre-prepared, one if Dilday retired and the other if he were fired. Some faculty members received the wrong letter. Within minutes of the firing, trustees changed locks of the president's office and denied him access. John Earl Seelig, a former seminary vice president, was placed in charge of the seminary's public relations. Seelig said he had been asked to take the position prior to the firing.[17]

During the same meeting, trustees withdrew a three-year-old invitation to Keith Parks, extended while he was still president of the Foreign Mission Board, to speak at the seminary's upcoming spring commencement. William B. Tolar, vice president for academic affairs and provost of the seminary since 1990 and a faculty member since 1965, was later named acting president of the seminary.

In response to widespread anger across the SBC, seminary trustees mailed 40,000 letters to pastors and directors of missions at a cost of $11,000 to explain their reasons for firing Dilday.[18] In addition to failing to support the Takeover, the letter accused Dilday of holding "liberal views of scripture."[19] The letter specifically accused Dilday of demonstrating "a commitment to the principles of higher criticism, which spawned theological liberalism (modernism), neo-orthodoxy, the death of God, situational ethics, etc." Dilday said he was "appalled by the "inaccuracies and distortions of truth" in the trustees' letter.[20] Seminary faculty, in an open letter to Southern Baptists, rejected the charges in the trustees' letter and affirmed Dilday for his conservative theology and "traditional, conservative Southern Baptist views of the Scriptures."[21]

In 1994, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), one of SWBTS's accrediting agencies, cited six concerns regarding Dilday's firing and called for the seminary to show cause why it should not be placed on probation. ATS executive director James Waits said

the firing was "a clear violation of acceptable governance practices"[22] and issued a written rebuke to the trustees.[23] In early 1995, ATS placed Southwestern Seminary on probation for two years.

Among its findings, ATS said a survey of the faculty found 67.2 percent of the faculty said academic freedom of some professors had been violated, and 88.1 percent said trustees were not acting responsibly in guiding the seminary.[24] The probation was lifted early in June of 1996.

In July 1994, seminary trustees unanimously elected church growth strategist and former pastor, Kenneth S. Hemphill, forty-six, as the seventh president of the seminary. Hemphill said he was dedicated to hiring faculty members who were committed to biblical inerrancy.[25] At about the same time, Dilday announced he would join Baylor University's new George W. Truett Theological Seminary as distinguished professor of homiletics and special assistant to the university's president, effective August 1, 1994.[26]

In 2003, Paige Patterson, one of the two architects of the SBC Takeover, returned to his home state to assume the presidency of Southwestern Seminary, the SBC's largest.

CHAPTER 12

Building a Takeover: Foreign Mission Board
(another example)

Career missionary R. Keith Parks was elected Foreign Mission Board president in 1980. He would serve the FMB a total of thirty-eight years. During his thirteen years as FMB president, the Board entered forty new countries to give the FMB 3,918 missionaries in 126 countries.[27]

As early as 1985, Parks spoke out courageously to contend that the controversy in the denomination was damaging Southern Baptist mission efforts. He described SBC missionaries as hostages to the conflict. He urged that nothing be allowed to weaken or interfere with Baptist mission work. He reiterated that the missionaries were fully committed, and that they believed the Bible, holding it to be the sufficient, certain, and authoritative Word of God.

Despite these assurances, the Takeover group continued to question the Biblical orthodoxy of some missionaries. Fundamentalists were also at a loss over what to do about Keith Parks. He was known as an outstanding preacher of unquestioned missionary zeal and yet he did not support their cause. Both Parks and his missionaries became the targets of Fundamentalist concern.

Problems began to develop after trustees dropped a requirement that all missionaries have at least one year of study in a Southern Baptist seminary. The change opened the door for missionary candidates from independent Fundamentalist institutions to be appointed. Some Fundamentalist missionaries challenged the orthodoxy of their colleagues on the field. In the summer of 1988, Michael Willett, a missionary ending his language training for service in South America, was fired over what was described as a "doctrinal" issue.[28] Reports indicate that another missionary, a graduate of a non-SBC seminary, kept extensive notes on Willett's views and informed on him.[29]

In 1990, new FMB trustee chair Bill Hancock affirmed Parks, saying, Parks is "God's man for this hour," and "we as trustees unani-

mously and uncompromisingly affirm Keith Parks as our leader of the FMB."[30] In 1991, Parks stated his wish to continue serving as FMB president until 1995 to maintain momentum and lead preparations up to the launch date of his "Mission 21" vision, which would take the FMB into the 21st century, but the drive to fulfill a Fundamentalist agenda forged onward.

Ruschlikon Seminary Defunded. At their October 1991 meeting, FMB trustees voted to defund the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland. Founded by Southern Baptists in 1949, it had come under increasing criticism from Fundamentalists for its alleged liberal faculty. European, as well as many SBC, Baptist leaders expressed shock at the unexpected loss of $365,000, 40 percent of the seminary's budget. Two professors at the Spanish Baptist Seminary in Madrid, Spain, called the cutoff "a radical measure that has negative influence on cooperative ministries with Baptists in Europe." FMB trustee Paige Patterson said: "This board is not going to be impacted by the protests of a few Europeans."[31] The trustees refused to restore the deleted funds in a December 1991 meeting.

The Baptist Theological Seminary, now supported by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, several state conventions, and numerous individuals, announced in 1993 a name-change to the International Baptist Theological Seminary and its move to Prague, the Czech Republic.[32]

In reaction to Keith Parks' expressed desire to remain at the FMB helm until 1995, a motion to form a search committee to seek Parks' successor was made and withdrawn at the October 1991 FMB trustee meeting. A reported motion to name a co-president with equal authority to Parks was defeated. Parks and FMB trustee chair Bill Hancock praised each other's leadership in a later press conference.[33]

But, after years of trying to please Fundamentalist trustees, Parks announced in March 1992 his retirement effective in October 1992. The announcement came after thirteen hours of intense, closed-door dialogue with FMB trustees.[34] Parks said he was not convinced trustees would give him the freedom to do his job. Some SBC Fundamentalists had opposed Parks since he had publicly opposed Charles

Stanley's candidacy for SBC president in 1985. Parks had cited the minuscule giving to the SBC Cooperative Program by Stanley's First Baptist Church of Atlanta, as a sign that Stanley and his church did not wish to serve the Southern Baptist mission effort unless they could control it.[35]

Keith Parks to CBF. A month after his resignation from the FMB, Parks joined the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as missions coordinator. Bill Pinson, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said of Parks: "At a time when numerous denominations were pulling back from foreign-missions efforts, Keith Parks was urging Southern Baptists to move forward. He helped Southern Baptists realize the extent of the world's lostness."[36] That worldwide vision was now being put to work on behalf of a more moderate community of Southern Baptists who were seeking a missions program they could support in good conscience.

FMB trustees elected career missionary Jerry Rankin, forty-one, as president in May 1993. Rankin was described as "sympathetic to the cause of SBC Fundamentalists and committed to biblical inerrancy." FMB trustee Paul Pressler led an effort to derail Rankin's election, but Rankin was elected by a vote of 59-14 just four votes more than the required margin.[37]

Rankin's tenure has been rocky at the FMB (now IMB). He assured missionaries that the imposition of the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* would apply only to new missionaries.[38] Later he was pressured by the IMB trustees to require all existing missionaries to sign the new document. Stories circulate that hundreds of missionaries resigned or retired early because of Baptist principles rather than support a creedal statement.[39]

CHAPTER 13

Tools of a Takeover: Biblical Inerrancy

The Takeover movement, as is well known, has gained most of its credibility by marching under the banner of "biblical inerrancy." Inerrancy is the affirmation that the Bible, in each and every part, is free of any error of any kind on any subject, geography, science, and history, as well as in its message of salvation and instruction for life. The Fundamentalist community conceives of the Bible as dictated word-for-word by God. Since God cannot make mistakes, the Bible must therefore be inerrant.

A Moderate Perspective on Inerrancy. Most in the moderate faction conceive the Bible as being composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, with the human writers as active participants with God in the work. Thus the Bible has a human face, but a divinely given heart. God has been at work all throughout the process of both writing and transmitting the Bible through the years, seeing to it that we have everything we need in scripture to hear his message of salvation and Christian life. With that view in mind, most moderates prefer the ancient affirmation that the Bible is "the infallible rule of faith and practice."

Moderates prefer not to use the term "inerrant" because serious Biblical scholarship clearly proves that the "human face" of scripture contains many a human flaw. Most moderates would agree that none of these flaws affects any Christian doctrine or historical affirmation. Nevertheless, moderates do not consider it wise to claim things for scripture that scripture does not claim for itself, and the Bible does not claim to be *humanly* inerrant. It claims to be divinely inspired, which should be quite enough. Moreover, moderates do not consider it honest to claim things for scripture that are simply not true. Moderates believe that the "divine heart" of scripture has ample power to demonstrate the Bible's inspiration and authority.

Fundamentalist "Unresolved Difficulties." Fundamentalist scholars confess the existence of human flaws in scripture, but prefer to refer to these as "unresolved difficulties." They insist that the

scholar's approach to scripture weakens the Bible's authority and thus weakens the power of Christian preaching. Therefore they have been quick to declare that anyone who will not describe the Bible as "inerrant" is a dangerous liberal who "does not believe the Bible." Using this rhetoric, Fundamentalist leaders convinced the rank and file Baptists that the seminaries were filled with dangerous liberals who would corrupt the believing heart of the SBC from within. Thousands of frightened believers came to the Conventions from 1979 to 1990 to save the Convention from these evil scholars, when in fact our seminaries were filled with decent, believing professors who refused to lie about the Bible, even when their jobs were threatened by the Fundamentalist movement.

Is Inerrancy the Real Issue? The inerrancy issue has worked as a yes/no question like "Have you stopped beating your wife?" A moderate with any honesty cannot answer that question without *appearing* to lack faith in scripture's spiritual perfection, even though he or she believes in the Bible just as much as the Fundamentalist questioner. The battle over inerrancy has also worked to distract people from hidden agendas, mostly regarding national and internal Baptist politics.

