

# Southern Seminary and the Reshaping of American Culture: Retrospect and Prospect<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

THE COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP between Southern Seminary and American culture in the twentieth century can be summed

up at least in part in the person and work of Jimmy Carter. By this I do not mean a direct connection between the Republic's most famously Southern Baptist president and his denomination's flagship seminary—although some connections exist.

Carter, after all, was a racial moderate in Plains, Georgia, right down the road from the interracial community Koinonia Farm project pioneered by Clarence Jordan—a project that began at Southern Seminary.<sup>2</sup> When Carter ran for president in 1976, Southern Seminary professor Henlee Barnette offered “Clergy for Carter” meetings at his home, and the *Towers*

campus newspaper reported that a majority of students at Southern Seminary supported Jimmy Carter for president in 1976, not because he was a Southern Baptist but because of his views on the issues.<sup>3</sup> Carter was among the final commencement speakers under the moderate leadership of the old Southern Seminary in 1992.

These direct connections do exist, but more important are the less obvious correlations. I mean that the social, political, and ecclesial forces that produced the thirty-ninth president of the United States coincided with the high-water mark of Southern Seminary's attempt to engage American culture in the post-World-War II era and to lead Southern Baptist churches and institutions to do the same. Like Carter, Southern Baptist's leadership's twentieth century project was to promote a progressive agenda articulated in a conservative dialect to a populist constituency; both constituencies later revolted against that leadership toward a more conservative model; and, like Carter and his administration, the Southern Baptist Conven-

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nary professor Henlee Barnette offered “Clergy for Carter” meetings at his home, and the *Towers*

tion and Southern Seminary's displaced leaders moved much more self-consciously to the left in the years out of office.<sup>4</sup>

The tension in the midst of all of this between Southern Seminary's self identity as a prophetic voice in a populist denomination is a reality that has changed in light of the conservative redirection of the convention and the seminary. But it is not altogether gone. The tension still exists. And it should still exist, I would argue—albeit in a different form.

I write not as a historian or a sociologist or even in my role as a theologian and ethicist, but frankly, first and foremost as a partisan. I believe the Conservative Resurgence—or “Fundamentalist Takeover,” depending on one's view of things—was a necessary and welcomed return of the seminary and the denomination to its founding charter and ongoing mission. But, though I write as a partisan, I do not write as a Manichean. I do not believe that the legacy of liberalism at Southern Seminary was a wholly failed project. I do not believe that liberalism at Southern Seminary after World War II—though wrong-headed and at times even wicked—was the result of a conspiracy of the ill-intentioned. I certainly do not believe it should be forgotten.

Instead, resurgent conservatives have much to learn about the points at which the institutional and personal heroism of some of the liberal figures in Southern Seminary's last generation were attempting to maintain a prophetic populism—lessons that could be applied today in the quest to forge a confessionally-orthodox, ecclesially-accountable future for the seminary and for the denomination. This means we must examine the points at which this prophetic populism both succeeded and failed, asking why it did so in both cases.

## **AMERICAN CULTURE AND SOUTHERN SEMINARY'S PAST**

Duke McCall—Southern Seminary's seventh president—did not endorse a candidate in the 1976 presidential election in the pages of the semi-

nary magazine, but he almost did. He took media criticism of Jimmy Carter very personally and said so in some of the strongest terms, saying,

Outside of the deep South, there are many people who think Southern Baptists are not worth knowing. In much of the United States, 'Baptist' carries the connotation of a fringe group. Our own self-image as a denomination responsibly related to American history and to the American decision making process is not widely shared beyond our own churches. Outside of the South, we have not thus far made the right kind of political noises to be taken seriously.<sup>5</sup>

McCall continues,

Let me illustrate the point. If the Episcopalians have a ridiculous debate over the ordination of women [and McCall does not exactly define how that would be ridiculous], it is viewed as an aberration among dignified, responsible community leaders. But if an emotionally disturbed Southern Baptist gets on the floor in one of our conventions, he is reported as 'typical' even though the embarrassed messengers pay no attention to his proposals.<sup>6</sup>

McCall continued in his article,

Paint us purple with passion if a public official advocates any form of gambling. Color us absent in the ecumenical meetings. Paint us red with rage if one of our leaders takes a stand on a public issue with which we individually do not agree. But that is only one side of us. We put our money into schools and hospitals. We produce hosts of dedicated young people for all kinds of benevolent causes. We even help the Presbyterians and Episcopalians by providing some of their leadership because of wedding bells. We take our religion so seriously that a sizable percentage of us actually act on our theological convictions some of the time.<sup>7</sup>

McCall defined the perception of Jimmy Carter and Southern Baptists in much of the media as an almost irrational frenzy. He said, "The idea of a Baptist in the White House has sent some Americans into panic. Maybe they did not notice that Harry Truman and Warren G. Harding were Baptist presidents. The trouble is that Jimmy Carter not only is a Southern Baptist—he talks like one."<sup>8</sup>

Now, when McCall wrote that Carter "talks like" a Southern Baptist, he does not specify if he means the content of Carter's evangelical communication (i.e., Carter referring to himself as "born again" and having "a personal relationship with Christ") or Carter's often-imitated south Georgia accent. After all, in 1976 Carter's candidacy was for many Southern Baptists as much a vindication of the Deep South as it was a recognition of evangelical acceptance in the public square. The South's marginalization in American culture from Reconstruction onward weighed heavily on the Southern Baptist Convention that produced the twentieth century Southern Seminary experience.

This can be seen perhaps nowhere more clearly than in Wayne Oates, professor of pastoral counseling at Southern Seminary and a pioneer of the kind of Southern Seminary progressive movement that harbored high ambitions for shaping and reshaping American culture. In his autobiography Oates wrote about the formative experience of being a page in the United States Congress as a young man, saying that

all the other pages were from privileged homes. They were sons of career government officials, grandsons of senators, sons of wealthy patrons of senators, etc. Yet behaviorally they were less well disciplined than my schoolmates back home. They made fun of my speech, my cotton-mill background, my social shyness, and my personal appearance. They quickly noted that I had a body odor, dental problems, bad breath, and strange speech patterns. For the first year I was tormented, hazed, ridiculed, and beat up on by these people. I sought to make personal friends

with them one by one to no avail. Consequently, my time off from work was spent in isolation from these persons. I was alone. That was it.<sup>9</sup>

Oates described this as a "struggle to be free from inferiority"—the inferiority of an impoverished background, of a Southerner in a Northern-directed world. "Respectability itself can be a sort of bondage to people who are 'born with a silver spoon in their mouth,'" Oates wrote. "To a person born into poverty, respectability is a hard-earned triumph over being inferior as well as over seeing oneself, and being seen by others, as inferior. The struggle for respectability among other people in the poverty areas where my family lived often took on a religious quality."<sup>10</sup> Oates was hardly alone in this struggle.

