INTRODUCTION

WOMEN'S PLACE: WOMEN'S ROLES IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Women's contributions often have been overshadowed by historians' accounts of the men and events that helped shape history. Nowhere is this more evident than within the realm of religion. Women, although often relegated to the background, contributed greatly to the shaping of American religious history. Since its inception in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) owes much to Southern Baptist women. Why then do histories of the SBC, one of the largest Protestant denominations in the world, lack the names and contributions of these women?\(^1\) Why then are women still so visibly absent from positions of leadership within the local church, as well as the upper echelons of the denomination's infrastructure?

As part of the evangelical movement of the nineteenth century, Baptists organized mission societies and Sunday schools, published literature, and began a moral crusade to

\(^1\)Gregory Vickers, "Women's Place: Images of Womanhood in the SBC, 1888-1929" (M.A. thesis., Vanderbilt University, 1986), 1.
save the world for the cause of Christ.\(^2\) Women supported their local congregations and participated in local benevolence efforts. Baptist women embraced charitable activities because "it was assumed that prayer, Bible study, soul-winning, and doing good deeds were normal parts of a Christian life."\(^3\) Roles for women in the church, however, were primarily nurturing roles. Teaching, taking care of children, and preparing meals were the major duties of these early sisters. During the antebellum period, church women initiated Sunday schools for their children and slaves, sang in their church choirs, organized local associations to help the less fortunate, and raised money to enable young men to pursue a ministerial education.\(^4\)

In the South, society itself revolved around the church.\(^5\) Submissive roles for women or being the "proper Southern Woman" were reinforced by evangelical theology.\(^6\) The images of the perfect Southern Christian woman and the perfect "Southern Lady" were nearly identical; therefore, "religion strongly reinforced the patriarchal culture," and so ultimately upheld the


\(^4\) Sarah Joyce Myers, "Southern Methodist Women Leaders and Church Missions, 1878-1910" (Ph.D Dissertation., Emory University, 1990), 13.


system of slavery. Southern women were taught to be submissive and "expected to be meek, mild, quiet outside their home, self-abnegating, kind to all, and to accept their husbands as lord and master." Prior to the Civil War, Southern women were concerned with behaving in a godly manner, maintaining a pious life, and aiding in the salvation of the soul. To illustrate the character of the pious Southern woman, one Virginia matron was described as follows:

her life was one long act of devotion--devotion to God, devotion to her husband, devotion to her children, devotion to her servants, to the poor, to humanity. Nothing happened within the range of her knowledge that her sympathy did not reach and her charity and wisdom did not ameliorate--she was the head and foot of the church . . . The training of her children was her work. She watched over them, inspired them, led them, governed them; her will impelled them; her word to them as to her servants was law. She reaped the reward . . . their sympathy and tenderness were hers always and they worshipped her.

"Proper duties" for women within Southern churches were practically the same as in Southern society at large. "Proper duties" were generally defined as anything that did not require exercising authority over men or doing anything that might conflict with men's primary responsibility of providing leadership in the church. "Womens' work" was expected to be done in silence; propriety prevented them from pushing for the right to speak in the church or to take leadership roles. These roles were reinforced by religious periodicals of the nineteenth century

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8Ibid., 94.

9Ibid., 92.

10Ibid., 94.

11Vickers, 1.

which emphasized women's need to focus on "prayer, contemplation, and Bible reading."  

Southern women were encouraged to recognize:

the need for constant cultivation of submissiveness to the will of an all-powerful God; the need for subduing the self and practicing goodness to others; the importance of raising children to fear God; the achievement of conversion and secure salvation; and a strong sense of one's own innate wickedness.  

Religion continued to be an important part of many women's lives but the nature of their religiosity changed from an "intense personal piety to a concern for the salvation of the heathen and for social problems."  

Personal piety led to a concern for the physical and spiritual well being of others, both at home and abroad. Faith and works were assumed to be requirements for salvation so Southern women believed humankind participated in their own salvation.  

Careful to stay within their proper sphere, women found ways to minister. Beyond simple benevolence in their local church, Baptist women first found their niche in mission societies and did a great work, especially in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, fostering missions education and missions promotion as their primary goals.  

Since the SBC began in 1845, Baptist women have taught their children to do what they believed God was calling them to do. Many women took their place in ministry within their "proper roles." However, some ventured into other areas of ministry previously unexplored--those of missionary, deacon and minister. These forays into new areas of ministry have

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13Scott, "Women," 95.

14Ibid.

15Ibid., 93.

16Ibid., 105-106.
sometimes met with criticism and resentment. Whatever their calling, Southern Baptist women have served in many different ministry roles.

\[17\] Ibid., 95.
CHAPTER 1

THE BIRTH OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION AND THE EMERGENCE OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST WOMEN WITHIN THE WOMAN'S MISSIONARY UNION (WMU)

In the nineteenth century, the "Big Three" denominations (Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian) dominated the religious life of the South. By the 1840's, the friction over slavery began fraying the fabric of Southern denominations. By 1845 friction over slavery threatened the missionary efforts of Baptists by splintering them along political lines. Southern Methodists had split from their Northern counterparts one year earlier. Out of this division came new Southern denominations.

The newly created SBC, organized in 1845 in Augusta, Georgia, reacted to this split in what Robert Norman Nash, in his 1989 dissertation called a "strange mixture of outrage and relief . . . [which] freed [them] from the hypocrisy of pretended friends as well as from the threat of avowed enemies." It was in this divisive climate over slavery that new denominational identities and missions emerged.

\[18\] Ibid.


\[20\] Nash, 142.
From its inception, the SBC adopted missions as its primary purpose for existence.\textsuperscript{21} The Convention was formed with "one sacred effort": to spread the gospel at home and abroad.\textsuperscript{22} Unlike the hierarchical structure of other denominations, the SBC was formed as a loose confederation of churches, all cooperating for the cause of missions. Although associated with the SBC in name and for the cause of missions, the local church remained autonomous. Therefore, individual churches adopted their own constitutions and structures while still remaining associated with the parent body. Males governed the denominational hierarchy and the local church. With the threat of the Civil War, the denominations' "sacred effort" was threatened along with the governance of the local church.

With able-bodied men gone to fight the Civil War, women undertook more responsibilities. As historian Anne Firor Scott points out, "with many men gone submissiveness was no longer a functional virtue" in Southern society.\textsuperscript{23} Additional responsibilities resulted in a reinterpretation of many women's roles in church and society.\textsuperscript{24} Women took quite a bit of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 8.
  \item \textsuperscript{22}Henry C. Vedder, \textit{A Short History of the Baptists} (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 347.
  \item \textsuperscript{23}Scott, "Women," 102.
  \item \textsuperscript{24}Nash, 228-229; Rees Watkins, \textit{Daughters of Destiny-Virginia Baptist Women, Their Story: Celebrating the Contributions of Women to Virginia Baptist Church Life} (Richmond, VA: Virginia Baptist Historical Society, 1994), 15.
\end{itemize}
latitude in creating new roles in church leadership necessitated by the war, like making church
decisions and securing pastors for their struggling congregations; yet they remained models of
piety.\(^{25}\) In the eyes of Southern men, whatever causes women chose to support easily translated
into church causes.\(^{26}\) To accomplish their goals yet preserve their proper role, women balanced
societal expectations of proper conduct (epitomizing the virtues of "true womanhood"—piety,
purity, submissiveness and domesticity) while they expanded their roles into something more.\(^{27}\)
These new administrative roles revealed the hidden managerial talents of many Southern
women.\(^{28}\) In a time when secular employment was limited or virtually nonexistent, women
looked to the church for a quasi-vocation.\(^{29}\) Church work became for many the first avenue of
freedom from rigid societal roles.\(^{30}\)

After the Civil War was over, men returned home and reclaimed their leadership roles in
the church and society.\(^{31}\) Southern men believed that expanded women's roles were just another
outgrowth of the devastating war.\(^{32}\) They believed that women would return to their "proper

\(^{25}\) Nash, 229; Watkins, 15.

\(^{26}\) Nash, 229.

\(^{27}\) Myers, 13.

\(^{28}\) Nash, 228-229.; Watkins, 15.

\(^{29}\) DeBerg, 22.

\(^{30}\) Scott, Southern Lady, 140.

\(^{31}\) DeBerg, 22.

\(^{32}\) Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, New Women of the New South: the Leaders of the Woman
roles" after the war was over.\textsuperscript{33} However, women's relationship to the church after the Civil War began a new phase of development.\textsuperscript{34} New roles of ministry emerged. Prior to this, "the male-dominated church and the kin-oriented society interfered with the development of separate women groups within the church structure."\textsuperscript{35} With Southern defeat and the Reconstruction to follow, Southern patriarchy was weakened and new roles for women began to appear.\textsuperscript{36}

With the South's defeat, mainstream evangelical women throughout the South were freed from slaveholding and other responsibilities assumed while men were gone to war.\textsuperscript{37} All denominations experienced the forming of some kind of women's religious society.\textsuperscript{38} Since the war left the South devastated, it became the church's responsibility to find solutions to the chaos that remained.\textsuperscript{39} Southern Baptist women, like their evangelical sisters, organized mission societies to raise funds and recruit volunteers to spread the gospel.\textsuperscript{40} Mission societies provided

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{34}Scott, "Women," 102.


\textsuperscript{36}Scott, \textit{Southern}, 96, 102.

\textsuperscript{37}Scott, "Women," 103.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 105-106.

\textsuperscript{39}Virginia A. Shadron, "Out of Our Homes: The Woman's Rights Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South 1890-1918" (M.A. thesis, Emory University, 1976), 3.

\textsuperscript{40}DeBerg, 22.
needed assistance through their benevolence in rebuilding the devastated South. Through their work in mission societies, women created new roles for themselves within the changing South.  

Towns in the "New South" began to spring up and urban populations in the South began to increase due to the industrialization of the late nineteenth century. New roles for Southern women evolved later in the nineteenth century due to the delay in modernization and industrialization. Industrialization benefited women of the South by creating "smaller families, better health, canned food, [and] store bought clothes . . . [reducing] . . . the time required for necessary household function and . . . [expanding] . . . the leisure time of urban wives." With more leisure time, middle and upper class Baptist women found new avenues to fill their time. With families needing them less, "it was the firm conviction of many women that . . . the Lord had work for them to do." They looked beyond the problems of their private lives to help others--identifying women and children as their primary responsibility. Missions became a principal vehicle for Christian women to exercise their gifts of money and ministry while enabling them to still fit within the proper sphere of Southern life. Although their main goal

41 Scott, Southern, 140.
42 Scott, "Women," 102.
43 Friedman, 6.
44 Scott, "Women," 102.
45 Friedman, 119.
47 Myers, 194.
48 Nash, 230.
was missions, through the coordination of their own programs the women in these societies
gained self confidence and sharpened their own leadership abilities and administrative skills. 49

Participation in mission societies was not a new occurrence for Southern Baptists. Even
before the founding of the SBC, Baptist women participated in benevolent societies. Inspired by
missionary pioneers such as Luther Rice and Adoniram Judson, Christian women participated in
"mite societies" and Ladies' Aid Societies. 50 One of the first national missions organizations that
Baptists participated in had been Mary Webb's Boston Female Society for Missionary
Purposes. 51 Created in the early 1800's, this missionary organization was an interdenominational
society consisting of fourteen members: eight Baptists and six Congregationalists. 52 Webb
reported in a newsletter that her society had "no doubt [that] our sisters feel with us, that it is out
of duty on these occasions, particularly to bear on our hearts the ministers of the gospel;
especially to our Missionary brethren." 53 The purpose of this society and others to follow was to
minister to the spiritual and physical needs of those less fortunate and to uplift missionaries
called to spread the Gospel.

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49 Myers, 186.


52 McBeth, Women, 77.; Nash, 235.
Mission societies supported the SBC's primary goal of evangelizing others through missions outreach.\footnote{H. Leon McBeth, A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 204-205.} At first, Southern Baptist mission societies emerged in response to the needs of specific missionaries at home and abroad.\footnote{McBeth, Sourcebook, 204-205.; Helen Emery Falls, "Baptist women in Missions Support in the Nineteenth Century" Baptist History and Heritage 12, no. 1 (January 1977): 33.} For example, in 1871, with strong support from local pastors, Ann Graves organized Baptist women in Baltimore for the cause of missions.\footnote{Vickers, 34.} Graves' son, Roswell H. Graves, was a Southern Baptist missionary in Canton, China.\footnote{McBeth, Women, 85.; Catherine Allen, The New Lottie Moon Story (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1980), 65.} Later notables such as Alice and Annie Armstrong were included in the membership of this missions organization.\footnote{Ibid.} One such group, the Richmond Female Society, demonstrated its support for missions by not only raising $1,000 within their first year, but also by sewing needed clothing and other items for the missionaries.\footnote{Allen, New Lottie Moon Story, 65.}

The early mission societies did their missionary work virtually unnoticed by the denomination and did not actively push for formal consolidated organization until 1872.\footnote{Watkins, 14} In
recognition of their good work, the SBC, in 1872, requested that the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) include a report of the work done by these "bible-women."\textsuperscript{61}

These mission societies were formed into loose confederations. As their interests in missions grew, Southern Baptist women began forming central committees of "women's work" or "woman's mission to woman" for both home and foreign missions in their individual states as early as 1876, garnering convention support in 1877.\textsuperscript{62}

A push for national organization gained momentum in 1885 due to an event that impacted Southern Baptist women. Mary Oldham Eagle (Mrs. J. P.), president of the Women of Arkansas, and Margareta Dudgeon Early (Mrs. M.D.), Secretary, traveled to attend the SBC as delegates from the Arkansas Convention.\textsuperscript{63} However, upon arriving, they were barred from their seats as delegates due to their gender. The two women withdrew their names from the delegates list due to the uproar it caused.\textsuperscript{64} To prevent this controversy from sparking again, a constitutional amendment was ratified which changed the word "messenger" in the constitution to the word "brethren."\textsuperscript{65} Previously, in 1877 and then again in 1882, Mrs. Myra E. Graves (listed on the delegates list as M.E. Graves without any notation of gender) was accepted as a delegate to the


\textsuperscript{62}Ammerman, 41.; Myers, 186-187.; Falls, 34.

\textsuperscript{63}Catherine Allen, \textit{A Century to Celebrate} (Birmingham, AL: Woman's Missionary Union, 1987), 38.

\textsuperscript{64}McBeth, \textit{Women}, 109.

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid.
It is interesting to note that, after the 1885 delegate incident, men, in return, were barred from the women's annual missions meetings. As a result of their disenfranchisement, women's voices (as well as their votes) were silenced in SBC matters until 1918. With this action, only through mission societies could SBC women's voices be heard. Attention and energies then turned to the mission societies.

Despite attempts to organize earlier, this incident created momentum to consolidate Southern Baptist women for the cause of missions. Baptist women had been meeting regularly since 1883. They had tried to establish a consolidated organization and move away from only ministering to women and children to create a broader evangelical base. In a meeting held in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1887, Annie Armstrong from Baltimore encouraged each state body of concerned Baptist women to continue setting up individual central committees within their states. She urged the central committees from each state to send delegates to an organizational meeting to be held in Richmond, Virginia, the following year. The majority of women felt that only through consolidation could a full effort be made to collect money efficiently and to

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69 Allen, *Century*, 34.

70 Ibid., 36.

disseminate missionary information.\textsuperscript{73} At that historic meeting in 1887, Fannie Stout from South Carolina expressed her sentiments for needing a national group:

We organize simply for greater efficiency in work and our work is the work of the convention. We do not desire a separate work, but if in some particulars, we separate ourselves as women, it is that we may gather greater momentum with which to push forward our united work.\textsuperscript{74}

In December of 1887 Lottie Moon, career missionary to China, wrote a letter of encouragement for consolidation, which was printed in the \textit{Foreign Mission Journal}:

I am convinced that one of the chief reasons our Southern Baptist women do so little is the lack of organization . . . In seeking organizations we do not need to adopt plans or methods unsuitable to the view or repugnant to the tastes of our brethren. What we want is not power, but simply combination in order to elicit the largest possible giving . . . Separate organizations is undesirable, and would do harm, but organization in subordination to the Board is the imperative need of the hour.\textsuperscript{75}

Although Moon would be known for her rather untraditional ministry views, she knew that only through working as an auxiliary to the SBC could missions be accomplished by Southern Baptist women of her day.

