

*YOUR WAY AND MINE: THE RESPONSE TO THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT
IN THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION IN THE 1980s.*

A Paper

Submitted to Dr. Lloyd Harsch and Dr. Steve Lemke
of the
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Course
HIST9409: Baptist Studies
in the Division of Theological and Historical Studies

Brian Dedmon

BA, University of Southern Mississippi, 2004
MACE, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008
MDiv, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019

April 28, 2021

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Women in the Bible.....	1
Chapter 2: Setting the Stage for Controversy	6
Chapter 3: The Schism in the Southern Baptist Convention	9
Chapter 4: The Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood	13
Chapter 5: First Baptist Church of Huntsville, AL and Waco, TX	16
Chapter 6: Conclusions	20
Appendix A	21
Appendix B	23
Bibliography	26

Chapter 1: Women in the Bible

Introduction

The culture surrounding the church in the year 2021 is in a determined quest for egalitarianism. The role of women in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is a contested subject that has and does cause disagreement among Southern Baptists and other Baptist sects. However, at no other time in Baptist history has the subject of women in ministry been more at the forefront than in the 1980s. At that time, fundamental, conservative, moderate, and progressive Baptists found themselves on different sides of the argument, instigating a gamut of responses ranging from the broad to the particular. In this paper, the author will consider the biblical position regarding women in church leadership. Second, this work will survey the cultural context within which the stated controversy took place. Finally, this paper will explore the responses on both the large and small scale within the SBC, examining the reaction of the convention itself and two influential churches in Alabama and Texas. The hypothesis of this paper postulates that the egalitarian movement of the 1980s led to a departure from the SBC on the macro and micro levels of ministry.

Female Leadership in the Bible

Women in the Bible served influential and essential roles. Consider the mother of Christ, Mary, within whom Christ was conceived. To dismiss the importance of women in the Bible would be to dismiss the importance of Jesus's mother. Women are indeed vital to the biblical text. Many women are described in the Bible as courageous leaders, others are generous caretakers, and others ambitious influencers.¹ A careful and considerate inspection of the biblical text would likely conclude that women are treated as anything but inferior to men.

In the Old Testament, women such as Deborah served as leaders for the Israelites, God's chosen people. Recorded in Judges 4:1-23, Deborah was a prophetess who led Israel to victory over their present captors. In Exodus 15:20, Aaron's sister, Miriam, inspired the people to worship in response to their victory over the armies of Egypt. And in Isaiah 8:3, the prophet Isaiah described his wife as a prophetess — one who receives revelation from God. The Old Testament law allowed women to “make sacrifices, attend feasts, and make vows (Deut. 12:11-19; Lev. 27).”² While skeptics and critics often criticize the Bible and the Old Testament particularly for a negative portrayal of the female sex, there are as many, if not more, positive examples of women contained within the text.

In the New Testament, Helen Beard observed that women were “the last at the foot of the cross of Christ and the first to visit the empty tomb.”³ In Luke 2:37-38, a woman named Anna

¹ Helen Beard, *Women in Ministry Today*, (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980), 63.

² *Ibid*, 32-33.

³ *Ibid*, 37.

was the first to share the message of Jesus with a Jewish audience. In Acts 21:9, it is written that the four daughters of Philip prophesied. And in Romans 16:1-2, a woman named Phoebe is recorded as a deaconess and overseer of the church.⁴ In other New Testament books, Apphia, Nymphia, Priscilla, Lydia, and Chloe are all listed as leaders of house churches.⁵ While none of these women are described as “pastors,” they are each most certainly in a position of leadership.⁶ These positions, however, have been contested by scholars such as Susan T. Foh who argued that the positions these women held were merely assistants to men, not positions of sole leadership.⁷ No matter which interpretation is embraced, it is indubitable that these women served in the church. Despite these examples of female leadership in the biblical text, the interpretation of certain New Testament texts serves as the core of the argument regarding women in ministry.

Problematic Passages

Robert K. Johnston wrote that Scripture must be interpreted in light of its original context and beside the remainder of Scripture.⁸ Basic hermeneutical principles state that a text will not have present meaning that it did not have for its original audience. However, even with these practices in place, Paul’s writing in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 are puzzling. Both of these passages are often interpreted by fundamentalists to mean that women should not speak in church. Were this the case, Paul would be contradicting what he wrote in 1 Cor. 11:5-13 which states that women should pray and prophesy. In the context of the city of Corinth in that period, it is more likely that Paul was urging women not to shame their husbands by questioning them in public.⁹ In the Greek culture, women were discouraged from speaking in public, so the better option would have been for them to remain silent.¹⁰ Concerning the 1 Timothy passage,

⁴ Travis Collins, “My Neighbor’s Pastor is a Woman! What Do I Do?!?!?”, accessed March 24, 2021, https://f37f13bb-eabc-4e97-b1e4-c7825765cad4.filesusr.com/ugd/94e546_3b7301ee5c824e49b291d14c7a11eb7e.pdf?index=true.

⁵ Apphia, Philemon 2; Nympha, Colossians 4:15; Priscilla, 1 Corinthians 16:19; Lydia, Acts 16:14-15; and Chloe, 1 Corinthians 1:11.

⁶ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 263-279.

⁷ Susan T. Foh, “A Male Leadership View: The Head of the Woman is the Man,” *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, eds. Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 79.

⁸ Robert K. Johnston, “Biblical Authority & Interpretation,” from *Women, Authority, & The Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelson, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 30-33.

⁹ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 193.

¹⁰ Richard L. Pratt Jr, *I & II Corinthians*, vol. 7, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 250.

Richard L. Pratt suggested that Paul meant for women to “learn in quietness,” not to refrain from speaking altogether.¹¹

1 Timothy 2:11-15 is sometimes referenced to restrict women from teaching men. In context, Paul may have been writing to Timothy regarding false teaching of which women of the church were at the center.¹² Linda Belleville observed that the restriction of participation of women in verses 11 through 15 would be in stark contrast to the all-inclusive language used in verses 1 through 7, in which the words “all” and “everyone” are used six times.¹³ Or, perhaps Paul was writing to battle the quickly spreading teachings of Gnosticism that purported an order of creation that was contradictory to Scripture. The inclusion of Adam and Even in this passage may also suggest a correction regarding the supportive roles men and women were created by God to fulfill. Rather than an interpretation of restriction, this passage could be understood to suggest a complementary view of men’s and women’s roles.

As it is today, both of these passages frequented the argument surrounding women’s ministry in the 1980s. As described, the interpretation of these passages led to disagreement on all sides of the discussion. Additionally, on the conservative side, Ephesians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3 are often used to suggest that only men should hold positions of church leadership. Contrarily, Max Anders wrote that these verses support complementary roles of the sexes.¹⁴ On the moderate or progressive side, Galatians 3:28 is often cited to suggest equal roles for men and women in the church. Evelyn and Frank Stagg wrote that the exclusion of women can not be reconciled with this passage.¹⁵ Although Gal. 3:28 certainly smacks of gender equality, H. Wayne House argued that this passage is about each person’s *position* before God rather than their *function*. House suggested that equal *position* before God does not necessarily result in the equal qualification for *function* in the church.¹⁶ Each of the aforementioned passages holds strong arguments for the various interpretations.

The argument concerning these passages and others is at the center of the controversy surrounding women in ministry in the 1980s and today. In 1985, J. I. Packer wrote an article in

¹¹ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 170.

¹² Linda L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 166-168.

¹³ Linda Belleville, “Commentary on 1 Timothy,” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews*, Vol. 17, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009), 43.