What about the inerrancy issue itself? Is it really the core issue that divides the people of the Southern Baptist Convention? Three reasons can be cited to demonstrate that beliefs about "inerrancy" did not divide Southern Baptists until the Fundamentalist movement exaggerated the importance of the issue. These reasons are spelled out by a team of scholars in *The Unfettered Word*, which was first published in 1987.[40] These three reasons were also set forward during a "Conference on Biblical Inerrancy" sponsored by the six SBC seminary presidents in 1987.[41] These three reasons have been set forth with the following arguments:

Inerrancy and Southern Baptists: **Three Key Issues.** Since the time of Harold Lindsell's 1976 book *The Battle For the Bible*, Fundamentalists have wrongly insisted that inerrancy is the definitive view of Southern Baptists.[42] The sources upon which Takeover people have based this unsound view of "our historic tradition" cannot be trusted at several key points.[43]

Leaders Have Been Misinterpreted. Three respected shapers of Southern Baptist theology, E. Y. Mullins, A. T. Robertson, and W. T. Conner, have been misinterpreted by Takeover leaders. These three theologians rejected the kind of inerrancy position advocated by the leaders of the Takeover movement,[44] and Mullins and Conner actively sought to counter such arguments. The Takeover movement has treated these theologians with a mixture of ignorance and distortion that could be called a crime against historical knowledge.[45] Leon McBeth's comment about Southern Baptists is apt:

> Their own theologians are almost unknown among them; their earlier confessions unfamiliar. This allows some Southern Baptists to claim recent innovations as "the historic Baptist position" on certain issues.[46]

"Inerrancy" Lacks Definition. When Fundamentalist leaders have attacked Southern Baptist scholars for not being inerrantists; they have ignored an important fact. They fail to mention that non-Southern Baptist inerrantist scholars carefully *qualify* what they mean when they say the Bible is without error. Indeed the word "inerrancy" becomes so heavily guarded and qualified that the final position regarding the text of the Bible is nearly the same for both Fundamentalists and moderates.

Inerrantist scholars and leaders admit that "apparent discrepancies, verbal differences, seeming contradictions, and so forth"[47] are in the Bible. But they say these things do not count as "errors," including events recounted out of chronological order, numbers disagreeing, or divergent accounts of the same events, passages in one part of the Bible quoted loosely in another part of the Bible.

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, which is being cited with the *Baptist Faith and Message* by a growing number of current SBC leaders, makes repeated qualifications to its statement on inerrancy. "Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed."[48] However, these inerrantists unanimously agree these "problems" do not count as "errors." In another qualification, the

Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy acknowledges "that the authority of Scripture is in no way jeopardized by the fact that the copies we possess are not entirely error-free . . . . no translation is or can be perfect . . . ."[49]

Where SBC Fundamentalists affirm such qualified views of inerrancy, and some of them do,[50] their hostility toward moderate teachers and preachers is unnecessary. Men like Jerry Vines, former co-pastor of the First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida, and a recent SBC president, say: "I just could not look Southern Baptists in the face and appoint people who believe there are errors in the Bible."[51] And yet their qualifications of the word "inerrant" tacitly admit imperfections in the Bible's text. Still, they continue their vendetta against Southern Baptist scholars whose views on the inspiration and authority of scripture do not differ significantly from these inerrantists' views.

Although many Takeover leaders have long been aware of how the word "inerrant" is qualified by conservative scholars, they have deceived many sincere rank-and-file Baptist pastors and lay people into believing that their use of the word "inerrant" means exactly what it says: to be without error. One Tennessee pastor who had worked hard in the Takeover effort read parts of *The Unfettered Word* by Rob James. The next day he said to James: "You told me some things I didn't know. Some of the people we've looked to as leaders have made some qualifications we didn't know about."[52]

Are Southern Baptists Inerrantists? Fundamentalists say that most Southern Baptists are inerrantists, but that certain professors are at odds with the people in the pew. Dr. Clark Pinnock, a conservative Baptist who now teaches theology in Canada, makes a convincing argument that moderate Baptist scholars were never far removed from the Biblical theology of the rank-and-file church members.

Pinnock taught at New Orleans Seminary from 1965 until 1969 and was one of Paige Patterson's favorite seminary professors. He was a fiery advocate of roughly the position now held by SBC Fundamentalists. Although Pinnock shifted his position on inerrancy in the 1970s,[53] leaders of the nondenominational inerrancy movement still claim him as one of their own.

At the 1987 inerrancy conference, Pinnock said he believed Southern Baptists' typical approach to the Bible is not inerrancy in the strictest sense. Rather, it is what he called "simple Biblicism." Simple biblicism, he said, is a view that "most evangelicals and Baptists hold, *whether scholars or not*, because the Spirit teaches it to them." This approach "views the Scriptures as the only place to go if you want to find the words of everlasting life."[54]

At the inerrancy conference, Mark Noll, a distinguished historian at Wheaton College,[55] agreed and explained that in the "Baptist" approach, as he called it, the Bible's truth and authority are known by inward experience, not by rationalistic arguments about the nature of the Bible."[56] This attitude toward the Bible could be called "inerrantist" in a loose, popular sense of the term.[57] But as Pinnock and Noll suggest, moderate Baptist scholars and many lay persons affirmed a "simple Biblicism" that was always sufficient to unify Baptist churches for missions and evangelism. The "inerrancy controversy" was invented to serve as a political weapon.

In any case, it is not difficult to state what unifies Southern Baptists in their approach to the Bible. As Russell Dilday, former president of Southwestern Seminary, the largest SBC seminary, states it, among Southern Baptists "there is practically total unanimity concerning their commitment to the Bible as the divinely inspired, sufficient, certain, and authoritative guide for faith and practice."[58]

"Undoubtedly, history will record that the controversy was not really about the Bible," stated Leon McBeth.[59] However, in order to divide the denomination and mobilize one group for conquest over another, inerrancy has been made an issue. For that reason, "the Bible issue" looms large in the *perception* of many people. But if one wishes to say where differences lie that are crucial for Southern Baptist denominational life — and that is what inerrantists claim to be talking about — the inerrancy issue is fraudulent.

CHAPTER 14

Tools of a Takeover: Women's Roles

All About Eve: Kansas City SBC, 1984. The controversy over the role of women in Southern Baptist life was not new in 1984. Almost a century earlier, in 1885, the SBC constitution was changed to seat "brethren" rather than "messengers" to prevent women being regarded as messengers; women were not accepted as messengers with full voting privileges until 1918.[60]

The Watts Street Baptist Church, Durham, North Carolina, ordained the first Southern Baptist woman, Addie Davis, to the ministry in 1964. By 1997, an estimated 1,400 women had been ordained in the South (not including deacons). [61]

The 1984 Kansas City Convention, firmly controlled by Fundamentalists, resisted this trend and opposed the full equality of women in the church by adopting a strongly worded resolution against ordaining women as deacons or pastors.

The resolution gave what purports to be the biblical rationale for the hierarchy of men over women in church life: God requires such submission, the resolution argued, because man was first in creation, while woman was first in the Edenic fall.[62]

Some who spoke for the resolution at the time made the point that a resolution does not instruct agencies or churches. It only registers the opinion of those attending that convention. True enough! There was no attempt in 1984 or 1985 to threaten the funding or reshape the policy of agencies that employed ordained women or their husbands. But the groundwork was laid for a later year, when Fundamentalists would have majorities on agency and institution boards.[63]

The 1984 resolution blaming women for sin in the world (for so it was understood) was greeted with surprise and outrage throughout much of the convention. It helped mobilize many who were just beginning to understand the seriousness of the Takeover.

What factors led to the 1984 Kansas City resolution? In the broader society, the changing role of women in society played a part in raising expectations of women who professed a religious calling; and these expectations, in turn, heightened the concerns of godly people over the erosion of family life and the increase in divorce and family strife. There were regional differences in theology and practice as well. "East Coast churches have regularly ordained women, while westerners have generally viewed such action as out and out heresy."[64] The growing presence of ordained women, especially in the eastern churches, alarmed church leaders in the deep south and west who demanded a more traditional approach.

In addition, specific actions in several states combined to call attention to the ordination of women as an issue: ordination of three women deacons by First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, in face of an associational resolution opposing ordination of women; the disfellowshipping of three California churches that ordained women deacons; the calling of a woman as pastor by a church in Chicago; protests in Montana decrying the fact that the Home Mission Board appointed an ordained woman as a church planter; associational actions on women's issues in at least seven states; and Home Mission Board president Bill Tanner's statement that the agency took no position on the ordination of women.[65]

"Wives Summit Graciously": Atlanta SBC, 1998. One of the most significant goals of the Fundamentalist faction has been to demand a more traditional approach to family relationships — an approach that affirms a divinely ordained authority of the husband over his wife. The 1998 Southern Baptist Convention approved a new article on the family as an amendment to the thirty-five-year-old *Baptist Faith and Message*. Adoption of the article marks the first time the *Baptist Faith and Message* has been changed since its adoption in 1963.

Members of the committee appointed by SBC president Tom Elliff to develop the article said its purpose was to "give a clear call to biblical principles of family life." However, a statement in the article that "A wife is to submit herself graciously" to her husband drew two amendments, both of which failed in separate votes by show of hands. One failed amendment suggested that "Both husband and wife are to submit graciously to each other as servant leaders in the

home, even as the church willingly submits to the lordship of Christ." The author of the failed amendment, Tim Owings, First Baptist Church, Augusta, Georgia, said he based his amendment on Ephesians 5:21, which states: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." The committee chose to emphasize Ephesians 5:22, stressing the wife's duty to her husband.[66]

The New *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. Following the SBC's adoption of the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message*, which limited the role of pastor to men, and the 2001 motion at the SBC's annual meeting to stop endorsing ordained women as chaplains, the number of SBC women endorsed as chaplains and counselors has declined. The policy was sealed in February 2002 when the SBC's North American Mission Board voted to cease endorsing women for chaplaincy roles if they were already ordained or had asked to be ordained. The NAMB voted to stop endorsing women chaplains in cases "where the role and function of the chaplain would be seen the same as that of a pastor."[67] This decision essentially brought an end to females being ordained by the SBC as military chaplains, due to requirements by military and some federal agencies for both ordination and endorsement.[68] However, it is not entirely clear what the impact has been on ordained SBC women serving as hospital chaplains and pastoral counselors.[69]

Current Conditions. By 2000 about 3,300 women had been ordained by the American Baptist Churches, SBC churches, and CBF-affiliated churches — although some have died and others have retired.[70] The best current figures suggest that almost two thousand women are serving as pastors, local-church staff members, chaplains, missionaries, and seminary-divinity school faculty members. It is unclear how many of this total have been formally ordained.[71] Female deacons are found in perhaps five thousand Baptist churches in the country, of which 15-20 percent are in the South and have been ordained.[72]

CHAPTER 15

Tools of a Takeover: A Common Enemy

> *Certain aspects of modernity were singled out for attack, including television, cinema, secular voluntary associations, ideologies, and political parties, These have been seen as threats corrupting the your and estranging them from their religious belief* — Emile Sahliyeh, referring to Shi'ite, Sikh, and Palestinian Fundamentalist movements.[73]

For the casual observer of the Southern Baptist Convention, the annual meeting of SBC may be best known for its 1996 boycott of Disney, which it recently called off after ten futile years. For those who watch the SBC more closely, the Disney boycott is one in a series of boycotts, negative resolutions, and other line-in-the-sand statements. For those who study extremist religious movements, these actions are more than quirky or misguided. They are indicative of a far more disturbing trend: extreme religious Fundamentalism.