Novelist William Faulkner famously told students at the University of Virginia that Southern Baptists are not religious. When a student asked, "Well if they're not religious then what are they?" Faulkner replied, "Well, they're Southern Baptist. I think that is an emotional condition that has nothing to do with God or politics or anything else." And he defined this as coming from times of hardship in the South when "there was little or no food for the human spirit—where there were no books, no theatre, no music, and life was pretty hard and a lot of it happened out in the sun, for very little reward and that was the only escape they had. I think that is the human spirit aspiring toward something. Of course, it got warped and twisted in the process."<sup>11</sup>

Wayne Oates wrote of this struggle to be free from the disadvantages of his impoverished background and his regional identity by seeking to become, in his words, "bilingual" in speaking to American culture. No one was going to take him as anything less than a credible and coherent voice because he was going to be able to speak the language of the ambient culture. And so Oates wrote of "psychotherapeutic wisdom" and "theological wisdom" providing "cross checks" on both fields. Employing Paul Tillich's categories, he wrote of

an “act of correlation” between the two.<sup>12</sup> No one need choose between the old time religion and the new therapeutic ethos; they could co-exist and thrive together.

Oates’s project was psychologically adept and theologically sophisticated. He was a brilliant thinker and a dynamic entrepreneur (an unusual combination), able almost singlehandedly to transform not only Southern Baptist perceptions of psychology and mental health but also to re-engineer the way virtually all SBC seminarians were trained in the disciplines of pastoral care. The complex system of clinical pastoral education (CPE) pioneered among Baptists by Oates became the standard for Southern Baptist seminaries and universities in training not only counselors but all ministers. Moreover, Oates’s observations of the unique stresses and strains of twentieth-century Americans were perceptive and helpful to pastors. His writings tapped into the same suburban angst and Baby Boom-era despair chronicled in the literary works of John Updike and Phillip Roth. Oates understood—better than most—the times Southern Baptists were facing, and he could “translate” these times into terms Southern Baptists could understand.

Oates’s engagement with a tumultuous American culture could be at times naïve and short-sighted. Take for instance Oates’s interpretation of the controversial Kinsey Report on human sexuality, the precursor manifesto to the sexual revolution. Oates argued,

Kinsey and his associates have left to the religious leadership the task of interpreting the data they present. They have set an example of untiring devotion and discipline thoroughness. We can hope for the day when scientists will no longer shirk the task of setting forth the moral implications of their findings, and when religious leaders will have the courage and the freedom to make the matters of human morality factually realistic as well as emotionally attractive.<sup>13</sup>

Oates noted that he did not commend the report as a desk guide for most pastors in counseling (only for use “in the hands of people who have sufficient training and objectivity to evaluate it properly”), but assured Christians that “the scientific honesty and moral integrity of the authors of this book have been clearly established.”<sup>14</sup> Oates at least initially didn’t seem to recognize that the Kinsey Report wasn’t simply an objective distillation of data. It was in fact a moral claim that what is “normal” cannot be “immoral.” Oates was, of course, biblically correct when he counsels pastors to patience with those overtaken in sexual sins, but when he used the Kinsey data to do so he was following the exact script the ideologues of a new sexual era had written. Later generations on both sides of the “culture wars” would see this clearly; Oates—and many of his co-laborers on the religious Left—did not.

The same can be seen in Oates’s discussion of cohabitation, much later in his ministry. He clearly did not endorse unmarried couples living together. But he articulated this in terms of the fact that marriage is best—for legal, emotional, and sociological reasons. He contextualized cohabitation as a result of societal distrust of social institutions (because of Vietnam and Watergate), societal value of short-term commitments (due, in part, to the Vietnam draft and industry layoffs), loneliness, increasing divorce, and economic pressures.<sup>15</sup> Many of these factors indeed did play a role in the normalization of cohabitation, but what was missing in Oates’s critique was an eschatology—the Pauline admonition that the sexually immoral “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9).

Oates and his colleagues in their project at Southern Seminary were clearly successful to some degree in this correlative project, including in the hopes that they would make the Southern Seminary contribution relevant to the outside secular culture. After all, Oates’s obituary in the *New York Times* credits him not first and foremost with his professorial work at Southern Seminary, nor

with his work in developing pastoral counseling; rather, the headline focused on his coining of the phrase, “workaholic.” No one was making fun of Wayne Oates. Indeed, the concept and the phrase that he created in order to explain it is quoted on almost a daily basis in every sector of the U.S. to this day. Oates had correlated and spoken in the language of the emerging therapeutic ethos in American culture with distinctively Southern Baptist content in his view.

Oates is unique in his singular success, but he was not unique in the kind of project he was undertaking. The same was taking place in all of the disciplines at Southern Seminary—especially in ethics and biblical studies. The faculty sought a similar correlation, for instance, of the preaching and teaching ministries of the church with the insights of, for instance, German higher criticism and Darwinian scientific insights. This attempt was, again, largely missiological. Southern Baptist progressives believed they were saving the Southern Baptist Convention by being a prophetic voice, calling the SBC away from the missiological dead-end of being the Confederate States of America at prayer. Correlating old-fashioned piety with the highest currents of academic progress was about saving the Southern Baptist witness, in their view, not destroying it, since the progressives read history in an upwardly linear trajectory. Christianity must change or die—and they wanted the faith to survive into a new millennium.

This was hardly an easy project. The ensuing tussle is why Duke McCall—in the institutional crisis of 1958—characterized the controversy between the faculty and the administration as being a dispute over whether or not Southern Seminary would become a Southern Baptist version of Harvard and Yale, a divinity school for elites rather than a seminary for training the preachers of the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>16</sup> McCall understood the kinds of people who were paying the bills; he wasn’t sure the liberals did—sequestered as they were in their seminary community churches. But it isn’t

entirely accurate to say that the liberals didn’t understand “real Southern Baptists.” Most of them, after all, were reared in “real” Southern Baptist churches—with orthodox doctrine and revivalist fervor. That was just the point. They saw these people as the past and the big wide world outside as the future. They knew typical Southern Baptists—and that’s what they didn’t want to be.

This brings us back to Jimmy Carter. Carter’s open explanations of his personal piety were important. But that accent was important, too. It was important to Southerners who saw their regional dialect portrayed as buffoonish or bigoted on “The Beverly Hillbillies,” in the voice of Gomer Pyle, or in the regularly broadcast rantings of figures such as George Wallace, Lester Maddox, Bull Conner, and other figures so spiteful and demagogic that they became almost cartoon caricatures of themselves.

But Carter’s self-presentation was also important to mainstream Northern, Midwestern, and Western Americans. George McGovern, after all, had been categorized four years earlier by his opponents as the “AAA candidate”—abortion, acid, and amnesty.<sup>17</sup> Though conservatives in 1976 warned that Jimmy Carter’s positions had little if any difference on paper than those of George McGovern on those issues, that he was just a “Southern-fried McGovern,” their warnings were ineffectual. Tip O’Neill had famously remarked in 1972 that George McGovern had been nominated by the cast of “Hair”—because of the counter-cultural appearance and affectation of the McGovernites. It was the McGovern campaign that, in the words of political scientist Bruce Miroff “shifted power among Democrats from the blue-collar party created during the New Deal to a party dominated by suburban, issue-oriented, and college-educated activists.”<sup>18</sup> The McGovern movement seemed—to both supporters and detractors—to be much more than a political campaign. It seemed, to both, to be more evidence of the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. Carter, on the other hand, could quote Paul Tillich, Rein-



hold Niebuhr, Bob Dylan, and Joan Baez, but he could also couch that within an unquestioned personal piety and a mode of discourse that was non-threatening to culturally-conservative Middle America. He too was bilingual.