¹⁴ “[In] the overall scheme of things, God has placed all of us in differing positions of authority and submission. The man may be in authority at home but submissive at work. The woman may be in submission at home and in authority at work. The point is, all social order depends on people’s willingness to work together and ability to determine who is the head of certain endeavors.” Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 173.

¹⁵ Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Woman in the World of Jesus*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1978), 178.

¹⁶ H. Wayne House, *The Role of Women in Ministry Today*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1990), 105.

which he asserted that the conclusion to this quarrel will only be resolved if the biblical function of men and women is unequivocally determined.¹⁷ Evelyn and Frank Stagg argued that coming to such a conclusion based on Paul's writing alone is impossible because his writing consists of both affirming and subordinating passages concerning women.¹⁸ Old Testament texts that condemn women in ministry and support the positions taken by those who interpret New Testament passages as restrictive are difficult to find. The Old Testament views men and women as being created equal but also features both genders serving in varying roles. This complementary view sought to affirm a supportive relationship between the sexes, however, it did not quell the feud.

Problematic Terminology

Over the past five decades, the argument over "women in ministry" has been haunted by a misunderstanding of what is meant by that phrase. For some, the issue is that women are not given equal opportunity to serve in the church or that men are somehow favored over women for roles of leadership. Conversely, when observing the weekly ministry of any given Baptist church, one would find that women are the ones who serve in the broadest scope of roles. Without women, many ministries in the Southern Baptist Convention would be non-existent. This was true in the 1980s and it is still true today.

A pivotal misunderstanding spawns from the frequent use of the phrase "women in ministry" as a euphemism for women serving as pastors. Lloyd Harsch wrote that "restricting the term only to the senior pastor of a congregation clouds the issue and adds confusion to the discussion."¹⁹ In the 1980s and today, this miscommunication causes certain opinions and loyalties to be assumed by persons on either side of the argument. Applying intentional meaning to the phrase "women in ministry" serves to prevent further turbulence surrounding an already tumultuous topic.

In a response to John Piper and Wayne Grudem's 1991 book *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, Aimee Byrd wrote her book in response titled *Recovering From Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*. Byrd's work arrived some thirty years after Piper and Grudem's book and yet illustrated a misconception present in both times. Byrd illustrated the assumptions that have been heaped upon complementarians, namely that they purport that all women must subordinate themselves to all men.²⁰ Although that may be true of some radical fundamentalists, it is certainly untrue of all complementarians.

¹⁷ J. I. Packer, "In Quest of Canonical Interpretation," from *The Use of the Bible In Theology: Evangelical Options*, (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1985, pp. 33-55).

¹⁸ Stagg, 179.

¹⁹ Lloyd Harsch, "Women in Ministry in the Southern Baptist Convention: A Brief Historical Overview," *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry*, Spring 2020, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 5-6.

²⁰ Andrew David Naselli, "Does Anyone Need to Recover from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood? A Review Article of Aimee Byrd's *Recovering From Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*," accessed April 17, last edited May 4, 2020, <https://cbmw.org/2020/05/04/does-anyone-need-to-recover-from-biblical-manhood-and-womanhood-a-review-article-of-aimee-byrds-recovering-from-biblical-manhood-and-womanhood/>.

In her address to the Southern Baptist Historical Society in 1988, Jann Clanton accused the conservative Baptists of “selective literalism,” meaning that they chose to interpret “women must be silent” literally while other passages are not given the same treatment.²¹ This proved to be problematic in the matter of biblical interpretation. What passages should be taken literally and which are exempt from that treatment? The frequent inability to set parameters for when it is appropriate to treat a biblical passage as literal when it is not is viewed as a gaping hole in the conservative argument.

Among the disagreement of women’s roles in church leadership is the issue of defining the role of a pastor. In the moderate view, a pastor is viewed as a *servant* or *shepherd*. According to Walter B. Shurden, fundamentalists considered the role of the pastor to be the *ruler* of the church. Shurden also claimed that fundamentalists used the Priesthood of the Believer as a rationale to increase the power of the pastor in the church.²² Though the conservative view considers the role of pastor as more of an *overseer* than *ruler*, Shurden’s assertion is evidence of the misunderstanding between conservative and moderates on this topic.

The miscommunication of parlance fueled the conflict that was brewing in the Southern Baptist Convention at the turn of the 1980s. As the century turned, the stage was set for the conflict to reach a breaking point. The last two decades of the 20th century would impact the whole of the SBC and leave no part unscathed.

²¹ Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2002), 212.

²² Walter B. Shurden, “The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship,” from *The Baptist River: Essays on Many Tributaries of Diverse Tradition*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 252.

Chapter 2: Setting the Stage for Controversy

Women in Baptist History

Leon McBeth observed that Southern Baptists have been shaped more by women than is generally recognized.²³ The first Baptist churches established in England commonly featured women deacons or deaconesses. Both John Smyth and Thomas Helwys advocated the ordination of women into ministry.²⁴ However, it was not common to find women pastors. In the 17th century Europe, General Baptists permitted women to preach while Particular Baptists reserved ministry in the church for men only. Due to the influence of Particular Baptists on American colonizers, their approach was continued in America. In 1765, the Philadelphia Baptist Association gathered to determine if women would be allowed to vote in the church. The result of that caucus found women to be allowed to speak if they kept their speech to a minimum but also forbid women from being ordained into the pastorate.²⁵

Industrialization in America in the 19th century caused a shift from the rural to the urban. The concept of a home-maker was being challenged in the cultural psyche.²⁶ The mid-1800s saw the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention and an increase in the involvement of women in church ministry. The Women's Christian Temperance Union was founded in 1853 by Francis Willard, influenced by the women's temperance movement of the time.²⁷ By the late 1800s, women were serving as Sunday school teachers, missionaries, and ministry organizers for entities such as the Women's Ministry Union.²⁸ Compared to previous centuries of church work and life, women had taken a great leap forward in ministry. Women were not only leading in the church through service, many were now in positions of influential leadership.

The 20th century saw significant movements concerning women's roles in Christian ministry. Helen Beard wrote that more women have served in the foreign mission field than men, becoming the backbone of missionary efforts for the SBC.²⁹ Two examples of such missionaries

²³ Leon McBeth, "The Role of Women in Southern Baptist History," *Baptist History and Heritage*, Vol 12 No 1 (January 1977), 3.

²⁴ Charles W. Deweese, "Baptist Women Deacons," from the *Baptist Heritage in the 21st Century* Pamphlet Series, accessed March 30, 2021, <http://www.baptisthistory.org/21stcentury/womendeacons.html>.

²⁵ Tom Nettles, "Is the BFM 2000 View of Women in Ministry an Innovation?", accessed April 5, 2021, <https://founders.org/2020/02/20/is-the-bfm-2000-view-of-women-in-ministry-and-innovation/>; McBeth, *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 88.

²⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 47.

²⁷ E. Luther Copeland, *The Southern Baptist Convention and the Judgement of History*, (New York, NY: University Press of America, Inc., 2002), 95.

²⁸ Hoyle.