For years, Americans have heard of the distant dangers of religious Fundamentalism: Suni-Shi'ite conflicts in Iraq, Protestant-Catholic fighting in Ireland, poison gas attacks by Hindu extremists in Japan. Or perhaps the dangers were closer to home: the 1979 Iran hostage crisis or David Koresh and the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. Most recently, the destruction of the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, brought the dangers of Fundamentalist religions to the forefront of the American consciousness.

Recent studies of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Confucianism have identified shared traits among Fundamentalist strains of each religion. In these studies, Fundamentalism is described as a "tendency of some members of traditional religious communities to separate from fellow believers and to redefine the sacred community in terms of its disciplined opposition to nonbelievers and 'lukewarm' believers alike."[74]

Understood in the context of Fundamentalism, the Southern Baptist Convention's focus on enemies — either external enemies (e.g., Ma-

sons) or internal enemies (e.g., seminary professors) — is no different from that displayed by other religions Fundamentalists. Emile Sahliyeh, associate professor of international relations and Middle East politics at the University of North Texas, for instance, identifies this characteristic in three forms of Shi'ite, Sikh, and Palestinian Fundamentalism: "The fixation with an identifiable enemy is another shared ideological property. Each of the three movements points to a specific foe as being the source of its troubles and hardships."[75]

For Fundamentalist extremists — whether Christian, Hindu, or Muslim — identifying and attacking enemies is a way of defining themselves. According to Sahliyeh, "the presence of definable enemies" sustains Fundamentalist movements.[76] Often, the first enemy to be attacked is a former member of the group who has either chosen to leave or has fallen out of favor. Southern Baptist leaders have shown this same tendency in their persistent attacks against groups like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Beyond self-definition, the targeting of an external enemy helps Fundamentalists make sense of complex world, In other words, Fundamentalism sees the world in black and white, with no shades of gray. Scholar Valerie Hoffman identifies this dualism in the psyche of Muslim Fundamentalists: "In their attacks on women's liberation and other aspects of Western culture, the fundamentalists reveal a basic aspect of their mindset — a great fear of social chaos."[77]

Identifying enemies in speeches and resolutions has been a main feature of Southern Baptist Convention sessions during the last twenty years of Fundamentalist control. Over the years, the SBC has targeted U.S. presidents, women, social groups, other religions, businesses, and others. Individually, these condemning words and actions may seem justified or merely misguided and futile. As a group, however, they give evidence of a dangerous Fundamentalist mindset.

Southern Baptist Convention Targets

Jimmy Carter (1979)	"I hope you will give up your secular humanism and return to Christianity" — Adrian Rogers to President Carter in the White House.[78]

Women in Ministry (1984)	"Man was first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall."[79]
Holiday Inn (1987-1992)	Boycott by the California Southern Baptist Convention[80]
Homosexuality (1988)	"a manifestation of a depraved nature"[81]
Woman's Missionary Union (1992) (1993) (1993) (1995)	• Motion made to make WMU an SBC agency[82] • Compared WMU to an "adulterous wife" for wanting to promote missions beyond the SBC and with the CBF[83] • WMU must be "hard-wired" to the SBC says Adrian Rogers.[84] • Removed responsibility for missions promotion from WMU[85]
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (1992) (1994) (1994)	• Seven agencies pressured to cancel exhibits at the CBF Assembly[86] • SBC agencies "instructed" not to receive financial gifts from CBF[87] • State conventions encouraged to reject funds to CBF[88]
Masons (1992) (1993)	• HMB ordered to make a yearlong study of "non-Christian teachings of the Freemasonry"[89] • HMB spent $110,000 to report that many teachings are "not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine."[90]
K-Mart/Waldenbooks (1993)	Protest sale of "sexually explicit magazines"[91]

Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, Arkansas (1993)	Individual messengers were grilled before being seated as messengers — because of President Bill Clinton's membership in this church.[92]
Bill Clinton/Al Gore (1993)	Eighteen of the forty submitted SBC resolutions dealt with them.[93]
Disney (1996-2006)	Boycott of Disney because of its medical coverage plans[94]
Jews (1996) (1999)	• SBC to "direct our energies and resources" toward evangelizing Jewish people[95] • "Pray that Jews will convert to Christianity during the High Holy Days."[96]
American Airlines (1999)	Dropped as SBC's official airlines because of alleged gifts to "gay rights organizations"[97]
Hindus (1999)	IMB "prayer guide" says Hindus live under "the power of Satan."[98]
Muslims (2002)	"Islam was founded by Mohammed, a demon-possessed pedophile," said Jerry Vines at the SBC Pastor's Conference.[99]
IMB Missionaries (2002)	Jerry Rankin forces IMB missionaries to sign 2000 *BFM* because "unnamed people were questioning the doctrinal integrity of IMB missionaries."[100]

One of the best ways to build unity in a group is to identify an enemy, and SBC Fundamentalist leaders have used this tactic with great effectiveness for many years. While dangers of this kind of Fundamentalist thinking are all too clear when referring to Islamic extremists, the influence of Fundamentalism in the Southern Baptist Convention has caused great damage as well.

CHAPTER 16

Tearing Down Autonomy: The Takeover's New Creed[101]

Historically, Baptists have vehemently avoided adopting creeds. According to W.R. Estep's *The Anabaptist Story*, "the primacy of Scripture in Anabaptist life discouraged the formulation of creeds . . ." (126). Leaders like Menno Simons avoided "any phraseology even slightly resembling a creed. He feared a creed might take precedence over the Bible or become in time a test of faith among the Brethren" (129).

Now the Southern Baptist Convention has changed course and is embracing what Bill Bruster has called a "creeping creedalism." The 2000 version of the *Baptist Faith and Message* has become a defacto creed, used by the current SBC leadership to exert control and undermine local church autonomy.

Even a cursory examination makes it clear that the revised *Baptist Faith and Message* seeks to "tighten up" the theological bindings around the hearts and lives of the Southern Baptist faithful. That's evident from two changes made in the statement: (1) a de-emphasis on the doctrine of soul competency and (2) a heightened emphasis on "doctrinal accountability."

The 1963 preamble includes these important words: "Baptists emphasize the soul's competency before God, freedom in religion, and the priesthood of the believer." In contrast, the 2000 version of the *Baptist Faith and Message* as originally proposed by the SBC review committee didn't even mention "soul competency" or "priesthood of the believer." After extensive criticism in the weeks prior to the convention, the committee acquiesced, reinserting these hallowed Baptist phrases prior to the vote by SBC messengers. But, even as they did, they subtly de-emphasized them. Instead of the saying that Baptists "cherish" these principles (as the 1963 statement says), the preamble goes only so far as to say Baptists "honor" them. More importantly, the preamble calls for believers' "accountability to each other under the Word of God."

This is more than a semantic change. Alarmingly, the very doctrine that E. Y. Mullins called Baptists' "distinctive contribution to the religious life and thought of mankind" has been altered in the document that supposedly defines the theology of Southern Baptists.

Why this de-emphasis on "soul competency" and "priesthood of the believer"? A glance at recent history suggests one answer: those currently in power in the SBC are deliberately attacking this basic principle of Baptists in order to increase the authority of the pastor and the national denomination.

Consider these recent developments:

- In an analysis of Mullins' writings published by Broadman and Holman in 1997, Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary and one of the architects of the revised *Baptist Faith and Message*, described soul competency as "an acid dissolving religious authority, congregationalism, confessionalism and mutual theological accountability."
- At the 1988 meeting of the SBC, messengers passed a resolution on pastoral authority that claimed that the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer was a relatively "recent" development in Baptist life, and that "the pastor is the ruler of the church."
- Now, the *Baptist Faith and Message* de-emphasizes this historic doctrine in favor of a doctrine of accountability.

The new statement now includes words that effectively call for it to function as a creed. And recent history suggests the *Baptist Faith and Message* may be used to "disfellowship" or exclude church members from local congregations or churches from associations, state conventions, or national SBC participation.

For example:

- **Florida**. At their 2004 convention, Florida Baptists amended their bylaws to exert more control over local churches by expelling congregations not adhering to the

2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* or "other declaration of faith which parallels the tenets of our historic Baptist faith." The bylaw amendment is specifically aimed at churches or associations whose "theology, faith, practice or polity" is deemed to be "questionable." [102]

- **Michigan.** Michigan Baptists affirmed the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* in a 2003 resolution stating "all individuals or churches receiving assistance must approve the *Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention." In 2004, the convention added this language to their constitution. [103]
- **International Mission Board**. IMB policy requires employees to sign the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* document. Scores of experienced, faithful missionaries have been fired or forced to resign from IMB service because of their refusal to sign. [104]

According to church historian Bill Leonard, dean of the Divinity School at Wake Forest University, no one should be surprised by the tightening standards. "Baptist organizations have every right to shape their policies as they choose," he said. The surprising factor, Leonard believes, is that dissenting Baptists have put up with the restrictive changes for so long without leaving the SBC.

While the SBC leadership has used the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* to exclude dissenting individuals and churches, other theological shifts in the document have raised deep concern for many.

