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## "That's the Way We've Always Done It": The Myth of Progress and the Identity of Women in Baptist Life

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

“THAT’S THE WAY WE’VE ALWAYS DONE IT”

THE MYTH OF PROGRESS AND THE IDENTITY OF WOMEN IN BAPTIST LIFE

By

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## ABSTRACT

Most historical accounts of women in Baptist life describe women's roles as both restricted by the conservative orientation of the denomination yet slowly expanding and progressing. Baptist women in ministry have found creative ways to work within Southern Baptist denominational boundaries while still negotiating leadership roles and positions. After fundamentalists took over the denomination in 1979, women have been forced to redefine both their personal identities and their relationships with the denomination. The 15 years following the fundamentalist takeover were a time of chaos, confusion, and uncertainty for women. Some abandoned the denomination, but the majority anticipated that their situation would improve. Because fundamentally aligned leaders have held complete control of denominational boards and agencies since 1995, more and more women have decided that working in connection with the Southern Baptist Convention is no longer an option. Contemporary histories narrating the experience of moderate Baptist women in ministry need to take into account the complete ways women have responded to their ambiguous status within Baptist life and culture.

In the current moment, Baptist women are seeking new institutional models while still adhering to a private Baptist identity. Recent writings by Baptist women in ministry explain their status and identity through reconstructing Baptist heritage. The analysis of moderate Baptists histories and specific publications that address women in ministry, such as the Baptist women in Ministry's newsletter *Folio* and collected narratives from forty-plus women, reveal that amongst the voices a general theme emerges which illustrates shared, characteristic patterns of contradiction. For instance, women generally have stayed connected to Baptist principles, such as local church autonomy and the priesthood of believers and have fashioned an identity from the influence of Baptist missions educational programs and mentors. The dynamics of individual beliefs and practices often belie denominational boundaries and a southern evangelical status quo. Nevertheless, because Baptist women have worked within these contradictory dynamics for decades, they constantly negotiate their positions and trap themselves in a culture shaped by incongruity.

Despite impediments, women in ministry still have hope that they will be accepted and supported within Baptist life. They tell stories of a glorious past, of times of trial, and of hope that their individual narratives will be a source of change for other women. These women have not refused to recognize to recognize the past, but they have failed to concede that their heritage has been unkind to them and that Baptist history has never demonstrated collective change. Baptist women in ministry continue to hope for the advancement of women within the context of Baptist life. The myth of progress becomes a substantial part of their identity.

In a culture and heritage where women remain in an obscure position, women in ministry attempt to create a usable past relevant to contemporary women in Baptist life, while sometimes misreading their history as progressive. This study explores the key dynamics of their identity as

shaped by patterns of contradiction that contribute to a mythologized Baptist heritage and ensnare women in a consistent narrative of incongruity.

## INTRODUCTION

The Southern Baptist Convention with over sixteen million members is a strong cultural and regional force in the southern United States, but its influence extends worldwide. Denominational estimates enumerate that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) congregations have substantially more female adherents than men. Because females constitute the preponderance of congregational membership, these figures proffer that females are the “movers and shakers” of local church life. However, the secured positions of authority and formal leadership in Southern Baptist life are primarily male. The male-centered administration has had a long history of contesting and defining women’s leadership roles within the Southern Baptist tradition, and women historically have chosen to negotiate leadership within a system of Baptist principles. Women always have had the alternative to disassociate from the SBC and join another denomination more accepting of women in ministry. For the women who have chosen this option and have vacated Baptist church life, they have not necessarily given up a Baptist history, heritage, and identity. The “leave or stay” dichotomy is not so clear in Baptist women’s history. Female leaders, however, who have chosen to remain have fused the two into a compromise that legitimizes their roles within church life.

To understand the history of Baptist women, specifically the status of Baptist women in ministry, the researcher must expand the discussion to include larger, more general cultural and religious developments that have shaped women’s determination to stay within or leave the denomination. The narrative begins around 1845, the year the SBC formally coalesced around a loosely defined mission emphasis. During this era, one finds records citing references to Baptist women deacons and occasionally a few preachers, but the actions of these women typically met leaders’ great disdain and suspicion.

Controversies about women’s spheres in religious organizations stemmed from ideas that were congruent and in conversation with the secular women’s rights movement. In the late nineteenth and twentieth century, women’s roles within church life and their status as voting representatives at convention meetings was under intense debate by male Baptist leaders. The SBC traditional perspectives that relegated women to home and family became more complicated when male leaders recognized that women were already organizing and eliciting mass funding for the SBC’s missionary endeavors. Because the beginnings of the twentieth century for the Baptist denomination and other evangelical traditions were characterized by this substantial, successful missionary impulse, Baptist women were able to use their mission endeavors for maneuvering leadership and ministry options within SBC parameters, while also establishing some independence.

