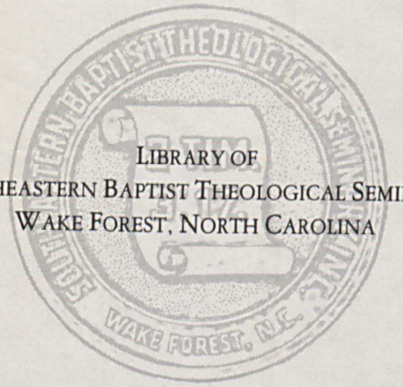
Carver-Barnes Lectures
1980-81



The

1980-81

CARVER — BARNES

LECTURES

Delivered by

Walter B. Shurden

Dean, School of Theology

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

November 4-5, 1980

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Wake Forest, North Carolina 27587
Telephone (919) 556-3101

Dear Reader:

Southeastern Seminary is pleased to share the 1980-81 Carver-Barnes Lectures with you. They were delivered on our campus by Dean Walter Shurden, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dr. W. W. Barnes and Dr. W. O. Carver were two of our most helpful Southern Baptist colleagues in focusing on our history and our mission. Dr. Shurden follows in their train. At times he speaks as a denominational historian; at times as a Kierkegaardian gadfly; but throughout these two lectures he speaks as a friendly critic within "the family."

These lectures are excellent resources as pastors and congregations prepare for events at the SBC meeting in Los Angeles in June.

It is our hope as we share these lectures with you that those gigantic events at Golgatha and in Joseph's Garden will capture you increasingly and propel you into the mission of our Lord Christ for our time.

W. Randall Lolley
President

The Carver-Barnes Lectures

The Carver-Barnes Lectures were established at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1961 to bring to the campus outstanding scholars in the field of Church history, particularly as it relates to the mission and ministry of Southern Baptists.

The Lectures are named for two scholars who made significant contributions to Southern Baptist life. Dr. W.O. Carver was Professor of Missions at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Dr. W.W. Barnes was Professor of Church History at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Lectures are funded in part by a generous contribution from Mr. and Mrs. Harold C. Fechner of Lee's Summit, Missouri.

Walter B. Shurden

Dr. Shurden, Dean, School of Theology and Professor of Church History, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is a native of Mississippi. He is a graduate of Mississippi College and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

A pastor and historian, Dr. Shurden also has taught at New Orleans Seminary, McMaster Divinity College and Carson-Newman College. He has served as president of the Southern Baptist Historical Society and as chairman of the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. He is the author of *Not a Silent People: Controversies that have Shaped Southern Baptists.*

Additional copies of these lectures may be secured by writing Office of Communications, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina 27587.

LECTURE I
"The Southern Baptist Synthesis: Is It Cracking?"

It was not a Baptist but a Roman Catholic who recently wrote: "There is no hope for the future if the past remains unreceived and unconfessed and unforgiven." I would add only one word: "There is no hope for the future if the past remains unreceived and unconfessed and unforgiven—and *unknown*." I am not plugging my discipline nor engaging in historical histrionics when I say to you with all the conviction of my soul: "No hope... for the future... if the past remains unknown."

I have been a member of a Southern Baptist church now for twenty-five years—all of my adult life. And because of my call from God to minister, because of my professional commitment as a Baptist historian, because I am an unapologetic lover of things Southern Baptist—I have attempted to be more than a casual observer of Southern Baptist life. And never in the last twenty-five years have I felt so deeply the urgency of history for the life of our denomination. Knowing our heritage is no longer a plaything: it has become an imperative thing. Forces and factors are loose in our denomination and our society which make awareness of heritage a necessity, not a luxury. To put it bluntly, we are facing the erosion of a rich denominational heritage which cannot be preserved by ignoring our heritage. We must receive it all. We must confess and forgive much of it. But, above all, we must *know* it.

My topic is "The Southern Baptist Synthesis: Is It Cracking?" One of the common interpretations of the Protestant Reformation has to do with the dissolution of the Medieval Synthesis. It goes roughly like this: During the period from Charlemagne to the Renaissance there developed a synthesis in Western Europe. That synthesis was constructed around the Roman Catholic Church. All of human life and experience—music, art, economics, education, politics, and philosophical perceptions of reality—all of those were brought together, synthesized, in the Roman Catholic Church. Life was a neat and stabile unit. Then in the fourteenth century cracks began to appear in this synthesis. The cracking came from many sources. A rising nationalism cracked the political unity. Then there was mysticism, humanism, and nominalism. And finally "a wild boar" entered the vineyard of the Lord, wrecking and ruining. The medieval Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall. And then the Enlightenment stamped irreverently on the remaining pieces. The synthesis was shattered. Life was never to be the same again in the west.

By no stretch of the imagination do I want to press the analogy. I simply want to use the metaphor. What I do want to suggest is that a Southern Baptist synthesis was shaped in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and first half of the twentieth centuries. I then want to point to some significant stresses placed on that synthesis since World War II. Finally, I want to make a closing observation on living in a synthesis under stress.

I. The Southern Baptist Synthesis: Its Shape

I am being only three-fourths facetious when I say that the extent of the knowledge of some Southern Baptists of their denominational heritage reaches all the way back to the last meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention which they attended! These are the rootless among us. On the other hand, some others think we emerged from the waters of Jordan with a full blown denominational structure. Baptist principles are certainly rooted in biblical convictions, but the shape of the denominational synthesis emerged in a later period. Let me now try to identify some of the components of that synthesis.

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. During the *18th* and *19th* centuries at least *four* distinct traditions among Baptists of the South helped shape the Southern Baptist synthesis.

The Charleston Tradition. The first of these is the Baptist tradition which emerged out of Charleston, South Carolina. In the 18th century Charleston was to the Baptists of the Southern colonies what Philadelphia was to Baptists of the Middle Colonies—the hub of Baptist activity. Organized in the late 17th century, the First Baptist Church of Charleston was not only the first church in the South, it was for a number of years the most influential church. From its influence in 1751 came the Charleston Association—the first Baptist association of the South. William Screven (D. 1714) *planted* the Charleston Tradition; Oliver Hart (1723-1795), a later pastor of First Church, *spread* the tradition when he founded the association; but the revered Richard Furman (1755-1825), pastor at Charleston for thirty-eight years, *perfected* the tradition.