The project at Southern Seminary proved most influential mid-century among Southern Seminary professors who were the most bilingual, that is, who knew how to both footnote German critical scholars and give a revival meeting altar call. Theologian Dale Moody, for instance, is the classic example of one who could study with Emil Brunner and others while still being able to preach with all the enthusiasm, piety, and fiery rhetoric of a backwoods itinerant evangelist. Even when Moody became a lightning rod of criticism within the denomination, it was not for the modernism that is so clearly articulated in his writings—especially in his magnum opus, *The Word of Truth*—but for his position on apostasy, which was articulated at (of all places) an Arkansas denominational pastor's meetings.<sup>19</sup> Moody's views on apostasy were, to be sure, outside the Southern Baptist confessional tradition (and worthy of his firing), but, in terms of shock value, they were no different than those of an orthodox Free Will Baptist.<sup>20</sup> It was what Moody preached from the biblical text—preached as though he believed it inerrant—that alarmed Southern Baptists, not what he wrote in texts they never read.

Southern Seminary saw itself in the post-World-War-II era increasingly as a “prophetic” voice to the denomination, calling it to progressive movements in American culture they saw as healthy, even providential. This is one of the reasons why, when the conservative movement began in the denomination, the Southern Baptist academy expressed horror at statements (albeit taken out of context) from conservative leaders, such as that if Southern Baptists believe pickles have souls then the seminaries should teach that pickles have souls. This is a statement that fully summed up for many in the Southern Baptist academy—most importantly at Southern Seminary—what was at

stake: the tension between being a prophetic voice in a populist denomination.

This tension, at its best, can be seen in an issue on which the progressives were inarguably right: the question of race. Several Southern Seminary professors—most notably Henlee Barnette—were personally heroic and institutionally courageous. As different as I am from them theologically, I would still argue that without the efforts in the civil rights movement of Barnette and others, we would not have a recognizable Southern Baptist Convention today. When it comes to the issue of race and the Southern Baptist controversies, I have made an argument that has been misunderstood by some, so I will reiterate it here.<sup>21</sup> What I am *not* arguing is that the civil rights movement among Southern Baptists was led by conservatives. Let me be very clear. During the most important days of the civil rights movement, conservatives—for the most part—were the villains. Biblical inerrantists often stood on the side of segregation, and those who most clearly articulated a progressive view of race—a view that we all would accept today—were for the most part theologically moderate or liberal.

But that is exactly my point. *There is no culture war on race among Southern Baptists in 2009.* Granted, American culture has moved in a progressive direction on race, but America moved in a progressive direction on sexuality, gender, and other issues while Southern Baptists have moved in the opposite direction—at least in their public pronouncements. Why? I would argue it is because the liberals didn't employ a “culture war” strategy on race in the first place. The civil rights agenda was articulated—by liberals predominantly, yes—through a conservative mode of discourse. Henlee Barnette, for instance, when he spoke to Southern Baptist pastors and churches and seminary students, spoke of civil rights as being about personal regeneration, declaring that Jesus died for people of every racial background. He spoke of white supremacy as being ultimately an issue of individual sin, self-love, and called

those engaged in racial prejudice to repent.<sup>22</sup> It is not simply a social justice issue; it is exactly what Southern Baptists can understand—an issue of sin against God and a violation of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Another Southern Seminary professor, J. J. Owens, spoke of the inconsistency between Southern Baptists taking up a Lottie Moon offering to reach people in Africa, while those same Africans to be converted could not have been received into membership in Southern Baptist churches.<sup>23</sup> They were calling conservative populist Southern Baptists in the churches to account for their own hypocrisy.

They were not alone in this. Martin Luther King Jr., in his 1961 chapel address at Southern Seminary, spoke in much the same way as he almost always did—in terms that sound less like Hegel or Niebuhr and more like King James. In King—whether in Southern Seminary’s Alumni Memorial Chapel or before the Lincoln Memorial at the March on Washington—one hears the cadences of the words of Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Jesus. King knew he was not speaking simply to other social progressives. He must reach the conscience of those who have been shaped and formed by the reading and preaching of the Christian Scriptures. And that’s exactly what, repeatedly and effectually, he did.

When King was at Southern Seminary, Penrose St. Amant, who was Dean of the School of Theology at the time, hinted that he might like to hire King on the faculty at Southern Seminary to teach preaching. Hinted is the key word. St. Amant later denied that he had actually made an offer because he did not have authority to make that unilateral offer and indeed he did not.<sup>24</sup> Duke McCall protected the seminary from the controversy that ensued over the invitation of King to deliver the Julius Brown Gay Lectures when, for instance, Baptist churches refused to send money to the seminary. All of McCall’s engagements on behalf of Southern Seminary in the state of Mississippi, Henlee Barnette reported, were canceled

for two years. And McCall also recounted that “a Baptist layman, Mr. W. A. Malone, a member of the First Baptist Church of Dothan, Alabama, raised \$50,000 for mass mailing to all the Southern Baptist churches for the expressed purpose of enlisting the churches in an effort to get Dr. McCall fired as president.” Dr. McCall said to Malone, “That is a stupid thing to do. Just give me \$25,000 and I will resign!”<sup>25</sup>

Progressives prophetically forced conservatives on the basis of the authority that conservatives already expressed—the biblical text and the Great Commission—to a choice between Jesus Christ and Jim Crow. And the conservatives chose Jesus. What is striking about this is that the progressives “won”—yes—but not by being “progressive.” This is self-evident in the reality that “progress” didn’t come on other issues.

The gender and sexuality issues are one example of this phenomenon. If Barnette was the most recognizable voice on the civil rights issue and Wayne Oates on the question of psychotherapy, theologian Molly Truman Marshall was the most recognizable voice of the feminist movement at Southern Seminary. While her proposals on God-language and the God-world relationship would have placed her on the theological margins of even mainline Protestant theology at the time, her views on egalitarian marriage relationships and in favor of the ordination of women were virtually consensus positions among Southern Baptist elites—and certainly in the Southern Seminary community.<sup>26</sup> Marshall herself argued that feminism was part of the Southern Seminary tradition as far back as W. O. Carver’s articulation of “the liberative vision of Jesus and early Christianity” in the matter of gender relations.<sup>27</sup> She called the move toward an egalitarian understanding of gender “another Reformation” sweeping the church.<sup>28</sup> If so, the Southern Baptist wing of the church responded with a counter-Reformation culminating in the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* statement with its traditionalist view of male headship in the church and home.

Marshall was correct to note that American culture was on her side of this question, starting with the expansion of women in the workforce in the 1940s and into theological studies in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the egalitarian view of sex roles arguably was even more consonant with the ambient culture than was the pro-civil rights view of race. Women, after all, made strides in almost all social and political categories (with the obvious exception of election to the presidency of the United States) earlier than African-Americans or other minorities. The feminist movement was as celebrated in American popular culture as the civil rights movement—if not more so (see, for instance, the feminist spin of everything from 1970s situation comedies to the shifting presentation of heroines in Disney animated films). Americans are now accustomed to seeing women serve in roles from corporate CEO to NASCAR driver to astronaut to Secretary of State. The progressive view of the relationship between the genders was fully consonant with the movement of American culture toward feminism and gender equality.