The missions movement is attributed to educating, developing, shaping and encouraging Baptist women leaders throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1960s and 1970s, as the SBC reacted to the women’s liberation movement and broader theological debates about Biblical



inerrancy, women in Baptist life were pursuing new ministry roles and moving into positions of formal leadership.

The 1979 fundamental/moderate controversy within the SBC was a pivotal point for women in ministry. In Baptist history this monumental change to a fundamentalist controlled SBC has been attributed to many causes, but central to the explanations are ideas about biblical inerrancy, power, and control. For both Baptist fundamentalists and moderates, the “woman question” has been a defining line of right or left allegiance.

After 1979, Baptist women in ministry were relegated to the moderately aligned representational minority in the SBC. But for the last twenty years moderates have debated their relationship to the conservative majority in the SBC, and a spectrum of solutions has resulted. Some options for Baptist women in ministry include the following: 1) some women are moderates who promote the Baptist principle “unity through diversity.” This ideology defends moderates working within the SBC and its sub-agencies in order to influence voting boards. Supporters embrace hope that moderates will be able to regain at least partial control of Southern Baptist state and national leadership. 2) Others advocate disassociating entirely with the SBC in order to found a “new” (moderates would claim “original”) Baptist organizational model. Regardless, both fundamentals and moderates deliberate what it means to be “Baptist” and each claims to possess a distinct Baptist heritage.

For the last twenty years sociological, anthropological and historical Baptist studies have focused on the factors leading to the 1979 change, predicted its results, and attempted to account for the outcomes. Additionally, all types of Baptists have produced a multitude of writings in an attempt to explain and validate their positions. The moderate writings have been especially profuse, and for any women contributing to the discussion, it was through moderate channels. (No formal leadership or pastoral options remain from women in ministry who seek endorsement by conservative SBC leadership.) But if the “woman’s question” was and remains a substantial portion of the debate, how have Baptist women in ministry reacted? If the history of women in Baptist life explains their subordinate status as one legitimized by creatively maneuvering within SBC guidelines, do recent histories concur with these findings? A comprehensive explanation of Baptist women’s options, obstacles, and choices over the last fifteen years has not been produced. Have women chosen to stay, leave, or negotiate a type of compromise within Baptist life? A history narrating what it means to be a Baptist woman in ministry is seriously lacking.

The status of women in Baptist history has been explained as an account of oppression and obstacles, yet also a story of progress, albeit gradual. Recent writings on Baptist women in ministry, some from the women themselves, explain their current situations, status, and identities by recognizing and retelling their heritage that reinforces a myth of progress. This assumption is supported by references to Baptist literature, writings, and interviews from women who recognize their subjugated positions, but who are also assured that their conditions will improve. The “hope,” which constructs a specific Baptist woman identity, is actually the ability for Baptist women to navigate gender boundaries, while accommodating traditional Baptist principles. Specifically, Baptist women missionaries have blurred the distinctions between working within and outside of SBC-defined functions. Yet, Baptist leaders, pastors, chaplains, and non-ordained women whose roles are more clearly fixed by the SBC also legitimize their positions by claiming a Baptist heritage and specific mythologized identity which negates collective change. The dynamics of this myth, fraught with contradictions, need to be explored adequately to understand the experiences of contemporary women in Baptist life.

The study begins by examining collected histories on Baptist women, analyzing early church records, and reading women's diaries, journals, and manuscripts that demonstrate if they have chosen to stay within or leave the tradition. Missionary writings and reports, as well as the history of the Woman's Missionary Union, are extremely beneficial resources for understanding women's roles in Baptist life for most of the twentieth century. However, Baptist women's voices were relatively silent until the 1970s when women began to forge new ministry roles outside of missions. For this era, denominational journals, such as *Southwestern Theological Review* and *Baptist History and Heritage*, Baptist state and national newspapers, as well as convention notes are references for unearthing reactions to the "women's question."

In order to study a more recent history of Baptist women in ministry after the 1979 turning point, I consulted statistics gathered from SBC agencies, the WMU, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Baptist Alliance, and new missions organizations. A survey of moderate publications and histories that address women in ministry, such as the Baptist Women in Ministry's newsletter *Folio*, furthermore contribute to the narrative. Yet, the best way to understand Baptist women and their experiences is to listen to the voices of the women themselves. Collected interviews and narratives contributed by contemporary women in ministry tell of a common personal identity shaped by Baptist history and heritage that keeps them working within the tradition.