Elevation of the Bible over Jesus. Tony Cartledge, editor of the *Biblical Recorder*, the state Baptist paper of North Carolina, said: "The changes put into writing a shift from the Living Word to the written word as the Christian's supreme authority, diminishing the role of a believer's personal experience with Christ as a guide for faith and practice. Christ is no longer seen as the pinnacle of God's self-revelation, but as the focus of God's written revelation." For a Baptist, any document that elevates anything — even the Bible — above Jesus should be a matter of deep concern.

Persons are not saved simply because they have read a Bible. They are redeemed only by a personal relationship with a Living Lord.

After all, what about early believers who trusted Jesus before the Bible as we have it came into existence? Or those believers in earlier centuries who trusted Christ in an age when only priests had Bibles? And what about those today (in cultures other than American) who might hear of Jesus but who have never seen or heard of a Bible?

Restriction of Women. The writers of the revised *Baptist Faith and Message* exclude women from the possibility of serving as pastors: "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of the pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

The Bible, however, displays an internal tension over the issue of women in ministry. A biblical case can be made on both sides. For example, in I Corinthians 11: 5, the Apostle Paul speaks of prophesying. He encourages men to prophesy (preach) with their heads uncovered and women to prophesy (preach) with their heads covered. In Romans 16:2, Paul recognizes the position of authority given to a woman. It's true that these passages don't necessarily refer to the pastoral office. But these and other scriptures can be used to make an important point: The Bible leaves room for interpretation here, so also should we.

Ironically, on the same day that the SBC committee published its proposed revisions to the *Baptist Faith and Message*, *USA Today* carried an article about Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of the famous Southern Baptist evangelist Billy Graham. In that article, Graham called her the "best preacher in the family." [105]

CHAPTER 17

Tearing Down Missions: The Takeover's Calvinist Theology

> *Sit down, young man. When God decides to save the heathen, he will do it without your help or mine!* — Calvinist Baptist to William Carey.[106]

Another development that has alarmed mission-minded moderates has been the growing influence of the theology known as Calvinism, among some Fundamentalist leaders. To simplify a very complex matter, Calvinism teaches that God has already predestined every eternal soul to heaven or hell, and human freedom to choose plays no part in this decision. It is obvious that this view would create problems for the theological foundation of and personal motivation to support missions and evangelism.

While Calvinism has gained many adherents in the Fundamentalist community, many oppose the philosophy, including Paige Patterson, Adrian Rogers, and Richard Land, president of the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

Calvinism takes its name from Reformed theologian John Calvin (1509–1564). Five-point Calvinism, advocated by Southern Baptist Calvinists such as Mark Coppenger, Al Mohler, and Tom Nettles, was adopted by the Synod of Dort in 1618–1619 in the Netherlands. Classic Calvinism rests on the foundation of five propositions. Those "five points" are often referred to using the acronym TULIP.[107]

T Total depravity of human nature.
U Unconditional election: humans are not chosen for salvation on the basis of any foreseen merit, quality, or achievement.
L Limited atonement: Christ died only for the elect, those chosen by God. Not all humans have been chosen for salvation; those not chosen are destined for eternal punishment from before birth.

I Irresistible grace: those chosen for salvation cannot refuse to receive it. It is irresistible.

P Perseverance of the saints: those chosen for salvation cannot lose it.

A gathering of seven persons in Euless, Texas, in November 1982 was the beginning of an effort to turn the Southern Baptist Convention toward a more strict Calvinist doctrine. Early Southern Baptist leaders were influenced to a certain extent by Calvinism, but generally rejected the Calvinist teaching of "limited atonement." Limited Atonement is the position that God elects certain persons for salvation and others for damnation. No matter how much a person may want to repent, Calvinists say, only God's elect are able to repent and believe.

Calvinist Timothy George of Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama, says: "Whosoever will believe may be saved. But it is efficient only among those whom God has elected to salvation." Outspoken Calvinist Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary, says believing that God alone determines who will be saved also requires a belief that God has chosen some people not to be saved.[108]

William R. Estep, distinguished professor of church history emeritus at Southwestern Seminary, said in 1997: "Baptists have never been doctrinaire Calvinists, as a careful study of the sources [reveals]." Estep said: "Most of the ardent advocates of this movement have only a slight knowledge of Calvin or his system."[109]

Despite alarm from moderates and fellow Fundamentalists, Calvinism continues to make inroads into Southern Baptist institutions. In 1997, Tom Nettles, an ardent defender of five-point Calvinism, joined the Southern Seminary faculty.

Fisher Humphreys, professor of religion at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School, said Calvinists and non-Calvinists have been a part of the SBC since its founding, but over time the SBC has moved away from Calvinism, affirming freedom of the human will to choose Christ as personal savior and Lord. This doctrinal direction has been important to our drive for evangelism and missions.[110]

CHAPTER 18

Tearing Down Religious Liberty: The Takeover's Political Agenda

> *The go-along, get-along strategy is dead. No more engagement. We want a wedding ring, we want a ceremony, we want a consummation of the marriage* — Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (formerly Christian Life Commission), to the Republican Party.[111]

> *It is clear, from what speakers at recent conventions have said and from the political endorsements by Convention leaders, that the Southern Baptist Convention leadership has identified with the Republican Party. It would be just as unfortunate if the Convention were aligned with the Democratic Party* — Bill Bruster in *Is Your Church Free or Reformed?* [112]

Religious liberty, guaranteed in the United States by the separation of church and state, is a unique and crucial part of our heritage. Religious historian Sanford Cobb called religious liberty "America's great gift to civilization and the world."

According to Dr. Derek H. Davis' article, "Why keep church and state separate," available from the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty's website (*bjconline.org*), the separation of church and state is ultimately a theological concern:

> People must believe for themselves, otherwise the divine initiative is compromised and government has violated the sacredness of those whom it is called to serve. The great Baptist John Leland would agree: "Religion is a concern between God and the soul with which no human authority can intermeddle."
>
> This does not mean that there is no public role for religion.

> America has a rich tradition of acknowledging the sovereignty of God over the nation by adopting generic language that attempts to respect as many Americans' faith as possible. For example, the national motto, "In God We Trust," is a broad term that most, though certainly not all, Americans can support. Such "civil religious" practices are assurances against carrying the separation principle too far, against government-sponsored secularism, but the basic commitment to separating church and state remains — as something that is good for both government and religion.[113]

Historically, Southern Baptists were strong advocates for church-state separation. We insisted that the state remain neutral on religious issues in order to protect liberty of conscience for religious minorities.

Baptists shaped public morality though the witness of the church rather than the through the power of the state. For more than sixty years, Southern Baptists have advocated this position through the work of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.

The Pressler-Patterson coalition that took over the Southern Baptist Convention favors church-state accommodation. They intend to promote specific religious agendas through public policy and want religious majorities to have greater access to public funds to do so. The Pressler-Patterson coalition has defunded the Baptist Joint Committee and created an Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission to promote their accommodationist agenda in Washington, D.C.

Former President Jimmy Carter expresses concern over these developments in his book *Our Endangered Values*. Fundamentalist influences being felt in public life, Carter says, include an "entwining of church and state." Christian Fundamentalists during the last two decades "have increasingly and openly challenged and rejected Jesus' admonition to 'render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.'"

"There is obviously a widespread, carefully planned and unapolo-

getic crusade underway from both sides to merge fundamentalist Christians with the right wing of the Republican Party," Carter continues. "Although considered to be desirable by some Americans, this melding of church and state is of deep concern to those who have always relished their separation as one of our moral values." [114]

Republican leaders also recognize the danger of this merger of religious and political groups. Former Republican Senator and UN Ambassador Jack Danforth stated in a *New York Times* editorial, "by a series of recent initiatives, Republicans have transformed our party into the political arm of the Conservative Christians."[115]

As a committed Christian and ordained minister, Danforth again expressed his dismay at this union of church and state in a June 2005 editorial. Senator Danforth writes: "In recent years, conservative Christians have presented themselves as representing the one authentic Christian perspective on politics. With due respect for our conservative friends, equally devout Christians come to very different conclusions. It is important for those of us who are sometimes called moderates to make the case that we, too, have strongly held Christian convictions, that we speak from the depths of our beliefs, and that our approach to politics is at least as faithful as that of those who are more conservative. Our difference concerns the extent to which government should, or even can, translate religious beliefs into the laws of the state."[116]

This shift in the Convention's view of the separation of church and state is revealed in the resolutions and stated positions of the group. At the 1981 Southern Baptist Convention in Los Angeles, messengers passed a resolution which reinforced the SBC's strong belief in separation of church and state. The resolution: affirmed the "belief that religion flourishes best without government's interference or tax support," and voiced "earnest protest against tax proposals which would finance educational and other activities of churches or religious groups."

By 1995, however, "the 'Wide Awake' issue came before the Supreme Court. Wide Awake, a student religious publication at the University of Virginia, wanted government money for its publication. The Baptist Joint Committee [which had been defunded by the

SBC in 1991] agreed with the lower courts that the government should not use public money to publish a religious magazine. The Christian Life Commission's political action committee supported the Wide Awake publishers, advocating the use of public funds for the religious magazine."[117]

Other examples of this shift in philosophy, says Carter, include the SBC's support for private school vouchers and a constitutional amendment to authorize mandatory prayer in public schools.[118]

CHAPTER 19

Tearing Down Priesthood of the Believer: The Takeover's Authoritarian Pastors

The SBC Controversy was dismissed early on as a preacher fight and something that had little to do with the local church. It was easy for regular church leaders not to understand how yearly national conventions electing an SBC president had any connection at all with Our Baptist Church in Our Town, USA.

In reality, the SBC Controversy has always been about influencing the local church and national secular political power. One way to gain control of the local church is to control the resources that the overwhelming number of SBC churches use — resources from the Baptist Sunday School Board (now Lifeway) and the seminaries that many churches contact for their next pastor.

It is when a typical moderate SBC church calls a recent SBC seminary graduate as its pastor that the local church experiences The Controversy firsthand. And the experience is often painful for the stunned church.

The Takeover's efforts to control the local church through a more authoritarian pastor can be seen in the passage of a 1988 Convention resolution which elevated pastors as the sole leaders of the church and de-emphasized the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. The resolution highlighted the pastor's "authority" and encouraged churches to "obey" and "submit."