²⁹ Beard, 38-40; Blevins, 54.

are Clara Swain, the first medical missionary to a non-Christian country, and Mary Slessor, who ministered for thirty-eight years in Nigeria.³⁰ In 1925, Mary Northington was allowed to present the report for the WMU at the Southern Baptist Convention. Although the WMU had been founded thirty-seven years prior, a man had previously given the organization's report before the convention.³¹ The WMU never claimed to be a women's rights agency, however, its influence regarding women's roles in the church is immeasurable. The WMU and other women's missionary societies attracted women who desired to see similar change inside the church as affected outside of the church.³² In 1963, the Baptist Faith and Message was updated from the 1925 statement to include clearer guidance concerning church autonomy and universality but placed no restrictions concerning women's ordination. In 1964, Addie Davis became the first woman to be ordained into a pastoral role in the SBC.³³ Another woman was ordained by a Southern Baptist Church in 1971 and records prove approximately 175 ordinations by 1982.

Societal Changes

According to E. Luther Copeland, the Civil War served to weaken the patriarchy and strengthen the matriarchy in the United States. After the Civil War in 1865, Confederate soldiers returned to their homes to find their farms well managed and society still functioning.³⁴ In a way, it was proven to the men of the South that the world could go on without them. In the South before the Civil War, white men were considered the pinnacle of society while black men were subjugated, white women were treated as trophies, and black women as sexual objects. After the war, Southern men were awakened to a harsh reality in that both women and African Americans were treated as inferior to white men.³⁵ While some had their eyes opened and responded in favor of changing how they treated those different in gender or race, others did the opposite.

The Civil Rights Movement in America influenced the fight for the feminist progress campaign in the late 20th-century. According to Copeland, women who were active in the fight for civil rights were more likely to become feminists.³⁶ The women's liberation movement in the 1960s and 1970s followed by the human rights initiatives under the presidency of Jimmy Carter

³⁰ Piper, 273.

³¹ Carolyn DeArmond Blevins, "Women in Baptist History," *Review & Expositor* 83, No. 1 (Winter 1986): 53.

³² Copeland, 97.

³³ Hoyle; Davis was ordained as pastor of Watts Street Baptist Church in Durham, NC, on August 9, 1964. After being shunned by the SBC, she would continue as a pastor for American Baptists. Davis recalls receiving dozens of letters objecting to her ordination. In 2004, Davis returned to Durham to celebrate the 40th anniversary of her ordination. Davis died in December of 2005. "Addie Davis, first woman ordained as Southern Baptist pastor, dies at 88," accessed April 19, 2021, <https://baptistnews.com/article/addie-davis-first-woman-ordained-as-southern-baptist-pastor-dies-at-88/#.YH3i7i2cZTY>.

³⁴ Copeland, 93.

³⁵ Ibid, 93-94.

³⁶ Ibid, 91-94.

brought women's roles further into the forefront of the public consciousness.³⁷ As the decades of "peace and love" and hedonistic pursuits concluded, society was prepped for some significant changes.

The Explosive 80s

By the turn of the decade, women had moved from the home to the corporate world. The 1980s featured a stock market boom that resulted in Americans with more money in their pockets and more women who were earning their financial independence.³⁸ The election of President Ronald Reagan promised and delivered an economic upswing and a focus on family values.³⁹ The hedonistic practices of the 1970s were called into question as many drugs and substances were ousted as detrimental to physical health. The sexual revolution was halted by the discovery of AIDS, an immune deficiency disease contracted through sexual intercourse.⁴⁰ Entertainment and consumption became king as shopping malls popped up all over the country and video games left the arcade and infiltrated the home. Amid all this change, the influence and strength of women was steadily growing.

In the world of ministry, the changes that were taking place in society were desired by many to be present in the church. After a three-decade decrease in seminary enrollment in the SBC from 1950 to 1980, females accounted for up to one-third of enrollment.⁴¹ What is more, Leon McBeth observed that seminaries hosted more than just female students, but also female trustees and faculty. McBeth observed that women who were enrolled in seminary were not interested in being trained for traditionally feminine ministry jobs, but ministerial jobs.⁴² Despite the movements toward female empowerment in American society and Christian training institutions, resistance was still present within the membership of the SBC.

³⁷ Deweese.

³⁸ "Life in the 1980s," accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.ushistory.org/us/59d.asp>.

³⁹ "Morning in America," accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.ushistory.org/us/59a.asp>.

⁴⁰ "Life in the 1980s."

⁴¹ Hankins, 204.

⁴² Leon McBeth, "The Role of Women in Southern Baptist History," 18-23.

Chapter 3: The Schism in the Southern Baptist Convention

The Great Divide

In the Southern Baptist Convention, tensions began to run high among those who vehemently opposed women's ordination and those who were in support. Outside of the disagreement surrounding the issue of slavery in the United States, no other topic has boasted the urgency and contention as that of women's ordination.

Douglas Moo published an article in the *Trinity Journal* in the spring of 1980 entitled, "1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance." In this article, Moo grieved over the inability for a ubiquitous understanding of the 1 Timothy 2 text. Moo constructed an analysis of the text "for its own day" and then summarized its application "for our own day."⁴³ Moo wrote, "[Nothing] which would have effect of restricting the application of Paul's advice in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 to a particular time and place has been discovered... it can only be concluded that the results of this exegetical investigation carried out in Part 1 must stand as valid for the church in every age and place..."⁴⁴ Despite his attempt to submit the final word on the issue, Moo's article did little to quell those who were in favor of women's ordination. In the same academic journal, Philip B. Payne published a response to Moo's article one year later. Payne wrote that the exact opposite of Moo's claims was true, that there is no exclusionary language in 1 Timothy 2. Moo and Payne's disagreement serves as a microcosm for the condition of the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s — the advocates and the nay-sayers were at an impasse.

A similar conversation about women's roles in the church occurred outside of the SBC between the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). As has been stated by theologians such as John Piper and Wayne Grudem in the Baptist forum, the CRC declared in 1981 that the conundrum of women's roles in leadership could not be determined without a conclusive understanding of the concept of "headship" in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 and elsewhere in Scripture.⁴⁵ The CRC made a declaration in 1984 that stated women were allowed to be ordained into ministry although not as pastors, evangelists, or ministers. On the other hand, the ECC made a contrary statement the same year. The ECC argued that women could indeed be ordained into ministry roles, citing their reasoning on the priesthood of the believer.⁴⁶

The two sides of this argument are perhaps best summed up by a debate between Jann Aldredge Clanton and Dorothy Patterson. Clanton had been trained in Southern Baptist institutions and was a member of a Baptist church, yet she served as the minister of family life at St. Johns United Methodist Church in Waco, TX. Clanton gave an address at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Historical Society in 1988. In her address, Clanton communicated what

⁴³ Robert K. Johnston, "Biblical Authority & Interpretation," from *Women, Authority, & The Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelson, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986) 32.

⁴⁴ Douglas J. Moo, "1 Timothy 2:11-15: meaning and significance," *Trinity Journal*, 1 No 1 (Spring 1980), 82.

⁴⁵ Johnston, 34; Piper, 425-468.