If historians describe Baptist women and the women themselves describe their experiences as working within denominational systems for slow, progressive change, scholars must explore the dynamics of the dichotomy between constructing a usable past and misreading Baptist heritage. The ambiguity has contributed to women and historians accepting a myth of progress without adequately exploring the contradictions.

## CHAPTER 1

### ESSAY OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF WOMEN IN BAPTIST LIFE

The Southern Baptist Convention of the twenty-first century--an unabashed American denomination and strong cultural force--controversially defines the proper sphere of women as determined by denominational leaders. The recent debates surrounding the “woman question” are not novel considerations for its 16 million adherents. In fact, the arguments supporting and opposing women and the subsequent discourses revealing both hope and discouragement have been drawn throughout decades without much resolution.<sup>1</sup> Historians have failed to explain why this is so. I propose that the repeatedly heard excuse “we are working on it, and making very slow progress” contributes to the ambiguous woman question. In order to investigate this conundrum, an exploration into how scholars have written about women in Baptist life and what common voices define the discussion is useful.

Denominational historians from within the tradition who research women in Baptist life have accomplished most of the foundational work. Therefore, it is not surprising that scholars have typically determined the history of Baptist women as a narrative of women working within the tradition, navigating their boundaries in relation to male-dominated power and authoritarian structures, while also accommodating traditional Baptist principles. Exceptionally few women have chosen to abandon their Baptist heritage, despite the realization of their subordinate roles. Historians have yet to elucidate this phenomenon, but continue to use such conclusions as standard models for Baptist history. Much of Baptist historiography focuses on the conservative denomination exerting authority and control, especially in regard to women’s issues, while at the same time the research has ironically juxtaposed Baptist principles, such as soul liberty and local autonomy, when historicizing Baptist women. This strange tension between freedom and relegation for Baptist women is an enigmatic dichotomy to restructure. Beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the story of Baptist women’s history is a diverse narration told by multifarious voices—mostly loud male voices.

The following chapter will situate the literature pertaining to Baptist women’s authority and leadership status in relation to general cultural, social, and religious trends.<sup>2</sup> For example, a Baptist woman deacon in the 1800s whose title connoted ‘servanthood’ signified distinctive circumstances for a woman in ministry than its more authoritative meaning in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> The language, which defines women in Southern Baptist leadership roles and ministry, has interminably modified meaning in the last two-hundred years as evinced by anthropologist Ellen Rosenberg. In her words, “The question of formal roles for women within the Southern

Baptist Convention (SBC)\* is complicated by the word games being played by all participants. The meanings of the terms change even as the context of their use and the institutions themselves are changing.”<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, historians have wielded consistent meanings when illustrating these formal leadership positions. The literature implies that female preachers are analogous to male preachers. Their title denotes a professional vocation, which requires providing spiritual leadership, exhorting regular sermons, leading their congregations, and thus commanding authority (implicitly and sometimes explicitly). Ordination, as a formal designation of a qualified minister, became a recognition of esteem near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but previously, ordination was not required for preaching and the identification was less controversial for both genders. Today, ordination is required for most pastoral positions and chaplaincy. Additional vocational ministry titles, such as missionaries, education administrators, and church musicians, do not necessarily require ordination for affirmed leadership. Keeping in mind that formal titles do not reveal the experiences of all Baptist women in ministry, historians have considered Baptist women’s status by scrutinizing their relationships to annual convention histories, theological debates, educational activities, missionary endeavors, and formal vocational statistics. In order to survey an extensive range of literature, the following chapter will encompass portions of each of these sub-histories.

The history of women asserting leadership within a less than compromising misogynic tradition can be divided into two major eras: before the fundamentalist shift in SBC leadership in 1979 and the reactionary writings after this pivotal point. In each of these intervals, further epochs of Baptist women’s history emerge when considering what it means to be a Baptist woman with authority. The dividing lines between these subdivisions often overlap, especially if individual church histories are considered. Thus, the dates I suggest are merely that, suggestions, not rigid markers signaling fluctuation.

Throughout Baptist history, however, adherents who, ironically, pride themselves on distinctive principles of soul liberty, continuously debate, restrict, and delineate this autonomy, complicating the general theme that recognizes the tension between women’s suppression and freedom. Historians, as well as several anthropologists and sociologists have studied Baptist women’s history by exploring aspects of leadership. A Baptist woman’s status is characterized as a type of limited authority *slowly* attained through creative measures despite SBC restrictions. With so many voices contributing to a diverse tradition, this chapter will reorganize how these voices have historicized women in the SBC, rarely diverging from the premises mentioned previously. I will suggest that new models and perspectives are missing, and especially the actual analysis of contemporary women’s voices--exclamations of anger, indifference, and joyous prospect.