From the courageous examples of their missions-minded sisters, thirty-two delegates from all over the South (except Alabama and North Carolina) created the Woman's Missionary

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{72}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{73}Ibid., 941.
\item \textsuperscript{74}Ibid., 462.
\item \textsuperscript{75}Una Roberts Lawrence, \textit{Lottie Moon}, (Nashville, TN: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1927), 152-153.
\end{footnotes}
Union (WMU), Auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention in May, 1888. It was hoped that each state women's organization would become an equal part, functioning as a united auxiliary to the SBC with one program and one executive committee. Through the formation of this organization, women created new models of ministry which fit into their life experiences--helping those in need, whether physically or spiritually. In that same year, by comparison, the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) numbered 2,399 societies, boasted a membership of 56,783 and supported numerous missionaries all across the globe.

Most women's societies worked as auxiliaries or supplements to missionary endeavors of evangelical churches. Unlike the first missionary society under the Woman's Board of Missions of the MECS which was created as an equal agency of the parent board, the WMU remained independent of the SBC and did not become a Convention board or agency. It was created to provide support for SBC endeavors. Composed of all women, members controlled

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76 Barnes, 154, 156.; The term "WMU" will be used throughout to describe the SBC women's missions organizations. The fledgling society was first named The Executive Committee of the Woman's Mission Societies, Auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, before being changed formally to WMU in 1890.

77 Myers, 189.

78 Vickers, 31.

79 Myers, 29.


81 Elaine Magalis, Conduct Becoming to A Woman (Cincinnati: Women's Division - Board of Global Missions of the United Methodist Church, 1973), 20-21.
their financial contributions, elected their own officers, and planned their own meetings despite their association with a predominantly male-governed, conservative denomination. Unlike sister mission societies from other Southern denominations, the organization decided that it would not appoint missionaries or appropriate funds directly for mission support. Instead, the WMU would support all SBC work equally and channel its funds through existing boards. The WMU did not wish to have administrative control per se over the missions operations but worked as a partner for all SBC mission causes. The organization knew that success lay in cooperative missions. To solidify its mission purpose, the WMU adopted the following preamble to its constitution:

We, the Women of the churches connected with the Southern Baptist Convention, desirous of stimulating the missionary spirit and the grace of giving, among women and children of the churches, and aiding in collecting funds for missionary purposes, to be disbursed by the Boards of the Southern Baptist Convention, and disclaiming all intention of independent action, . . .

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85 Myers, 188.


As the Convention accepted the auxiliary, the WMU expanded its interests to become one of the staunchest supporters of all SBC causes. 88

Despite the worthy cause of missions, not all Baptists embraced this new organization. Baptist men viewed Southern women more conservatively than their Methodist brethren. 89 Some Baptist ministers feared that the creation of the WMU posed a feminist threat to the sanctity of the home. 90 SBC historian Rufus Spain observed that some Baptists feared that the creation of the WMU was an "attempted invasion by women . . . [in] areas providentially reserved for men." 91 Using the Bible as their guide, some Baptists were reluctant to embrace such an organization because of the Bible's silence on the establishment of such organizations and because of biblical directives about women's proper conduct in church. 92 Leon McBeth, a prominent Southern Baptist historian, attributed the delay in organizing a national organization to Southern Baptists' uncertain as to the proper extent of women's ministry. 93

Most, however, were not threatened, provided that women's mission work revolved around ministry to other women and children. 94 Most churchmen viewed these missionary

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88 McBeth, Baptist Heritage, 463.
89 Scott, "Women," 104-105.
90 Scott, Southern, 139.; Scott, "Women," 104-105.
91 Spain, 167.
92 Ibid., 171.
93 McBeth, Women, 93.
94 McBeth, Baptist Heritage, 463.
societies as mere extensions of women's proper sphere, untainted by feminist leanings.  
Although approximately sixty percent of church members were women, the attitude that prevailed within the male-dominated SBC proposed that this organization could never have an equal relationship with other church organizations.  The WMU accepted its role within the denomination and worked hard for cooperative missions purposes.  Although many SBC male delegates were worried about the formation of this separate mission entity, they reluctantly gave their blessing to its purpose.  By century's end "virtually all opposition to women's missionary work had ceased."  

The primary purposes of the WMU were twofold: to promote missions through financial support and to educate Baptists from the cradle to the grave about missions.  In missions promotion, two recognized missions offerings were developed and promoted by Baptist women: the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions.  Lottie Moon, ground-breaking career missionary to China, had suggested observing a week of prayer like their Methodist counterparts.  As a result, the first Baptist Week of Self Denial was held in 1894.  In support, Moon wrote:  

96Belew, 88.  
97Spain, 171.  
98Rosenberg, 87.  
99Barnes, 159
Need it be said why the week before Christmas is chosen? Is not the festive season, when families and friends exchange gifts in memory of the gift laid on the altar of the world for the redemption of the human race, the most appropriate time to consecrate a portion from abounding riches and scant poverty to send forth the good tidings of great joy into all the earth?  

Named for Moon in 1918 at the urging of then Executive Secretary Annie Armstrong, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering grew to become the most important SBC offering for missions.  

The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions was named for one of the founding mothers of the WMU. Armstrong, Executive Secretary from 1888 to 1906, was so honored because of her continued commitment to missions. She demonstrated her commitment by becoming the quintessential promoter: visiting the sick, working with immigrants and children, teaching underprivileged women, and supplying the growing needs of missionaries and their families. She was always involved in missions and intolerant of the women who were not. It is appropriate that this offering is named after this great missions promoter.

In supporting these offerings, Baptist women were urged to give sacrificially. During her tenure as WMU President, Fannie Heck urged Southern Baptist women that to give sacrificially

100 McBeth, Baptist Heritage, 170.

101 Ibid., 419.

102 Barnes, 159.


104 Ibid.
would mean "us[ing] two yards of ribbon less or to give a pound of butter and a dozen eggs more for the salvation of the world."\textsuperscript{105} From the mission field, Lottie Moon urged women to give:

In like manner, until the women of our Southern Baptist church are thoroughly aroused, we shall continue to go on in our present 'hand to mouth' system. We shall continue to see mission stations so poorly manned that missionaries break down from overwork, loneliness, and isolation; we shall continue to see promising fields unentered and old stations languishing; we shall continue to see other mission enterprises, no richer and no better educated than our own, outstripping us in the race.\textsuperscript{106}

While promoting missions through their financial resources, the WMU educated participants about missions.\textsuperscript{107} Mission circles provided training to Baptists from the youngest children to mature adults.\textsuperscript{108} The youngest branch of the WMU-sponsored mission circles was adopted in 1890 and was named the "Sunbeam Band" (or "Sunbeams"). Children aged twelve to sixteen formed the Junior Young Women in 1908, later to be renamed Girl's Auxiliary, or GA's, in 1914. For young women over sixteen years old, the Young Woman's Auxiliary (YWA) formed in 1907. While primarily ministering to female mission education, the WMU also established the "Royal Ambassadors" (or "RA's") which provided missions education to young

\textsuperscript{105}Fannie E. S. Heck, \textit{The Answered Prayers: To a Million Southern Baptist Women} (n.p.:n.d.), 1.

\textsuperscript{106}Lawrence, 154.


\textsuperscript{108}The use of the word "circles" is used to differentiate from the WMU itself, although in Baptist church they are referred to also as "organizations" as well.
boys (an organization which was later transferred to the Brotherhood Commission in 1954). Activities included mission studies, distributing missionary literature, hands-on mission work, collecting offerings, promoting missionary work, and organizing prayer meetings in support of missions.

Though they initially used Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) literature, leaders of the WMU soon developed their own literature to assist in missions training. The WMU's promotion propelled missions into the central focus of the local church and created one church-wide effort for the cause of missions. It was not until 1904, under Fannie Heck's direction, that the WMU experimented with a set of uniform missions magazines to be used by the individual circles. Publications such as the *Heathen Helper*, *Baptist Basket*, *FM Journal*, *Royal Service* and *Kind Words* assisted the WMU in their training. *Kind Words*, for example,

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109 McBeth, *Baptist Heritage*, 663.; According to Patricia R. Hill, Baptists were not the only group to sponsor children's education. By 1907, Children's missionary bands became an elemental part of the women's missionary movement.

110 Myers, 190.


112 Belew, 86.

113 Correll, 53.

114 Ibid.
was a paper for small children that was distributed in Sunday school.\textsuperscript{115} It contained pictures, Bible verses, a brief Bible story and personal information about missionaries.\textsuperscript{116}

According to historian Leon McBeth, the creation of the WMU was one of the single greatest events in Southern Baptist history due to its promotion of missions, making the SBC "one of the most missionary-minded of all modern denominations:\textsuperscript{117}

Perhaps it was fortunate that Woman's Missionary Union remained auxiliary to the convention because its sole purpose was dedicated to the support of the two missions agencies and education for missions in the local churches. [The] WMU has been formed to perform acts of missions with a singular dedication. Those denominations that have grown in their missions expansion have felt the impact of a specialized group committed especially to mission support. This has been the case with Southern Baptists and the unusual support of Woman's Missionary Union.\textsuperscript{118}

William Estep, another noted Southern Baptist historian, observed that no single event in SBC history had a greater influence on the Southern Baptist missionary effort than the formation of the WMU.\textsuperscript{119}

Throughout SBC's tenuous financial situations, WMU has been an active part of the cooperative effort, providing needed financial assistance. The Woman's Missionary Union has been recognized as the best supporter of Southern Baptist causes, including rescuing the bankrupt Convention from financial ruin during the days of the Great Depression.\textsuperscript{120} All through

\textsuperscript{115}McBeth, \textit{Baptist Heritage}, 436.
\textsuperscript{116}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117}Ibid., 665-666.
\textsuperscript{118}Belew, 88.
\textsuperscript{119}Estep, 8.
\textsuperscript{120}Rosenberg, 87.
the days of depression and debt, the WMU shouldered its full share of the burden. For example, when the struggling SBC needed financial assistance, it began the Seventy-Five Million Campaign in 1919 to raise that amount to rescue the Convention from bankruptcy. The WMU jumped in to lend its support in raising the necessary funds needed for the Convention's survival. With fifty-eight million dollars raised convention-wide, the WMU contributed sixteen million dollars, surpassing its fifteen million dollar pledge. By 1925, the SBC was on the road to financial recovery primarily due to the creation of the Cooperative Program. In 1931, the WMU diverted funds from missions offerings to the SBC when, again, the Convention was threatened with bankruptcy.

The WMU's members followed Fannie Heck's final directive as she finished her tenure as WMU President in 1915:

See to it only, that you listen to His voice and follow only where Christ leads. Be gentle in your personal lives, faithful and shining. Be joyful, knowing His purposes are good, not evil, to His children. Be prayerful in your planning. Be patient and persistent in your fulfillment. Endeavor to see the needs of the world from God's standpoint. Plan not for the year but for the years. Think long thoughts. Strive for the conversion of those around you as faithfully as for the heathen. Train the children for world-wide service. Lead the young women gently in places of joyous responsibility. Bring all your powers into the best service of the best king. Thus shall your work abide and be abundantly blessed of God to your own joy and the joy of the world. In the belief that you will continue to adorn the doctrine of service. I bid you, dear friends, farewell.

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121 McBeth, Women, 125.

122 Ibid., 128-129.

123 Ibid., 129.

124 Ibid., 88.
The WMU took Heck's directive further by expanding its commitment to missions and ministry. Throughout the years, members continued their ministry within the SBC by expanding their programs both within churches and beyond. The successful partnership of the WMU and the SBC has remained one of the denomination's strongest assets.

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125 Allen, Laborers, 34-35.
CHAPTER 2

THE WOMAN'S MISSIONARY UNION AND ITS WORK: MISSIONS IN ACTION

Founded in 1888 with missions education and promotion as its dual focus, the WMU put its ministry into action immediately. Members not only worked for the spiritual edification of the soul but for the physical edification of the body. The WMU was not the only organization concerned with the well-being of those less fortunate. In the North, the social gospel movement combated the problems that urbanization and industrialization created. The "Father of the social gospel movement," Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), formulated the tenets of the social gospel as he worked with derelicts in New York's Hell's Kitchen. He became sensitized to the injustices of poverty, depression, illness, and danger that existed in the urban areas where he ministered. Prompted by his experiences, Rauschenbusch espoused a Christian social gospel that promoted the human virtues of honesty, integrity, fairness, and charity. His vision of the social gospel was not introverted and cerebral like traditional theology but rather an active


129 Ibid., 133.
gospel which sought to protect the common man against the unscrupulous practices of those with 
power and persuasion.¹³⁰

Rauschenbusch, a Baptist professor at Rochester Theological Seminary and a minister in 
his own right, proposed a new interpretation of the gospel that was contrary to the traditional 
approach of his day.¹³¹ Mainstream evangelicals were concerned more with the personal 
conversion of a man's soul. To this end, Southern Baptists displayed hesitancy in their 
participation in the social gospel movement because they thought that personal conversion 
should come first and then the social needs of the individual could be met.¹³² In 
Rauschenbusch's social gospel, only through the improvement of the human condition could the 
individual and society experience "regeneration."¹³³ As SBC historian Robert Baker succinctly 
stated, Rauschenbusch's social gospel "interpret[ed] Christianity in humanitarian terms rather 
than individualistic regeneration, [creating a] 'this-worldly' social gospel [rather] than an 'other-
worldly' individual-redeeming gospel."¹³⁴ The social gospel introduced Christian morality into

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Richards, 140-141.

¹³²Allen, Century, 213.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Robert A. Baker, Southern Baptist Convention and its People,1607-1972, (Nashville, TN: 
the secular world.\textsuperscript{135} This movement revolutionized the way ministries were carried out yet it never created a new creed or denomination.\textsuperscript{136} This provided for new avenues to express social ministry within established denominations, including those in the South.

As a rule, Southerners were reluctant to embrace the social gospel movement because of its association with Walter Rauschenbusch and theological liberalism. The South remained predominantly rural and ethnically homogeneous. As a result, the region experienced less of the industrial growth and labor unrest so common in North.\textsuperscript{137} Because of this, some scholars have concluded that the social gospel was strictly a Northern phenomenon.\textsuperscript{138} In addition, many Southerners rejected it as a Northern export.\textsuperscript{139} Rauschenbusch's emphasis on "concerns [being restricted] to man and not God, and to social theory and not the gospel" were too liberal for some evangelicals, especially Southern Baptists.\textsuperscript{140} In addition, Baptists criticized Rauschenbusch because of his view that men, if engaged in humanitarian work, become godlike, while Baptists


\textsuperscript{136}Harper, 9.

\textsuperscript{137}Harper, 2; J. Wayne Flynt, "The Impact of Social Factors on Southern Baptist Expansion, 1800-1914," \textit{Baptist History and Heritage} 17, no. 3 (July 1982): 25.

\textsuperscript{138}Harper, 2, 4.; Flynt, 25. For several scholars debates on the absence of the social gospel, See Harper, 4 and Rosenberg, 161.

\textsuperscript{139}Harper, 5.; Baker, 307.

\textsuperscript{140}Patterson, 136.
stressed "man's inherent evil." Baptists could not overlook the social gospel's neglect to recognize the sinfulness which "formed the mother lode from which all man's problems could be extracted." The social gospel existed in the South though marbled by Southern culture and prejudices. Historian Henry F. May argued that the social gospel movement can be distinguished...from 'Social Christianity' which...was a more general term implying 'Christian solutions' to social problems." In this context, it is more accurate to term Southern Baptist participation in the social gospel movement as social Christianity.

Surprisingly, Southern Baptists (and primarily Southern Baptist mission women) did address social problems, despite it being a "foreign idea" and, worse yet, a Northern idea. While helping the physical condition of their fellow man, Southern social gospelers still focused on those issues that held some kind of implication, moral or religious, for the individual.

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142 Thompson, 39-40.

143 Harper, 9.

144 For the purpose of this study, however, the term "social gospel" or "social gospelers" will be used.

145 Harper, 3.

146 Rosenberg, 161.
The WMU embraced the ideas of the social gospel and meshed Baptist concerns for personal salvation with the physical needs of the individual. The WMU did not discount personal evangelism, but saw beyond the theological implications to address the social problems of the individual first and personal evangelism second.\textsuperscript{147} The closest examples of social gospel work in the SBC were those acts involving the Home Mission Board (HMB) and its staunch supporter, the WMU.

