

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FUNDAMENTALIST-MODERNIST
CONTROVERSIES OF BOTH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
AND THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Doctor of Philosophy Committee
of the
Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Theological and Historical Studies Department

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BM Jacksonville University, 2003
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May 2010

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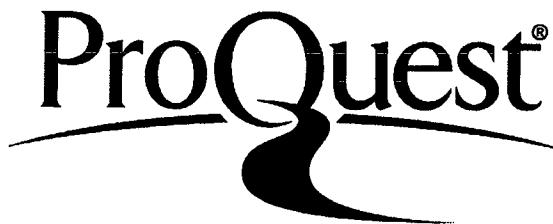
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**REPORT OF DISSERTATION EXAMINATION
FOR THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM
MID-AMERICA BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

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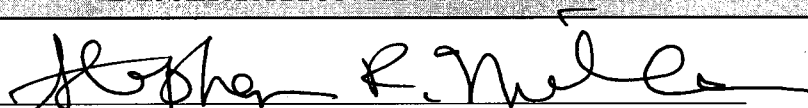
Major Field: Theological and Historical Studies

Date Approved: April 23, 2010

Dissertation Title:

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

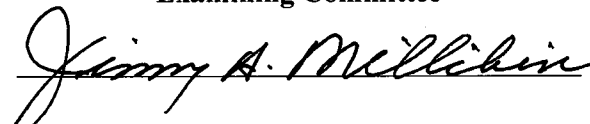


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Examining Committee



This dissertation meets the academic standards of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary but does not necessarily represent the views of the administration and faculty.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation compares and contrasts two significant theological controversies in the twentieth century. The first controversy deals with the Presbyterian Church USA; the second involves the Southern Baptist Convention. The result of the controversies changed each denomination forever.

The first two chapters focus on the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in the Presbyterian Church in the 1920's. The Presbyterian Church USA, was known as holding to conservative, Reformed theology. Her crown jewel, Princeton Theological Seminary, was known as the citadel of conservative Presbyterian thought. During the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, liberals and moderates, through political subversion, succeeded in capturing control of the denomination. Their next move was to gain control of Princeton Seminary. There was little the conservatives could do to stop the liberal takeover. Defeated conservatives left and founded Westminster Theological Seminary as a foil to the now liberal Princeton. The liberals had succeeded in capturing the denomination and her educational institutions. The conservatives were forced to retreat and form a new seminary that they felt remained true to traditional Presbyterian beliefs.

The next two chapters deal with the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention and how it impacted the Cooperative Program seminaries. The Southern Baptist Convention was founded on conservative beliefs. Their polity was different than

the hierarchal system of the Presbyterians, which worked to their advantage. Several pastors and denominational leaders became aware of the liberalism that was now in the educational systems. They began working to return the largest protestant denomination in America back to its conservative roots. As early as 1969, several Southern Baptist leaders began to work to reform the convention. The controversy lasted until 1991, when the liberals left the convention and formed their own denomination. After the controversy had subsided in the Southern Baptist Convention, the conservatives moved to reclaim the seminaries and colleges from the liberals. They succeeded in reclaiming the seminaries, but were unsuccessful in making progress in the state conventions and colleges.

The last section deals with how the Controversy affected the state conventions and liberal arts universities. Most state conventions and colleges resisted the reform that came to the overall denomination and seminaries. The Baptist General Convention of Texas, the largest of all of the state conventions, provides a clear example of resistance to reform. Lastly, Baylor University, the largest Baptist University in the world, broke away from the Baptist General Convention of Texas. This set off a trend that separated the Southern Baptist colleges from their state conventions. The work concludes with a final comparison of how each denomination handled controversy and the impact that each controversy made on their denomination.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Of the many religious controversies of the twentieth century, two of the most significant occurred within two prominent Protestant denominations, the Presbyterian Church and the Southern Baptist Convention. While the first controversy lasted only ten years, the latter engaged the largest Protestant denomination in America in a bitter struggle for nearly thirty years.¹ A significant amount of scholarship has focused on the causes and outcomes of each of these controversies.² While much of the research and

¹Several sources differ on the beginning of the Conservative Resurgence. Most historians acknowledge that the beginning of the controversy began with the Pressler-Patterson coalition of 1979. David T. Morgan, in his work, *The New Crusades The New Holy Land: Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969-1991* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1996), dates the struggle back to the presidency of W. A. Criswell in 1969 and details the slow start of the Conservative Resurgence during the decade of the 1970's.

²For sources on the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention, see Michael W. Nolan, "A Critical Evaluation of the Historiography Surrounding the Southern Baptist Convention Controversy, 1979-1996" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1997); William Stanley J. Stone, "The Southern Baptist Convention Reformation, 1979-1990: A Social Drama" (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 1993); Dennis Ray Wiles, "Factors Contributing to the Resurgence of Fundamentalism in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1979-1990" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992). Significant works dealing with the Presbyterian Controversy are as follows: James Alan Patterson, "Robert E. Speer and the Crisis of the American Protestant Missionary Movement, 1920-1937" (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1980); Ronald H. Clutter, "The Reorientation of Princeton Theological Seminary 1920-1929" (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982), Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996), Bradley J. Longfield, *The*

work generated by the study of these separate events is beneficial, no comparative analysis of these two unique controversies exists.

There is a direct correlation between the controversies of the two denominations. In both controversies, the liberal side argued for the de-emphasis of theology in favor of becoming more inclusive and accommodating to progressive (i.e. liberal) ideas and personalities. The New-School Presbyterians were more liberal than their Old-School counterparts. The forced reunification of the two schools in 1869 created a unique problem in the ranks of the General Assembly. Two schools, the conservative Old School and the liberal New School were suddenly reunified without settling their differences. New School proponents felt conservative Calvinistic theology was too rigid to be beneficial in the larger scope of the theological liberalism of their day.

The liberal New School sought to jettison historic Calvinistic Presbyterianism and replace it with their own inclusivist's view, which differed greatly from the revered Westminster Confession of Faith. Princeton Theological Seminary, and her adherence to Old School Presbyterianism, stood in direct contrast to the New School theology. The controversy that engulfed the Church during the decade of the 1920's reached its zenith with the battle for the seminary. The liberals succeeded in gaining control of the General

Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalist, Modernist, and Moderates (New York: Oxford, 1991), Louis Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement 1930 -1956*, Twin Book Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963); Bradley J. Longfield, "For Church and Country: The Fundamentalist-Modernist Conflict in the Presbyterian Church," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78:1 (Spring 2000): 35-50; Ronald T. Clutter, "The Reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary Reconsidered," *Grace Theological Journal* 7 (1986): 179-202.; Edwin H. Rian, "Theological Conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s in the Presbyterian Church and on the Princeton Seminary Campus," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 5:3 (1984): 216-223.

Assembly by 1926, and three short years later to gain control of Princeton. Once Princeton fell, the dominance of Presbyterian theology and influence in America waned drastically.³

The controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention had a similar parallel to the Presbyterian conflict. The Southern Baptist seminaries, founded on historic Baptists beliefs, were guilty of straying into, embracing, and teaching both theological liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. Several conservative leaders realized the dangerous road the convention was heading down and set plans into motion to return the Baptists to their historical, conservative roots.

The liberal's arguments against the conservative resurgence parroted several key points of their liberal Presbyterian brethren sixty years earlier. In their battle to hold control of the Southern Baptist Convention, the liberals argued that Baptists historically have had the freedom to believe what they wanted about the Scripture and that it was each individual's right to believe how and what they wanted. They argued that Baptists are not creedal and therefore no litmus test should rightfully be applied to what Baptists believe. They decided to organize to try to stop the Fundamentalist takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention. The conservatives on the other hand attempted to restore traditional Baptists beliefs about the Scripture, the church, and other basic tenets of the faith.

This struggle happened at several different levels. The first level of conflict was within the national scope of the Southern Baptist Convention. Both conservatives and

³Clifton E. Olmstead, *A History of Religion in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1960), 574. Olmstead argued that Princeton Theological Seminary became the center of theological existentialism in America by the end of the 1930's.

moderates battled for control of the presidency of the convention during the decade of the eighties and into the early nineties. The next battle the conservatives waged was for control of the Cooperative Program Seminaries. The conservatives viewed the seminaries as the root of theological liberalism and decided that reform was needed. Next, the controversy waged within each of the state conventions. Because of Baptist polity, it is possible for the overall convention to change and for an individual state, which is in itself an autonomous entity, to change, resist change, or remain relatively unchanged by the actions of the SBC.

The final section of the controversy occurred within the Southern Baptist liberal-arts colleges and universities. The conservatives, while largely successful at reforming the seminaries, had a much tougher time reforming the colleges and universities. Several state conventions decided to break with their universities rather than reform them. Some colleges, fearing a fundamentalist takeover, took drastic steps to insure their independence from what they perceived as fundamentalist interference.

The Motivation for the Study

How did the controversies in both the Presbyterian Church and the Southern Baptist Convention affect the overall denominations? Did the Southern Baptists learn from the conservative Presbyterian's failure in their controversy? Did they use the same tactics on the moderates during the Conservative Resurgence in the later half of the century? A few works were produced at the very end of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy among Presbyterianism that give a fairly biased picture of the events of that

decade.⁴ This is a different story within Southern Baptist life. Many works, such as books, pamphlets, sermons, and articles have stemmed from the Baptist controversy. Those who were labeled conservatives or fundamentalists wrote about the convention returning to its historic, conservative roots. The liberals or moderates who lost control of the convention categorize the controversy as a radical takeover by the unscrupulous fundamentalists who had attempted to undermine Baptist principles of freedom and scholarship.⁵ They felt the conservatives were trying to limit freedom of expression by imposing their narrow-minded views on the rest of Baptist life.

This study will attempt to show a comparison between the conservative's fall from power and prominence in Presbyterianism and the disastrous impact it had on the denomination, and then, compare it to Southern Baptists, who felt the denomination was straying away from historic Baptist principles based on Scripture, and who decided to confront the liberals in the convention and to purge them from Baptist life.

The Relevance of the Study

Because of both the length and scope of the two controversies, and because of the

⁴The two most significant works dealing with the Presbyterian controversy are Edwin H. Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1940), and Lefferts A. Loetscher, *The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church Since 1869* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954). Rian was professor of church history at Westminster Theological Seminary and wrote from the conservative, fundamentalist Presbyterian view. Loetscher was professor of history at Princeton Theological Seminary and wrote from the liberal, moderate Presbyterian view.

⁵Moderate leader Walter B. Shurden authored two significant works dealing with the controversy from a moderate perspective. They are *Not a Silent People: Controversies that Have Shaped Southern Baptist* (Nashville: Broadman, 1972), and *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1993).

amount of biased literature generated by both the liberal and conservative factions, a historical study that is relatively free from biases and prejudices is warranted. While most of the literature generated throughout the controversies argued from a certain theological or denominational standpoint, there is no current research that compares the two controversies with the intention of discovering why the conservative Presbyterians chose to leave Princeton and start new schools of theology that were more in line with their traditional beliefs and why the Baptists fought so hard to return their denomination back to its historic, conservative roots. Most of the research has focused on the events that either led up to or resulted from the controversies. Very little information is available as to the main cause of the liberal's victory at Princeton and the conservative's overall victory at Southern and the other seminaries.

Part of the challenge in comparing these two controversies stems from the difference in polity between the two denominations. Presbyterian church polity is vastly different from Baptist polity.⁶ Because the Presbyterian churches and synods are so closely connected, if a minister is charged with heresy and de-frocked from his church, it is virtually impossible for him to get a ministry position or pastorate anywhere else in the Presbyterian church.⁷

⁶Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, in *Contours of Christian Theology Series* (Downers' Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 210-211. Clowney provides a basic understanding of how church polity works. A good discussion on Presbyterian polity comes from Robert L. Reymond's chapter entitled the Presbyterian-Led Church: Presbyterian Church Government, in *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity*. Edited by Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2004).

⁷High-profile examples of this took place with the J. Gresham Machen trial of 1934 where charges of heresy were brought up against Machen and he was effectively

The same cannot be said, however, about Baptist life. Because of Baptist polity, each church is its own autonomous organism and is neither controlled nor owned by any national state or local denomination or convention. This presented a unique problem in Baptist life and in the controversy overall.⁸

The Purpose of the Study

This study will compare the controversy at Princeton in the early twenties and the three decade-long struggle for control of the Southern Baptist Convention. This work will seek to answer the question as to why the conservative Presbyterians failed in their quest to maintain control of their church and as a result, lost their seminary and chose to let it go and formed other schools as a foil to the then liberal seminary. Their loss will be

removed from his pulpit (See chapter 8 of Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict*, for further information on the Machen Trail and the aftermath). Earlier attempts at trying pastors for heresy or other violations occurred three different times during the Presbyterian controversy. The first was the heresy trial of Professor Charles A. Briggs before the Presbytery of New York. The second was the trial and removal of Henry Preserved Smith from his pulpit at the Presbytery of Cincinnati because of his work, *Biblical Scholarship and Inspiration*, which favored the historical-critical method of the Bible. Smith was tried, convicted, and ultimately removed from his pulpit. He appealed to the General Assembly in 1894 and ultimately lost his case. Smith claimed he would have to admit that the scriptures were inerrant for him to keep his position. He argued in vain before the Assembly that all points of view, not just the narrowminded views of the Westminster Confession and Old-School Presbyterianism, be allowed to be openly discussed and proclaimed from Presbyterian pulpits. For further study on the Briggs trail, see Loetscher chapter 6. For the Smith trail, see Loetscher chapter 7.

⁸Several sources that are helpful in understanding Baptist polity are as follows: Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology: 2nd Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology vol. 4: Church, Last Things* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2005), Mark Dever's chapter entitled, "The Doctrine of the Church," in, *A Theology for the Church*, edited by Daniel L Akin (Nashville: Broadman and Holman 2007), 766-856. A classic source, which is now dated, is James L. Sullivan, *Baptist Polity as I See It* (Nashville: Broadman, 1983).

compared to the Southern Baptist Controversy in order to show a difference in the way the Southern Baptist handled the controversy in the convention.

This study will address the question of why Southern Baptists decided to spend years and resources to reclaim the denomination from liberalism instead of simply just letting it go. This study will also look at how the controversy impacted both a state convention and a major Southern Baptist university.

The Methodology and Organization of the Study

Having introduced the topic in chapter one, this project is a comparison of the controversies of the Presbyterian Church and the Southern Baptist Convention in an effort to see why the former failed and why the latter prevailed. Chapter two of this dissertation presents an overview of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the Presbyterian Church and will focus on the events that took place that moved the Presbyterian Church from the example of conservative scholasticism and turned them into an inclusivist denomination.

Chapter three focuses on the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy at Princeton Theological Seminary. This section begins with a brief history of the school and its historic stand for both scriptural truth and common sense realism. After the liberals in the church secured their positions on the boards of the General Assembly, they went after the last remaining bastion of Old School Presbyterianism – Princeton Theological Seminary. This chapter will show how the fundamentalists were politically outmaneuvered and subsequently chose to relinquish control of Princeton Theological Seminary to the liberal moderates and decided to develop alternative schools of theology

that were more in line with traditional Presbyterian beliefs.

Chapter four is an overview of the Conservative-Moderate Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention. Special emphasis will be placed on the convention meetings that turned the tide for the conservatives. The chapter will analyze the plan of action, strategies, and outcomes of the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention. This section will also address the arguments from moderates, perceptions of the controversy as a whole, and the fate of those who left the party.

Chapter five focuses on the effect the controversy had on The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This chapter will provide a study of the oldest, largest, and most visible sign of theological scholasticism in the SBC and the events before, leading up to, and after the return of the seminary to its historical conservative roots. This section looks at prominent liberal or questionable professors who were targeted by conservatives as well as the tenures of the last three presidents of the school; two of which were liberal, and the last a conservative who returned the school to its conservative roots. There will be an analysis of the perceptions of the school and the politics surrounding the reform of the seminary.

Chapter six focuses on the controversy at the state level. It provides an overview of the politics in the state convention and how denominational politics and the struggle between the conservatives and moderates affected the politics at the state level. This chapter focuses on The Baptist General Convention of Texas, the largest state Baptist convention, and how the Controversy affected state politics.

Chapter seven focuses on the controversy at Baylor University, the largest Southern Baptist college in America. The topics discussed and analyzed will be the

history of Baylor, growth of the school, liberalism at the school, the charter change that removed Baylor from the control of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the fallout from the charter change, and the political drama that occurred during the closing days of the Southern Baptist controversy.

Chapter eight concludes this work and will summarize all the relevant points concerning the aftermath of the controversies and a final comparison between two denominations.

CHAPTER II

THE FUNDAMENTALIST-MODERNIST CONTROVERSY

IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

For over one-hundred years, the Presbyterian Church stood for conservative orthodoxy in America. Many of her leaders, both clergy and laity, greatly aided the theological development of this country. Of the many schools and seminaries, the seminary at Princeton was known across America as the greatest seminary in the history of American religious thought.¹ Her preachers, scholars, and professors were well known around the world as upholding the Calvinist roots of Old Side Presbyterianism. Men such as Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, Robert Dick Wilson, Gerhardus Vos, and Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield dominated the conservative theological landscape of America. The school served as a shining light for

¹There are many great books dealing with the heritage and history of Princeton Theological Seminary. One of the finest histories available is a two volume work by David B. Calhoun, professor of Church History at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. It is entitled *Princeton Theological Seminary* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1994) and Banner of Truth published vol. 2 in 1996. Other significant works include Lefferts A. Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), and William K. Selden's work *Princeton Theological Seminary: A Narrative History 1812-1992* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). Another work of significance is entitled *The Princeton Theology 1812-1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method From Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), edited by Mark Noll and *The Princeton Theology: Reformed Theology in America* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), edited by David F. Wells.

orthodoxy throughout the nineteenth century.

During the early part of the twentieth century, the school that modeled American conservative thought began to weaken, not only in her influence, but also in her own theological thinking. This came as a result of liberalism that had crept into the Presbyterian Church. The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy led to the demise of one the greatest theological schools and its thought in American history and not only set the tone for a new wave of liberalism to sweep the land, but also displayed a new tactic for churchmen who were looking to change their church's direction. This chapter looks at the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the Presbyterian Church and the effects it had on the denomination during this time period.

The History of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy

The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in the Presbyterian Church began because of the forced unification of the Old School and New School of Presbyterianism. What became known as the Princeton Theology came as result of the Old-Side New-Side controversy that happened between 1741 and continued through 1758. During this time, Old School pastors who held to a higher form of Calvinism grew concerned about the spiritual development of some in their church. They viewed those who embraced revivalistic tendencies toward deep meditation and thought about God, Scripture, and theology as dangerous and close to heresy. It was their priority that Princeton should focus on traditional Old -Side theology if the Church was to thrive.²

²Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 329.

During the nineteenth century, Princeton Theological Seminary stood as a model of American reformed conservative thought. As theological liberalism swept across the Atlantic and crept into American thought and theology, Princeton stood alone as the last great citadel of conservative theological thought. Gary North, in his book, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church*, made the following statement about the beginning of the controversy:

The events collectively known as the Presbyterian conflict centered around five theological questions. (1) What is the nature of God and His relation to His Church? (2) What is the (representative) voice of God's authority in history? (3) What is the nature of law, e.g., the ecclesiastical judicial function of creeds and confessions? (4) On what legal basis, and in which jurisdiction, should Church discipline be brought against ordained ministers who are regarded as theologically deviant? (5) Which faction will be the dominant one in the Church's future?³

Because of the views prevalent during this time period, it is difficult to point to a single inciting moment that touched off the controversy. Some argued that the conflict at Princeton was the culmination of the Old Side/ New Side controversy from colonial Presbyterianism that was never officially resolved. Others argued that the theologically liberal climate of American theology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century finally brought its battle to Princeton.

Edwin Rian argued that there were four separate issues that perpetuated the controversy. The first dealt with the attempt of the liberal faction to revise the Westminster Confession. The second was the Harry Emerson Fosdick affair that brought

³Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church*. (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996), xxxviii. North summarizes these issues into the following five words: legitimacy, authority, legality, sanctions, and inheritance.

the conflict out of the shadows and into the plain view of the world. Third was the passing of the Auburn Affirmation in which all of the signatories denied the five “fundamentals” of the faith. The final issue was the reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary, where the moderates seized control of the governing boards and outnumbered the conservatives. This allowed them to take the school in a solid, liberal direction.⁴

Higher Criticism

One of the earliest warning signs that trouble lurked ahead dealt with the issue of higher criticism of the Bible and the conservative response. The Presbyterian Church and Princeton Theological Seminary made a choice to deal with the issues of higher criticism. As European liberalism slowly crept into Union Theological Seminary in New York, it began to appeal to many scholars at both schools. Higher biblical criticism was all the rage in the late 1890s and early 1900s, with European liberal thought permeating nearly every aspect of biblical and theological studies. With theological liberalism common in most schools in the late nineteenth century, Princeton Theological Seminary both firmly rejected it and openly attacked the theological liberalism of this period. This was due partly to the openness of theological thought that was allowed and even encouraged at PTS.⁵ Professors such as Robert Dick Wilson, Gerhardus Vos, and Benjamin

⁴Edwin H. Rian, “Theological Conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s in the Presbyterian Church and on the Princeton Seminary Campus,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 5:3 (1984): 218-219.

⁵In 1922, Professor Robert Dick Wilson wrote an article in which he provided a solid defense of the written Word of God. This type of scholarship was prevalent in the Old School Presbyterians, who stood for the strict adherence to doctrine. Even with men

Breckenridge Warfield succeeded in providing a solid theological defense for their faith. Because of their strict adherence to doctrine, Princeton Theological Seminary stood alone for the conservative Reformed faith during the early part of the twentieth century.

The Briggs Affair

One of the first signs of trouble in the Presbyterian Church that directly involved Princeton was the Briggs Affair. Charles Briggs, professor of Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary, issued a challenge that validated higher criticism as a viable method of theological thinking at Union Theological Seminary. Briggs, already a sixteen- year veteran professor at Union, had made a dramatic shift in his theology about both the inspiration and authority of the Bible.⁶ He began to doubt the traditional beliefs of the church about the Scriptures.⁷ Briggs determined that higher criticism was the most accurate way to interpret the Bible and that the Westminster Confession, which had been the guiding source of reformed theology, was antiquated and subsequently inadequate to handle the emerging shift in theological studies.⁸

Briggs book, entitled, *Whither?*, began to question the very fundamentals of

like Wilson making solid biblical arguments against higher criticism, his warnings went unheeded and the school paid dearly for it during the late 1920s.

⁶Lefferts A. Loetscher, *The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church Since 1869* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954), 11.

⁷Robert T. Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 71.

⁸Ibid., 70.

Reformed theology.⁹ His work argued that several professors from both Union and Princeton had abandoned the principles dictated in the Westminster Confession by embracing and teaching a more Calvinistic scholasticism.¹⁰ He firmly rejected the orthodox views of reformed theology and replaced them with newer higher critical forms. The conservatives immediately moved to attack Briggs and his teachings as heretical, but the damage to their cause was already done.¹¹

In an address made before the general assembly entitled “The Authority of Holy Scripture,” he addressed six problems that he saw regarding the inspiration of the Bible. First, he attacked the superstitious nature of many things in the Bible.¹² Second, he denied verbal inspiration, claiming that neither Scripture nor the early creeds of Christendom ever affirmed this doctrine.¹³ He then claimed the authenticity of the biblical books was a barrier to spiritual effectiveness.¹⁴ Briggs argued that the Scriptures contained errors that could not be explained away. He viewed the defense of the original text as inerrant as insufficient and sheer assumption. Scripture, according to Briggs, contained errors in the circumstantial evidence it produced. According to his view, he was no different than his conservative colleagues at either Union or Princeton.¹⁵ He

⁹North, *Crossed Fingers*, 206-207.

¹⁰Ibid, 80-81.

¹¹Loetscher, *The Broadening Church*, 48-49.

¹²Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York*, 71.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., 72.

¹⁵Ibid.

directed this attack squarely toward the conservatives at Princeton.¹⁶

Fifth, Briggs argued against the conception of miracles because he stated it violated the laws of nature. He called miracles human fabrications which churches have both taught and passed down as fact.¹⁷ His final attack was against “minute prediction” as misunderstood prophecy which lead pastors to invent unrealistic futures that would fit their predicted fulfillments.¹⁸

In 1910, The General Assembly adopted the five “fundamentals” as essential to the Christian faith.¹⁹ Because of his stance against orthodoxy, the Presbytery of New York brought up charges of heresy against Briggs. Briggs defended his doctrines and beliefs before the Presbytery of New York. He refuted their claims of heresy and showed proof about several fundamental questions dealing with the unknown authorship of several Old Testament books and the understanding of the early church fathers concerning the same doctrines that were in question as a basis for his teachings.²⁰ Even though he claimed to believe the Bible was inerrant, the General Assembly found Briggs guilty and suspended him from ministry in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.²¹ This fueled the small embers that were glowing for some years. While the Princetonians saw this as a

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Origins of Fundamentalism: Towards a Historical Interpretation*, in Facet Books Historical Series 10 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 22.

²⁰David Briggs, *The Defence of Professor Briggs Before the Presbytery of New York* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1893), 87.

²¹Edwin H. Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1940), 18.

victory, others at Union saw it as a precursor to a greater conflict ahead.²²

Westminster Confession Revision

One of the staples of the conservative Princeton theology was the Westminster Confession of Faith. This document, first penned in 1647, laid the groundwork for the theology of the Presbyterian Church for over 200 years. Shortly after the Old School-New School reunion, some desired to revise the Westminster Confession of Faith.²³ In 1878, the Niagara Conference produced the “Niagara Creed.” It possessed fourteen distinct “fundamentals of the faith.” The opening statement of the creed was used as a standard for admission into the conference. It declared the following:

So many in the latter times have departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; so many have turned away their ears from the truth, and turned to fables; so many are busily engaged in scattering broadcast the seeds of fatal error, directing the honor of our Lord and the destiny of the soul, we are constrained by fidelity to Him to make the following declaration of our doctrinal belief, and to present it as a bond of union with those who wish to be connected with this conference.²⁴

The debate over whether or not to accept the amended creed was not received by all in the

²²Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York*, 90.

²³Loetscher, *The Broadening Church*, 43.

²⁴James J. Ehrhard, “An Analysis of the Popular Apologetic of Harry Emerson Fosdick During the Height of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, 1922-1932,” (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997), 85. The Niagara Creed was meant as a declaration of faith for ministry. It is interesting because it is the first creed to espouse dispensational theology, which was not favored by Presbyterian pastors. For further study of some of the events that were important to the fundamentalists, consult Willard B. Gatewood Jr.’s, *Controversy in the Twenties* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969). The section dealing with evolution and the teaching of it is particularly entertaining and informative regarding the fundamentalist’s mind during this period.

Church.²⁵ The General Assembly of 1893 polled 220 presbyteries to see if revision was favored. In order for revision to take place, two-thirds of the presbyteries would have to give their approval. The committee needed 147 to enact the revision. They only received 115. For now, the Westminster Confession of Faith appeared to remain intact. As the fundamentalist phenomenon swept the country in the opening decades of the twentieth century, the movement received considerable support from well-known leaders in the Presbyterian church.²⁶ Men such as Mark A. Matthews and Maitland Alexander played a significant part in implementing the fundamentalist agenda at the General Assemblies.²⁷

²⁵Ehrhard, "An Analysis of the Popular Apologetic of Harry Emerson Fosdick," 86.

²⁶George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 109. Marsden did a masterful job of identifying and discussing the historical and cultural events that led up to the conflict within fundamentalism. Marsden defined fundamentalism as follows: "'Fundamentalism' refers to a twentieth-century movement closely tied to the revivalist tradition of mainstream evangelical Protestantism that militantly opposed modernist theology and associated cultural change. Fundamentalism shares traits with many other movements to which it has been related (such as pietism, evangelicalism, revivalism, conservatism, confessionalism, millenarianism, and the holiness and Pentecostal movements), but it has been distinguished most clearly from these by its militancy in opposition to modernism. This militancy has typically been expressed in terms of certain characteristic theological or intellectual emphases: whereas modernism or liberal theology tended to explain life and much of religion in terms of natural developments, fundamentalists accentuated the supernatural. According to their most distinctive doctrines (although not all held by everyone in the movement) were the divinely guaranteed verbal inerrancy of Scripture, divine creation as opposed to biological evolution, and a dispensational-premillennial scheme that explained historical change in terms of divine control. In America, where fundamentalism originated, adherence to the first of these teachings became a test for the purity of denominations, the second a symbol for the effort to preserve the Christian character of the culture, and the third a basis for fellowship among fundamentalists themselves." (Quoted by Nelson Hodges Hart, "The True and the False: the Worlds of an Emerging Evangelical Protestant Fundamentalism in America, 1890-1920" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1976), 23-24).

²⁷Charles E. Quirk, "Origins of the Auburn Affirmation," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 53 (Summer 1975): 121. Quirk argued the changes made at the Niagara

The Westminster Confession of Faith was safe for now. Its theology would soon arise again during the controversy of the 1920s.

Harry Emerson Fosdick and Clarence E. Macartney

Many scholars agree that the genesis of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the Presbyterian church centered around two sermons preached in 1922.²⁸ On Sunday morning, May 21, 1922, Harry Emerson Fosdick, a noted liberal Baptist preacher, delivered a sermon from the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church in New York City. It became the most famous of his career entitled, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" Fosdick delivered his sermon as a "plea for good will." Unfortunately, it exploded like a bombshell on the Presbyterian church and set events into motion that would devastate the church well into the next decade.²⁹ The conservative Northern Presbyterians took

Conference were insignificant to the proposed changes to the Westminster Confession.

²⁸Edward W. Farley, "The Presbyterian Heritage as Modernism: Reaffirming a Forgotten Past in Hard Times," in *The Presbyterian Predicament: Six Perspectives*, edited by Milton J. Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Luis B. Weeks (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 52-53. The term "modernism" can be as difficult to define as fundamentalism because of its ambiguity. As a historical term, it was first used to describe a Roman Catholic movement at the turn of the century that was condemned by Pope Pius X. In Protestant circles, it's meaning is twofold. It is first used to describe the extremely liberal wing of liberal Protestantism, in which case a distinction is posited between evangelical liberals like Charles A. Briggs and William Adams Brown and modernists like Shailer Matthews and Gerald Birney Smith. This term was also used in the 1920s as the theological alternative to fundamentalism.

²⁹Louis Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement 1930 -1956* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 15. Ivy Lee, a layman at the First Presbyterian Church in New York City, so enjoyed Fosdick's sermon that he published and distributed it without informing Fosdick. He had tried to keep his liberalism under the radar, but this inadvertent blunder by a layman exposed his liberalism to the world. The Fundamentalists put immediate pressure on the First Presbyterian Church to oust Fosdick for his denial of the virgin birth, the inerrancy of the Bible, and the second coming of Jesus. Fosdick was later removed from the pulpit in 1924, not because of his theological beliefs, but because he was not an

immediate action against Fosdick and his sermon. Clarence Macartney, a conservative Presbyterian pastor and professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, countered Fosdick's sermon with his own entitled, "Shall Unbelief Win?" These sermons touched off the official start of the conflict.³⁰

Fosdick's infamous sermon propelled him into the national spotlight. He became the most influential pastor in the first half of the twentieth century. He began his ministry at First Presbyterian Church on December 20, 1918. Both the trustees and the congregation approved his appointment to the clerical staff by a unanimous vote.³¹ Fosdick aligned himself with the liberal wing of the Presbyterian church. He authored several books in which he tried to make the case for his theological liberalism. His most famous book was probably *The Modern Use of the Bible*. This work, composed in 1924, was Fosdick's apologetic for his 1922 sermon.³²

The 1923 General Assembly

The 1923 meeting of the General Assembly in Indianapolis began with a battle for moderator of the General Assembly. William Jennings Bryan ran against Charles Wishart, president of the College of Wooster, a Presbyterian school that taught the theory of evolution as fact in the science department. Bryan lost the election by a close

ordained Presbyterian minister. This however, did very little to satisfy the already irked fundamentalists who were preparing for a war.

³⁰Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict*, 19.

³¹Robert Moats Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet* (New York: Oxford, 1985), 93-4.

³²*Ibid.*, 135.

vote of 451 to 427.³³ After losing the election, Bryan excoriated in the assembly for over an hour on their acceptance of evolution. This was a warmup for the committee over what to do next about the Fosdick issue.³⁴

The next order of business for the General Assembly was the Fosdick case. Fosdick's preaching in the First Church in New York was problematic because of his denial of the five fundamentals of the faith. The General Assembly issued two reports on the Fosdick incident. The majority report, signed by twenty-two of twenty-three committee members, reinforced the church's commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith and recommended that no action be taken because the Presbytery of New York was investigating the complaint and therefore did not need the General Assembly's involvement.³⁵

Clarence Macartney, the leader and spokesperson for the conservatives, raised the stakes in the debate. He claimed the issue before the church was not just a denominational disagreement. He made the following comment to the General Assembly:

The eyes of the whole Church and the whole nation are upon this Assembly. They are waiting to hear what you will say. If you answer the Philadelphia overture in the affirmative you rejoice the hearts and strengthen the arms of thousands of followers of Christ throughout the land. . . . But if you answer the overture in the negative, you disappoint thousands of praying men and women, you discourage

³³Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy* (New York: Oxford, 1991), 73.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 74.

³⁵*Ibid.*

them in a battle for Christ in his kingdom.³⁶

William Jennings Bryan applauded the action of the assembly. He believed that conservative Presbyterianism could regain the losses it had incurred in the first part of the twentieth century. His optimism however, turned out to be sanguine.

On the final day of the meeting, William P. Merrill, along with eighty-five commissioners, lodged an official protest against the committee's action on the Fosdick case. Their protest claimed the Assembly's decision did not properly address the matter before the entire body, was based on unsubstantial allegations, and sought to impose doctrinal tests on church officials that were unconstitutional.³⁷ Henry Sloane Coffin, pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, issued a statement in which he explicitly denied the five fundamentals of the faith. He issued the following statement to support his views:

I feel that I owe it to my congregation and to the Presbytery to state plainly that if any action is taken which removes Dr. Fosdick from the pulpit of the First Church on account of his interpretation of the Christian Gospel, I cannot honestly be allowed to remain in the pulpit of Madison Avenue Church, for I fully share his point of view.³⁸

The 1923 General Assembly did nothing to address the problems of the Presbyterian Church which did nothing but fuel the fire and add to the controversy. Both fundamentalists and moderates were now clearly taking sides in the battle that would come.

³⁶Ibid., 75.

³⁷Ibid., 76.

³⁸Ibid.

Several conservatives felt that the public was unaware of the problems in the church. In 1923, John Gresham Machen, newly minted leader of the conservatives, published a book entitled *Christianity and Liberalism*. He argued that theological liberalism was incompatible with traditional Christianity. He wrote that he was “interested in showing that despite the liberal use of traditional phraseology modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions.”³⁹ He attacked the claim of liberals that Christianity was a life and not doctrine. He argued that Christianity was “a way of life founded upon a message.”⁴⁰

Machen wrote *Christianity and Liberalism* as a comparison of traditional Christian beliefs and present-day theological liberalism. His book specifically discussed the doctrines of God and man, Scripture, Christ, salvation, and the church. He began by showing that the liberal view of God and the rejection of His attribute of transcendence both skews and distorts the rest of their theology.⁴¹ Next, he attacked the belief that there is a loss of consciousness of man’s sin.⁴² Concerning Scripture, Machen wrote that the liberals rejected both the authority of Scripture and the Christ of Scripture. Because of the liberal view of Christ, He was stripped of His significance, becoming an example of

³⁹John Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923), 7.