## **Women in Baptist Life Prior to 1979**

### **Early Baptist Beginnings: A Collection of Individual Voices (1639-1845)**

Early writers describing Baptist distinctions neglected to mention women. During the colonial and antebellum periods, women had few occasions to exhibit formal religious leadership, and these writings reflect their general, ancillary status. Nevertheless, by the end of

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\* Please refer to the list of abbreviations in the appendix.

the nineteenth century, the histories alluding to women's leadership unhurriedly alternated to issues concerning conventional administration. Therefore, initial Baptist women's history is limited to church records, sermons (usually admonishing women), convention notes, exiguous mentions in religious presses, and scattered diaries or manuscripts. In order to piece together a general understanding of Baptist attitudes regarding women, modern historians have attempted to uncover these sporadic records. The researcher remains to speculate how the average Baptist woman situated herself in relation to her church, leaders, and God. However, these sources do allow the historian to concentrate on the few women pastors, teachers, and leaders included in church records whose unique positions naturally captured the attention of church leaders and record keepers who predominately divulged antagonistic responses to women's activity.

The following chapter will include a review of both primary sources directly from the period, and more recent historical analyses of these writings. Because early sources are limited, the bulk of Baptist women's history is relatively current. Therefore, a melding of past and contemporary texts is represented in each of the following historical subdivisions.

It was not until 1979 that Leon McBeth, Baptist historian and professor of church history at Southwestern Theological Seminary, wrote *Women in Baptist Life*, the most copious account of Baptist women. His section on early Baptist women leaders and preachers is brief; nonetheless, he attempted to single out a few influential women. McBeth began his history describing the origination of seventeenth century Baptists in England, and he suggested that there were evidences that women did preach in England, but rather many more women were deaconesses.<sup>5</sup> For John Christian's 1922 *A History of the Baptists* the story began in America. Christian proposed that the history of Baptist women should begin with the tale recounting Catherine Scott's influence on Roger Williams' conversion in 1639.<sup>6</sup> Historians report little from the rest of the seventeenth century, except general reference to colonial women subscribing to Baptist belief before churches were officially organized. Besides describing how Baptist women walked out on infant baptisms or protested the sacrament by closing their eyes in the ceremony, early Baptist histories ignore females.

Contemporary scholar Catherine A. Brekus expanded the understanding of these limited beginnings. In her 1998 work *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America 1740-1845*, Brekus admits that uncovering the history of Baptist women preachers is an endeavor that is scant to null, given that few left manuscripts, letters, or diaries. Her analysis is dependent on church records, sermons, and religious periodicals. Brekus gathers most of her documentation from Freewill Baptists, who along with New Light and Separate Baptist churches, allowed women to speak during worship services in the eighteenth century. Brekus suggests that since Baptists were religious dissenters, as marginal groups they were more likely to experiment with gender roles than traditional, more formal sects. She proposes that all genders could improve their God-given talents, given the stipulation that converts respected the boundaries of Christian order.<sup>7</sup> Reinforcing historians' prior summations, Brekus also depicts Baptist women working within limiting parameters.

Brekus concludes that women supposed it was possible to defend gospel liberty through speaking in church without raising questions about their political liberty. For instance, Baptist women initially were able to vote in meetings and serve on church committees (even the pastoral search committee). Within this era, Moran Edwards, in his 1774 book, *Customs of Primitive Churches*, noted that women elders effectively ministered to other women. He defended their teaching and praying and noticed that women outnumbered men in early churches.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the Baptist majority thought otherwise, and the 1746 Philadelphia Baptist Association determined

that, “women ‘ought not to open the floodgate of speech in an imperious, tumultuous, or masterly manner.... The Bible excludes all women whom so ever from all degrees of teaching, ruling, governing, dictating, and leading in the Church of God.”<sup>9</sup>

As the country and denominations grew, radicalism, loose institutional structures, and egalitarianism suffered, while power, influence, politics, and the formal structure of American religion became greater. The rise of political power and control are key themes in Brekus’ work, and by the mid-eighteenth century Baptists seeking legitimacy, and denominational prominence, barred women from voting, choosing pastors, praying or exhorting publicly.<sup>10</sup> Individual women preachers and their congregations had to choose to embrace their marginal sectarian status or to change with the times and join the majority opinion seeking power and respectability.