The tradition had roots. It was rooted in the Particular Baptists of England, who in turn were rooted in English Calvinistic Puritanism. The Charleston Tradition is one of the major reasons why E. Brooks Holifield of Emory could say, "The Southern Baptist Convention is one of the last great repositories of the Puritan Tradition in America." Puritanism is still difficult for scholars to define. But at the heart of it were two central affirmations which were bequeathed to Charleston. One was the centrality of religious experience; the second was the sole authority of Holy Scripture.

The Charleston Tradition, personified in Richard Furman, may be summarized in one word, and that word is *ORDER*. Charleston provided *theological order*. In 1767 the Charleston Association adapted and adopted the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. Naturally, it became known as the Charleston Confession. Calvinistic in character, that confession became a consensus of Baptist thelology in the South. While it was a confession which expressed a Baptist consensus, it was never intended as a creed to bind a Baptist conscience. That part of our heritage, it appears, will have to be relearned.

Charleston alone provided *ecclesiological order*. "A Summary of Church Discipline" was adopted by the Charleston Association. This early church manual insisted upon the independence of the local churches. But it avoided "lone rangerism" in church life by balancing the demand for local church independency with a call for cooperation in associational life. Southern Baptist connectionalism in denominational polity comes from Furman through W.B. Johnson. Cooperation was a key.

And then there was *liturgical order*. It represented a style in public worship that was ordered and stately, though pulsating with evangelical warmth. The ordinances were more important to these 18th century Baptists than to many of their successors. Worship appeared to be neither spontaneously charismatic nor primarily revivalistic. It was directed toward heaven, not earth. The object was to praise God, not entertain people.

Finally, the Charleston Tradition emphasized *ministerial order*. The very *first* educational fund promoted and supported by a group of Baptists in America was initiated by the Charleston Association in 1755. Charleston never demanded education as a prerequisite to ministry, but neither did they demean it. Neither did they make the mistake of later generations by equating education with graduation. Richard Furman never graduated, but he was thoroughly educated. And he insisted that a preacher's sermon should, as he put it, "smell of the lamp."

From this pro-educational, non-anti-intellectual Charleston sentiment were born Baptist colleges: Furman, Georgetown, Richmond, Wake Forest, Mississippi College. And the roots of Southern Baptists' first theological seminary are clearly traced to the Charleston Tradition. James P. Boyce, an aristocratic and educated South Carolinian, founded Southern Seminary in 1859 in Greenville, South Carolina. In 1877 the seminary moved to Louisville, Kentucky, so it could survive in the penniless days of the Post-Civil War.

In brief, the Charleston Tradition consisted of pietistic Puritanism, Calvinistic confessionalism, quasi-connectionalism, churchly liturgics, and a commitment to an educated ministry. Permit me a generalization and I would dub these folk "semi-presbyterians." The word for Charleston is *ORDER*.

The Sandy Creek Tradition. The second word in the Southern Baptist synthesis is *ARDOR*. And that word came out of the Sandy Creek Tradition. These were the Separate Baptists. Much that is distinctive in Southern Baptist life can be traced directly to the Separate Baptist heritage. Coming out of New England revivalism during the era of the Great Awakening, these fiery frontier folk migrated to the South and settled in Sandy Creek, North Carolina, in 1755. They were a people possessed by ardor. And that ardor expres;sed itself in individualism, congregationalism, biblicism, and egalitarianism. They released a devotion to freedom which is without parallel in Baptist history.

Because they wanted religious freedom to evangelize every soul who crossed their path, they rejected any infringement from the state in matters of faith. The result? The walls of the Southern establishment in matters of church-state came tumbling down. Because they wanted ecclesiastical freedom for the local church, they tended to be suspicious of associational authority. Because they wanted theological freedom for the individual conscience, they were reluctant to pledge themselves to confessions of faith.

And their leaders? Shubal Stearnes was their patriarch and pastor at Sandy Creek. Daniel Marshall, his brother-in-law, began a Baptist church wherever he could gain two converts, a motion and a second to the motion. And he did that in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Georgia. Samuel Harris was a sheriff turned evangelist who outran the Church Growth movement by 200 years. And Elder John Leland, a Baptist freedom lover if ever there was one, is probably groaning in his grave over the tightening vise of creedalism in Southern Baptist life. He was so turned off by Baptist confessions of faith that he called them "a Virgin Mary between the souls of men and the scriptures." Confessions of faith, he said, "often check any further pursuit after truth, confine the mind into a particular way of reasoning and give rise to frequent separation." And finally he spoke to the subject by saying, "It is sometimes said that heretics are always averse to confessions of faith. I wish I could say as much of tyrants." He wrote, as James L. Sullivan would say, with carbolic acid on asbestos paper!

Quickly, now, let me identify four characteristics of Separate Baptist ardor. First, their worship was *revivalistic*. Stearnes and Company were a highly emotional, deeply pietistic kind of people. They had one value: winning people to Jesus Christ and to an emotionally identifiable experience. Faith was feeling and every Sunday was a camp meeting. Their praise of God was not vertical but horizontal. Unlike the city-slickers at Charleston, they didn't praise God by praising God; they praised God by reaching women and men. They had a mourner's bench and they expected public groaning, not polite amens. They were ardent revivalists.

Second, their ministry was *charismatic*. The call of God to preach, like the conversion which preceded it, was internal and experiential, never a professional choice. Ministerial education was not encouraged but discouraged. Their preachers were not out to educate but to alarm. And their preaching was marked by "a holy whine." Proclamation was immersed in tearful pathos and with a sing-song pattern to it that many Southern Baptists since have found effective for discovering the holy in life. Of Shubal Stearnes it was said: "His voice was musical and strong, which he managed in such a manner, as one while to make soft impressions on the heart, and fetch tears from the eyes in a mechanical way; and anon to shake the nerves, and to throw the animal system into tumults and pertubations." They were ardent preachers!

Third, their ecclesiology was ruggedly *independent*. They formed associations, their first being the Sandy Creek in 1758. But unlike the Charleston Tradition, the Sandy Creek Tradition did not spend as much time defining associational authority as they did declaring local church autonomy. The Separate Baptist concept of connectionalism did not contribute to a later Southern Baptist centralized denominational structure. Rather, you find here some roots of later Landmarkism.

Their worship was revivalistic; their ministry was charismatic; their ecclesiology was independent. Fourth, their theological approach was *biblicistic*. With a highly literalistic approach to scripture, they found not two but nine Christian rites in the Bible. Their biblicism is what made them so ardently opposed to confessions of faith. Their background was New England Congregationalism where non-binding confessions had evolved into binding creeds. And they had watched the creeds become substitutes for the authority of the Word of God. They would have none of that. For years, therefore, different postures toward confessional statements kept the Charleston and Sandy Creek Traditions from merging.