While the WMU heartily embraced the social gospel, it would take time and the influence of the WMU and the HMB successes to convince Southern Baptists as a whole to embrace this variegated form of the social gospel. In the SBC Minutes from 1896, Baptists were reminded that "the time is ripe, with none to lose, for extension along every line of Christian endeavor."\textsuperscript{148} WMU members were no different from other social gospelers except for their belief that salvation of the soul was as important as helping the physical needs of others.\textsuperscript{149}

The WMU’s participation in the social gospel revolved around their two primary purposes: missions education and missions promotion.\textsuperscript{150} From its beginnings, the WMU maintained its graded missions program, teaching children from an early age to be concerned for

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\textsuperscript{148} SBC, 1896 minutes, LIX.
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\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
the spiritual and physical plight of others. It was hoped that, as youngsters grew, so would their commitment to meeting the needs of others. This education effort profited from the fact that, by the time the WMU was created, almost all native-born white women were literate.\footnote{Hill, 43.}

While the WMU was the main missions promoter in the church, especially in the education of children, it also became involved in teaching women to take a more active role in hands-on missions. One project that the WMU developed to train women in active mission work was the Woman's Missionary Union Training School.\footnote{The WMU Training School would later evolve into the Carver School of Social Work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) in Louisville, Kentucky. Recently, Campbellsville University in Kentucky (a Baptist affiliated institution) obtained the Carver School of Social Work from SBTS. In recent years, the Carver School of Social work has been in the middle of warring factions at SBTS (mostly revolving around women's place in church and society) which has threatened its very existence.} The Training School developed when the need arose to provide missionary education for women. Until the establishment of the Training School, Baptist women, including those appointed as career missionaries, had no opportunity for formal theological or biblical training.\footnote{McBeth, Women, 127.}

The Training School evolved out of a local missions project spearheaded by Eliza Broadus, daughter of the famous Baptist minister and Southern Seminary Professor and

\footnote{Rosenberg, 88.; Estep, 8.}
President, John A. Broadus.154 A few women had begun attending Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) classes in Louisville, Kentucky, as early as 1884 but they were not allowed to speak in class and were not officially enrolled.155

Finally in 1902, Southern Seminary's faculty appointed a Trustee Committee to investigate the need for providing biblical training for women. The Trustee Committee made the following recommendations:

1. That we find that there is a necessity, distinct and urgent for such a school for Southern Baptist women . . .

2. That after conference with the Faculty of the Seminary we find that instruction well suited to the young women can be provided without expense to the Seminary.

3. That there are no dormitories or boarding arrangements for the young women at the Seminary . . . We may hope that a suitable dormitory may be provided for the young women . . .

4. That we commit this matter to the Faculty of the Seminary, requesting that the matter be duly considered, that they undertake such work in this direction as seems wise to them.156

By the fall of 1904, twenty-five women were attending classes.157 By 1906, the number of young women attending seminary classes had grown to thirty-five but still they could not

154 McBeth, Baptist Heritage, 663.


156 Ibid.
actively participate in classes. Recognizing this growing need for training, Eliza Broadus, along with other Baptist women in the Louisville area, began raising money for lodging facilities near campus to house these young women. This local missions project soon became a nationwide WMU mission goal, one that was supported throughout the South.

Finally, in 1907, with the help of the SBC Sunday School Board, the WMU established the WMU Training School for the biblical training of women. Maud R. McLure was the Training School's first principal. According to the annual WMU Report, by 1908 the Training

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157 McBeth, "Role," 17.; Included in this number were four single women which necessitated lodging for these women. The single women were identified as Clemmie Ford of Tennessee, Alice Huey of Alabama, Ella Jetter of Oklahoma and Rena Groover of Georgia according to Catherine Allen, Century, 267.

158 McBeth, "Role," 18.

159 Ibid., 17.

160 McBeth, Baptist Heritage, 663. The WMU Training School was to continue to be a primary project for WMU until the mid-twentieth century. For the purposes of this study, the WMU Training School will also be termed as the "Training School."

161 McBeth, "Role," 17.

162 Ibid.
School's facilities were deemed adequate. Mrs. Sam'l [sic] E. Woody, chairman of the Local Board of Managers of the WMU Training School, described the facility as follows:

The building is at 320 East Broadway, six blocks from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and in the neighborhood of churches and religious institutions. It has twenty-five comfortable bed rooms, which can accommodate the faculty and forty students. Five bath rooms, an abundant supply of hot and cold water, numerous closets and presses furnish all the comforts of a pleasant home . . . The front hall is very attractive, with oriental rugs and mahogany furniture, the handsome settee being a gift from Woman's Missionary Union of Parker Memorial Church, Anniston, Ala. Two parlors are prettily furnished by the Woman's Missionary Union of the First Baptist Church of Columbus, Ga., and a handsome roller desk for the Principal was given by Primary Department of the First Baptist Church of Columbus, Ga . . . study hours and their social life . . . The dining room is not as large as we could wish.

According to the WMU Training School Brochure, the school provided classes "in Christian Doctrine, Missions, Church History, Biblical Introduction, Sunday School Pedagogy, Sociology, Music, Elocution, Nursing, and Domestic Science." The estimated cost for each session was $175 which covered everything but personal and travel expenses. Women over the age of twenty and in "robust health" were eligible to attend upon the recommendation of their guardians.

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164 Ibid.


166 Ibid.
pastor, four fellow parishioners and their family doctor.\textsuperscript{167} Due to an intense curriculum, students were not allowed to work outside the Training School.\textsuperscript{168} Each woman's course of study included hands on training at a settlement house sponsored by the Training School.

The first Training School settlement house was created and staffed by the Training School in Louisville, Kentucky, on October 25, 1912.\textsuperscript{169} Methodist women had spearheaded the settlement movement in the South and their Southern Baptist sisters embraced the cause.\textsuperscript{170} The success and inspiration of this first settlement house prompted a recommendation from the Convention directing the establishment of more settlement houses under the direction of Woman's Missionary Union workers.\textsuperscript{171} Every state was challenged to begin settlement work in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{167}Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{168}Ibid., 3. \\
\textsuperscript{169}SBC Encyclopedia, 1516, 1518.; Sorrill, "Southern Baptist Laywomen," 23.; The settlement houses were renamed "Good Will" centers in 1914. For consistency, the term used in this study will be "Settlement House." \\
\textsuperscript{170}Scott, Southern, 142. \\
\textsuperscript{171}SBC Encyclopedia, 1518.; Sorrill, "Southern Baptist Laywomen," 23.
\end{footnotesize}
needy areas of their states. Settlement houses were designed to train workers for the rising new field of social work.\(^\text{173}\)

Through the Louisville Settlement House, the community enjoyed a 212-volume library provided by Carnegie Library, a schedule of supervised activities for children and a series of clubs that provided companionship and instruction for young women and children.\(^\text{174}\) During club meetings, women learned housekeeping chores, thrift, needlework, crafts, personal hygiene, manners, and appropriate moral and religious conduct.\(^\text{175}\) A brochure on the work at the settlement house described the weekly meetings as "lively" and described the typical meetings as follows:\(^\text{176}\)

All join heartily in song service and the leader usually gives a short talk containing a living, vital lesson from God's word. Sometimes the meeting are thrown open for discussion on practical questions, such as 'the boys and cigarettes' 'how to keep a home' etc. Great stress is laid on personal service and at each meeting report of the work done during the week, are given by the members. Cases of special need are referred to the leader or one of her helpers, for investigation and relief. Sickness with its burdens falls

\(^{172}\) SBC Encyclopedia, 1518.


\(^{174}\) Baptist Training School Settlement, 4.; Baptists were not alone in this work. The MECS had settlement houses as well that they called "Wesley Houses." See John Patrick McDowell, Social Gospel in the South: The Woman's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South 1886-1939 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 61ff.

\(^{175}\) Baptist Training School Settlement, 4.

\(^{176}\) Ibid., 6.
heaviest upon the poor. The Friendly Circle does a blessed work in looking after the sick in the homes and furnishing sheets and night-gowns [sic] for those unable to buy them. This service is a great power for the development [sic] of character in the mothers.\textsuperscript{177}

Although the WMU was very proud of this work, members never intended the settlement house to become a substitute for the organized church.\textsuperscript{178} Instead, a settlement house's purpose was "to develop [sic] . . . the physical, mental and spiritual life . . . to establish friendly relations between each other . . . [and] to have homes where Jesus shall be the head of the house; where cleanliness, health and happiness shall be . . . [the] motto."\textsuperscript{179} Although not all suffering could be alleviated by these settlement houses, they did establish temporary relief and provide needed contacts with hospitals, local charities, relief agencies, and juvenile courts.\textsuperscript{180}

Given the task of hands-on missions through settlement work and clubs, the WMU's members became involved in other missionary efforts. Members supported missionaries or were sent as missionaries to establish churches, industrial schools, day cares, Sunday Schools, literacy

\begin{footnotes}
\item [177] Ibid.
\item [178] Ibid., 4.
\item [179] Ibid., 5-6.
\item [180] Ibid., 4.; Vickers, "Women's Place," 7.
\end{footnotes}
classes, orphanages, homes for unwed mothers, mothers' clubs and Bible study classes. In addition, they provided needed support to the people on the frontier.\textsuperscript{181}

Frontier missionaries' lives were difficult yet they attempted to lead others to salvation while also working to relieve the miseries of human suffering. This missionary work was often done without much financial backing from either the Convention or local Baptist churches. To provide needed assistance, one of WMU's earliest ministries was sending frontier boxes to Southern Baptist missionaries on the frontier.\textsuperscript{182} The Home Mission Board had suggested this work to the WMU in 1891 in the following recommendation:

(a) That the Woman's Missionary Societies aid in the support of missionaries and missionary families on the frontier and elsewhere. (b) That boxes of clothing and other useful articles be sent to our frontier and other needy missionaries.\textsuperscript{183}

Basically the frontier box was a "care package" filled with supplies for home missionaries and their families. These missionaries drew meager salaries and faced a constant lack of

\textsuperscript{181}Vickers, "Women's Place," 11.; Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, "The Role of Women in Baptist Missions," \textit{Baptist History and Heritage} 27, no.3 (July 1992), 31. When discussing frontier missions, WMU and the SBC Reports of 1888-1920 insinuate that the frontier includes anywhere that Southern Baptist work had previously not been undertaken or was in its infancy. Pioneer missions were mentioned in such urban/port areas as Baltimore, New York, New Orleans, and the Florida, North Carolina, Georgia and Texas port cities, as well as in the Southwest, Missouri, Oklahoma, and "Indian Territory." For the purposes of this study unless directed otherwise, the term "frontier" is a general term defined as anywhere that Baptists undertook "pioneer" mission work.

\textsuperscript{182}Sorrill, \textit{Annie}, 4. Also referred to as frontier barrels or "box work."

\textsuperscript{183}Our Home Field, (July 1891), 1.
supplies. Missionary families could continue their work with assistance in meeting their own physical needs.\(^{184}\) Provided with personal information about family members, the WMU's volunteers gathered clothing, books, candy and toys and sought to match each item with an appropriate recipient.\(^{185}\) As the WMU reported, these boxes "carried necessities, comforts, happiness and hope into hearts and homes that would have known none of this cheer without them."\(^{186}\) Southern Baptist women participated in missions by supporting what they termed their "substitutes" in mission work on the frontier.\(^{187}\)

The frontier box campaign was a success. In 1896 alone, the WMU reported sending 358 boxes with contents valued at $21,475, surpassing the 224 sent the previous year.\(^{188}\) By 1905, 515 boxes were sent at a value of $43,105.33.\(^{189}\) In a letter written on August 2, 1887, Mrs. J.A. Montgomery recounted her North Carolina WMU group's experience in sending a frontier box:

> We packed our Sunbeam box for the Home missionary this morning. I hope it will not be delayed long, as the summer will be over before they can wear their new clothes. I wrote to the missionary, telling him we were getting up a box of clothing for the children.

\(^{184}\)Our Home Field, (January, 1902), 5.

\(^{185}\)Falls, 35.

\(^{186}\)WMU Report, 1896, 15.

\(^{187}\)The word "substitutes" was found throughout the literature and seemed to be the favored word for the evangelical women's missionary groups in referring to missionaries on the field.

\(^{188}\)WMU Report, 1896, 15.

\(^{189}\)Ibid., 1905, 17.
(though I did hope we could have gotten a summer suit for the pastor), but we did the best we could, and really feel gratified at the result, considering the very warm weather and 'hard times.' We sent new suits entire for all the children, shoes, hats, etc., and many useful and necessary articles. We valued the contents at $41. We will pay the freight on the box and send the railroad receipt in a letter to the missionary. Our pastor and his wife came this morning with their contribution, and we had a little prayer-meeting, which we all enjoyed very much. 190

This early ministry helped countless families and gave validation that the WMU was making a tangible contribution to SBC missionary work. In the annual WMU Report of 1897, one missionary thanked the WMU for their efforts:

The Woman's Missionary Union is doing a grand work for God by sending these boxes to the Missionaries. They remove from his mind the burden of wondering how the family shall be clothed. They deepen his interest in the work and prepare him to go to his field of labor. When the contents of the box are taken out, we always feel like bowing in family worship and thanking God for such sisters, and praying His richest blessings to rest upon them.191

The WMU's frontier boxes helped missionaries tremendously with their work and the missionaries responded with sincere gratitude and appreciation. In a letter received by Executive Secretary Annie Armstrong in 1902, one missionary recipient from Texas expressed his gratitude as follows:

Dear Sister in Christ:


191WMU Report, 1897, 16-17.
We are the delighted recipients of a 'Missionary Box' from the Woman's Missionary Union of Norfolk, VA. We have received boxes before but none so large, containing so great a variety of articles, all useful in their season. We are all profoundly grateful for this generosity and Christian beneficence. May the Lord richly bless every donor, and all Missionary Unions in the land. We go in a few days to an entirely destitute field. On whole count without a Baptist preacher. Pray for us that we may go up and possess the land in the name of our Lord and King.

We feel greatly encouraged and go to our new field with increased faith in God and confidence in our noble consecrated men and women.

Yours in Christian Love

The WMU not only supported missionaries with frontier boxes but also supported their children as well. On November 19, 1905, members established the Margaret Home in Greenville, South Carolina, with a gift of $10,000. Children of Southern Baptist home and foreign missionaries were provided a clean, Christian place to live while away from their families in pursuit of an education. The property included six acres of land with more than adequate housing and utility buildings for the Home. The Margaret Home was sold in 1913 after the use of the Home declined. The money received from the sale of the Home was

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192 Our Home Field, (January 1902), 5.
193 WMU Report, 1905, 15.; SBC Minutes, 1905, 76, 160.; Its name, the Margaret Home, was adopted at the request of the donor, Margaret Waller.
194 WMU Report, 1905, 15.
195 Allen, Century, 186.
invested in trust to establish a scholarship fund to benefit the educational pursuits of missionary children.\textsuperscript{196}

While the WMU supported missionaries and their families on the field, they also sought areas of ministry within Southern Baptists' sphere of influence. One project supported mission work in the mountain regions of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia. The WMU helped to bridge the physical and financial barriers of the mountain regions, already populated with a good majority of Baptists, and bring needed assistance to this isolated region.\textsuperscript{197}

According to the \textit{WMU Report} of 1899, these disparate mountain regions needed better educational facilities and learned preachers to help in the education of local inhabitants.\textsuperscript{198} Schools in this region were extremely poor and most of their teaching materials were outdated, inadequate, or nonexistent. One anonymous library noted in the \textit{WMU Report} of 1905 possessed only fifteen dollars' worth of books.\textsuperscript{199} Practically none of the libraries in the region owned

\textsuperscript{196}This scholarship fund, the Margaret Fund, is still in existence to provide monetary assistance for the educational pursuits of missionary children.

\textsuperscript{197}\textit{WMU Report, 1899}, 59.

\textsuperscript{198}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{199}\textit{WMU Report, 1905}, 20.
maps. With the help of the WMU, funds and volunteers were provided to help alleviate the problems facing mountain regions.

During the "gilded age," immigration was rising to new heights. By 1920 the number of foreign-born residents in the United States had more than doubled from 1880. The WMU responded by supporting Home Mission Board efforts to minister to the growing number of immigrants. Although spurred by a genuine concern for the plight of immigrants, Southern Baptists' concern was tinged by fear of the "strange, foreign" beliefs brought with immigrants from their homelands. In a piece entitled *Home Mission Work in Cities for the Sake of the World*, published anonymously in 1895, the author warned against the dangerous threat to religion (more particularly Southern Baptists) from "Old World papists and pagans, with dark creeds and ways, [that] throng to our cities, and thwart efforts that are made in the interests of purity, order, and peace." Another author opined that "you need not cross the ocean to see heathen, but you can meet them in a few hours of travel in our luxurious cars."