Brekus quotes Baptist historian David Benedict who stated, “In the former times [the Baptists] decidedly approved of females taking part in social religious meetings.” Moreover, in his 1813 two-volume work, Benedict concluded after surveying more than two thousand churches that Baptists for an extensive period had been “as decidedly opposed to anything of the kind, as any of the pseudo-Baptist churches... This restraint on the freedom of females, right or wrong, is evidently on the increase.”<sup>11</sup>

Early women leaders were not able to generate entire denominational support in favor of women preachers. Rather, from their individual churches females preached the freedom to imitate the life of Christ, often taking a middle position that was not revolutionary. Brekus ultimately sketches Baptist women’s history as a reiteration of a common theme--the narrative is a scattered, non-revolutionary history. The sketches of these women illustrate individual stories of courage, faith, and inner self-reliance, which with amazing trust in God and strength from the Holy Spirit, women recognized that God called them.<sup>12</sup> Early Baptists may have resented the patriarchal structure of Southern culture, such as denouncing slavery and economic class distinctions, thus appearing anti-clerical. However, according to historians describing the dichotomy between relegation and freedom, when it came to designating religious leadership, conservative male-leaders “mixed their commitment to gospel liberty with traditional beliefs about women’s subordination to men,” thus relegating women to a confusing middle position where they often internalized the message of submission and rhetoric of Gospel freedom.<sup>13</sup>

### **Convention History, Baptist Distinctions, and the Missions Impulse: A Determination of Women’s Voices (1845-1920)**

According to McBeth, most all major denominations protested against women in leadership roles during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most controversial issue concerned the very few women serving as deaconesses, although these women were not ordained and were consigned to welfare-type positions.<sup>14</sup> Within the variety of Baptists sects, the Free Will Baptists and American Baptists have granted ordination to women since the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> An additional variety of Baptists, the Southern Baptists, organized in Augusta, Georgia in 1845 under a loose organizational structure called the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) that was able to agree uniformly on a mission emphasis.<sup>16</sup> Historians describe the beginnings of the SBC as a group unified by a specific attentiveness to evangelism. Thus, an understanding of Baptist historiography must include interpreting the denomination’s missions emphasis, an accentuation that was ultimately shaped by women.

The historian can also study the status of Southern Baptist women through formal convention actions. William Wright Barnes wrote an institutional history of the SBC in 1954, which was the first primary research endeavor surveying SBC meeting records. Different regional associations attempted to consolidate Baptist groups around a central mission focus. Baptist reasoning was centralized in ecclesiology, and in 1814, the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions (popularly known as the Triennial Convention) held their first meeting. The convention approved of women's gifts and mission efforts, but did not want them organizing.<sup>17</sup>

Abolition disputes divided the loose alliance in the 1830s and after. Consequently, the Southern Baptist Convention resulted from a division among the Home Mission Society and the General Missionary Convention (foreign missions agency) in 1845, but no women were present at the founding of the SBC, nor did attendees mention them.<sup>18</sup> However, scholars such as David Stricklin have argued that a denomination defining itself according to the "Great Commission," the highest calling to "go and make disciples," required all the resources the church could enable—including women, even though early convention histories neglect their contributions.<sup>19</sup>

Barnes' convention history confined "women's work" to a single chapter, and omitted women's voices throughout the remainder of the text. He disclosed prejudice toward women's greater participation in religious circles and recounted how women slowly formed mission societies. Barnes' history portrays the normative seclusion of women in public life and their limited capabilities within the Baptist tradition. However, he did note how the secular issues of abolition and slavery spread democratic ideals while also bringing recognition to the limitations of women in religious life. The remainder of his chapter accented the developing women's mission organizations and women's contributions to the SBC when females became delegates and voted.

Barnes suggested "over-zealous" women of the period deepened prejudice against the entire female population, and he admitted that in the religious realm, where women in public life often were limited by theological arguments, chauvinism was more conspicuous than in the secular. Writing a decade after Barnes, social historian Rufus Spain also confirmed that the post-Civil War generation experienced an upsurge in feminist movements.<sup>20</sup> Spain agrees that Southern Baptists were opposed to women's movements—significantly suffrage—theologically rationalizing that God created women different from men physically, intellectually, and emotionally. Women's spheres in life were subordinate to men because of this, and to make women and men equal was to be contrary to God's will.<sup>21</sup>

Due to institutional limitations, Barnes posited that, "Women's entrance into religious activities in public had to proceed a short step at a time. If they formed organizations at all, they had to "work behind the scenes."<sup>22</sup> Spain reached the same conclusions by analyzing state Baptist papers. He suggested that the Southern Baptist attitude—determining that a "woman's place was in the home"—did not change from the Civil War to the end of the century, and that women were respected as long as they were regulated to the home sphere. Yet, Spain implies a glimpse of progress when he reported that men did hesitantly welcome women's roles of wife and mother for religious causes.<sup>23</sup> Despite opposition and southern social and cultural changes, Spain agreed that women worked behind the scenes of political Baptist life by persisting in forming missionary organizations that contributed to the growth of the denomination.