⁴⁰Ibid., 21. Machen argued that the apostle Paul was not an advocate of an undogmatic religion, but that his mission above all else was to show both the objective and universal truth of his message.

⁴¹Ibid., 64.

⁴²Ibid.

faith and not the object of faith. Based on this view, Jesus was wrongfully conceived as being the founder of Christianity rather than the foundation.⁴³

Next, Machen attacked the liberal understanding of salvation. He said the following about the liberal understanding of the atonement:

Against the doctrine of the Cross, they use every weapon of caricature and vilification. Thus they pour out their scorn upon a thing so holy and so precious that in the presence of it the Christian heart melts in gratitude too deep for words. It never seems to occur to modern liberals that in deriding the Christian doctrine of the Cross, they are trampling upon human hearts.⁴⁴

Machen concluded that the church was in her weakened state because of her adherence to non-Christian principles. He wrote, “The greatest menace to the Christian Church to-day [sic] comes not from the enemies outside, but from the enemies within; it comes from the presence within the Church of a type of faith and practice that is anti-Christian to the core.”⁴⁵

Machen referred to those who declared acceptance to the Westminster Confession of Faith at the time of their ordination, but then later denied the Confession in their ministry. He desired that the liberals would leave the church and unite with other liberals to form new church bodies. If this didn’t happen, Machen saw the possibility of splitting off from the liberals as one of the Church’s most pressing needs.⁴⁶

⁴³Ibid., 112. Machen argued that the liberal Christ is not historical, but rather the product of human imagination.

⁴⁴Ibid., 120. He argued that salvation, according to the liberal view, was a form of legalism because it insisted on obeying God’s commands rather than trusting in the death of Christ.

⁴⁵Ibid., 117.

⁴⁶Ibid., 166.

Machen viewed liberalism as an enemy that sought to destroy the basic tenets of the Christian faith. His hardline defense of the traditional Calvinistic beliefs put him at odds with both Seminary president J. Ross Stevenson and Charles Erdman, a moderate friend and fellow seminary professor. Machen wrote the following with regard to Erdman's 1924 candidacy for Moderator of the Presbyterian Church:

If he is a candidate, I sincerely hope that he may be defeated; for he is more dangerous because of his good, little commentaries which betoken his belief in the New Testament. Ecclesiastically I fear that he will simply be a catspaw for the Modernist, as he was in 1920 or thereabouts, when he favored the agnostic scheme of organic union.⁴⁷

The conflict between these two men was a continuation of the two schools which now coexisted in the Presbyterian Church. Even though both men were conservative, they differed in their approach to handling difficult problems within the denomination. This difference of opinion was never reconciled, and Princeton Theological Seminary would pay the price.⁴⁸

In 1924, two books came out in defense of liberalism. Fosdick authored *The Modern Use of the Bible*, and Shailer Matthews wrote *The Faith of Modernism*. Both of these works advocated the liberal position on theology and Scripture. Fosdick argued that Scripture, according to the early Jewish rabbis, was not literal, but allegorical.⁴⁹ He was a key player in the early part of the controversy. He signed the Auburn Affirmation and

⁴⁷Ronald T. Clutter, "The Reorientation of Princeton Theological Seminary, 1900-1929" (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982), 118.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 119.

⁴⁹Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 72. In this book, he denied the five fundamentals of the faith.

taught homiletics at Union Theological Seminary for thirty-eight years after the Presbyterian controversy.⁵⁰

The 1924 General Assembly

In 1924, the General Assembly assembled in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for their annual meeting. The first order of business, as it was every session, was the election of a moderator. The Presbyterian Church selected two prominent members as candidates. Both men were conservatives; but one, Clarence Macartney, was a noted leader in the Fundamentalist party. The other candidate, Charles Erdman, was more tolerant of diverse beliefs within the church. William Jennings Bryan, after placing Macartney's name on the ballot, said, "His election to the office of chief executive of our militant church will be accepted as an announcement of the church's unshaken adherence to the impregnable rock of the holy Scriptures."⁵¹

The final vote was close. The Assembly cast 910 ballots. Clarence Macartney claimed 464 votes. Charles Erdman only earned 446 votes. This was an important victory for the Fundamentalists. Liberals, who largely supported Erdman, were upset and

⁵⁰Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet*, 319. For more information on Fosdick, consult David May's article, "Harry Emerson Fosdick: A Man for the Current Season," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 21:1 (Spring 1994): 43-57; J. Gresham Machen, "The Modern Use of the Bible," *Princeton Theological Review* 23 (1925): 66-81; and David B. King, "Harry Emerson Fosdick's Role in the War and Pacifist Movements," *Baptist History and Heritage* 41:2 (Summer 2006): 99-108; Charles Earl Leininger, "The Christian Apologetic of Harry Emerson Fosdick" (ThD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1967); Brian Lee Harbour, "The Christology of Harry Emerson Fosdick" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 1973); Henry E. Ernst, "American Protestant Liberalism as Exemplified in the Life and Thought of Harry Emerson Fosdick" (PhD diss., St. Mary's Seminary and University, 1988).

⁵¹Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 104.

discouraged at the candidate's defeat. Henry Sloane Coffin, in a letter to his wife confessed, "Here the dreaded worst has happened. On Bryan's nomination Macartney has been elected by a close majority."⁵² Coffin and the other liberals were determined not to give up without a fight. "My fighting blood's up," he added, "and I'm rather glad that the issue can be clearly drawn."⁵³

Conservatives also welcomed the clear-cut division between conservatives and liberals in the denomination. As the controversy escalated, liberals, led by Henry Sloane Coffin, and fundamentalists, led by Clarence Macartney, stood eye to eye, and toe to toe. Neither side yielded any ground. This stalemate forced the majority of the denomination who were observers to end their neutrality and declare a side.⁵⁴

Moderator Macartney and the conservative allies in the Assembly moved to purge the liberals and the practices from their denomination. William Jennings Bryan, the vice moderator, filled every committee with conservative clergymen.⁵⁵ Erdman, the defeated moderate candidate, became the chair of the home mission board which was a noncontroversial committee. Tensions ran high at the 1924 General assembly. Coffin, who placed himself squarely in the fight, saw no hope of reunification or reconciliation.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵See Paul Pressler's article "It Happened at Princeton," *The Baptist Student* (April 1952): 6-8, quoted in Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and Southern Culture* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 37. Pressler learned from the conservative Presbyterian's mistake during their controversy and, along with Paige Patterson, used the liberals tactic of nominating people sympathetic to their views to change the influential boards in the Southern Baptist Convention and to enact the Conservative Resurgence.

In a letter he wrote to his wife, he commented that he believed the church would split and that only a miracle could save it.⁵⁶ Conservatives drew a line in the sand and challenged the liberals to cross it.

The Auburn Affirmation

The turning point of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy was the creation and signing of the Auburn Affirmation. Many liberals were unhappy with the revisions of the Westminster Confession of Faith. They embraced the liberal thought of higher criticism and imposed it onto the biblical text. One of the main opponents to Machen and the other conservatives at Princeton was Coffin.⁵⁷ Known as one of the greatest liberal thinkers in the Presbyterian church, he threw his full support behind Harry Emerson Fosdick.⁵⁸ He and others assembled together and crafted the Auburn Affirmation. This affirmation (called heresy by the orthodox Presbyterians) set out to deny the five points affirmed by the Westminster Confession. They denied the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth, the resurrection, and the authority of the General Assembly on the presbyteries.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 125.

⁵⁷Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York*, 44-45.

⁵⁸Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 77-78.

⁵⁹Morgan Phelps Noyes, *Henry Sloane Coffin: The Man and His Ministry* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), 161. Coffin and others argued that they wanted to make the church more acceptable to a larger group of people, even if that meant abandoning historic Presbyterian beliefs and taking a more liberal or broader view of theology, church, and culture.

Differences with the Westminster Confession.

The differences between the Auburn Affirmation and the Westminster Confession were staggering. Many conservatives called this Affirmation the Auburn Heresy and vigorously opposed its implementation. J. Gresham Machen, writing about the Auburn Affirmation, made the following statement regarding the theology contained within:

Another attack has been made by the modernist “Affirmation” of one hundred and fifty ministers, for which by an active propaganda many more signatures have now been secured. The Affirmation does indeed employ Christian terminology; and, deceived by this terminology, there are no doubt Christian men among the signers. But the document itself is radically hostile to the Christian faith. It is directed against the creedal character of the Presbyterian Church and against the entire factual basis of Christianity.⁶⁰

This particular document challenged the authority of the General Assembly to make binding decrees. It argued that, according to the Adopting Act of 1729, which created the American Presbyterian Church, no candidate for the Presbyterian ministry could be held to confess more doctrine than what was contained in the confession, which argued solely for the system of doctrine taught in holy Scripture and not just for any particular section of the Westminster Confession.

This meant that a man could say he believed the entire Westminster Confession, even while denying the basic tenets and finer points of the confession, and still be ordained in the Presbyterian Church.⁶¹ This particular affirmation would have gone against the New York Presbytery’s decision in 1923 to reject the ordination of two

⁶⁰J. Gresham Machen, “The Parting of the Ways – Part II,” *The Presbyterian* (April 24, 1924), 7. Machen was affirming that several of the men who affirmed this affirmation were confused about the definition of Christianity as laid out in the Word of God.

⁶¹North, *Crossed Fingers*, 535.

candidates for the ministry, Henry P. Van Dusen and Cedric Lehman, because of their more liberal leanings.⁶²

Reaction by the General Assembly

Conservatives moved quickly to denounce the Auburn Affirmation. Many of them railed against this new “Auburn Heresy” and saw it as a downward spiral into rejection of orthodox Christianity. Even though a surprising number of ministers signed the Affirmation, a vast number of conservatives did not.⁶³ Loetscher described three different parties at that time. The first were the extreme conservatives who felt, like Machen, that Christianity and liberalism were totally incompatible because they were different religions altogether. This group predicted a major fallout and untold consequences if the measure was to pass. The second group was known as the party of extreme tolerance. These signers felt the theological differences were not as serious as the radical, militant conservatives and because of this affixed their signatures to the document. The last group was made up of conservatives who favored toleration and unity in the General Assembly, even though they had disagreements with several theological points made in the Affirmation. This group favored unity first.⁶⁴

The key to the Affirmation, according to Loetscher, was contained in the

⁶²Ibid. The moderates argued that this Affirmation was done in the spirit of Christian unity and as a way of preserving Christian freedom of religious thought in the Church, which they saw as threatened by the radical conservative factions. Liberals used this same argument in the Southern Baptist controversy some sixty years later.

⁶³Loetscher, *The Broadening Church*, 118.

⁶⁴Ibid., 119.

following paragraph:

Furthermore, this opinion of the General Assembly [i.e., the five-point deliverance] attempts to commit our church to certain theories concerning the inspiration of the Bible, and the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Continuing Life and Supernatural Power of our Lord Jesus Christ. We all hold most earnestly to these great facts and doctrines; we all believe from our hearts that the writers of the Bible were inspired of God; that Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh; that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and through Him we have our redemption; that having died for our sins He rose from the dead and is our ever-living Saviour [sic]; that in His earthly ministry He wrought many mighty works, and by His vicarious death and unfailing presence He is able to save to the uttermost. Some of us regard the particular theories contained in the deliverance of the General Assembly of 1923 as satisfactory explanations of these facts and doctrines. But we are united in believing that these are not the only theories allowed by the Scriptures and our standards as explanations of these facts and doctrines of our religion, and that all who hold to these facts and doctrines, whatever theories they may employ to explain them, are worthy of all confidence and fellowship.⁶⁵

The Auburn Affirmation did a great deal to damage the integrity and authority of the Presbyterian Church. The conservatives did not expect the Auburn Affirmation, or the Auburn Heresy as they called it, to become a major issue with the later General Assemblies. These men were shocked and dismayed to find that over 150 ministers signed this document. They could not understand how so many Presbyterian pastors were willing to jettison their theology for the sake of denominational unity.⁶⁶

The 1925 General Assembly

In 1925, the General Assembly appointed a special commission to, "... study the present spiritual condition of our Church and the causes making for unrest, and report to

⁶⁵Ibid., 118.

⁶⁶Quirk, "Origins of the Auburn Affirmation," 130-131. In January, 150 men signed the Affirmation. By the end of March, 1,000 men signed the Affirmation. By May, 1,274 Presbyterian pastors had affirmed the Auburn Affirmation.

the next General Assembly, to the end that the purity, peace, unity, and progress of the church may be assured.”⁶⁷ The General Assembly’s adoption of the special committee’s report on the effects of the Auburn Affirmation became the key turning point in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. The committee tried to figure out how to “remove the binding force of the ‘five points’ without repudiating them as doctrines.”⁶⁸ It declared that the General Assembly did not have the authority to enforce strict adherence to the Westminster Confession, but rather, granted that power to the individual presbyteries. The adoption of this report signaled the beginning of the end of overall conservative influence in the Presbyterian Church U. S. A.⁶⁹

The 1926 General Assembly

The 1926 General Assembly began by addressing the difficulties at Princeton. During the early part of the 1920s, the Old School faculty enjoyed the majority. The retirement of Professor William Greene from the chair of Apologetics threatened their majority.⁷⁰ The faculty minority, composed of President J. Ross Stevenson, Frederick Loetscher, Charles Erdman, J. Ritchie Smith, and John Davis desired to see an acceptance of the more liberal views of the church. Instead of being an Old School institution, they wanted Princeton to be closer to the mainstream of the church. The faculty chose

⁶⁷John W. Hart, “Princeton Theological Seminary: The Reorganization of 1929,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 58:2 (Summer 1980): 127.

⁶⁸Ibid. For further discussion, see Loetscher, *The Broadening Church*, 140-142.

⁶⁹Ibid., 128.

⁷⁰Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 162.

Clarence Macartney to succeed Greene. This delighted Machen who begged his friend to take the position. He wrote to Macartney, "The whole future of Princeton Seminary, I am almost tempted to say, depends upon your decision. I am bound to say that if you decline I fear the battle so far as Princeton is concerned is practically lost."⁷¹

Macartney did not desire the position of apologetics. He saw himself as a preacher, not an academic. His colleague, Frederick Loetscher, who knew of both Macartney's talents and the balance of power at the school, suggested that Macartney stay in the pulpit. In response to Macartney's decision, the board of directors appointed J. Gresham Machen to the position of Professor of Apologetics and Christian Ethics. Machen declined at first, claiming his field of training was in New Testament, not apologetics. He was also aware of the balance of power and the importance of the faculty position. Machen was concerned that the General Assembly would not confirm his position. Because of his strong statements in the past regarding liberalism, Machen feared his reputation with the General Assembly was tarnished. Reluctantly, he accepted the position. Unfortunately, his fears became reality. The General Assembly, in full view of the church and world, not only challenged Machen's appointment, but also rejected it.⁷² One thing became clear to the conservatives. Their long held power and influence at Princeton was rapidly slipping away.

⁷¹Ibid., 163.

⁷²Ibid. Machen's appointment was postponed by the General Assembly. The Assembly suspended both the appointments of Machen and O.T. Allis, professor of Old Testament, until the 1928 Assembly. They were ultimately denied tenure, which came as a result of the liberal influence of the General Assembly.

The 1927 General Assembly

The 1927 General Assembly began with Robert Speer, a conciliatory leader, being elected to serve as Moderator. His election was unique for two reasons. First, he was the only laymen ever elected as Moderator. Second, he was the only Moderator ever elected by a unanimous vote.⁷³ He played a key role in the Presbyterian controversy in its waning years, a role the liberals had used to their advantage since 1893- the role of a wounded lamb.⁷⁴ One of the Assembly's first actions was to report on the supplemental ordination clauses of 1910, 1916, and 1923. Each of these Assemblies preserved and upheld the Westminster Confession of Faith. The 1927 Assembly reached a final decision on Ordination. It stated that the authority of the five points was not binding because every deliverance must, "be in the exact language of the article as it appears in the Confession of Faith."⁷⁵ It also determined that no Assembly was bound to uphold the rulings or decisions of any previous Assemblies.

The Moderates won a greater victory than the ordination issue in 1927. The General Assembly passed a resolution entitled, "Authority of the General Assembly and the Function of Presbyteries in Regard to Licensure and Ordination." It proclaimed that

⁷³North, *Crossed Fingers*, 610-611.

⁷⁴Ibid., 611

⁷⁵Ibid. This motion passed without debate. Loetscher argued that this was the turning point for the church. "It meant that moderate theological liberalism would have what it had unsuccessfully sought almost since the reunion, an acknowledged place in the Church's life and thought." *The Broadening Church*, 135. Gary North argued that Loetscher was incorrect; that 1920 was the turning point. He claimed the 1927 proclamation was a public acknowledgment of the liberal's victory in 1920. Theological Liberalism was now a permanent part of the Presbyterian Church.

the power of the General Assembly was delegated to the Presbyteries in regard to ordination. Later on in the same resolution came a damaging clause. The Assembly stated the following: "The General Assembly may not lawfully revoke any man's ordination for any reason." The Assembly asserted that once a man was ordained, he was always ordained.⁷⁶ This assured that there was no recourse possible against the liberals who were now in control of the denomination.⁷⁷

The 1928 General Assembly

The topic of Princeton Theological Seminary dominated the 1928 General Assembly. It formed one committee of eleven to address the Princeton problem. This committee consisted of two groups. The first group was responsible for the legal questions pertaining to Princeton's charter and other issues. The second group dealt with the revision plan of the Seminary. They were, "together with such readjustment and rearrangement of the details as were necessary in order to conform to the proposal of one

⁷⁶Ibid., 612.

⁷⁷The same standard was not applied after the liberals gained control of the General Assembly. Machen was tried for creating an independent board of foreign missions that did not answer to the General Assembly. Because of this, the liberals tried J. Gresham Machen for heresy in 1934, defrocked him, and removed him from his pulpit. The Rev. A. Z. Conrad, pastor of Park Street Congregational Church, Boston, made the following statement about the trial: "Not for a generation has anything so high-handed, so unjust, so utterly un-christian [sic] been witnessed as the trial of Dr. Gresham Machen in the New Brunswick Presbytery." Upon hearing the verdict of the trial, Dr. Clarence E. Macartney commented, "Sad, lamentable, tragic, unthinkable that the Church Dr. Machen has served for thirty years, and more than twenty of them at our oldest and most famous seminary, and to which he has brought renown by his great talent, should now repay him by casting him out of its fellowship." For information on the Machen trial, see Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict*, chapter eight.

Board.”⁷⁸

The committee met together and offered a proposal. They made three recommendations to the General Assembly. First, they wanted to change the Charter of the school and place it under the authority of the General Assembly. Second, they affirmed the merging of the two boards of directors into one. Third, they redefined both the role and authority of the new president, the faculty, and the new governing board.⁷⁹ The committee argued that the charter change allowed the historic role of Princeton to remain the same. The director would take a vow affirming the authority of Scripture, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the role of the Seminary and the church.

The committee also decided to merge the two governing boards of Princeton Theological Seminary into one board that would control the Seminary. The two current boards both disliked and distrusted each other. The only hope of reconciliation would be for the General Assembly to choose the new board’s membership. With the liberals now firmly in control of the General Assembly, the prospect of Princeton remaining the same was in serious jeopardy.⁸⁰

Ethelbert D. Warfield, B. B. Warfield’s brother, issued the minority report. He argued for the merger of the two boards, but argued for Princeton’s present board of directors to be left intact and the final third be comprised of the new board. He also opposed the new powers that would be granted to the President of the Seminary. This

⁷⁸Clutter, “The Reorientation of Princeton Theological Seminary,” 212.

⁷⁹Ibid., 214.

⁸⁰Ibid.

plan, Warfield argued, would limit the faculty's freedom to express ideas that might be contrary to the President. Warfield argued that without fruitful dialogue and an open atmosphere for discussion, theological education could not exist.⁸¹

The General Assembly, based on a motion by Mark Matthews, decided to postpone the Princeton issue until the 1929 General Assembly. They gave Princeton a year to put her house in order without Assembly interference.

The 1929 General Assembly

The 1929 General Assembly was the final nail in the coffin for Princeton Theological Seminary. The report came back from the committee that investigated Princeton with the conclusion that the two governing boards should be reorganized into one board that would have control of the Seminary. The General Assembly selected the members of the new governing board. Machen argued that reorganizing Princeton would mark the end of an era in the modern church. He proclaimed that if Princeton were to fall, new agencies would need to be formed that would defend the tenets of Presbyterian faith.⁸²

⁸¹Ibid., 215. Liberals in the Southern Baptist Convention used this same argument when debating the Conservatives in their controversy some sixty years later. They argued that without the freedom to teach diversified thought and liberal theology, intellectual stimulation would cease and the seminaries would become fundamentalist brainwashing centers. See Derek E. Wittman's article, "Freedom and Irresponsibility: Fundamentalism's Effect on Academic Freedom in Southern Baptist Life," *Baptist History and Heritage* 40:4 (Winter 2004): 80-96, for the argument from a Southern Baptist liberal.

⁸²Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 169. As late as 1927, Machen still held out hope that Princeton could be saved. Machen argued that since the ecclesiastical leaders were, "running rough-shod over the principles of liberty in the church," the Seminary could still be saved by the evangelical people in the pews.

Several prominent Presbyterian leaders presented papers, sermons, and pamphlets regarding Princeton and her future. Clarence Macartney wrote an article in the *Presbyterian Banner*. He argued that if the plan was achieved, it would mean the passing of Princeton. He went on to argue that those who wanted to eliminate the board of directors at Princeton were all men who had signed the Auburn Affirmation. He argued that the elimination of the board, "... meets with the hearty and unanimous support of all those in the Presbyterian Church who are on record as subscribing, for instance, to the thoroughly un-Presbyterian and unevangelical statement of the Auburn Affirmation of 1924."⁸³ Macartney warned of the damage that removing the board of directors would do not only to Princeton, but also to evangelical Christians around the world.

The 1929 Assembly received six different reports that addressed the situation at Princeton. The unified board, which the assembly elected, consisted of thirty-three men. Two of these men, W. Beatty Jennings and Asa J. Ferry, signed the Auburn Affirmation. Machen gave a fiery speech before the General Assembly in 1929. He declared that Princeton was in a state of apostasy and that he could no longer serve at an institution with these beliefs. He stated, "Princeton Seminary is committed by the most solemn trust obligations to a certain doctrinal position, with which it is perfectly evident that the new Board, in its overwhelming majority, is out of sympathy."⁸⁴

⁸³Ibid., 170. Charles Erdman argued that no one at Princeton wanted to change the doctrinal teachings of the church.

⁸⁴Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 443. Machen told the board that he was willing to continue his service to the seminary under the old board of directors. If a new board was established, he could no longer teach at Princeton.

The General Assembly recommended that Princeton Seminary's boards be merged into one. The Committee of Eleven chose the men who would govern the school. Rev. Lewis Seymour Mudge led the new Board of Directors. Drs. Allis and Van Til's professorships were referred to the new board. With this action, Princeton was reorganized.⁸⁵

Conclusion

Theological schisms among various protestant denominations of the 1920s had a larger affect and more lasting consequences than initially feared. The white Protestant influence, which was responsible for shaping national policy for decades, was lost forever. Historian Martin Marty wrote the following about the debate:

What had come of the conflict of the twenties was a deeply, permanently divided Protestantism.... Original-stock Protestantism - from which both sides derived - no longer presented a single front.... They were splitting up what was left of a Protestant establishment, leaving it ever less prepared to hold its place of dominance in American culture in the decades to come.⁸⁶

The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy showed the struggle between two different theological systems within a single church. The Old and New Schools of Presbyterianism never reconciled their differences after their reunification in 1869. This lead to the open controversy of the 1920s. Although the New School of Presbyterianism

⁸⁵“Action of the General Assembly of 1929 in Reference to the Seminary,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 23:1 (1929): 11. Drs. Allis and Van Til were never confirmed at Princeton. Allis left with Machen to serve at Westminster. Van Til began pastoral work in Spring Lake, Michigan, but returned to teach Apologetics at Westminster after Machen's repeated request.

⁸⁶Quoted in Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 385.

gained and retained control of the Presbyterian church since 1927, neither side won in the struggle.⁸⁷ The Old School, with her strong doctrinal integrity, miscalculated both the importance and role of politics in the controversy. They believed that doctrine, which had stood the test of time for many years, would once again rule the day and carry them to victory.

The New School learned how to play politics and politically outmaneuvered the Old School. They wrestled the church away from the conservatives. The next chapter points out the specific impact the controversy had on Princeton Theological Seminary. Men such as Fosdick, Coffin, Erdman, and others who argued for a more inclusive church with varying viewpoints got their wish. The result was a denomination that was Presbyterian in name only, not a historic Presbyterian church.⁸⁸ Denominational schisms became common after the Great Depression, and the result was a Presbyterian church that became fractured and broken. Although her schools and educational systems were intact, her influence in America waned after the Great Depression and Second World War.

⁸⁷Robert Wuthnow, "The Restructuring of American Presbyterianism: Turmoil in One Denomination," in *The Presbyterian Predicament: Six Perspectives*, edited by Milton J. Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Luis B. Weeks, (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 29.

⁸⁸Dallas M. Roark, "J. Gresham Machen: The Doctrinally True Presbyterian Church," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 43:2 (June 1965): 124. Machen sought a true Presbyterian church. He declared the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. was full of apostates. After his trial and suspension from ministry, Machen and a small group of pastors and professors from Westminster formed the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Machen made the following comment just after forming the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, "We became members, at last, of a true Presbyterian Church; we recovered, at last, the blessing of a true Christian fellowship. What a joyous moment it was! How the long years of struggle seemed to sink into nothingness compared with the peace and joy that filled our hearts.... At last true evangelism can go forward without the shackle of uncompromising associations."

CHAPTER III

THE FUNDAMENTALIST-MODERNIST CONTROVERSY AND THE BATTLE FOR PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the Presbyterian Church shifted during the second half of the 1920s. When the moderates gained control of the General Assembly, they quickly moved to capture control of the last bastion of Presbyterian conservatism, Princeton Theological Seminary. For years, Princeton appeared unaffected by the liberalism that befell Union Theological Seminary and other schools in the Presbyterian Church.¹ The majority of professors at Princeton were Old School Calvinists who were fully committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith. They had been successful in keeping the liberals at bay for the latter decades of the nineteenth and first two decades of the twentieth century.

¹John Calvin Siler, "Modernism" *Union Theological Review* 36:4 (July 1925): Siler explained the debates that were raging in the New York Presbytery at the height of the controversy. He admitted that there were those at Union Theological Seminary who did not hold to the transcendence of God and those who reduced the Bible to scientific inquiry as Shailer Matthews did. The definitive work on modernism during this time period is Shailer Matthews, *The Faith of Modernism* (New York: MacMillan, 1924). For more information of how theological liberalism impacted American Christianity at the turn of the century, consult Kenneth Cauthen, *The Impact of American Religious Liberalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); and John M. Wells, "What is Modernism?" *Union Seminary Review* 34:2 (January 1923): 89-98. Wells analyzed the five points of Modernism and compared them to the traditional beliefs of Christianity. He concluded, as Machen had, that Modernism was not Christianity and was a very real danger to the church.

As the events of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy engulfed the Presbyterian church, the conservatives saw their beloved denomination slowly slipping from their grasp. Their only consolation was that the majority of the faculty at Princeton were still Old-School conservatives who held to traditional Presbyterian beliefs. After realizing the General Assembly had slipped away from their control, they saw the last hope of holding on to any authority or prominence in the church as the Seminary.²

Archibald Alexander founded Princeton in 1812, and the school became the pinnacle of Presbyterian scholarship in the nineteenth century.³ During the rise of theological liberalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Princeton stood alone for traditional conservative Presbyterian beliefs. The conservatives, headed by J. Gresham Machen, professor of New Testament and Apologetics, strove to keep Princeton true to her founding and strict adherence to theology. The General Assembly, with a moderate majority, moved to reorganize Princeton under modernist influences.⁴ The battle for Princeton was the Waterloo of the conservatives in the Presbyterian church, which resulted in the loss of not only their theological domination, but also Princeton's influence as a major theological voice in American religious education.⁵

²William J. Weston, "Princeton and Union: The Dialogue of Pluralism," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 45:3-4 (1991): 155-156.

³David R. Plaster, "The Theological Method of the Early Princetonians" (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1989), 2.

⁴"Action of the General Assembly of 1929 in Reference to the Seminary," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 23:1 (1929): 10-12.

⁵Edwin H. Rian, "Theological Conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s in the Presbyterian Church and on the Princeton Seminary Campus," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin Vol. 5:3* (1984): 216-223.

The Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary

In 1810, the Presbyterian General Assembly convened to discuss the creation of at least one national seminary. The presbyteries sent their request to the General Assembly for analysis. Of the Church's thirty-six presbyteries, nine did not vote. Six presbyteries voted against founding a seminary while one voted in favor of two seminaries. The remaining twenty presbyteries split down the middle, ten voting for a single seminary and ten voting for local presbyteries to control the school. Overall, a majority of the presbyteries voted to establish a theological school. Several of the presbyteries had concerns that if there was one official church-sponsored seminary, all the presbyteries would be required to send their candidates to that school. The seminary might then control the licensing of ministers instead of keeping that responsibility with the respective presbyteries.⁶

Princeton Theological Seminary is remembered for the influence of Charles Hodge. Although he was influential in defining the Princeton Theology, he often overshadows those who came before him. Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller, and Ashbel Green founded the school in 1812. These men were scholars and pastors in their

⁶Lefferts A. Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 125. Loetscher made an interesting point in regard to the control of the Seminary. If the seminary was created by the General Assembly and therefore not controlled by one single church, it would be more interested in preserving the unity of the denomination and be less likely to become self-serving by showing favoritism to a particularly influential parish. This however, came back to haunt the conservatives during the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s when influential seats in the General Assembly came under the control of the liberal moderates, who in turn succeeded in forcing through their liberal agenda.

own right. They met together to form a seminary for the purpose of training ministers.⁷

Miller, Greene, and Alexander did not agree initially about the plan of the seminary. Today, historians disagree in their understanding of the plan. Mark Noll commented:

Many of the supposed defects of the Princeton theologians, and some of their vaunted triumphs as well, become less striking if the work of the school is placed in its historical context. To study Princeton only in relationship to twentieth-century theological developments, or, from a different perspective, to ignore the centuries between Calvin's activity in Geneva and Alexander's in Princeton, is to short circuit sympathetic understanding of these theologians. It may even be that the genuine contribution of Princeton theology will only be apparent when it is placed against the background of its times.⁸

Princeton experienced slow growth throughout the early decades of the 1800's. The school suffered from financial problems and differences of opinion among the faculty, as well as competition from other seminaries. Even as it overcame each challenge, the conditions which would eventually lead to its dominance in the later part of the century

⁷Mark A. Noll, "The Founding of Princeton Seminary," *Westminster Theological Journal* 42:1 (Fall 1979): 81. Earlier in 1811, a group of trustees from Princeton College proposed forming a seminary that would be tied to the college. Harvard created its divinity school in 1815 and Yale followed suit in 1822. Both of these schools were under the larger umbrella of the college. The trustee's proposal would have removed Princeton Seminary from the control of the General Assembly and placed it under the control of the board of Regents at the college. The seminary felt the college wanted to control the curriculum and theology taught at the seminary as well as placing it under control of the secular institution. The control of the seminary being placed in the hands of the college made several Presbyterian pastors uneasy. The final plan agreed upon by both schools allowed the seminary to use some of the college's land for its buildings while leaving the seminary as an independent entity under the control of the General Assembly.

⁸Mark A. Noll, "Princeton Theology" in *Reformed Theology in America*. Quoted in Plaster, "The Theological Method of the Early Princetonians," 2. See chapter one of Plaster's dissertation for a succinct biography of both Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge.

kept the school growing.⁹

The Reunification of the Old School and New School

In 1729, a split occurred in the Presbyterian Church in America.¹⁰ The split occurred because of theological differences between two groups of the Presbyterians. Presbyterians that held to a more Reformed view argued that the church should remain doctrinally pure and should protect itself from a liberal ideas and ideologies that were becoming more and more prevalent in religion and theology. This group of scholars and pastors became known as the Old Side or the Old School Presbyterians. The New School Presbyterians were younger and more open to the liberal ideas that had come about because of the Enlightenment. They favored higher critical methods over traditional reformed beliefs and argued that the best way to grow the church was to invite and allow those with varying views to participate in their community.¹¹

The Old School and the New School reunited in 1869 and became the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. The reunification of the church however brought about its own unique set of challenges. One of the major problems with the unification was the nonresolution of the theological issues that divided the churches in the first place. Because of these unresolved differences, both Old School and New School theologies

⁹Noll, "The Founding of Princeton Seminary," 85.

¹⁰J. Ross Stevenson, "The Adopting Act of 1729 and the Powers of the General Assembly," *Princeton Theological Review* 22:1 (1924): 96-97.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 102.

wrestled over which one would be the dominant voice of Presbyterians in America.¹²

Because these differences were not resolved decades earlier, the embers of the controversy were allowed to stir until the main controversy in the 1920s. Because both sides failed to resolve their differences, the stakes over who would control the Presbyterian Church in the 1920s became so high and the price so great that the church itself split and fell from any sort of prominence in American life.¹³

With their reunion in 1869, the New School Presbyterians began to absorb the Old School. The Old School was rigid and inflexible in its defense of traditional Calvinistic Presbyterianism. The New School favored a confessionally broader based church that would grow through evangelism.¹⁴ The New School was willing to pay lip service to the confession, but would not enforce it in their representative presbyteries. Once a minister confessed allegiance to the confession during his ordination examination, the Old School assumed he would always confess and therefore could never be removed from his pulpit.¹⁵

Part of the problem facing the Old School from 1869 to 1900 dealt with the New

¹²Samuel Donald Fortson III, "The Presbyterian Creed: Old School/New School Reunion and Confessional Subscription" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2003), 10.

¹³John David Hannah, "The Social and Intellectual History of the Origins of the Evangelical Theological College" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Dallas, 1988), 254. Chafer wrote in a letter dated October 19, 1932, "There is no distinctive, vital truth taught at Princeton."

¹⁴Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996), 292.

¹⁵Ibid. This process of not enforcing the confession became policy with moderator Robert E. Speer at the 1927 General Assembly. The key issue after 1900 was peace in the Presbyterian Church, not enforcement of the Westminster Confession.

School and their paid lip service to confessional subscription. The Old School voted overwhelmingly to accept the New School's affirmation at face value. Once this was done, their fate was sealed. The only recourse the Old School had was to beg the New School pastors to enforce the confession on their most notorious heretics. Charles Briggs, renowned Old Testament professor at Union Theological Seminary, was not condemned because of this theological heresy but rather for his rhetorical excesses. Heresy had to be present, but was insufficient in and of itself to gain a conviction. If *Whither?* could not cause a seminary professor to be defrocked, a modernist pastor at a small parish church had little reason to fear, especially if his views were never put into print.¹⁶

With the court unwilling to impose negative sanctions, it became impossible for the denomination to be sure of the beliefs of those who took ministerial oaths. It was possible for a man not to hold to any of traditional Presbyterian beliefs, say what the committee wanted to hear, and then be ordained as a minister in the Presbyterian church with no other thought given to his theology.¹⁷ The Old School saw three solutions for this problem. The first was to challenge a candidate's views publicly under cross-examination at his ordination hearing. The second was to revise the confession so that no Presbyterian with any errant views would have the chance of becoming ordained. The third was to impose more rigorous sanctions after ordination upon members than was originally voted upon in 1869. This is initially what the Old-School wanted, but the sheer

¹⁶Ibid., 297. Briggs successfully pointed out that the Old School leaders had departed from the Confession as it related to the election of infants.