Then what about their theology? Were they Calvinists or moderate Calvinists or just outright Arminians? You get different answers from different Baptist historians. John Leland is probably to be trusted as a guide at this point.

Leland said, "It is a matter of fact that the preaching that has been most blessed of God, and most profitable to men, is the doctrine of Sovereign grace in the salvation of souls, mixed with a little of what is called Arminianism." In fact, the Separate Baptists were not systematic theologians. They were heralds of the sovereign grace of God and they directed it to the free wills of all who would lend an ear.

In brief, the Sandy Creek Tradition consisted of revivalistic experientialism, anti-confessionalism, exaggerated localism, fierce libertarianism, and a commitment to personal evangelism. Permit me another generalization, and I would dub these people "semi-pentecostals." And now a suggestion: if you marry a semi-presbyterian from Charleston to a semi-pentecostal from Sandy Creek, you will get a whole host of Southern Baptists spreading all over the Southland. That's what happened. Beginning in 1777 in North Carolina and continuing until 1801 in Kentucky, the Charlestonians and the Sandy Creekers began coming together. Together they formed the Southen Baptist Convention and the blending helped shape the Southern Baptist synthesis.

The Georgia Tradition. The third tradition contributing to the Southern Baptist synthesis may be called the Georgia Tradition. This tradition is understood by pointing to two locales, not one. The two are Augusta and Atlanta. And there are two Baptist leaders who personify this tradition. They are W.B. Johnson, first president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and I.T. Tichenor, the leader of the Home Mission Board who helped to forge a Southern Baptist consciousness in the despairing denominational days of the post Civil War. And the "words" to describe this tradition? The words for the Georgia Tradition are "LOCAL COLOR."

Arriving in Augusta on May 8, 1845, W.B. Johnson had in his pocket a proposed constitution for the about-to-be-formed Southern Baptist Convention. After the Convention convened, a "Public Address" was drafted to explain why the Southern Baptist Convention was being organized. Johnson wrote the address. Two ideas dominated those two documents. The ideas were denominationalism and sectionalism. These ideas have provided for Southern Baptists *much* of their local color throughout the history of the Convention.

First, sectionalism. We Southern Baptists have not always spoken with candor on why the Convention was formed. We have often smoke-screened this part of our heritage. Theological differences between Baptists North and South had nothing to do with the denominational division. And Baptists at Augusta clearly said so: "Let not the extent of this disunion be exaggerated. . .," they said, "Northern and Southern Baptists are still brethren. They differ in no article of the faith." Nor did ecclesiology or missionary neglect of the South by the North contribute significantly.

The issue was *slavery* which was a part of the larger issue of a growing *sectionalism* in the country. Following the invention of the cotton gin, Baptists *of* the South became Southern Baptists, a people who for years to come would defend the Southern way of life. But, that defense would begin cracking in the 1950's. Here is a part of our heritage which we must receive and confess and forgive.

Slavery gave local color to 19th century Southern Baptists just as it did to every other major Southern denomination. Bigotry was not a Baptist monopoly. But my main point here is that the slavery issue fueled the *sectionalism* of Baptists in the South. No pun intended, it "colored" the Southern Baptist Convention. It colored it not only in terms of *race*, but more generally in terms of *region*. Again, Baptists *in* the South became *Southern* Baptists, a *regional* people. But that would begin cracking in the 1940's.

The organization of the Southern Baptist Convention was also colored by cooperative denominationalism. As often pointed out by historians, Southern Baptists formed in 1845 a *new* kind of denominational structure, one that was more connectional, more centralized and more cooperative than any heretofore known among Baptists. They forsook the decentralized, societal approach of the North and formed one convention with two Boards, Home and Foreign, which were accountable to the one Convention.

What would cement this new denominationalism? What would hold it together? Would it be theological and creedal? And the answer was given: "We have constructed for our basis no new creed; acting in this manner upon a Baptist aversion for all creeds but the Bible." Southern Baptists waited eighty years to adopt their first confession, and then only reluctantly and under pressure. When they adopted the confession of 1925, however, a crack appeared in the anti-confessional posture of the SBC.

If the new denomination was not to be united by theological uniformity, then by what? Article two of the Constitution answered forthrightly: "It shall be the design of this Convention to promote Foreign and Domestic Missions, and other important objects connected with the Redeemer's kingodm. . ." They were organizing a plan, as the Preamble to the Constitution states, ". . .for eliciting, combining and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort, for the propagation of the gospel. . ."

Cooperation was the *method. Missions* "and other important objects connected with the Redeemer's kingdom" was the *motive.* That was what happened at Augusta.

The ideas of sectionalism and denominationalism were intensified by I.T. Tichenor in *1882.* In that year he became the Executive-Secretary of a crippled Home Mission Board, and moved it from Marion, Alabama, to Atlanta, Georgia. In order to save the Board from an imminent death, Tichenor had to do two things. He had to guarantee Southern Baptists' allegiance to the *Southern* Board by breaking their support for the Northern Board Home Missions Society which was more influential and affluent. He did so by appealing to Southerners' *sectionalism.* Also, he had to persuade Southern Baptists to work through a central denominational mission board rather than through the increasingly powerful state convention boards. He did so by pointing to the value of a *cooperative denominationalism.* He was successful in both cases.

So the Georgia Tradition colored the SBC with an intense sectionalism and a devout cooperative denominationalism. For years the sectionalism restricted us in both our relationship with Blacks and our outreach beyond the confederacy. Our denominationalism, however, provided a cooperation between churches and the Convention which should explain part of the genius of the SBC.

The Tennessee Tradition. The fourth tradition that went into the shaping of the synthesis came out of Tennessee. J.R. Graves is the central figure. Landmarkism was the movement. And Nashville and Memphis, the respective homes of Graves, were the places. To describe

this tradition, so powerful in its impact on the synthesis, let's use the words *"QUESTIONABLE HONOR."*

I will forego an enumeration of the Landmark distinctives, knowing that you are aware of them. But let me make the crucial point. Landmarkism, with its emphasis on local church successionism and the exclusive validity of Baptist churches, Baptist ministers, and Baptist ordinances, gave to Southern Baptists a claim to fame as being the only ones God had. Over against the restorationism of the Campbellites and the pedobaptism of the Methodists and Presbyterians, Landmarkism gave to Southern Baptists a "trail of blood" which said the oldest is the best. The assumption was that longevity validates truth. Many Southern Baptists, however, believed the non-historical assumption and felt much better about who they were. Much of our anti-ecumenism and almost all of our sectarianism may be traced to the Tennessee Tradition. In other words, Landmarkism gave us an identity based on a fallacious history. By the turn of the 20th century, Southern Baptists were being told it was not so. Cracks in the Landmark structure continued in the 20th century and even to this day create something of an identity crisis for some Southern Baptists.