State convention positions on the status of women in the post-Civil war decades were not unanimous, but historians writing state Baptist histories have generally arrived at the equivalent suppositions as Spain and Barnes. Wayne Flynt's survey of Alabama Baptists demonstrates the

diversity, while W. Harrison Daniels confirms that Virginia Baptists were insistent upon maintaining male supremacy in his 1970 article, “Virginia Baptists and Feminism, 1865-1900.” He stated:

Men [who formulated denominational policies] believed that it was possible for women to organize for the promotion of missions and the financial interests of the denomination. But any challenge to male supremacy was viewed with alarm, and the status quo was defended with an appeal to Holy Writ. But despite the odds against them, Baptist women were gradually gaining the status of first-class church membership. The concept of women was slowly changing throughout the nation and in the minds of Virginia Baptists.<sup>24</sup>

The first general meeting of Southern Baptist women was held in 1868 with the objective to enlist women in the South for missionary work. At this point, there were two additional boards affiliated with the SBC that worked specifically for coordinating missions: the Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board, both administrated entirely by males. It was not until 1875 that the SBC recognized the work of women and urged pastors affectionately to help the women organize a woman’s society. Despite this progress, Barnes’ history confirmed that considerable prejudice rooted in social and theological premises still existed for women, and in 1878 the SBC reversed its support, suggesting that a general, separate organization was undesirable and not in harmony with “southern women’s values.”<sup>25</sup> The Foreign Mission Board, unwilling to take the responsibility for women, determined women’s organizations should be regulated to individual states.<sup>26</sup>

Barnes’ *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1953* illustrated the early varieties of Baptist viewpoints concerning the position of women by identifying the SBC’s flip-flop resolutions on women’s organizations and the reactions to these changes in two major Baptist state newspapers.<sup>27</sup> In 1881, the SBC asked the Foreign Mission Board to “appoint some competent woman as superintendent of this work.” But the board replied that they wanted to move “slowly and cautiously” to avoid embarrassment.<sup>28</sup> The Home Mission board also petitioned for a woman appointee. The Rev. J.W.M. Williams in an 1884 *Religious Herald* issue expressed his desire for a woman appointee when he explained, “I’m afraid the women will work without us if we don’t permit them to work with us.” But many leaders opposed the action and continued to use a prolific amount of references fearing liberalism and women speaking in public. Before Barnes, B.F. Riley in *A History of the Baptists in the Southern States East of the Mississippi*, speculated that early women’s organizations were rejected because they could possibly divide the churches. He stated, “And the further fear was not disguised that there was danger of according too much prominence to women in the churches.”<sup>29</sup>

If women were not to be incorporated through appointments to mission boards, the option for allowing women to organize apart from the convention was correspondingly heard in SBC debates, but most leaders reacted negatively and with warnings. Several propositions answered the question, “Should women or a women’s organization be admitted to the convention?”<sup>30</sup>

The 1885 SBC meeting in Augusta proposed that men at the national convention would represent women, thus consigning women and missions to statewide organization that could be administered by the national convention. Confusing interpretations of the SBC resolutions slowed a unified reaction. Historians have noted in retrospect how this work under state control was beneficial for women, allowing for broad work by women who were unregulated by the



national Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board. The description of Baptist women creatively working within the system persists as the popular narrative used by historians.

Barnes concluded that by 1885 the “woman question” was no longer an issue for the SBC as evinced by a widely circulated book, *The Heathen Helper*, which served as a communication tool for women in the south calling for “south-wide solidarity” to support women’s work for missions.<sup>31</sup> As organizational activities became more complete, a call for a unified association was espoused in 1887. The ladies reassured the male leadership’s apprehensions about their work, contesting that they “wouldn’t interfere with the management of the existing boards of the convention.”<sup>32</sup>

Women wanted to organize, but they had to convince male Southern Baptist leaders that they would not be infringing on male territory and power. Historians Leon McBeth and Alma Hunt cite Fannie Stout’s address to the SBC as an example of the rhetoric used by women leaders to convince male delegates that they were not overtly challenging SBC male authority.