Jerry Falwell, now America's best known Southern Baptist preacher, spoke at Southwestern Seminary on August 24, 2004. In his address he clearly articulated the hope of SBC leaders to capture moderate churches through an authoritarian pastor: "May God lead many of you to some of these moderate churches that deserve fundamentalist pastors like you . . . . Sometimes it takes a full year before that church is who you are." [119]

Pastor Jeffrey D. Vickery of Cullowhee, North Carolina, raises critical questions and concerns about the effect of the SBC Takeover on the local church:

> Any moderate church that continues to identify with the SBC in an era when fundamentalism has firm control over the denominational hierarchy will potentially one day find themselves with an SBC-indoctrinated pastor whose allegiance to fundamentalism is strong. SBC leaders like Patterson, Aiken, Mohler, and others expect that their pastors will find their way into moderate churches and take control. Falwell simply put the truth into plain words.

Vickery continues:

> What is amazing is that many Baptist churches that do not identify themselves as fundamentalist continue to maintain strong connections with the SBC and search among recent SBC seminary graduates for their next pastor, or make use of convention-supported Sunday School curriculum. In essence, they are Falwell's hoped-for church converts and the home for these new fundamentalist pastors.
>
> I believe it is time for congregations to reassess their position of dual alignment with a nod toward congregational honesty. It is increasingly impossible to maintain a connection with the SBC and with moderate Baptists and be honestly moderate or honestly conservative. As the SBC becomes deeply entrenched in its fundamentalism and more open about that reality, any church that remains tied to the SBC will be forced into open fundamentalism as well.[120]

CHAPTER 20

Moderate Responses to the Takeover

The devastation left in the wake of the Fundamentalist Takeover is obvious to those Baptists who appreciate the freedom, diversity, and openness of former days. There was a time when Southern Baptists stood together in doing the work of the gospel. While we might have differed on how best to do this, we did not try to exclude each other from the opportunity to do ministry. The damage done to the cause of Christ by the Fundamentalist Takeover is incalculable. But the perceptive reader may be wondering where the moderates were as the Fundamentalist juggernaut plowed forward. Was there any significant attempt to thwart the Takeover before it went too far? What was the political response to this very political Takeover?

Moderates Resist Partisan Politics. An intentional effort to defeat the Fundamentalist revolution eventually evolved, but moderates were slow to take up partisan politics within the Convention. At the beginning of the controversy most of the seminary leadership and most of the SBC agency leadership was made up of people who would later identify themselves as "moderates." They saw the election of Adrian Rogers and the political machinations of Paige Patterson and Judge Pressler as distasteful but not alarming. In retrospect these leaders were clearly overconfident. They had been in the vanguard of SBC leadership for many years, and assumed they had built up a reservoir of trust in the denomination that could not be easily shaken. They assumed this new controversy was just another Fundamentalist "tempest in a teapot," that would soon blow over. In any event, people of their view held most of the reins of power in the denomination. They felt they could "handle" the upstarts.

Moderates Work to Get Out the Vote. After the election of Bailey Smith to be SBC president at the 1980 Convention, with 51 percent of the vote on the first ballot, against five other non-aligned candidates, the moderates were shaken. Paul Pressler's announcement in September that a Fundamentalist political strategy did indeed exist and that they were attempting to "go for the jugular" of the Convention, galvanized moderates into action. Duke McCall, former presi-

dent of Southern Seminary, encouraged Cecil Sherman, then pastor of the First Baptist Church of Asheville, North Carolina, to launch a resistance movement. Dr. Sherman asked seventeen trusted leaders from various states to meet with him in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, in late September of 1980. The group that met there became known, somewhat humorously, as the "Gatlinburg Gang."

Together, these men developed their own strategy for a "get out the vote" campaign. Their goal was to defeat the Pressler-Patterson machine by electing a consensus candidate who would be acceptable to a broad spectrum of Southern Baptists. Many of the candidates put forward by the moderates over the next few years were quite theologically conservative, but were not willing to shut all moderates out of the denomination. The "get out the vote" strategy was simple enough, and while it grew in size over the next few years, it never became much more complex. They sought out viable candidates and generally agreed to support one in particular before each upcoming national convention. They elected a national coordinator for their movement. They also selected state coordinators who would in turn recruit coordinators in the local Baptist associations. Based on the number of messengers who promised to go and vote for a moderate candidate, they estimated their chances and focused additional efforts to recruit more messengers from weaker areas.

Moderates Are the "True Conservatives." Their rhetorical strategy was simple as well. Moderates presented themselves as denominational loyalists and friends of missions. They also presented themselves as the "true conservatives" because they wanted to maintain the Southern Baptist traditions of soul freedom and the priesthood of all believers. In contrast Fundamentalists were shown to be violating traditional Baptist freedoms. Moderates accused the Fundamentalists of diverting money, time, and energy from "Bold Mission Thrust," the attempt to reach everyone with a gospel witness before the end of the century. Moderates pointed out that the charges of rampant liberalism in the denomination were vastly exaggerated. In tandem with this, they declared that the Fundamentalist movement was primarily a grab for power, with theological issues being used as a smokescreen. Moderates showcased the ethical transgressions in the political activity of the Fundamentalists.

They also pointed out that the whole political enterprise launched by the Fundamentalists was an exercise in worldly politics, far removed from the kindness and civility of previous years. Even the stern Fundamentalist patriarch at the First Baptist Church of Dallas, W.A. Criswell, was disturbed by the tactics of the Takeover faction. He declared in 1980 that the methods used by his associate, Paige Patterson, and Judge Pressler were "those of a different world."[121]

Why Moderates Lost the Struggle. The moderates lost "the struggle for the soul of the SBC" as Walter Shurden puts it, for several reasons. To begin with, they had to play "catch-up" against an opposition that was already well organized and had won two major elections in 1979 and 1980. On the strength of those victories, the Fundamentalists were well ahead of the moderates in understanding the mechanics of how to dominate the conventions. Their troops came early, got the best blocks of hotel rooms near the convention centers, and sat in the seats closest to the rostrum for best effect in both voice and hand votes.

Incumbency also has its advantages in planning and administering the conventions. One advantage of incumbency is the extensive power of the Convention president as chair of the meeting. Each of the editors of this booklet has witnessed high-handed and partisan use of the chair, in everything from the recognition of speakers to parliamentary procedure rulings. The rulings of the president could be challenged and appealed to a parliamentarian, kept near the platform for just such disputes. However, even the selection of the parliamentarian is in the control of those who run the Convention. That advantage is seen quite clearly in a celebration following the 1990 Convention in New Orleans.

Following their massive and rather final defeat of the moderates, Paige Patterson and others went to the Café Du Monde in the French Quarter to celebrate their victory. Patterson and Pressler were given framed certificates honoring their achievements. The Convention parliamentarian, supposedly neutral and from another denomination, was present for the celebration, and even called it to order! When his presence at this meeting was challenged as inappropriate, he first explained that he was "just passing by, picking up an order of doughnuts." When the challengers pointed out that the parliamentar-

ian had actually been seen arriving at Café Du Monde in a limousine with the Convention president, he amended his story to say that he was on "24 hour call" and therefore obliged to accompany the President wherever he went. When one messenger tried to tell the story of what he had seen at Café Du Monde to the Convention the following day, he was deterred. Twice the President refused to recognize him and twice his microphone was turned off.[122] Such abuse of the chair was common all during the Takeover.

Fundamentalists Claim "High Moral Ground." Another reason for the failure of the moderate political response is that by 1981 the Fundamentalists had already convinced many Baptists that they held the moral high ground. As James Slatton observes: "They had 'prayer meetings' not political rallies, and they were 'led of the spirit' to nominate 'Godly' men for office."[123] Thus they often obscured the worldly political nature of their activities. Their rhetoric, accusing denominational leaders and seminary presidents of "liberalism," and their passionate call to "save the Bible" within the Convention, was exactly the kind of white-hot language that sweeps a crowd off its feet into a glorious sense of mission. It was much like the inflammatory rhetoric of Joseph R. McCarthy's hunt for communists, and southern politicians of another era who used the language of racial prejudice to get in power and stay in power. Fundamentalist language engaged the heart, while deceptively disengaging the mind.

The moderate position was a harder sell precisely because it was "moderate," while Fundamentalist language was not. Educated Fundamentalists might qualify their statements about the Bible more carefully in a classroom setting, but on the political stump, when they fiercely declared the Bible "inerrant" they stirred the passions of many Bible-believing Baptists. The moderate position, more thoughtful and more truthful, was better crafted for the classroom. Few ever learned how to present moderate beliefs in the language of a rally. So, as the Fundamentalists proclaimed the Bible inerrant, moderates were either silent or too cerebral, and gave the impression that these accusations of heresy were true. To say, "Well, let's think about this more carefully" is hardly going to bring the basic Baptist to his feet in passionate commitment. Unwilling to cast the basic subjects of the controversy in moral and political language, moderates were left with trying to discredit the ethics and the distinctive

Baptist-ness of their opponents. They presented the controversy as merely a power struggle. True believers in the Fundamentalist camp were generally unfazed by this approach and many non-Fundamentalists saw such attacks as "mean-spirited."

This, of course, brings up another problem for the moderate political response. Most moderates found the whole political nature of the Controversy mean-spirited and distasteful in the extreme. They saw any response in kind as sinking to the level of the enemy. They regarded such partisan and exclusionary politics as beneath the dignity of civil Christian churchmanship — beyond the pale of both Baptist freedom and Christian love, their most cherished biblical values. While the typical Fundamentalist layperson was caught up in the excitement of a "revolution for God," moderates wrestled with how far to go in fighting back. Hence many moderates were loathe to rise to the occasion. In practical terms, this meant they never raised quite enough money or quite enough votes to defeat their opponents in the contest.

Moderates Discouraged from Within. Far from being motivated by white-hot political rhetoric, the Gatlinburg Gang and other moderate leaders were often intentionally discouraged from political organizing by their own allies. Cecil Sherman tells of how one moderate leader warned him in 1981 that moderate political organizing would only make things worse, and that they should simply wait for "the pendulum to swing back." A major denominational executive told him: "Stop what you are doing Cecil; we can handle these people." When the seminary presidents offered "the Glorieta Statement" in 1986, affirming biblical inerrancy in the hope that their schools would not be further attacked, Dr. Sherman protested to one of the seminary presidents who was later summarily fired by Fundamentalist trustees. That president told him: "Cecil, you are more trouble to us than they are."[124] Such responses on the part of people they were trying to help did not exactly create a "Go get 'em, you can do it!" spirit.