Now, a word of summary concerning these four traditions. By 1900 this Southern Baptist goulash had been mixed and stirred and looked something like this.

The Charleston Tradition had poured into the bowl *order,* which provided denominational connectionalism, a theological consensus, and, while never neglecting evangelism, facilitated ministerial education as an important object of the Redeemer's kingdom. Charleston provided leadership and stability for an emerging denomination. it gave us a *churchly* identity.

The Sandy Creek Tradition contributed *arbor,* which provided revivalistic momentum, an adventuresome spirit and a love for liberty. It gave us an *evangelistic* identity.

The "Southernness" of the Georgia Tradition gave us a *cultural* identity. Just as important, however, it intensified the *denominational* identity of a close-knit organizational connectionalism which was present at Charleston. It gave us a method and a motive for cooperation.

The Tennessee Tradition yielded an *ecclesiological* identity resulting in a narrow sectarianism. In doing so, however, it overlooked the older and continuing Charleston ecclesiology, which affirmed the universal church. However, the Tennessee tradition gave a sense of pride to 19th century Southern Baptists.

The First Half of The Twentieth Century. A process of denominationalizing had begun among Southern Baptists before the dawn of the 20th century. A "Southern Baptist spirit" was developing around distinctly Southern Baptist institutions. The synthesis solidified around several institutions and movements in the 20th century.

Institutions and the Denominationalizing Process. First, the nature and organizational plan of the 1845 SBC, as I have mentioned before, strengthened the synthesis. A comprehensive denominational structure, based on cooperation, encouraged *devotion to* and *financial responsibility for* diverse types of Christian ministry. The syntehsis of the convention was missionary, not doctrinal, in nature.

Second, the Foreign and Home Mission Boards *symbolized* the synthesis. Both were begun in 1845. Both elicited support from Baptists all over the South and Southwest. Both became a bond of denominational loyalty.

Third, Baptist colleges, though formed under state conventions, rather than the Southern Baptist Convention, nevertheless helped to create a Southern Baptist consciousness.

Fourth, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, while organized outside the Southern Baptist Convention, was widely and correctly perceived as a Southern Baptist institution. It, and the five other Southern Baptist seminaries which followed in the 20th century, afforded Southern Baptists a theological educational enterprise which has to make Furman and Boyce and Carroll and Dement and Stealey grin all over heaven. Rooted in the Word of God and made possible by Southern Baptist cooperation, these six schools, which contain 20% of all theological students in the U.S. and Canada, have provided Southern Baptists with justifiable denominational pride.

Fifth, the Woman's Missionary Union, organized in 1888, underscored missions as the one sacred effort of the Convention. Women became denominationalists by giving their money, encouraging the local churches to give theirs, and by educating the children, young people, and the men in missionary education.

Sixth, by 1891 the Southern Baptist Convention had its own Sunday School Board. *No* institution has done more to denominationalize and synthesize Southern Baptists. It lassoed every interdenominational movement that came down the churchly pike in the latter 19th and early 20th centuries and promptly "Southern Baptistized" it. This was true of the interdenominational B.Y.P.U., the interdenominational Baraca Sunday Schools, and the interdenominational student movement. The SSB has provided a common literature, challenged our educational programs to set common standards of excellence, stressed the common task of evangelism, and produced and published in 1940 the first "Southern Baptist Book of Common Prayer"—the Broadman, and later, Baptist hymnal. It has united us with everything from Vacation Bible School to the January Bible Study, common Christian stock in most Southern Baptist churches. While unifying us, it has not uniformed us; no organization can or should do that. The denominational unity created by the Board has not only respected Southern Baptist diversity; it has, when not under critics' attacks, encouraged it.

Other Developments. All of the other agencies and commissions of the SBC have made signal contributions to the Southern Baptist synthesis. But time precludes their mention. I would, however, call your attention to three other developments in the 20th century which must not be overlooked. They are the Executive Committee, the 1925 Confession of Faith, and the 1925 Cooperative Program.

Formed in 1917, the Executive Committee has become the administrative and organizational linchpin of the SBC. It has been of enormous value in coordinating a mushrooming denomination.

"The Baptist Faith and Message of 1925" was a kind of Southern Baptist Elizabethan Settlement, a theological statement broad enough to include all Southern Baptists and narrow enough to affirm the Christian fundamentals. This part of the Southern Baptist synthesis has come under attact in recent years. It is now accused by some critics of being too broad and not strict enough.

The Cooperative Program became the financial synthesis of Southern Baptists. It is the life-line of the Southern Baptist way for doing the gospel. Without its development

in 1925, the Southern Baptist Convention would today be a different people. If Southern Baptists fail to increase their support for the Cooperative Program, the SBC will be different in the future.

II. The Southern Baptist Synthesis: Its Stresses

Since World War II, and particularly in the last two decades, phenomenal stress has been placed on the Southern Baptist synthesis. Let me identify some of the stress points.

There has been a *cultural* stress. This has been partially due to the geographical expansion of Southern Baptists. Until World War II, the geographical base of the SBC remained fairly constant, centered in the Southeast, South, and Southwest. Between 1845 and 1942 only six additional states were added to the original fourteen state conventions affiliated with the SBC. Today we have 34 state conventions and we have churches in all fifty states of the Republic.

Two forces, *migration* and a *continuing emphasis on evangelism* have created this new geographical distribution. But the expansion has placed pressure on the "Southernness" of Southern Baptist life. Geographical expansion has inevitably produced a growing cultural pluralism in the Convention. While still a predominantly regional, white, middle-class denomination, the synthesis is beginning to be challenged by cultural diversity.