⁴⁶ Johnston, 34.

could be viewed as the quintessential argument for women's ordination on the progressive side of the argument. Citing both Old Testament and New Testament examples, Clanton encouraged the understanding that men and women were created equally in the image of God and also claimed that passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-15 had been taken out of context to restrict women's roles in the church. Clanton boldly stated that Southern Baptists had not historically taken a strong enough stand regarding equality.⁴⁷

Dorothy Patterson was invited to present a response to Clanton's argument. Both Clanton's and Patterson's papers were published in the *Baptist History and Heritage* journal. In her counterpoint, Patterson recollected her experience at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Patterson enrolled in the same classes as her husband, Paige Patterson, as the only female in that degree program. Patterson also recalled the resentment and hardship that she experienced as a female seminarian in the 1960s. Patterson used many of the same biblical passages as Clanton but with the claim that they instructed women to "learn quietly." Patterson warned against the danger to interpret these passages to ban women from ministry and rather encouraged that women could serve any position in the church as long as it was not in authority over a man. In her conclusion, Patterson stated that she would trade her years as a wife and mother for any possible ministry career. Moreover, she claimed that Scripture required that sacrifice. Her greatest accomplishment, as Patterson stated, was serving alongside her husband in ministry.⁴⁸

The proceeding ended as most of the conversations on the topic within the SBC: awkward laughs and positions held. According to Barry Hankins, the moderates "won the day" with the moderator's closing statement, "I'm sure we have not settled all the issues, nor the questions, nor the problems. But I'm also sure that God will continue to call whomsoever he will land that the churches in their wisdom will ordain whom they see fit."⁴⁹ Discussions of this topic among Baptists rarely, if ever, end in a mutual agreement but rather in a *you go your way and I'll go mine* conclusion. The interactions between Moo and Payne and also Clanton and Patterson serve to illustrate the seemingly irreconcilable division that exists between the two sides of the argument.

The Shroud of Inerrancy

Nathan Finn and Amy Whitfield wrote that inerrancy became the "theological flashpoint" for conservative Christians in the 1980s and 1990s. However, they also stated that it was never just about inerrancy.⁵⁰ The issues of inerrancy and women's ordination seemed "thoroughly intertwined."⁵¹ Upon the inspection of this issue, Johnston narrowed down the argument from a

⁴⁷ Hankins, 205-208.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 208-212.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 213.

⁵⁰ Nathan A. Finn & Amy C. Whitfield, "Southern Baptist Complementarianism: Perspectives and Prospects," from the *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 2020), 1.

⁵¹ Elizabeth H. Flowers, *Into the Pulpit: Southern Baptist Women & Power Since World War II*, Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 104.

question of what women should or should not do to one of biblical authority.⁵² Both camps on either side of the argument claim the Bible as their source of inspiration and yet neither can agree on the correct application of these particular passages. Therefore, the argument is reduced to a question of biblical interpretation. The issue of women's ordination finds itself shrouded within the issue of inerrancy. Therefore, Johnston asked, "What is behind our continuing inability as evangelicals to agree?"⁵³ The answer to this question is multi-faceted.

First, the limited knowledge of any biblical scholar results in the possibility of an alternate understanding. In other words, there is always another interpretation of any given passage. Second, two opposing interpretations of Scripture can be equally valid. Even when utilizing the same hermeneutical principles, different results are not only possible but probable. The burden of proof lies with the interpreter to make the decisions as to what is prescriptive or descriptive. Any two interpreters may not agree on what is relevant in modernity based on their theological leanings and training. Finally, the reality of a fallen world means that sinful desire and selfishness influences our interpretation of Scripture. In other words, we allow our proclivity to affect our interpretation of Scripture, both consciously and unconsciously.⁵⁴

Shurden claimed that the subject of inerrancy was one of six major factors that led to the formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) in the early 1990s. According to Shurden, it was the view of biblical inerrancy that directly led to the disagreements between conservatives and moderates concerning women's ordination. While fundamentalists claimed that moderates did not believe the Bible, supporters of the CBF stated that inerrancy is not a biblical teaching and that biblical claims must be based on the Bible and not man's interpretation. CBF supporters stated in their 1991 declaration "An Address to the Public," "we dare not claim less for the Bible than the Bible claims for itself."⁵⁵ Elizabeth Flowers wrote that the decree of the conservatives was "inerrancy" while that of the moderates was "freedom."⁵⁶

Johnston wrote that the challenge to solving this conundrum lies within a "reader-sensitive hermeneutic."⁵⁷ This method requires the interpreter to approach the Scripture with a completely objective outlook, excluding all personal biases and predeterminations. Johnston purported that Scripture must be interpreted by the intended meaning of the original author and "to turn to the reader is to adopt neo-orthodoxy or liberal perspectives."⁵⁸ Johnston claimed that the fallacy in evangelical Christianity is the refusal to allow truthful biblical exposition to change our political stance or praxis. It can be assumed that Douglas Moo, Dorothy Patterson, and J. I. Packer intended to interpret Scripture free of bias, and yet Robert K. Johnston and Jann Clanton would claim that they allowed their partisanship to lead their interpretation.

⁵² Johnston, 34.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 35.

⁵⁵ Shurden, 251.

⁵⁶ Flowers, 69.

⁵⁷ Johnston 36.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

The 1980s included what the moderates call a “fundamentalist takeover” in the Southern Baptist Convention.⁵⁹ With Ronald Regan in the White House, Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority on the TV, and Adrian Rogers appointed as president of the SBC, the country was overwhelmed by conservative values in 1980. No one moment in Baptist history encompasses this fact more than the election of Albert Mohler as the president of Southern Seminary.

According to Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, Albert Mohler arrived at Southern Seminary in 1993 with an agenda to transform the faculty into exclusively inerrantists.⁶⁰ Mohler's inerrancy stance included a position against the ordination of women. Many of the faculty of Southern Seminary held conservative values and yet supported women's ordination, including the acting provost, David Dockery.⁶¹ The situation came to a head when the Carver School of Social Work wanted to hire a Reformed inerrantist faculty member who supported women's ordination. The dean of the Carver School, Diana Garland, took a stand against Mohler and reports disagree on whether she was fired or resigned. Although Mohler remained president through the controversy, many of the evangelical faculty that had been sought out and hired by David Dockery and Mohler's predecessor, Roy Honeycutt, exited their positions over the following year, including Dockery.⁶² The events at Southern Seminary from 1993 to 1994 illustrate the schismatic nature of the issue of women's ordination and its tendency to be shrouded in the concept of inerrancy.

⁵⁹ Nathan A. Finn & Amy C. Whitfield, “Southern Baptist Complementarianism: Perspectives and Prospects,” from the *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 2020), 1.

⁶⁰ Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists In America: A History*, (Oxford: University Press, 2015), 238.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid, 240.

Chapter 4: The Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

The 1984 Resolution No. 3

James T. Draper, the SBC president in 1984, stated that women's ordination might become "the most emotional and explosive issue" that Southern Baptists had faced. As 17,000 Southern Baptist representatives gathered in Kansas City that year, Draper's prediction would prove to be true.⁶³ Before the convention, two hundred women gathered for a meeting of the Southern Baptist Women In Ministry (SBWIM) in which they prepared for the rumored presentation regarding women's ordination at the convention. Led by Reba Cobb and Betty McGary, the SBWIM prepared their response for such a proclamation.⁶⁴ Carl F. H. Henry, the editor of *Christian Today* and a founder of Fuller Theological Seminary, stood to deliver "The Resolution On Ordination And The Role of Women In Ministry" that allowed the "service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastor functions and leadership roles entailing ordination."⁶⁵ Flowers described the scene by writing, "The carefully ordered convention floor turned into a chaotic uproar."⁶⁶ Attendees flooded the isles and surrounded the microphones to give responses and present counter-points. The room was instantly divided.

Resolution No. 3 cited 1 Timothy 2:12 as its reasoning, claiming Adam as the authority because man was created first and declaring woman as the subservient gender because Eve was first in the Fall. Despite the attempts to lengthen the time for discussion, the time limit for discussion on each presentation had been limited to eight minutes. At the end of the allotted time, Draper put the motion to a vote. The resolution passed by 58 percent; 4,793 votes in support and 3,460 opposed.