Some prominent and influential pastors failed to speak out when it might have done more good because they were reluctant to join the rough-and-tumble of a political fight. Other moderates were afraid of being painted as liberals by the other side, and thus losing their jobs.

The moderate political movement that did evolve from the Gatlinburg meeting was loose knit, with occasionally changing leadership. The Fundamentalists were tightly organized, with an almost military discipline, and had focused, consistent leadership, with a clear vision and a clear strategy that they stayed with throughout their campaign. Cecil Sherman points out that if the moderate leaders had been more authoritarian in their approach, no one would have followed them, since moderates by nature resist the kind of authoritarian, lock-step approach common to Fundamentalists. For all these reasons, the energy and momentum were never sufficient in the moderate movement to defeat a dedicated opposition, willing to make great sacrifices.

There were, however, many great men and women of the moderate Baptist community who fought the good fight to the bitter end for freedom and truth. Great sacrifices in time, money, and career advancement were made by those faithful Christians.

CHAPTER 21

Out of the Wreckage . . . Hope

> *If we stand for authentic Baptist beliefs in our local churches, in our state conventions, in our district associations, around the dinner table with friends and neighbors, we will find ourselves at odds with others at times. But, living as an authentic Baptist seems to inevitably bring conflict*—Gary Parker, former Coordinator for Baptist Principles, CBF, Atlanta, Georgia.[125]

At the 1990 SBC Convention in New Orleans, the moderates were handed their most devastating defeat of the controversy, as Daniel Vestal, then pastor of the Dunwoody Baptist Church in Atlanta, was defeated by Morris Chapman by the widest margin of any Fundamentalist candidate: 57 percent to 43 percent. The defeat was doubly painful because it marked the eleventh election since the beginning of the controversy. Judge Pressler had determined early on that the Fundamentalists needed to win only ten elections in a row to create a Fundamentalist majority on every board and agency of the Convention. This eleventh election sealed the Fundamentalist victory.

Dialogue Among Moderates Begins. After Fundamentalists steamrolled moderates in New Orleans, Vestal called for a dialogue among moderate Baptists concerning their future in the SBC.[126] Over 3,000 Southern Baptists answered his call and met in Atlanta, Georgia, August 23-25. Jimmy Allen, chair of Baptists Committed to the Southern Baptist Convention, a group organized in Texas in 1988, moderated the Atlanta meeting. Those assembled created a new funding mechanism, the Baptist Cooperative Mission Program (BCMP). This funding mechanism was primarily used to channel mission giving specifically to those Southern Baptist causes that these moderate Baptists could support in good conscience. Dr. Vestal was named chair of the steering committee for "The Fellowship." They voted to meet again the following year.[127]

In May 1991, 6,000 Southern Baptists met again in Atlanta and adopted the name, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), approved

a constitution, a budget, and a plan for world missions that went beyond the work of the Southern Baptist Convention. Vestal told the enthusiastic gathering: "We're here because we're sensing that God is doing a new thing."[128]

The CBF is a place where Baptists who do not see themselves as Fundamentalists can do ministry together with like-minded moderates. Many CBF supporters are people who liked being Southern Baptists in the days when the SBC was more inclusive and had a mixture of progressive as well as conservative elements. The CBF has avoided matters of extreme controversy and is genuinely centrist or conservative in its theology and practice. Much of the CBF's work gets done through dynamic partnerships that may seem like the old Baptist "society" model, rather than through centralized ownership of institutions.

CBF elected Cecil Sherman, then pastor of Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, as national coordinator in early 1992.[129] CBF appointed its first missionaries, Charles and Kathie Thomas, who had resigned as FMB missionaries the previous October. Ruschlikon seminary president John David and Jo Ann Hopper were appointed in May 1992 when they resigned as FMB missionaries.

SBC Rejects CBF Giving. In April 1992, seven SBC agencies who had planned to sponsor exhibits at the CBF Assembly in May canceled those plans after receiving phone calls from Morris Chapman, president-elect of the SBC executive committee.[130] Chapman led an anti-CBF effort which eventually led the 1994 Southern Baptist Convention to refuse any and all CBF funds. The CBF had been sending financial contributions to specific SBC agencies, particularly the mission boards. All SBC agencies and boards have been directed since 1994 to return any such contributions.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship offered a no-strings attached gift of $100,000 to the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union in 1994 in appreciation for the excellent work the WMU does in missions education. FMB president Rankin urged the WMU to refuse the money. (In 1995, Rankin would send out 11,500 letters criticizing the WMU for producing CBF-related mission material.)

The WMU is not an agency of the SBC, but an auxiliary, and thus not controlled by the SBC. The WMU executive board was not intimidated and voted to accept the gift.[131]

In 1993, CBF adopted a global missions program, devised by Keith Parks, who had retired as FMB president in October 1992, that focused on "World A" people groups, or ethnic-linguistic groups who have had little access to the gospel.[132] The plan was to avoid duplicating efforts already in place by Southern Baptists. Dr. Parks in particular wanted to send missionaries to the most difficult places, where Baptist mission work is not normally done.

Many Fellowship members at the 1994 General Assembly wanted to respond in some way to the March 1994 firing of Southwestern Seminary president Russell Dilday. In 1993, the CBF had sent $492,037 to the six SBC seminaries, including $164,871 to Southwestern. One motion at the General Assembly suggested that the CBF protest the Dilday firing by excluding all SBC seminaries from all future CBF budgets. Following a healthy debate, the CBF determined to "take the high road" and continued to offer funds to all the seminaries.[133]

SBC actions just a few weeks later eliminated any gifts to SBC seminaries or missionaries from CBF. In 1994 CBF was on track to have provided about $2,000,000 to support SBC missionaries but the SBC leadership decided those funds were not needed if they came from the Fellowship.

Cecil Sherman retired as CBF coordinator in June 1996. The Coordinating Council of the CBF unanimously elected Daniel Vestal, the son of a Southern Baptist evangelist and pastor of Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston since 1991, as the second coordinator in September 1996. He began his leadership with "a deep conviction God has called me to this place and this task" on December 1, 1996.[134]

There are several ways to track the continuing development of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship:

- Visit the CBF's website— w*ww.thefellowship.info.*

- Request a complimentary subscription to *fellowship!* by calling 770.220.1600.
- Contact the CBF state or regional center near you.

CHAPTER 22

CBF Under Attack

Because the CBF has been the most visibly successful moderate challenge to the Takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention, leaders of the SBC continue seeking ways to discredit the Fellowship.

Those who oppose the CBF like to accuse it of "being soft" on hot-button topics such as abortion, homosexuality, and biblical authority. These charges can be easily made since the Fellowship does not pass resolutions at national or state assemblies like other Baptist groups. CBF "silence" is twisted by detractors to mean approval. Perhaps the simplest and best response is that these accusations have the validity of attack ads late in a secular political campaign. CBF leaders have addressed these hot-button topics in Q & A formats. [135]

The SBC Fundamentalists do not agree with the concept of partnering in missions with other Christian groups who may hold differing views on theological issues. If SBC leaders are not in complete agreement and cannot control the expression of beliefs, they will not work with other Christian groups. CBF operates very differently. Its leaders need not completely agree with or control fellow Christians in order to partner with them in ministry.

Every year the SBC-funded Baptist Press seeks out the most controversial booth or break out session at the CBF national assembly meeting and that booth or breakout session becomes the focus of the Baptist Press story. Since the CBF believes in Baptist freedom, its leaders are reluctant to silence or censor new and controversial thinkers, so it isn't hard to find at least one booth or break-out session that challenges traditional thinking. One year there was a break-out session on feminist theology, and suddenly Fundamentalists were implying that the whole CBF was amuck with radical feminists praying to the mother-goddess.[136] Another year Professor Fisher Humphries, of Beeson Divinity School, hosted a discussion forum on "Open Theism," and even though Dr. Humphries was reluctant to endorse open theism, this break-out was represented by Baptist Press as representative of liberal CBF theology.[137]

Unlike the annual convention of the SBC, the primary focus of the CBF national meetings is missions, and the CBF national meetings mostly resemble the old pre-Takeover SBC meetings when missions was the focus of those gatherings. Because there are so many booths and breakout sessions to choose from at each CBF national gathering, the majority of those in attendance often do not know about a controversial matter until they get home and read about it in the SBC-controlled state papers. They usually scratch their heads and think: "Gee, I was there for the whole thing, but I don't remember any of this being an issue."

That's because taking "positions" on controversial theological and political issues is not the focus of CBF meetings. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is a missions-sending agency for missions-minded moderate and conservative Baptists who want to keep the great commission of Christ the uniting factor in a Baptist family that can be both free in Christ and faithful to Him.

State CBF organizations have grown to the point that coordinators have been elected to assist in CBF work in the various states. There are eighteen state and regional groups that, while each is autonomous, relate closely with the work of the national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The CBF General Assembly meets annually in different regions of the country. The annual assembly is traditionally the fourth week in June. The General Assembly sponsors a variety of breakout sessions to inform and educate people on a wide variety of issues and interests. The plenary meetings give considerable attention to worship and celebration, and the leadership at the podium is strongly committed to diversity. Responsibilities are very intentionally divided between clergy and laity, men and women.

Two Questions Asked of the CBF. Given the reality that the Fellowship started as a breaking away from the Southern Baptist Convention and the efforts made by SBC leaders to discredit the Fellowship, two questions frequently arise when CBF is presented and discussed.

Is CBF a Convention/Denomination? The answer is both complex and simple. In 1995 a Special Study Commission named by CBF was charged with addressing the question: "Should the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship become a separate convention?" Over 115 letters with opinions were received by the Commission. A survey of 500 CBF members had been conducted earlier in 1995. The Commission compiled opinion papers from thirteen selected individuals. Those papers were compiled into a booklet called *Findings.*[138]

The 1996 Assembly participants were asked to vote on their preference. Those in favor believed it would give the Fellowship greater credibility; others that it was an indicator of what CBF had become. Those opposed were concerned it could place undue stresses within local churches having to decide between two of more conventions. Some believed the CBF making such a statement would be seen as trying to compete with the SBC. Others believed that the idea of "conventions" is simply a outdated understanding of church organization and not relevant to the 21st Century. The vote was 95 percent *not* to declare CBF a convention or denomination.