For example, approximately 30% of the churches in the Southern Baptist General Convention of California are predominantly ethnic minority. And an estimated 90% of Southern Baptist churches in California have multiethnic memberships. And the trend, for which we thank God, is that more ethnic minorities are coming into our churches every year. While thanksgiving is in order for the increasing cosmopolitanism of Southern Baptist life *and* our evangelistic successes, we must face the need to orient new people to a denominational heritage they have inherited but do not know and many do not understand. In addition to some Bold Going, Bold Growing, and Bold Giving, we *must* have some *Bold Knowing* of what holds this Convention together. And we can do this without resorting to an indoctrination of our past regionalism and Lankmarkism.

Cultural diversity has come at Southern Baptists from another direction. The Civil Rights struggle of the 60's with a focus on Blacks and the Human Rights struggles of the 70's with a focus on women have both also stressed the synthesis. And until we update our Baptist freedom, so central to our heritage, and make our Convention and churches genuinely open to *all* Southern Baptists, the stress will continue.

A second stress point is *denominational loyalty.* Southern Baptists stayed a country mile away from the organized ecumenical movement of the early part of this century. And yet some Southern Baptists who would have been the sharpest critics of that kind of ecumenism are right in the middle of a new fundamentalist ecumenism. Encouraged by the boom of the electronic church, and stimulated by the activity of para-church groups such as the Moral Majority, this new non-denominationalism has made unbelievable inroads into Southern Baptist life. Several months back, Dr. Bill Pinson had a little article in the Baptist Press entitled, "Can Southern Baptists Survive the Evangelicals?" His point was, and it is a good one, that Southern Baptist life could be eroded by the pervasive presence of the new fundamentalist ecumenism. The ecumenical threat to Southern Baptist denominational loyalty does not come from the left; it comes from the right. Some Southern Baptists have more loyalty to non-Southern Baptists seminaries, non-Southern Baptist agencies, and non-Southern Baptist movements, than they do to the denominational enterprise.

And this allegiance manifests another stress point, and that is *financial.* Statistics on the Cooperative Program have continued to look good. What these statistics do not demonstrate, however, is how much Southern Baptist money is being siphoned off from the Cooperative Program and channelled to non-denominational causes. Said one associate of the PTL ministries: "We don't keep statistics on denominational preferences because that goes against what Jim [Bakker] meant for us to be—interdenominational. But a good per cent of our supporters are Baptists, I expect." And Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcast Network indicates that Baptists, the Network's largest denominational contributor, give about 30% of what funnels in. It would be interesting and disconcerting to compare the total receipts of the SBC's Radio and Television Commission to the total amount given by Southern Baptists to the non-denominational electronic church. And do you imagine that the Christian Life Commission will get as much Southern Baptist money this year as Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority?

A leading critic of the Southern Baptist agencies is reported recently to have told some churches in Virginia to "give at least enough" to the Cooperative Program "to have the maximum number of messengers" at the Southern Baptist Convention so as to control the Convention. No wonder that some among us would resist a revision of the SBC Constitution which would call for a more liberal financial contribution in order to participate in the denominational process. Such a revision would impact churches on either end of the theological spectrum.

There are at least two other stress points which are integrally related. And they are *creedal* and *theological* in nature. But they shall be discussed in the next lecture.

III. The Southern Baptist Synthesis: Its Future

Well, is the synthesis breaking up? No, not breaking up; cracking, yes. But maybe better, it is reshaping. Some of the elements in the synthesis needed to be cracked. Our regionalism and our racism had to go if Southern Baptists were to be true to the gospel they proclaimed. And our Landmarkism simply could not withstand our devotion to the study of scripture or our heritage which came from Charleston, or our presence in a new world. We had another ecclesiology, both biblical and historical, which had to emerge.

Martin Marty recently referred to the Southern Baptist Convention as the Catholic Church of the South. He meant, I guess, that we are big and powerful and semi-established. He knows us well enough, however, to have meant that there is a kind of "protestant catholicity" among Southern Baptists. We have always been a diverse people The statement is not made simply as a plea for tolerance, though that in itself would justify it. It is made as a historical fact.

We came from sophisticated cities like Charleston and from rustic crossroads like Sandy Creek. We came educated and uneducated. We came with evangelism and we came with educational institutions. We came with the local church and the universal church. We came with

Calvinistic theology, Arminian theology and with no theology. We came applauding confessional statements and we came deploring confessional statements. We came affirming culture and rebuking culture. But mostly, I think, we just came together. That togetherness is a marvel to those of us on the inside and a mystery to those on the outside. And it is the togetherness, the diversity, the synthesis, which we must receive and confess and forgive. Above all, we must *know* it. Or there will be no hope for the denomination's future.

LECTURE II
"The Inerrancy Debate: A Comparative Study of Southern Baptist Controversies"

Southern Baptists are presently in their fourth major debate in the 20th Century. The first came in the mid-1920's and is generally known as the Fundamentalist Controversy. The second came in the early 1960's and is known as the Elliott Controversy. The third began in 1969 and lasted through the early 1970's and is known as the Broadman Controversy. And now the fourth, the Inerrancy Debate, began in the late 1970's and the end is not in sight.

My purpose is to compare the contemporary conflict with the three which preceded it. I will try to provide as much of the relevant pieces of each story so that you can see clearly the contrasts and similarities, though there are obvious limitations in an address of this length.

I. The Historical Contexts of the Debates

One should begin with the historical contexts of the debates. And contexts are both national and denominational. The spirit of the times will not necessarily determine debates within Christian denominations, but they certainly contribute. They can fuel the fire or they can dampen it. They can prolong it or they can abbreviate it. They can focus it or they can distract it.

Without question, the social matrix of the current controversy is more inflammatory than any of the other three Southern Baptists have known. Politically and religiously, it is a time of "hit lists." The Southern Baptist inerrantists appear to be a part of both the new religious and political right-wing. "The world is not moving toward toleration but away from it," said Martin E. Marty. And most, I think, would judge that Marty is correct in his observation.

Moving away from toleration—that was *partially true* of the 1920's and the first fundamentalist attack on the Southern Baptist Convention. *Only* partially true, however. Because while the 20's were characterized by an impulse to use coercion to preserve the past, as expressed in the aggressiveness of the Ku Klux Klan and the introduction of legislation to prevent the teaching of evolution in public schools, they were also "the roaring twenties." It was an age of flappers and speakeasies, of frolicking and gaiety. Dual moods existed then and now, but it seems that the 80's have begun as a more serious and far more conservative time. Clothing is now dark gray!

If the national turn to the right was partially true of the 20's, it was not true at all of the early 60's. The criticism of Ralph Elliott and his book, *The Message of Genesis*, was not buoyed by culture. For the 60's (not even the early 60's) were not dominated by repression but by an emerging permissiveness and liberation. Nor was it true of the days of the Broadman Controversy in the early 70's, though slightly more so than the 60's.