¹⁷Ibid. The problem is defining heresy.

impracticality of obtaining a conviction and the time consumed with a heresy trial made this option impossible.¹⁸

The Old School's only real cost-effective option for protecting both the integrity and theology of the Presbyterian Church after 1869 rested in one area: the candidate's examination. The Old School could have protected the integrity of the ministerial oath by insisting on the right of each individual Presbytery's examination committee to use the Westminster Confession of Faith to cross-examine ministerial candidates. This is where the Old School could have tested and judged to determine the New School's seriousness by making them publicly affirm the Westminster Confession. Had the Old School started this in 1870 and insisted on it, heretics like Charles Briggs would not have survived ordination.¹⁹

The reunion of the Old and New School reunited two differing viewpoints in American Presbyterianism. These unresolved problems surfaced again in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the 1920s. This time it led to the departure of the Old School from Princeton, along with many of her brightest scholars and thinkers.

¹⁸Ibid., 208-209. Charles Briggs was a classic example of how much time and resources were consumed with a heresy trial. The bigger problem however, was defining heresy. After the reunion of the two schools, it became nearly impossible to go after every heretic that had infected the church. For more information on confessional subscription in the Old School/ New School reunion, see Samuel Donald Fortson III, "The Presbyterian Creed: Old School/New School Reunion and Confessional Subscription."

¹⁹Ibid., 300. After the reunion, the Old and New Schools had a new enemy. It was the modernists who wanted to alter the Presbyterian denomination with their full embrace of theological liberalism. The only real option the Old School had against the modernists was to force them to confess the doctrine they feared the most, the doctrine of eternal torment. Had the Old School been successful in forcing the modernists to make a positive confession of the doctrine of eternal punishment, (which they summarily dismissed) they could have been successful in exposing and rooting out the liberals in the church.

The Princeton Theology

The Princeton Theology grew from the teachings and writings of a handful of extraordinary men during the nineteenth century. Four men in particular, Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, and Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, along with their representative works, defined the Princeton Theology.²⁰ The Princeton Theology was an expression of reformed Calvinism with an undeniable American accent. Their theology was intelligent, insightful, practical, and pastoral.²¹

Defining the Princeton Theology is not as simple as both proponents and skeptics allege. Four main pillars of the Princeton Theology are Reformed Confessionalism, Scripture, Scottish Common Sense Philosophy, and Religious Experience and the Work of the Spirit.²²

The first tenet of the Princeton Theology was Reformed Confessionalism. Warfield and the other Princetonian professors believed Calvinism to be Christianity in its simplest form. They drew their theological premise from the greatest reformed theologians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Princetonians viewed

²⁰Mark A. Noll, *The Princeton Theology 1812-1921* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 13. For more information about the theology of the early Princetonians, see Plaster, "The Theological Method of the Early Princetonians," Andrew Hoffercker, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians: Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), and *The Princeton Theology*, edited by David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989).

²¹Mark A. Noll, "The Princeton Theology" in *The Princeton Theology*, edited by Wells, 16, 17.

²²Ibid., 22. See also John William Stewart, "The Tethered Theology: Biblical Criticism, Common Sense Philosophy, and the Princeton Theologians" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1990).

Reformed faith as static and not affected by historical development.²³ They ignored the possibility that earlier Reformed theologians inserted their own interpretation of biblical revelation into their understanding and use of Scripture. To them, timeless truth was as relevant in their time as it was at its origination.²⁴

The second and most researched area of the Princeton theology dealt with their understanding and use of Scripture. In his inaugural address in 1812, Archibald Alexander delivered a sermon from John 5: 39, “Search the Scriptures.” In doing this, he established the Bible as the foundation for Princeton’s existence.²⁵ From Archibald Alexander to J. Gresham Machen, the foundation for Old Princeton was the Scriptures. Charles Hodge was the first to develop Princeton’s views on Scripture; just as higher criticism started to creep into the country from Europe during the middle part of the century. His writings on Scripture in his *Systematic Theology* mostly corrected the false Roman Catholic and Pietists views of Scripture.²⁶

Archibald Alexander Hodge and Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield further developed Charles Hodge’s study of Scripture after his death. In 1881, they published a

²³Noll, “The Princeton Theology,” 19.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Donald K. McKim, “Archibald Alexander and the Doctrine of Scripture,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 54:3 (Fall 1976): 360. For more information on Archibald Alexander and the doctrine of Scripture, see Andrew Hofferger, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians*, chapter one. See also chapter five, “The Development of Reformed Scholasticism in America” for more information on the founding of Princeton Seminary. For a defense of the seminary’s position during the conflict, see chapter six, “The Defense of Reformed Scholasticism in America” in Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

²⁶ Noll, “The Princeton Theology,” 20. See also Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology vol 1* (New York: Eerdmans Reprint, 2003), chapter 6.

book entitled, *Inspiration*. This work defended the church's historic Reformed view of Scriptures, while adding support for the new presuppositions on Scripture that were present in the late nineteenth century. Their teaching on Scripture was clear. The Bible was God's written word. It was a product of human activity that could be understood and studied. Scripture presented perfect truth.²⁷ The human authors, (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), gave the world a perfect picture of salvific and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.²⁸

²⁷There are many differing views on the Princetonians' views of Inerrancy. Charles Hodge, who wrote so convincingly about the authority of Scripture, once stated that minor variations in Scripture would not bother him. Warfield, on the other hand, was the first of the Princetonians to argue for the absolute inerrancy of Scripture. For Warfield's view of Scripture, see *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Reprint, 1948). For more information on Princeton and Scripture, see the following resources: chapter five, "Biblical Literalism: Millenarianism and the Princeton Theology" in Earnest Sandeen's *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* in Twin Book Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978); William S. Barker, "Inerrancy and the Role of the Bible's Authority: A Review Article," *Presbyterion* 6:2 (Fall 1980): 96-107; Randall H Balmer, "The Princetonians and Scripture: A Reconsideration," *Westminster Theological Journal* 44 (1982): 352-365; Richard B. Gaffin, "Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy," *Westminster Theological Journal* 44:2 (Fall 1982): 250-289; Darryl G. Hart, "A Reconsideration of Biblical Inerrancy and the Princeton Theology's Alliance with Fundamentalism," *Christian Scholar's Review* 20:4 (March 1991): 362-375; Robert J. Hoefel, "B. B. Warfield and James Orr: A Study in Contrasting Approaches to Scripture," *Christian Scholar's Review* 16:1 (September 1986): 40-52; Eugene March, "Biblical Theology, Authority and the Presbyterians," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 59:2 (Summer 1981): 113-127; Matthew McDill, "B. B. Warfield and the Inspiration of Scripture," *Faith and Mission* 21:3 (Summer 2004): 77-91; Roger R. Nicole, "The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture: J. D. G. Dunn Versus B. B. Warfield," *Churchman* 97:3 (1983): 198-215; Mike Parsons, "Warfield and Scripture," *Churchman* 91:3 (July 1977): 198-220.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 21. For an excellent discussion on the different approaches of the Princetonians and Scripture, see Richard J. Mouw, "The Bible in Twentieth-Century Protestantism: A Preliminary Taxonomy," in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, edited by Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 139-162, and 143-144 for the doctrinal differences of Old Princeton. See also D. G. Hart, "A Reconsideration of Biblical Inerrancy and the Princeton Theology's Alliance With Fundamentalism," *Christian Scholar's Review* 20:4 (March 1991): 362-

The third component of the Princeton Theology was Scottish Common Sense Realism. Thomas Reid, the son of a Scottish Presbyterian minister, created a system that gave philosophical validation to the practice of inductive science and confirmed the received Christian tradition and the common sense beliefs of ordinary people.²⁹ Reid's system became known as "Common Sense" philosophy. John Witherspoon, who instructed Alexander's mentor William Graham at Princeton College, trained his students in Scottish Philosophy. Alexander, after studying with Graham, imported many of the same principles that Witherspoon brought with him to America from thinkers such as Francis Hutcheson and Thomas Reid.³⁰

Both Hutcheson and Reid were reacting to the English Enlightenment of John Locke and Isaac Newton, the idealism of George Berkeley, and the skepticism of David Hume. Alexander believed that mankind's "common sense" validates the physical sense and the "moral sense" (i.e.: intuitive conscience). "Common Sense," Alexander argued, provided a basic, irrefutable apologetic concerning both biblical revelation and the existence of God. This logic became the basis for instruction at Princeton for a generation.³¹

375; D. G. Hart, "Fundamentalism, Inerrancy, and the Biblical Scholarship of J. Gresham Machen," *Journal of Presbyterian History (Philadelphia, 1997)* 75: 1 (Spring 1997): 13-28.

²⁹Jack B. Rogers and Donald K McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 326.

³⁰Noll, "The Princeton Theology," 21. See also Plaster, "The Rise of The Princeton Theology."

³¹*Ibid.*, 22. Charles Hodge made the following statement in the beginning of his *Systematic Theology*, "The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man of science. It is his store-house of facts; and his method of ascertaining what the Bible teaches is the

The final component of the Princeton Theology dealt with religious experience and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Princeton theologians stressed constantly the need for the work of the Holy Spirit and the importance of religious experience. They did not believe that religious experience should replace or be in opposition to Reformed Theology, but that experience is both supplemental and subordinate to both Scripture and the Confessions of faith.³² The principal feature of the Princeton Theology was the Holy Spirit's quickening power manifested through divinely ordained means. This element of the Princeton Theology, though sometimes overlooked, was an extremely important part of their system.³³

The Princeton Theology experienced its rise in the nineteenth century and its demise in the twentieth century. Disagreements among prominent scholars still exist after a century of scrutiny.³⁴ The complexity of their theology has lead to a careful historical

same as that which the natural philosopher adopts to ascertain what nature teaches." Warfield learned Scottish Philosophy from James McCosh at Princeton in 1868. Many professors supported Common Sense strongly. Some, like A. A. Hodge, simply accepted them as natural axioms for theological inquiry. The Princetonians, while investing in Common Sense, did not reorganize their Reformed theology as Nathan Taylor had done. They simply added Common Sense to their list of traditional theological convictions. Although this muddled the waters for them when they mixed Common Sense and Reformed theology in regards to the fall, they placed Common Sense into a subordinate position to Reformed theology concerning Scripture, the sovereignty of God, and the primacy of Divine revelation to an individual.

³²Hoffecker, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians: Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield*, vi.

³³*Ibid.*, vii.

³⁴Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 43. For further study, see Rogers and McKim, Earnest Sandeen, "The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism," *Church History* 31 (September 1962): 307-321; and *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 103-131; Randall H. Balmer, "The Princetonians and

study by some, sloppy history by some, and a rather wooden treatment by others. A truly complete and excellent study of their sophisticated theology is still warranted.

The Challenge to the Princeton Curriculum

The Old School and New School reunion of 1869 altered the relationship between the Presbyterian Church and Princeton Seminary. Loetscher wrote:

The relationship between the American Churches and their theological seminaries was a reciprocal one: the theology that the seminaries taught at any particular time was soon widely held throughout the Churches; and contrariwise, changes in the Churches' activity and thought, reflecting changes in American social and cultural life after the Civil War, created demands for changes in the curricula of the seminaries.³⁵

During the late nineteenth Century, seminaries were making significant changes to their curriculum. Two of the main changes were the elimination of Hebrew and the movement toward an elective system.³⁶ This impacted Princeton Seminary where the curriculum was fixed and set by the General Assembly. This was the norm since its founding. The fixed curriculum of instruction consisted of Divinity, Oriental and Biblical Literature, Ecclesiastical History, and Church Government. Many Old School professors, such as B. B. Warfield, defended the traditional Princeton curriculum. He stated,

In this outline it is required of every student whose preparation for the ministry shall be made in this seminary, that he shall engage in the thorough study of

Scripture: A Reconsideration," *Westminster Theological Journal* 44 (1982), 352-365; Randall Balmer, "The Princetonians and Scripture: A Reconsideration," *Westminster Theological Journal* 44: 2 (1982): 352-365.

³⁵Lefferts A. Loetscher, *The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church Since 1869* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954), 74

³⁶*Ibid.*, 74-75.

Biblical Criticism, Apologetics, Dogmatics, Church History and the various branches of Practical Theology. These five departments of study, it will be at once perceived, constitute the essential divisions of what is called the "Theological Encyclopedia," and when arranged in scientific order will be recognized as a scientifically complete theological curriculum. Every one who would attain a comprehensive knowledge of theological science, in other words, must give adequate attention to these five disciplines: Apologetics, Exegetics, Historics, Systematics, and Practics; and in these five disciplines the circle of theological sciences is complete.³⁷

Warfield believed the traditional curriculum fulfilled the requirements that Presbyterian pastors would need to minister effectively in the changing world.

One of the earliest challenges to the fixed curriculum at Princeton came from Charles W. Elliot, president of Harvard University. Elliot argued that the environment in which a minister worked changed during the nineteenth century and that changes in the curriculum were necessary to allow the pastor to be an effective minister in the new century. He pointed out that ministers no longer commanded the respect they had in the past. As educational opportunities grew, the pastors lost the monopoly on being the most educated members of a community. The loss of ministerial influence in the changing society was Elliot's motivation for the move away from a rigid, fixed theology.³⁸

Elliot attacked Princeton's defense of teaching apologetics. He argued that they never convinced anyone but the ignorant and were not up to the standards of a modern society. He also attacked the traditional educational curriculum. He stated:

If it be said that there can be no progress in theology, because revelation was a fixed historical quantity, the answer is that revelation like creation must be fluent, or, in other words, that the interpretation of revelation to the mind of man must be

³⁷Ronald T. Clutter, "The Reorientation of Princeton Theological Seminary, 1900-1929" (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982), 57.

³⁸Ibid., 58.

like the interpretation of creation, ever flowing, shifting, and if the mind of man improves, improving. No other profession is under such terrible stress of temptation to intellectual dishonesty as the clerical profession is, and at the same time the public standard of intellectual candor has been set higher than ever before.³⁹

Elliot advocated academic freedom from the rigid curriculum, arguing that the student should have the freedom to either accept or reject what was taught. He also argued against using outside groups to support men in seminary. He claimed it gave an unfair advantage to some and would encourage substandard students who were just looking for free education.⁴⁰

After laying out his argument for the changes in instruction, Elliot proposed his changes in the curriculum. He cited preaching as the most important function of a minister and placed the emphasis on homiletics as the first theological science. Exegesis was the traditional foundation for seminary training in the Presbyterian church. Elliot's emphasis on preaching independent of exegesis was troubling to many at Princeton. Elliot argued for a curriculum that focused on preaching, with electives from subjects such as psychology, ethics, philosophy of religion, Old and New Testament criticism, and comparative religions would produce a more well-rounded minister and would be far superior to the antiquated system currently in place at Princeton.⁴¹

³⁹Ibid., 59.

⁴⁰Ibid., 60.

⁴¹Ibid., 61. Elliot argued that focused study in a few areas produced a better result than giving students a broad overview of many areas. To him, the old system at Princeton was passé. He also argued that the study of theology was too vast to be covered adequately in three years. He believed that focusing a student on multiple electives would produce a better result than the traditional four pillar instruction of historic Princeton. He also argued that because the world around the minister was constantly changing, it would

Elliot's challenges to the curriculum at Princeton demanded a response from the proponents of traditional instruction. Francis Landey Patton, President of Princeton, defended traditional curriculum in an article to *The Princeton Review*. He argued that theological education implied the existence of a church, and the church could limit the freedom of the teacher. He also attacked Elliot's proposed changes in the curriculum that detracted from core classes such as Old and New Testament exegesis, ecclesiastical history, and systematic theology. Elliot's expanded curriculum, Patton wrote, belonged in the secular classroom, not in the theological seminary.⁴²

B. B. Warfield, noted Old School leader at Princeton during the early twentieth century, submitted his views on the theological curriculum at Princeton. He still held to the original curriculum set by the 1812 General Assembly and saw no need to change it. He argued:

They do not exist primarily in order to advance theological learning, but in order to impart theological instruction; their first object is not investigation, but communication; and they call their students to them, not that these may explore the unknown, but that they may learn the known in the sphere of theological truth. They do not exist primarily, again, in order to place in reach of all who may be interested in theological thought facilities for acquiring information concerning

be better for a minister to provide a commentary on a new work instead of preaching a sermon.

⁴²North, *Crossed Fingers*, 310. Princeton Theological Seminary had already begun to experience a fundamental curriculum change. Between the years 1812 and 1871, Princeton officially required each new student to be able to read Turretin's *Systematic Theology* in the original Latin. After the reunion in 1870, Princeton found that many students could not read Latin well enough to read Turretin. Charles Hodge published his lecture notes on Turretin, which became known as his *Systematic Theology* (1871-1873). For nearly forty years, Princeton Theological Seminary pretended that every ministerial student could read Latin fluently. It wasn't until 1919 that Presbyterian presbyteries voted to allow a bachelors or masters degree become a legitimate substitute for proficiency in Latin. See *Minutes of the General Assembly, 1911*, 197-198.

whatever department of theological learning each inquirer may for a moment desire to give his attention to; but in order that they may provide for a select body of young men, who have consecrated themselves to the Christian ministry, the thorough training which they require to fit them for the proper exercise of its function.⁴³

One of the main arguments Warfield made against the changes to the curriculum was the historical fact that Presbyterian seminaries had always held their ministers to the highest of standards of ministerial education. Neither professors nor students were free to believe as they wish. They had to follow a set curriculum that kept everyone on the same page. He argued that the goal of the fixed curriculum at Princeton Theological Seminary was not to prepare men for the Christian ministry, but that it had a specific purpose to prepare men for the Presbyterian ministry.⁴⁴ Regarding the proposed elective system, Warfield recognized that this could be a viable alternative in a controlled setting. Warfield argued that the problem was with the approach. First, more faculty members would be needed. Second, it would require more faculty control of the students and would require more influence in the church as to what specific curriculum the presbyteries thought would be best.

Warfield viewed the elective system with cautious optimism. He gave a little ground in this area. He argued as long as electives were placed in a subordinate position to the main curriculum, he could tolerate it.⁴⁵ Of the fundamental differences between Warfield's view and Elliot's view dealt with the core curriculum at the seminary.

⁴³Clutter, "The Reorientation of Princeton Theological Seminary," 64.

⁴⁴Ibid., 65.

⁴⁵Ibid., 66.

Because Princeton was a training ground for ministry, Warfield insisted that the five following areas be included in a seminary curriculum: Exegetical, Apologetical, Historical, Systematic and Practical Theology. According to Warfield, these four subjects were the pillars on which a Presbyterian minister stood. Each subject, except for Old and New Testament exegesis, should receive equal time. Old and New Testament exegesis should receive more time because it was the foundation for the instruction a Presbyterian minister received.⁴⁶

One of the earliest challenges to the curriculum came from students who wanted an instructional course in the English Bible. Initially, Warfield and the other conservative professors protested strongly against such an action. They argued that the foundation for a Presbyterian pastor's ministry should be the study of the Scriptures in the original languages. They viewed instruction in the English Bible as a dangerous crutch that ministers would rely on instead of doing their original language work. Warfield commented, "Our theological seminaries can never make the 'English Bible' the basis of their instruction, or a thorough knowledge of it the main object of their efforts."⁴⁷

From 1900 until 1914, there was an underlying expression by some at Princeton to move to a more practical educational approach. The Board of Directors had heard the students' pleas for instruction in the English Bible and granted their request.⁴⁸ Soon more changes followed, such as the addition of new faculty members to cover new elective

⁴⁶Ibid., 67.

⁴⁷Ibid., 68.

⁴⁸Ibid., 69.

courses that were introduced into the curriculum. New faculty members meant new bureaucracy and more potential problems. In 1909, a group of students who were unhappy with the curriculum rebelled and petitioned the committee to offer more control to the student in choosing what courses each student could take.⁴⁹ The Board of Directors formed a new committee to investigate the problems of the curriculum at Princeton. This committee found that students attending Princeton had a tougher time finding employment around the seminary as compared to Union, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Pittsburgh. While each of these seminaries were growing, Princeton was declining both in prestige and influence.⁵⁰

The Board of Directors made a motion on their investigation of the curriculum. They found that most of Princeton's students came from the East, which tended to be more liberal. They had a more difficult time attracting more conservative students from the West.⁵¹ The committee decided to look at modifying Princeton's curriculum. The committee made several proposals. The first proposal was to move away from the lecture method to a more critical discussion method. Contrary to Warfield's claim, the committee found that the plan of the seminary did not establish a definite curriculum. They also concluded that the three-year program was too difficult. They found there were too many required hours in the program.⁵² They concluded that the set curriculum at

⁴⁹Ibid., 78.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., 79.

⁵²Ibid., 81.

Princeton did not adequately prepare men for ministry in the twentieth century.

While the Board of Directors argued over the curriculum changes, B. B. Warfield attempted to defend the traditional curriculum one final time. He acknowledged the benefits of some of the proposals. He then argued that because of the original 1812 plan of the seminary, the traditional core of the seminary curriculum should be left intact.⁵³

In the end, the committee made sweeping changes to the curriculum at Princeton. They made seven recommendations. First, every department would offer electives. Second, the three-year program should be extended into a four-year program. Third, a Doctor of Theology degree should be conferred upon students who completed the postgraduate program.⁵⁴ Fourth, a postgraduate program should be initiated for students who wished to do further study at Princeton. Fifth, every program should be listed in the catalog. Sixth, one hour of the English Bible would be inserted into the curriculum. Seventh, the seminary president should address the students annually in a lecture series of his choosing.⁵⁵

The twentieth century brought challenges to the traditional curriculum at

⁵³Ibid., 86.

⁵⁴Ibid. The original plan of 1812 granted a certificate of completion to any man who successfully completed the three year program. Upon graduation, the candidate was then sent to a presbytery who was responsible for the practical side of his training and ultimately his ordination. For more information on the original curriculum at the school, see Noll, "The Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary," 90-96; and chapter nine, "The College and the Seminary" and chapter eleven, "What Should a Minister Study?" in Lefferts A. Loetcher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983).

⁵⁵Ibid., 86.

Princeton. Up until 1910, the conservatives had their way, but the progressives and liberals started making their influence and presence known. Theological education, however, experienced a drastic change between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Warfield and the other conservatives saw the change as inevitable and did everything they could to prepare for the conflict that would come to Princeton. With the watered-down curriculum and proposed changes in faculty, more trouble was sure to follow.

Presbyterians had a distinct weakness that did not affect other denominations. They maintained a distinction between teaching elders, those who were seminary graduates, and ruling elders who were layman who were elected to office. This left the denomination vulnerable to liberal infiltration from ruling laymen who were not trained at seminary. The Presbyterians placed a great deal of value on the education of their ministers. During this time, theological liberalism infected many major universities and even seminaries in the country. The possession of the academic degree was the main criteria for permanent teaching positions at most secular universities and seminaries. Most of the universities in America had fallen to liberalism in the nineteenth century. The desire to have faculty that were graduates of prestigious universities, both in America and Europe, eventually overwhelmed and consumed the Presbyterian church.⁵⁶

The Presbyterian church considered the academic pedigree as the most important component of pastoral ministry. This became a golden calf at which the Presbyterian

⁵⁶North, *Crossed Fingers*, 584.

church worshiped for nearly two centuries before the conflict at Princeton.⁵⁷ The Presbyterian church considered a seminary degree as the equivalent to ordination. B. B. Warfield saw the danger a seminary education posed. He saw seminary as a training ground for ministry. He did not believe that a minister would learn everything at seminary. It was an instrument of the church. It was not the principal instrument. The presbyteries were responsible for molding a minister after his initial seminary training.⁵⁸

Princeton placed a great deal of weight upon the supremacy of logic in regard to traditional Christianity. Christianity could thrive because Christianity appealed to human reason.⁵⁹ This theory led to the demise of Princeton in the 1920s. The problem Princeton faced was that theological liberalism used the same logic as historic Christianity, both intellectually and institutionally.⁶⁰ Old Princeton overestimated the primacy of the intellect and the strength of higher education. The liberals were able to use this to their advantage and to infiltrate Christian higher education. They had the higher degrees from the universities that the conservatives said legitimized their ministry. In their worship of higher education and academic degrees, the administrators of Princeton Seminary went

⁵⁷Ibid., 585. The academic degree affected both conservatives and liberals alike. When Machen formed the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1936, he required each ministerial candidate to hold at least a bachelors degree and at least two years of study at a theological seminary.

⁵⁸Ibid., 586.

⁵⁹Ibid., 587. Cornelius Van Til identified the supremacy of reason as the weak link in Princeton's theology. He criticized Charles Hodge in his book, *Apologetics* (Nutely, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1959), 47. He criticized Warfield's view in his book, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1969), chapter 8.

⁶⁰Ibid., 588. Both used common ground logic and the qualifications of an academic degree.

the way of Harvard and the rest of the Ivy League in the early nineteenth century.⁶¹

J. Gresham Machen

After Warfield's death, the mantle of conservatism at Princeton fell firmly on the shoulders of J. Gresham Machen.⁶² The professor of New Testament and theology fought valiantly against the implementations of liberals into positions of prominence. He stood before the General Assembly and the presbyteries to defend the conservative scholarship and biblical authority that was the capstone of Princeton for over a century. Several schools and people outside the Presbyterian Church were also watching to see what kind of impact the reorganization might have on reformed theology.⁶³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, a

⁶¹Ibid., 590.

⁶²Longfield, 126. Numerous works about J. Gresham Machen have been written. The classic biography remains Ned. B. Stonehouse's work, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (1954, 2004). Stonehouse was Machen's younger colleague in New Testament who succeeded him at Westminster. He spent many years digging through the archives of Machen's published works, sermons, and addresses in preparing the biography. More current works on Machen's life are D. G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994). This is an adaptation of Hart's doctoral dissertation. Two other works, both shorter in nature, written by men who had direct contact with Machen, also deserve mentioning. The first is Henry W. Coray's work entitled, *J. Gresham Machen: A Silhouette* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1981). This work, written in 1981, provide snapshots of Machen's life at various times and in various roles. The final work that is significant to the study of Machen is *The Significance of J. Gresham Machen Today* (Nutely, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1977). Paul Woolley, Machen's friend and professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary depicts, "the living man at his work." See also Paul Kjos Helseth, "Moral Character and Moral Certainty: The Subjective State of the Soul and J. G. Machen's Critique of Theological Liberalism" (PhD diss, Marquette University, 1997), and C. Allyn Russell, "J. Gresham Machen, Scholarly Fundamentalist," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51:1 (Spring 1973): 41-70.

⁶³Helseth, "Moral Character and Moral Certainty: The Subjective State of the Soul and J. G. Machen's Critique of Theological Liberalism," 1.

former Presbyterian minister, founder and president of the Evangelical Theological College, (now Dallas Theological Seminary) commented about the controversy at Princeton to a Texas judge in 1928 stating:

In this day of deflection from the truth of God there is as much theological variance often-times between two men of one denomination as between men of different denominations thirty years ago, and these differences which still exist in the denominations are bound to appear on any denominationally controlled faculty. The present strife at Princeton is an evidence at this point.⁶⁴

Chafer honestly believed that the men who left Princeton would matriculate to Dallas to aid his school. In a letter he wrote to a board member dated January 7, 1928, Chafer wrote:

I have just received word from Dr. Machen of Princeton indicating that five worth-while, orthodox professors of that great institution will probably be forced to resign by the last of May through the Seminary passing into modernist control. This means the fine student body that is there now, and those naturally going there another year and in years to come, will be turned away, and there is no other place excepting this new college in Dallas, and large numbers will probably seek to transfer their matriculation from Princeton to Dallas.⁶⁵

Chafer thought that the conservatives who left Princeton would come to his aid, and was shocked and upset when they turned him down because of theological differences with

⁶⁴Hannah, "The Social and Intellectual History of the Origins of the Evangelical Theological College," 228.

⁶⁵Ibid., 229. Unfortunately for Chafer, the exodus to Dallas never happened, and Machen and the other conservatives formed Westminster Theological Seminary. Chafer's hope in acquiring students based on this division illustrated Chafer's naiveté. He felt that Princeton, even in her glory days, did not adequately prepare men for the pastoral office because they failed to receive training in what Chafer referred to as the "vital truth" (e.g. dispensationalism, pre-tribulational pre-millennialism, the Victorious Life testimony, and an intense study of the English Bible). Chafer's ignorance came back to hit the already struggling seminary in the pocket-book because the now fractured church and various splinter groups would have less to contribute to his independent school.

eschatology.⁶⁶

Creation of Westminster Theological Seminary

When Machen left Princeton, he decided to form a new seminary that would remain faithful to the reformed teachings of the Westminster Confession of Faith. He invited professors who were also disturbed about the direction of the Presbyterian Church USA to join him in creating Westminster Theological Seminary. The professors covered most of the main areas of the school. J. G. Machen and Ned B. Stonehouse taught New Testament. John Murray taught New Testament and theology. Oswald T. Allis, Robert Dick Wilson, and Allan McRae taught Old Testament. Cornelius VanTil taught apologetics, and Paul Wooley taught church history. All of these men had served faithfully alongside Machen at Princeton and held to his conservative ideals. These conservatives believed that the cessation of fighting can mean one of two things, compromise or death.⁶⁷

Theological Differences with Princeton Theological Seminary

Since Princeton had decided to follow in the way of liberal theology, Westminster aspired to uphold the mantle of conservatism that had once draped Princeton. Robert Dick Wilson, believing that Westminster was to become the new

⁶⁶Ibid., 254. Dallas Theological Seminary founder Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote to Machen and the conservatives at Westminster and invited them to come to Dallas and aid the young institution. Chafer, a former Presbyterian minister, began Dallas Seminary five years before Westminster.

⁶⁷Louis Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement 1930-1956*, in Twin Book Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 15.

center of conservative scholarship in America commented:

Westminster must take rank with the best schools in Scotland and Germany. It must be respected by powerful schools of theology like Union Theological Seminary and the theological departments of the University of Chicago and Harvard.... Unless Westminster attained an international reputation, ... it would fail.”⁶⁸

Machen and the other conservative professors at Princeton felt the same way about making the move to Westminster. Lefferts A. Loetscher, in his work *The Broadening Church*, wrote the following about the division of the seminary:

The unfolding events had finally made mutually incompatible two tendencies which had existed side-by-side in the Princeton Theology from the beginning – a broad and warm evangelicalism on the one hand and a highly rational orthodoxy and extreme literalism on the other. It was best for both parts of the seminary tradition that opened bifurcation come at last, and that each could develop more fully inconsistently its inherent implications unhampered by a really alien tendency.⁶⁹

The emphasis placed on biblical scholarship and solid reformed teaching came from Machen’s desire and belief in the power of ideas. Machen wrote in 1924, “The really great moments in history are the moments which mark the first enunciation of great ideas. Ideas, after all, are the great conquerors [sic]; they cross the best-dug trenches; they cut the most intricate barbed wire; they move armies like puppets; they build empires and pull them down.”⁷⁰ Machen and the other conservatives were determined to provide the finest education possible while still remaining loyal to the Westminster Confession.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Loetscher, *The Broadening Church*, 147.

⁷⁰Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 179. Machen also believed that the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel were false ideas. He commented that Christianity would be lost if the intellectual foundation of faith was ever destroyed through the secularization of the church.

Conclusion

The climax of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy resulted in the loss of Princeton Theological Seminary. Several key factors resulted in reorganization. The first factor was the static nature of the school. Princeton was operating in the twentieth century with nineteenth century curriculum and practices. This made her graduates less effective for ministry in the twentieth century. The change in the curriculum from the fixed style of the nineteenth century to the more university style in the twentieth century again left the seminary vulnerable to fundamental institutional change.

Another problem Princeton faced during this time was a division of her faculty as to how to respond to theological liberalism. Warfield, Machen, and other conservatives believed it had no place in a minister's preparation. Moderates, such as Charles Eerdman and Robert E. Speer, favored a more inclusive church that tolerated a wider scope of "Christians."⁷¹ When the moderates gained control of Princeton in 1929, their goal of a denomination filled with both conservatives and liberals was realized. A look at the history of the Presbyterian Church shows that the liberals, who thought the church courts would properly police doctrine in the presbyteries, were sorely mistaken. Both the conservatives and liberals claimed their theological basis came from Princeton's founders, but where the former generation had succeeded in blending solid theological training with a changing ecclesiology, both sides in the debate a century later failed at the same task.

Princeton Theological Seminary was caught between two theological and

⁷¹See chapter 2 of this study for information on Speer and Erdman.

ecclesiological viewpoints. One side held theology and doctrine as their highest priority, while the other side sought growth through diversity. The conservatives remained fiercely loyal to the Westminster Confession of Faith, while the moderates and liberals sought to broaden the influence of the church by ignoring dogmatic theology and by casting a wide net that welcomed both moderates and theological liberals into the Presbyterian Church. With the fundamental changes in the denomination in the first two decades of the twentieth century and the curriculum and governance changes that soon followed, change at Princeton Theological Seminary was inevitable.

CHAPTER IV

THE FUNDAMENTALIST-MODERNIST CONTROVERSY OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

During the second half of the twentieth century, the largest protestant denomination in America became embroiled in a theological controversy.¹ Conservatives, alarmed by the theological liberalism that was coming out of Southern Baptist seminaries, decided to move the denomination from an emergence of neo-orthodoxy back to her historic, conservative roots. Theological liberals, who controlled the seminaries and liberal arts colleges, argued that Southern Baptist's defining principles allowed them to believe and teach newer forms of theology within the schools and seminaries.² Theological liberalism had crept into the Southern Baptist Convention, and

¹Bill Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), x. Bill Leonard calls the Fundamentalist/Modernist or Conservative/Liberal as simply "The Controversy." This author will use the same term in reference to the Conservative/Liberal Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention.

²For the sake of this study, the term Fundamentalist will not be used. The term became a pejorative after the Scopes trial in 1925. The two architects of the Conservative Resurgence, Paige Patterson and Judge Paul Pressler, prefer the term conservative rather than fundamentalist when referring to themselves and their supporters in the conflict. Concerning the terminology, Patterson commented, "... Fundamentalist, which I do not like to be called, because it is used in the pejorative sense, and it carries with it the baggage today of legalism and hostility, neither of which I wish to be identified with." Judge Paul Pressler added, "I know many, many fundamentalists in the Southern Baptist Convention... The word was caricatured in the 1920s (in the Scopes trial and elsewhere) to refer to a person with and rigidity of thought, rigidity of methodology of doing things..."

it would take a major controversy to settle the rift that was growing between different sects of Baptists.

The ensuing controversy lasted over twenty years. Conservatives and liberals struggled both for the control and the direction of the denomination. Most church members did not know about the Controversy or that Southern Baptists had strayed from their historic beliefs. Both Conservative and Liberals waged battles at the national, state and local associational level. Pastors who did not care much for denominational politics did not discuss many of the facts of the Controversy with their congregants. Other pastors brought the maximum number of messengers allowed by the Convention to make sure their agenda was carried out.³ This led to some tense moments at several annual meetings.⁴

So, in common day parlance, a fundamentalist is a pejorative term used to denote someone who was negativistic and rigid. I don't know many people or anybody I would classify that way in the conservative movement in the Southern Baptist Convention. We're biblical conservatives." See Dennis Ray Wiles, "Factors Contributing to the Resurgence of Fundamentalism in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1979- 1990" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992), 14.

³James C. Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis vol. 1* (Richmond, VA: Hannibal Books, 1986), 195. Conservative pastor Harold Hunter, then pastor of North Jacksonville Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, commented that the messengers from his church voted like he did. Liberals used Hunter's statements to show how "fundamentalists pastors" were squelching the freedom of individual Baptists in the church. Hunter argued that the messengers in his church believed like him and if a large church such as his wanted to bring a larger group of Conservatives to the meetings, they should be free to come and express their theology. This went for both Conservative and Liberal churches. Throughout the years of annual convention meetings, Conservatives nearly always outnumbered Liberals.