But feminism was not received by Southern Baptists—although racial progress was. This is the case even among Southern Baptists who hold in their personal lives to something far short of a “complementarian” marriage or church structure. Even those who don’t understand or live out male headship believe they do—or believe they ought to—and they certainly affirm the Bible teaches it. That’s quite a different story from the Southern Baptist trajectory on race. Why?

Quite simply, biblical texts teach the complementary aspects of the male/female duality, and affirm male headship. From Southern Seminary and other progressives, Southern Baptists heard how these texts cannot possibly mean what they seem to say. Henlee Barnette, for instance, dismissed passages such as Paul’s affirmation of male headship in 1 Corinthians 11 as due to the fact that the Apostle “was a creature of his time.” Paul “was Jewish in practical matters as seen in his limitations on the freedom of women in 1 Corin-

thians 11:2-16, but he had a vision of the principle of liberation in Jew-Gentile, slave-free, male-female relations” in Gal 3:28.<sup>30</sup> Barnette could conclude, as he did, that those who “argue against liberation in the male-female category must also, to be consistent, support slavery and racism,” but his argument wasn’t persuasive to those who held to Scripture as the definitive authoritative norm—that is, the vast majority of Southern Baptist Christians.<sup>31</sup>

The same is true on the question of bioethics and the sanctity of human life. The culture has moved toward liberalization on issues such as abortion rights while Southern Baptists have veered in the opposite direction. On this one as well, Southern Seminary’s liberal professoriate tried to move Southern Baptists with the culture. Ethicist Paul Simmons, the most theologically radical figure in the history of Southern Seminary when it comes to the issue of the denial of the dignity of unborn human life, spoke of the emerging pro-life movement as being the equivalent of the McCarthy era and the Salem witch trials, and that it would be just as repudiated by history.<sup>32</sup>

Addressing the abortion issue theologically, Simmons wrote,

The one who unquestionably fits this portrayal is the woman or mother in question. Because the pregnancy is hers, so the decision is uniquely hers. Certainly, the entire circle of those most intimately involved with the abortion question are persons—reflecting on the meaning of this moment, considering the data, weighing the facts of the past, anticipating the future and making some decision. The abortion question focuses on the personhood of the woman, who in turn considers the potential personhood of the fetus in terms of the multiple dimensions of her own history and the future.<sup>33</sup>

Simmons concludes, “This is a god-like decision. Like the Creator, she reflects upon what is good for the creation of which she is an agent. As stew-



ard of those powers, she uses them for good and not ill—both for herself, the fetus and the future of humankind itself.”<sup>34</sup>

Simmons was the most brazen, but he was hardly alone. Henlee Barnette, for instance, in an argument for an ecological ethic, writes about responsible parenthood mentioning both Oregon Senator Bob Packwood’s voluntary means of population control and Paul Erhlich’s coercive means of population control, while making no distinction in the article as to the moral integrity of either. Instead, Barnette states that

regardless of the debate about voluntary or coercive approaches to the problem of birth control, the Christian ethic calls for responsible parenthood. No parents have the right to produce more children than they can adequately care for. Hence, parents must evaluate their own and the world’s situation and in the light of love and reason, mutually agree on the number of offspring they should have and use the most effective birth control methods available to achieve their goal.<sup>35</sup>

Only one year after the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision, Wayne Oates wrote dispassionately about legalized abortion along with accelerating contraceptive technology creating “increased control” women have over their own bodies “because of more effective contraceptives and the legalization of abortions.”<sup>36</sup>

Of course, conservative Southern Baptists were slow (much too slow) to join the Roman Catholic-led pro-life movement. Biblical inerrantists such as W. A. Criswell and W. O. Vaught made initial apologies for denying “personhood” to “the fetus” until the “breath of life” at birth. As with segregationist thought, though, such viewpoints fell away into a consensus so strong that the right to unborn life was articulated in resolution after resolution from the beginnings of the conservative resurgence to the present day and included in the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message*. Southern Baptist churches in the 1960s, 1970s, and even

the 1980s, did not have a carefully developed ethic of the sanctity of human life like the full-orbed theology of Pope John Paul II’s *Human Vitae* and *Theology of the Body*. But there was, in Southern Baptist churches, an intuitional moral revulsion at the idea of a “god-like” decision to take the life of the fetus. The very rhetoric employed would have seemed, to biblically-literate Southern Baptists who heard it, to sound suspiciously like monologue they’d heard before, from a reptilian mouth in the opening pages of their Bibles (Gen 3:1-5). One doesn’t need sophisticated bioethical training to discern that the God of Jesus Christ is on the side of the life of babies, not on the side of those who justify killing them. The conscience that served progressives on the race question witnessed against them on the life question.

The progressive agenda was frustrated by the populist constituency within the Southern Baptist Convention. Often Southern Seminary professors and their allies in the convention articulated this as being a problem of a lack of education of ministers and laity. Richard Marius for instance, an alumnus of this institution, wrote about Bailey Smith’s election to the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1980 and why this was so incredible to so many in the Southern Baptist academy, arguing that “the moderates have imbibed the scholarly, critical approach to the Bible. That is how the Bible is taught in Southern Baptist seminary classrooms by professors who have taken sabbaticals in Oxford or in Cambridge or in German universities.”<sup>37</sup> These moderates, Marius concluded, “dare not make clear pronouncements about their true beliefs, and their language swims with annoying futility in a defensive smokescreen that fundamentalists claim (with some justice, I think) is dishonest and deceitful.”<sup>38</sup> Marius argued that moderates often dismissed “fundamentalists” because of class and education divisions as much as because of theological ones. Marius wrote,

One of the moderates, pastor of a large, comfortable church, told me privately that the real trouble with Bailey Smith was that he served a one-class “blue-collar congregation” and that he had never been a member of a downtown Rotary Club. It gave me pause to realize that a moderate (who happened to be a former president of the denomination) prized the Rotary Club as a civilizing influence and as a standard for proper behavior.<sup>39</sup>

Southern Baptist churches increasingly saw Southern Seminary as not only disconnected from church life, but hostile to it. And this was articulated not merely by the conservative opposition to the Southern Seminary faculty and administration. Clayton Sullivan, a Ph.D. graduate of Southern Seminary, reflecting on his experience at Southern, writes of “anticlericalism” in the classroom at Southern Seminary in the era in which he studied in the twentieth century. Sullivan said,

Most professors under whom I studied at Southern had no prolonged experience in the pastorate. That was unfortunate because they had no appreciation of the role the church plays in the lives of common people. They had no real understanding of what ministers do in relating to folk in the crises of life when sickness, divorce, tragedy, and death come. Maybe if all my seminary teachers had each conducted a hundred funerals the administration-faculty conflict I am relating would never have taken place. But in any case, because of their anticlericalism and denominational hostility some members of the faculty were not primarily interested in Southern Seminary as a service to the Southern Baptist Convention, as a preparatory school for working pastors. They wanted it to be a divinity school—the Harvard of the evangelical world, with a hyperintellectual approach to the Christian faith. They placed it in a world somehow “above” the Southern Baptist Convention and

its fried-chicken-eating churches, a Laputa for Protestants alienated from their roots.<sup>40</sup>