In order to help combat what Southern Baptists perceived to be dark forces, the Home Mission Board along with the WMU's assistance began mission work to immigrants. Baptist

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200 Ibid.
201 McDowell, 60.
203 *Heathenism in America*, 1.
women served "as city missionaries . . . as administrators of Baptist hospitals . . . as Red Cross workers, as . . . supporters of Baptist orphanages . . . and as organizers of homes for the aged."\(^{204}\) One of the first works started by a Miss M. Buhlmaeir was work with German immigrants in the port city of Baltimore, Maryland.\(^{205}\) Later, other mission works among German immigrants spread to Texas and Missouri.\(^{206}\)

Immigrant ministries started by the WMU and the HMB included the establishment of mothers' meetings, homemakers' clubs, language and literacy classes, industrial schools, juvenile rehabilitation classes, day care, and Sunday Schools as well as the distribution of literature to the immigrants in their native languages.\(^{207}\) Along with the support of work to German immigrants, the WMU also supported work among Italian immigrants in New York and Baltimore; Chinese immigrants in Baltimore, New Orleans, and Augusta; Mexican and French immigrants in Texas and Louisiana; Indians in the Southwest; and Cubans in Tampa, Florida.\(^{208}\) Assuredly, the


\(^{206}\) Ibid.


\(^{208}\) WMU Report, 1897, 17.; SBC Annual, 1896, 28.; WMU Report, 1896, 15; *Our Home Field*, (June 1898), 3.
WMU undertook this effort sincerely in the interests of assisting those in need but, at times, their words revealed deep-seated suspicions and prejudices:

What ever threatens the stability and permanency of other people seem to confront us on American shores. We have Romanism, Ritualism, Intemperance and Sensuality, Ignorance and Superstition, Materialism and Anarchy; While these four great questions demand adjustment, namely, the Indian, Mormon, Chines, and Freedman problems. . . . Some of these Germans are the most dangerous of all our inhabitants not only are they rationalists, but they are, in many instance, the leader in Socialism, aided by Bohemians and Poles. 209

The WMU not only crossed ethnic lines in America with their missions to immigrants but also pioneered work into neighboring Cuba. At the close of the Spanish-American War, Cuba was brought into America's sphere of influence, prompting the Home Mission Board to turn its attention there. 210 Though very little Home Mission Board work had yet been conducted on the island, the WMU helped begin a mission work among Cuban women in 1901. 211 In addition, members collected money to be used in the establishment of schools, the building of chapels and churches and the purchase of hospital supplies. 212

In the WMU's assistance with missions both at home and abroad, it could not shed the paternalism that tarnished its mission projects. This was not only true in its work with

209 Heathenism, 1-2.


211 Our Home Field, (July 1902), 3.
immigrants and Cubans, but also in its relations with American blacks. For Southern Baptists, the Social Gospel movement, no matter how marginally successful in the South, did not tackle the principal problem confronting them--the issue of race.²¹³

Although no less prejudiced than other predominantly WASP groups of the time, the Home Mission Board and the WMU took a paternalistic, patronizing attitude toward fellow Southerners of color. It was out of paternalism and guilt for the past that the WMU felt it necessary to minister to Southern blacks. Also, WMU ministered to blacks out of guilt for the past. Fannie Heck succinctly summarized WMU’s motivation when she notes "A race side by side with our own, yet still and forever apart, to whom we must lend an uplifting hand in Christ's name or be grappled and drawn downward by their dark fingers."²¹⁴ In fact, the WMU looked at blacks as its special mission field.²¹⁵ In a WMU Report in 1896, the writer noted that "God sent the Africans to us in the providence of events and calls on us as on no others to be their 'neighbors.'"²¹⁶ This understanding of blacks as "neighbors" motivated WMU members to approach their work in what Annie Armstrong termed "With and For [working with blacks and

²¹²SBC Annual, 1894, 24.; Our Home Field, (July 1891), 1.
²¹⁴Allen, Century, 241.
²¹⁵Correll, 63.
²¹⁶WMU Report, 1896, 15.
working for blacks].”217 As WMU writer Catherine Allen points out, many of WMU's leaders "cut their missions teeth" in ministries to blacks.218 Executive Secretary Annie Armstrong spearheaded the WMU's mission work through the Home Mission Board to "colored people, especially the Negro women."219

Despite its paternalistic outlook, the WMU tried to improve race relations. The WMU's members recognized the need for all to coexist peacefully despite racial boundaries.220 When female leaders in the all black National Baptist Convention wanted to begin a similar woman's mission organization, they turned to the WMU for guidance.221 Executive Secretary Annie Armstrong helped the National Baptist Convention's fledgling society to organize and guided them in preparing a constitution.222 She even accepted an invitation to address their national

218 Ibid., 241.
219 Minutes of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, n.d.), 2.; The use of the words "negro," "negroes," "africans" or "colored" are not used here in a degrading way but are used in order to be consistent with the common vernacular of the day and usage in documents researched.
220 WMU Report, 1899, 59.
221 SBC Annual, 1902, 166.
convention in Cincinnati in 1901.\textsuperscript{223} In this spirit of cooperation, the SBC and the WMU became interested in developing an interracial advisory committee with the National Baptist Women's Auxiliary to provide training, meetings, and literature.\textsuperscript{224} In fact, the WMU joined the interdenominational "Woman's Committee of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation" in 1921.\textsuperscript{225} Members of the WMU remained active on this committee until its dissolution in 1943.\textsuperscript{226} Although ultimately separated by racial prejudice in the 1940's, the WMU pushed for racial harmony in a time known for racial turbulence and political activism.

Progressivism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought new life to the suffrage movement.\textsuperscript{227} Yet, Southern Baptist women were less involved in suffrage than other contemporary women's groups of the time. In fact, Baptists overwhelmingly opposed the feminist movement and viewed suffrage as moral decay.\textsuperscript{228} Southern interest in suffrage began

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{223} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{224} SBC Encyclopedia, 1517.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Allen, Century, 246.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{227} Wheeler, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{228} Spain, 165.; Scott, Southern Lady, 209.; Wheeler, 22.
\end{itemize}
just a few years after the creation of the WMU.\textsuperscript{229} Yet, women's societies in the South, especially after the turn of the century, functioned more as reform clubs and avoided politics.\textsuperscript{230}

The woman's missionary organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) was one of the few societies that did become politically active. While supporting the goal to win converts, Methodist women's groups were also concerned with how physical hardships of life endured by women and children affected their spiritual health. This provided the much needed impetus for Methodist women to fight for such things as child labor laws, a reasonable work day and a safe working environment for women.\textsuperscript{231} Among the major Southern Protestant denominations, Methodist women fulfilled more of the traditional definition of the Social Gospel and, therefore, "many of the women who led secular reform movements in the South were members of the Methodist Church."\textsuperscript{232}

Although formally they were not as vocal in advocating the cause of women's rights as they were social reform, women in the MECS societies thought that a certain amount of political activism facilitated meeting goals within their social ministry programs.\textsuperscript{233} As one social

\textsuperscript{229}Ibid., xv.

\textsuperscript{230}Hill, 159.

\textsuperscript{231}McDowell, 41, 48.

\textsuperscript{232}Scott, "Women," 108.

\textsuperscript{233}McDowell, 58.
concern led to another, the societies were drawn more toward politics.²³⁴ After the merger in 1906 of the two MECS's missionary organizations, Methodist women became more politically motivated and took up socio-political causes of the time while their Baptist sisters remained relatively neutral.²³⁵

Although not officially associated with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), some of the WMU's members belonged to the WCTU but the membership as a whole did not take up the temperance cause as readily or actively as that of other evangelical women's groups. In contrast, the WMU’s Methodist counterparts worked closely with the WCTU in support of common social causes.²³⁶ One reason for this was one of their own members led the WCTU, Frances Willard. Willard was raised a Methodist and brought her Methodist sensibilities of fighting for a better life to the WCTU.²³⁷ According to Barbara Dobschuetz in a 1992 thesis, "as a basis to Christian reform . . . Willard's accommodation of scripture combined with her Methodist understanding of and experience with God influenced her commitment to Christian

²³⁴ Scott, Southern Lady, 160.

²³⁵ Magalis, 105. Previously, there had been two separate women's missionary societies in the MECS for home and foreign missions with separate purposes. Without consulting these societies, the male members of leadership in the General Conference merged the two, infuriating the members of these societies.

²³⁶ Correll, 23.

Willard, like her Methodist sisters, fought for suffrage, unions, better employee rights and better wages. WCTU became more involved in politics as leaders became frustrated with the lack of attention that legislators gave to social reform. Southern suffragists believed that the time had come when it would take legislative action, rather than attention from the private sector, to facilitate changes for those in need. As a result, women of the WCTU became the earliest Southern suffragists. Although WCTU memberships often overlapped with those of the missionary societies, the WMU was hesitant to become more involved in the temperance organization. Unlike other regions in the country, the South put up the greatest resistance and afforded the least success in the history of the suffrage movement. Thus, organized women's groups within the church provided one of the few avenues for reform


239 Brown, 29.

240 Wheeler, 23.

241 Ibid., 39.


243 Hill, 55.; Correll, 60.

244 Wheeler, 4.
One failure of the suffrage movement was that none of the suffragists moved to help gain political rights for black women. Because of racial attitudes in the South, suffrage became a way to preserve white supremacy across gender lines and Southern prejudice triumphed over Southern progressivism. In fact, this racist attitude, the issue over states' rights and the power of Southern male chauvinism divided politically active Southern women and stunted the progress of the National Suffrage Amendment in the South. Within Southern Baptist ranks, the suffrage movement languished due to Southern Baptists' resistance to drastically changing female roles. The WMU seemed less interested in “empowerment” than in helping others in need. SBC writer and scholar Catherine Allen clarified that SBC women "have been universally acclaimed as feminine, never as feminists.” Because of resistance to the suffrage movement, leaders within the Southern women's movement pushed for changes that carefully stayed within the context of expected gender roles.

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245 Wheeler, 108.
246 Ibid., xiii, 30-31.
249 Allen, Laborers, 10.
250 Friedman, 110.
Though put off by the struggle for suffrage, Baptists nonetheless agreed with the WCTU that society could be redeemed only through the banishment of alcohol.\textsuperscript{251} Baptist women's answer came in 1913 when the WMU founded its own temperance organization, the Social Service Commission.\textsuperscript{252} The effort emphasized support for the abolishment of what Baptists perceived to be a hindrance in the spread of the gospel message and a destructive force in the American home.\textsuperscript{253}

Through their evangelical interpretation of the Social Gospel, the WMU helped alleviate some social problems facing their brothers and sisters in Christ.\textsuperscript{254} The WMU provided training and physical assistance, through active missions participation and monetary support, for their missions workers and those in need.\textsuperscript{255}

Although not politically active, the organization did energetically work to better the lives of others. Through it all, the women of the Woman's Missionary Union of the SBC provided money and devoted their talents to support the evangelical efforts of their denomination. With these efforts melding with a physical concern for the physical needs of the less fortunate, the

\textsuperscript{251}Ammerman, 38.

\textsuperscript{252}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{253}\textit{SBC Encyclopedia}, 1516.

\textsuperscript{254}Vickers, "Southern Baptist Women," 11.

\textsuperscript{255}Ibid.
WMU's members led the way in providing a social conscience for the SBC as a whole. The WMU proved to be as concerned with personal welfare as personal salvation and, as they ministered and were successful, members of the WMU gained more confidence in their work and causes. With this confidence, the WMU stretched the ministry roles of women within the SBC and thus set the stage for further avenues of ministry.
CHAPTER 3

SOUTHERN BAPTIST WOMEN: BREAKING THE BARRIERS - BEYOND TRADITIONAL ROLES

Through the WMU, Southern Baptist women were able to express their concern for the physical and spiritual well being of others. With the Convention's blessing, these early sisters ministered and set an example for others to follow. For many Baptist women, this role as lay minister fulfilled what they believed God had called them to do. For others, the "call" propelled them beyond missions into active ministry.

The period between 1880 and 1920 has been called the "golden age of missionary expansion in the history of American Protestantism." Southern Baptists participated fully in this mission. One of the earliest examples of Southern Baptist women missionaries was the legendary Lottie Moon. In 1873, Moon became the third single female missionary to be sent out by the SBC to teach and minister in China. With the growth of female missionaries on the field, the roles of these missionaries had to be redefined "to include social service; women, denied ordination were sent as teachers, doctors, nurses, and social workers rather than as preachers."

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256 Hill, 8.
257 McBeth, Women, 90.
258 Hill, 4.
Raised in Virginia, Moon was better educated than most of the Southern Baptist women of her day, holding one of the first awarded Master of Arts degrees for women in the South.\(^{259}\) Although better educated than most of her contemporaries, she was still expected to fulfill the traditional roles of wife and mother.\(^{260}\) Feeling a higher calling, she seized the only alternative career opportunity open to her--missions.\(^{261}\)

Leaving behind her family and fiance', seminary professor Crawford H. Toy, Moon went to China to fulfill what she believed God was calling her to do.\(^{262}\) Shortly before leaving for China, Moon wrote in anticipation of her new career:

> Could a Christian woman possibly desire higher honor than to be permitted to go from house to house and tell of a savior to those who have never heard his name? We could not conceive a life which would more thoroughly satisfy the mind and heart of a true follower of the Lord Jesus.\(^{263}\)

Throughout her ministry in China, Lottie Moon broke down gender barriers and expanded the role of women missionaries.\(^{264}\) Women missionaries were expected to participate


\(^{260}\)Vickers, "Women's Place," 37.

\(^{261}\)Ibid.


\(^{263}\)Allen, "Legacy," 149.

\(^{264}\)Even before the first women minister was ordained, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution in 1959 practically declaring women missionaries "ministers with a status equal to ordination."
in medical work, schools and evangelical charity work.\(^{265}\) Moon's assignment was to minister to women specifically because Baptists clearly prohibited women from teaching, preaching, or otherwise exercising authority over men.\(^{266}\) Chinese men, however, appeared to missionaries as less masculine than American men.\(^{267}\) They, in turn, viewed missionary women in asexual terms because the women "had already forsworn their sex" to become missionaries.\(^{268}\) Because she was the only resident Christian in her village, Moon unavoidably began teaching men, women, and children.\(^{269}\) She sometimes found herself in direct conflict with her more conservative missionary colleagues.\(^{270}\) In response to criticism by some of her male mission counterparts, she was quoted as saying that she was comforted to know that, on the Day of Judgment, she would not be judged by mortal man, but rather by God.\(^{271}\) Moon defended her actions in her writings, saying that her first concern was to share the gospel of Christ and "if men didn't like the way she was sharing the gospel, let them send some men to do it better."\(^{272}\) Because of this breach in Baptist protocol of women "preaching" to anyone other than women, she carefully reported her


\(^{266}\) Allen, "Legacy," 148-149; McBeth, Women, 91.

\(^{267}\) Hunter, 213, 264.

\(^{268}\) Ibid.

\(^{269}\) Allen, "Legacy," 152.


\(^{271}\) Vickers, "Women's Place," 38.

\(^{272}\) McBeth, Women, 91.
actions to the Foreign Mission Board (FMB), hoping that her reports would "shame American pastors for abdicating their duties to a woman." When it came to witnessing, no amount of criticism could keep her from doing what she understood the Lord was leading her to do. She did not blindly accept what her male counterparts and the male-dominated mission board prescribed for her as "right" conduct. Tensions mounted over this issue, once even to the point of Moon resigning. However, she ultimately retracted her resignation at the urging of the FMB.

Despite criticism of her methods, Moon witnessed to males and females alike and led many Chinese to Christianity. She is remembered by Baptists for her dedication to the cause of missions--a cause that she championed literally until death. In 1912, weighing only 50 pounds, she died of malnutrition on her way back from China after almost forty years on the mission field. During times of famine, Moon sacrificed her own health to feed others. Ultimately, her sacrifice led to her death:

On Christmas Eve 1912, as the ship was in the harbor of Kobe, Japan, Lottie Moon died. In the hours before death, her mind had cleared [for she had been delusional]. She had sipped some grape juice and expressed appreciation for her care. After prayer and hymns,

Allen, "Legacy," 152.

McBeth, Women, 91.

Ibid.

McBeth, Baptist Heritage, 418.

Carolyn Blevins, "Ordination of Women: Wrong or Right?" The Theological Educator 37 (Spring 1988): 105.