⁴Liberals alleged that Conservatives were guilty of "bussing" in more messengers than they were allotted. In the 1985 meeting in Dallas, they accused Conservatives of "orchestrating from the skyboxes," and pressuring Baptists to enact their agenda. Liberals argued that Baptists who did that were sacrificing their freedom of individual expression

Defining Qualities of Baptist

Most Baptists hold to certain particular distinctives that define them. According to Shurden, Baptists have historically been known for the following qualities: freedom to allow Scripture to speak for itself, local church autonomy, the individual freedom to believe and interpret Scripture, and the freedom to teach openly and freely in Southern Baptist Seminaries and Colleges.⁵ This led to much of the Southern Baptist Convention's success in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

During The Controversy, both Conservatives and Liberals argued that the qualities which defined the Southern Baptist Convention supported each of their agendas.

Conservatives argued that Southern Baptist had left her conservative, historical roots and were in the process of embracing both theological liberalism and neo-orthodoxy.⁶

Liberals argued that each individual believer and church in the Southern Baptist Convention was free to interpret Scripture and theology as they saw fit because of the freedom Baptists have historically embraced.⁷ Conservatives responded that the

and blindly following the Conservative leadership. Walter B. Shurden argued that each individual Baptist has the ability to interpret scripture as they see fit. See Walter B. Shurden, *The Doctrine of the Priesthood of Believers* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1987), 38.

⁵Walter B. Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1993), Introduction.

⁶Wiles, "Factors Contributing to the Resurgence of Fundamentalism in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1979-1990," 53.

⁷Cecil E. Sherman, "Freedom of Individual Interpretation," in *Being Baptist Means Freedom*, edited by Alan Neely (Charlotte, NC: The Baptist Alliance, 1988), 9. See also Robert Torbet, *History of the Baptists* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1950), 16-32.

supremacy of historical, conservative Baptist theology trumped the liberals argument of soul freedom.⁸ They contended that the liberals could believe what they wanted, but they would now be considered outside of the mainstream of the convention as a whole.

Each side argued salient points from Baptist history. The liberals, however, failed to understand that even though Baptists have favored freedom, they never did so at the expense of sound doctrine. Both early English Baptists who settled the Northeast and Southern Baptists who became a denomination in 1845 historically held to the fact that the Bible is the Word of God. This became a thorn in the flesh of the liberals who tried to argue for the higher-critical method of observing Scripture that became prevalent in the later half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹

The Issue of Soul Freedom

One of the key issues in the controversy was the concept of "Soul Freedom."

Historically, Baptists have not been tied to a particular creed or set theology by the overall

⁸Cameron Jorgenson, "Bapto-Catholicism: Recovering Tradition and Reconsidering the Baptists Identity" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2008). Chapter two is particularly helpful in understanding how both Conservatives and Liberals defined Baptist identity. Other resources that are helpful are Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*; Earl Kelly, *Southern Baptist Distinctives* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1989); Cecil E. Sherman, "Freedom of Individual Expression," in *Being Baptist Means Freedom*, edited by Alan Neely (Charlotte, NC: Baptist Alliance Press, 1988); E. Glenn Hinson, *Religious Liberty: The Christian Roots of Our Fundamental Freedom* (Louisville, KY: Glad River Publications, 1991); and *Soul Liberty* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1975).

⁹Wiles, 109-111. See also Gene Adams, "An Analytical Study of Southern Religion of the 1970's as Based on Samuel S. Hill Jr.'s Southern Culture-Religion Thesis," (PhD diss., Florida State University, 1980), chapters 3-5; Johnson Daymon, "Reformed Fundamentalism in America: The Lordship of Christ, The Transformation of Culture, and Other Calvinist Components of the Christian Right" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 1994), chapter 4.

denomination. Each individual Baptist church, acting as its own independent entity, has the freedom to believe and preach what it wants. This can be problematic if one church holds to a more conservative view than the church across the street. The issue of allowing individual churches and members inside the church to believe what they want without pressure from the overall convention, has been a hallmark of the Baptists ever since 1845.

During the Controversy, liberals in the Southern Baptist Convention argued that Baptists had the soul freedom to believe what they wanted to about the Scripture and other aspects of theology. They grew increasingly concerned about conservatives, who continued to argue for a return to historic, conservative Baptist views. They argued that liberal Baptists should have the freedom to believe and teach whatever they wanted in the churches, colleges, and seminaries. Because the Southern Baptist Convention held no official creed but Scripture, they argued that their individual interpretation of Scripture was sufficient and therefore should suffice in both the educational context of the seminaries and the local context of the churches.¹⁰

¹⁰The initial perceptions of Baptists going into the Controversy was that there was no official Baptist creed; there was only Scripture. For a good introduction to this problem, see Herschell H. Hobbs, "Southern Baptist and Confessionalism," *Review and Expositor* 76:1 (Winter 1979):55-69. But, because of the differing views on Scripture in the Convention, the denomination set out on the task of revising the Baptist Faith and Message in 2000. In the new confession, Southern Baptist cut the part that said that Scripture was a record of God's revelation. They changed it to say it was God's revelation. The phrase in the 1963 Confession that said that the standard for interpreting Scripture was Jesus Christ was also removed from the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. The phrase, "All Scripture is a testimony to Christ who is Himself the focus of divine revelation," took its place. Both Conservative and Liberal factions argued about the Baptist Faith and Message. Two of the most prominent arguments came from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's journal, *Review and Expositor*. See Joe T. Odle ed., "Should Southern Baptist Have a Creed/Confession?— Yes!" *Review and Expositor*

Defining Baptist Polity

Baptist polity has always been a difficult issue to nail down.¹¹ There are three main branches of Baptist polity and each one has a unique perspective on church.¹² The one unifying theme of each tradition is the independence of the local Baptist church.¹³ This, however, could be problematic during the large scale controversy. In Southern Baptist life, each church has the freedom to believe whatever they see fit. There is no standard or fixed curriculum that comes down from the convention. Because of this, a church on one side of town can be conservative while the one across town can have more liberal views.¹⁴

76:1 (Winter 1979): 89-94; John Hurt, "Should Southern Baptist Have a Creed/Confessions? – No!" *Review and Expositor* 76:1 (Winter 1979): 85-88; and James Leo Garrett, "The Concept of Biblical Authority in Historic Baptist Confessions of Faith," *Review and Expositor* 76:1 (Winter 1979): 43-54. For more information of the changes in the Baptist Faith and Message, see Timothy Seal, "A Comparative Analysis of the Theological Heritage of the 2000 Revisions to the 'Baptist Faith and Message' in Relation to the 1963 and 1925 Confessions" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000).

¹¹Several sources that are helpful in understanding Baptist polity are as follows: Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology: 2nd Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), part 11; Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology vol. 4: Church, Last Things* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2005) part 1, and Mark Dever's chapter entitled, "The Doctrine of the Church," in, *A Theology for the Church*, edited by Daniel L Akin (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007), 766-856.

¹²The three main traditions are the Charleston, Sandy Creek, and Landmark traditions. Even though the Landmark tradition varied between Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas, because they each held to the same basic tenets, they will be referenced together for the purpose of this study.

¹³Robert G. Torbet, *History of the Baptist* (Philadelphia, Jurdson, 1950), 16-32.

¹⁴M. Jean Heriot, "Rural Interpretations of Conflict," in *Southern Baptist Observed*, edited by Nancy Ammerman (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 237.

The issue of polity also impacted state conventions.¹⁵ During the Controversy, some state denominations were naturally more liberal while some were conservative. Just because the denomination at large made a turn back toward conservative theology, doesn't mean that each state followed suit. While the drama was going on at the annual convention meetings, both Conservatives and Liberals were waging the struggle in their own state conventions. This is one area where the Liberals actually gained ground in the waning days of the Controversy.¹⁶

During the Controversy, Liberals argued that the President of the Convention and the denominational leaders ruled by dictate and presidential decree. They argued that Southern Baptists had embraced a Catholic style of government that gave more influence to the pastor as the leader of the church instead of allowing each believer to express his or her own opinion and beliefs. Liberals held that the Conservatives destroyed the priesthood of the believer and replaced it with the Catholic view of the priesthood and infallibility of the pastor. Liberals saw these as three main areas of concern in the convention.¹⁷

¹⁵Chapter six of this study will show how the Controversy affected the state conventions. This study will focus on the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Every state convention had a different outcome. Some were more explosive than others. James Hefley, in *The Truth In Crisis* series, focused on the controversies in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Texas, and Virginia.

¹⁶James Hefley covered the controversy in the state conventions in the following works; *The Truth in Crisis vol. 2* (Garland, TX: Hannibal Books, 1987), chapter 12; *The Truth in Crisis vol. 3* (Garland, TX: Hannibal Books, 1988), chapter 10; and *The Truth in Crisis, vol. 5* (Garland, TX: Hannibal Books, 1989), chapter 7.

¹⁷Jorgenson, "Bapto-Catholicism: Recovering Tradition and Reconsidering the Baptists Identity," chapter 2. See also Grady C. Cothen, *The New SBC: Fundamentalism's Impact on The Southern Baptist Convention* (Macon, GA: Smyth and

Theological Inadequacy in the Southern Baptist Schools

A few Southern Baptist pastors and professors became increasingly concerned with the material being taught in the convention supported colleges and seminaries. Students were returning to their home churches and reporting to their congregations about the liberalism which was taught. Subjects ranging from evolution to abortion were either being taught as fact or supported by faculty members at Southern Baptist schools.¹⁸ Several pastors and professors became alarmed over the theological state of the colleges and seminaries. B. Gray Allison, professor of Evangelism and Church History at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary saw the need to reform the seminaries firsthand during his time as a professor at New Orleans Seminary.¹⁹ Future Conservative leader and architect of the Conservative Resurgence Paige Patterson, a New Orleans alumnus, also saw the same need.

The problems these men and others observed in the convention became the catalyst for the Conservative Resurgence. Southern Baptists had strayed from their historic, conservative roots and were in danger of following the path of the Presbyterian Church U. S. A., who jettisoned their theology for denominational unity during the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This led to their ultimate demise. If Southern Baptist did not act quickly, the same fate that befell the Presbyterians

Helwys, 1995), chapter 5.

¹⁸Joe Edward Barnhart, *The Southern Baptist Holy War* (Austin, Texas: Texas Monthly Press, 1986), 80-1.

¹⁹James A. Patterson, *To All the World: A History of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972-1997* (Memphis, TN: Disciple Press, 1997), 26-27.

would come to them.

The Need to Reform the Seminaries

During the second half of the Twentieth century, there arose an apparent need to correct or reform several of the Southern Baptists Cooperative Program Seminaries. The first real cause for concern arose with the Elliot controversy. In 1962, Ralph Elliot, professor of Old Testament at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, published a book entitled, *The Message of Genesis*. In this work, Elliot, argued that the first eleven chapters of Genesis should not be taken as literal, but should be seen as symbolic or allegorical.²⁰ He also did not believe that God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac in chapter twenty-two.²¹

The next major controversy was known as the *Broadman Holman* controversy. In 1969, Broadman-Holman released their first commentary set on the Bible. G. Horton Davies, a British Baptist, wrote the Genesis commentary. Davies, a liberal, argued that the near sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22, along with several other items, were made up fables.²² Davie's Genesis Commentary caused such a firestorm that the Southern Baptist Convention ordered the Genesis commentary rewritten. Broadman-Holman commissioned Clyde Francisco, professor of Old Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, to re-write the commentary. A theological liberal himself,

²⁰Ralph Elliott, *The Message of Genesis* (Nashville: Broadman, 1961), 14.

²¹*Ibid.*, 145-147.

²²G. Henton Davies, *Genesis*, vol. 1 in Broadman Holman Commentary Series (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), 198.

Francisco's revision was not much of an improvement on Davie's original work.²³

At the Southern Baptists annual meeting in 1971 and 1972, the convention passed a resolution condemning both the Genesis Commentary and Eliot's work. The leadership of the convention was hesitant to do anything about the liberalism that had now been brought into the spotlight. This led small groups of concerned pastors in several states to begin exploring new organizational and educational options that reflected the historic, conservative Baptist's beliefs.²⁴

*Independent Conservative Responses to the
Liberalism in the Seminaries*

The liberalism in the Southern Baptists colleges and seminaries did not go unnoticed. Several pastors and professors, along with some of the largest Southern Baptist churches in the convention, decided to start theological institutions that adhered to traditional conservative Baptist theology. There were three schools that made a significant contribution to the conservatives in the Controversy. They were The Criswell Bible Institute (now The Criswell College), Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, and Luther Rice Seminary. Conservative pastors and seminary professors united to provide a meaningful alternative to the liberalism of the Southern Baptist seminaries and

²³Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope*, 72-73. Francisco also favored the Historical-Critical method of interpreting Genesis. For more information on Biblical Authority in the Southern Baptist Convention, see Walter B. Shurden, "The Problem of Authority in the SBC," *Review and Expositor* 75:2 (Spring, 1978): 225.

²⁴David T.Morgan, *The New Crusades, The New Holy Land: Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969-1991* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1996), 32-3.

colleges.

Criswell College

During the final year of his presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention, W. A. Criswell, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, announced that his church would be starting a school where men could go to receive solid, biblical training.²⁵ Criswell held a PhD from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and was vocal in his opposition to liberalism both at Southern and at the other Cooperative Program seminaries.²⁶

Criswell did not see any hope for the Cooperative Program seminaries turning around during his lifetime. Because of this, First Baptist, Dallas, started a school that would take a stand for the innerrancy of the Word of God and hold to conservative Baptist principles. As with everything he did, Criswell poured his entire life into the development of his school. First Baptist, Dallas had the resources to turn Criswell's dream into a reality.²⁷

²⁵Michael M. Soud, "The Effect of Criswell College's Effect on the Southern Baptist Controversy 1980-2000" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 27-8.

²⁶Criswell played a key role in the start of the Controversy. For more on Criswell's role in the Controversy, see David Louis Goza, "W. A. Criswell's Formative Role in the Conservative Resurgence of the Southern Baptist Convention" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006). For more on Criswell College and his leadership role, see Gloria Cowan, "Contributions of W. A. Criswell to the Establishment and Development of the Criswell College" (EdD diss., University of North Texas, 2004); Paul David Jacobs, "The History and Development of the Criswell College, 1971-1990" (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 1991).

²⁷Michael M. Soud, "The Effect of Criswell College's Effect on the Southern Baptist Controversy 1980-2000," 28.

In 1969, First Baptist Church, Dallas, voted overwhelmingly to create a school that would present a conservative option to the liberal seminaries. In 1970, Criswell Bible Institute started holding classes.²⁸ The school experienced significant growth during the first five years. By the spring semester of 1976, ten professors taught nearly 130 students. The first graduating class held their commencement exercises at First Baptist Church, Dallas with twelve graduates.²⁹ The school has remained faithful to the Word of God and Conservative Baptist principles.

Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary

The next major academic response to the liberalism in the seminaries was the creation of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee. B. Gray Allison, founder of Mid-America, earned his ThD at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and taught there for ten years before resigning. Allison was concerned about the liberalism in the seminaries and asked God to give Southern Baptist a school that believed the Bible is the Word of God. He also wanted a school where every professor held an earned doctorate and evangelism and practical missions were at the core of the seminary's program.³⁰ Mid-America opened its doors in 1972 as another conservative

²⁸David Louis Goza, "W. A. Criswell's Formative Role in the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention," 156.

²⁹Gloria Cowan, "Contributions of W. A. Criswell to the Establishment and Development of the Criswell College," 34.

³⁰Patterson, *To All The World*, 25.

alternative to the Southern Baptist Schools.³¹

During the years of the Controversy, both Liberals and several Co-operative Program Seminaries targeted Mid-America for her stand on the Bible and the school's conservative theology.³² One Southern Baptist Seminary openly protested the Southern Association of Colleges and School's accreditation of Mid-America Seminary.³³ B. Gray Allison, founder and longtime president of Mid-America, made it clear to members of the school and others that they were not to get involved in any part of the Controversy. He started the school as an alternative to the liberalism that he saw in the seminaries, and he did not want to agitate or aggravate the situation any further by delving into denominational politics.³⁴

Luther Rice Seminary

In 1962, Robert Gee Witty, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, met with several concerned pastors about the need for a conservative seminary. Central Baptist Church provided space for the seminary to meet. Witty found five pastors

³¹Ibid. Another concise work on Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and the Southern Baptists Convention came from an article in *Journal for Baptist Studies*. See James A. Patterson, "Alternative Theological Education in the Southern Baptist Convention: A Case Study of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary" *Journal for Baptist Studies* 1(2007): 2-19.

³²Patterson, *To All The World*, 93-4.

³³Ibid., 90.

³⁴Ibid., 96. Mid-America wanted to offer an alternative Conservative education. Discussing the Controversy publicly by the faculty and students was prohibited. President Allison once interrupted a guest preacher who was criticizing Southern Baptists during a chapel message. He informed him that Mid-America did not criticize the Convention.

who were willing to serve as faculty. In May of 1962, these five pastors, along with president Witty, signed Luther Rice's charter. The state of Florida granted the charter on June 14, 1962. The first classes were held on September 11, 1962.³⁵ By 1964, the student body had grown to ninety-four and the faculty had increased to sixteen pastors.

The school experienced rapid growth throughout the decade of the 1960's and the early part of the 1970's. In 1982, the school moved to the south side of Jacksonville. Another move brought the school to its present location in Lithonia, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta, in 1991. The school held to conservative Baptist theology which included both the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.³⁶

Luther Rice, like Mid-America, stayed out of the fray around them. Two of the denomination's leaders, Charles Stanley and Jerry Vines, earned degrees from Luther Rice Seminary. The school continued to offer an alternative to the then liberal cooperative program seminaries. Because of this, they drew Southern Baptist pastors and future leaders to the seminary.³⁷

This school, along with Criswell College and Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, began the arduous task of providing a conservative alternative to the liberal Cooperative Program seminaries. Early in the decade of the 1970s, they faced ridicule and difficulties, but each school provided a much needed support to the Conservative

³⁵“About Luther Rice Seminary and University: A Brief History,” available from http://www.lru.edu/Content.aspx?page=about_lru (Accessed October 23, 2009).

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

Resurgence throughout the decades of the seventies and eighties.³⁸

The Architects of the Conservative Resurgence

There were two men who led the way during the Conservative Resurgence. They met at Café du Monde in New Orleans in 1979 to discuss a strategy to return the Southern Baptist Convention back to her conservative, historical roots. They were Paige Patterson, a professor at the Criswell College and later president of both Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Paul Pressler, a district judge of the 14th Court of Appeals in Houston, Texas. They became the targets of vicious attacks by the Liberals.

Reports say that the Controversy affected both men differently. Judge Pressler was largely unaffected by the Controversy. He ignored all of the name calling and allegations the Liberals hurled at him. Paige Patterson, on the other hand, had a much different reaction to the Controversy. A largely private person, the name calling, hateful rhetoric, and broken friendships took a terrible toll on him.³⁹

Judge Paul Pressler

The first architect of the Conservative Resurgence was Paul Pressler. A native of Texas, Pressler attended preparatory school at Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. After graduating from Exeter and military service, he attended Princeton University. He was exposed to theological liberalism while at Princeton, which prompted

³⁸Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis* vol. 1, 112.

³⁹Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation* (Nashville: Broadman, 2000), 84.

him to write an article in the school newspaper defending the conservative view of Scripture. After graduating from Princeton, Pressler attended the University of Texas Law School, graduating with his law degree. He returned to Houston to practice law. Pressler feared that the liberalism that led to the collapse of evangelical Christianity in the Northeast had permeated the Southern Baptist Convention. In 1963, he authored a letter in which he expressed concern over the Elliot controversy. In 1970, Pressler said, “I really believe if our (SBC) seminaries abandon teaching the authority of the Scriptures then additional doctrinal error will come quickly and we will cease to be a force for God in our country.”⁴⁰

Pressler continued to work as a judge during the time of The Controversy. Many Liberals accused him of neglecting his real job to further the “radical fundamentalist” agenda.⁴¹ His role in the conservative resurgence in the SBC is unquestioned.

Paige Patterson

If W. A. Criswell was the ideological godfather and Judge Paul Pessler was the strategist, then Paige Patterson was the apologist for the Conservative Resurgence.⁴² Patterson is the son of a prominent Texas pastor, T. A. Patterson. After completing his studies at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, Patterson attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he earned a ThM in 1968 and a ThD in 1973. Paige

⁴⁰Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 78.

⁴¹See Paul Pressler’s autobiography, *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist’s Journey* (Nashville: Broadman, 1999).

⁴²Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 78.

Patterson met Judge Paul Pressler in 1967. While pastoring a church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, Paige Patterson received a call from W. A. Criswell inviting him to be the president of The Criswell College.⁴³

Patterson served as the president of the college until 1992, when the trustees of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, elected him to be the president of the school.⁴⁴ Patterson was instrumental in rooting out the liberals at Southeastern and repairing both the school's image and enrollment.⁴⁵ After serving at Southeastern for eleven years, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, offered Paige Patterson the job as the seminary's eighth president. Both he and his wife, Dorothy, currently live in Fort Worth and serve on faculty at the seminary.⁴⁶

The Strategy

The strategy of the Conservatives was simple and straightforward. In order to reform the seminaries and return the convention to its historic, conservative roots, new,

⁴³Ibid., 82.

⁴⁴Ibid., 83. By 1998, only two of the thirty-six faculty under the "Moderate" leadership were still employed at Southeastern Seminary.

⁴⁵Ibid. Sutton devotes chapter fourteen to the Controversy's impact on Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The fighting at Southeastern was the fiercest of any of the Cooperative Program Seminaries. Some Conservatives labeled it the most liberal of the Seminaries, while others held that The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky was the most liberal and in the most need of reform. The next chapter will discuss the impact of the Controversy on Southern.

⁴⁶Paige Patterson became the president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in August of 2003.

conservative leadership needed to replace the entrenched liberal beauracracy in the convention at all levels. Early on in the process, Conservatives discovered that the power of the pulpit was mightier than the power of the pen. If change was going to come to the Southern Baptist Convention, it would happen in the pulpit before it became a reality in the classrooms.⁴⁷

The Conservative leaders understood the power that the President of the Southern Baptist Convention had. He controlled the appointments to the important Committee on Committees. This group was responsible for choosing the trustees at the six Cooperative Program Seminaries and other influential boards in the convention. If the Conservatives could win the presidency for a number of years, they could begin to impact the influential committees that could ultimately bring about organizational change in the convention.⁴⁸

This became the Conservative's strategy. They focused their attention on

⁴⁷For an excellent discussion on the influence of conservative preaching in the Southern Baptist Convention, and analysis of selected sermons by both Conservatives and Liberals, consult Maria A Dixon, "The Sword of the Word: The Use of Sermonic Discourse as Organizatinal Rhetoric in the Battle for the Southern Baptist Convention" (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2004). The Conservatives were successful in using the Pastor's Conference at the annual Southern Baptist Convention meetings both to rally their supporters and antagonize their opponents. One of the main differences between the Southern Baptist Controversy and the Presbyterian Controversy was that pastors, not scholars, became the most effective communicators of truth. They became more influential than the Liberals in the classroom. They were able to get their message out and influence more people in their churches compared to the Liberals who mainly influenced the seminaries and colleges.

⁴⁸Two books that give perspective on the Presidents of the Convention are Emir and Ergun Caner, *The Sacred Trust: Sketches of the Southern Baptist Convention Presidents* (Nashville: Broadman, 2003), and Emir and Ergun Caner, eds., *The Sacred Desk: Sermons of the Southern Baptist Convention Presidents* (Nashville: Broadman, 2004). Nancy Ammerman provides a good discussion of the Southern Baptist hierarchy in *Baptist Battles* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 168-171.

promoting strong, pastoral figures with name recognition in the convention as the champions for their conservative cause. Prominent pastors such as Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellvue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee; Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia; Bailey Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dell City, Oklahoma; Jerry Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida; and Morris Chapman, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas are some of the pastors who served as Convention presidents. Each played a key roll in bringing much needed reforms to the convention.⁴⁹

Selected Conventions and Presidents During the Controversy

There were several significant conventions and Convention presidents who made the difference for the Conservatives in The Controversy.⁵⁰ Although each convention during the Controversy had a key role to play, there were four conventions that had a major impact on the overall direction of the Convention. The 1979 convention, with the election of Adrian Rogers, brought the Controversy into the national spotlight. The climax of The Controversy came with the 1985 annual meeting in Dallas, Texas. Over 45,000 messengers showed up to debate the direction of the convention and to battle over

⁴⁹See Sutton, Hefley, and Morgan's works for a good summary overview of the works of each of the Convention Presidents and the issues each faced during the Controversy.

⁵⁰For a good analysis of the Controversy, see James C. Hefley's five volume set entitled, *The Truth in Crisis*. Each volume presents an account of the Controversy. See also Sutton's book, *The Baptist Reformation*. Sutton discusses the later events and effects of the Controversy to 1999. Bill Leonard's work provides a good overview of the Controversy. David T. Morgan's book, *The New Crusades, The New Holy Land*, gives a good perspective of the Controversy from 1969 up until the New Orleans Convention in 1991.

significant doctrinal issues. Other significant conventions were the 1988 convention in which Jerry Vines was elected President. The final significant convention occurred with the twelfth win in New Orleans in 1991 with the re-election of Morris Chapman as President.⁵¹

During the overall Controversy, the major theological issue became the issue of the inerrancy of Scripture.⁵² Liberals contended that each person and church be allowed to interpret Scripture as he or they see fit.⁵³ They argued that there should be no doctrinal standard or litmus test that should be applied to the Convention's educational institutions or to the Convention leadership. Conservatives contended that Baptists had always believed the Bible was the Word of God and they needed to return to it.⁵⁴ Because of this, Liberals accused Conservatives of making the Bible an idol and worshiping it. Conservatives argued that since Liberals did not believe the Bible was the Word of God, they had no foundation to support their views.

⁵¹Morgan, *The New Crusades, The New Holy Land*, 103.

⁵²Many works came out of the Controversy what dealt with the Inerrancy of Scripture. See Thomas J. Nettles, "Baptist and Scripture" in *Inerrancy and the Church*, edited by John D. Hannah, (Chicago: Moody, 1984); L. Russ Bush and Thomas J. Nettles, *Baptists and The Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1980); Clark H. Pinnock, "How I Use the Bible in Doing Theology" in *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options* edited by Robert K. Johnston (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1985); Allene Stuart Phy, ed., *The Bible and Popular Culture in America*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Ernest S. Freirichs, *The Bible and Bibles in America* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988); Duane A. Garrett and Richard R. Melick Jr. *Authority and Inspiration: A Baptist Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

⁵³Fisher Humphreys, *The Way We Were: How Southern Baptist Theology has Changed and What it Means to Us All* (New York: McCracken Press, 1994), 148-9.

⁵⁴Earl Kelly, *Southern Baptist Distinctives* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1989), 57.

The Presidency of Adrian Rogers

The first major move of the Controversy was the election of Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellvue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Upon winning the presidency, Rogers said he wanted to set a tone of positivism, but that he did not want to compromise the Word of God.⁵⁵ Soon after his presidency, Rogers told Louis Moore from the *Houston Chronicle* that he would use the power of his presidency to straighten out some of the serious doctrinal issues in the Southern Baptist Convention. He said that he would only appoint people that believed the Bible was God's inerrant Word to any position of power. He pledged, "I hope to set in motion forces that will ultimately choose trustees (of the Convention, seminaries, and agencies) who are warmhearted, evangelistic, and conservative."⁵⁶

Rogers worked hard on not playing politics, stating that when he spoke, it would not be about denominational politics, but about soul winning, loving Jesus, and standing up for the Word of God. Rogers met with Abner McCall, a Liberal, and president emeritus of Baylor University, who was elected as the first Vice-President. McCall sent Rogers some names of people for committee appointments, and when asked by Rogers if they were innerrantist, McCall responded, "I don't know."⁵⁷ Rogers tried to figure out how to speak pastorally to a divided convention while not compromising his beliefs.

⁵⁵Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 101.

⁵⁶Ibid., 102.

⁵⁷Ibid., 110.

The Presidency of Charles Stanley

The election of Charles Stanley at the 1984 convention in Kansas City marked a significant turning point to the Controversy. Up until this point, most of the denominational leaders saw the Conservative Resurgence as a brief sidebar to business as usual. Conservatives wanted both a voice in the Convention and to be heard. Liberals thought things would remain the same. They did not expect the Conservative Resurgence to take off as it did. All of this changed with the election of Charles Stanley as President of the convention in 1984. He presided over the most difficult hour in the struggle and launched a new phase in the Controversy. Two key events that happened during his presidency were the siding of denominational executives with the liberal wing of the convention, and the creation of the Peace Committee, which was responsible for discovering the causes of the conflict and finding solutions to fix them.⁵⁸

Stanley won a close election against Grady Cothen, head of the Sunday School board and John Sullivan, a pastor from Louisiana. Stanley received 52.18 percent majority with 7,692 votes. Moderates left Kansas City discouraged. Moderate leader Walter B. Shurden proclaimed:

For messengers to reject Grady Cothen, a staunch biblical conservative and devoted denominationalist, for Charles Stanley, a biblical fundamentalist and marginal Southern Baptist, meant that fundamentalists had been enormously successful in heralding the fundamentalist program as the new badge of denominational unity.⁵⁹

Shurden and his supporters failed to realize one key fact. Only denominational

⁵⁸Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis*, vol. 2 (Garland, TX: Hanibal Books, 1987), 24-5.

⁵⁹Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 143.

executives considered Stanley marginal. The common Southern Baptists in the pews viewed him as one of their heroes and great leaders of the convention.⁶⁰ James B. Dunn warned Liberals that they needed to bring everything and everyone they could to the 1985 convention in Dallas to stop the “fundamentalists.” If they failed to win in Dallas, the cause could be lost forever. With this, Dunn and the other denominational leaders declared their allegiance to the Liberals and their cause.⁶¹

The Showdown in Dallas

The climax of the Controversy came at the Southern Baptist Convention’s annual meeting in 1985. 45,519 messengers converged upon Dallas, Texas to debate the direction of the convention.⁶² The media hailed this meeting as the largest Protestant denominational gathering in history. W. A. Criswell preached one of his more famous sermons, “Whether We Live or Die,” at the pastor’s conference the day before the convention business began. Charles Stanley won reelection over Winfred Moore with 55.3 percent of the vote.⁶³

The most significant decision at the Dallas convention was the creation of the Peace Committee. This committee would, in context of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message, judge the health of the different boards, agencies, and programs in the

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Aaron Weaver, “James M. Dunn and Soul Freedom: A Paradigm for Baptist Political Engagement in the Public Arena” (MA thesis, Baylor University, 2008), 44.

⁶²Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 147.

⁶³Jerry Falwell, “Southern Baptist Face off in Dallas,” *The Fundamentalist Journal* 4:5 (May 1985): 10.

convention. Conservatives applauded the effort as a major step in the right direction. They saw the Committee as a way to police the convention and to expose the Liberals.⁶⁴

Shortly after the meeting in Dallas, Paul Pressler and Ken Chafin debated publically if a Jew or non-Christian could go to heaven on the Phil Donahue show. When asked about the need for a personal relationship with Jesus, Chafin responded that his rabbi friend would probably go to heaven based on what Jesus did. Although he never said that a personal relationship with Christ was unnecessary, many Southern Baptist grew concerned over the Liberal's views of salvation. This also caused them to wonder about other positions they held.⁶⁵

The Peace Committee

At the annual meeting in 1985, in Dallas, the convention leadership formed a special committee to help resolve the differences in the convention and to bring an end to the fighting. This group formed the Peace Committee that would hash out the differences between the two sides. A group of convention leaders selected twenty-two members to the Committee.⁶⁶ They were responsible for examining the different agencies in the convention and finding a solutions to the differing viewpoints of both the Conservatives and Liberals.

⁶⁴Charles Martin Jacumin, "A Theological and Historical Analysis of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee, 1985-1987" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 23.

⁶⁵Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 149.

⁶⁶Randall Wayde Williams, "The Role of the Peace Committee in the Southern Baptist Convention Inerrancy Controversy" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000), 62-63.

The Liberals complained that the Committee was stacked with Fundamentalists who would enact the Conservative agenda no matter what the outcome.⁶⁷ The committee reported on the health of each of the cooperative program seminaries as well as several other denominational and doctrinal issues.⁶⁸ The committee met between 1985 through 1988. The report they gave during the 1987 convention was a tremendous turning point in the Controversy. The convention voted to adopt the committee's report. This legitimized the conservative movement as being in line with the official policy of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁶⁹ Some Conservatives felt that if the Peace Committee had not been created, their cause would have died.⁷⁰

The Presidency of Jerry Vines

In 1988, the Southern Baptists, meeting in San Antonio, Texas, elected Jerry Vines as convention President. He won a narrow victory over Richard Jackson, an inerrantists who many perceived to be less polarizing. Jackson favored the idea of unity amidst diversity.⁷¹

It was during the 1988 convention that Liberals realized that the convention was changing and there was nothing they could do to stop it. The Conservative's success led

⁶⁷Ibid., 64. The Liberals asked for the formation of the Peace Committee.

⁶⁸Jacumin, "A Theological and Historical Analysis of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee, 1985-1987," 23.

⁶⁹Williams, "The Role of the Peace Committee in the Southern Baptist Convention Inerrancy Controversy," 163.

⁷⁰Ibid., 61.

⁷¹Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 192.

many of the Liberals to begin thinking about leaving the convention. Alan Neely, longtime missionary and Liberal, suggested that if they could not win with Richard Jackson, they could not win with the Apostle Paul.⁷² Jerry Vines declared that the battle for the Bible was over and that the issue of inerrancy was settled in Southern Baptist life.⁷³ Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, was another convention favorite that mainstream Southern Baptists both knew and loved. The Liberals, even with Dan Vestal, a popular Texas pastor, could not muster enough support to defeat the popular Conservative Vines the next year.⁷⁴

Vines remained committed to the Word of God. He encouraged all Baptists to remain faithful to Scripture. He also promoted personal soul winning and holding to the doctrines that had defined Baptist for over one-hundred years.⁷⁵

The Presidency of Morris T. Chapman

In 1990, the convention elected Morris Chapman as President. During his presidency, several major issues arose. Unhappy Liberals were seeking to find a resolution that would give them some sort of influence in the convention. Others were discussing pulling away from the Southern Baptists and forming their own denomination. Chapman had the daunting task of keeping the convention attuned to their historic

⁷²Morgan, *The New Crusades*, 93.

⁷³“Vines Reiterates: Issue of the Bible ‘Over’,” *Baptist Standard* (June 21, 1989): 8.

⁷⁴Morgan, *The New Crusades*, 95.

⁷⁵Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis*, vol. 5, 77.

mission while dealing with the Liberals who were planning their exodus.

The messengers re-elected Chapman in 1991. In his inaugural address, Chapman declared the issue of the inerrancy of Scripture was now settled. He went on to say that those who did not hold his view would never declare the issue as settled. Chapman reminded Southern Baptists that they could not afford to compromise their convictions about the Bible.⁷⁶ Several Liberals questioned Chapman on his committee appointments. He had pledged not to assign people to any committee who had served before. They wanted him to “broaden the tent” in the Southern Baptist Convention. Chapman kept his promise of not appointing anyone who had previously served on a committee.⁷⁷

As a result of Chapman’s presidency, several liberal Baptist churches began complaining to anyone that would listen to them that Conservatives had excluded them from prominent positions in Baptists life. Many wrote letters to Chapman threatening to withdraw funding from the Cooperative program. He responded with grace and a pastor’s heart. He wanted everyone to join together around the Word of God and to encourage and pray for each other.⁷⁸

The Twelfth Win in New Orleans

With Morris Chapman’s re-election at the convention in New Orleans, the Conservatives enjoyed twelve years of consecutive wins. After his election, over 300 hundred Conservatives packed into Café du Monde to celebrate their victory. This was

⁷⁶Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 203.