In reality, the question, "Is CBF a convention/denomination?" works better when it is reversed. The real question is: "What does the individual or the local church want and need from the Fellowship?" For Baptists like Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter, CBF is their "denominational home." Others see the Fellowship as a "convention" because it offers retirement services through its Benefits Board. Others look to the Fellowship as a convention because of the number of missionaries serving in tough settings. Still others would count the more than 500 CBF-endorsed chaplains as a sign that CBF is a convention.

Others would see the Fellowship as one of several sources that can service and provide resources for personal spiritual growth and help with their local church. For them there is no need to be "singly aligned" with the Fellowship as in the earlier convention days.

All Fellowship leadership is committed to the position that it is not important to tag CBF with or without a "convention" label. What matters to them is that the Fellowship is serving individuals and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given purpose.

Is CBF Pro-gay? Detractors of the Fellowship note that CBF has never passed a resolution condemning homosexual practice. That "silence" is used as proof that CBF is "pro-gay." The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship does not issue "official" positions on homosexuality or other social issues, for to do so lies outside CBF's stated mission. Rather than issuing proclamations in hierarchical ways that are foreign to historic Baptist principles of faith and practice, CBF seeks to be a resource to help churches deal redemptively with the complex moral and social issues of the day.

In 2000, the CBF Coordinating Council adopted an organizational policy on homosexual behavior related to personnel and funding.

> As Baptist Christians, we believe that the foundation of a Christian sexual ethic is faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman and celibacy in singleness. We also believe in the love and grace of God for all people, both for those who live by this understanding of the biblical standard and those who do not. We treasure the freedom of individual conscience and the autonomy of the local church, and we also believe that congregational leaders should be persons of moral integrity whose lives exemplify the highest standards of Christian conduct and character. Because of this organizational value, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship does not allow for the expenditure of funds for organizations or causes that condone advocate or affirm homosexual practice. Neither does this CBF organizational value allow for the purposeful hiring of a staff person or the sending of a missionary who is a practicing homosexual.[139]

This policy is a very clear statement about CBF as an organization and its understanding of the sexual ethic in the Bible. Yet, this policy does not presume upon any individual or local church.

This organizational hiring policy was brought to the 2001 General Assembly in Orlando. Some Assembly participants wanted the policy studied for an additional year and then presented at the 2002 Assembly. Others thought the CBF Coordinating Council had developed a statement that reflected the preferences of the vast majority of

Fellowship Baptists and yet respected the autonomy of any local church that differed with the CBF organizational policy statement. The question came to a vote: should CBF engage in a review of this policy decision for another year? The vote was 58 percent not to continue with a study and 42 percent wanting another year of study.

CBF detractors used this close margin to conclude that CBF was evenly divided on this topic of homosexuality. CBF detractors use scare tactics about this vote when describing the Fellowship. Since the topic of homosexuality is such a current "hot button topic" within some churches, it is important to explain how a vote could be so close and yet not be reflective of that same percentage of total CBF members.

Interpreting Close Votes. Consider the last "hot topic" your church addressed at a business meeting. It could have been replacing the roof, hiring a new staff person, a building project, or perhaps the termination of an employee. What made that topic divisive within your own church?

Consider a political election — and for the sake of presentation, let's choose whatever party won. Is it reasonable to conclude that a majority of voters voted for that person or party for the same reason? Of course not! Name some factors:

- They liked the person — regardless of his/her political party.
- They were from the same state or region of the county.
- They were pro- or anti- with what the candidate agreed/disagreed with on a specific issue.
- They have always voted for candidates from that party.
- A spouse had a strong opinion and the other spouse "sort of went along."

The same variety of responses was true of the 2001 vote in Orlando.

- Persons genuinely and respectfully disagreed with the CBF organizational hiring policy.

- Persons thought this seemed a lot like a resolution and they were opposed to any resolution.
- Persons believed CBF was dealing with the topic of homosexuality just because of pressure from Fellowship detractors—they were opposed to CBF acting re-actively to what the SBC did or did not do.
- Persons were unsure about the policy and believed that one year was not an unreasonable time for additional study.
- If CBF could have an organizational policy about homosexuality, would there be one the next year on obesity or on tithing or on . . . ?

Reasonable people understand how complex "hot button" topics can be. For those not present, there is a desire for a snapshot summary. In this case, detractors had a field day with "spinning" a complex vote into a simple sound bite.

CBF has developed Q & A presentations on several "hot button" topics, and those are available on the Fellowship website [140] or by contacting a state or national resource center. [141]

Perhaps the real story that comes out of the CBF discussion and vote on this 2001 subject is the way members were determined to respect each other even in the midst of deeply divided opinions. Whichever side won, there was a strong conviction that all belonged within the Fellowship and that there was room for honest disagreement.

CHAPTER 23

Four Baptist Freedoms

Those of us blessed to live in the United States understand that our country was founded by radicals. These men and women championed the values of freedom and self-determination. In a similar way, Baptists have been defined by their radical commitment to freedom. Since the early 1600s, four basic freedoms have traditionally and historically defined the Baptist faith. These freedoms were summarized in *Four Fragile Freedoms*, a Baptist primer by Dr. Walter Shurden. [142]

> 1. ***Bible Freedom*** is an open Bible under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Bible transforms our lives, supersedes any form of creed, and frees the individual to interpret scripture as the Holy Spirit leads.
> 2. ***Soul Freedom*** means that a person's faith is personal, experiential, and voluntary. A person is responsible for making up his or her own mind about God and spiritual matters.
> 3. ***Church Freedom*** is the belief that local churches are free under the Lordship of Christ to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, and to ordain whom they perceive as gifted for ministry. No one—no pastor, no civil magistrate, no convention of churches—can dictate to the local church.
> 4. ***Religious Freedom*** is defined as "a free church in a free state"—the separation of church and state.

All Baptists would subscribe to these four freedoms, but differences in how these freedoms are understood contributed to the conflict that led to the SBC Takeover. As a former SBC Convention president once quipped: "We use the same vocabulary, but have different dictionaries."

Address to the Public,[143] the founding document of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, outlines how CBF's understandings have remained consistent with the best of Southern Baptist heritage but are

different from those who now control the Southern Baptist Convention.

Occasionally, someone accuses Baptists of being merely a contentious, controversial people. That may be. But the ideas that divide Baptists in the present "controversy" are the same ideas that have divided Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Episcopalians. These ideas are strong and central; these ideas will not be papered over. Here are some of these basic ideas.

1. Bible. Many of our differences come from a different understanding and interpretation of Holy Scripture. But the difference is not at the point of the inspiration or authority of the Bible. We interpret the Bible differently, as will be seen below in our treatment of the biblical understanding of women and pastors. We also, however, have a different understanding of the nature of the Bible. We want to be biblical — especially in our view of the Bible. That means that we dare not claim less for the Bible than the Bible claims for itself. The Bible neither claims nor reveals inerrancy as a Christian teaching. Bible claims must be based on the Bible, not on human interpretations of the Bible.

2. Education. What should happen in colleges and seminaries is a major bone of contention between Fundamentalists and moderates. Fundamentalists educate by indoctrination. They have the truth and all the truth. As they see it, their job is to pass along the truth they have. They must not change it. They are certain that their understandings of the truth are correct, complete, and to be adopted by others.

Moderates, too, are concerned with truth, but we do not claim a monopoly. We seek to enlarge and build upon such truth as we have. The task of education is to take the past and review it, even criticize it. We work to give our children a larger understanding of spiritual and physical reality. We know we will always live in faith; our understandings will not be complete until we get to heaven and are loosed from the limitations of our mortality and sin.

3. Mission. What ought to be the task of the missionary is another difference between us. We think the mission task is to reach people for faith in Jesus Christ by preaching, teaching, healing and other ministries of mercy and justice. We believe this to be the model of Jesus in Galilee. That is the way he went about his mission task. Fundamentalists make the mission assignment narrower than Jesus did. They allow their emphasis on direct evangelism to undercut other biblical ministries of mercy and justice. This narrowed definition of what a missionary ought to be and do is a contention between us.

4. Pastor. What is the task of the pastor? They argue the pastor should be the ruler of a congregation. This smacks of the bishops' task in the Middle Ages. It also sounds much like the kind of church leadership Baptists revolted against in the seventeenth century.

Our understanding of the role of the pastor is to be a servant/shepherd. Respecting lay leadership is our assignment. Allowing the congregation to make real decisions is of the very nature of Baptist congregationalism. And using corporate business models to "get results" is building the Church by the rules of a secular world rather than witnessing to the secular world by way of a servant Church.

5. Women. The New Testament gives two signals about the role of women. A literal interpretation of Paul can build a case for making women submissive to men in the Church. But another body of scripture points toward another place for women. In Galatians 3:27-28 Paul wrote, "As many of you as are baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (NRSV)

We take Galatians as a clue to the way the Church should be ordered. We interpret the reference to women the same way we interpret the reference to slaves. If we have submissive

roles for women, we must also have a place for the slaves in the Church.

In Galatians Paul follows the spirit of Jesus who courageously challenged the conventional wisdom of his day. It was a wisdom with rigid boundaries between men and women in religion and in public life. Jesus deliberately broke those barriers. He called women to follow him; he treated women as equally capable of dealing with sacred issues. Our model for the role of women in matters of faith is the Lord Jesus.

6. Church. An ecumenical and inclusive attitude is basic to our fellowship. The great ideas of theology are the common property of all the church. Baptists are only a part of that great and inclusive Church. So, we are eager to have fellowship with our brothers and sisters in the faith and to recognize their work for our Savior. We do not try to make them conform to us; we try to include them in our design for mission. Mending the torn fabric of both Baptist and Christian fellowship is important to us. God willing, we will bind together the broken parts into a new company in preview of the great fellowship we shall have with each other in heaven . . . .

Something is wrong with a religious body that spends such energy in overt political activity. Time is unwisely invested in beating people or trying to beat people . . . . There is division. The existence of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is a simple confession of that division; it is not the cause of that division.

CHAPTER 24

Relational Model — Pyramid Vs. Molecular

Do you remember diagramming sentences in school? It may have seemed like a confusing waste of time, but it did force students to visualize how a sentence gets put together.