Allen, "Legacy," 146.
she dozed, then smiled, lifted her hands in the customary form of Chinese greeting, and exhaled quietly.  

Upon her death, Moon did not leave many material things behind. She left an estate worth approximately $250 and an old, worn trunk with a few personal effects; but, more importantly, she left an example of ministry for all Southern Baptists to follow. To commemorate her sacrifice for missions, Chinese Christians erected a small marker on the mission field where she had served that simply read "How she loved us."

Moon was an early example that women could persevere despite the criticism of others. Her example expanded ministry into areas previously unexplored by women. Although she was not what one would call a feminist, Moon lived out the idea of being one in Christ and equal in His task. She proved that women could fill roles other than as "helper" to their missionary husbands and demonstrated that women could step out of conventional societal roles and immerse themselves into those roles that had traditionally been reserved for men. Southern Baptists remember her each year by collecting the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions in her honor. In addition, many took Moon's example of ministry and pursued other areas of ministry.

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279 Ibid., 155.
280 Ibid., 146.
281 Ibid., 156.


283 Allen, "Legacy," 146. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions is the largest source of funding for the SBC's overseas missions, involving almost four thousand
While some Baptists today feel the call to be missionaries, much of the work of the denomination is accomplished at the local church level. This work is performed by both the laity and the clergy. Although deacons are considered "lay leaders," the office requires the act of ordination. Other lay positions do not require the act of formal ordination. Within the church, lay ministry, regardless of gender roles, has been traditionally accepted without qualms and is not dependent on the approval of others. The primary function for women has been to attend services and lead the way with the Woman's Missionary Union and other ministries. This call usually translates into lay ministry positions like Sunday School teacher, Vacation Bible School worker, and musical accompanist.

Two ministry roles within the SBC require the act of ordination: the roles of deacon and minister. Southern Baptist churches have traditionally held the power of ordaining whomever they believed to be called by God for ministry. Because there are no scriptures delineating the specific process of ordination, Southern Baptists have followed the apostle model for setting "apart" those called to ministry. This tradition can be traced back to the fourth century.

missionaries. By 1992 the cumulative total of the offering was nearly $1.3 billion. With more than $80 million raised in the 1992 collection, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is thought to be the largest annual offering collected by Christians.

284 Blevins, 101.
285 DeBerg, 86.
288 Ibid.
Ordination confirms the local church's confidence in the person being ordained whether as deacon or as minister and places a great deal of authority into the ordained's hands.\footnote{Charlene Kaemmerling, "Ordination of Women:Wrong or Right?" The Theological Educator 37 (Spring 1988): 98.}

The ceremony of ordination is a special service held to "set apart" members of the congregation that feel called to ministry, whether as deacon or minister. This sacred service usually involves prayers, pledges of support given by those officiating and the congregation, and the "laying on of hands." Within the SBC, once a person is ordained, this ordination is valid for life.

Although both offices require ordination, the duties of deacons and ministers differ. Deacons are viewed as "servants of the church."\footnote{Bill Stancil, "Recent Patterns and Contemporary Trends in Deacon Life," Baptist History and Heritage 25, no. (1990): 22.} The Greek word \textit{diakonos} found in the New Testament is translated literally as "servant." The decision to "set apart" candidates for the diaconate in Baptist history has been left up to local churches and, as a result, the procedure for deacon selection and practice can vary widely from church to church.

Deacons fulfill a variety of functions dependent upon a church's individual needs. Some diaconates are more needs-oriented and, in this scenario, deacons' duties are to witness, to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the church and community, to visit, to perform benevolent acts, to assist in worship and to support the pastor.\footnote{Ibid., 22-23.} Diaconates that are more managerially-
styled take on the role of board of directors for a church. Their duties include the same duties as a needs-oriented diaconate plus directing the business and financial concerns.

From Baptists' earliest history, there were women deaconesses. Sandy Creek Church, established in North Carolina in 1755, as the mother church of Separate Baptists in the South, had deaconesses. Some Southern Baptists continued this tradition set by the Separate Baptists with having deaconesses. According to Caralie Nelson Brown, long time deacon and church planter in Raleigh, North Carolina, the First Baptist Church of Raleigh had four deaconesses ordained as early as 1894.

Southern Baptist historian Leon McBeth has differentiated the two terms, deacons and deaconesses, and argued that they "have not been used synonymously in Baptist history." Rather, he insisted, deaconesses were an unordained subordinate group that mainly ministered to women and children. Although the ministry of women deacons and deaconesses were virtually the same, the key issue is the act of ordination. In support of the service of women deaconesses, R.B.C. Howell, in a paper written in 1846 entitled "The Role of Baptist Deaconesses," argued that "Do we not know that they have admission to multitudes of their own

292 McBeth, Women, 18.


294 McBeth, Women, 18.

295 Caralie Nelson Brown, Deacon Workshop, Knollwood Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC, 15 November 1993.

296 Stancil, "Recent," 25.
sex with very great advantage to the interests of religion, under circumstances in which, otherwise, they must remain unvisited? After 1800 there was a decline in deaconesses, due to a move from a needs-oriented diaconate to a more managerial-styled board of directors. Nevertheless, as long as ordination was not in question, women were allowed to fulfill certain ministry roles.

A renewed interest in women deacons in the late twentieth century was most likely attributable to the effects of the secular women's movement of the 1960's and 70's and the drift of the diaconate back from a managerial-styled board to a needs-oriented group. Although the issue of ordination in general remained a controversial one, women deacons were far more prevalent than women clergy.

The path to ordained ministry in Southern Baptist churches varies from church to church. Typically, an individual initially professes a "call" to full-time ministry. According to Charles H. Talbert, Professor of Religion at Wake Forest University, ordination involves several steps. It consists of a private call from God to the individual, a "providential call" which provides the individual with the gifts of ministry, and "an ecclesiastical call" when the church legitimizes the

297 Ibid.
298 McBeth, Sourcebook, 333-335.
299 DeWeese, 54.
300 Ibid, 55.
301 Melton, xxviii.
private "providential call." Usually an individual is not ordained until requested to serve a church. According to Talbert "ordination is a request to the Lord who has called the individual to supply the grace to enable that person to fulfill his/her calling . . . [therefore] recognizing the genuineness of [the] secret and providential calls." Once a public profession of this call is made, the church (usually the person's "home" church) sets aside that candidate for ordination. The prospective minister is first licensed to preach. Then, after examination by the leadership of the membership, an ordination service is held. Unlike their evangelical counterparts, specifically those within the Methodist church, Baptist ministers are "free agents." In other words, they contract with a church directly. Churches hire ministers directly and each minister remains accountable to a specific congregation. In addition, Southern Baptist ministers do not have an educational requirement placed upon them. As a result, the educational diversity of Southern Baptist ministers varies widely. Formal training (i.e., seminary training) depends upon each individual church's requirement.

Typically, the offices of deacon and minister are filled by men. Although women have been an integral part of Southern Baptist Churches, the offices of deacon and minister are not readily available to them. Baptists encourage women to fulfill what they believe God calls them to do, as long as it does not require the act of ordination. Because the act of ordination is applied

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303 Ibid.
304 Ibid.
to both deacons and ministers, the controversy centers around the act of ordination itself and the
erown and leadership that it implies.  

Opponents of female ordination use a biblical foundation for their arguments and believe that anything other than traditional, accepted roles for women is a violation of scripture.  

Supporters, on the other hand, accuse them of taking many passages out of context, thus transforming biblical statements into pronouncements which support prejudices against women.  

Those opposed to ordaining women, however, do not advocate removing women altogether from church work because churches are "far too dependent on the skill, dedication, time, and money that they [give]."  

In general, Southern Baptists follow these scriptures outlining the qualifications of deacons and ministers:

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.

Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous.

One that ruleth his house having his children in subjection with all gravity.

305 Even though the "calls" and service expectations are diametrically different, the common denominator in this study is the practice of women's ordination and the controversy that surrounds it. For the purpose of this study, the practice of ordination and placing authority into women's hands for women deacons and ministers will be discussed as one issue.

306 Leonard, 152.

307 Hinson, 5.

308 Deberg., 80.
(For if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.

And let these also first be proved then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

Even so must their wives be grave, not slandered, sober, faithful in all things.

Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

. . . thou shoudest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre

But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate,

Opponents also agree that both the order of divine creation and the ultimate responsibility for the Edenic Fall limit women's leadership roles. Eve, created after Adam, receives special

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309 1 Timothy 3:1-5. All biblical references will be cited from the King James Version of the Bible.

310 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

311 Titus 1:5-8.
blame for succumbing to the serpent in the Garden of Eden and thus facilitating humanity's
descent into sin:

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety. 313

Some opponents also purport that women are more subject to sexual temptation in ministry roles and point to Eve's succumbing to the serpent as evidence for this position. 314 Working in close proximity with men, they argue, could result in tempting situations which women would be unable to resist. Another reason opponents give for excluding women from leadership roles in the church is the possible interference of these roles with familial relationships and responsibilities. 315 Women could not support both equally--either family responsibilities or church responsibilities would suffer due to a conflict of interests. As late as


313 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

314 Stancil, "Divergent," 46.

315 Ibid.
the 1980's, Bailey Smith, former president of the SBC, stated that marriage, propagation and submission were the highest possible callings for women.\textsuperscript{316}

One of the earliest opponents of women's ordination and involvement in ministry roles outside their "proper sphere" was John A. Broadus. Broadus, a prominent Southern Baptist minister and the President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1889 to 1895, supported women only when their role pertained specifically to other women and children. In a pamphlet entitled "Should Women Speak in Mixed Public Assemblies," Broadus outlined his support of a scriptural admonition for women remaining silent in the church. He also sided with the interpretation that women should remain subservient to men and that they were responsible for the Edenic fall.\textsuperscript{317} The scripture used in support of this view came from I Corinthians:

\begin{quote}
Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.\textsuperscript{318}
\end{quote}

Broadus did, however, think it appropriate that women minister to other women and supported their roles in mission societies.\textsuperscript{319} Ironically, it was Broadus' daughter, Eliza, who was one of the founding mothers of the WMU. Nevertheless, John Broadus noted proudly that "it is a comfort to know that the great majority of Baptist women in our country as a whole are still

\textsuperscript{316}Leonard, 153.


\textsuperscript{318}I Corinthians 14:34-35.

\textsuperscript{319}Broadus, 10.
distinctly opposed to this practice [women speaking in mixed assemblies]."\textsuperscript{320} Because of biblical pronouncements, Broadus and others took this directive literally and included women delivering the WMU report to the SBC as going against scripture. Allowing women to give the WMU report themselves met with firm resistance. When it was time for the WMU report, the Convention adjourned outside the confines of the sanctuary in order to avoid contradicting the scripture about women speaking from the pulpit. In fact, it was not until 1929 that the WMU report to the SBC was delivered to the Convention by women.\textsuperscript{321}

This issue came to a head when Mrs. W.J. Cox presented the WMU report in 1929. In defiance of this breach in etiquette, some pastors stormed out of the proceedings in protest. George W. Truett, prominent pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, calmed the crowd and urged them to listen to Cox. Cox, despite her shy, retiring way, poignantly defended herself by noting to those assembled that "No woman went to sleep in the garden . . . No woman denied him . . . No woman betrayed him . . . But it was a woman acting on intuition who tried to save him." Although Mrs. Cox triumphed that day, women did not regularly give the WMU report until 1938.\textsuperscript{322}

Another early opponent of women in ministry was John R. Rice, author of a 1941 book entitled \textit{Bobbed Hair, Bossy Wives and Women Preachers}. Rice opposed women in leadership positions in the church, especially in the role of preacher. He argued forcefully that if a woman

\textsuperscript{320}Ibid., 15-16.

\textsuperscript{321}McBeth, \textit{Women}, 119.

\textsuperscript{322}SBC Annual, 1929, 120.; Barnhart, 145; McBeth, \textit{Baptist Heritage}, 664.
felt that the Holy Spirit was telling her to preach, it should be remembered "that every false doctrine in the world is supported by the same argument." He also maintained that a true call could not be in direct opposition to the Bible since "no leading is from God if it goes against the plain statements of God's Word." For Rice, public opinion was never to take precedence over biblical directives. Predictably, he equated women in the pulpit with child prodigies and boy preachers, calling the result "nothing more than a vaudeville show." And Rice enjoyed plenty of support for his views. In almost every Baptist publication of his day, opponents cited the scriptures to restrict ministry roles for women.

The views put forth by Broadus and Rice were rekindled with new fervor by Southern Baptist fundamentalists beginning in the late 1970's during Ultra-Conservative Takeover of the SBC. One of the most prominent of the new conservatives was W.A. Criswell. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, continued to base his prohibition of women's ordination on scripture. Like Broadus and Rice before him, he believed that women were

324 Ibid.
325 Ibid., 38.
326 Ibid., 65.
327 McBeth, Women, 114.
328 Barnhart, 152.
more "susceptible to be taken in by fast talkers and deceivers--case in point, the Edenic fall."\textsuperscript{329}

Gifts, according to Criswell, were not based on "divine grace but rather on the basis of gender."\textsuperscript{330} All opponents to women's ordination believed that "if women thought that God had called them [to preach], they were simply mistaken, since God would not violate his inerrant and infallible word as fundamentalists interpreted it."\textsuperscript{331}

Proponents for women's ordination, on the other hand, viewed women's ordination as a human rights issue and argued that the practice was not inconsistent with scripture. They argued that the scripture should be interpreted within a specific historical context. Enmeshed in a patriarchal system, Jewish women during biblical times were legal possessions of their husbands--really no better than cattle. Therefore, restrictions against women reflected the limitations of the society rather than God's will. Moreover, proponents found support for women's expanded roles in the church as in Galatians 3, where Paul proclaimed one gospel for all and with all equal in His task.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.\textsuperscript{332}

Proponents also used biblical examples to make their case. In their view, Paul's letter to the Romans actually commended a woman named Phoebe for her speaking and ministering.\textsuperscript{333}

\textsuperscript{329}Ibid., 151.


\textsuperscript{331}Leonard, 152-153.

\textsuperscript{332}Galatians 3:28.
I commend unto you [Phoebe] our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. 334

Proponents cited other examples of biblical models of ministry: Dorcus, referred to in Acts as a "woman . . . full of good works and almsdeeds"; Ruth, Esther, and the prophetesses: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna; Priscilla, Lydia, Elizabeth, Mary, and Anna. 335

One early proponent of women in ministry was J.B. Moody. Moody, Dean of Hall-Moody Institute in Martin Tennessee, wrote a book in 1910 entitled Women in the Churches: Their Rights and Restrictions or Paul Harmonized with the Law and The Gospel. Uncharacteristic of men of his time, he unreservedly supported women using their God-given gifts. 336 Early on, Moody had condoned the writings of John A. Broadus, T.T. Eaton, and W.P. Harvey. In time, however, he rebelled against such traditional restrictions on women's roles, arguing that "to rob woman of her God given rights and privileges in His service is a crime." 337

Most important, Moody defended Paul from charges that he personally hated women and cast the

334 Romans 16:1-2.
336 J.B. Moody, Women in the Churches: Their Rights and Restrictions or Paul Harmonized with the Gospel (Martin, TN: Hall Moody Institute, 1910), 3.
337 Blevins, 126.
apostle in a very different light\footnote{Moody, 3.} Moody's views at the time, however, represented only a minority opinion within the SBC.