Thus, the right-wing movement in the denomination today has a stronger ally in the culture than have previous movements among Southern Baptists. This decade may be a time of trying men's souls, but it may also become a time for coercing men's souls. The Norrisite attack on the SBC was a problem *within* the Convention for about five years. The real heat was between 1921-1926. The Elliott Controversy lasted almost three years (1961-63), as did the Broadman debate (1969-1972). We have already had two years of the present conflict, and according to the Pressler-Patterson plan, it will last as long as it takes to gain control of the SBC agencies. They have announced a ten-year plan, and there is no good reason not to believe them. They have promised persistence. Again, the general atmosphere of the age may help sustain the movement.

But what about the denominational context of the controversies? In the 1920's the Southern Baptist Convention was not as vulnerable to critics as it is today. A stronger sense of denominational loyalty existed. Leaders within the Convention knew each other better. In addition, the first half of the decade (1919-1924) Southern Baptists were engaged in their first massive financial campaign, an effort to raise seventy-five million dollars. That campaign failed, incidentally. It raised only fifty-nine million and the SBC agencies were left with heavy debts. Part of the reason for that failure was the Fundamentalist undercutting of denominational allegiance.

So dollars dominated the 20's for Southern Baptists. These dollars were in the form of the Seventy-Five Million Campaign and the national depression. Surviving as a strong denomination was more important to most Southern Baptists than hearing what Frank Norris and C.P. Stealey had to say. One other thing should be noted. In the 1920's Southern Baptists had not experienced any serious previous denominational squabbles. Residuals of former tensions were not as present then as today.

In the Elliott Controversy, Southern Baptists had just emerged from the secure cocoon of "the religious fifties." The Convention was expanding in every way. A strong denominational consciousness had gotten stronger. And the Elliott Controversy was thirty-five years removed from the fundamentalist fire of the 1920's. There were no smoldering ashes to fan into a blaze.

From the Elliott Controversy of the early 1960's to the present debate, however, there were ashes. And they have flared again and again. The sense of victory in the removal of Ralph Elliott from his teaching post at Midwestern fueled a militancy which became more and more assertive.

By the time of the Broadman Controversy, beginning in 1969, religious America had gone through what Sydney Ahlstrom called "the tumultuous 60's." Southern Baptists were acquainted with the phrase. In addition to the Elliott Controversy at Midwestern, New Orleans Seminary an Southeastern Seminary had theological rumblings, as well as did Southern Seminary. Also, throughout the decade, the prophetic posture of the Christian Life Commission on the issue of Civil Rights caused consternation. Not once but three times motions were presented on the floor of the Convention to *abolish* the Commission. Walker Knight editor of *Home Missions* magazine, was also in the fray. A minor theological fuss developed in 1969 when Broadman Press published SBC president W.A. Criswell's book entitled *Why I Preach the Bible Is Literally Ture.* And four months before the release of Volume I of *The Broadman*

Bible Commentary, a motion was presented at the New Orleans Convention "that the Convention urge the Sunday School Board to have all writers to sign a statement with each manuscript of belief in the infallibility of the entire Bible, and that the seminaries secure from professors a like statement annually." The motion failed, but served as a prelude to the Broadman Controvery.

From 1969 to 1973 every one of the twelve volumes of the *Broadman Bible Commentary* was criticized. By Convention action, Volume I had to be withdrawn and rewritten. Following the Broadman conflict, the issues in it and the Elliott controversy were kept alive by three institutions, none of which are Southern Baptist related agencies. One is the Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, located in Memphis, Tennessee. Advertising that all professors subscribe to the plenary verbal inspiration of scripture, the school receives much—maybe most—of its funding from Southern Baptist churches which apparently prefer to support it on an independent basis than to support the six Southern Baptist Seminaries. The school has maintained a low profile in Convention politics. The mere presence of the school, however, has nurtured controversy in Southern Baptist circles.

A second organization has not been quiet. Begun in March, 1973, at the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia, the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship has agitated for a strict adherence to the confessional statement adopted in 1963 during the Elliott Controversy. The Fellowship has consistently attacked what it perceives as doctrinal impurity among Southern Baptists through its newspaper, *The Southern Baptist Journal.*

Finally, but most significantly, *Christianity Today*, an interdenominational journal edited by Harold Lindsell, became a major tool for "channeling all theological issues into the inerrancy debate." (Henry, *The Christian Century*, Nov. 5, 1980, p. 1061) Lindsell, a Southern Baptist church member whose ministry has been interdenominational in context, also wrote two books, *The Battle For The Bible* (1976) and *The Bible In The Balance* (1979), which were very critical of Southern Baptists. In 1978 Lindsell was elected president of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship.

By the spring of 1979, when Paige Patterson and Paul Pressler announced plans to elect an SBC president committed to inerrancy and to end an alleged drift toward "liberalism" in the Convention, the fires had been stoked. They were stoked by twenty years of denominational tension. Patterson himself said that the present move was brought on "as much as anything else by the unwillingness of certain groups to really deal with the Broadman Commentary issue." The fires were stoked also by the erosion of denominational loyalty as represented in the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, by Mid-America Seminary, and by the Criswell Bible Institute where Patterson is president. And the fires were stoked, thirdly, by Harold Lindsell's writings.

The cumulative effect of all these movements, plus the cultural matrix, freight the denomination with a weight it has not had to bear in past controversies. It makes the present conflict, therefore, far more serious.

One other factor, often overlooked, is that Southern Baptists have been in a "generational crease" for the last five to seven years. We have had a changing of the guard in almost every agency and institution as well as in some of the larger pulpits in Southern Baptist life. Denominational leadership has not been able to solidify around an E.Y. Mullins or a Herschel H. Hobbs. People do not know each other well. The result is a very low trust level in the denomination. Polarization is more acute than it has ever been in our denomination's history. And that is the context of the inerrancy debate, nationally and denominationally.

II. The Issues of The Debates

Now, let's turn to a second area of comparison: the issues of the debates. All four of the controversies have had the Bible as a focal point of the rhetoric surrounding the controversies. The issues, however, cannot be limited to "the Battle *for* the Bible." That is to generalize to the point of distortion. Southern Baptists have never had a problem with the sole authority of scripture. In fact, it is that very Baptist principle which has made us reluctant to absolutize any human words, any confession of faith, or any creed for the Bible.