Ever diagrammed your church? How about how your church relates to other churches and other groups — like conventions, associations, and ministries?

Baptists place great emphasis on freedom —and its necessary corollary of responsibility. Baptists value the phrase "local church autonomy." That is a principled way of describing that Baptists reject the idea of outsiders meddling with our internal business. At the same time, your church wants effective and efficient ways to do missions and offer successful programs.

Pyramid. Reflecting the American business model of most of the 20th century, your church easily moved into a pyramid model of church and denominational relationship. In SBC life, this pattern traces to the 1891 founding of the Baptist Sunday School Board (now Lifeway) and the 1925 start of the Cooperative Program.

The SBC, at the top of the pyramid, provided programs and initiatives and phrases that held together a growing and sprawling collection of churches. We used a common Sunday School literature from the Sunday School Board. We sang from the same hymnal produced and sold by the Sunday School Board. We promoted the same programs and offerings.

Genuine old-timers remember phrases like the push to baptize "a million more in '54." Also, they may recall the Sunday School growth campaigns such as "8.5 [million] by '85." Many were moved to vocational and volunteer mission service by "Bold Missions Thrust." These initiatives came from the top of the pyramid.

State convention leaders met in December of each year in Nashville, Birmingham, or Atlanta to learn the latest plans and how to train others.

Those state leaders sponsored training for associational leaders and workers within each state.

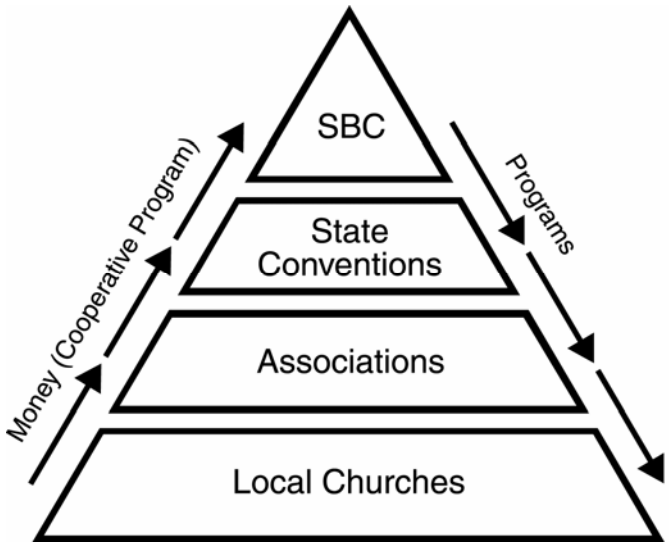
The local association's Director of Missions offered training to church leaders in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and missions education.

It was a clean, easy, and efficient way to serve thousands of churches.

In return, each church provided financial support. They bought materials from the Sunday School Board (now Lifeway) and WMU. They gave a small percentage of undesignated receipts to the local association. They gave a larger percentage (often 10 percent) to "the Cooperative Program." The state convention kept one half to two thirds for state use. The other one half to one third was passed on up to the Southern Baptist Convention level.

The SBC funded missionaries, seminaries, and other programs that then began the cycle again.

It was easy and it was efficient. Southern Baptists had and still have an operation the envy of many denominations. In times of trust there is nothing wrong with this model.



There are at least three flaws with this pyramid for the early 21st century with Christian denominations in America.

1. We are no longer in a time of trusting denominations.
2. We no longer believe the notion that "one size fits all" when it comes to church programming. (For example, find out how many different publishers the churches in your own Baptist association used for VBS materials just this past summer.)
3. We are in a rapidly changing culture — not somewhere else but right in our own community. Businesses start, merge, downsize, outsource, and re-locate. Ethnic groups who were once "over there" are now next door. New technologies both entice and frighten us.

The old pyramids do not work in the 21st Century.

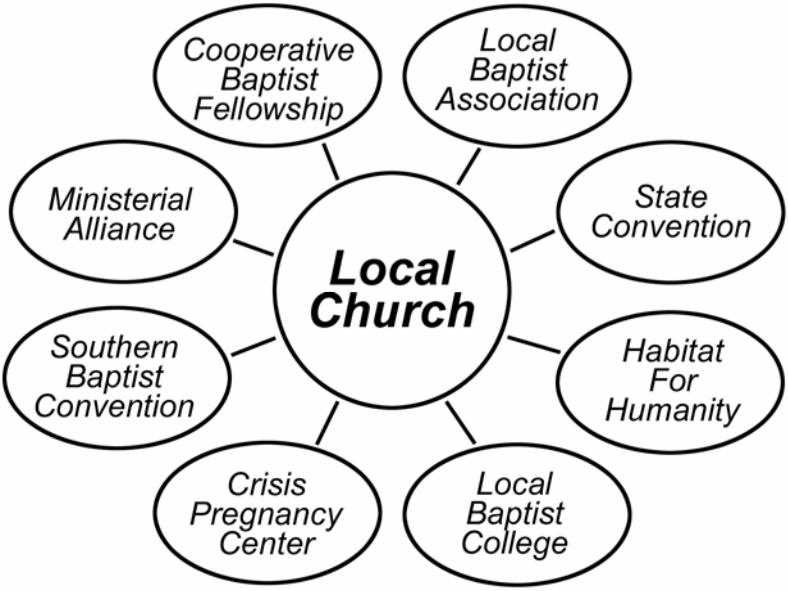
Molecular. Each and all of these factors mean your church is now practicing a different model whether you realize it or not. It is a molecular model. This model puts your church where, as a Baptist, it belongs — in the center.

Your church under the Lordship of Christ—not any outside group—decides who can best help your church meet the needs of the people who need Jesus in your community and offer programs that meet needs of your congregation.

Here are examples of those your church might relate to:

- Local Baptist association
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- Ministerial Alliance
- State Convention
- Southern Baptist Convention
- Habitat For Humanity
- Crisis Pregnancy Center
- Local Baptist College

Here is how that would look in a molecular model:



The groups your church can partner with are endless! The only limit-

ing factor is your church. Your church under the Lordship of Christ decides with whom and how extensively you will partner with any one group.

The molecular model reflects a healthy understanding of local church autonomy. Your church, after prayer and discussion under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, makes decisions that impact your church and your community.

Where Do You Fit In? Talking about church partners can be tough. These are "head and heart" issues. Your head tells you that some groups now are not the same as they were when you were younger. Your heart tugs at you because certain labels and phrases have provided valuable markers on your spiritual and church journey.

One Example. In 1980 Jimmy Carter was the best-known Southern Baptist deacon and Sunday School teacher in America. Jerry Falwell was one of the most vocal detractors of the Southern Baptist Convention. By 2002, Jimmy Carter has "found a spiritual home" within Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Jerry Falwell has become one of the best-known spokespersons for Southern Baptists on TV talk shows. Did Jimmy Carter change? Did Jerry Falwell change? Or, did Baptist groups change?

Practical Test. Consider these questions that will let you assess where you and your church might be more comfortable:

1. You get on an airplane for a cross-country flight. There are two seats — one next to Jimmy Carter and one next to Jerry Falwell. Where do you choose to sit?
2. Your pastor will be out of town in a few weeks and you are responsible for finding a supply preacher for the day. Whom would your church want to contact to "fill the pulpit" — Jimmy Carter or Jerry Falwell?

If you opt for Jimmy Carter, you would feel "at home" — with your head and with your heart — as part of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

If you opt for Jerry Falwell, you would feel "at home" — with your

head and with your heart—within the Southern Baptist Convention.

There is not a right answer for this test. It provides one easy way to decide where you and your church might best "fit." Your church must decide its identity, what God wants you to be, and then look at the Baptist partners who can best help your church succeed.

Follow Up. Using your church's budget, diagram your church's partners with a molecular model.

Postscript. The Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention continues. For those who cannot grasp what has and is happening it is easy to label the Controversy as just some sort of "preacher fight" that is too complex for regular church members. The Controversy has been solved on the national level. The only curiosity is what group or organization will be targeted for censure or boycott by the Convention in any given year.

The Southern Baptist Convention had calm meetings each year with uncontested elections from 1991-2005. But that Fundamentalists need to have an enemy, to distrust others, and to root out "heresy" is rearing its ugly head anew. In 2006 there are signs the Fundamentalists are turning on themselves. It will be interesting to see who is the next to be targeted as "liberal," "heretic," or "infidel."

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is maturing as an organization. Early on, some people might say they liked the Fellowship but wondered if it "would make it." It has.

The struggle has turned to the state conventions. Only the Texas and Virginia state conventions have survived the political assault waged each fall as Fundamentalists mobilized enough messengers to show up to elect a pre-selected candidate as convention president who would use the same appointment process that the national presidents had used. The process is similar in your state, and often in your association.

For events that present the damage of "the Takeover" to the Southern Baptist Convention, state conventions, and associations, visit *www.SBCTakeover.com.*

For CBF responses to SBC attacks, visit *www.truthaboutcbf.net.*

For information about Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, visit *www.thefellowship.info*.

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Notes

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Changes in the Southern Baptist Convention have gone unnoticed by many members of Southern Baptist churches. Southern Baptists were once known for their historic adherence to Baptist principles such as priesthood of all believers, the separation of church and state, local church autonomy, and individual responsibility for interpreting the Bible and applying it to life. A deep trust developed throughout the 20th century in SBC institutions and agencies. Southern Baptist students called to ministry could expect to encounter competent theological education at any of the six SBC seminaries.

Today, the new leaders of the SBC claim to speak "for" members of Southern Baptist churches on a wide array of political and moral issues. Candidates for political office, including the Presidency, are scrutinized for "approval" by a small group of SBC agency heads and pastors. One nationally-known television evangelist proclaimed that 15,000,000 Southern Baptists will elect the next President of the United States! Students attending the SBC seminaries are exposed exclusively to a Fundamentalist, sometimes Calvinistic, theological education.

What happened? When and where did the SBC change its course? Who is responsible? What happened to seminary professors, agency leaders, and prominent pastors who resisted the revolutionary changes in the SBC?

Out of all that has happened can Baptist people find hope?

This book provides a well-documented, factual description of what many have come to understand as "the Fundamentalist takeover of the SBC." It also introduces the reader to the formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, one of several responses from free and faithful churches to the "Takeover."