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....The brethren are our guardians—and when they realize what we want to do, that we do not wish to wander in any dangerous ways, but are only trying to follow them as our leaders and trying to carry into practice what they have taught us from pulpit and press, their anxieties will cease.<sup>33</sup>

From May 11-15 in the year 1888, Southern Baptist women held their first meeting composed of female delegates appointed by each state.<sup>34</sup> The SBC male delegates and leaders were convening down the street, and Barnes proposed that the men were nervous about giving up their power. He more than likely gathered this assumption from reading Ethlene Boone Cox’s fifty-year history of the Woman’s Missionary Union, *Following His Train*, published in 1938.<sup>35</sup> Boone Cox described male leaders’ anxiety towards women as intense, but ultimately appeased. She concluded that women’s work was not seriously hampered by the SBC’s lack of harmony on women’s issues, because the SBC still adopted formal encouragement for missionary circles.<sup>36</sup> The name “Women’s Missionary Union” was officially granted to the woman’s organization as a “true denominational body” in 1890. From the beginning, the WMU formed amidst resistance, and historians continue to demonstrate the unresolved tension.

Women’s representation as voters who shaped decisions within the Southern Baptist Convention directly corresponds to their contributions toward SBC missionary endeavors and the subsequent success of the efforts. However, historians, such as Barnes, Hunt, and McBeth reveal that their suffrage was granted and then retracted by a convention that tightly regulated women’s activities, despite that by 1885, 60% of one million Southern Baptists were female.<sup>37</sup> Women cast ballots in local churches, but they were excluded from voting at the convention from 1885 until around 1915 when a change in attitudes towards women reopened the debate. McBeth reasoned this disenfranchisement probably ensued because men wanted to distance themselves from the national women’s movement.<sup>38</sup>

Chapter three in Norman Lesinger’s 1973 thesis, *The Woman’s Liberation Movement: Implications for Southern Baptists*, surveyed the status of Southern Baptist women affiliated in a historical perspective. When analyzing convention report histories from 1860-1920, he found little documentation of women, except references which alluded to women’s contributions to

mission societies. Letsinger suggested that historians surveying state conventions did not make judgments or conclusions about the roles of women, but even with the rise of mission societies, women were generally excluded by Southern Baptists on a theological basis. Letsinger's claim is a familiar conclusion that emphasizes the tension--some Southern Baptists directly opposed women-led mission societies even though they recognized these organizations directly attributed to the growth of the denomination.<sup>39</sup> Females faced opposition, but they were not unceasingly suppressed to zero agency. The above survey of convention histories lead one to believe the forming of mission societies challenged men's previous restrictions on women's speaking and teaching.

Historians describing the status of Baptist women have also considered the Biblical interpretation of the era. William H. Felix in *The Work and Sphere of True Womanhood* (1877) concluded that the nature of woman was subordinate to man and anything else would deny the position God had given her. James B. Hawthorne's article "Paul and the Woman" (1891) admonished women who spoke in mixed assemblies, and he applied 2 Timothy 2:14 to prove that a woman sinned first. J.W. Porter's *Feminism and Her Work* (1923) was a series of articles that scandalized women who dared speak in mixed assemblies. Some main themes identified by Letsinger in these widely circulated books and state Baptist articles from 1865-1940 include Baptist beliefs that a woman's natural place was in the home, that her intellect was inferior to man, that God disdained female preaching, and that she should not be involved in politics. These assumptions conflicted directly with the goals of the women's movement.<sup>40</sup>

The convention's attitude that women were inferior because of Eve's sin or a unified opposition to the feminist movement was not universal within its ranks. As reported in the May 30, 1918 edition of the *Baptist Standard*, Lee Scarborough reminded the SBC that it had asked women to tithe, teach, donate time and "to give their sons to preach, and their daughters to be missionaries"; thus, they should be given a voice of representation.<sup>41</sup> Edward Bagby Pollard in an address delivered before ministers advocated women's suffrage and direct action for women who could expand their home sphere to the world.<sup>42</sup> Finally, the SBC enfranchised a woman's vote in 1918.<sup>43</sup>

Historians observe that opposition toward women was severe during the 19th century, thus reinforcing the idea that women's recognition progressed slowly within SBC boundaries. Contemporary historian Wayne Flynt in *Alabama Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* concedes that women's leadership in Southern Baptist life was a protracted unfolding due to Baptist women's lack of revolutionary tactics and unchallenged acceptance of their spheres. He propounds, "These women were not dangerous radicals but the most distinguished products of their own denomination."<sup>44</sup>

Earlier, McBeth had indicated the same suspicion when he stated, "No doubt many women were content in their 'traditional' roles assigned to them by our society and our churches."<sup>45</sup> McBeth's observation, however, was not an entirely static conclusion for the position for women, because he also suggested that the role of women in the church paralleled society. Subsequently, as churches encountered women's rights momentum in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they began to form their own denominational groups springing from these cultural changes.