By the late 1970's, others arose to champion Moody's interpretations. Frank Stagg, former New Testament professor at Southern Seminary, argued that there is one gospel for all, not a different gospel for males than for females, and maintained that anyone holding on to a preoccupation with male authority threatened to negate the very gospel Jesus Christ had proclaimed.\footnote{Stagg, 59,63.} Prominent theologian Carl F.H. Henry insisted that the "New Testament emphasize[d] the equal dignity of men and women, that both sexes received the spirit at Pentecost, and that New Testament women 'fulfilled special church service-ministries.'"\footnote{Leonard, 151.} In a similar vein, Carolyn Blevins, Carson-Newman Baptist College professor, proposed that Jesus taught equality in Christianity by conversing freely with women, discussing scriptural matters with them [(i.e., the Woman at the Well [John 4:8-26]; Lazarus' sisters Mary and Martha [John 11:17-27; Luke 10:39, 42] and encouraging them as his disciples.\footnote{Blevins, 101.; i.e. Joanna and Susanna, etc [Luke 8:3]}}

Citing scripture, other, supporters of women's ordination proclaimed the practice consistent with biblical teachings given evidence that God called women to service and that Christ's ministry included women.\footnote{They also argued that any gospel that excludes people from using their abilities to the fullest is inconsistent with Jesus' ministry of inclusion, rather...}
than exclusion.\textsuperscript{343} Randall Lolley, while president at Southeastern Baptist Seminary president in 1984, maintained that those against the ordination of women had selected a few verses, disregarded the context in which they were written, and then bent them to suit their own faith and practice.\textsuperscript{344}

The first woman Southern Baptists ordained to the pastoral ministry was Addie Davis in August 1964, at the Watts Street Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina.\textsuperscript{345} Despite the ordination, Davis did not find a Southern Baptist pastorate in the South and migrated North to Vermont.\textsuperscript{346} Not accepted by her own denomination, she held effective pastorates outside the bounds of the SBC in North Carolina and Virginia.\textsuperscript{347} No other women were ordained to the SBC ministry until Druecillar Fordham in 1972.\textsuperscript{348} Fordham also became the first black woman ordained as a Southern Baptist minister.\textsuperscript{349} After 1972, numbers increased steadily. At least three women were ordained in 1973, followed by eight more in 1974.\textsuperscript{350}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{342} Ibid., 100.
  \item \textsuperscript{343} Ibid., 108-109.
  \item \textsuperscript{344} Lolley, 8.
  \item \textsuperscript{345} Melton, xxviii.
  \item \textsuperscript{346} Ammerman, 91.
  \item \textsuperscript{347} Blevins, 102.
  \item \textsuperscript{348} McBeth, \textit{Women}, 159.
  \item \textsuperscript{349} Ibid., 156.
  \item \textsuperscript{350} Ibid., 159.
\end{itemize}
Since the early 1970's, the ranks of ordained women ministers have continued to increase slowly. Because of the design of the SBC's hierarchial structure and the autonomy of the local church, ordination figures are difficult to confirm. On addition, SBC and local associational records do not always differentiate ordination candidates according to gender.

In comparison to other mainstream Protestant denominations, however, Baptist women clergy figures are extremely low. As of 1996, out of the more than fifteen million Southern Baptists, there were only 2313 women ministers.\(^{351}\) It has been estimated that out of the number of ordained women ministers, there are "at least 1,225 women [who actively] serve as Southern Baptist clergy."\(^{352}\) By comparison, Presbyterian Church, USA boasted a 1996 membership of a little over 2.5 million members and reported 3,202 women ministers with 639 awaiting ordination the same year.\(^{353}\) The United Methodist Church, with a little over 8.5 million members, reported almost 4,500 ordained women clergy in 1996.\(^{354}\) Making matters worse, ordination to the Southern Baptist ministry is not tantamount to a job. While many churches are willing to ordain women to the ministry, they are often hesitant to hire them.\(^{355}\) Thus, it is likely that the percentage of women actively pastoring Southern Baptist churches is actually lower than current ordination figures suggest.

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The small number of Baptist women serving as senior pastors of churches suggests to some that "the pulpit is the last bastion against women."\(^{356}\) Only sixteen states in 1998 reported having at least one senior pastor that is a woman.\(^{357}\) Sarah Frances Anders, a Louisiana sociologist, reported in 1998 that "at least eighty-five women are pastors in Baptist churches throughout the United States while more than one hundred serve in an associate pastor role."\(^{358}\) Many ordained women have been disappointed that the doors to ministry remain closed, especially the role of senior pastor.\(^{359}\) As a rule, ordained women have sought other forms of ministry as counselors, campus ministers, associate pastors, and chaplains.\(^{360}\) Anders noted that the chaplaincy is the most popular vocation for Southern Baptist women clergy as "twenty-five percent of confirmed Southern Baptist clergywomen serve as chaplains."\(^{361}\)

The case of pastor Nancy Sehested represented a rare success story for Southern Baptist women in ministry. Sehested was called as senior pastor of a large church in Memphis, Tennessee, Prescott Memorial Baptist Church, in 1987.\(^{362}\) Because of the church's acceptance of Sehested as pastor, however, Prescott Memorial was disassociated from the Shelby County

\(^{355}\) Ammerman, 90.


\(^{358}\) Ibid.

\(^{359}\) McBeth, Women, 165.

\(^{360}\) Melton, xxviii.


Most, however, were not successful as Nancy Sehested. Peggy Haymes, a minister and writer in Greensboro, North Carolina, commented that, in some Baptist churches, "women's full participation in ministry roles is embraced, while in other congregations, such participation is discouraged . . . 'Doors have opened, but far too many remain closed'". Because of their exclusion, many women ministers have expressed doubts, not of their faith in God or His calling, but of the denomination of which they are a part. Most experience an identity crisis, wanting to do what they feel God has called them to do yet not believing they are welcome to fulfill that call within their own denomination. Rhonda Davis, a ministerial graduate of Duke Divinity School, expressed her own frustrations with the current SBC climate by noting that women ministers often are "victims of identity crises." Because whereas they believed God was calling

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362 Leonard, 154.
363 Ammerman, 94.
them for ministry, the church [specifically the SBC] did not recognize that call. The rejection ultimately caused Davis to question her "identity as a woman, as a Baptist, and as a church member seeking ordination."

With the growing conservatism of American politics by the 1980's, women's ordination once again came under attack as an affront to family values, the stability of the home, and a blatant contradiction to the scriptures concerning women's proper place. Nowhere was this more obvious than within the SBC Annuals. The controversy over women's ordination became even more volatile after the 1984 passage of a SBC resolution concerning women's ordination. This resolution categorically denounced women's ordination within the SBC. (SEE APPENDIX 1)

Passed by 58 percent of the voting messengers, the resolution was seen by proponents of women's ordination as a personal attack on women, blaming them solely for the Edenic Fall and rendering them incapable of any leadership roles other than those traditionally defined. SBC resolutions have no legislative power and they only represent the feelings of those gathered at the annual convention at a particular time. However, the 1984 resolution gauged the beliefs of a large majority of Southern Baptists regarding the role of women in the church.

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367 Ibid.
368 Ibid., 10.
369 Leonard, 151.
370 Ibid., 152.
As a result, some feared that the "woman issue" might become more of a divisive issue than the inerrancy debate.\textsuperscript{371} In fact, the two debates were noticeably intertwined. The inerrancy debate concerned biblical literalism. Conservatives within the Convention contended that the Bible represented the inerrant Word of God and allowed for only minimal exceptions to a strict literal interpretation. Moderates also accepted the Bible as the word of God but allowed a much broader degree of interpretive freedom. These divergent opinions on interpretation stood at the crux of the Southern Baptist debate over the role of women.

Neither the denominational hierarchy nor the local church were the only places for gender debate and prejudice. The argument also spurred seminary debate. At New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Kelly M. Sisson, an ordained minister and former seminary student, related the prejudice of her own seminary colleagues when she was chosen to deliver a sermon from the pulpit of the seminary chapel. She recalled, in particular, a string of harassing phone calls from her fellow ministerial students.\textsuperscript{372} Sisson concluded that this experience represented the future battles she faced as a woman within the Convention and that she decided against spending her professional career fighting about the issue.\textsuperscript{373} She argued that she had been "called to be a minister, not a politician. If I can't live that out in the local church then I'll have to find other ways to fulfill my ministry."\textsuperscript{374}

\textsuperscript{371}Ibid., 151
\textsuperscript{372}Betsy Matthews Wright, "Keeping the Faith." \textit{Virginia Pilot and Ledger Star (Hampton Road Woman's Section)} 12 July 1992, 12.
\textsuperscript{373}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{374}Ibid.
The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary was not the only site of controversy. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) also became one of the major battlegrounds of the debate. Most of this controversy began when R. Albert Mohler began his tenure as Seminary president in 1993. Southern Seminary's troubles came to the forefront after the forced resignation of Molly T. Marshall. Marshall, the first tenured female theology professor at Southern, was forced to resign in 1994 due to charged that she had violated the institution's state set of theological guidelines for faculty--the Abstract of Principles. (SEE APPENDIX 2)

President Mohler accused Marshall of violating the Seminary's Abstract of Principles by "promoting universalism--the notion that all people can be saved--as well as liberalism and advocacy of feminist theology." Such charged were not new to Marshall's case; in fact, she had been cleared of similar charges in 1986, 1988 and 1990. Marshall responded to the new allegations by addressing each violation in a memo in which she also outlined "her beliefs regarding each of the 20 principles under question." Mohler, however, did not respond to the memo and insisted that Marshall had violated the terms of her contract. Echoing the president, John Michael, a former Seminary trustee, reported that Marshall had not only violated the Abstract of Principles but had barely "avoided being charged with heresy by . . . a series of


377 "Tenured," 847.
compromises and negotiations."\textsuperscript{378} Marshall, however, maintained that her firing was "a smoke-screen" rather than a violation under the \textit{Abstract of Principles}.\textsuperscript{379}

Accused of prejudice, Mohler denied that Marshall's gender had anything to do with the effort to oust her but acknowledged that the issue of feminist theology had been a concern at Southern.\textsuperscript{380} Nevertheless, some of Marshall's defenders continued to believe that "her outspokenness and gender were the real issue."\textsuperscript{381} However, former SBTS president Roy L. Honeycutt who had initially hired Marshall to the faculty, stated that Marshall was only asked to resign due to "Mohler's interpretation of [her] theological posture--and [the decision was] unrelated to gender."\textsuperscript{382} Similarly, Mohler defended his own actions when he noted that Southern would not entertain a revisionist view of basic Christian doctrine in order to fit the demands of today's society.\textsuperscript{383}

A year later, the conflict continued at SBTS with the case of Diana Garland. Garland had been on the faculty since 1983 and had served as Dean of the Carver School of Social Work since 1993.\textsuperscript{384} Nevertheless, in March, 1995, she was asked to resign after criticizing President

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{378}McCormick, A7.
\textsuperscript{379}"Tenured," 847.
\textsuperscript{380}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{381}McCormick, A7.
\textsuperscript{382}Ibid., A10.
\textsuperscript{383}"Tenured," 847.
\textsuperscript{384}"Diana Garland Resigns from Southern Seminary Faculty," \textit{Biblical Recorder} April 26, 1996, n.p.
\end{footnotesize}
Mohler's decision not to "hire David Sherwood of Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, because [he] . . . would not exclude women from pastoral ministry." Garland had reportedly told her students that President Mohler's new hiring criteria threatened the Carver School's accreditation. Mohler faulted Garland for using class time "or any forum designated for instructional purposes for the purpose of undermining or obstructing the policies of [the] . . . institution." Ultimately, Garland agreed to resign because, as she outlined in a letter dated April 15, 1996, she could not continue to insure quality graduate social work education due to the loss of personnel and administrative constraints.

At this point, I fear my continued presence on the faculty will engender false hope that the school can continue to offer quality social work education an additional year and hinder the transfer of remaining students to social work degree programs in other institutions.

Mohler, with the support of SBTS trustees, also adopted the stance that he would hire only those faculty that held the belief, backed up by scripture, that women were not called to preach. He defended this stance by saying that he would continue to hire faculty based on candidate affirmation of scriptures that, in his view, condemned homosexuality, women serving

385 Joe Maxwell, "Dean's dismissal draws faculty, student protests," Christianity Today, 39, no. 6: 54. Carver School of Church Social Work was formerly the WMU Training School.


387 "Trustees affirm mohler, grant more authority over faculty." Biblical Recorder, April 29, 1995, 1.


389 Ibid.
as ministers and abortion.\textsuperscript{391} In response to criticism over the Garland incident, trustees of SBTS "affirmed the leadership of President Albert Mohler, adopted . . . [a] . . . policy discouraging teachers from criticizing the administration and strengthened the president's role in [the] selection of new faculty members."\textsuperscript{392} For good measure, the board also adopted "a statement against women serving as pastors."\textsuperscript{393} The words of the new policy protecting administrators from criticism were ambiguous but Southern's faculty were clearly made to "realize they cannot publicly differ with the president or the trustees."\textsuperscript{394} This policy came to be known at Southern as the "gag rule."\textsuperscript{395}

A string of faculty members resigned following the Marshall and Garland incidents. In the five years following the fall of 1992, ten out of a total of forty-two full-time faculty members either resigned, were forced to leave or retired. Garland's firing was called "a thinly veiled warning against acts like hers."\textsuperscript{396} Because of the continued uproar at the Carver School and further resignations by Carver School personnel, Southern Seminary trustees and administration

\textsuperscript{390}"Literal interpretation," \textit{Christian Century} (21 June 95), 112, no. 20: 663.

\textsuperscript{391}Maxwell, 54. All three items are not mentioned in the Abstract OF Principles.

\textsuperscript{392}"Trustees Affirm," 1.

\textsuperscript{393}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{394}"Trustee actions bury faculty, staff in despair," \textit{Biblical Recorder}, May 13, 1995, 8.

\textsuperscript{395}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{396}"Trustees Affirm," 1.
officials transferred the school to the campus of Campbellsville University in Campbellsville, Kentucky.\textsuperscript{397}

There was one ironic footnote to the SBTS episode in the mid-1990's. During the height of the Marshall/Garland controversies, Southern Seminary held its annual preaching contest. The contest began just one week after trustees had adopted the new position "to hire only professors who believe that women are not called to preach."\textsuperscript{398} Twenty-eight manuscripts were submitted to an all-male panel composed of two faculty members and six students. The names and genders of the ministerial candidates were not included on the manuscripts submitted. The committee only learned of the true identities [and genders] of the top three winners after listening to tape recordings of the sermons.\textsuperscript{399} It was revealed that all three top winners were women. This was the first time that women had earned all of the top prizes.\textsuperscript{400} SBTS student David Casto summed up the beliefs of many when he noted that the decision "affirms that God's Spirit blows where it will and in a time where there is so much despair, there is a little hope in this."\textsuperscript{401}

Even so, the controversy continued. On September 26, 1997, Paul Debusman, a thirty-five year veteran reference librarian at Southern, was fired as a result of a letter he had written to

\textsuperscript{397}"Carver School," n.p.


\textsuperscript{399}"Literal interpretation," 663.

\textsuperscript{400}"Women Sweep," 8.

\textsuperscript{401}Ibid.
SBC president Tom Eliff.⁴⁰² Apparently, the letter questioned some statements that Eliff had made while delivering a chapel address at Southern.⁴⁰³ Though only ten months away from retirement, Debusman was dismissed with one month's severance pay.⁴⁰⁴ According to the SBTS administration, his actions had been "harmful" to the Seminary.⁴⁰⁵

Despite the controversy, women ministers sought ways to cope and remain within the SBC. Though some ultimately left the denomination altogether, others have banded together to support each other in their calling. In 1982, supporters within the SBC organized "Baptist Women in Ministry" as an organization support women struggling to fulfill their "call."⁴⁰⁶ Individual states soon followed suit with organizing state and local chapters of "Baptist Women in Ministry." The newsletter Folio, begun in 1983, served as an aid for women ministers and gave them a forum in which to be heard.⁴⁰⁷

Despite opposition to women's ordination at the Convention level, the issue remained relatively open at the local level. Because of the Southern Baptist concept of local autonomy, little could be done to prevent female ordination at the local church issue.⁴⁰⁸ Some churches as a

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⁴⁰³Ibid.
⁴⁰⁴Ibid.
⁴⁰⁵Ibid.
⁴⁰⁶Blevins, 48.
⁴⁰⁷Ibid.
⁴⁰⁸Leonard, 152.
whole openly supported women's ordination while others condemned the practice. Likewise, there were often divisions within individual Baptist churches.

Even so, by the closing decades of the twentieth century, the issue of women serving as ministers was clearly a sensitive one for Southern Baptists. According to a survey conducted by the Home Mission Board in 1977, 75 percent of Southern Baptists approved of women's ordination in leadership areas other than the pastorate. However, further data revealed that both the pulpit and the diaconate remained off-limits in the opinion of most church members, while one-third have no objection to women being ordained as deacons. Only 17 percent approved of women serving as pastors while 34 percent approved of women deacons. While the legacy of Lottie Moon had opened the way for women interested in missions work, much remained to be accomplished if women were to serve fully in local Southern Baptist congregations.

By the 1990's, proponents of women, who in good conscience could not support the Convention financially due to its stance on women (and other issues), began looking for alternative funding opportunities. The answer for some was to form the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) in 1991 to dispense contributions to various Baptist missionaries and educational institutions. The CBF resisted the impulse to break from the SBC and form a separate denomination. Rather, in many "moderate" churches, new association simply provided

409 McBeth, Women, 24.

410 Ibid.

411 Ibid., 75.
a vehicle for those members opposed to SBC policies and unwilling to contribute to the denomination's financial umbrella, the Cooperative Program.\textsuperscript{413} As a result, disgruntled Baptists could avoid support of traditional SBC mission boards and agencies but still support their favorite causes.