Some of this alienation was undoubtedly the result of a disappointed idealism about the church’s potential in leading American culture toward social justice. And this was not new. In his recent biography of William Whitsitt, James Slatton writes about Whitsitt’s conflict in relating to his constituency because, as Slatton writes,

Whitsitt had developed into a gentleman of considerable refinement as well as scholarship. He prized dignity, proper decorum, good company, and elevated interests, such as the classics he studied in his spare hours. While Baptist churches had a share of the people of privilege and refinement in the communities they served, they were predominantly and overwhelmingly churches of the common folk. Whitsitt’s correspondence and diaries show he had not lost the common touch or his respect for the rank-and-file Baptist, but he also yearned for a communion and fellowship more congenial to his sensibilities. That impulse alone would not have moved him to leave the Baptists. He thought mainly in terms of duty. He was torn between his commitment to Baptist principles and the evident failure of Baptist churches to produce better results.<sup>41</sup>

The same kind of language is used in the mid to late twentieth century by some Southern Seminary professors. Barnette, for instance, was very critical of the social gospel as naïve about human depravity. He was a Niebuhrian after all. But he quoted, tellingly, Brooks Hays, United States congressman from Arkansas, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and a courageous leader on the issue of race who said, “Don’t be shocked if you find our government more Christian than the church on such issues as racial discrimination and economic justice.”<sup>42</sup> Barnette concluded, “There is a measure of truth in this statement. The church has been prone to drag

its institutional feet on the most crucial issues of our day while political forces have moved in to right social wrongs.”<sup>43</sup> And Barnette’s antidote to this consisted mostly of the education of the individual, registering voters and church teaching from Romans 13 on the usefulness of the State.<sup>44</sup>

As Southern Seminary developed an increasingly higher view of social justice, and an increasingly lower view of the church’s ability to meet that standard, the end result was a protest movement. From the vantage point of liberal Baptist historian Bill J. Leonard, the Baptist establishment—including its nexus at 2825 Lexington Road in Louisville, Kentucky—lost the ability to connect with its populist denomination, and thus became more and more the “Democratic party of the Southern Baptist Convention,” a “coalition of diverse subgroups unable to agree on a common vision for the denomination or evoke the focused ideological intensity that characterized the fundamentalist camp.”<sup>45</sup> Like the struggling Democrats of the late twentieth century, the older generation of Baptist moderates relied on a message of Big Government to try to sway the masses, but found the appeal of such government was waning. As Leonard put it, the Baptist establishment “often promoted the programmatic and corporate identity of the denomination, thereby contributing to the impersonal, bureaucratic image that the fundamentalists exploited.”<sup>46</sup> And, again like the bleakest days of the Democratic Party, beneath the attempt at government as a unifying theme was a student protest movement consisting of special interest groups and causes.

The final throes of opposition to the conservative resurgence at Southern Seminary looked something like the 1968 Democratic National Convention—only held on the seminary lawn, complete with long hair, tie-dyed T-shirts, sit-ins, and Pete Seeger guitar sessions on the steps of the James P. Boyce library. This wave of protest—launched by the election of conservative Albert Mohler as Southern Seminary’s ninth president—might have been cathartic for the faculty and

students involved, but it was hardly effective in communicating with Southern Baptists. Anyone familiar with the lyrics of Merle Haggard’s song “Okie from Muskogee” could have predicted the conservative backlash—and Molly Marshall was, in fact, an Okie from Muskogee. The ethos of the left-wing dissent looked and sounded more and more distant from the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. The progressives gave up on populism, and their cause was over.

## **AMERICAN CULTURE AND SOUTHERN SEMINARY’S FUTURE**

If the moderate Southern Baptist Convention looked something like Jimmy Carter, the conservative resurgence within the Southern Baptist Convention arguably looked something like Ronald Reagan. Bill Leonard noted that when Adrian Rogers was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1986, Charles Stanley—the outgoing president—read a letter from president Reagan that expressed gratitude that “so many of the proud liberal myths ... have shriveled up and look as though the next strong wind should blow them away.”<sup>47</sup>

Just as Reagan was portrayed by his critics as an anti-intellectual amiable dunce, so were the conservative leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention. And just as we now see from the personal diaries and writings of Reagan that he was far more intellectually engaged than the caricature, the same is true of leaders such as Adrian Rogers and Jerry Vines and Paige Patterson—each of whom were razor-sharp intellects and sophisticated theological wits, as interlocutors such as moderate Cecil Sherman would acknowledge.<sup>48</sup> Just as Ronald Reagan was able to speak directly to the populist values of his constituency, Southern Baptist leaders (especially mega-church pastors) had both the venue and the ability to do the same. Critics attempted to make Ronald Reagan seem like a war-hungry ideologue—just as they did Barry Goldwater a generation before—but his hopeful, optimistic communication countered this in the

eyes and ears of his hearers. In the same way, the Southern Baptist establishment tried to convince Baptists that the conservatives were “independent fundamentalists” of the J. Frank Norris stripe, but it didn’t work with people who had heard Charles Stanley preach or Adrian Rogers pray or Bailey Smith plead with the lost to be saved.

But the Reagan narrative is more complicated than either his defenders or his detractors often present it. Reagan didn’t go to church. Reagan was estranged from his rebellious children. Reagan had what no one would call a “complementarian” marriage. His closest friends were the media elite, his speechwriters and supporters castigated. When Jimmy Carter said that he had stayed with a Hispanic family during the 1980 campaign, Ronald Reagan quipped that he stayed with a Hispanic family as well—in the home of television *Fantasy Island* star Ricardo Montalban. He was, in the words of songwriter Kris Kristofferson, “a walking contradiction, partly truth and partly fiction.” In an era of arguably the most self-consciously pro-life president, you also had the rise of a consumer culture that gave us the nighttime sex dramas *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. Even as we saw the end of Soviet totalitarianism, we didn’t notice that the free market we so praised was quietly and entrepreneurially pioneering the technology that would never give us a Strategic Defense Initiative nuclear shield but would give us Internet pornography. When he spoke, though, Reagan could call forth the ideals of an American Republic its citizens—especially the swing voters of the working and middle classes—could identify as what they had been taught to hope their country could be.

After Reagan, though, the contradictions of American conservatism became strained, and some of Reagan’s most idealistic supporters grew to wonder what had actually been gained. After all, abortion is still legal. Marriage is even more contested. The sexual revolution has hardly abated. The Reagan Administration may have been about smaller government, but it’s hard to say which New Deal or Great Society program

or bureaucracy was wiped away, and government spending could hardly be said to be curtailed with massive deficits tallied at the end of the eight-year revolution. The Cold War is won, but the world is, it seems, even more unstable and in some ways scarier. Most conservatives—and arguably most Americans—believe the Reagan Revolution was a good idea, but many wonder just how “revolutionary” it actually was.