Our souls, like Luther's, have always been captive to the Word of God. Southern Baptists have affirmed that the Bible, not natural revelation, not churchly tradition, not Bishops—Baptist or otherwise—, not creedal documents, is our only authority for belief and behavior. So to keep the record clear, the question is not the authoritative nature of scripture. But the question has been one of *interpretation* and *approach* to our common authority. Diversity of interpretation *about* the Bible is not the same as *denial of* the Bible. And that is exactly why Baptists have had as one of their basic convictions the concept of soul freedom. Running through all four of the debates, therefore, are two themes: (1) the affirmation that the Bible is the Word of God, (2) the fact that Baptists have differences of opinion among themselves concerning the interpretation of scripture.

There was a specific issue in the Fundamentalist movement of the 1920's. It was the issue of evolution. In 1923 Frank Norris said, "I intend to start a fight on evolution and on the denomination and I never expect to stop it until it is extracted, root and branch, and if the denomination is split, it will split over the question of evolution." The one phrase which C.P. Stealey, a Norris ally, wanted in Article 3 of the 1925 Confession was the phrase "And Not By Evolution." Any interpretation of the Bible which said that God used the evolutionary process in creation was portrayed as denying the Bible.

Another issue in the 1920's was Frank Norris' vitriolic attacks on denominational leaders and institutions. L.R. Scarborough, president of Southwestern Seminary during the controversy, wrote a little tract entitled "Norrisism." He called Norrisism "an old cult under a new name" which "... gives nothing to associational, state or home missions and only enough to foreign missions to get representation in the convention." Norris' hobby, it was said, was "tending to the convention." He and C.P. Stealey focused the issue on professors in Southern Baptist colleges and seminaries. Professors Hall and Dow of Baylor, Staten of William Jewell, Poteat of Wake Forest University and Sampey of Southern Seminary all came under the editorial gun of C.P. Stealey.

In both the Elliott and Broadman controversies the central word was not "evolution" but "infallibility." Specifically, divergent interpretations of the book of *Genesis* constituted the center of the conflicts. In the Elliott Controversy the spotlight shone most brightly on *Genesis*

1-11. Opponents of Elliott claimed that to refuse to take these chapters literally is to deny the Bible. His supporters claimed that the important thing about the Bible is its message, not its literary nature. Genesis 22 and the proposed sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham was the pivotal, but certainly not the only, passage of interpretation under debate in the Broadman Controversy.

A spirit of anti-denominationalism, so prevalent in Frank Norris, did not dominate these two controversies. What was under criticism in the Elliott Controversy was a Southern Baptist seminary professor, the institution he taught in, the book he wrote, and Broadman Press which published it. Because Henton Davies, the writer of the Genesis Commentary in the Broadman Commentary, was not a Southern Baptist professor, the criticism was directed at the book itself and primarily at Broadman Press for publishing it.

From "evolution" to "infallibility," the code word of the present controversy is "inerrancy." While there is no indication that it will remain so, the inerrancy advocates are far more general in their accusations than critics in past controversies. Baylor University has undergone some scrutiny recently but with no major consequence. And the names of six or seven seminary professors were listed as unorthodox last spring by Paige Patterson, but no charges, to my knowledge, have been filed with their respective Boards of Trustees.

At this stage of the debate the issue does not appear primarily to be biblical or theological. The issue appears to be—and has been for two years—political. The very first action of the inerrancy advocates was to construct political organizations to see that an "inerrancy" president was elected at the SBC. After organizing meetings in several states, they supported Adrian Rogers in 1979 for president, and he was elected on the first ballot. Following that the politicizing has intensified. When Rogers declined to serve a second term, this group threw their support behind and helped elect Bailey Smith. The political issue was clarified almost two months ago when Paul Pressler announced: "We are going for the jugular." He exegeted that to mean that his political caucus was out to control Southern Baptist institutions. And Pressler is aware that "the jugular" of these institutions are the trustees. He said, "We are going for having knowledgeable, Bible-centered, Christ-honoring trustees of all our institutions, who are not going to sit there like a bunch of dummies and rubber stamp everything that's presented to them." So the primary issue at present is political.

No single person or institution or book is the object. And in this the inerrancy controversy differs from the Broadman, the Elliott, and, to some degree, the 20's debate. Inerrancy advocates think the problem is systemic to the denomination, not isolated to specific cases. *The result is that they are going after the machinery of the denomination as well as the minds of Southern Baptists. But that leads us to a third area of comparison and that is methods used in the controversies.*

III. The Methods of The Debates

When Norris and Stealey went after the issue of evolution in the 1920's, the attack was four-fold. First, the leadership, especially Norris, was *charismatic.* Norris was a spellbinding preacher by anybody's standards. His language was concrete and crusading, intimidating and unambiguous. He once described the mayor of Ft. Worth and his associates as a "two by four, simian-headed, sawdust-brained, bunch of grafters." He accused them of "tampering with the wires" of his radio station and declared that "some of you low down devils that monkey around this property, arrange for your undertaker before you come around here." The audience cheered. Norris was more like Urban II at Claremont, whipping up the troops for a crusade, than he was Eisenhower, staying in the general's quarters and mapping out strategy. Norris had no plan; he had a *pulpit!*

Second, the approach was *journalistic.* Norris had "The Searchlight" and Stealey had *The Messenger,* the Oklahoma state paper. Third, Stealey led the fight for a creedal statement. He was on the committee, chaired by E.Y. Mullins, to draw up Southern Baptists' first confessional statement. But in the end, it was not binding enough for Stealey. That was 1925. One year later the Convention adopted the McDaniel Statement, a strong anti-evolution statement that satisfied Stealey. But he and his associates were not through. Three days after the McDaniel Statement was adopted, a resolution was presented, saying, "that this convention request all its institutions and Boards and their missionary representatives" to sign the McDaniel Statement. Stealey then engineered his home state convention to withhold undesignated funds of the Cooperative Program from Southern Baptist seminaries whose faculties refused to sign the statement. The funds were released in two years even though two of the three faculties did not sign the statement.

In the Elliott controversies there was no charismatic-led attack such as that of Norris. K. Owen White, pastor of First Church, Houston, Texas, and president of the Convention in 1963, was one of the biggest pastoral names. Nor were there private papers involved. The state Baptist papers, however, were more widely divided than in the Norris controversy. Also, some critics of Elliott arranged pre-convention planning conferences, but these were primarily designed to strategize for resolutions and motions on the floor of the Convention. No systematic effort was made to control the election of trustees for all SBC agencies, though there was some effort—and success—in determining the Midwestern Board. And interestingly enough, the Confessional statement which came at this time was not the work of those opposed to Elliott but of the established leadership of the Convention. It was an establishment effort at peace-keeping.