⁷⁷Ibid., 210.

⁷⁸Ibid.

the place where Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson met twelve years earlier to discuss their concerns about the convention.⁷⁹

Russell Dilday, the Liberal president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, stated that the political takeover of the convention by the Conservatives was both unbiblical and unnecessary. He said the division as a result of the Controversy threatened the biblical mandate of evangelism that defined Baptists for over 100 years.⁸⁰

The Liberals suffered three key defeats at the New Orleans Convention. Chapman was reelected, while the Liberal candidates for both first and second vice-president also lost. Liberals lost the right to report on the Committee on Nominations.⁸¹ The Liberal's most crushing defeat however, came with the de-funding of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. The messengers voted to appropriate \$50,000 for the agency. Their appropriation the year before was \$391,796. This represented an 87.24 percent budget cut.⁸² It became very clear to the Liberals that they were defeated and that the overall struggle which had consumed the convention for eleven years had come to an end.

The Creation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

On August 23, 1990, the Consultation of Concerned Baptists met in Atlanta to

⁷⁹Morgan, *The New Crusades*, 104.

⁸⁰E. Glenn Hinson, *Religious Liberty: The Christian Roots of Our Fundamental Freedom* (Louisville, KY: Glad River Publications, 1991), 139.

⁸¹Morgan, *The New Crusades*, 103-4.

⁸²*Ibid.*

determine what possibilities, if any, they had to unite in a cooperation for the cause of Christ.⁸³ The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, at this time an unofficial group, complained that Conservatives had driven them out of the convention. On May 9-11, 1991, Liberals met together and officially formed the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Five thousand participants met in Atlanta, Georgia. They elected the pastor of First Baptist Church in Asheville, North Carolina, John Hewett, as their first moderator. Their counsel consisted of seventy-nine members.⁸⁴

Many of the members of the Liberals joined the Fellowship after the 1991 Convocation. They provided a place for displaced churches, pastors, and Liberal Southern Baptists to unite and work for their common interest. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship tried to unite the group of Baptists that held their beliefs.⁸⁵

Conclusion

The Southern Baptist Convention is no stranger to controversy. Unlike earlier controversies, this one differed from the others in both nature and scope. This Controversy rested on two differing perspectives concerning the nature of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Controversy changed the Southern Baptist Convention forever. Liberals argued that the Conservatives stole the convention from them. They alleged that the

⁸³Daniel Vestal, "The History of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," in *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement*, edited by Walter B. Shuden (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1993), 260-1.

⁸⁴Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 209.

⁸⁵Vestal, "The History of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," 253-254.

Convention had not returned to her historic roots, but that a small group of “Fundamentalists” had captured the convention and forced their agenda upon the rest of Southern Baptists.⁸⁶ Conservatives were successful in returning the Convention to its historic roots.

Part of the Conservatives’ success came from the dominant personalities of several prominent pastors.⁸⁷ Men like W. A. Criswell, Adrian Rogers, Charles Stanley, Jerry Vines, and Morris Chapman were successful in gathering the support of the believers who sat in their respective pews. The Conservatives were extremely successful in getting their message out to the Convention. The Liberals were not as successful. Conservatives also won the press battle. Jim Hefley and other Conservatives provided an accurate account of what was happening at the Convention meetings.⁸⁸ Most of the Liberal’s literature was a frustrated reaction to their lack of success.⁸⁹

The Southern Baptist Convention, along with the Missouri Synod Lutherans, are the only major denominations which, after drifting away from its formative doctrines,

⁸⁶Timothy George, “Southern Baptists After the Revolution,” *First Things* (August 2006): 17-9.

⁸⁷In the Presbyterian Controversy, Conservative scholars tried to carry the day and hold the denomination together. During the Controversy, prominent pastors with very dominant personalities were successful in returning the convention back to the Bible. Liberal scholars and seminary professors, seemed to push for the Liberal view of individual and institutional freedom to continue to promote liberal theology in the schools.

⁸⁸Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 477.

⁸⁹Bruce T. Gourley, *The God Makers: A Legacy of the Southern Baptist Convention?* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1996), 22. Gourley alleged that the Conservatives engaged in Bibliolatry at the expense of historic Baptist principles.

returned to their historic moorings. As with the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy seventy years earlier, the defeated faction broke away and formed their own denomination. Tensions were high and feelings were hurt. Many lifelong Southern Baptists turned on friends and family who shared disagreements. By the grace of God, leaders and pastors who remained dedicated to the Bible preserved the designation of Southern Baptist as being “people of the Book” for the next generation.

CHAPTER V

THE FUNDAMENTALIST-MODERNIST CONTROVERSY

AND THE BATTLE FOR THE SOUTHERN

BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

As the Controversy raged in the Southern Baptist Convention, most of her agencies felt the pressure. During the waning years of the Controversy, the Conservatives moved to reclaim the academic institutions. Most of the Southern Baptist seminaries were seedbeds of liberalism during the 1960's through the 1980's. As the Conservatives began to reclaim the convention, the Controversy began to impact the Cooperative program seminaries. The Controversy impacted each seminary differently. At some seminaries, the fighting was explosive. Others were not hit as hard. The Peace Committee reports during 1985 through 1988 gave Southern Baptists an account of each seminary.¹

One of the Conservative plans for institutional change came from their nominations to the ever important Committee on Committees. This group had the responsibility of selecting the board of Trustees for the six Cooperative Program

¹For information on the Peace Committee's report on the seminaries, see Randall Wayde Williams, "The Role of the Peace Committee in the Southern Baptist Convention Inerrancy Controversy" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999); and Charles Martin Jacumin, "A Theological and Historical Analysis of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee, 1985-1987" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008).

seminaries. Conservatives saw this board as a way to enact fundamental institutional change that they saw as a necessity in their efforts to reclaim the convention.²

As the Controversy gained significant ground and the Conservatives enjoyed consecutive years of wins, much of the entrenched leadership at the Southern Baptist seminaries began to take notice. They grew increasingly concerned that the radical fundamentalists were going to swoop into the seminaries and forever alter the way theological education was done.³

One of the issues that the seminaries constantly dealt with was the issue of academic and institutional freedom.⁴ Just as Liberals alleged that each church and believer had the freedom to believe whatever they wanted to about the Bible and therefore Conservatives should not place a litmus test on them, the Southern Baptist seminaries believed that they had the freedom to teach, preach and train students in whatever educational capacity they saw fit.⁵ If theological liberalism appealed to the majority of people at the seminaries, there should be no problem with teaching it as fact in the

²For more information on how the Committee on Committees was able to influence the Board of Trustees at a seminary, see David Telford Highsmith, "The Board of Trustees as an Institutional Change Agent: A Case Study Inquiry Into the Governance Transformation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979-1993" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 1999).

³Gregory Lee Waltermire, "Academic Freedom in the Southern Baptist Seminaries: A Study in Epistemology and Response to Modernism" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1996), 24.

⁴Derek E. Wittman, "Freedom and Irresponsibility: Fundamentalism's Effect on Academic Freedom in Southern Baptist Life," *Baptist History and Heritage* 40:4 (Winter 2004): 82.

⁵*Ibid.*, 84.

seminaries. The seminaries wanted the freedom to teach and believe whatever they wanted to and felt that they had the right to teach openly and publicly without interference from Southern Baptists.

One of the main goals of the Conservatives was reforming the seminaries. Because Southern Baptists through the Cooperative Program owned the seminaries, Conservatives finally saw an opportunity to take advantage of their turn in fortunes. Reforming the seminaries would be a major challenge that would have a major impact on the future the Southern Baptist Convention. The seminaries were seemingly inoculated and impervious to Conservative's complaints. Pastors who went to the seminaries in the early heydays when liberalism was taught as fact did not see any chance of them ever returning to conservative principles.⁶ Even W. A. Criswell, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, commented that he saw no hope for the seminaries turning around in his inaugural presidential address in 1969.⁷

Because the seminaries became the focus of the Controversy during the waning years, it is important to look at how the Controversy impacted them. The most explosive battle occurred at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.⁸ Midwestern, New Orleans, and Golden Gate seminaries for the most part were given a clean bill of health

⁶Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation* (Nashville: Broadman, 2000), 324. See Chuck McAlister and John Franklin's testimonies on how their experience at Southern nearly destroyed their faith.

⁷Michael M. Soud, "A Critical Analysis of the Criswell College's Effect on the Southern Baptist Convention, 1980-2000 (Texas)" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 28.

⁸Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 324. See chapter fourteen for information on the Conservative Resurgence effect on Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

and were largely ignored during the Controversy.⁹ The seminary that became the focus of the Conservative's attack and was arguably in the most need of reform was The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the seminary became known for having some of the greatest teachers in the entire convention. Many of them held academic degrees from overseas institutions and were seen as prestigious in the eyes of academia. Southern regularly entertained lecturers and scholars from schools such as Harvard, Princeton, Oxford, and other noted institutions.

The school however, was seemingly lost to liberalism. According to Conservatives, Southern Seminary posed the greatest challenge in regards to returning to historical Baptist theology. Institutional change came to the school, but it took many years and faced significant hurdles as Conservatives tried to root out some of the most noted and most Liberal professors in Southern Baptist education.

Brief History of Southern

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary began in Greenville, South Carolina in 1859. After the Civil War, the seminary moved to Louisville, Kentucky. James Petigru Boyce started Southern with nine students and four professors.¹⁰ Boyce held to a

⁹For more information on the state of the seminaries during the Controversy, see Williams, "The Role of the Peace Committee in the Southern Baptist Convention Inerrancy Controversy," 170.

¹⁰Gregg A. Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009* (New York: Oxford, 2009), 110. The author would like to thank Gregg Wills for his kindness in opening up the archives and special collections at the James Petigru Boyce Library for research. The author is also indebted to Jason Fowler and Chris DeWeese for their

strict Calvinism and embraced many traditions that her neighbor to the north, Princeton Theological Seminary, and professor Charles Hodge held.¹¹

The seminary experienced slow growth during the nineteenth century. Boyce struggled with the idea of moving the already cash-strapped institution from Greenville to Louisville, Kentucky. The seminary competed with other Southern Baptists colleges like William Jewel for students. Both Boyce and John Broadus labored at the school, even at the expense of their health. By 1878, the fledgling school was on the brink of failure.¹² In 1880, Joseph E. Brown, former governor of Georgia, railroad president, and state senator, gave Boyce fifty thousand dollars in cash and securities. His gift encouraged other benefactors to contribute to the school. Soon, Boyce and Broadus raised two hundred thousand dollars, which saved the seminary.¹³ With the seminary on relative solid footing, Boyce and Broadus began the task of building up the library collection, constructing much needed classrooms and dormitory quarters, and recruiting more faculty members.¹⁴ This marked a new era at the seminary.

Southern is no stranger to controversy. The school was involved in two controversies near the end of the nineteenth century. The first major theological

assistance in both retrieving and copying requested materials for this study.

¹¹For more information on Charles Hodge's influence on Boyce, see Walter Wiley Richards, "A Study of the Influence of Princeton Theology Upon the Theology of James Petigru Boyce and His Followers With Special Reference to the Work of Charles Hodge" (ThD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1957).

¹²Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009*, 159.

¹³Ibid., 160.

¹⁴Ibid., 161.

controversy came with Crawford H. Toy and his embracement of higher criticism.¹⁵ Toy was one of the original students at the seminary. He was an extremely gifted student, completing the three year curriculum in one year.¹⁶ After serving in the Confederate army, Toy studied Semitic languages at the University of Berlin between 1866 and 1868. After returning to America, he taught Greek at Furman University for a year before returning to Southern as a full-time professor in 1869. Toy distinguished himself as a gifted teacher and scholar. When he returned from Germany however, he brought German theological liberalism back to Southern with him.

Toy's problem began with the inspiration of Scripture.¹⁷ He began using science to interpret Scripture. He applied a Nestorian division between the divine and human elements of Scripture. He saw this distinction in Scripture, especially in the realm of science. His curiosity led him away from the traditional view of Scripture. He became so convinced in the scientific influences of Scripture that he departed from traditional Baptists interpretation of Scripture. Ten years later, he left Southern Seminary for a more progressive faith.¹⁸

The Toy Controversy reflected a new state in American Protestant Theology.¹⁹

¹⁵Charles Briggs, professor of Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary, correctly called Crawford H. Toy as Modernism's first martyr.

¹⁶Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009*, 110.

¹⁷Paul R. House, "Crawford Howell Toy and the Weight of Hermeneutic," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3:1 (Spring 1999): 28.

¹⁸Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009*, 114-5.

¹⁹For more information on theological liberalism see Kenneth Cauthen, *The Impact of American Religious Liberalism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962); Gary

Many people began to deny the literal interpretation of Scripture. Charles Darwin and his work, *Origin of the Species* (1859), toppled the long held belief in biblical creationism and replaced it with the Darwinian evolutionary theory. During this time, scholars began to believe that higher criticism afforded a better defense of Christianity than traditional orthodoxy.²⁰

Another significant controversy that affected Southern was the Whittsitt controversy. Southern fired William H. Whittsitt, the seminary president, over his view of Landmarkism.²¹ Whittsitt, who was also professor of church history, embraced higher criticism and applied this thinking to both history and ecclesiology. He argued that the Landmark view of a local Baptist church being both the true church and the personification of the body of Christ on earth was a result of ignorant pastors who preached to ignorant congregations.²²

Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); William Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).

²⁰William A. Mueller, "Historical Perspectives Among Southern Baptist in Theological Education: With Special Consideration of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," *Review and Expositor* 70:1 (Winter 1973): 17-26.

²¹For more information on the Whittsitt Controversy, consult Rosalie Beck, "The Whittsitt Controversy: A Denomination in Crisis" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 1984). For more information about Landmarkism and its view in the Southern Baptist Convention, see J. Kristen Pratt, "A Landmark Baptist's Ecclesiology: Ben M. Bogard and Local Church Protectionism" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2005).

²²Beck, "The Whittsitt Controversy," 69-71. Beck argues that Southern Baptists during Whittsitt's time did not have the theological training to answer his claims. They reacted emotionally; instead of standing on the traditional Baptist claim of individual soul freedom. She also accurately explains that there was a noticeable division in the Convention between the laity and the seminary trained pastors, whom the parishioners

The first major shift in Southern's educational philosophy came under the presidency of Edgar Yeagar Mullins. Mullins became the president of Southern after Whittsitt's firing. Though Mullins classified himself as a Conservative, he was very sympathetic to the Liberals and their cause.²³ Mullins was instrumental in crafting the "Baptist Faith and Message" in 1925. The seminary grew both numerically and in prestige during his tenure.²⁴ Mullins, along with the more progressive wing of Southern's faculty, embraced a mediating theology that was foundational to theological liberalism. The mediating theology argued that rationalism could replace orthodox faith with respect to the approach. Mullins claimed, "I believe in progress in theological thought and statement, but I believe in evangelical fundamentals."²⁵

Mullins' pietistic progressivism slowly replaced Boyce's vision for the school. Early twentieth century Conservatives, like William O. Carver, denounced Mullin's view about the divided sphere of knowledge. They claimed that his views would take the school dangerously down the road of progressive theological modernism. He attempted to walk the fine line that existed between the two poles. Although Mullins himself was a Conservative, he allowed the Liberals to enter the school and exert their influence on the

saw as an elite aristocracy. For a concise view of Whittsitt's view, consult Joshua W. Powell, "'We Cannot Sit in Judgment': William Whittsitt and the Future of the Seminary," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13:1 (Spring 2009): 46-59.

²³William E. Ellis, "Edgar Young Mullins and the Crisis of Moderate Southern Baptist Leadership," *Foundations* 19 (April 1976): 171-185.

²⁴E. Glenn Hinson, "E. Y. Mullins on the Confessions of Faith," *Baptist History and Heritage* 43:1 (2008): 50.

²⁵Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009*, 252.

seminary's operations.²⁶ As a result, the Liberals gained control of the seminary and held a monopoly for over fifty years after Mullins' death.

Pre-Controversy Years at Southern

During most of the twentieth century, Southern Seminary had the most noted collection of scholars amassed at one seminary. Professors from other seminaries moved to Southern to join their elite team of scholars and educators.²⁷ Southern began to be affiliated with prestigious schools such as Harvard, Yale, Oxford, and Cambridge.²⁸ Many of Southern's faculty went to Europe for additional study and higher degrees. However, when they returned from studying overseas, many of them brought back the theological liberalism they encountered. They began teaching the higher critical method of interpreting Scripture and many of them held neo-Orthodox views. They transferred their new theology to their students who, as a result, began denying the fundamental tenets of the faith.²⁹

²⁶Ibid., 308.

²⁷Two examples of professors who moved from one seminary to Southern were Penrose St. Amant and Frank Stagg. St. Amant taught Church History and Frank Stagg taught New Testament at New Orleans before relocating to Southern.

²⁸Roy Honneycutt, "Heritage Creating Hope: The Pilgrimage of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," *Review and Expositor* 81:4 (Fall 1984): 367-8. Early in Duke McCall's presidency, Southern debated the direction of the seminary. Some wanted to turn the seminary away from a denominational seminary and wanted to turn the school into institutions like Harvard, Yale, Union, or University of Chicago. See also Wills, 359.

²⁹For a helpful analysis of the digression of orthodox Baptist beliefs by alumni of Southern seminary, see Noel Wesley Hollyfield, "A Sociological Analysis of the Degrees of 'Christian Orthodoxy' Among Selected Students in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," (ThM thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976). Hollyfield's thesis showed that the more education from Southern a student received, the more likely

One of the men who was instrumental during this period at Southern was theology professor and academic vice-president William Hull. As academic dean, Hull fielded questions from concerned pastors and other Southern Baptists who questioned the direction of the seminary. Hull provided a clear example of theological liberalism at Southern Seminary.³⁰ President McCall left most of the defense of Southern's theological positions in Hull's capable hands. He handled inquiries and concerns over various theological topics from pastors all across the country. He answered pastor Owen White's concerns about Jesus Christ and mysticism that was being taught at Baylor as fact.³¹

Hull attempted to keep Southern in good graces with the other denominational seminaries. He defended Ralph Elliot after Midwestern fired him. Hull argued that Elliot's historical-critical method was in agreement with what Baptists traditionally believed.³² He was one of the first professors at Southern Seminary to hide liberal theological beliefs in either the footnotes of an article or in a book review where only

they were to stray from historic, conservative Baptists beliefs.

³⁰Hull and McCall had many letters of correspondence that dealt with theological issues. Some of the more noted correspondences include the following: William E. Hull to Duke McCall, "Baptist Scholarship and Churchmanship." William E. Hull 1966 Folder, McCall Papers, SBTS Archives; William E. Hull to Duke McCall. "The Lifestyle of the Contemporary Student," William E. Hull 1969 Folder, McCall Papers, SBTS Archives; William E. Hull to Duke McCall. "Deanship Negotiations." William E. Hull 1969 Folder, McCall Papers, SBTS Archives; William E. Hull to Duke McCall, "Seminary Worship." April 28, 1967. William E. Hull 1967 Folder, McCall Papers, SBTS Archives

³¹Duke McCall to K. O. White," Professor William Hull," (March 5, 1964) William E. Hull 1964 Folder, McCall Papers, SBTS Archives.

³²Duke McCall to William E. Hull, "Problems at Mid-western." (Oct. 23, 1962) William E. Hull 1962 Folder, McCall Papers, SBTS Archives.

those who “needed” to see it would.³³

Wayne Oates

Another professor who defined theological liberalism at Southern during the pre-controversy years was Wayne Oates. Oates taught Christian psychology at Southern Seminary for nearly forty years. He was one of the earliest professors to explore Christian Psychology.³⁴ He coined the term “workaholic.” He was horrified that professors at Southern favored the literal view of Scripture over the historical-critical view in the 1940's. He learned the historical-critical method at Wake Forest and pushed for its inclusion as the only reliable hermeneutic at Southern.³⁵ Oates taught a generation of Southern Baptist pastors and left just before the launching of the Conservative Resurgence. Oates informed McCall that he wanted more time to focus on research and writing and less teaching. He refused, and Oates resigned from Southern and joined the faculty at Southeastern in 1974.³⁶

³³William E. Hull, “Reflections on the Task of Defining Theological Education.” William E. Hull 1967 Folder, McCall Papers, SBTS Archives. See also Duke McCall to William E. Hull. “Problems at Southern Seminary.” (Dec. 20, 1962) William E. Hull 1962 Folder, McCall Papers, SBTS Archives.

³⁴Wayne E. Oates, “Personal Reflections on the Controversy and Crisis at Southern Seminary,” (Wayne Oates 1958 Folder, McCall Papers, SBTS Archives).

³⁵Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009*, 335. For more on Oates’ philosophy of Fundamentalism, consult, “Apocalypse: On the Psychology of Fundamentalism in America,” *Theology Today* 51:4 (January 1995): 640-642.

³⁶Ibid. 423. Many faculty members felt that Christian Psychology was a field that lacked real scholarship. They viewed Oates as a prima donna and would certainly not support special favors being afforded to him. Upon his resignation, Oates published a scathing critique of McCall, Hull, and the Southern leadership. He claimed McCall and Hull were more concerned with their own legacies than with the school’s best interest. He

Duke McCall

Duke McCall served as the seventh president of Southern Seminary. He earned both his masters and doctorate from Southern in 1950.³⁷ He taught several subjects at Southern until the Trustees chose him to become president. For much of McCall's presidency he was entangled in controversy. His earliest controversy came when he dismissed fourteen faculty members for their aberrant views on the nature of seminary education. Professors from the seminary sharply criticized McCall for the dismissal of the professors. Some even suggested he resign.

McCall presided over the growth of the seminary and its perception during the early fifties through the decade of the seventies.³⁸ A decade before the Controversy, Theron Price and several faculty members desired freedom from denominational control. They accused McCall of subjecting truth to denominational will. McCall and others thought that Price and his colleagues' vision of a pursuit of truth apart from

applied for a faculty position at Southeastern, but declined his final interview when he heard the school was considering Bill Hull as their president. In 1974, Oates landed a position as professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Louisville's medical school. Oates taught at Louisville until his retirement in 1991. His resignation was the second major hurdle for McCall and Hull. Later in his life, Oates returned to writing. Two relevant works to his tenure at Southern are Wayne Edward Oates, "Apocalypse: On the Psychology of Fundamentalism in America," *Theology Today* 51:4 (January 1995): 640-642; and Wayne Edward Oates, and Samuel Southard, "Preventing, Understanding and Responding to Sexual Misconduct," *Journal of Family Ministry* 8: 2 (1994): 4-19.

³⁷For more information about Duke McCall's life, see his autobiography entitled, *Duke McCall: An Oral History*, (Nashville: Fields Publishing Company, 2001).

³⁸Duke K. McCall, "The Role of Southern Seminary in Southern Baptist Life and Around the World," *Review and Expositor* 67:2 (Spring 1970): 183-193.

denominational control was quixotic.³⁹

McCall was one of the Liberal leaders who realized the danger Southern Seminary would be in if the Controversy ever gained significant momentum. McCall once commented that if God wanted believers to have an inerrant Bible, He would have preserved the original text on a golden tablet.⁴⁰ He led the charge against the Conservative Resurgence at Southern and vowed to keep the seminary out of the hands of the Fundamentalists. He, along with the other seminary presidents, wanted the status quo to remain the same.⁴¹ Shortly after his presidency, McCall debated Paige Patterson on the authority of Scripture. Jerry Falwell carried the debate in his magazine, *The Fundamentalist Journal*. McCall continued to insist that both he and Southern Seminary held views that were consistent with Baptist principles.⁴² Patterson argued that both McCall and Southern Seminary had strayed from traditional Baptist beliefs and were holding to un-Baptist beliefs.⁴³

McCall retired from Southern Seminary in 1982. He presided over Southern

³⁹Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009*, 359-60.

⁴⁰Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 341.

⁴¹William E. Hull, "Pluralism in the Southern Baptist Convention," *Review and Expositor* 79:1 (Winter 1982):121-146.

⁴²Duke K. McCall, "The Role of Southern Seminary in Southern Baptist Life," *Review and Expositor* 67:2 (Spring 1970):183-193. Throughout his entire tenure at Southern, McCall continued to promote the idea the Southern was conservative. He ignored Conservative's complaints about the school and defended it up until his retirement.

⁴³Duke McCall and Paige Patterson, "Patterson vs. McCall on the Southern Baptist Controversy," *Fundamentalist Journal* 4:5 (May 1985): 14-21.

during its period of theological liberal dominance. He, along with other denominational Liberals, saw the potential for the seminary to reach the pinnacle of a Christian educational institution during the twentieth century. Unfortunately, McCall's plan to promote Southern as a place of academic scholarship allowed the school to become the envy of many other denominational seminaries and the ire of many Conservatives.⁴⁴

Dale Moody

Dale Moody taught systematic theology at Southern starting in 1949. He held both a masters and doctorate from Southern and earned another doctorate from Oxford.⁴⁵ He was noted for his systematic theology, which was published in 1983.⁴⁶ Many Conservatives had a problem with Moody's view of inspiration, apostasy, and the atonement.⁴⁷ In December 1982, Jerry Vardaman, Dale Moody's longtime friend, defended his positions in an article entitled "Moody Hasn't Fallen From Grace." He made five arguments in Moody's defense. First, he argued that he didn't care what Moody said about apostasy. Second, he argued that Moody was one of the most

⁴⁴Nathan Finn, "The Development of Baptist Fundamentalism in the South, 1940-1980" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 180.

⁴⁵For a list of Dale Moody's works, see Paul M. Vardaman, "Dale Moody : a Bibliography," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 14:4 (1987): 139-140.

⁴⁶E Glenn Hinson, "Dale Moody : Bible Teacher Extraordinaire," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 14:4 (1987): 3-17.

⁴⁷For more information on Dale Moody's views of the atonement, see chapter four of Walter Draughon's work, "A Critical Evaluation of the Diminishing Influences of Calvinism on the Doctrine of the Atonement in Representative Southern Baptist Theologians, James Petigru Boyce, Edgar Yegar Mullins, Walter Thomas Connor, and Dale Moody" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987).

conservative professors at the seminary. Third, he argued that Moody's critics were uncomfortable with challenges to their own faith that Moody's writings produced. Fourth, he warned against the position that he viewed as making the abstract of principles a creed for working at the seminary. He concluded his argument by proclaiming the Dale Moody was a modern-day prophet.⁴⁸

Moody's departure in 1982 signaled the end of an era at the school. For nearly thirty years, Southern's faculty had the liberty to teach whatever they wanted without fear of disciplinary action. Although Honeycutt shared and carried on McCall's vision of the school, the Conservative Resurgence was not going to stand by and let Southern remain the same.

Controversy Years at Southern

Southern Seminary became the target of Conservatives for both her liberal professors and their teachings. The seminary struggled during the eighties and early nineties as the Controversy and the drama related to it came to Southern. Both outgoing president McCall and the new incoming president knew that the battle for the direction of the seminary was inevitable.

Roy Honeycutt

When Duke McCall retired, the trustees at Southern named Roy Honeycutt to be

⁴⁸Jerry Vardaman, "Moody Hasn't Fallen From Grace," *Western Recorder* 22 (December 22, 1982): 10. The idea that Moody was one of the most conservative professors at Southern Seminary sent ripples throughout the convention. If he was one of the most conservative, what were the others like? Moody had agreed to teach in accordance to Southern Seminary's Confession of Faith, The Abstract of Principles. Moody admitted that in 1982, he sent outgoing president Duke McCall and incoming president Roy Honeycutt a seven page letter and a seven-page revision of the abstract of principles.

the seminary's eighth president. Honeycutt differed from other agency heads and seminary presidents. Most of them decided to stay above the fray and did not enter into the conflict. Honeycutt, however, decided to directly engage both the Conservatives and the convention.⁴⁹ In 1984, Russell Dilday, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, preached a sermon entitled, "Higher Ground." During the convocation address at Southern Seminary on August 28, 1984, Honeycutt preached his famous "throwing down the gauntlet" sermon entitled "To Your Tents O Israel!"⁵⁰

Honeycutt emphasized the role of pluralism in the SBC and encouraged those both in the seminary community and surrounding supporters to rise up in opposition to the Conservatives who were "taking over" the Southern Baptist Convention.⁵¹ Both Honeycutt and his followers received support from many of the state convention papers. President Honeycutt encouraged those who were concerned with both freedom in Southern Baptist life and those who were concerned about Southern Seminary to attend the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas, Texas in 1985 in order to defeat the Fundamentalists and their agenda.⁵² Paige Patterson, one of the architects of the Conservative Resurgence, publicly challenged Honeycutt to a debate where he could

⁴⁹Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 343.

⁵⁰Roy L. Honeycutt, "To Your Tents O Israel! A Biblical Call to Duty, Unity and Honor." SBTS Archives, (August 28, 1984). Dilday's sermon promoted unity among the seminary presidents and the convention. Honeycutt's was a call to war.

⁵¹Roy Honeycutt, "SBC Takeover Must Be Averted," *The Tie* (Sept-Oct. 1984): 4-5.

⁵²Roy Honeycutt, "Freedom and Responsibility in a Denominational Seminary," SBTS Archives, 1983.

answer the accusations made by Honeycutt in his holy war sermon. Patterson argued that if Honeycutt had nothing to hide either personally or at Southern Seminary and if he invited the entire world to see both the actions and the words of Southern, then he should allow the debate to proceed. Patterson also encouraged Southern Seminary to allow classroom lectures to be taped over the next two years and then make the tapes public so that the true nature of what Southern was teaching could be realized.⁵³

Honeycutt presided over a difficult time at Southern Seminary. He had the difficult task of trying to address issues that Conservatives raised about several noted and famed professors at the school. For the most part, Honeycutt did very little to resolve the doubts Conservatives raised about Southern. When asked if professors such as Paul Simmons, Molly Marshall, and Glenn Hinson, were outside of the mainstream of Southern Baptist life, Honeycutt noted that each of these professors taught in accordance to the Abstract of Principles and that both their teaching and their views were considered mainstream with what Southern Baptists both believed and taught.⁵⁴

Paul Simmons

Paul Simmons was one of the professors who the Conservatives constantly complained about during the Controversy. Simmons taught ethics at Southern Seminary. His views on both abortion and homosexuality troubled many Conservatives.⁵⁵ Simmons

⁵³Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 345.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 354.

⁵⁵Paul D. Simmons, *Birth and Death: Bioethical Decision-Making*, In *Biblical Perspectives on Current Issues Series* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 84-5. For more information about his ethical views, see Paul D. Simmons, *Issues in Christian Ethics*

argued that a baby was not fully a person until after it had been born and therefore saw no problem with abortion.⁵⁶ He also argued in favor of homosexuality as being both normal and natural. He even went as far as speaking before a pro-homosexual group which again enraged Conservatives.

Conservatives had a difficult time trying to dislodge Simmons from his teaching position. When Roy Honeycutt announced his plans to retire in October 1992, Simmons sensed his time at Southern was drawing to an end. In December 1992, Southern trustees held a special call meeting in which they discussed ethics professor Paul Simmons. He was criticized for his views on both abortion and homosexuality. Students had complained for years about Simmons and his views, but a single incident brought his teaching career at Southern to an end. In a class entitled *The Church and Sexuality*, Simmons showed a sexually explicit video during a lecture. Students lodged formal complaints against Simmons and the showing of the video. Honeycutt placed the matter under administrative review. Rather than fire Simmons, Southern offered him a

(Nashville: Broadman, 1980). For more information on Simmons and his views on abortion, consult Paul L. Sadler, "The Abortion Issue Within the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969-1988," (PhD diss., Baylor University, 1991). Simmons argued that according to Exodus 21:22-25, there is a distinction between the pregnant woman and her fetus. The woman is alive whereas the fetus is not. Throughout his entire career, Simmons argued that according to Genesis 2:7, a child becomes a person at birth, not at conception. God breathed life into Adam and, according to Simmons, the baby was not a person until it took its first breath.

⁵⁶Paul D. Simmons, "A Theological Response to Fundamentalism on the Abortion Issue," *Church and Society* 71:4 (March-April 1981): 23-35. For more information about Simmons and his views on abortion, see Paul Simmons, "Dogma and Discord : Religious Liberty and the Abortion Debate," *Church & State* 43 (January 1990): 17-21; Paul Simmons, "Religious Liberty and the Abortion Debate," *Journal of Church and State* 32:3. (Summer 1990): 567-584.

severance package and released him from his teaching duties.⁵⁷ This was a relief to both Conservatives and Liberals alike. Many on both sides of the argument at the school found Simmon's views to be both outrageous and outside of the mainstream of Southern Baptist life.

Molly Marshall

Another noted professor at Southern was Molly Marshall. Marshall began teaching theology at Southern Seminary in 1983. She earned both her masters and PhD at Southern. Her dissertation was entitled, "No Salvation Outside the Church, A Historical Inquiry." In it, she questioned the possibility of salvation being accomplished apart from both Christ and the church.⁵⁸ She served on the faculty of Southern Seminary in the Theology department from 1983 until 1993.

The Peace Committee used a chapter of her dissertation as a example of Liberalism that was coming out of Southern Seminary. Honneycutt did not seem to mind Marshall's teachings. When Conservatives complained about her theology, Honneycutt responded that her views were well inside the Abstract of Principles and that she had taken some bold and courageous steps into a new area of theological scholarship.⁵⁹

Honneycutt allowed Marshall to keep teaching her views openly in class. When the charges of universalism were levied against her, he defended her position. It soon

⁵⁷Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary 1859-2009*, 508.

⁵⁸Molly Marshall-Green, "No Salvation Outside the Church? A Historical Inquiry" (PhD thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983), 457.

⁵⁹Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 348. Molly Marshall was know as Molly Marshall-Greene at this time.

became obvious to all that Honeycutt was not willing to deal with any of the legitimate concerns that the Conservatives raised.⁶⁰

E. Glenn Hinson

Of all of the professors who were singled out for their liberal views, probably no one received as much criticism as E. Glenn Hinson, professor of Church History at Southern Seminary. Hinson became famous after he published his book *Jesus Christ*. In it, he denied the Jesus of Scripture and replaced Him with another Christ.

Hinson had two earned doctorates. He held a ThD from Southern and a DPhil from Oxford. He authored several books. His work, *Jesus Christ*, drew immediate fire from Conservatives. Hinson challenged the traditional understanding of Christ and replaced Him with a mythical figure that, according to Hinson, might not have existed.⁶¹ He argued that key events such as the place of Jesus' birth, the characterization of John the Baptist, Peter's confession that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and the cursing of the fig tree are historically doubtful.⁶² He also argued that Jesus' miracles were not literal, but actually embellished stories told by devoted followers.⁶³ Perhaps the view that most troubled Conservatives was Hinson's insistence on salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ. He embraced a Christian Platonism that was similar to the Logos theology of Clement and Origen. He argued that everyone was

⁶⁰Ibid., 349.

⁶¹E. Glenn Hinson, *Jesus Christ* (Wilmington, NC: Consortium Books, 1977), 57.

⁶²Ibid., 60, 71, 74.