A similar scenario is being played out within the Baptist Right. Conservatives during the controversy often pointed to the statistical success of conservative churches—in membership, attendance, and baptisms—as indicators of God’s blessing, over against the declining baptisms and waning evangelism of moderate and liberal Baptist churches and certainly the left-wing Protestant mainline. Now, however, conservatives are alarmed by declining baptism and moribund evangelistic statistics.<sup>49</sup> Conservatives lampooned the nepotism and cronyism of the Southern Baptist establishment, a key aspect of their populist appeal. Now, however, younger conservative Southern Baptists question the same thing when they see the same list of speakers at virtually every denominational gathering at the local, state, or national level. Conservative resurgents countered the idea that loyalty to the bureaucracy equals loyalty to the Great Commission—and so Adrian Rogers famously declared that the Cooperative Program was becoming a “golden calf.”<sup>50</sup> Now, however, some conservative Southern Baptists complain that the definition of CP giving—through what they sometimes consider wasteful and overlapping state convention structures—is unfair and nonsensical. Now whether these concerns and critiques are right or wrong is beside the point. The question of conservative cooperation in the next century is a live debate.

Whatever frustrations conservative Southern Baptists may experience, however, are tiny compared to the chaos ensuing among what used to be the left-wing of the Southern Baptist Convention. From the point of view of orthodox Baptists,

the conservative resurgence restored a degree of trust between the bureaucracy and the churches that support the cooperative mission. The resurgence restored the confessional basis upon which Southern Baptists have agreed to cooperate and continue to agree to cooperate throughout the history of the denomination. But the resurgence did not settle all the issues; it merely clarified that it is the canon of Scripture that is our common authority, and that it is truthful, accurate, and God-originated.

In the midst of all of this, Southern Seminary once again—albeit in a different way—has to play the role of the prophetic populist voice. The turnaround of the Southern Baptist Convention is nowhere more obvious than in the faculty assembled by Southern Seminary president Albert Mohler since 1993 and in his role, personally, as a theological leader of the Convention. Due to Mohler's leadership—along with co-laborers such as David Dockery, Daniel Akin, Thom Rainer, and others—Southern Seminary is an “ideas center” for orthodoxy and mission in the Southern Baptist Convention. The responsibility of Southern Seminary over the next fifty to one hundred years is sobering, and the challenges faced are even more so.

Newly elected Metropolitan Jonah of All America and Canada of the Orthodox Church in America has spoken about the fact that the Orthodox Church in America is so identified with a cultural identity rather than an outward mission that it is becoming in many cities little more than ethnic food- and dance-festival promoters. The same could be true with Southern Baptists, except with sequined quartets and dinners on the ground. The answer though, it seems to me, lies in a missional rootedness in which Southern Seminary trains a generation that is not living in rebellion against the rural agrarian blue-collar roots of the real churches that gave birth to the seminary and that we continue to support, but also does not substitute cultural hegemony—that of the Bible Belt of yesteryear—for the Koinonia of the Spirit of the Christ.

Part of the problem is that Southern Baptists have, for too long, defined success as our ability to reach “the right kind of people.” Just as the liberals before us found “freedom from inferiority” by being taken seriously by Harvard and Yale, we often seek the same thing by seeing to it that our churches are filled with upwardly mobile suburbanites or early trend-adopting urbanites. Yes, we must—as did the first-century church—reach people in every economic category, but a dismissal of our rural blue-collar roots evidences not only ingratitude and a lack of self-awareness but also theological and missiological shortsightedness.

The reason that Pentecostalism is exploding across the globe, especially in what Phillip Jenkins calls the global South, is because Pentecostalism is able to speak to the poor and the marginalized—to those who are not part of the elite classes. Why would Southern Baptists give up the opportunity to speak to such people, people whose economic and cultural roots are so similar to our own even when—perhaps especially when—their language and skin color are dissimilar from our own? Southern Seminary can and must train pastors who value education but who do not see education as a means to “transcend” people whom the culture around us deems less than valuable—the poor, the uneducated, the rural, the “uncool.” At the same time, Southern Seminary is to be a prophetic voice constantly calling Southern Baptist churches and the convention itself to question those things endemic to our own culture that drag us away from our common theology and common mission.

A temptation for Southern Baptists in the next generation will be the same temptation that fell to Oates and Barnette and others in the Southern Seminary tradition which is to speak to issues because of how well-received they are in culture around them while muting those deemed by the culture to be “backward” or “yesterday.” Take ecology, for instance. I write as one who would be to the left of most of the Southern Baptist Convention on the issue of environmental and ecological



issues, but some are speaking of ecological concern as a means of reaching people “where they are” because secular Americans are already concerned about ecology. Should the church speak to environmental stewardship? Yes. Is environmental stewardship a key part of the cultural mandate and thus the church’s mission? Yes. Is environmental stewardship a way to build the kind of common ground that would then bring about an easier reception of the gospel? I believe the answer is no. The church must speak to ecological stewardship but it must speak to it in ways that will sound dissonant to the ambient culture—including whatever “Green” trends come and go. We must speak to a broader ecology—that is ecclesial, familial, and sexual as well as cosmic. This will be resisted by the present age—as it always is—but it will clearly lay forth the distinctive sound of the Christian message.

Southern Seminary must train pastors to think through the issues that are not being asked or considered by the culture or, more importantly, by the churches. Ronald J. Sider, for instance, has written compellingly and with conviction of the hypocrisy of an evangelical church culture in which divorce rates are the same or higher than those of the outside culture. Why are conservative Southern Baptist preachers not disturbed to the point of tears and all-night prayer meetings over such? Wayne Oates, of all people, wrote in mid twentieth century of the problem of the Southern Baptist “marrying parson,” the pastor present in almost every town who will marry—as Oates put it—“any and all persons for a fee.” Oates lists all the self-justifying rationalizations this pastor tends to rattle off: “If I don’t marry these people, somebody else will” or “This ‘opens the door to win them to Christ.’” Oates wrote that these marrying parsons are “oblivious to the superstition of the persons marrying about wanting a minister to marry them. They are naïve about the way the church is ‘used.’” Oates called this a “*laissez-faire* approach to divorce” and he repudiated it.<sup>51</sup> Wayne Oates, here, I would argue, is more conservative and

more prophetic than we are on this issue, and that is to our shame. Divorce has not become moral in our eyes, but it has become normal. This normality puts us at odds with Holy Scripture, with Jesus himself, and with our ability to be relevant to the people crushed beneath a soul-devouring divorce culture. In what other ways are we too normal to be prophetic?

Cultural libertarianism and global capitalism make for a volatile mix. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Southern Seminary must recognize that the era of the Bible belt is over. Southern Baptist churches will then, by definition, if they remain orthodox and evangelistic, seem increasingly odd. Southern Seminary must equip pastors and church leaders who will know what this oddity must look like—by distinguishing a biblical Christian conservation of historic orthodoxy from what passes for “conservatism” in the world around us—even among those we too often have named as our allies. What we mean by conservatism cannot be Fox News with prayer requests. It is the oddness of Southern Baptist churches, though, that will secure the future for these churches. Only those churches with something distinctive to say will have a voice for the burned over generations of men and women seeking something more permanent than the cruel and tireless tyrannies of Bacchus, Mammon, and Aphrodite.