Members of the SBWIM were outraged. Women in attendance claimed that they were purposefully not allowed to speak. Draper attempted to pacify the tumult by stating that the resolution was not binding and stated that the issue should not be allowed to become "a test for fellowship."⁶⁷ However, the stated issue had become just that: a dividing line that split the fellowship of the convention. Individuals, churches, associations, and state conventions expressed their support of discontent. Response nationwide by Southern Baptists mirrored the vote, with many on either side of the issue.⁶⁸ Historians such as Copeland and Flowers consider

⁶³ Flowers, 102.

⁶⁴ Jesse C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention: A Sesquicentennial History*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 272.

⁶⁵ Flowers, 102; "Resolution On Ordination And The Role Of Women In Ministry," accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/resolution-on-ordination-and-the-role-of-women-in-ministry/>; See Appendix A.

⁶⁶ Flowers, 102.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 103.

⁶⁸ Copeland, 107.

Resolution No. 3 a major turning point in the SBC. From this point on churches were more likely to view SBC declarations as non-binding suggestions rather than viable precepts.⁶⁹

The Danvers Statement

Nine evangelical leaders met in Dallas, Texas in January of 1987 to discuss the growing concerns regarding manhood and womanhood from a biblical perspective. The issue of women's ordination was now being explored as a misunderstanding of masculine and feminine roles in God's created order. This initial meeting resulted in the formation of The Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood which consisted of a board of five directors and twenty-six council members.⁷⁰ Those counted among the members included James Borland from Liberty University, James Hurley from Reformed Theological Seminary, and Richard Mayhew from The Master's Seminary, as well as John Piper, Wayne Grudem, and Douglas Moo. Appropriately, the council also seated multiple women including Rhonda H. Kelley from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Joyce Rogers, Dorothy Patterson, and Beverly LaHaye, president of Concerned Women for America.⁷¹ The council convened in December of 1987 with the express purpose of preparing The Danvers Statement. This proclamation would serve Baptists as the response to issues regarding gender roles from a biblical approach.⁷² First published in November of 1988, The Danvers Statement was encouraged to be disseminated and utilized by Baptists nationwide.⁷³

The Danvers Statement consists of three major parts: Rationale, Purposes, and Affirmations.⁷⁴ The first section presents the reasoning behind the formulation of the statement. One rationale cites the growing ambiguity surrounding the complementary relationship between men and women. And another refers to the the glamorization of non-traditional sexual activity. The second segment contains the purposes for which the statement was composed. The purposes include the promulgation of a biblical view of masculinity and femininity, to promote the publication of scholarly works that support this view, and to encourage the application of this view in the lives of Baptists. Finally, the affirmations portion lists the biblical principles that The Danvers Statement confirms. Among ten total affirmations is found the Old and New Testaments equal value of both genders, no man or woman should ever be restricted from following God's call, and that particular roles in the church are reserved for men.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Copeland, 107.

⁷⁰ Waldemar Degner and William C. Weinrich, "The Danvers Statement," from the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol 53 No 1-2 (January - April 1989), 93.

⁷¹ Piper, 471.

⁷² Degner, 93.

⁷³ Piper, 471.

⁷⁴ See Appendix B.

⁷⁵ Piper, 469-471.

A Baptist Exodus

The response to The Danvers Statement among moderate Baptists was swift and averse. Shurden wrote, “Every aspect of SBC denominational life fragmented during the first years of the 1990s.”⁷⁶ In 1989, Christians for Biblical Equality issued a statement that refuted both The Danvers Statement and the 1984 Resolution.⁷⁷ Moderate groups reacted by dropping the “Southern” nomenclature from their titles. The Southern Baptist Alliance changed its name to Baptist Alliance in March of 1991. In May of the same year, the *Southern Baptist Convention Today* newspaper edited its title to become the *Baptists Today*. However, there were institutions other than ministry organizations and publishers that wanted to separate themselves from Southern Baptists.

The decade leading up to the 90s had proved to be the breaking point for many Baptists who stood in opposition to the stances of the SBC. Although the inspiration behind the formation of new Baptist associations can not be traced directly to the egalitarian issues, there is no doubt that it was a major influence on the decision to disassociate from Southern Baptists. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was established on May 9, 1991, in Atlanta, GA. The CBF’s “Address to the Public” would serve to separate themselves from the SBC in the same manner as Southern Baptists separated themselves from Northern Baptists in 1845.⁷⁸ Former President and SBC member, Jimmy Carter, also separated himself from the SBC and aligned with the CBF.⁷⁹ Although the Southern Baptist Alliance had been founded in February of 1987, they committed to cooperate with the SBC in a non-political manner. However, in 1991 the Southern Baptist Alliance broke all ties with the SBC.⁸⁰ Decline and opposition continued throughout the 1990s. In 1998, First Baptist Church of Raleigh, NC, one of the founding churches of the SBC in 1845, disassociated with the SBC. The controversy over egalitarian issues caused various institutions to reevaluate their participation in the SBC. The impact on the associational and national levels was palpable, but what of the impact on the local church?

⁷⁶ Shurden, 249.

⁷⁷ Hankins, 226.

⁷⁸ Shurden, 250.

⁷⁹ Amber Louise Cooke, “The Denied Calling: A Look at the Role of Women in the Southern Baptist Church.” *LOGOS: A Journal of Undergraduate Research*, Vol 3 (Spring 2010): 196.

⁸⁰ Andrew Gardner, *Reimagining Zion: A History of the Alliance of Baptists*, (Macon, GA: Nurturing Faith Inc., 2015), 29.

Chapter 5: First Baptist Church of Huntsville, AL and Waco, TX

First Baptist Church of Huntsville, AL

On the banks of the Flint River in 1809, the second Baptist congregation in the state of Alabama was started. One month after its establishment, the church was given the title of Enon Baptist Church.⁸¹ In its beginnings, the church was no stranger to quarrel. At a church meeting in 1809, a debate over foot washing had to be tabled until the following year due to disagreement.⁸² The church was largely influenced by Calvinistic beliefs, including a statement supporting predestination in their earliest recorded doctrines.⁸³ Their Calvinistic beliefs are reminiscent of Particular Baptist influence, which would make it unlikely for the early congregation to support the ordination of women.

Enon Baptist church was one of the founding entities in the newly formed Flint River Baptist Association in 1814. Five years later, the Alabama territory officially became a U.S. state. In 1825, Enon Baptist Church became a part of the newly formed Alabama State Convention. At this time, Baptists were counted as the largest religious group in the state with “5,000 members, 125 churches, and 75 ministers.” Enon Baptist Church and other Baptist congregations were experiencing encouraging growth. In 1838 at a meeting of the Flint River Association, Enon and a handful of other churches disassociated due to disagreements over the validity of missionary societies. Those churches appointed representatives to form the Liberty Baptist Association, one that would pursue a more liberal agenda. Though there were no representatives from Enon Baptist Church at the establishing meetings, the church affiliated with the newly founded SBC in 1845.⁸⁴

The nearby city of Huntsville was flourishing and the frontier church was dwindling in membership by 1860. In 1861, a decision was made to move the quiet wilderness church to the bustling city of Huntsville. This decision set the church on a new path, representative of a culture that was shifting from rural to city life. The business meeting minutes from April 20, 1861, recorded that Bro. J. W. Steel and his wife were appointed as deacon and deaconess. There is no known record as to the details of Mrs. Steel’s role as a deaconess.⁸⁵ Due to the furor of the Civil War, few records of the church exist until the Liberty Baptist Association’s records of October 1865, following the cessation of the war.⁸⁶

Under the leadership of their twenty-third pastor, Oscar Haywood, Enon Baptist Church changed its name to First Baptist Church of Huntsville in 1893. The leadership of the church in the late 19th-century and early 20th-century was largely women, particularly those who were

⁸¹ Bruce Gourley, *Leading the Way for 200 Years: The Story of First Baptist Church of Huntsville, AL 1809-2009*, (Nashville, TN: Fields Publishing, Inc., 2009), 29.