Like the Elliott Controversy, the criticism of the Broadman Commentary was non-charismatic in leadership, widely debated in the Baptist Press (with more editors supporting Broadman than they had Elliott), and vigorously aired on the floor of the Convention. There were *no* independent papers, *no* on-going political organization or refined orchestration to control the agencies. The effort was *singular* in purpose—to get the Sunday School Board by Convention action to withdraw Volume I of the commentary. It was withdrawn and rewritten and while the Confessional Statement of 1963 was used, unsuccessfully, in 1972 to try and ban all twelve volumes, the statement did not play a major role in the strategy of the Broadman critics.

What about the inerrancy advocates of today? First, they have run up against a group of editors of state Baptist papers who have, I think, almost all editorialized against the movement. Not in the 1920's, 1960's, or 1970's have the Baptist papers been so solid in this opposition. In fact, in the other three controversies there was a division of

editorial opinion. This does not appear to be the case today. However, two independent papers, "The Southern Baptist Journal" and "The Southern Baptist Advocate" serve as the media for inerrancy.

The Baptist Faith and Message of 1963 is being used in the current debate very much like the 1925 Confession was used by Stealey, but more intensely. In fact, an obvious effort is being made to redefine the Confession, particularly the article on Holy Scripture, into stricter words and a more restricted interpretation. Resolution 16 on Doctrinal Integrity is the most recent attempt at revising the Confession and transforming it into a creed. A "liberal," in the minds of the inerrancy advocates, is now one who believes in the Baptist Faith and Message as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963.

Notice what has happened to Southern Baptists and creedalism. In 1845, the SBC said it had no creed but the Bible. In 1925, it adopted its first confession. W.W. Barnes, professor of Church History at Southwestern Seminary and one for whom this lecture series is named, said joyfully in 1934 that the Confession was received by Southern Baptist churches generally with "a tremendous outburst of silence." Barnes went on, however, to make some ominous remarks about the Convention adopting doctrinal statements. Said Barnes:

> The reception that that creed has received, or perhaps one should say, has not received, seems to suggest that Southern Baptists are not yet ready for doctrinal centralization, but the first step has been taken. It may be another century, but if and when the doctrinal question again arises, succeding generations can point to 1925 and say that the Southern Baptist Convention, having once adopted a creed, can do so again. Perhaps by that time other centralizing forces will have developed and the convention may have the means and the method of compelling congregations to take notice of the creed adopted.

Barnes' gloomy forecast was wrong on two counts. It did not take a century, it took only thirty-eight years. And to this point no effort has been made to force congregations to adopt it. But, Barnes saw the creedal trend clearly. First, there is a call for inerrancy. Second, the confessional statement is interpreted to guard inerrancy. Third, there are suggestions to revise the Confession to guarantee inerrancy. Fourth, there is a call for the imposition of the revised Confession to make binding the inerrancy. Creedalism is not creeping among us; it is galloping!

The unique thing about the inerrancy debate, however, is not creedalism. Nor is it the most dangerous thing. The unique thing and the most dangerous thing is that we now have for the first time in the Southern Baptist Convention a highly-organized, apparently well-funded, partisan political party which is going not only for the minds of the Southern Baptist people but for the machinery of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Their method is clear. First, they turn out the votes at the annual meeting of the SBC even if they must bus people in. Second, they seek to elect an SBC president who they believe is committed to their goals. Third, their president appoints a Committee on Committees sensitive to their goals. Fourth, the Committee on Committees names a Committee on Boards sensitive to their goals. Fifth, the Committee on Boards nominates to the SBC trustees who are sensitive to their goals. Sixth, you get the votes back out to the Convention to make sure the Committee on Boards' report is accepted. In no controversy in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention has the system been misused this way. Those who say that "this is just the same old thing" are unaware of our heritage.

IV. The Consequences of the Controversies

Well, what have been the consequences of the four controversies? I have intimated at this throughout the lecture. But let me summarize.

The consequences of the Norris-Stealey movement? (1) A confession of faith was adopted which was satisfactory to neither side but generally accepted by all. (2) Southern Baptists were unsuccessful in their $75 million campaign. (3) A specific anti-evolution statement was adopted and attempts made to impose it. (4) Norris was discredited, forced from the Convention and was successful in alienating a few ministers and churches from the Convention. (5) Stealey was eventually dismissed from his editorship.

The consequences of the Elliott Controversy: (1) Elliott was dismissed, not for heresy, but for insubordination. He was fired because he would not promise that he would voluntarily refrain from re-publishing his book. (2) The book was not banned by Convention action but it was not republished by administrative decision of the Sunday School Board. (3) A young seminary was severly crippled. (4) A second Southern Baptist Confession was adopted. (5) The trustees of Midwestern Seminary approved the historical method, but not necessarily the interpretations of *The Message of Genesis*. (6) Seminary professors and the Sunday School Board were placed under a cloud of suspicion.

Consequences of the Broadman Controversy: (1) A book was withdrawn by Convention action. (2) The 1963 Confession became increasingly more visible in the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship. (3) The suspicion of denominational agencies intensified.

And what shall be the consequences of the inerrancy debate? One, of course, cannot be sure, but some things are clear: (1) Polarization is occurring and there appears to be no arbitrator, no E.Y. Mullins or Herschel Hobbs on the scene. (2) The religion department of one college and the names of seminary professors have been accused of heterodoxy. There will, doubtless, be others. (3) The debate will continue and doubtless intensify. The inerrancy advocates are persistent. They have not been slowed down by all the state editors, nor by a Convention resolution rebuking their activities in 1979, nor by a mild rebuke by one of the most influentially conservative voices in the SBC, W.A. Criswell, nor by defeat at several state conventions. Some have begun to see the gravity of the problem and are countering with quasi-political movements. (4) The debate could jeopardize Bold Missions in the same way that the Fundamentalist Debate of the 1920's helped wreck the $75 Million Campaign.

Someone asked a French priest what he did during the revolution. He answered, "I survived." Let us hope and let us pray that the Southern Baptist synthesis, so rich in diversity, so flawed by the likes of us sinners, so used by God despite the flaws — let us pray that the synthesis shall be sustained.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