In the early 1990's, the upper echelons of the SBC and the Woman's Missionary Union came into conflict over the auxiliary's decision to fund other mission opportunities (particularly CBF missionaries) in addition to traditional Southern Baptist mission endeavors.\textsuperscript{414} In response to the perceived threat, Adrian Rogers, minister of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, and a former Convention president, commented that the Woman's Missionary Union should be taken over to bring a halt to the "feminization of missions."\textsuperscript{415}

In the midst of the controversy at the Convention level, some local churches recognized the need to reevaluate and tried to find ways to incorporate more women into leadership roles. Some even appointed committees to study the ordination dilemma and recommend how their church should respond. One such example was the First Baptist Church of Columbia, South Carolina. In a vote passed at a Church Conference in December, 1982, a study was commissioned to analyze why women were under-represented in certain roles in the church. The motion called for a committee "to study barriers to the election of women to the diaconate, to

\textsuperscript{412} Leonard, 153.

\textsuperscript{413} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{415} "Rein In," 423-424.
serve as deacons, ushers and associate deacons.”

Though there was some opposition to this course, the motion carried.

In looking at women's ordination and leadership roles within the church, First Baptist of Columbia appointed a committee of five (two men and three women) to seek answers to this difficult question. Members explored the ordination issue from the standpoint of "Biblical Teachings, Historical Precedents, and Current Practice and Need" and by November 9, 1983, the report was submitted to the Church Conference. (SEE APPENDIX 3) Ultimately the committee recommended that the "church as well as others within the denomination mostly under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, broaden and strengthen the base for ministry and witness." Their conclusions affirmed that women should be allowed to use their gifts in other areas not previously open to them.

Even when churches have ordained women to the ministry, they have risked disassociation from their local associations. In 1997, the First Church of Drakesboro, Kentucky, voted to dissociate itself from the Muhlenberg County Baptist Association when the

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416 Report of the Committee on the Role of Women in the Church (Columbia, SC:First Baptist Church, 1983), 1.
417 Ibid.
418 Ibid.
419 Ibid., 17.
420 Ibid., 18.
421 Melton, xxix. Associations in Baptist terms, are regional delineation of the state's Baptist convention.
Association issued an ultimatum threatening to disfellow the congregation.\textsuperscript{422} The issue involved the listing of Angie Flack in the association directory as an ordained pastor.\textsuperscript{423} Flack had been ordained in North Carolina before moving to Kentucky.\textsuperscript{424} Unlike First Church, Drakesboro, other churches have been disassociated involuntarily.

Despite opposition, the number of women in ministry continues to grow. In a sermon entitled "Southern Baptist Women in Ministry: Vision, Goal, Strategy, and Tactics" given to a gathering in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1983, Nancy H. Sehested gave this advice to her fellow women ministers:

Specifically, in encouraging women to fuller participation in ministry we need to transcend all the talk about demanding 'rights' and place the emphasis on the responsibility of exercising 'gifts.'\textsuperscript{425} As women in ministry many--perhaps most of us--are pioneers in our denomination in assuming new roles of power and authority. For some of us, doors have opened; for others, we've gotten our foot in the door--while still many are facing a closed door to ministry.\textsuperscript{426}

With this statement, Sehested directed women to concentrate on the "call" itself and not on the man-made acceptance of the call. Within some Southern Baptist ranks, this "call" will never be accepted. Because of the denominations hierarchy, the "call" has been put within the context of

\textsuperscript{422} "Church in women's ordination dispute withdraws from Kentucky Association," \textit{Biblical Recorder} Oct 18, 1997, 9.
\textsuperscript{423} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{424} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{426} Ibid., 2.
the local church. Like the secular women's movement, the challenge is to "do it," not just to debate about it.

Will Southern Baptists remain divided on the issue of diverse leadership roles for women in the church? Can the Southern Baptist Convention keep the entirety of their denomination intact? The future of women in ministry is anyone's guess, but women driven by a sense of God's call, whatever that may be, will continue.
CONCLUSION

PROMOTER, EDUCATOR, MISSIONARY, DEACON, MINISTER? SOUTHERN BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY

For 153 years, women's role in ministry has remained vital to the health of the SBC. Missions organizations freed women from the Victorian mold of Southern womanhood by allowing them to conduct their own meetings and organize their own programs. In turn, Southern Baptist women opened their eyes to the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. A new world previously unavailable to women emerged through mission work which helped break down the limitations of their gender and empowered women to work directly for change within their society and denomination. It was from this motivation to help the poor, as well as the poor in spirit, that the mission societies were born.

Missionary societies gave women a new voice in religious matters that continues to influence the ideas of the church today. In helping others, women obtained varying degrees of freedom. As a result of this newfound freedom, countless people were helped in the process, not least the women of these mission societies. For providing examples of ministry to those less fortunate and for supporting SBC mission causes with their time and money, the SBC is indebted to the WMU. The legacy of those early mothers helped push women toward positions of

\[427\] McBeth, Women, 63.

\[428\] Shadron, 11.

\[429\] Watkins, 16.
leadership, even those historically filled by men. The WMU continues to fulfill a viable role within the SBC. In over one hundred years, the organization has remained true to its cause of missions. From the example of good works, women were further inspired to do what they believed God was calling them to do. The impact of Lottie Moon and other women missionaries are still felt by Southern Baptists a century later.

By expanding gender roles within accepted ministries, WMU members claimed more latitude for service. Women expanded into other areas of ministry, but not without controversy. The struggle over women in ministry continues--especially over the issue of ordination. Many women, however, do not feel the need to push for ordination in order to minister. In fact, it is likely that most Southern Baptist women are comfortable with their ministry roles given that relatively few over the years have indicated a desire to be preachers.

Thanks to local autonomy, the Southern Baptist denomination remains intact despite much controversy. Likewise, women continue to pursue many avenues of ministry. Though much disagreement continues to swirl on the proper role of women within the church, one thing cannot be denied. Baptist women figure prominently within the ministry of those calling themselves Southern Baptists. Regardless of ordination, women will continue to champion the cause of Christ and be "set apart" for ministry. Whether as Woman's Missionary Union workers, missionaries, ordained deacons or ministers, women have and will continue to express

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431 McBeth, "Role," 11.; "No evidence indicated that [vast] numbers of Southern Baptist women wanted to be preachers."
themselves as they feel God calls. Ordained or not, women have historically ministered and will continue to minister for the cause of Christ.
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APPENDIX A
1984 SBC Resolution

Be it further Resolved, That we approve the principle of quality education and urge Southern Baptist to become personally involved in public, private, or Christian school matters, encouraging the restoration of theistic principles in the curriculum, and

Be it further Resolved, That we express our dismay over the triviality of much mass media content and our disapproval of the hedonism and relativism it reflects, and that we encourage dedicated Christians to pursue vocational careers that would allow them to project a positive Christian lifestyle in mass media content; and

Be it finally Resolved, That we call Southern Baptists to involvement in political, educational and media opportunities, and to exemplify in their lives and leadership the relevance of the ethical principles of the Bible to the contemporary moral crisis.

203. Lee Porter (TN), registration secretary, reported on results of the ballot on Resolution 3 (Item 195): 8,380 (49.15% of registered messengers) voted; Yes - 4,793 (58.03%); No - 3,466 (41.97%). Resolution 3 was declared adopted.

Resolution No. 3 On Ordination and the Role of Women in Ministry

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., I 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 (I-Cor. 11:2-16), and Priscilla joined her husband in teaching Apollos (Acts 18:26), and women filled 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 (I 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 (I 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 (I 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 (I 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 Christian 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.
APPENDIX B
Abstract of Principles

Abstract of Principles

The following is an excerpt from the Fundamental Laws of the Seminary written into its charter on April 30, 1858: Every Professor of the Institution shall be a member of a regular Baptist Church; and all persons accepting Professorships in this Seminary, shall be considered by such acceptance, as engaging to teach in accordance with, and not contrary to, the Abstract of Principles hereinafter laid down.

I. THE SCRIPTURES

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.

II. GOD

There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of himself, all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience.

III. THE TRINITY

God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being.

IV. PROVIDENCE

God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any wise to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures.

V. ELECTION

Election is God's eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life—not because of foreseen merit in them, but of his mere mercy in Christ—in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified.

VI. THE FALL OF MAN

God originally created man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors.

VII. THE MEDIATOR

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man. Having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the law, suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended to His Father, at whose right hand He ever liveth to make intercession for His people. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the Universe.
VIII. REGENERATION

Regeneration is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, who quickeneth the dead in trespasses and sins, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone.

IX. REPENTANCE

Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being, by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbleth himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things.

X. FAITH

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatsoever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness.

XI. JUSTIFICATION

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith.

XII. SANCTIFICATION

Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified, by God's word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is progressive through the supply of Divine strength, which all saints seek to obtain, pressing after a heavenly life in cordial obedience to all Christ's commands.

XIII. PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Those whom God hath accepted in the Beloved, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall, through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the Church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

XIV. THE CHURCH

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the church, which is composed of all his true disciples, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to his commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into particular societies or churches; and to each of these churches he hath given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which he hath appointed. The regular officers of a Church are Bishops or Elders, and Deacons.
XV. BAPTISM

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of his giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. It is prerequisite to church fellowship, and to participation in the Lord's Supper.

XVI. THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and wine, and to be observed by his churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate his death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with him, and of their church fellowship.

XVII. THE LORD'S DAY

The Lord's day is a Christian institution for regular observance, and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, resting from worldly employments and amusements, works of necessity and mercy only expected.

XVIII. LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it. Civil magistrates being ordained of God, subjection in all lawful things commanded by them ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

XIX. THE RESURRECTION

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God—the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked, to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised.

XX. THE JUDGMENT

God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when everyone shall receive according to his deeds: the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life.
APPENDIX C

The Role of Women in the Church: A report to the Church Conference From the Special Study Committee - November 9, 1983 - First Baptist Church, Columbia, South Carolina

(Source: Report of the Committee on the Role of Women in the Church, Columbia, SC: First Baptist Church, 1983.)
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

A Report to the Church Conference From the Special Study Committee
November 9, 1983 - First Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C.

Introduction

A motion was made and adopted from the floor during the annual Church Conference in December, 1982, requesting that a special study be made for the Conference. The Minutes of the Conference record the action as follows:

The moderator recognized Dr. Robert Porter who again brought up the lack of women in certain roles in the church. He made the motion that the pastor be asked to appoint a committee to study barriers to the election of women to the diaconate to serve as deacons, ushers, and associate deacons and then to report to the church its findings at the next quarterly conference in April, 1983. The motion was seconded by Mr. Preston Callison. There was opposition to the motion but the majority carried.

During the early months of 1983, the pastor, Marshall Edwards, selected five people to serve on this committee. They are Mr. Truman Fallaw, Mr. Flynn Harrell, Mrs. Dexter Martin (Guynelle), Mrs. George McGregor (Anne), and Miss Zella Woody. The Committee met during the summer and agreed on a procedure for the assigned study. Members accepted responsibility for doing reading and research in three areas: Biblical Teaching, Historical Precedents, and Current Practice and Need. Each also agreed to prepare a written account of his or her findings. This report to the Church Conference is a compilation of the individual studies and has been examined and approved by the five members acting as a committee-of-the-whole and has been examined and approved by the pastor before presentation to the Conference tonight.

Through both corporate and individual prayer over these last months, Committee members have sought for direction and leading by the Holy Spirit in the research and preparation of this report. Each member feels a deep sense of responsibility to God and to this congregation that the report be both scriptural and objective. It is the
deepest hope of the Committee that the report not arouse any element of disharmony in this fellowship and that no polarization of viewpoints result. Furthermore, the Conference is reminded that this is a report of Committee findings and, as such, requires no action, debate, or vote. It is presented by the Committee to be received as the fulfillment of action taken by the Conference in December, 1982, requesting the study. Finally, this study is a report defining matters relating to a particular New Testament Baptist church -First Baptist Church of Columbia, South Carolina - and in no way is to be interpreted as a political, sociological, or activist tool.

The Committee requests that the report be received prayerfully into the minds and hearts of this congregation which we believe are open to the leading of him who is our Savior and Lord so that we are directed by him and that we "lean not upon our own understanding."

Overview

In preparing this report, the members of the Special Study Committee affirm the Biblical principles that male and female were both and equally created by God in his Image, and that for believers, there is no distinction of sex, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. We affirm the priesthood of the believer and the authority of the local New Testament Church where decisions are made concerning the role of women in the church.

In examining Scripture passages from both the Old and New Testaments, the Committee finds:

- that women in Bible times existed in a role of submission to men primarily because of the patriarchal system that governed life;

- that because Jesus gave no direct teaching to or for women, his words are equally applicable to both men and women;

- that by his treatment of women Jesus challenged the status quo of the patriarchal system, thereby returning to women the worth, personhood, and equality God intended in creation;
- that Paul affirmed this oneness of all in Christ by recognizing women as his co-workers in the churches;

- that while some of Paul's writings have been used to place women in a position of submission to men in New Testament churches, these writings were directed to particular problems in particular first century situations.

In examining the research of church historians, the Committee finds:

- that the deaconate and the practice of ordination are not clearly and doctrinely defined in the Bible;

- that the deacon function and the practice of ordination have had different interpretations over the years;

- that women as well as men have performed services described as those of a "diaconos" (or servant) in churches from New Testament times to the present.

In examining current practice and need at First Baptist Church, Columbia, South Carolina, the Committee finds:

- that there is a resident membership of 3,137;

- that of this membership, 1,580 are females 18 years of age or older; and a total of 710 women serve in specific places of responsibility in the church;

- that the church By-Laws (except in several instances) do not designate what offices are to be held by men and what ones shall be held by women:

- that members of the congregation hold differing opinions and viewpoints which may exist as barriers to the nomination and election of women to the church offices of deacon, associate deacon, and usher since no women currently hold any of these offices;

- that these differing positions and viewpoints are the result of many influences; tradition, culture, teachings, background, feelings, Scriptural interpretations, etc.;

- that a prayerful and Spirit-directed examination of these positions and viewpoints could result in the women of this church being offered places of service not open to them before.

**Biblical Teaching - Part I**

There are three basic principles found in the Bible upon which
this report has been developed. A statement of each with some explanation follows:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:26-27) (KJV)

1. The first principle is that human beings - male and female - were "both and equally created by God and in His Image." Both received the blessings of God and both were charged to have dominion over the earth in "unity and partnership." The Scriptures express the ideal of God for mutual equality as the perfect relationship, and Jesus repeats this intent in Mark 10:6:

“But from the beginning of the creation, ‘God made them male and female.’” (KJV)

Paul declared and applied this ideal for all believers of all times in his statement of Christian liberty found in Galations 3:28.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (KJV)

2. The second principle, really a corollary to the first, is that male and female are both equal in "personhood" and directly responsible to and under the authority of their creator - God - with neither male nor female exercising authority over nor requiring submission from the other. Within a fellowship of believers which makes up a New Testament church, this principle is seen as the concept of the "priesthood of the believer." The Baptist Faith and Message reads:

"The church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Christ. In such a congregation, members are equally responsible."

"Such a definition places all members of a fellowship on the same high plane. No one is placed in a position of inferiority for reasons of age, sex, or any other difference. It is at this point that we begin any study of the roles of members of the body of Christ. Each person is responsible
for being one's own priest, completely accountable to God without the necessary intermediary role of any other except Christ. This is the basis of equality, unity, and congregational Baptist policy."

3. The third principle is an extension of the second and affirms the autonomy of each New Testament church where decisions are made and action taken within and by the fellowship and not by any outside person, group, association convention. This principle means that the members of this congregation decide what offices are needed and what officers shall serve the Lord through this fellowship.

Biblical Teachings - Part II

There are now three areas of Scripture which need to be examined. First, what does the Old Testament show about women in the religious structure of these times? Second, what do the Gospels record that Jesus taught and did concerning women? Third, what do New Testament writers tell about women in the churches of the first century?