⁸² Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1998), 25.

⁸³ Gourley, 40-41.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 43-45.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 163.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 50-58.

leaders in the WMU.⁸⁷ FBC Huntsville changed locations three times before landing in their current-day location in downtown Huntsville in May of 1966.⁸⁸ In those years, the church's influence and ministry grew exponentially.

Ralph Langley became the pastor of FBC Huntsville in 1979 and would lead the church through a turbulent yet prosperous period. Langley stood in opposition to the perceived "fundamentalist takeover" of the SBC. Langley, along with delegates from his church, attended the 1981 Southern Baptist Convention in Los Angeles and stood to speak in favor of the moderate candidate, Abner McCall, against the fundamentalist, Bailey Smith. Smith would ultimately win the vote and become the 44th president of the SBC. Despite their pastor's leanings, FBC Huntsville continued to support the SBC and send messengers to annual conventions for the remainder of the decade.

Following the proclamation of Resolution No. 3 in 1984, FBC Huntsville ordained its first woman deacon in September of 1985. The newly appointed deacon was a beloved member of the church and celebrated servant of God, Martha Boothe. Boothe did not vie for the position but rather allowed her name to be placed on the ballot. On the day of Boothe's ordination, a church member confronted Langley in his office and urged him to cancel the ordination. Upon learning about the upset, Boothe took the stage at the ordination service and declared her willingness to resign from her position. After Boothe absconded, Langley called for a motion to accept Boothe's resignation as a deacon to no response. Martha Boothe's ordination set a precedent for FBC Huntsville as a church that would not blindly follow the direction of the SBC. Just one year later, FBC Huntsville ordained Linda Kaye Kennemar to the ministry. Today, FBC Huntsville seats multiple women deacons.⁸⁹ The current pastor, Travis Collins, wrote a short book that explores the issues of women's ordination in which he wrote, "The role of women in the church is a matter of interpretation, not a litmus test for one's view of Scripture."⁹⁰

The distancing from the SBC that began in 1979 culminated in 1990 with the appointment of Alan Walsworth as pastor. A co-pastor at FBC Huntsville, Walsworth assumed the pastorate after Langley's resignation and led the charge in ensuring that the church was no longer exclusively associated with the SBC. Also established in 1990, the CBF had the support of FBC Huntsville. According to church records, the most significant factor in the decision to distance from the SBC was missionaries who were losing funding due to the leadership changes in the convention. Though SBC leaders urged members of the WMU to follow their lead regarding ordination, the women's organization never took an official stance.⁹¹ With many leaders and members in the congregation of FBC Huntsville, the WMU had the church's support in its posture.⁹²

⁸⁷ Gourley, 87-93.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 143.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 159-163.

⁹⁰ Collins, 33.

⁹¹ Flynt, 583.

⁹² Gourley, 185.

Bruce Gourley reported that changes in denominational alliances were inevitable for FBC Huntsville.⁹³ Once the church moved to the city they set themselves on a path that would lead towards the more liberal leanings compared to conservatives and fundamentalists. As the home of NASA and multiple colleges, Huntsville drew a more liberal-minded population and thus influenced the membership of the church. It would seem, then, that the controversy over women's ordination in the 1980s may have served as an influencer for FBC Huntsville to distance from the SBC, but it was not the direct cause.

First Baptist Church of Waco, TX

The First Baptist Church of Waco, TX (FBC Waco) was founded May 31, 1851, by Noah T. Byars, an armorer by trade and a frontier missionary.⁹⁴ Prior to the establishment of FBC Waco, Baylor University was founded nearby on February 1, 1845.⁹⁵ Both FBC Waco and Baylor are staples of Texas history, both still holding the titles as the oldest establishments of their kind in the state. According to records, Baptist women had a presence in Texas before 1851. Lydia Allcorn is recorded as the first female Baptist convert in the Texas territory. And in 1839, Massie Millard and Lea Bledsoe formed the first Baptist Women's Society in the state.⁹⁶

The prolific pastor of FBC Waco, B. H. Carroll, and the president of Baylor University in the 1870s, W. C. Crane, both supported female leadership and women's ministry societies. In 1879, Carroll appointed six women deacons at FBC Waco who were likely the first in the state to serve in that role.⁹⁷ Matt Snowden, the current pastor of FBC Waco, reported that the women who served as deacons at that time held the title of the deacon but were not ordained.⁹⁸ This history serves to confirm that the practice of female leadership at FBC Waco was not unique to the 20th-century.

In the late 1970s, Peter McLeod, then pastor of FBC Waco, inquired of his membership at a Wednesday meeting to consider the future of the church. One of the suggestions that he asserted that evening was women deacons. At that suggestion, one church member reacted in opposition and quickly left the church membership. Alton Pearson, an influential deacon in the church, recalled discussion on the topic of women deacons in his Sunday School class led by Dr. Bob Patterson, then a professor of religion at Baylor University.⁹⁹ These events suggest a period

⁹³ Gourley, 184.

⁹⁴ Harry Leon McBeth, *Texas Baptists: A Sesquicentennial History*, (Dallas, TX: BaptistWay Press, 1998), 20.

⁹⁵ "About Baylor: Heritage: History," accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.baylor.edu/about/index.php?id=88778>.

⁹⁶ McBeth, *Texas Baptists*, 78.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 79.

⁹⁸ Matt Snowden, phone interview with author, April 21, 2021.

⁹⁹ William L. Pitts, Jr., "Women, Ministry and Identity: Establishing Female Deacons at First Baptist Church, Waco, 1996," from *Baptist Identities: International Studies from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*, eds. Ian M. Randall, Toivo Pilli, and Anthony R. Cross, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 200.

in which the appointment of women deacons fell out of practice at FBC Waco. Records indicate that the conversation regarding women deacons continued in the church throughout the 1980s. In 1994, Scott Walker accepted a call to become the pastor at FBC Waco. The members of the search committee inquired of Walker during his interview process regarding whether or not he would entertain the idea of appointing women as deacons and he responded affirmatively.¹⁰⁰

FBC Waco would officially adopt a policy regarding women deacons in May of 1996. For the motion to carry in the church, the proposal first had to be taken before the membership.¹⁰¹ Snowden confirmed that the people of FBC Waco desired to be confident in the biblical soundness of this decision before they would give their support. Bill Pitts, a member of FBC Waco and celebrated professor of history at Baylor, stated eloquently that “hermeneutics had to be the ‘lead pony’” of the discussion. According to Snowden, the debate concerning women’s ordination would have been more of a fight had it been an issue of women’s rights. However, the greater concern in the church was reportedly more about adherence to Scripture than personal biases.¹⁰²

The proclivity of FBC Waco to accept women deacons has various causes. The church’s close relation to Baylor University is likely an influence, given the university’s frequency of boasting faculty and students as members and the fight for equality on the college’s campus beginning in the 1930s.¹⁰³ The state’s history for Baptist women in leadership set a precedent for the state and FBC Waco. According to pastor Snowden, the decision was also influenced by an influx of new church members in Waco impacted by both economic growth and the draw of the prestigious Baylor University. As people migrated to Texas, women arrived at FBC Waco who had been ordained as deacons previously by other churches. FBC Waco was then forced to consider its policy on the transfer of deacons and whether or not that would include women.¹⁰⁴

In pastor Snowden’s words, FBC Waco’s departure from the SBC was not a “public divorce.” The decision for FBC Waco to disassociate itself from the SBC was a gradual one, not a reaction to any particular event. Bill Pitts stated that he does not recall the issue of women’s ordination being a factor in the church’s decision to split from the SBC. Considering that the conversation surrounding the ordination of women in the church from the late 1960s through the 1990s was ongoing, it was most certainly a factor in the decision, but by no means the direct cause. In FBC Waco’s case, like that of FBC Huntsville, there was no “last straw” that caused their withdrawal, but rather a gradual progression that followed its natural course.