⁶³Ibid., 67.

already accepted by God. He declared:

I prefer to look at God's saving work as a work he has chosen to do through his divine Logos who became incarnate in Jesus. This Word, now risen, reveals God everywhere among all persons (as Matt. 25:40, 45 imply). The urgency of our task is one of waking people up to his presence with them and in them.... some persons do not get the help they need to make an open acknowledgment. Mahatma Gandhi, for instance, lived Jesus' teachings better than any Christian I have known but could not become a confessing Christian because of the way Christians had treated him as an Indian in South Africa. Persons of similar experience are legion.... Yet I can't believe God the Father, Creator and Redeemer and Eternal Lover of humankind, will give up on that. Indeed, I only hope I know him as well before I die as Martin Buber and Abraham Joshua Heschel, Conservative Jewish rabbis, have known him.⁶⁴

While teaching at Southern, Hinson distinguished himself as a Patristics scholar.

Throughout his academic career, he changed his views from traditional theology to mystical realities. He began to treat history as though it was mystical instead of historical.⁶⁵

Throughout the Controversy, Conservatives trained both their ammunition and their attacks at Hinson. He was one of their prime examples of liberalism in the seminaries and he became the target of several of Southern's alumni who were serving as pastors.⁶⁶ Liberals defended Hinson and argued that he was the prime example of both

⁶⁴Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009*, 456.

⁶⁵Hinson was prolific author. He was the editor of *Review and Expositor* for over thirty years. An attempt to analyze everything he wrote is outside of the scope of this study. For several of Hinson's most noted and notorious works, see the small sampling of journal articles and book reviews in the Bibliography.

⁶⁶Hinson knew he was a target and early in the Controversy, tried to defend his views. In 1983, he preached a sermon in chapel entitled, "Am I a Heretic?" He promoted his views of scripture and Christ and then challenged the group to expose his heresy. For more on this sermon see, E. Glenn Hinson, "Am I A Heretic?" (Hinson Papers, SBTS Archives, 1983).

Christian and Southern Baptist scholarship.⁶⁷ Hinson defended his beliefs in a sermon he preached at Southern entitled, “Am I a Heretic?” He argued that his views were consistent with mainstream Baptist principles of soul freedom and individualism.⁶⁸

Southern's Perception as a Seminary

For years pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention viewed Southern with both admiration and remorse. After the Controversy, several pastors did interviews in which they stated that they almost lost their faith during their studies at Southern Seminary. The Peace Committee reports showed that Southern was considered outside of the mainstream Southern Baptist life during the 1980's.⁶⁹ Honeycutt disregarded the Peace Committee reports and argued that Southern had actually become more conservative under his leadership.⁷⁰

In April 1990, Jerry A. Johnson, a trustee from Colorado, published a sixteen page booklet entitled, “The Cover Up At Southern Seminary.” In it he addressed the major theological problems that were both present at the seminary and that President Honeycutt

⁶⁷Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 346. Jim Stroud, a pastor in Knoxville, Tennessee, criticized many of Hinson's works and challenged him to a public debate about his beliefs.

⁶⁸E. Glenn Hinson, “Am I A Heretic?” Hinson Papers, SBTS Archives, 1983. See also, E. Glenn Hinson, *Soul Liberty* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1975), 50.

⁶⁹Williams, “The Role of the Peace Committee in the Southern Baptist Inerrancy Controversy,” 170.

⁷⁰Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 347. In response to the Peace Committee report, Honeycutt argued, “We will keep faith with the scholarly biblical tradition of Southern Seminary by continuing to interpret the divinely inspired Scripture—with reverence, accuracy, and integrity—through the best of historical-critical methodologies.”

had ignored.⁷¹ The document created a firestorm both at Southern and at the Executive Committee. Several faculty members, including Honeycutt, called for Johnson's immediate expulsion from the board of trustees. The Conservatives at Southern came to Johnson's aid, and the motion was commuted until the next year.⁷²

Johnson and other Conservatives questioned the Peace Committee's reports that cleared Southern of any aberrant teachings or theological beliefs. Many felt that the committee ignored some significant theological issues and favored Honeycutt in their decision. At the seminary, prominent faculty members circled the wagons around Honeycutt. Bill Leanord, speaking for the faculty, demanded Johnson's resignation from the Executive Committee board. He called the article a malicious attack on President Honeycutt and other prominent professors.⁷³

A controversy was the last thing Honeycutt needed. In May 1990, he published a twenty-eight page response to Johnson's article. In it, he attempted to clarify his beliefs on difficult parts of the Old Testament that Johnson accused him of denying. He accused Johnson of being a Fundamentalist and trying to cause trouble at the school.

The Seminary trustees met in September 1990 and voted 36-14 to include the 1987 Peace Committee reports as a measuring stick for hiring, promoting, and granting tenure to faculty. Honeycutt and others at Southern immediately condemned the resolution as a "litmus test of orthodoxy." Bill Leonard, president of the faculty

⁷¹Jerry A. Johnson, "The Coverup at Southern Seminary," SBTS Archives, (April 1990).

⁷²Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 349.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 350.

association said, "The trustee action in effect establishes a new creedalism at Southern Seminary that is the result of the Peace Committee."⁷⁴

Southern and Accreditation

Because of Jerry Johnson's article, the Association of Theological Schools questioned Southern's accreditation. The accrediting boards heard Southern's professor's complaints and decided to investigate. The agency cited faculty unrest as the official reason for both visiting and investigating the school.⁷⁵

In March 1992, Glen Hinson resigned his position at Southern Seminary after a thirty-four year teaching career and moved to the newly formed Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia.⁷⁶ He cited conservative control of the board of trustees that would place stricter rules on what professors could both say and teach in the classroom. Hinson alleged the new regulations would limit the freedom of teachers to

⁷⁴Williams, "The Role of the Peace Committee in the Southern Baptist Convention Inerrancy Controversy," 170.

⁷⁵ATS investigated Southern from 1995 to 1997. Many Liberals argued that the new board and seminary leadership prohibited them from teaching objectively. Several members of the faculty appealed to the ATS to investigate the school. They saw this as the only way of stopping the Conservatives. In 1995, a team visited Southern to assess the school. The team reported that the political unrest at the school concerned them. They affixed a notation to their accreditation that stated, "General tone of the school impairs the capacity to provide significant theological education and ministerial training." In 1997, ATS announced that it had completed its investigation and had removed the "notation" from Southern Seminary.

⁷⁶Waltermire, "Academic Freedom in the Southern Baptist Seminaries: A Study in Epistemology and Response to Modernism," 150.

teach in the classroom as his reasons for his departure.⁷⁷ During this time, the trustees appointed David Dockery as Dean of the School of Theology. The trustees informed professors Paul Simmons, Molly T. Marshall, and Glenn Hinson that they were in danger of violating the Abstract of Principles if they did not change their position on several theological issues. Other professors became concerned about their future at Southern as well.

R. Albert Mohler

In 1993, Southern Seminary elected R. Albert Mohler as Southern's ninth president. Mohler earned both his master's and doctorate from Southern and served under President Honeycutt from 1983 to 1989. Many of the Liberals in both the convention and at Southern Seminary were both stunned and upset with Mohler's selection as president. President Honeycutt encouraged Southern Baptists to support Mohler in his presidency and said,

Mohler brings to the presidency the fidelity of an alumnus, a limitless love for the seminary, and an exceptional awareness of its heritage, and intellectual excellence of the distinguished doctorate in theology from Southern seminary, a sensitivity to the changing patterns of denominational life and personal qualities necessary for effective relationships with friends who support the seminary.⁷⁸

There were several faculty members who were unhappy with Mohler's appointment. Several people accused him of being a Fundamentalist while others claimed he was intolerant; some even argued that he was just a puppet in the hands of the

⁷⁷E. Glenn Hinson, "Fed up with Fundamentalism: a Historical, Theological, and Personal Appraisal of Christian Fundamentalism," *Baptist History and Heritage* 43:3 (Sum-Fall 2008): 115-6.

⁷⁸Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 355.

Fundamentalists in the Conservative Resurgence. Mohler immediately went on the offensive against his detractors and argued that the fundamentalism at Southern was found with Liberals who would not allow for diversity or differences of opinion. Several faculty members resigned upon hearing that Mohler was the choice for seminary president. Mohler argued that those who left Southern left on their own accord and had determined that they could not work with him.⁷⁹

One of Mohlers' first challenges dealt with the faculty appointment of Molly Marshall. Marshall taught in the theology department and was constantly criticized as advocating universalism. Mohler argued that he was aware of the theological problems associated with Marshall's teaching and that her theology fell outside the parameters of the Abstract of Principles.⁸⁰ Because she re-signed however, Southern never carried out the formal dismissal process. Marshall immediately attacked President Mohler, David Dockery, vice president of academic affairs, and Southern Seminary claiming that she was told she would be fired in October if she did not resign. Several faculty members passed a resolution on August 22, expressing their outrage over the forced resignation of Professor Molly Marshall.

Southern Today

Southern Seminary experienced a transformation shortly after the arrival of Al Mohler. One of Mohler's first major movements was to create the first college at one of the six cooperative program seminaries. Mohler and the trustees founded Boyce college

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary 1859-2009*, 520.

as a response to the loss of several of the Southern Baptist's liberal arts colleges.⁸¹ He brought new faculty to Southern Seminary. He hired some of the brightest scholars in the Southern Baptist Convention to teach at the seminary. Some of the new additions included Thomas J. Nettles, Danny Akin, Thomas Schreiner and Richard Land.⁸²

Not everything was smooth sailing for Mohler and the Conservatives at Southern. In 1996, the editorial board of the *Review and Expositor*, the faculty journal of Southern Seminary for ninety-three years, announced that it was cutting ties with Southern Seminary. The editorial board made this decision without consulting president Mohler or any of Southern's leadership. Paige Patterson expressed his concern over the journal's decision. He, along with many other Conservatives, were saddened with the decision made by the journal's editorial board. It was later discovered that *Review and Expositor's* leadership board had ties with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.⁸³

In response to the loss of *Review and Expositor*, Southern seminary launched a new journal entitled, *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*. Many of the conservative leadership and faculty at Southern have contributed to the new journal. It has become a great resource for conservative theological scholarship.

Another challenge Mohler faced was the Carver School of Social Work. The school had a reputation of producing notorious liberal graduates and having one of the most liberal faculties at the school. The dean of the school, Diana Garland, announced

⁸¹Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 360. See chapter seven of this study for how the Controversy affected the Colleges.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid., 361.

her retirement effective July, 31, 1996. The school also relocated to Campbellsville University.⁸⁴ The Carver school had the unique ability to appoint faculty without trustee approval. Conservatives had complained about the Carver School for years. Many saw the Carver School as the “Camelot” of liberalism in the seminary.⁸⁵ Several students told horror stories about the treatment they received at the Carver School. A particularly damaging report, published in 1997, showed the spiritual progress of students throughout the school. Twenty-six to thirty-four women who were enrolled in either the PhD or EdD program responded to the survey the school mailed to their alumni. Of the respondent’s spiritual journey, four of the thirty-four respondents identified themselves as lesbians.⁸⁶ The profanity and obscenities used by some of the respondents in their letters made their correspondence impossible to print.⁸⁷ With the departure of the Carver school, the final bastion of liberalism at Southern fell.

Conclusion

Southern Seminary made the most drastic change of any of the six cooperative program seminaries. As the Conservative Resurgence neared its conclusion during the later part of the 1980's, President Roy Honeycutt and his executive staff did their best to

⁸⁴Ibid., 360.

⁸⁵Susan M. Shaw and Tisa Lewis, “‘Once There was a Camelot’: Women Doctoral Graduates of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982-1992, Talk About the Seminary, the Fundamentalist Takeover, and Their Lives Since SBTS,” *Review and Expositor* 95: (1998):397-423.

⁸⁶Ibid., 400.

⁸⁷Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 362.

prepare the seminary for the Conservative assault on Southern that was sure to come.⁸⁸

Many of the most noted professors in the Southern Baptist Convention taught at Southern. Unfortunately, most of them were also the most liberal as well. Duke McCall and the leadership at Southern did not see any problem with the direction of the school. Roy Honeycutt, Southern's president during the Conservative Resurgence, did his best to hold off the Conservatives who he felt threatened the essential freedom of thought that Baptists cherished.

Unlike the Presbyterians, who lost Princeton because Liberals outflanked them, Conservatives organized and put a system in place that allowed the reforms at Southern to be carried out effectively.⁸⁹ Unlike some of the so-called Liberals in the overall Controversy, many of Southern's most famous professors were famous because of their radical theological beliefs. As with the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy some sixty years earlier, McCall and Honeycutt did not believe that the Liberals would ever lose control of Southern. They believed that even if every other school in the convention fell, Southern, with her proud heritage and her prestigious faculty, would successfully repel the Conservative assault and would come through the controversy unscathed.

Roy Honeycutt attempted to repel the attacks at Southern Seminary, but after the Johnson letter and the overall convention transformation, he ultimately conceded that

⁸⁸Russel D. Moore, "Southern Seminary and the Reshaping of American Culture: Retrospect and Prospect," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13:1 (Spring 2009): 83.

⁸⁹Highsmith, "The Board of Trustees as an Institutional Change Agent: A Case Study Inquiry Into the Governance Transformation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979-1993," 261.

change was inevitable. When Mohler became president in 1993, the conservative transformation of Southern happened rapidly. Most of the liberal faculty either quit or chose early retirement because they realized they were outside of the mainstream of the new seminary administration. The resignation of Glenn Hinson and Molly Marshall, the firing of Diana Garland, and the relocation of the Carver School of Social Work showed Southern Baptist that both Al Mohler and his administration were not afraid of dealing with the difficult challenges that were at Southern. The seminary returned to historic Baptist teachings and beliefs. Under the leadership of Al Mohler, Southern Seminary is once again Boyce's seminary.⁹⁰

⁹⁰Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009*, 547.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUNDAMENTALIST-MODERNIST CONTROVERSY AND THE STATE CONVENTIONS

While the battle for control over the Southern Baptist Convention raged on at the national level, state conventions faced many of the same problems and struggles that plagued the convention as a whole.¹ Conservatives and Liberals alike tried to outmaneuver the other and gain the upper hand of the Controversy at a more local level. When the seminaries began to return to historic conservative principles, many of the liberal faculty members at the seminaries were either fired, resigned, took early retirement, or moved to jobs at the state convention.² This change brought with it a whole new dynamic to the battle for the states. Some states remained largely unaffected by the Controversy while others experienced great turmoil.³

¹For information on several of the state controversies, see James C. Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis: vol. 2 Bringing the Controversy Up - to - Date*, vol. 2 (Dallas: Criterion, 1987); and James C. Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis: Conservative Resurgence or Political Takeover*, vol. 3 (Dallas: Criterion, 1988). Hefley briefly discusses, the Florida Baptist Convention, the Georgia Baptist Convention, the North Carolina Baptist Convention, the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

²J. Kevin, Jenkins, William Loyd Allen, and Penny L. Elkins. "Policymaking Boards and Religiously Affiliated Colleges: The Experiences of Two Baptist Institutions," *Christian Higher Education* 7 (2008): 23-43. Both Jenkns, Allen, and Elkins worked at Southern Seminary, but left after Mohler became president.

³Larry McSwain, "Anatomy of the SBC Institutional Crisis," *Review and Expositor* 88:1 (Winter 1991): 25-36. See also Larry McSwain, "Baptist and Culture," *Review and*

The Problem of Baptist Polity

Because Baptist polity is not hierarchal like Presbyterian or Roman Catholic polity, several unique problems can arise when matters of reform or theological difficulty come up in the church. Even though the denomination itself returned to her historic conservative roots, the effects did not necessarily trickle down throughout all of the state conventions. The struggle for control of several of the state conventions continued for several years after the 1991 New Orleans convention when the defeated Liberals withdrew from the convention and formed a moderate coalition of Baptists known as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.⁴

Liberal seminary professors who were either fired or left their teaching positions after the Conservatives reclaimed the seminaries sought either teaching positions at Baptist liberal arts colleges or administrative positions in state conventions.⁵ This was particularly the case with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the largest of the state Baptist conventions. This state convention boasted more than 5 million members and

Expositor 84:4 (Fall 1987): 659-666. Most of the larger state conventions that operated liberal arts colleges experienced greater turmoil than some of the smaller state conventions.

⁴Bill J. Leonard, "Coming Together, Coming Apart: Embattled Baptist In Texas," *The Christian Century*, 115:35, (1998), 1204; Phil Lineberger "An Open Letter to Texas Baptist." *Baptist Standard* (Oct. 31, 1991): (The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas), 17.

⁵Harold Lynn Eckeberger, "The Administrative Leadership Styles of Directors of Associational Missions in the Baptist General Convention of Texas" (EdD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985). See also David Stricklin, "A Genealogy of Dissent: The Culture of Progressive Protest in Southern Baptist Life, 1920-95" (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1996).

possessed an annual operating budget of around \$50 million dollars. It is a cliché that states that things are bigger in Texas, and while this is not necessarily true for everything, it certainly rings true when it comes to the amount of political fighting in Texas compared to other state conventions.

Brief History of the Baptist General

Convention of Texas

There is no definitive date when Baptists first entered Texas. Some reports claim that Baptists entered Texas as early as 1812, but most of those stories are based on hearsay and memories. There is not any concrete evidence that points to this fact. The earliest record of a Baptist being in Texas was Joseph Bays, a Baptist minister who preached along the Sabine in 1820.⁶ Another influential Baptist was Zechariah Morrell who assured Baptists place in Texas life when he crossed the Sabine in 1835. He gathered his family and moved to Texas in 1836. He traversed the hostile Texas terrain and preached to anyone who would listen. He helped Texas Baptists form the first association, the first state convention, and the first university. He spent his life on the frontier and today is credited for shaping Baptist's life in Texas.⁷

Texas Baptists formed the first state convention in Independence in 1848. During this time, there were several regional associations that cooperated concerning missions. It wasn't until 1886 that the current entity known as the Baptist General Convention of

⁶Leon McBeth, *Texas Baptist: A Sesquicentennial History* (Dallas: Baptistway Press, 1998), 13.

⁷Ibid., 18.

Texas (BGCT) came into existence. This new denomination comprised those from all across the theological and ecclesiological spectrum including landmark pastors such as B. H. Carroll, to mission men like S. A. Hayden.⁸ Although the two sides came together in both cooperation and partnership, there were many unresolved underlying theological issues that played a prominent role in the early part of the twentieth century and in the later decades of the Controversy.

Two of the earliest and most colorful figures in Texas Baptist history were Benahiah Harvey Carroll and John Frank Norris. Both of these men play significant roles in the development of Texas Baptist life in the early theologically turbulent decades of the 1900's.⁹

B. H. Carroll was born December 27, 1843 in Carroll County, Mississippi.¹⁰ After service in the Civil War, he spent his time teaching and preaching. Most of his efforts were focused in Waco. He was well known for his exegetical work entitled, *An Interpretation of the English Bible*. Carroll was also a strong proponent of Baptist

⁸Ibid., 87.

⁹Hart Nelson Hodges, "The True and the False: The Worlds of an Emerging Evangelical Protestant Fundamentalism in America, 1890-1920" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1976); see also J. Kristian Pratt, "A Landmark Baptist's Ecclesiology: Ben M. Bogard and Local Church Protectionism" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2005).

¹⁰James Spivey, "B. H. Carroll" in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, edited by Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 166. See also Alan Lafever, *Fighting the Good Fight: The Life and Work of Benahiah Harvey Carroll* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1994). Not everyone was pleased with Lafever's treatment of Carroll. Gregg A. Wills, professor of Church History at Southern Seminary, wrote a scathing critique of Lafever's work. See Gregg A. Wills, "Fighting the Good Fight: The Life and Work of Benajah Harvey Carroll," *Review & Expositor* 93:1 (1996): 144-6.

Landmark ecclesiology. He, along with James R. Graves, advocated the landmark position around the turn of the century.¹¹

The most notorious Baptist pastor at the turn of the century was John Frank Norris, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas.¹² Norris, a Fundamentalists Baptist preacher, along with William Jennings Bryan, defined religious Fundamentalism for a generation. Norris, who was nicknamed “the Texas Tornado,” sought to enact his views of religious Fundamentalism on everyone in Texas. He was notorious for his temper and for his wildly animated sermons. He was one of the first Baptist pastors to discuss the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy that was raging in the North. He preached against evolution and against the liberalism at Baylor University

¹¹For more information about J. R. Graves and his Landmark views, see Barry William Jones, “James R. Graves, Baptist Newspaper Editor: Catalyst for Religious Controversy, 1846-1893” (PhD diss., Ohio University, 1994); and Stephen Martin Stookey, “The Impact of Landmarkism Upon Southern Baptist Western Geographical Expansion” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994). The Landmark view will play a significant role in the future of Texas Baptist life and in the Controversy. During the Controversy, Liberals used this argument of local church autonomy as an excuse for returning to the SBC before the Controversy. They did not want to see any normative doctrine the Convention at large formed to be forced onto either the state and local conventions, or the local Baptist churches.

¹²For information on Norris, see, Louis Entzminger, *The J. Frank Norris I Have Known for Thirty-Four Years* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.). See also, Barry Hankins, *God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris and the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1996); and Charles Allyn Russell, “J. Frank Norris, Violent Fundamentalist,” in *Voices of American Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976). Another resource to show the nature of the times is a debate between J. Frank Norris and Foy E. Wallace, *Norris-Wallace Debate* (Fort Worth: Fundamentalist Publishing Company, 1935). See also Barry Hankins, “The Strange Career of J Frank Norris : or, Can a Baptist Democrat be a Fundamentalist Republican?” *Church History* 61:3 (September 1992): 373-392; and Bobby D. Compton, “J. Frank Norris and Southern Baptist,” *Review and Expositor* 79:1 (Winter 1982): 63-84.

in the twenties.¹³ Norris had a knack of getting under people's skin, and getting acquitted for crimes he committed. Until George Washington Truett, Norris was the most influential Texas pastor in the early part of the twentieth century.¹⁴

For twenty years after Norris' passing, Texas enjoyed a period of relative quiet. Baylor constantly came under criticism for alleged liberalism, mostly because it taught evolution at the school. But the convention as a whole remained unchanged. The stability and calm disappeared with the onset of the Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention. Two prominent Texans, Paige Patterson and Judge Paul Pressler, hurled the denomination into a debate over the theological direction of the convention. Mega-church pastors from Texas, like W.A. Criswell, threw their support behind the Conservative Resurgence. Criswell served as convention president from 1968 through 1970 and started Criswell College as a Conservative alternative to the then liberal Cooperative Program seminaries. He also preached against the theological Liberals in the convention from his pulpit in the historic First Baptist Church, located in downtown Dallas.¹⁵

As with most things in Texas, the fighting became fierce and in many cases, was

¹³Russell, "J. Frank Norris, Violent Fundamentalist," 24.

¹⁴Hankins, *God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris and the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism*, 7.

¹⁵For information on some of Criswell's more famous sermons, see Gray M. Allison, "The Preaching of W. A. Criswell: A Critical Analysis of Selected Messages," (ThD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990). For information on how W. A. Criswell impacted the Controversy, consult David Louis Goza, "W. A. Criswell's Formative Role in the Conservative Resurgence of the Southern Baptist Convention," (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006).

greatly exaggerated. The Controversy raged in Texas for over a decade after the Conservative's overall victory in 1991. Three major events, the charter change at Baylor University, the firing of Southwestern President, Russell Dilday, and the creation of a new Conservative Texas Baptist group are great examples of how the Controversy impacted the largest state convention.¹⁶

*Examples of the Fighting of the Moderates and Fundamentalists
in the States During the Controversy*

A good example of denominational bickering and fighting at the state level can be seen by an examination of the *Baptist Standard* during the last several years of the 1980's and the early part of the 1990s. Many Texas Baptist pastors, parishioners, and other observers bombarded the state paper with arguments either for or against the Conservative Resurgence, taking either the Conservative or Liberal side of theological issues mentioned in the Controversy, and discussed in Texas Baptist politics in general.¹⁷

The Baptist Standard carried news from the annual convention meetings and kept Texas Baptist informed about their denomination. They announced when Conservatives such as Jerry Vines defeated popular Texas pastor Dan Vestal for SBC president in

¹⁶For more information on events at Southwestern during the Controversy, see the following resources: Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation* (Nashville: Broadman, 2000), chapter sixteen. For a history of the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention, see Gary Ledbetter, *The Day of Small Things: A History of The Southern Baptist of Texas Convention* (Grapevine, TX: The Southern Baptist of Texas Convention, 2008). Chapter seven of this study shows how the Controversy impacted Baylor.

¹⁷Many of these articles came as letters to the editor at *The Baptist Standard*.

1988.¹⁸ The state newspaper also cited Jimmy Draper as confirming the battle for the Bible was “over.” While this might have been the case for the overall convention, Texas Baptists did not agree with Draper’s declaration.¹⁹

One of the major sticking points with Texas Baptists was the firing of Dan Martin and Al Shackleford.²⁰ Conservatives constantly criticized both of them for their liberal views.²¹ Moderates argued that both were examples of mainstream conservatism in Texas and that they were casualties of a Conservative witch hunt. Several pastors and leaders tried to keep the peace between Conservatives and Liberals, but none of them had much success.²² Denominational leaders, seminary presidents, and prominent pastors weighed in on the Controversy. Russell Dilday, then president at Southwestern Baptist

¹⁸Roy Jennings, “Jerry Vines is Winner in Las Vegas,” *Baptist Standard* (June 21, 1989): 3. Jim Jones, “‘Young Conservatives’ Support Jerry Vines,” *Baptist Standard* (June 7, 1989): 5. Dan Martin, “Dispute Over, Says Vines; SBC Ready to Move Forward,” *Baptist Standard* (May 24, 1989): 9,16.

¹⁹Toby Druin, “Draper, Others Huddle, Seek Cure for ‘Sick’ SBC,” *Baptist Standard* (Sept. 26, 1990): 5. Linda Lawson, “Draper Elected Sunday School Board President: No Opposition to Texas Pastor After Closed-Door Session,” *Baptist Standard* (July 24, 1991): 3. Greg Warner, “Draper Inaugurated, Pledges Board Will Be ‘True to the Bible,’” *Baptist Standard* (Aug. 28, 1991). Another Liberal posting that protested the Conservative Resurgence was entitled, “Who Will Act Now?” *Baptist Standard* (Oct. 9, 1991): 2.

²⁰Dan Martin and Greg Warner, “Fundamental-Conservatives Meet in Atlanta,” *Baptist Standard* (Mar. 15, 1989): 5.

²¹Toby Druin, “Baptist Press Director, News Editor Ordered to Resign or They Will Be ‘Dealt With Harshly: SBC Executive Committee Officers Send Ultimatum Through President Harold Bennett to Al Shackleford and Dan Martin,” *Baptist Standard* (July 4, 1990): 4-5, 8; Other prominent Texas pastors considered leaving the SBC. Defeated Liberal candidate Richard Jackson was one of those people. See Toby Druin, “Jackson: SBC on Strange Road He Can’t Travel,” *Baptist Standard* (Mar. 22, 1989): 13, 14.

²²“Any Servants in the SBC?” *Baptist Standard* (Feb. 17, 1988): 2.

Theological Seminary, was forced to explain a statement at the New Orleans Convention in 1991 where he called the actions of the Conservatives, “satanic and evil.” Later in the article, Dilday defended his comments and argued that he was not calling any one group or person evil and that he hoped to see an end of the twelve year erosion of the missions work of the SBC.²³

One of the Texas leaders who tried to remain both positive and objective throughout the Controversy was William Pinson. Pinson earned a ThD from Southwestern and was the Executive Director of the BGCT from 1983 through 2000. He had served as pastor, professor, and president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. Pinson wrote a weekly column for the *Baptist Standard* during his tenure as Executive Director.²⁴ He argued that the Baylor decision was the greatest crisis Texas Baptists had faced.²⁵ He presided over the BGCT during the drama associated with the Charter Change at Baylor. He currently serves as an occasional faculty member at the George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University.

Another major wrinkle in the state politics in Texas dealt with Joel C. Gregory. Gregory held both a bachelors and PhD from Baylor and a masters from Southwestern. He became a rising star for Conservatives in the Texas convention and distinguished himself as a masterful preacher and scholar. W. A. Criswell handpicked Gregory to

²³Scott Collins, “Dilday Issues Clarification of Statements Made at SBC,” *Baptist Standard* (July 11, 1991): 8.

²⁴For a listing of Pinson’s more memorable and relevant editorials, consult the bibliography.

²⁵William Pinson Jr., “The Greatest Crisis Ever Faced,” *Baptist Standard* (Dec. 12, 1990): 7.

succeed him as pastor of First Baptist, Dallas.²⁶ Gregory was president of the BGCT from 1988-1990.²⁷ Gregory remained a dominant figure in Texas Baptist life, even after his abrupt resignation at First Baptist, Dallas and his divorce. He currently serves on the faculty at the George W. Truett Seminary at Baylor University.²⁸

The Moderates Activity in Texas

Along with the sermons and editorials that the *Baptist Standard* carried, other groups began to rise up and weigh in on the Controversy. One such group was called Texas Baptist Committed. This newsletter appeared in the early 90s and tended to argue about issues in the Controversy from a liberal or moderate perspective.²⁹ The senior editor of the newsletter, David Currie, received his doctorate from Southwestern Baptist

²⁶“Joel Gregory Accepts Call as Pastor of FBC, Dallas,” *Baptist Standard* (Nov. 28, 1990): 4.

²⁷Joel C. Gregory, “The Lord Prays for Texas Baptist,” *Baptist Standard* (Nov. 9, 1989): 8.

²⁸The Controversy in Texas left Gregory in a difficult position. As the pastor of arguably the most influential Baptist church in the twentieth century, he became directly involved in the state controversy and was even elected president of the BCGT. He also threw himself completely into the battle for Baylor. After resigning from First Baptist, Dallas, he wrote a book entitled *To Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America's Superchurch* (Ft. Worth, TX: The Summit Group, 1994). In this work, he argued that W. A. Criswell was power hungry and would not step aside and let him minister in the proper way. He tells his side of the story in which he was the made the victim, not the villain.

²⁹During the Controversy in Texas, the term “Fundamentalist” was quoted quite frequently. Another term used by the Liberals was Moderate-Fundamentalists. This referred to a Liberal who was just as adamant about his liberalism as a Conservative was about their “fundamentalist” beliefs. Alan Lafever, Interview with Author (Apr. 3, 2009), Typewritten notes. The author would like to thank Alan Lafever, historian for the BGCT, and professor of Church History at Truett Theological Seminary, for his gracious assistance to the author by giving of his time and his willingness to do two interviews on this difficult topic.

Theological Seminary. He made it known to everyone who would listen or read his newsletter about his displeasure with the fundamentalist's success in purging the denomination of liberalism.³⁰ Currie and his supporters launched vicious, unchristian attacks at many, both in the Southern Baptist Convention and in Texas.³¹ Many times, he used derogatory language to paint Conservatives who believed in a literal, inerrant Bible as backwards or "bubbas."³²

Currie was one of the major Liberal Texas leaders who played the part of wounded soldier in the Controversy when it was convenient, while constantly writing and spewing hatred about Conservatives in Texas.³³ Many Liberals in the BGCT argued that both they and their defeated friends were on the right side of Baptist history and that they had not departed from historic Baptist beliefs.³⁴ They accused Conservatives of playing dirty politics and destroying both the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of local

³⁰For a comprehensive list of some of Currie's more memorable and rhetorical writings, consult the bibliography of this study.

³¹For a Texas Liberal's perspective on the "Conservative Takeover" consult Paul Kenley, "A Summary of the SBC Controversy: 1979-1994," *Texas Baptist Committed* (May 2000): 10-12; Paul Kenley, "A Summary of the SBC Controversy: 1995-2000," *Texas Baptist Committed* (May 2000): 13. See also Charles McLaughlin, "Chronology of Major Events in the Controversy," *Texas Baptist Committed* (May 2000): 14-5.

³²David Currie, "Bubba's Got A Good Idea!" *Texas Baptist Committed* (January 2000): 4-5.

³³David Currie, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," *Texas Baptist Committed* (October 2000): 16-17. Currie wrote about having an attitude like Christ. Unfortunately, both his words and his rhetoric do not match his message.

³⁴Charles C. McLaughlin, "Who Moved, The Southern Baptist Convention or the Baptist General Convention of Texas?" *Texas Baptist Committed* (May 2000): 6.

Baptists churches.³⁵ Herbert Reynolds, then President Emeritus at Baylor University, presented a speech in June, 1990 in New Orleans. In it, he called the Conservative Resurgence an “illness.” He argued that Fundamentalism had destroyed the historic Southern Baptist Convention. Because he and other Liberals believed that the “Fundamentalists” stole the convention and forced their will and way upon it, he compared Conservatives to Hitler.³⁶

Reynolds and others accused Conservatives of waging an unholy twenty year war that, in their opinion, destroyed the tenets of Baptists life. Reynold’s anger and disdain for Conservatives was nothing new, and Currie and the staff at *Texas Baptist Committed* again showed their intolerance to anything and anyone who disagreed with their position by continuing to use material that was eleven years old to attack the Conservatives.

Creation of The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention

The origins of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention go back to the days shortly after Baylor changed her charter and removed herself from BGCT control. Shortly after that event, two Conservative groups sprung up in Texas. Between 1991 through 1998, there was a protest movement in Texas among Conservatives. The first group was named “Baptist With a Mission.” This group tried in vain to find a way to

³⁵Ron Cook, “The Controversy Has Arrived at Local Churches,” *Texas Baptist Committed* (May 2001): 12-13. See also Tony Cartledge, “I was Just Thinking... When Did Souls Become Independent?” *Texas Baptist Committed* (July 2000): 8. Matthew Brady, “Garrett: Baptist Distinctives Are In Danger,” *Baptist Standard* (Sept. 11, 1991): 4.

³⁶Herbert H. Reynolds, “Anatomy of an Illness: Fundamentalism in the Southern Baptist Convention,” *Texas Baptist Committed* (August 2001): 18-20. Reynolds originally gave this speech at the SBC Forum at New Orleans in June 1990.

reclaim Baylor University and place it back under control of the state convention.

Another group formed and was called the “Pastor’s Group.” The Pastors Group grew increasingly concerned about theological irregularities that the BGCT would not address.³⁷

Both the layman and pastors groups merged and ran a Conservative candidate as president of the BGCT. Their candidate lost against the Liberals every time. In 1997, Conservatives created a new group, called the Conservative Baptists Fellowship of Texas, to give Conservative churches another option other than the liberal BGCT. Shortly after the inception of the group, her leaders realized that the acronym for the new group was CBF Texas. Conservative leaders became concerned that people would confuse this Conservative group with the Liberal Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which was also operating in Texas. Because of this, the name was changed to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC).³⁸

The new group formed the first steering committee in 1998. The leaders of the new denomination desired to have a native Texan as their leader. In September of 1998, the committee called Jim Richards as their executive director. Richards was unsure if he wanted to take the position. He agreed and became the SBTC’s executive director.³⁹ With all of the name calling and rhetoric that was swirling around Southern Baptists in

³⁷Jim Richards, Interview with Author (August 20, 2009) typewritten notes.

³⁸Ledbetter, *The Day of Small Things: A History of The Southern Baptist of Texas Convention*, 76-7.

³⁹Jim Richards, Interview with Author (August 20, 2009) typewritten notes.

Texas, Richards decided to stay positive and not engage the BGCT.

The representatives from both the BGCT and the SBTC met together between January and February of 1998. During this meeting, the leaders discussed theological issues about which each party differed.⁴⁰ They discussed five main points of disagreement.