Old Testament

God's ideal that men and women whom he created as equal in his image to live in unity and partnership was altered when the created persons sinned. The subordination of the physically smaller and weaker female to the physically larger and stronger male becomes the order in a fallen society. The Old Testament shows the inferior state in which women existed, almost as chattel at all levels of life - social, legal, religious, etc. - in Israel under the patriarchal structure of family life which was formed by the descendants of Abraham. However, Old Testament writers give vivid accounts of specific women God called to special service - Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Esther, and Ruth - and in Proverbs 31, the ideal woman is described. Also, the Law allowed women to take the vow of the Nazarite with the men, and women were included in the renewal of the Covenant under Nehemiah and Ezra. Women, however, were not given an education and were not allowed to participate in the synagogue teaching.
The Gospels

The Gospel writers provide an examination not only of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, but also of his teachings and ministry as well. The most significant fact derived from these four books is that Jesus uttered no specific teaching directed to or for women. This is irrefutable evidence that his words and work were equally applicable to both men and women. He came to set at liberty all persons - male and female. By speaking with women, by healing them, and by praising their fidelity, Jesus challenged the status quo and gave worth and personhood to women.

"But when the time has fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman..." (Galations 4:4) (RSV)

Thus, Mary, a woman, was used by God to bring salvation through Christ to the world.

Women were a visible and significant part of Jesus' ministry, and women responded gratefully and wholeheartedly to Him, traveling in the band of disciples and providing financial support.

"Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and also some of the women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Suzanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means." (Luke 8:1-3) (RSV)

"(Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem." (Mark 15:41) (KJV)

"And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him. Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and John, and the mother of Zebedee's children." (Matthew 27:55-56) (KJV)

The woman of Samaria became an evangelist and a missionary when she encountered Jesus. The depth of spiritual understanding and devotion of Mary when she "annointed him for his burial" went beyond that of his closest disciples. The women were the last at the cross and the first at the tomb. No woman went to sleep in the garden. No woman denied him, and no woman betrayed him.
Jesus appeared to the women at the tomb and commissioned them to go and give the first report to the
disciples of the miracle of the Resurrection, the greatest event the Christian world has ever known. Matthew 28:1
names the women who shared in this great event - Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph.
These women were the first to be a witness to Christ's conquest over death and the first to be sent to go forth and tell
others that they had seen the risen Lord.

Women waited in the upper room with the eleven disciples, and the first Christian congregation before
Pentecost included not only the eleven apostles but also the women. On the day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed the
significance of the Holy Spirit's coming using the words of the prophet Joel:

"Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . and on my servants and handmaidens I will
pour out in those days of my spirit; and they shall prophesy." (Acts 2:17-18) (KJV)

New Testament Writers

The "church" as it is identified in the twentieth century experience did not exist until the last sixty years of
the first century. During the nearly 2,000 years preceeding the birth of Jesus, the Hebrew people had worshipped
Jehovah according to his revelation and according to the writings of Moses and the prophets - first at designated
altars, then in the Tabernacle, and finally in the Temple at Jerusalem. During and after the Captivity, small local
units called synagogues were established among the Hebrew people for worship and instruction. Some synagogues
remained small while others were quite large. After the Temple was rebuilt, the theocracy of the Jewish people was
again structured with the synagogues as important units. This was the religious system into which Jesus Christ came
to build his church.
Recognizing that the church of Jesus Christ includes all believers of all times, the organizational unit to which Southern Baptist believers relate is the independent, autonomous, local New Testament church, modeled after the ones of the first century which had, in turn, followed the structure and pattern of existing local synagogues.

However, and most importantly, the functions of the New Testament church went beyond worship and instruction. To share the good news of Jesus Christ evangelism became the focus. Closely linked was the commitment of members of this "body of Christ" to the teaching of the Savior and to a life of service or ministry under this Lordship.

New Testament writers directed their writings to situations in these first century churches and to the people who made up their membership. Most of Paul's epistles were written to particular churches, in particular locations, faced with some particular problems. He was writing within the context of first century culture. Not all of his background was changed by his conversion. He was a Jew and a Pharisee. He was the product of his immediate environment and of a long past. In orthodox Jewish synagogues, the male would pray thankfully to God "who hath not made me a Gentile, a slave or a woman."

Some of the writings of the Apostle Paul have contributed more than any other to the subordinate role of women through the centuries. Paul said that women must keep their heads covered in church (1 Cor. 11:3-10). (Women's hair was not to be shaven because this was considered disgraceful.) Paul said that women must keep silent in the church and should ask their husbands at home whatever they desire to know (1 Cor. 14:33-35). (Here Paul was dealing with a problem of disorder in public worship.) Paul said that women must be silent and submissive and must not teach or have authority over men (1 Tim. 2:11-14). Nonetheless, Paul in his writings involved women
in the work of the church. He considered women to be his co-workers on an equal basis with men, and he applied the truth that all persons are one in Christ Jesus. Examples include the following:

Lydia, a woman from Thyatira, who lived at Philippi, was a business woman, a "seller of purple." In Acts 16, Paul relates how Lydia listened and the Lord opened her heart of understanding; she became Europe's first convert. Soon afterwards, she was baptized and then her household. She did not think of how this decision might affect her business. "Her customers of the purple cloth or dye would probably have scoffed at the Gospel of Christ, but Lydia did not wait to see." She put Christ first and was baptized as were members of her household. We are not told whether those who were baptized were members of her family or those connected with her business. In any case, they respected the good judgment of Lydia and were willing to follow her lead. She was one of many to help spread the Gospel of Christ through Europe.

One of the most influential women in the New Testament church was Priscilla, a Jewess, who came out of Italy with her husband Aquila. They left home at the time when Claudius had expelled all Jews. Acts 18:1-2. When Paul first met them, they lived in Corinth; they were tentmakers and so was Paul. He stayed with them, but later they went with Paul to Ephesus. When Paul left for Syria, he committed the work in Ephesus to Priscilla and Aquila. About a year later, he returned and found that they had established a well-organized congregation in Ephesus. Later Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians from Ephesus and sent greetings from Aquila and Priscilla "with the church that is in their house." (I Corinthians 16:19) In Acts 18:26, we read that Priscilla and Aquila introduced Apollos who was a very learned man, one who had received the baptism of John, to the true Christian faith. They recognized that he had only a superficial knowledge of the new Christian faith.
In Romans 16:1-2, Paul introduces Phoebe, a "deaconess" (RSV) as the bearer of his epistle to the Romans. In choosing Phoebe to carry his epistle, Paul conferred a great honor upon her.

Paul describes Phoebe in a few brief words but gives a vivid picture of the type person she was. First he calls her "our sister." Second, he calls her "a servant of the church." The word "servant" comes from the Greek word, diaconos, from which the word "deacon" is derived. Dr. Lee Anna Starr, in The Bible Status of Women has conjectured that Phoebe was a minister, even as were Paul, Timothy and others.6

Paul also describes Phoebe as "a helper of many." This suggests that she was one who had come to the aid of converts in need and one who had fought the battles of those who were oppressed. In addition, Paul records that Phoebe had helped him also. In the same Roman letter, Paul greets by name at least seven women who were part of the church at Rome (Romans 16). He further instructs the Roman congregation to help Phoebe "in whatever she may require from you."

Indeed, Paul acknowledged women to be his co-workers on an equal basis with men.

### Historical Precedent

Space does not allow a lengthy presentation of the role of women in nearly 2,000 years of church history. A cursory look, however, must include the following information:
In church history, there was an office of women deacons by 112 A. D. (having been explicitly referred to in the famous letter of Pliny, governor of Bithynia, to the Emperor Trajan). Deacon functions were sometimes given to widows.

John Smythe, who later became pastor of the first Baptist congregation in history in Amsterdam, wrote about deaconesses in 1607. Thomas Helwys, leader of the first Baptist church in England in 1611, wrote in the first Baptist confession of faith that deaconesses were to be elected and approved by the church. Morgan Edwards, the earliest historian of Baptists in America, wrote between 1770 and 1774 that a Separate Baptist church and several Particular Baptist churches in South Carolina had women deacons. The Sandy Creek influence continued this tradition. It is also of worth to note that while the origin of organized Baptists in America is traced to Roger Williams in Rhode Island, few people give credit to "a woman, Catherine Scott, who persuaded him to make a public profession of his Baptist views."7

During the 1800's with the emergence of the concept of deacons as a "board of directors" and as "business managers," women as deacons declined. The prevailing tendency was for men only to occupy management positions.

In the 1900's, a renewed interest in women deacons has developed. This has resulted from a renewed scriptural emphasis of the servant role of the deacon and from the widespread emphasis upon equality among the sexes. A deacon is not so much an office to hold as it is a function to perform. The ministry role women performed through the centuries has assisted immeasurably Kingdom progress. Women deacons have existed in every century of Baptist life, but especially in the 18th and 20th centuries.
Many of our churches have come a long way from the time women were not allowed to vote in Church Conference. In the Southern Baptist Convention, women were excluded as messengers from 1885 to 1918, and those who did attend sat in the balcony. Recently, several have served as vice president, and they comprise almost half of those attending. Woman's Missionary Union, organized in 1888, provided the first real opportunity for women to exercise leadership in missions. Later, their annual report was given, usually as a part of the Foreign Mission Board report and always by a man. In 1929, Mrs. A. J. Cox, in giving the WMU report, became the first woman to address the SBC. Several men tried to prevent her from speaking and, when they failed, some walked out. In 1901, a few women were allowed to sit in the back of the classroom at our only seminary, but they could not ask questions, take exams or receive degrees. Today, they are a significant proportion of all our seminary students.

Current Practice and Need

In preparing the Seminary Extension Study Guide entitled Women In The Church, the author, Minette Drumwright, wrote a questionnaire listing the following twelve items to which those surveyed would respond "agree," "disagree," or "uncertain."

1. God's intention for man/woman relationships is partnership rather than one's being subordinate to the other.

2. God intends for only men to have places of leadership in situations that include both men and women.

3. Men have more responsibility before God than women do.

4. Women should always yield to a man's decision.

5. Jesus related to women in a way that violated the custom of the day.

6. Some of Paul's teachings apply to the local situations to which he was writing and are not intended to be applied to all churches for all time.

7. Some of the New Testament churches had women deacons.
8. Qualified women should be eligible for election as deacons in my church.

9. Women should be ordained to the ministry if they feel God has called them.

10. God calls only men to the pastoral ministry.

11. God intends that women should be subordinate to men in the home.

12. God intends that women should be subordinate to men in the church.

Responses to these twelve items by the individual members of local Southern Baptist churches through their official actions in church conferences like this one have established and will continue to maintain the avenues of ministry to which the female members of that "local Body of Christ" are allowed access.

This Study Committee does not suggest that the survey be used to determine the "mind" of the congregation at First Baptist Church, but the Committee members recognize responses to these items have shaped the practices, the traditions, and the customs now in effect in this church as they relate to offices and duties held by women members.

The computer membership report for September 30, 1983, lists First Baptist Church, Columbia, South Carolina, with 3,137 resident members. Of this number, 1,580 are women 18 years of age or older. A careful study of the report of the Committee on Organization, various handbooks, and communication from directors and leaders of the respective phases of the church organizations shows 710 women are serving in a variety of capacities of leadership and responsibility. (A detailed listing is included in the APPENDIX of this report.)

It is of great significance that the By-Laws do not specify - other than references to the Woman's Missionary Union director - whether general officers, deacons, associate deacons, ushers, members of church
councils and committees shall be men or women. Listed in the APPENDIX to this report, however, are the seven sections in Article VIII of the Church By-Laws which specify that women are to serve in specific capacities.

That no woman in First Baptist Church serves in the capacity of deacon, associate deacon or usher is fact. That no woman serves on the personnel committee - composed of the past Deacon Chairman, present Deacon Chairman, and Finance Committee Chairman (who is a deacon selected by the deacons) is also fact. That no woman serves at the level of a "minister" on the present church staff is likewise a fact. However, as has been reported, the By-Laws of First Baptist Church in no way establish this situation. Selection of people to serve in church offices is made by the Nominating Committee, and the floor of the Conference is always open for other nominations. Election is by the vote of the members of the congregation present at the Annual Conference.

If barriers exist to the nomination and election of women to the church offices of deacon, associate deacon, and usher, such barriers are based in positions or viewpoints held by the elected members of the Nominating Committee and by the members of the congregation attending the annual church conference concerning the ordination of women as deacons or church offices open to women.

The Committee recognizes that "those who favor and those who feel women should not be ordained are equally sincere. Both appeal to Scripture in supporting their position. The Bible sets forth principles which speak to the question, but give no specific instructions as to whether women should or should not be ordained. Indeed... there is no clear mandate in the New Testament for the ordination of anyone. Still, the roots of our ordination practice are found there." The APPENDIX of this report includes a concise treatment of both viewpoints written by Dr. Alton H. McEachern in his 1980 book, Set Apart for Service.
A study written by Dr. Duke McCall, Chancellor of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and President of the Baptist World Alliance, reports that during the second and third centuries Christians spoke of baptism as the layman's "ordination" since the high calling of God is the call to be a Christian. Dr. McCall also reports that the idea translated by the English word "ordain" is not one technical term but 20 different Hebrew and Greek words, and he points out that deacons are not merely to serve in the areas of church benevolence or business but more specially as spiritual leaders. He states that "when the church is convinced that Almighty God has endowed an individual with spiritual gifts which enable that person to function in an enabling and representational ministry in the church, then and only then, lay hands upon that person in ordination."\(^{10}\)

Recognizing that the Bible does not state that there are spiritual gifts for males and spiritual gifts for females, but that these gifts are conferred by God for ministry, larger numbers of churches are ordaining women and affording them increasing roles for leadership today. This is true among all major denominations. Among some of the Baptist churches in South Carolina where women serve as deacons are Greenville First, Charleston First, Orangeburg First, Greenwood First, Chester First, Fernwood (Spartanburg), Kathwood (Columbia), and Clemson. There are women who are currently members of First Baptist Church who have been ordained and who have served as deacons in other churches.

That this congregation recognizes God's call by his Holy Spirit to individuals for specific service is evidenced by the ordination in May of 1981, of Patricia Anne Otwell "to the gospel ministry in order that her calling as a hospital chaplain might be fulfilled." A copy of the report to the deacons of this event is included in the APPENDIX of this report.
Conclusion

The Committee believes that the issues generated by any study of the role of women in the church whether local or denominational, must be addressed honestly, objectively, prayerfully, and scripturally, but they must be addressed.

The following quotations taken from an article in Search written by Nell MaGee in 1979 best express the feelings of the members at this time.

"Women who are called of God to areas of ministry will have to prepare, and some should expect to suffer unusual stress as pioneers in order to help bring about some of the necessary changes for women. . ." 

"To feel called and not have a place of service is a frustrating experience."

"As the result of an article which was requested for the Baptist Program. . . some rather simple suggestions were made in regard to the roles of women in the church. 'First we must recognize and accept women in leadership roles - in addition to Woman's Missionary Union - employ them equally, provide equal benefits, and appoint them to our boards and committees.'

'Second, we need to be more honest and responsible in our teachings on the equality of all persons.'

'Third, we need to encourage churches to consider ordaining women as deacons. . .''

"Many people have failed to realize that there are qualified women available for all areas of denominational life. The works of our churches and denominations can be done much more effectively when this large group of untapped resources - women - is called on for more responsibility."

"If we are serious about winning the world to Christ through Bold Mission and whatever other we can put into motion, we are going to need the efforts of all Christians, both women and men. We are going to have to put aside cultural and social differences and encourage women to become leaders in many areas heretofore closed to them. We are going to have to take our direction from the whole Bible, where women were often found in leadership roles in the Christian community.

Above all, we are going to have to seek and be open to God's leadership in our lives, following his will into whatever place of ministry can be opened to us."[1]

Dr. Leon McBeth, a contemporary Southern Baptist historian at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has written: "Our
daughters as well as our sons love the Lord and want to find a place in his service. . . increasingly, Southern Baptist women are breaking out of stereotyped roles and taking places of leadership in the church, the community, and the larger society."

Therefore, as a committee, we hold that this church as well as others within the denomination must, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, broaden and strengthen the base for ministry and witness if the goal of Bold Mission thrust is to be gained and the people of this world are to experience the salvation of Jesus Christ. Part of the effort to broaden and strengthen this base could be the utilization of the gifts and skills of the women in this congregation in places of service which traditionally have not been offered to women.

Respectfully submitted,

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Susan Lea Jennings was born in Birmingham, Alabama on June 20, 1964. Because Susan's father was a full-time Southern Baptist minister, her educational history spanned three states: Georgia, Louisiana, and North Carolina.

Susan graduated from Freedom High School in Morganton, North Carolina in May, 1982. After receiving an Associate of Arts Degree from Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton, NC in 1985, she attended Appalachian State University and received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History in 1987.

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