¹⁰⁰ Pitts, 201-202.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 202-204.

¹⁰² Snowden.

¹⁰³ Jessica Roshak, “Women’s Access to Education at Baylor University, 1931-1940,” accessed April 22, 2021, <https://blogs.baylor.edu/hesabaylorhistoryproject/baylor-1931-1940/access-at-baylor-1931-1940/jessicas-paper/>.

¹⁰⁴ Snowden.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

A Steady Trajectory

The surprising results of this paper have found that, though the controversy over women's ordination in the SBC significantly impacted Baptists as a whole, it did not affect the trajectory of local churches as strikingly. At least not in the lives of the churches cited. Congregations such as First Baptist Church of Waco and Huntsville owe their leanings more to the communities in which they exist than to the influence of the SBC or any association. Additionally, FBC Waco and FBC Huntsville have a lot in common other than their convictions. Both are large churches in liberal communities with means that are not typical of smaller congregations. As the resources and membership of each church grew, they became more and more diverse and independent. Diversity and independence naturally lead to a church with its own unique approach to church life and hermeneutics.

Leadership is also a major factor. Though Enon Baptist Church had more fundamental-leaning pastors in their beginnings, FBC Huntsville boasted leaders such as Ralph Langley, Alan Walsworth, and Travis Collins who not only accepted but championed the ordination of women. Similarly, FBC Waco has been led by B. H. Carroll, Peter McLeod, and Matt Snowden who have also approved of the practice. Perhaps most importantly, is the lay leadership of the church who continually support such movements, such as Alton Pearson, Bill Pitts, and Martha Boothe. A pastor's leadership can not endure without a congregation and lay leaders who support and uphold the trajectory of the church.

Considering their size and means, both FBC Waco and FBC Huntsville were likely to separate from the SBC with or without controversy. An intriguing continuation of this study would be to focus on smaller congregations who disassociated with the SBC in the 1990s and explore their motivations for so doing.

A Model for the Convention

The reaction to the argument surrounding women's ordination in the SBC in the 1980s was felt in the whole of the denomination. However, the response on the street level did not put a halt on ministry locally or nationally. As James Draper emphasized at the 1984 convention in Kansas City, the decisions of the SBC are not binding to the autonomous, local church. Perhaps the best example of a response to the controversy is the WMU, who quietly disagreed and went about their ministry as they saw fit. As pastor Snowden put it, the response on the associational level may have become more about egalitarianism than biblical authority.

Conclusion

This paper has affirmed that the culture shift regarding women's rights in the 1980s directly affected the controversy in the SBC. Also, it has been established that the response on the provincial level did not lead to separation from the SBC as expected. Finally, this work has given an overview of the biblical position on women's ordination and concluded that the answer relies on the hermeneutical approach of whoever is interpreting Scripture. The answer to the quandary of women's ordination is "you go your way and I'll go mine" both yesterday and today.

Appendix A

The Resolution On Ordination And The Role of Women In Ministry

Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting

June 1, 1984

WHEREAS, We, the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Kansas City, June 12-14, 1984, recognize the authority of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice including the autonomy of the local church; and

WHEREAS, The New Testament enjoins all Christians to proclaim the gospel; and

WHEREAS, The New Testament churches as a community of faith recognized God's ordination and anointing of some believers for special ministries (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:7; Titus 1:15) and in consequence of their demonstrated loyalty to the gospel, conferred public blessing and engaged in public dedicatory prayer setting them apart for service; and

WHEREAS, The New Testament does not mandate that all who are divinely called to ministry be ordained; and

WHEREAS, In the New Testament, ordination symbolizes spiritual succession to the world task of proclaiming and extending the gospel of Christ, and not a sacramental transfer of unique divine grace that perpetuates apostolic authority; and

WHEREAS, The New Testament emphasizes the equal dignity of men and women (Gal. 3:28) and that the Holy Spirit was at Pentecost divinely outpoured on men and women alike (Acts 2:17); and

WHEREAS, Women as well as men prayed and prophesied in public worship services (1 Cor. 11:2-16), and Priscilla joined her husband in teaching Apollos (Acts 18:26), and women fulfilled special church service-ministries as exemplified by Phoebe whose work Paul tributes as that of a servant of the church (Rom. 16:1); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures attest to God's delegated order of authority (God the head of Christ, Christ the head of man, man the head of woman, man and woman dependent one upon the other to the glory of God) distinguishing the roles of men and women in public prayer and prophecy (1 Cor. 11:2-5); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach that women are not in public worship to assume a role of authority over men lest confusion reign in the local church (1 Cor. 14:33-36); and

WHEREAS, While Paul commends women and men alike in other roles of ministry and service (Titus 2:1-10), he excludes women from pastoral leadership (1 Tim. 2:12) to preserve a

submission God requires because the man was first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall (1 Tim. 2:13ff); and

WHEREAS, These Scriptures are not intended to stifle the creative contribution of men and women as co-workers in many roles of church service, both on distant mission fields and in domestic ministries, but imply that women and men are nonetheless divinely gifted for distinctive areas of evangelical engagement; and

WHEREAS, Women are held in high honor for their unique and significant contribution to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and the building of godly homes should be esteemed for its vital contribution to developing personal Christian character and Christlike concern for others.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That we not decide concerns of Christians doctrine and practice by modern cultural, sociological, and ecclesiastical trends or by emotional factors; that we remind ourselves of the dearly bought Baptist principle of the final authority of Scripture in matters of faith and conduct; and that we encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ "Resolution On Ordination And The Role Of Women In Ministry," accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/resolution-on-ordination-and-the-role-of-women-in-ministry/>.

Appendix B

The Danvers Statement

The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood
November, 1988

Rationale

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. the widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Purposes

Recognizing our own abiding sinfulness and fallibility, and acknowledging the genuine evangelical standing of many who do not agree with all of our convictions, nevertheless, moved by the preceding observations and by the hope that the noble biblical vision of sexual complementarity may yet win the mind and heart of Christ's church, we engage to pursue the following purposes:

1. To study and set forth the biblical view of the relationship between men and women, especially in the home and in the church.
2. To promote the publication of scholarly and popular materials representing this view.

3. To encourage the confidence of lay people to study and understand for themselves the teaching of Scripture, especially on the issue of relationships between men and women.
4. To encourage the considered and sensitive application of this biblical view in the appropriate spheres of life.
5. And thereby
 - to bring healing to persons and relationships injured by an inadequate grasp of God's will concerning manhood and womanhood,
 - to help both men and women realize their full ministry potential through a true understanding and practice of their God-given roles,
 - and to promote the spread of the gospel among all peoples by fostering a biblical wholeness in relationships that will attract a fractured world.

Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order and should find an echo in every human heart.
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall and was not a result of sin.
4. The fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women.
 - In the home, the husband's loving humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
 - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women. Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community.
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
 - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to the husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership.
 - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men.
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission—domestic, religious or civil—ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin.

8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside biblical criteria for particular ministries. Rather, biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world.
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Degner, Waldemar and William C. Weinrich. "The Danvers Statement." From the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol 53 No 1-2 (January - April 1989): 92-96.

Bibliography

- _____. "About Baylor: Heritage: History." Accessed April 22, 2021. <https://www.baylor.edu/about/index.php?id=88778>.
- _____. "Addie Davis, first woman ordained as Southern Baptist pastor, dies at 88." Accessed April 19, 2021. <https://baptistnews.com/article/addie-davis-first-woman-ordained-as-southern-baptist-pastor-dies-at-88/#.YH3i7i2cZTY>.
- _____. "Baptist Faith & Message 2000, VI. The Church." Accessed March 31, 2021. <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#vi-the-church>.
- _____. "Morning in America." Accessed April 19, 2021. <https://www.ushistory.org/us/59a.asp>.
- _____. "Life in the 1980s." Accessed April 19, 2021. <https://www.ushistory.org/us/59d.asp>.
- _____. "Resolution On Ordination And The Role Of Women In Ministry," accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/resolution-on-ordination-and-the-role-of-women-in-ministry/>.
- Akin, Daniel L. "The Bible and Sexuality." In *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, edited by Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax, 1821. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017.
- Beard, Helen. *Women in Ministry Today*. Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980.
- Beck, James R. And Craig L. Blomberg, editors. *Two Views on Women in Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001.
- Belleville, Linda. "Commentary on 1 Timothy." In *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews. Vol. 17*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009.
- Belleville, Linda L. *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000.
- Blevins, Carolyn DeArmond. "Women in Baptist History." *Review & Expositor* 83, No. 1 (Winter 1986): 51-61.
- Bruce, Michael and G. E. Duffield. *Why Not? Priesthood and the Ministry of Women*. Marcham Manor Press, 1972.
- Clouse, Bonnidell and Robert G. Clouse, editors. *Women in Ministry: Four Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989.

- Collins, Travis. "My Neighbor's Pastor is a Woman! What Do I Do?!?!?" Accessed March 24, 2021. https://f37f13bb-eabc-4e97-b1e4-c7825765cad4.filesusr.com/ugd/94e546_3b7301ee5c824e49b291d14c7a11eb7e.pdf?index=true.
- Cooke, Amber Louise. "The Denied Calling: A Look at the Role of Women in the Southern Baptist Church." *LOGOS: A Journal of Undergraduate Research*, Vol 3 (Spring 2010), 189-205.
- Copeland, E. Luther. *The Southern Baptist Convention and the Judgement of History*. New York, NY: University Press of America, Inc., 2002.
- Degner, Waldemar and William C. Weinrich. "The Danvers Statement." From the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol 53 No 1-2 (January - April 1989): 92-96.
- Deweese, Charles W. "Baptist Women Deacons," from the *Baptist Heritage in the 21st Century* Pamphlet Series. Accessed March 30, 2021. <http://www.baptisthistory.org/21stcentury/womendeacons.html>.
- Exell, Joseph S. *The Biblical Illustrator: Galatians*. New York; Chicago; Toronto; London; Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.
- Finn, Nathan A. & Amy C. Whitfield. "Southern Baptist Complementarianism: Perspectives and Prospects." From the *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 2020): 1-4.
- Fletcher, Jessie C. *The Southern Baptist Convention: A Sesquicentennial History*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.
- Flowers, Elizabeth H. *Into the Pulpit: Southern Baptist Women & Power Since World War II*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- Flynt, Wayne. *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1998.
- Gardner, Andrew. *Reimagining Zion: A History of the Alliance of Baptists*. Macon, GA: Nurturing Faith Inc., 2015.
- Gourley, Bruce. *Leading the Way for 200 Years: The Story of First Baptist Church of Huntsville, AL 1809-2009*. Nashville, TN: Fields Publishing, Inc., 2009.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995.
- Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture*. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2002.

- Harsch, Lloyd. "Women in Ministry in the Southern Baptist Convention: A Brief Historical Overview." From the *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 2020): 5-19.
- House, H. Wayne. *The Role of Women in Ministry Today*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1990.
- Hoyle, Lydia Huffman. "Baptist Women in Ministry." Special Series: Baptist Heritage and the 21st Century. Published by the Baptist History and Heritage Society. Accessed April 3, 2021. <http://www.centerforbaptiststudies.org/resources/heritageseries/womeninministry.htm>.
- James, Sharon. *God's Design for Women in an age of Gender Confusion*. Darlington, CO: EP Books, 2019.
- Johnston, Robert K. "Biblical Authority & Interpretation." From *Women, Authority, & The Bible*. Edited by Alvera Mickelson. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986.
- Kidd, Thomas S. and Barry Hankins. *Baptists In America: A History*, Oxford: University Press, 2015.
- McBeth, H. Leon. *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987.
- McBeth, Harry Leon. *Texas Baptists: A Sesquicentennial History*. Dallas, TX: BaptistWay Press, 1998.
- McBeth, H. Leon. "The Changing Role of Women in Baptist History." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 22, No. 1 (Fall 1979): 84-96.
- McBeth, H. Leon. "The Role of Women in Southern Baptist History." *Baptist History and Heritage*, Vol 12 No 1 (January 1977), 3-25.
- Moo, Douglas J. "1 Timothy 2:11-15: meaning and significance," *Trinity Journal*, 1 No 1 (Spring 1980), 62-83.
- Morris, Leon. *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 7. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985.
- Naselli, Andrew David. "Does Anyone Need to Recover from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood? A Review Article of Aimee Byrd's *Recovering From Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*." Accessed April 17, 2021. Last edited May 4, 2020. <https://cbmw.org/2020/05/04/does-anyone-need-to-recover-from-biblical-manhood-and-womanhood-a-review-article-of-aimee-byrds-recovering-from-biblical-manhood-and-womanhood/>.

- Nettles, Tom. "Is the BFM 2000 View of Women in Ministry an Innovation?" Accessed April 5, 2021. <https://founders.org/2020/02/20/is-the-bfm-2000-view-of-women-in-ministry-and-innovation/>.
- Packer, James I. "In Quest of Canonical Interpretation." From *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1985, pp. 35-55.
- Piper, John and Wayne Grudem. *50 Crucial Questions: An Overview of Central Concerns about Manhood and Womanhood*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2016.
- Pitts, William L., Jr. "Women, Ministry and Identity: Establishing Female Deacons at First Baptist Church, Waco, 1996," from *Baptist Identities: International Studies from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*. Edited by Ian M. Randall, Toivo Pilli, and Anthony R. Cross. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006.
- Pratt, Richard L., Jr. *I & II Corinthians*. Vol. 7. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000.
- Roshak, Jessica. "Women's Access to Education at Baylor University, 1931-1940." Accessed April 22, 2021. <https://blogs.baylor.edu/hesabaylorhistoryproject/baylor-1931-1940/access-at-baylor-1931-1940/jessicas-paper/>.
- Rutledge, Franklin E. *Can God Call a Woman to Pastor?* 1stBooks, 2002.
- Snowden, Matt. Phone interview with the author. April 22, 2021.
- Stagg, Evelyn and Frank Stagg. *Woman in the World of Jesus*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1978.
- Yarbrough, Robert W. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. Edited by D. A. Carson. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018.