The 1987 Peace Committee put forth three main criteria as a definition of innerrancy. The first was the acceptance that the biblical narratives happened. Second was the acceptance that literal miracles occurred. The final test for innerrancy, according to the Peace Committee, was that the biblical authors actually wrote the books that have traditionally been ascribed to them. The SBTC held to innerrancy, while the BGCT continued to support the language of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message that argued that the standard for both judging and interpreting Scripture was Christ.⁴¹ They held to the Liberal argument that Conservatives used Innerrancy as a measuring stick and viciously went after anyone who held to an understanding of soul competency.

Liberals in the BGCT argued that the “new” SBC had idolized Scripture and made direct worship of it a requirement for any leadership role in their convention.⁴² Texas Liberals continued to purport the lie that Conservatives had “stolen” the Southern Baptist

⁴⁰Marv Knox, Liberal editor for the *Baptist Standard*, later wrote an article for Currie’s newsletter where he profiled the differences between the two conventions in Texas. “Why the Divisions Between the Two Conventions? Four Issues Stand Out,” *Texas Baptist Committed* (August 2001): 7.

⁴¹Mark Wingfield, “BGCT Affirms 1963 Doctrinal Statement,” *Texas Baptist Committed* (January 2000): 8-9.

⁴²Bill Phillips, “IMB Regional Leader Declines to Sign BFM Form, Steps Down,” *Texas Baptist Committed* (August 2001): 12.

Convention away from not only Texas Baptists, but also others in the denomination.⁴³

They claimed that this new group of “Fundamentalists” required adherence to their thinking or be ostracized from their new club.⁴⁴

Jim Richards, executive director for the SBTC, came into this whirlwind of controversy in the lone star state. A native Texan, he attempted to build a convention of cooperating Baptists churches that would serve as an alternative for pastors and churches who were not satisfied with the overall direction of the BGCT. He officially began work in January of 1999. Working out of a pastor’s study in Mesquite, Richards began contacting churches and offered assistance. First Baptist, Dallas held the first annual evangelism conference of the SBTC in May. Paige Patterson, Tom Elliff, Jerry Vines, and Jack Graham were the keynote speakers.⁴⁵

The small Conservative group began to grow. Churches began to be dually aligned with both the BGCT and the SBTC. Others signed on to the new convention and pledged their support. In November, the convention gave over one million dollars to support Southern Baptist missions. Stan Coffey, the first elected president of the SBTC, applauded the group. He commented, “It’s getting Southern Baptists back to where we should be. It is accurately aligned with Scripture on various issues like in its opposition

⁴³Scott Walker, “Confronting Radical Religious Fundamentalism,” *Texas Baptist Committed* (April 2002): 23-24.

⁴⁴David R. Currie, “How Do We Move On?” *Texas Baptist Committed* (August 2001): 1-2.

⁴⁵Ledbetter, *The Day of Small Things: A History of The Southern Baptist of Texas Convention*, 96.

to the ordination of women and abortion.”⁴⁶ A small group of pastors and their churches realized the BGCT had strayed from conservative Baptists beliefs. They were relieved to discover a group that held to traditional Baptists beliefs.

Scripture

One of the first major points of dissension in Texas Baptist dealt with the nature of the Scriptures. Even though the Convention, now under Conservative control, espoused inerrancy, the Liberals still held to the idea of soul competency which allowed for any particular person, people, church, or local and state conventions to deal with the Scriptures as they saw fit. The newly formed SBTC affirmed the inerrancy of Scripture.⁴⁷ The BGCT did not.⁴⁸ The SBTC argued that Scripture came from God and was therefore perfect and accurate. The BGCT rejected the claim that the Bible was both infallible and inerrant. They continued to argue that their standard for both judging and interpreting Scripture was Christ.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Ibid., 99. Jewish rabbi, Jerry Young, of Beth Shalom Messianic Congregation of Houston commented that he felt at home at the meeting and cited the group’s unity and sweet spirit as the primary reason.

⁴⁷Inerrancy was big deal at the state conventions. For a Liberal’s reaction in Texas, see Mark Wingfield, “What Would Jesus Do? Wrong Question for SBC!” *Texas Baptist Committed* (July 2000): 1-3;

⁴⁸Charles Wade, “Jesus is the Standard by Which We Interpret Scripture,” *Texas Baptist Committed* (October 2000): 12.

⁴⁹It is interesting to note that the Liberals who seek to affirm the Scripture by interpreting it through the lense of Jesus, often fail to realize that the only record Jesus gave mankind of Himself is recorded in sacred Scripture. The Liberals, who deny the Scripture’s reliability and accuracy, claim to use Jesus as their standard. There is a definite flaw in their logic. For a Liberal perspective on Inerrancy, see James C. Denison, “Inerrancy: Definitions and Qualifications,” *Texas Baptist Committed* (May 2000): 22-24. See also, Gordon James, *Inerrancy and the Southern Baptist Convention: A Historical*

Abortion

Another major issue that separated the two groups dealt with the sanctity of human life and abortion. The Christian Life Commission (CLC) printed a booklet that argued that life began at birth, not conception. The SBTC contacted the CLC and requested that they rescind their writings and republish the booklet with a more pro-life stance. The BGCT agreed with the language the CLC used and argued that the SBTC was just trying to stir up trouble.⁵⁰ In 2000, the new Baptist Faith and Message revisited the language that dealt with the sanctity of human life. Liberals argued that Southern Baptist Conservatives wanted to use the abortion issue as a way to keep women in their rightful place— under male domination.⁵¹

In 1991, the Southern Baptist Convention presented a resolution on the sanctity of human life. It encouraged Southern Baptists to work in their respected states to push for pro-life legislation. In 1996, the convention adopted a resolution affirming their

and Theological Survey and Analysis (Dallas: Southern Baptist Heritage Press, 1986). In August 2001, incoming SBTC president Rudy Hernandez clarified the Conservative's view of Scripture in respect to the 1963 BF&M. He argued that it is impossible to know Christ apart from Scripture. This however, did little to satisfy the Liberals, who were still up in arms about the Conservative's view of inerrancy. David Currie argued that the *Baptist Press* had acted unethically when it mischaracterized Liberal pastors and their views on Scripture. Currie cited pastor Anthony Sisemore. Sisemore made a statement to the *Baptist Press* in which he argued that the Bible was "just a book." Currie cried that the *Baptist Press* did a hatchet job on Sisemore's statement and only used selected phrases that would support their point of view. See David R. Currie, "Baptist Press: A Case-Study of Unethical Journalism," *Texas Baptist Committed* (October 2000): 8-11.

⁵⁰Jim Richards, interview with author, (August 20, 2009), typewritten notes. For a Liberal's reaction, see Billy Spencer, "Let the BGCT Speak For Itself on Controversial Issues," *Texas Baptist Committed* (May 2000): 1-3.

⁵¹Joe Edward Barnhart, *The Southern Baptist Holy War* (Austin, TX: Texas Monthly Press, 1986), 160-161.

support of a ban on partial birth abortions.⁵² The final word on the abortion issue for Southern Baptists came in the new Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M) 2000. Article XV pronounced, “We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.”⁵³ Article XVIII, on The Family stated, “Children, *from the moment of conception*, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord.”⁵⁴ The new language argued for the sanctity of human life and protected the rights of the unborn, but it angered many feminists and Liberals both in Texas and in the Convention at large.⁵⁵ Liberals in Texas, who were searching for another reason to complain against Conservatives, actually accused Conservatives of placing words in their mouths about issues such as abortion.⁵⁶

⁵²Jones, “The Priesthood of the Believer in the Public Square,” 69-70.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid. Paul Simmons, former ethics professor at Southern Seminary, held that a baby was not really a person until it could breathe on its own. Many Liberals and feminists took Simmon’s work and used it as support for their insistence on abortion on demand. For a small sampling of Simmon’s work on this particular issue, see the following resources: Paul D. Simmons, “A Theological Response to Fundamentalism on the Abortion Issue,” *Church and Society* 71:4 (March-April 1981): 23-35.; Paul D. Simmons, “Dogma and Discord : Religious Liberty and the Abortion Debate,” *Church & State* 43 (January 1990): 17-21; Paul Simmons, “Religious Liberty and the Abortion Debate,” *Journal of Church and State* 32:3 (Summer 1990): 567-584. See also Paul D. Simmons, *Birth and Death: Bioethical Decision-Making*. In Biblical Perspectives on Current Issues Series (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), and Paul D. Simmons, ed., *Issues in Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Broadman, 1980).

⁵⁵E. Glenn Hinson, “The Church: Liberator or Oppressor of Women?” *Review and Expositor* 72:1 (Winter 1975): 19-29.

⁵⁶Billy Spencer, “Let the BGCT Speak For Itself on Controversial Issues,” *Texas Baptist Committed* (May 2000): 1-3.

Women as Ministers

Another major issue the representatives from both conventions discussed dealt with women pastors.⁵⁷ One of the issues the BGCT never dealt with was the issue of Julie Pennington, a prominent woman pastor in Waco.⁵⁸ The SBTC included language in its charter that limited the role of bishop or pastor to men only. The BGCT rejected the men only language and supported women as pastors.⁵⁹

Baptist Faith and Message 2000

Like the SBC, the SBTC affirmed the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. This document incorporated new language that strengthened historic Baptist beliefs and

⁵⁷Lydia Huffman Hoyle, "Courage and Hope: the Stories of Ten Baptist Women Ministers," *Baptist History and Heritage* 41:2 (Spring 2006): 120.

⁵⁸Daniel Vestal, "Women as Pastors," *Texas Baptist Committed* (July, 2000): 16. Although Vestal does not mention Pennington directly, he provides ample reasoning for his convictions that women can be pastors.

⁵⁹Several leaders in the BGCT argue that this was the only doctrinal distinction between the SBTC and the BGCT. Alan Lavever, Interview with Author. Apr. 3, 2009. Typewritten notes. See also Sandra Magee Womack, "In Praise of Women's Missionary Union and Baptist Women in Ministry," *Texas Baptist Committed* (January/February 2001): 20. Several issues such as this one spilled over from state to state, see John Pierce, "Georgia Baptist Executive Threatens to 'Shut Down' Women in Ministry if Pro-SBC Guidelines not Met," *Texas Baptist Committed* (October 2001): 23; Gary E. Parker, "Women in the Pulpit? Absolutely!" *Texas Baptist Committed* (July 2000): 15; Bob Allen, "Church Survives Challenge Over Woman's Ordination," *Texas Baptist Committed* (October 2001): 8. For current scholarly research on women pastors: Eileen Renee Campell-Reed, "Anatomy of a Schism: How Clergywoman's Narratives Interpret the Fracturing of the Southern Baptist Convention" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2008); Elizabeth Hill Flowers, "Varieties of Evangelical Womanhood: Southern Baptist, Gender, and American Culture" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2007); Demetria A. Newman, "Christian Fundamentalism and Women's Human Rights," (MA thesis, American University, 2003); for more on the history of women's roles in the twentieth century, see Strickland, "A Genealogy of Dissent: The Culture of Progressive Protest in Southern Baptist Life, 1920-95," chapter five.

signified an important step in the right direction for Southern Baptist's future. The BGCT however, was very hostile to the new Baptist Faith and Message. Angry Texans, who wrote under David Currie's banner of *Texas Baptist Committed*, immediately moved to distance themselves from the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M 2000). They openly attacked both the Southern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention for their affirmation of the BF&M 2000.⁶⁰ One of the arguments the BGCT had with the new BF&M 2000 dealt with the required affirmation by the leadership of Southern Baptists in both missions and denominational leadership. They railed against the new requirement which mandated an employ affirm the BF&M 2000 as a condition of their continued employment as both missionaries and employees.⁶¹

David Currie and others began complaining about the new "litmus test" or "standard of orthodoxy" placed on Southern Baptist in Texas. Liberals, who were obsessed with "individual freedom" were angered that any Southern Baptist should be

⁶⁰William L. Hendricks, "Reflections on the Baptist Faith and Message," *Texas Baptist Committed* (May 2000): 1. See also Bruce Prescott, "2000 BF&M Annuls Work of 1963 Committee," *Texas Baptist Committed* (October 2000): 15. For a clearer explanation of the relationship between the three Baptist confessions of Faith, see Timothy C. Seal, "A Comparative Analysis of the Theological Heritage of the 2000 Revisions to the 'Baptist Faith and Message' in Relation to the 1925 and 1963 Confessions," (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003). Seal argued that the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message is consistent with both the 1925 and 1963 Confessions of Faith. A dated article, but one that sheds light on the Liberal's view, is Walter B. Shurden, "Southern Baptist Responses to the 1925 and 1963 Confessions," *Review and Expositor* 76:1 (Winter 1979): 69-84.

⁶¹Mark Wingfield, "Revised Statement Will Guide Employment," *Texas Baptist Committed* (July 2000): 7.

told how to think by the larger convention.⁶²

The Cooperative Program

A major issue that angered the Liberals in Texas dealt with how the Cooperative Program funded liberal Baptist programs. Most of the money from the Cooperative Program went to fund both missions and the seminaries. With the seminaries under Conservative control, Liberals did not want any more of their money going to aid their enemies. One of the Liberal's tactics was to de-fund agencies that they felt were Conservative or Fundamentalist. Conservatives had success at this during the Controversy.⁶³

The BGCT gave a significant amount of money to both the CBF and Baylor. After a group of Conservatives succeeded in cutting support for Baylor after the charter change in 1990, the BGCT designated funds to the CBF group in Texas and Baylor.⁶⁴

⁶²Jerold McBride, "Keep the Faith as We Move Forward," *Texas Baptist Committed* (January 2000): 1, 3.

⁶³David T. Morgan, *The New Crusades, The New Holy Land: Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969-1991* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1996), 113. Officers from the BGCT voted against de-funding the BJC. See Toby Druin, "Executive Board Approves BJCPA Funding Plan: State Convention to Determine Amount in Annual Budget," *The Baptist Standard* (Oct. 31, 1990): 3

⁶⁴Douglas Wong, "BGCT Gets Split Vote on Funding," *Waco Tribune Herald* (Thurs. Nov. 15, 1990). When Baylor broke from the BGCT, they lost over seventy-five percent of their funding. Liberals, who applauded the move, elected to fund Baylor with funds that were designated for the Cooperative Program. Conservatives moved to de-fund Baylor and designated the money for other worthwhile causes. See Toby Druin, "Committee Votes to Halt, Escrow Baylor Funds: Formal Study Asked; Executive Board Meeting Called Oct. 17," *Baptist Standard* (Oct. 10, 1990): 3.

They then argued that they gave money to the Cooperative Program.⁶⁵ In 1998, the BGCT gave thirty-seven percent of their Cooperative program money to the SBC and sixty-three percent to the CBF. Last year, the BGCT gave seventy-nine percent of its Cooperative program budget to the CBF. Only twenty-one percent went to the SBC.⁶⁶

The SBTC has designated fifty-five percent of its budget to the Cooperative program.⁶⁷ The Liberal group, *Texas Baptist Committed*, attacked the SBTC for their giving to the Cooperative Program.⁶⁸ The SBTC decided not use the money in the budget to expand the convention, but to reach people both in Texas and the world with the gospel. As a result of their positive outlook and dedication to missions, God has blessed the SBTC in a mighty way.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy raged simultaneously on two fronts. The most noted battles occurred at the annual convention meetings. Most Southern Baptist were largely unaware of what was progressing in the states. Apart from Texas, no other state convention showed denominational loyalty to convention leaders and no other convention displayed such a volatile reaction even after the Controversy at the national

⁶⁵Chad Owen Brand and David E.Hankins, *One Sacred Effort: The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman, 2005), 165.

⁶⁶Jim Richards, interview with author, (August 20, 2009), typewritten notes.

⁶⁷Ibid. "SBTC 2009 budget," available from http://www.sbtexas.com/about_sbtc/09budget.htm (Accessed August 20, 2009).

⁶⁸Ophelia Humphrey, "Committee Looks at North American Mission Board," *Texas Baptist Committed* (August 2001): 16-7.

⁶⁹Ledbetter, *A Day of Small Things*, 172.

level had ended.

There were several key factors that were unique to Texas. President Herbert Reynolds and the trustees at Baylor University changed the charter in 1991 and removed the school from the governance of the BGCT.⁷⁰ On March 9, 1994, the trustees at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, citing that the school needed a new direction for the twenty-first century, fired president Russell Dilday without prior notice.⁷¹

The BGCT aligned themselves with most of the Liberals in the Controversy. Several denominational leaders, from both sides of the Controversy, came from Texas. In some states, the defeated Liberals formed new groups under the banner of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). A CBF group formed in Texas, but the BGCT held to many if not all of the same beliefs as the CBF. Because of this, there arose a need for a new, Conservative group of Southern Baptist in Texas. Because the BGCT controlled most of the funds in Texas, it seemed unlikely that a new group would survive.

A few men and churches stepped out in faith and formed the SBTC. Since its official formation and operation, the association has grown to over 2150 affiliate churches. In ten years, the SBTC has given over \$35,000,000.00 to missions. The SBTC has both funded and started over 450 new church plants. Currently, ninety percent of these churches are still serving as a cooperating church.⁷² The leadership staff of the SBTC attempted to provide an alternative for churches who were disappointed with the

⁷⁰The charter change at Baylor is discussed in chapter seven.

⁷¹Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 377.

⁷²Ledbetter, *A Day of Small Things*, 150-151.

BGCT and who wanted to hold to historic Baptist principles.

The SBC's unique polity allowed for intense debate and has generated plenty of both scholarly and passionate works within the state conventions. Texas Baptist have always been a colorful cast of characters. They have generated controversy throughout much of their existence. Many of the SBC's greatest heroes and villains hailed from the Lone Star State. The study of how the Controversy affected a state convention gives Southern Baptists a new dynamic to the overall Controversy and has generated and yielded a great amount of scholarship that can aid future Baptists by helping them better understand both Baptist polity and state convention politics.

CHAPTER VII

THE FUNDAMENTALIST-MODERNIST CONTROVERSY IN

A STATE AND THE BATTLE FOR

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

As the Conservative Resurgence continued to impact the Southern Baptist Convention, the Controversy shifted from the seminaries to several of the liberal arts colleges and universities. Conservatives hoped to capitalize on their good fortunes at both the national convention and seminary level. They desired to use their momentum to carry them to victory in the battle for the state conventions and the liberal arts colleges.¹

Unfortunately, things did not go as well for Conservatives when it came to the Southern Baptist universities. The universities were in as bad a shape as the seminaries and in some cases they were worse. The Southern Baptist Convention does not own any of the liberal arts colleges in the states. The state conventions supported and financed several of the colleges. Since the Southern Baptist Convention founded many of these universities, the state conventions that are affiliated with each school selected the Board

¹Very little information exists regarding the Controversy and its impact on the states compared to the literature generated by the Controversy as a whole. Knowing how the Controversy impacted the states and the liberal arts universities can be beneficial. Two resources that are helpful are as follows: Anna Christine Coley, "Experiences of Religious Study Faculty Members as Teachers and Scholars at a Former Baptist University in the South" (PhD diss., Georgia State University, 2004); and Mark Alan Taylor, "Religious Identity on a Slippery Slope: Furman University and Mercer University During the 1990's" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2000).

of Trustees.

Shortly after the New Orleans convention in 1991, defeated Liberals fled to the state conventions. Many sought employment in the state bureaucratic machines or as professors in the Southern Baptist liberal arts colleges. As the Southern Baptist Conservatives consolidated their power and were busy cleaning house at the seminaries, many of the colleges feared they were next on the hit list. Many of the prominent Southern Baptist universities, such as Baylor, Wake Forest, Furman, William Jewel, Stetson, and Mercer began the process of breaking away from their state conventions. As this chapter will show, Baylor was the most radical of the universities in regards to the method of breaking with the state convention. Other state conventions grew increasingly frustrated with the futile attempts at reforming the colleges. Because of this, many of them voted to grant the college their independence and to either slow their funding or to cut them loose all together.²

In response to the losses of several of the Baptist Liberal arts colleges, several of the Cooperative Program seminaries began undergraduate schools of their own.³ The

²James C. Hefley, *The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Garland, TX: Hannibal Books, 2005), chapter 7. Hefley also covers the problems with state colleges in volumes two and three of *The Truth in Crisis*. See James C. Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis: Bringing the Controversy Up - to - Date*, vol. 2 (Dallas: Criterion, 1987), chapter 12; and James C. Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis: Conservative Resurgence or Political Takeover*, vol. 3 (Dallas: Criterion, 1988), chapter 11.

³Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was the first seminary to start a college. Southern founded the Boyce College in 1997. Shortly after this, Southeastern began the College at Southeastern. Southwestern started the College at Southwestern. New Orleans began Leavell College and Midwestern Seminary began Midwestern College. For more information on each of these schools, see the respective seminaries' website.

state conventions voted to de-fund many of the colleges and decided to use their money for more productive purposes.⁴ After the initial loss of several of the premier colleges, a few of the state conventions who still held influence in their colleges finally found a way to counter the growing trend of the colleges breaking from them.⁵

Liberals, who had infiltrated the universities, convinced several of the independent schools to form either schools of divinity or seminaries. They wished to return Southern Baptists theological education to the pre-Controversy status quo and found that the best way to do this was to create either a seminary or divinity school, founded after Harvard and Yale, as the Liberal alternative to the six cooperative program

⁴After the BGCT voted to de-fund Baylor, the South Carolina Convention voted to de-fund Furman and give the money to Anderson University and Charleston Southern University, two schools that are affiliated with the South Carolina Convention. See Ben McDade, "S.C. Baptists Vote to Pursue 'Declaratory Judgement Action' Against Furman," *Baptist Press* (Nov. 14, 1991): 1. For a brief comparison of Baylor and Furman, see the following resources: Ken Camp, "Baylor/Furman Choices Differed," *Baptist Standard* (Nov. 20, 1991): 5, 7; Douglas Wong, "S.C. Baptist take school to Court," *Waco Tribune Herald* (Nov. 16, 1991), and Taylor, "Religious Identity on a Slippery Slope: Furman University and Mercer University During the 1990's," chapter four.

⁵The Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC) recently announced that it has broken ties with Belmont University. Belmont was the last major Southern Baptist college to break from the state convention. They tried to change their charter in 2005 and remove themselves from under TBC control. The TBC rejected Belmont's proposal and proceeded to de-fund the university. They gave the money to Union University and Carson-Newman College, which are still Southern Baptist colleges. In 2006, *The Tennessean* reported that the TBC wanted to remove the existing board at Belmont and replace it with one that was entirely Southern Baptists. On September 29, 2006, the TBC filed a lawsuit against Belmont and demanded the school repay the convention approximately \$58,000,000. The two sides reached a settlement on November 14, 2007. TBC and Belmont would break amicably. Belmont agreed to give the convention \$1,000,000 immediately and \$250,000 annually for the forty years for a total cost of \$11,000,000. The school has stated that it wishes to remain a "Christian" university, but no longer a "Baptist" one.

seminaries.⁶ Liberals would now have the option to send their young people to a school that, according to them, reflected historic Baptists principles such as the individual freedom to believe and interpret Scripture as the student or professor saw fit. This has provided Southern Baptists, both Conservatives and Liberals, with a variety of new educational opportunities in the twenty first century.⁷

History of Baylor University

Baylor was founded in Independence, TX, where Texas hero Sam Houston lived and was baptized as a child. William Tyron, one of two missionaries sent to the area by the American Home Mission Society, came up with the idea to place a Baptist University in Texas. The Society sent the missionaries to the area to address complaints of some in the South of neglect by the convention. Judge Robert Emmet Bledsoe Baylor dictated the school's charter and Tyron assigned the name Baylor University. The Ninth Congress of the Republic of Texas certified Baylor's charter on February 1, 1845. Later on that year,

⁶For more information on the break between Christian denominations and the schools they founded, consult James Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities From Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Burtchaell discusses Southern Baptist in chapter four and profiles Wake Forest University and their relationship with the North Carolina Baptist Association.

⁷Several former Southern Baptists colleges began seminaries or schools of divinity. Wake Forest began a School of Divinity and hired Bill Leonard, former professor of Church History at Southern Seminary as its founding dean. Baylor began Truett Seminary. Mercer began McAfee School of Theology. Each of these school is listed as a partner school with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). For more schools (both Baptist and Non-Baptist) who are partnered with the CBF, see their website. Between the Cooperative Program seminaries starting colleges and former Southern Baptist Universities starting either divinity schools or seminaries, the options for both Conservative and Liberal students for theological education are bountiful.

Texas became the 28th state to join the Union. Two of the first contributors to Baylor were Judge Baylor, who gave the school \$1,000, and Sam Houston, who donated \$300 and the use of his law library⁸

Classes began at the school on May 18, 1846 with twenty four male and female students. In 1851, Baylor divided into both female and male schools. Individual presidents presided over each of the schools. In 1863, the women's department in Independence separated from Baylor University and became Baylor Female College. The school was later renamed Mary Hardin-Baylor University. In 1882, a tornado ripped through Independence and nearly destroyed Baylor. Texas Baptists began talking of the possibility of merging Baylor University with Waco University and moving both schools to Waco. William Carrie Crane, Baylor's president, opposed the union. In 1885, however, he died of a sudden attack of pneumonia. That same year the Baptist state convention and Baptist General Association of Texas consolidated and became the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). The BGCT, along with the trustees of both Baylor and Waco universities, voted to move the school from Independence to Waco and merge the two schools. The name of the school in 1886 was Baylor University in Waco. Fifty years later, Baylor dropped "at Waco" from the school's name.⁹

Baylor grew in the latter half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. During this time, two prominent Texas Baptist pastors, B. H. Carroll and J.

⁸Hefley, *The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention*, 284.

⁹Ibid., 284. For a copy of the 1886 charter, see William Ford Faulkner, "Institutional Change on Southern Baptist Higher Education: An Interpretive Study of Governance Change at Baylor University" (EdD diss., Memphis State University, 1993), Appendix F.

Frank Norris, criticized Baylor for liberal and moderate beliefs.¹⁰ Baylor University saw the need for a theological seminary in Texas and decided to begin one. They organized Baylor Theological Seminary in 1905 and located the school in Waco as part of the university. Two years later, the school moved to Seminary Hill in Fort Worth. In 1908, Baylor Theological Seminary changed its name to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.¹¹

Relationship with Baptist General Convention of Texas

The BGCT enjoyed a relatively peaceful relationship with Baylor. Because the BGCT was more moderate leaning, they saw Baylor as one of the premier Baptist institutions in the country. It grew to become the largest Baptist university in the world and was deemed by many as the “crown jewel” of Texas Baptist life.¹² Most of her students came from Texas and many of them were second and third generation Baylor students. Because of the generous donation of Texas Baptist, Baylor grew to be one of the wealthiest private colleges in America and is even listed as one of the top twenty five higher-level learning institutions in the country.¹³

¹⁰Charles Allyn Russel, *Voices of American Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 36-7.

¹¹Leon McBeth, *Texas Baptists* (Dallas, TX: Baptistway Press, 1998), 143.

¹²Paula Price Tanner and Sherry Boyd Castello. “Safe From the Storm,” *The Baylor Line* 52 no. 2 (Nov. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 3. President Reynolds was the first one to publicly call Baylor the, “crown jewel of Texas Baptist.”

¹³Gary Ledbetter, “Lost Institutions,” *Southern Baptist Watchman* 1:1 (November 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 3; Bob Lott, “Reynolds Strikes a Blow for Education in Texas,” *Waco Tribune-Herald* (Sept. 29, 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; See also Faulkner, “Institutional

Herbert Reynolds and the Charter Change

Baylor came under constant criticism by conservative pastors and leaders of the Conservative Resurgence. Students who complained of liberalism at the school, asked Conservative leader Paul Pressler to come visit the university and see the examples of liberalism for himself. The judge visited the school in 1977 and upon viewing the curriculum commented, "When I got up there and read their textbooks and found out what kind of garbage they were being fed, I promised the Lord I was going to do something about it."¹⁴ Two years later, James Draper, prominent Texas pastor and future SBC president, attacked Baylor because H. Jackson Flanders was appointed head of the religion department. Draper accused Flanders of being a liberal and was sharply critical of his work entitled *People of the Covenant*.¹⁵

When Abner McCall announced his retirement in 1981, Herbert Reynolds became president. Reynolds served as president of Baylor University during the Controversy. A theological Liberal, he immediately launched an offensive attack against both the Fundamentalists and the Conservative Resurgence. In the *Baylor Line*, the school's newsletter, he wrote that Conservatives were like, "a little Baptist college of Cardinals" and "a priestly class among us who feel they are endowed with special wisdom and

Change on Southern Baptist Higher Education: An Interpretive Study of Governance Change at Baylor University," 13.

¹⁴David T. Morgan, *The New Crusades, The New Holy Land: Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969-1991* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1996), 145-6.

¹⁵Ibid.

special authority, when, in fact, they possess neither.”¹⁶ Conservative laymen Zig Ziglar, criticized Baylor for not teaching biblical inerrancy and for giving tenure to a Mormon professor who taught Spanish there. Reynolds argued that there is nothing wrong with a Mormon teaching at Baylor and argued that tenure should not be denied from him because he had promised not to proselytize Baylor students.¹⁷

Baylor was again embroiled in controversy in 1986. This time, Paul Powell, a Baylor trustee and president of the BGCT, asked Lee Roberts, a fundamentalist layman from Georgia, to apologize to Winfred Moore for accusing the former SBC presidential candidate of not believing in “truth.” This sparked a feud between the two over whether the trustees at Baylor had voted, “to allow the continued showing of pornography depicting homosexuality, sadism, nudity, explicit sex, and the use of our Lord’s name in vain at Baylor.”¹⁸ The two men argued and bickered about the films, President Reynolds approached the trustees and explain the student officers of the Baylor Film Society disobeyed orders from the faculty advisors to stop showing pornographic films. He assured the board that he was against pornography and suspended the society until new guidelines could be created. Brad Blake, the honor student who informed the trustees about the film, was singled out by some Liberals and was labeled a “member of the Fundamentalist KGB.”¹⁹

¹⁶Ibid., 146.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

Shortly before the 1987 state convention, Baylor was once again in the news. Les Csorba, a member of the SBC Public Affairs Committee, wrote a column that stated that five or six professors at Baylor “resigned” over allegations that they were involved in homosexual activity. The *Baptist Standard* reported Reynolds as commenting that several students were dismissed for soliciting homosexual acts during the 1985-86 school year.²⁰

After the Liberal defeat at the 1988 convention in San Antonio, Reynolds feared that the Conservatives were going to target the state conventions. He declared that SBC Conservatives were, “moving to ‘capture and dominate’ the entire SBC.”²¹ Shortly before the 1989 convention, the Baylor newspaper quoted Reynold as saying, “There are too many contradictions in the Bible for the Bible to be inerrant.”²² In 1988, a group of concerned Baptists formed an organization called United for a Better Baylor. The group was formed in response to a question raised in the *Southern Baptist Advocate*: “Are you mad about the liberal bent of the *Baylor Line*?” In August, the group attacked the Baylor Alumni Association and the school’s trustees for allowing the university to become liberal. Two months later, the group released an eight page document which criticized the school for teaching evolution, refusing to charter Campus Crusade for Christ as a student organization, offering yoga classes in the division of continuing education,

²⁰Hefley, *The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention*, 286.

²¹*Ibid.*, 287.

²²*Ibid.* See also Paul Yowell, “Moderates Win BGCT Offices; Conflict Lingers,” *The Baylor Lariat* 96:36 (Nov. 9, 1989): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 1, 4.

allowing Planned Parenthood to distribute materials on campus, for permitting a Mormon to served on the faculty, and for not responding to liberal statements made by professors in the religion department.²³

At the 1989 convention, BGCT president and two time Baylor alumnus Joel Gregory met with Reynolds regarding some of his concerns he had with perceived theological problems at Baylor. He gave Reynolds a list of about twenty Conservative evangelical scholars who had not been involved in the Controversy. Gregory asked Reynolds if he would consider hiring anyone from that list so that Baylor would have a more balanced religion department. Reynolds and Baylor dismissed Gregory's list and didn't hire any professors listed on it.²⁴

Unkown to both Gregory and other leaders of the BGCT, Reynolds was already in the process of distancing Baylor from the BGCT. He had six lawyers investigate the possibility that Baylor could change its charter and remove itself from under the authority of the state convention. Baylor had been "chartered" twice, in 1845 and again in 1886. There were also several amendments made to the charter since the school moved to Waco.²⁵

The 1886 charter stated that Baylor did not have the authority to remove itself from under the BGCT's control without convention approval. However, Baylor's law

²³Morgan, *The New Crusades: The New Holy Land*, 147.

²⁴Hefley, *The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention*, 287.

²⁵Faulkner, "Institutional Change on Southern Baptist Higher Education: An Interpretive Study of Governance Change at Baylor University," Appendix F. See also the 1936 charter of Baylor University, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 1936.

professors discovered that Baylor was chartered before the BGCT and that the trustees gave the authority to the convention to elect the board after the fact. Chancellor McCall, himself a former judge and former dean of the Baylor Law School, commented about the charter, “No statements in any other organization’s charter or bylaws can control what the trustees can do. And once trustees are elected, their obligation is to the trust– not to those who elected them.”²⁶

When asked about the possibility of the charter change, McCall stated that he:

Looked into the possibility of such action 25 years ago. I found out that there was no question about the right of the trustees to change the charter.... the [Baptist] conventions don’t own the ... institutions... They are set up as independent, nonprofit, eleemosynary corporations. They are all public trust, dedicated to public purposes... Once they are dedicated as such purposes, it is an irrevocable dedication. Baylor’s relationship with the denomination... has been a voluntary, cooperative relationship.²⁷

President Reynolds kept most of the Baylor trustees in the dark in regards to the legal search. He mentioned it was time to act when Conservatives won the Convention presidency for the twelfth strait year. He stated that a “reliable source” informed him that the national leadership intended to make Texas their next target. He became fearful that the BGCT would fall into the hands of the Fundamentalists who would then be able to force their will on Baylor. The BGCT elected the entire forty-eight members of the Baylor Board of Trustees. Reynolds claimed that there were between eight and fourteen members who “might vote in sympathy with the fundamentalist faction or do their

²⁶Hefley, *The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention*, 287.

²⁷Ibid.

bidding.”²⁸ With sixteen new trustees scheduled to be elected at the 1990 state convention in Houston, Reynolds saw the chance of the Conservatives running an alternative slate of trustees that would give them a majority.

Reynolds worked carefully with Randall Fields, president of the alumni association, to prepare the alumni for the proposed plan. The alumni magazine ran a four page add with the headline, “Fundamentalists Threaten Baylor Takeover.” The ad alleged that the action would cut Baylor’s student body in half and stifle academic freedom through “thought control.”²⁹ The *Waco Tribune-Herald* reprinted an editorial about a speech Reynolds gave at the 1991 New Orleans annual convention where he compared, “certain fundamentalist leaders to Nazis in their myopia and intolerance.” He argued that fundamentalists desired to, “convert the world-renowned university into a second-rate Bible college.”³⁰

Reynolds called the trustees to a secret meeting on September 21, 1990. Reynolds had already set the plan in motion to protect Baylor from further interference by the Fundamentalists. He was going to change the charter of the school and remove Baylor out from under the control of the BGCT. Of the forty-eight trustees who attended the meeting, five of them, John Baugh, Glen Diggs, Randy Fields, Winfred Moore, and Dewey Presley, entered the meeting with full knowledge of Reynold’s plan. Ten trustees did not attend the meeting, while a number of them entered to the sight of the “insiders”

²⁸Ibid., 288.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

surrounded by their battery of lawyers. The trustees made a motion to forgo the usual order of business and proceeded directly into the adoption of the charter amendment.