The recovering of confessional accountability is a first and necessary step, then, to Southern Seminary’s future. The most important aspect of Mohler’s re-emphasis on the Abstract of Principles upon his election was not, first of all, fidelity to the document but accountability *to the churches* through fidelity to the doctrines outlined in the confessional statement. This necessitates a theologically and morally vigilant president and dean and board of trustees, to be sure, but it also necessitates the right kind of collegiality and interdisciplinary cohesion among the Southern Seminary faculty. Disciplinary silos will inevitably lead left. When biblical studies narrow down to mere mor-

phology or archaeology or literature, theologians are needed in the conversation to call biblical scholars to teach what the text means. The disciplines of theology and ethics are perhaps the most vulnerable to historical myopia and thus to faddishness. We need historians who are familiar enough with the patristic, medieval, Reformation, and contemporary eras to raise questions and insights when they see these disciplines making well-intentioned but misguided return trips to Vanity Fair. Abstraction also leads to the Left, which is why biblical scholars and biblical theologians are necessary to point systematic theologians and philosophers away from mere categories and toward the narrative of the Scripture itself. Disciplinary boundaries should never be so rigid that a biblical scholar cannot explain, for instance, not only that he agrees with how the apostles interpreted the Old Testament but how to model such interpretation—of the Bible and the rest of reality, in light of Christ—for the preaching and teaching and counseling ministries of the church. The so-called “practical disciplines” of preaching and evangelism and spirituality should be as academically robust as the so-called “classical disciplines” and should hold the seminary accountable—in every field of study—to demonstrate how whatever aspect of Scripture or doctrine or philosophy under consideration contributes to the mission of Christ and his church.

We must also ensure that our confessional conservatism is not reflexive reaction. Ideas are not to be opposed simply because non-orthodox people once trumpeted them (or continue to do so). Religious liberty and the separation of church and state, for instance, are not “liberal” ideas. Yes, some liberals held to (sometimes highly decontextualized and hyperbolic versions of) these concepts, but they originated with our “fundamentalist” forebears under persecution in England and colonial America, and they are, when rightly understood, rooted in the gospel itself. Do we really want an unregenerate teacher instructing an unregenerate student to pray “Our Father,

who art in heaven” because of some bureaucratic edict? Do we really wish to tax citizens to pay for Muslim mosques or Mormon temples or Baptist family life centers? Of course we do not—because we believe the spheres of the state and the church are separate, and that only the Spirit—not any Caesar—can call forth authentic faith.

Paying attention to Southern Seminary’s past can help us to see the heroic nature of putting one’s life and reputation on the line for an issue of gospel importance. The civil rights issue is at the forefront of such. It can also help us to see ways that we might be blinded by our social, cultural, and political commitments just as our predecessors were, but in different ways. It is easy for conservatives to see how moderates and liberals became chaplains for a progressive American cultural order—providing a benedictory blessing for everything from feminism to pacifism to environmental activism. It is not as simple for us to see how we could be just as easily co-opted in the same way for anything from corporate environmental degradation to technologically-fueled consumerism to unjust or unwise warmongering to robber baron economics.

Being ecclesially accountable, though, is not enough. If Southern Seminary is to remain viable in a time of shifting cultural context, the seminary must also be self-consciously ecclesially rooted. This will mean the recovery of a vibrant ecclesiology. One of the reasons I am most optimistic about the future of the Southern Baptist Convention is because of the renaissance of concern for community and ecclesiology. Discussions over baptism, the Lord’s Supper, elder governance, church discipline, and the whole gamut may be controversial in the short run, but the conversations themselves are a demonstration that Southern Baptists are beginning to re-remember where the locus of God’s activity is—in the Body of Christ.

The danger that was faced by the liberals in the past generation of a certain kind of social justice utopianism are just as real for resurgent conservatives at Southern and elsewhere at the level of a

*theological* utopianism. Whether or not the system is Calvinism, Landmarkism, or anything in between, there can be a tendency to give up on the church when the church does not meet ideals that are presented. Just as our liberal forebears grew impatient with local congregations for their lack of urgency with regard to social justice, we too can face the test of seeking to replace the church with something else—to our own destruction. Southern Seminary students must continue to see that the outpost of the kingdom of God in this age is not a classroom lectern, the Oval Office, or a parachurch ministry; it is a covenant community of believers accountable to one another in a local assembly. This means Southern Seminary students must know not only how to diagram Greek and Hebrew sentences, but how to love and to live with those who don't have their English subjects and verbs in perfect order. For the most part, that cannot be taught in a classroom, but it can and must be emphasized and modeled.

The kind of “anticlericalism” Clayton Sullivan encountered among his professors could just as easily happen among orthodox, confessionally accountable faculty members as among the liberals of Sullivan's seminary experience. This is why Southern Seminary must strive for the tension of high academic expectations while combating the ever-present temptation to elitism. In recapturing the heritage of founder James P. Boyce, we must also guard his founding vision for a seminary in touch with the commonness of biblical Christianity. In the 1856 address that laid forth his idea for theological education, Boyce said,

Trace our history back, either through the centuries that have long passed away or in the workings of God in the last hundred years, and it will be seen that the mass of the vineyard laborers have been from the ranks of fishermen and tax gatherers, cobblers and tinkers, weavers and ploughmen, to whom God has not disdained to impart gifts, and whom He has qualified as His ambassadors by the presence of that Spirit by

which, and not by might, wisdom, or power, is the work of the Lord accomplished.<sup>52</sup>

The answer to this is not simply adding pastoral experience to the list of qualifications for faculty members. By itself, this could actually have the opposite effect from that intended. One could conceive of a faculty of burned-out ex-pastors seeking refuge from deacons and building programs and, well, people, by serving behind a classroom lectern. Southern Seminary founder John Broadus was correct when he wrote, “No man is fit to be a theological professor who would not really prefer to be a pastor.”<sup>53</sup> Southern Seminary can ensure its future prophetic voice by ensuring that the church is the focal point of all instruction. This means that no future generation of Southern Seminary students should hear their professors sarcastically deriding the “typical Southern Baptist sermon” or the “typical Southern Baptist church.” Southern Baptist churches will be—and should be—criticized by future Southern Seminary faculty members but only by seminary professors who clearly see themselves as insiders calling churches and pastors they adore to their common first love.

This is precisely why I am optimistic about Southern Seminary's future. Thomas R. Schreiner, arguably the most significant Southern Baptist biblical scholar since A. T. Robertson, preaches every Sunday in a congregation down the street from his seminary office. Bill Cook, one of the most popular classroom lecturers on the seminary's faculty, pastors a thriving congregation. Theologian Chad Brand, one of the most prolific writers in Southern Baptist life, pastors a flock in nearby Elizabethtown every Sunday morning. Hershael York, one of the Convention's most respected preaching professors, pastors a church in the Kentucky state capital, and as a former state convention president serves as a kind of unofficial “bishop,” encouraging and equipping fellow pastors all around the state and beyond. And the list of such faculty members

could go on and on. This is a good sign.

Who knows what the future looks like for the United States of America? Will the generations to come have a discernible Christian memory? Will there be persecution or marginalization? Will our grandchildren be grappling with the question of how to evangelize human clones or with the ethics of artificial intelligence or how holographic transmission dehumanizes conversation? We don't know. We do know that the church is the outpost of the kingdom of Christ. We do know that the church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15 NASB). And we know that the gates of hell—much less the waves of American culture—cannot overcome it. This means that Southern Seminary must speak prophetically to the church but must always do so as the church's servant, knowing, in the end, the church will survive even if, God forbid, Lexington Road is underwater or the Statue of Liberty is buried beneath the rubble of a dead civilization.

In short, in order to reshape American culture, we must give up on reshaping American culture. We must instead turn to reshaping Southern Baptist churches, including reshaping the way they feed from and respond to American culture. In order to save our influence, we must lose it. Otherwise, we will become increasingly similar to the culture around us and therefore increasingly irrelevant. And the culture we seek to save may say to us with an amiably dismissive shrug what one unchurched American once said to a Southern Baptist Sunday school teacher a generation ago, "There you go again."

#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>This article was originally delivered as an address to the Center for the Study of the Southern Baptist Convention's February 2009 conference on Southern Seminary and the History of American Christianity.
- <sup>2</sup>For the history of the Koinonia experiment, see Tracy Elaine K'Meyer, *Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South: The Story of Koinonia Farm* (Charlottesville: University of

Virginia, 2000).

<sup>3</sup>"Carter Wins Survey," *Towers*, 25 October 1976, 1.

<sup>4</sup>For Carter's articulation of his religious development since leaving office, see Jimmy Carter, *Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

<sup>5</sup>Duke McCall, "The Baptist Threat," *The Tie*, October/November 1976, 12.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Wayne E. Oates, *The Struggle to Be Free: My Story and Your Story* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 31.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>11</sup>*Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia, 1957-1958* (ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner; New York: Vintage, 1959), 189-90.

<sup>12</sup>Wayne E. Oates, *Pastoral Counseling* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 57.

<sup>13</sup>Wayne E. Oates, "A Critique of the Kinsey Report," *Review and Expositor* 46 (1949): 352.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 348.

<sup>15</sup>"The Care of 'Living Together' Couples: An Interview with Wayne E. Oates," *Journal of Family Ministry* 12 (1998): 57-60.

<sup>16</sup>For an analysis and interpretation of the 1958 controversy between the Southern Seminary administration and faculty, see Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: 1859-2009* (New York: Oxford University, 2009). For McCall's recollection, see Duke McCall (with A. Ronald Tonks), *Duke McCall: An Oral History* (Brentwood, TN: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2001), 161-211.

<sup>17</sup>The famous "triple-A candidate" quip was offered by U.S. Sen. Hugh Scott (R-Pa.), but was adapted from an earlier comment by an unidentified liberal Democratic U.S. Senator warning about the perils of a McGovern candidacy to columnist Robert Novak. Novak identified this anonymous Democratic detractor years after the senator's death as U.S. Sen. Tom Eagleton (D-Mo.) who would go on, of course, to later serve—for a brief time—as McGovern's running mate. Robert D. Novak, *The Prince of Darkness:*



- Fifty Years of Reporting in Washington* (New York: Crown Forum, 2007), 224-27.
- <sup>18</sup>Bruce Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 2.
- <sup>19</sup>For Moody's own perceptions of the apostasy controversy, see Dale Moody, *Apostasy: A Study in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in Baptist History* (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 1997).
- <sup>20</sup>For a compelling rebuttal of Moody's position on perseverance from within the Reformed confessional consensus of the Southern Baptist tradition, see Tom J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 322-47.
- <sup>21</sup>Curtis Freeman, "'Never Had I Been So Blind': W. A. Criswell's 'Change' on Racial Segregation," *Journal of Southern Religion* 10 (2007): 1-12. Freeman responds, in part, to my "Crucifying Jim Crow: Conservative Christianity and the Quest for Racial Justice," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 8 (2004): 4-23.
- <sup>22</sup>Henlee Barnette, *Crucial Problems in Christian Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 117-25.
- <sup>23</sup>From transcript of oral history interview by Becky England and Diana Frederick with J. J. Owens, Estill Jones, Henry Turlington, and Wayne Ward, April 1986, James P. Boyce Centennial Library and Archives, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.
- <sup>24</sup>Henlee Barnette, "The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Civil Rights Movement: The Visit of Martin Luther King, Jr., Part Two," *Review and Expositor* 93 (1996): 103-05.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 93.
- <sup>26</sup>For examples of her articulation of a Baptist feminist theology, see Molly T. Marshall, "Galatians 5:1, 13-14: Free Yet Enslaved," *Review and Expositor* 91 (1994): 233-37; and "The Promise of Feminist Theology for Baptist Theology," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 25 (1998): 99-104.
- <sup>27</sup>Molly T. Marshall, "Engaging Gender Relations," *Review and Expositor* 101 (2004): 38.
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup>Henlee Barnette, "Coarchy: Partnership and Equality in Man-Woman Relations," *Review and Expositor* 75 (1978): 23.
- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup>Paul D. Simmons, "A Theological Response to Fundamentalism on the Abortion Issue," *Church and Society* 71 (1981): 34-35.
- <sup>33</sup>Paul D. Simmons, *Personhood, the Bible, and the Abortion Debate* (Washington D.C.: Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, 1987), 8.
- <sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup>Henlee H. Barnette, "Toward an Ecological Ethic," *Review and Expositor* 69 (1972): 31.
- <sup>36</sup>Oates, *Pastoral Counseling*, 205.
- <sup>37</sup>Richard Marius, "Musings on the Mysteries of the American South," *Daedalus* 113 (1984): 161.
- <sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup>Clayton Sullivan, *Called to Preach, Condemned to Survive* (Macon: Mercer University, 1985), 86.
- <sup>41</sup>James H. Slatton, *W. H. Whitsitt: The Man and the Controversy* (Macon: Mercer University, 2009), 53.
- <sup>42</sup>Henlee H. Barnette, "Protestants and Political Responsibility," *Review and Expositor* 65 (1968): 299.
- <sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 301-04.
- <sup>45</sup>Bill J. Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 182.
- <sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 181.
- <sup>47</sup>Bill J. Leonard, "Southern Baptists and the New Religious Establishment," *Christian Century*, 10-17 September 1986, 775.
- <sup>48</sup>For primary source documentation of Reagan's early and ongoing handwritten thoughts on his political philosophy, see *Reagan in His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan that Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America* (ed. Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson; New York: Free Press, 2001).
- <sup>49</sup>See, for instance, Thom Rainer, "A Resurgence Not Yet Realized: Evangelistic Effectiveness in the Southern Baptist Convention Since 1979," *The Southern*



*Baptist Journal of Theology* 9 (2005): 54-69.

<sup>50</sup>Dan Martin, "Doctrinal Unity, Program Unity Rise, Fall Together, Rogers Says," *Baptist Press*, 14 May 1982, reproduced in *Going for the Jugular: A Documentary History of the SBC Holy War* (ed. Walter B. Shurden and Randy Shepley; Macon: Mercer University, 1996), 69-71.

<sup>51</sup>Wayne E. Oates, "The Church, Divorce, and Remarriage," *Review and Expositor* 61 (1964): 50-51.

<sup>52</sup>James P. Boyce, "Three Changes in Theological Institutions," in *James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings* (ed. Timothy George; Nashville: Broadman, 1989), 37.

<sup>53</sup>John A. Broadus, *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), 245.