Three trustees, Diggs, Baugh, and Fields seconded the motion. The lawyer passed out a seventeen page document of questions and answers. They informed the trustees that Baylor was a “public trust” that was dedicated to education. They reminded the trustees that the BGCT did not own Baylor, but that it was only under the “patronage and general direction” of the convention. They informed the trustees that they could legally change the university’s charter to provide for a self-perpetuating and self-governing board of regents.³¹

Their plan would progress over three years. The forty-eight member board of trustees would become a twenty-four member board of regents. The BGCT would select only one-fourth of the regents. The sitting board would choose the rest of the regents. The three-fourths self perpetuating board would effectively end BGCT control of the school. The new BGCT elected regents would mainly be responsible for public relations and fund-raising.³²

The board discussed the amended charter for two hours before calling for a vote. The trustees voted to amend the charter thirty to seven with one abstention.³³ After the

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 289.

³³Kenneth L. Woodward and Ginny Carroll, “How to Steal a University: Baptist Battle for Control of Baylor,” *Newsweek* 117: 1 (Jan. 7, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 49. The seven who voted against the change were Hal Boone, Bill Grubbs, William D. Agee, Reida R. Stewart, Jack Fields, Donald H. Wills, and Fred Roach. After the meeting, Trustee Grubbs told a reporter, “It was beautiful job—a classical story on how to steal a school. The whole trustee meeting was railroaded.”

trustees announced the vote, Baylor counsel Basil Thompson called the law firm in Austin where James Nehrton, Baylor Vice-President, and Treasurer Howard Dudgeon, waited with a copy of the amendment. The two then signed the document, had it notarized, and then carried it to the Secretary of State's office where they received a certificate of amendment. The trustees, now regents, became solely responsible for Baylor with assets totaling \$459,005,617 and \$203,751,433 in endowments.³⁴

Before the meeting began, President Reynolds had all communication lines in Baylor's executive offices disconnected to prevent anyone outside the of the school from gaining knowledge of the deed and filing an injunction that would possibly delay the charter change. After he knew the charter was amended, Reynolds faxed the following press release to the *Baptist Standard*: "This is an historic and courageous initiative by the board of trustees... this action will maintain Baylor's academic excellence and continue its world-wide Christian emphasis while freeing Baylor from an attempted takeover by its special interest groups."³⁵ Shortly after receiving the press release, the *Baptist Standard* called William M. Pinson, executive director of the BGCT, to told him about the charter change. This was the first Pinson had heard about the event.³⁶

Reaction by the Baptist General Convention of Texas

The news of the charter change spurred a frenzied and panicked reaction from the

³⁴Hefley, *The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention*, 289.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

BGCT.³⁷ They were in no danger from Conservatives. Liberals dominated the convention and it was one of the state conventions that consistently produced the Liberal candidate throughout the Controversy. William Pinson, after receiving news on the charter change, wrote in the *Baptist Standard* that this was the greatest challenged Texas Baptists had ever faced.³⁸ Members of the BGCT were shocked when they discovered the Reynolds and the trustees had done.³⁹ Alumni on both sides of the issue flooded Texas newspapers for weeks with editorials expressing both outrage and joy over the events in Waco.⁴⁰ The editorials and letters to the editor dominated the local newspaper,

³⁷Alan Nelson and Tessie Borden, "Leaders React With Surprise After Action," *Waco Tribune-Herald* (Sept. 22, 1990).

³⁸William M. Pinson Jr., "The Greatest Crisis Ever Faced," *Baptist Standard* (Dec. 12, 1990): 7.

³⁹Phil Lineberger, "An Open Letter To Texas Baptist Concerning the Relationship of The Baptist General Convention of Texas and Baylor University," *Baptist Standard* (July 31, 1991):8-9.

⁴⁰Several articles that praise the charter change are as follows: Letter to Editor: "Let the Healing Begin," *Baptist Standard* (Dec. 4, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 2.; Letter to Editor: "Time to Pray," *Baptist Standard* (Nov. 6, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 2.; J. Michael Kennedy, "Baylor Maneuvered Past Fundamentalism," *Los Angeles Times* (Nov. 13, 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Jim Jones, "Legal Action Against Baylor Urged: Gregory, Criswell Share Views on Control of School," *Fort Worth Star Telegram* (Nov. 27, 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas. Jim Jones, "Baptist Want More Say on Baylor Board," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (May 15, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Jim Jones, "Baptist Panel Votes to Loosen Control Over Baylor," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (Sept. 11, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; "In a Nutshell... Why Baylor Cares About the BGCT," *Baylor-BGCT Update* (October/November 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 3; Gracie Hatfield Hilton, "Baylor Seeks Agreement With State Convention Officials," *Baylor-BGCT Update* (June 1991) The Texas Collection, Baylor University; Randy Fields, "Appreciation Expressed to Retired Baylor Faculty," *Baylor Needs You!* (Sept.1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 5; Editorial: "Battle for Baylor: Factional Fight Over Control Could Damage School," *Houston Post* (Sept. 25, 1990) Reprinted in *Baylor Needs You*

the *Waco Tribune-Herald* and Texas newspapers for many days and weeks following the event.⁴¹ Students at the university were as confused as the rest of Texas Baptists about

(Oct. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 6; Editorial: "Baylor Escapes Unharmed From Baptist Battlefield," *The Baylor Lariat* (Sept. 25, 1990), Reprinted in *Baylor Needs You* (Oct. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 5; Editorial: "Baylor: Preserve University's Academic Freedom," *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram* (Nov. 9, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 28; Editorial: "Baylor Trustees Made Right Move," *Waco Tribune Herald* (Sept. 25, 1990): Reprinted in *Baylor Needs You* (Oct. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 5; Editorial: "Courageous Act: Change at Baylor Thwarts Takeover Bid," *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram* (Sept. 5, 1990): Reprinted in *Baylor Needs You* (Oct. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 5-6; Editorial: "Dallas Morning News: Baylor Basher," *Waco Tribune Herald* (Oct. 1, 1991), Reprinted in *Baylor-BGCT Update* (October/November 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 3; Editorial: "Dallas Morning News: Baptist Politics: School Should Be Shielded from Theological Tiff," *Baylor-BGCT Update* (June 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 4; Editorial: "Baylor Vote: University Must Not Be Taken Over By Extremists," *Houston Chronicle* (Nov. 10, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Editorial: "Houston Chronicle: Baylor's Future," *Baylor-BGCT Update* (June 1991) The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 4; Editorial: "Please No Quick Call for the Question in Waco," *Baptist Standard* (Nov. 6, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 6; Editorial: "Some People Don't Want Baylor to be a Real University," *Waco Tribune-Herald* (June 14, 1990): Reprinted in *Baylor Needs You!* (Sept. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 4; Editorial: "Understanding Takeover Tactics," *Baylor Needs You!* (Oct. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 8.

⁴¹Billy Ray Parmer, "Protecting Baylor...", *Waco Tribune-Herald* (Monday, Nov. 11, 1991): Guest Column; Helen Parmley, "Baptist OK Compromise on Baylor: Moderate Elected State President," *The Dallas Morning News* (Tues. Nov. 12, 1991); Editorial: "Another Look at the Relationship Proposal," *Baptist Standard* (Oct. 30, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 6; Editorial: "Battle for Baylor: Factional Fight Over Control Could Damage School," *Houston Post* (Sept. 25, 1990) Reprinted in *Baylor Needs You* (Oct. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 6.; Editorial: "Baylor Escapes Unharmed From Baptist Battlefield," *The Baylor Lariat* (Sept. 25, 1990), Reprinted in *Baylor Needs You* (Oct. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 5.; Editorial: "Baylor: Preserve University's Academic Freedom," *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram* (Nov. 9, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 28; Editorial: "Baylor Trustees Made Right Move," *Waco Tribune Herald* (Sept. 25, 1990): Reprinted in *Baylor Needs You* (Oct. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 5.

what happened.⁴²

Reaction by Prominent Texas Baptist Leaders

Texas has always had a flair for the dramatic. The same holds true in regards to the reaction of charter change by several prominent Texas Baptist leaders.⁴³ Robert Naylor, former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, expressed his concern over the way the charter change was carried out in secret. He served on the committee that would try to negotiate some sort of compromise between Baylor and the BGCT.⁴⁴ Joel Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, argued, “a group of robber barons who are not happy with the way that Baptist, who are paying the bills all these years, were managing the university.”⁴⁵ Gregory and others insisted that Reynolds not only broke the law, but also violated the trust of Texas Baptists. They vowed to fight the

⁴²Tessie Borden, “Baylor Move Nets Protest on Both Sides,” *Waco Tribune-Herald* (Sept. 27, 1990); Tessie Borden, “BU Students, President Want Improved Academics for School,” *Waco Tribune-Herald* (Nov. 11, 1990); Tessie Borden, “Students Look at Revisions in Confusion,” *Waco Tribune Herald* (Nov. 11, 1990).

⁴³Alan Nelson and Tessie Borden, “Leaders React With Surprise After Action,” *Waco Tribune-Herald* (Sept. 22, 1990); “Baptists’ Big Question: Will We Splinter Now?” *LA Times* (May 11, 1991): Editorial.

⁴⁴Robert A. Naylor, “Oral Memoirs of Robert A. Naylor,” (Baylor Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, Texas), 528-33., 548-551. Naylor argued that he was against the way the charter change took place, but not against the reasons behind the action. He was also on the committee chosen by the BGCT to look at the possibility of reconciliation with the school. Naylor, like others in Texas, thought Baylor could be saved when it came up for a vote at the BGCT convention meeting in Houston. Naylor did not see the prospect of either the BGCT or Baylor ever being taken over by Conservatives, see his comments on 542.

⁴⁵Morgan, *The New Crusades, The New Holy Land*, 148. See also Joel C. Gregory, “Texas Baptists and Baylor,” *Southern Baptist Watchman* 1 no. 1 (November 1991): (The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas), 14-17.

issue in court.⁴⁶ Reynolds defended his actions and insisted that he had the right to save Baylor from the Fundamentalists.⁴⁷ This brought about a new press war between Gregory, then pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, and the Baylor President.⁴⁸

Several prominent men who were on the committee to look at Baylor's relationship with the BGCT moved to immediately de-fund Baylor and to hold over one million dollars of the 1990 budget for Baylor and the nearly six million dollars appropriated to Baylor in the 1991 budget in escrow until a reasonable negotiation could be reached between the convention and the school.⁴⁹

The BGCT appointed a new twenty-five member committee to review the relationship between the BGCT and Baylor. Robert Naylor, the Committee Chairman, criticized Baylor for unilaterally amending its charter and creating chaos in the state. The former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary pointed out that both Texas Baptist and the BGCT had given Baylor \$78 million in support in the past 40

⁴⁶Cecile Holmes White and Steven R. Reed, "Pastor Blast Baylor Trustees: Gregory Succeeds Criswell as Dallas' First Baptist Church," *Houston Chronicle* (Nov. 27, 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Jim Jones, "Legal Action Against Baylor Urged: Gregory, Criswell Share Views on Control of School," *Fort Worth Star Telegram* (Nov. 27, 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

⁴⁷Tessie Borden, "Reynolds: BU Followed Texas Law," *Waco Tribune-Herald* (Sun. Oct. 14, 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.1, 2.; Douglas Wong, "Baylor Ready for Legal Battle," *Waco Tribune Herald* (Nov. 12, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Douglas Wong, "Reynolds Began Research that Led to Baylor Switch," *Waco Tribune-Herald* (Sept. 29, 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

⁴⁸Toby Druin, "Gregory, Reynolds Turn Up Heat on Baylor Issue: Pastor Asks Plan Rejection: President Says Pastor on 'Ego' Trip," *Baptist Standard* (Oct. 9, 1991): 3-4, 10.

⁴⁹Morgan, *The New Crusades, The New Holy Land*, 149.

years. Reynolds smugly responded that Baylor appreciated the support but that he and Baylor were unconcerned with losing a little bit of support from the BGCT.⁵⁰

Negotiations between Baylor in the BGCT special commission ended on July 24, 1991. The two groups announced a compromise that would recognize Baylor's independence, eliminate the schools "two-tiered system of governance" in favor of the twenty-four regents, confirmed that the BGCT would elect one fourth of the school's regents, and amended the Baylor bylaws assuring that the school would remain "Baptist oriented."⁵¹ The compromise was short lived. Both opposing groups drew lines in the sand and awaited the day at the state convention when the issue of Baylor would finally be settled by Texas Baptists.⁵²

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Toby Druin, editor for the *Baptist Standard*, covered the Baylor issue with great detail. For an exhaustive list of his writings on Baylor, consult the bibliography. A few of his works which are relevant to the discussion on the compromise are as follows: Toby Druin, "BGCT/Baylor Committee OK's Officers' Plan: Makes Recommendation to Boards on Release of Funds," *Baptist Standard* (Aug. 21, 1991): 3-4; Toby Druin, "BGCT, Baylor Leaders Sign Proposed Agreement," *Baptist Standard* (July 31, 1991): 3-4; Toby Druin, "BGCT/Baylor Relationship Proposal Approved: Move 110-36 To Settle Issue in 'Church House, not Courthouse'," *Baptist Standard*, (Sept. 15, 1991); Toby Druin, "BGCT/Baylor Relationship Proposal Approved," *The Baptist Standard* (Sept 18, 1991) 3-5; Toby Druin, "BGCT/Baylor Proposal Tops Executive Board Agenda," *Baptist Standard* (June 2, 1991): 5; Toby Druin, "Baptists Committed Vow 'Long Haul' Effort," *Baptist Standard* (Apr. 19, 1989): 4; Toby Druin, "Baylor Board to Discuss Relationship Proposal," *Baptist Standard* (May 1, 1991): 1, 3, 8; Toby Druin, "Board Approves Committee Recommendation: Reynolds Says It's Unacceptable, Baylor Will Pursue Own Plan," *Baptist Standard* (June 19, 1991): 3-5; Toby Druin, "Board Denies Release of BU Scholarship Funds," *Baptist Standard* (Dec. 12, 1990): 3; Toby Druin, "Board OK's Steps for BGCT/ Institution Study," *Baptist Standard* (June 19, 1991): 3; Toby Druin, "Committee Named to Study Baylor Issue," *Baptist Standard* (Oct. 24, 1990): 3.

⁵²Editorial: "Waco BGCT: Direction Set For Texas Convention," *Baptist Standard* (Nov. 20, 1991): 6.

The State Convention Meeting Concerning Baylor

The BGCT meeting in November focused solely on Baylor. Reynolds defended his position and explained that he was tired of being questioned and second-guessed by “fundamentalist extremist.” He vowed to keep the university independent. He argued that his motive was not to remove Baylor from Texas Baptists, but to protect the school and keep it safe from the radical fundamentalists and the “extremist movement.”⁵³

Unfortunately for Reynolds, many Texas Baptist were unsympathetic with his view and disagreed on the clandestine method of both him and the Board of Trustees. The state convention voted earlier to withhold the money from Baylor until the state convention could decide what to do.⁵⁴

The time period between the charter change and the state convention meeting in Waco to discuss Baylor’s future was riddled with press releases, editorials, and articles. Outraged Conservatives fired off numerous editorials condemning President Reynolds, the trustees, and any other prominent Liberal they could think of.⁵⁵ Liberals praised the

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Toby Druin, “Panel Begins Search For Baylor/BGCT Remedy: Approves Escrow, Subcommittee to Discuss Future Relationship,” *Baptist Standard* (Nov. 7, 1990): 3, 4.

⁵⁵William M. Pinson Jr., “Questions About Baylor’s Decision,” *Baptist Standard* (Oct. 17, 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 7; Helen Parmley, “Baylor Accord was Key Defeat for Dallas Pastor: Fundamentalist Sees Silver Lining,” *The Dallas Morning News* (Monday, Nov. 18, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Douglas Wong, “Reynolds Began Research that Led to Baylor Switch,” *Waco Tribune-Herald* (Sept. 29, 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

President and the board of trustees for their heroic and courageous actions.⁵⁶ The Baylor Alumni Association printed numerous pamphlets and newsletters warning Texas Baptist that the battle for Baylor was not over, and that the Conservative Fundamentalists were still going to try to steal Baylor back at the convention meeting in Waco.⁵⁷ Several prominent Liberals, such as Cecil E. Sherman, the pastor of Broadway Church in Fort Worth, wrote an editorial in the October/November edition of the *Baylor-BGCT Update* where he argued in support of Baylor's action and told Liberals that the "Fundamentalist" were going to try to return the school under denominational control.⁵⁸

Conservatives saw this as their opportunity to reclaim the school. They knew tensions would be running high and they made the first move in the chess game. Several Conservative groups bought up more than 2,000 rooms in Waco and the outlying cities. Conservatives wanted to make sure that their side would be the majority.⁵⁹ In response,

⁵⁶Michelle Mittelstadt, "Baylor Caught Between Baptists at Loggerheads: Feeling as Fervent as Intellect as Both Sides Feud Over Faith," *Waco Tribune Herald* (May 9, 1991): The Texas Collection: Baylor University, Waco, Texas; "Texas Baptist For Baylor," *Baptist Standard* (Oct. 30, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 15.; "What if Fundamentalists Gain Control of Baylor?" *Baylor Needs You!* (Sept.1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 6.

⁵⁷Herbert H. Reynolds, "Baylor University Must Not Be Next to Lose Right to Freedom," *Waco Tribune-Herald* (Oct. 18, 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.; "Presslerite-Fundamentalists Plan Texas Takeover: Baylor University is Primary Target," *Baylor Needs You!* (Sept. 1990): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 2.

⁵⁸Cecil E. Sherman, "What's at Stake in the Baylor/BGCT Agreement?" *Baylor-BGCT Update* (Oct./Nov. 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 1.

⁵⁹"Rooms Are Available For BGCT Despite Efforts of Fundamentalist to Block Attendance of Moderates," *Baylor-BGCT Update* (October/November 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: 6.

the Waco Baptist Association, and her cooperating churches, opened up more than 700 homes for Liberals to stay in. When Phil Lineberger, the BGCT President, heard of the action of Conservatives, he publicly apologized. He even gave up his own hotel room and stayed in a home in Waco.⁶⁰

Baylor's New Relationship with the BGCT

11,159 messengers packed the Ferrell Center in Waco to vote on Baylor's future on November 11, 1991. It was the largest meeting of Texas Baptist in the history of the BGCT.⁶¹ Tensions were high as the fate of Baylor lay in the hands of the messengers.⁶² The entire meeting rested on one single question. Would the messengers ratify a relationship agreement between Baylor University and the BGCT? After the messengers cast their ballots, 5,754 messengers approved the agreement reached between Baylor and the BGCT. 3,992 voted against the proposal.⁶³ Conservatives left Waco both discouraged and defeated. Reynolds and the Liberals left the meeting elated. Reynolds thanked the Liberals who drove up from all around the state of Texas and the members of the Baylor Alumni Association who also turned out in force to help push the Baylor proposal over the top. He told a group of reporters that Baylor and the BGCT were now

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Editorial: "Waco BGCT: Direction set for Texas Convention," *Baptist Standard* (Nov. 20, 1991): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 6.

⁶²Paula Price Tanner, "Texas Baptist Accept New Relationship With Baylor: Historic Vote in Ferrell Center Ratifies Agreement Reached Between Baylor and BGCT Leaders," *The Baylor Line* (Jan./Feb. 1992): The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 6.

⁶³Ibid.

a mutual agreement and he was excited about the possibility of their future partnership together.⁶⁴

Creation of George W. Truett Theological Seminary

On the same day that President Reynolds changed the charter of Baylor University, he filed a motion with the Secretary of State to reserve the name of Baylor's new seminary. The seminary was to be called the George W. Truett Theological Seminary.⁶⁵ Reynolds and other Liberals decided that since the Conservatives stole the Cooperative Program seminaries from them, institutions such as Baylor should create new schools in which moderate or liberal Southern Baptists could come and receive an education and that was tailored more to their theological understanding.⁶⁶

Truett seminary became another safe-haven for Liberals who either left or were fired from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Truett's faculty argued that it was fashioned after the "Old Southwestern" and that it seeks to offer students an arena for "open" thought and "freedom" of both expression and ideas.⁶⁷ Truett offers the following degrees: Masters of Divinity, Masters of Social Work, Master of Theological Studies, and

⁶⁴Ibid., 9.

⁶⁵Toby Druin, "Reynolds Bans Dancing; 'Truett' Name Reserved: President Says Action Preserves Option if SBC Seminaries Falter," *Baptist Press* (Aug. 1, 1990): 5.

⁶⁶"Articles of Incorporation of the George W. Truett Theological Seminary," The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas: (March 25, 1991).

⁶⁷Alan Lafever, interview with author (July 16, 2009), typewritten notes. Lafever noted that there are several faculty members at one to turn the new seminary in to a more conservative direction, much like the new Southwestern Seminary. He argued that the faculty was split on the issue and finally put it to a vote. The faculty voted by a three to two margin to remain an independent school that emphasized freedom of thought and expression for both students and faculty members alike.

a Doctor of Ministry. The seminary also offers the following joint degrees: Master of Divinity/ Master of Social Work, Master of Divinity and Master of Music, and Master of Theological Studies/Master of Social Work.⁶⁸

Conclusion

The drama which unfolded around Baylor University denoted a change between the state conventions and many of the institutions which Baptists supported. Many Conservatives in the states, wearied from the nearly fifteen years of theological conflict, chose to break from the Southern Baptist liberal arts colleges in their states and granted the schools their independence. Generations of Southern Baptists built the schools from the ground up and Southern Baptists in the states have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars which have sustained many of these institutions for a century and a half. Baylor, under the guise of secrecy and fear, began this trend that separated the Southern Baptists in the states from their schools. As a result, the Cooperative program seminaries began institutions at the undergraduate level so that Southern Baptists have a place for they can come and learn that is a historic Baptist, Conservative environment.

Many of these colleges, upon being released by the state conventions, began either seminaries or schools of divinity, where deposed Liberal faculty members and casualties of the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention can now go and teach their Liberal agenda and spew their anti-Southern Baptist hate and rhetoric.

Baylor University, once dubbed the crown jewel of Texas Baptist life, brought

⁶⁸George W. Truett Theological Seminary Catalog, 47-58. Diana Garland, the former head of the Carver School of Social Work at Southern Seminary, is currently serving as professor and dean of the school of Social Work at Truett Seminary.

politics in the SBC to a new level. Herbert Reynolds, along with a Liberal group of trustees, took drastic and desperate measures to ensure that Baylor University would never be taken over by “Fundamentalists.” Reynold’s fear was based on the false assumption that Conservatives might actually have a chance of gaining control of the BGCT and would then make Baylor their next target.

Reynolds was also instrumental in creating the George W. Truett Theological Seminary located at Baylor University. Baylor began the seminary and fashioned it after old Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.⁶⁹ This school, along with others at schools such as Mercer and Wake Forest, provided a safe haven for Liberal Baptist professors and an option for Southern Baptist students who are liberal, who felt that they could not survive the educational at one of the Cooperative program seminaries.

The story of Baylor University and the drastic measures Reynolds and other Liberals took to ensure the school would not fall into the hands of the “Fundamentalists,” represented some of the finest political wrangling and sleight-of-hand ever seen by a group of so-called Christians in the twentieth century. The new, independent Baylor University, provides a classic example of Liberal “toleration” and continues to be a significant force in Texas Baptist life today.

⁶⁹Alan Lafever, Interview with Author (Apr. 3, 2009), Typewritten notes.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In the twentieth century there were two significant controversies that seriously altered the direction of two of the largest denominations in the United States. The Presbyterian church, traditionally known for her conservative, reformed theology, was crippled by political wrangling and maneuvering. The denomination that generated most of the conservative, reformed doctrine throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was lost forever. Liberals infiltrated the denomination and slowly worked their way into positions of power and prominence. By the time the Conservatives had realized what the Moderates had done, they had been reduced to a small minority.

The Presbyterians, who based everything upon their Reformed doctrine, made the mistake of believing that doctrine would stand even in the face of the Moderate political takeover of the Presbyterian church. Presbyterians have a proud history and reputation of being not only great reformed theologians, but as also producing some of the finest biblical and theological scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They mistakenly assumed that the Presbyterian church would always be a Conservative, reformed group that held to the traditional beliefs about the Bible. The Westminster Confession of Faith, the creed that had guided them for over two hundred and fifty years, would always be the model that Presbyterians would judge their theology by.

The Moderates in the Presbyterian church had already made their move to capture

The Moderates in the Presbyterian church had already made their move to capture the denomination long before Harry Emerson Fosdick preached his now infamous sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalist Win?" Through political wrangling and concessions, Moderates maneuvered themselves past Conservative Fundamentalists in the church and found their way into positions of power. By the time the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy had gone full scale, Moderates outnumbered Fundamentalist.

The Auburn Affirmation, a document that was meant to show how "inclusive" the Presbyterians could be, did enormous damage to the Conservatives toward the end of their conflict. Fundamentalists, such as J. Gresham Machen and Clarence Macartney, did not believe any Bible believing Presbyterian pastor would sign anything that called the miracles of the Bible "theories" and rejected the basic tenants of Presbyterian faith. They were shocked to find out how many pastors agreed with the statement. By the time they realized the gravity of the movement, the fundamentalist movement and conservatives found themselves in a fight for its very existence.

Princeton Theological Seminary, the iconic symbol of Old School Presbyterianism in America, came under fire during the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. The Conservatives, strict Calvinists who believed that sound doctrine would always carry the day, allowed the Moderates in the Presbyterian Church to come into Princeton without analyzing and scrutinizing their theology. Liberals began to slowly erode away the trappings of historic Presbyterianism and set their sights on the one prize that always seemed to elude them. Conservative stalwarts such as Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, Geerhardus Vos, and Robert Dick Wilson had always stood for the truth of the Word of God. Most of these men were not only the greatest Reformed theologians in America, but

where also the most able defenders of historic Presbyterianism ever assembled at a single school. Moderates were terrified to challenged these men on doctrinal issues, so they subverted them by politically outmaneuvering them. When the Moderates gained control of the Presbyterian church in 1926, the Conservatives, with J. Gresham Machen as their leader, saw little hope of for the Presbyterian church or Princeton Theological Seminary. When the General Assembly voted to reorganize Princeton in 1929, the Moderates had finally succeeded in capturing the last Conservative stronghold in the Presbyterian Church.

In response to losing Princeton, J. Gresham Machen and a few Conservatives left and formed Westminster Theological Seminary. This school was built on the foundation of Old Princeton Seminary and Conservative Presbyterian beliefs. Machen and the small group that fled Princeton still held out hope that Presbyterians could still be true to her historic roots.

The Conservative Presbyterian's inattention to politics cost them their most cherished treasure in American education. The Baptist, some fifty years later, began waging the same war as their neighbor to the north had. Baptist polity created some significant challenges that had not plagued the Presbyterian church. Southern Baptist leaders learned from the mistakes made by their brethren in the north. Several prominent Southern Baptist leaders grew concerned about theological liberalism that was portrayed in the Cooperative Program Seminaries. Two Southern Baptists, Paige Patterson and Paul Pressler, decided to launch a movement that would take the Southern Baptist back to their historic, Conservative roots.

The struggle for control of the Southern Baptist Convention centered around one

principle issue. What do Southern Baptists believe about the Bible? For centuries, historians have labeled Baptists, “people of the book.” Baptist theology, based on local church autonomy and the priesthood of the believer, muddled this designation because of the various opinions in Southern Baptist life.

One of the problems that plagued Southern Baptists was the Cooperative Program seminaries. Most of them had abandoned teaching truth and were focused on generating Baptists “scholars.” Southern, Southeastern, Midwestern, and New Orleans were training up a generation of Southern Baptists pastors and teaching them that the Bible was just another book and that . Even several prominent pastors, such as Chuck McAlister and John Franklin, argued that the seminaries nearly destroyed their faith.¹

In response to this disturbing trend, several concerned pastors and seminary professors launched out and started schools that would stand for historic Baptist beliefs. Conservative Southern Baptists created three independent schools that would offer an alternative to the liberalism that was found in the cooperative program seminaries. Each of these school received and endured much criticism during the early stages of the Conservative Resurgence, and they reminded Southern Baptists that they had serious theological problems that they could not ignore.

In 1979, two prominent Southern Baptists, Paige Patterson and Paul Pressler, who were both concerned with the direction of the seminaries and the future direction of the convention, set out to return Baptists to their historic, Conservative roots. Southern Baptist Liberals became aware of the duos plan and attempted to mount a resistance

¹Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation* (Nashville: Broadman, 2000), 340-1.

movement. Between 1979 and 1991, the Southern Baptists annual convention meeting became the battleground on which the battle for the direction of the Southern Baptists Convention was waged.

Conservatives ultimately won the war because of several key factors. Most of the Conservative candidates were popular Conservative pastors. Men such as Adrian Rogers, Charles Stanley, Jimmy Draper, and Jerry Vines were well known and well loved by the Southern Baptist in the pews. The dominant personalities of these men and the leadership they displayed in their churches helped the Conservative's cause. The Liberals did not run a candidate that had as much star power or had as much of a following as these men. Many of the Liberals were seminary professors who remained cloistered in their classrooms where they could comfortably teach their Liberal views.

Conservatives were also better organized. They were able to get out their message and get their messengers to the convention. Liberals underestimated the power of the Conservatives to get out both the message and their messengers. The Southern Baptists laity held the belief that Bible they read and heard preached from their pulpits on Sunday was accurate. When Liberals tried to argue that this wasn't always the case, the laity responded in a knee-jerk reaction. They believed the Bible was true and that it was the Word of God. The Liberal's arguments of soul competency did not stand up to an emotion charged laity.

After twelve years of successive losses, the defeated Liberals finally broke from the Southern Baptist Convention and formed their own group, called the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Walter Shurden, one of the Liberal leaders, said that Conservatives won because they convinced more messengers to attend the convention meetings. He

admitted that the Liberals were less organized and did not get out their message effectively. Shurden also argued that Liberals (or Moderates, as he preferred to be called), were disadvantaged because of their nature. He proclaimed:

Moderates did not have enough moral energy to win. We could not bring ourselves to use moral language to describe our cause. Truth was butchered. We said nothing. Good people were defamed. We were silent. Baptist principles were mangled and Baptist history replaced, rewritten. All the while, teachers who could have written about the problems in calling the Bible inerrant, did not. And preachers who could have called us to arms said nothing. The want of moral energy was the undoing of the Moderate movement.²

The Liberals got their wish. They formed their own “fellowship” of like minded Liberals so they can minister and serve together. Unfortunately, the “fellowship” turned into a new platform for defeated Liberals to keep hurling arrows of hate at Conservatives.

Chapter five examined how the Controversy affected one of the cooperative program seminaries. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was the oldest and most prestigious school in the convention. Before the Controversy, it also had the reputation of being the most liberal. It had the greatest collection of scholars at any of the Southern Baptist seminaries. Around the turn of the century, E. Y. Mullins altered Boyce’s plan for the seminary and started the school down a path of fame, and infamy. As professors at Southern chose to worship the academic degree instead of Christ, they turned the school into a cess pool of theological liberalism and neo-orthodoxy.

Conservatives saw little hope of ever reforming Southern. Her entrenched faculty, along with Duke McCall and Roy Honeycutt, did not believe the Conservatives would have a chance of success. The road was long and it took many years before

²Walter B. Shurden, *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1993), 288.

Conservatives could finally remove some of the most esteemed and notorious scholars from Southern. Under the leadership of Albert Mohler, Southern now stands as a testament not only to her colorful past, but also to a bright future.

Chapter six observed how the controversy affected the state conventions. The state of Texas, the largest in the convention, was filled with conflict and strife throughout much of her history. A colorful cast of pastors, lawyers, missionaries and villains have passed through the lone star state. The Controversy in Texas brought about a new state convention, and a new set of challenges and conflicts. The Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) was on the Liberal side of the Controversy. Conservatives were woefully outnumbered at the state level.

In 1998, a new Conservative group took a bold step and forged a new state convention, called the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC). The new SBTC took on the Conservative mantle and provided an option for frustrated churches who did not want their money going to fund Liberal groups and causes. The BGCT has attacked and criticized the SBTC at every turn. The new convention, under the direction of Texas native Jim Richards, has experienced significant growth not only in the number of cooperating churches, but in the number of missions opportunities and giving as well. Texas is a good example of the fighting at a state level. Not all of the state conventions had the problems that Texas had, and not all of them had the same response from Conservatives that Texas had.³

³For the most part, the battle for the state conventions because most of the defeated Liberals in the convention fled to the states for jobs. See chapter six of this study for information on the states.

Chapter seven of this study observed how the Controversy affected the Southern Baptist liberal arts universities. During the 1990's, many of the prominent universities began seeking independence from their state conventions. The most radical example of this was seen at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. The most famous Southern Baptist university and the "crown jewel of Texas Baptist life" had become one of the most liberal universities in the convention. Conservatives constantly targeted Baylor for her liberal beliefs.

Herbert Reynolds, Baylor's president, feared that the Conservatives might actually take over the BGCT. He had heard that if that happened, their next move was to reform Baylor just as they had the seminaries. To thwart this, Reynold and the trustees changed Baylor's charter in secret and removed the school from under the control of the BGCT. The move sent shockwaves throughout the convention leaders and the state. The BGCT moved to de-fund Baylor and waited for the state convention meeting do discuss the school's future.

At that meeting, the Liberals voted to keep the school independent by a narrow margin. Baylor started the George W. Truett Theological Seminary as an alternative for students who felt they could not survive at the new Southern Baptists seminaries. This started a new trend in Southern Baptist life. In response, several other former Southern Baptist universities started seminaries or graduate schools of religion.

The Southern Baptist learned from the Presbyterians failure to play denominational politics. History has showed that the Presbyterian church was never the same after the Liberals gained control of the denomination. Princeton Theological Seminary, once hailed the citadel of conservative orthodoxy in America, became the

center of theological existentialism by the end of the 1930's.⁴ As a result, J. Gresham Machen and a few Conservatives from Princeton started Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia as a conservative (ie. orthodox) alternative to Princeton.

The Southern Baptist had much better success in their Controversy. They, along with the Conservative Lutherans, are the only denomination to flirt with theological liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, who then returned to her historic roots. Their success, however significant, was only limited to the overall convention and the cooperative program seminaries. Liberals still held many of the state conventions. Many of the liberal arts universities that Baptist both founded and funded for decades, broke from their state boards and now function as independent entities that can teach as they wish without denominational interference. Many state conventions became safe havens for ousted Liberals who wanted to remain relevant in denominational life.

The story of the two controversies displays a change in character. One group believed that doctrine would stand against any and every assault. They ignored politics to their peril. The other group played politics and won back control of the seminaries and the overall convention. They did this at the cost of ruined friendships and shattered relationships. Throughout both controversies, the grace of God was apparent. It was nothing short of a miracle that the SBC returned to her historic moorings.

As a result of the two Controversies, both Conservative and Liberal Presbyterians and Baptist alike now have a wide selection of theological educational institutions to choose from. Both sides of both denominations now possess schools that teach from their

⁴Clifton E. Olmstead, *A History of Religion in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1960), 574.

perspective. While this can be viewed as a victory, it also shows the diversity that remains not only denominational beliefs, but in theological education as well.

The overall theme of both of these controversies dealt with how each group perceived Scripture. Presbyterians left the Bible in favor of academic credentials and liberal theology. Their influence, which once dominated American theological life is now reduced to a remnant of her former glory. The Baptists, on the other hand, risked everything, including the entire convention, to reclaim the Bible and placed it back where generations of Baptists before once had it. Because of this, the denomination shrank, but the remnant returned to the historic Baptist belief in the Bible as the Word of God. The new Southern Baptist Convention, her pastors, and her seminaries share a kinship with the Baptists not only from America's founding, but from their beginnings during the Reformation, in their belief in the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God.

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