For instance, multi-staff ministry, an unequivocal technique to work within denominational systems, was a relatively new idea. "Bible women" intimately involved in Biblical literature visited the sick, served as Sunday school teachers, counseled women, and were music leaders. Sunday schools and missionary societies positioned women in church shaping capabilities.

Similar to most matters pertaining to Baptist women, Sunday school, a sphere where women participated, was slow to be accepted. Historian Martin Marty determined this tardy approval directly linked with women's involvement in the movement, which posed a threat to the traditional order. Although churches did not allow women to give public instruction, women did teach Sunday school, but men forbade their lessons for male or mixed classes.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, women who overtly challenged predominant regulative ideologies were forced to seek alternatives. These females detached from the status quo and chose to disassociate rather than to negotiate within fixed boundaries. Historians rarely cite this uncommon episode, yet it was a viable alternative for females. Wayne Flynt discovered in minutes from the Alabama Evergreen Association that in 1888 a Baptist preacher called Mrs. Perry Elders arrived at Newton Baptist Church but was rejected to preach despite her good credentials. So instead, she began sermonizing at a Methodist church down the street.<sup>47</sup>

### **Women's Spheres in Missions: The Voices of Agency (1888-1964)**

Women's participation and influence in Baptist missions is an integral component of Baptist women's history.<sup>48</sup> Nearly anything ever written about Baptist women recapitulates missionary endeavors to some extent. Historian Evelyn Wingo Thompson has noted that, "Baptist women have written many histories, especially about their own work."<sup>49</sup> Moreover, historians like Thompson are unable to escape connecting Baptist "women's work" with missions history. These historical models generally assume women were able to work within a male-dominated system while still developing distinctive styles of autonomy and leadership.<sup>50</sup>

Alma Hunt's 1964 *History of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU)* made no explicit statement on the status of women. Hunt nonetheless explained, "WMU's history is a reflection of the dreams, the vision, the toil of dedicated women...WMU's very existence is in large measure due to the fact that these men [convention leaders] walked side by side with the early women leaders. This does not mean at all that the secretaries of the boards in succeeding years have been less 'brotherly.'"<sup>51</sup> Hunt was reluctant to draw conclusions or make judgments scrutinizing the position of women. Instead, she authorized the reader to draw her own suppositions. As implied from her illustrations, Hunt did offer portrayals of women leaders and experiences which coincide with Barnes and Spain's earlier conclusions.<sup>52</sup> These women faced severe opposition, but continued to "labor for God" by adhering to denominational perimeters and gathering encouragement from founding missionary heroines and those remembered as "strong women." Baptist historiography has demonstrated that the contributions of women through mission enterprises have been part of a gradual reinterpretation of women's roles in Southern Baptist churches.

Mid-twentieth century historians such as Barnes and Spain recognized that compared to other Protestant denominations, the early SBC did not permit a women's mission board to organize until relatively late. Historians Ruth A. Tucker and Walther Liefeld in *Daughters of the Church* and Gregory Vicors writings in the 1980's deduced that the SBC was hesitant to grant any authority for women, because the SBC may have been afraid that missionary work was linked too closely with the women's rights movement at the turn of the century.<sup>53</sup> Modern historians describe this situation as a difficult and delicate problem for Baptist leaders, because the "flip flop" SBC resolutions supporting and then denouncing women's organizations evince this dilemma.

Historians like Hunt have used WMU history to justify women's leadership and demonstrate their subordination. The dichotomy between relegation and freedom only becomes more confusing when analyzing women's missions history. Contemporary WMU historian and former associate executive director (1983-1989) Catherine B. Allen is considered one of the most prolific writers and experts on Baptist women and missions, and she concurs with the previous general assumptions that normative, non-radical women created women's mission history. There is little debate that these women were situated within a turn of the century, Protestant context where women rarely questioned their status in society. SBC leaders would have been content with Allen's assertion: "Not one national officer of WMU in a century has campaigned for women's rights in the political or secular sense. Some privately favored these. Others were opposed. Each was willing to wait for history to deliver changes to her or to the next generation."<sup>54</sup> Consider the Women's Missionary Union officially organized in 1888 as an auxiliary group to the SBC with two original purposes: 1) "stimulating the missionary spirit," and 2) "collecting funds" for the SBC's Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board.<sup>55</sup>

Relatively, the Union's statement "to be more efficient in collecting money and disseminating information on mission subjects" was not a radical assumption for a women's group.<sup>56</sup> The WMU has never independently appointed missionaries; but it has financially supported the Home Mission Board (HMB) and Foreign Mission Board (FMB), the SBC institutions responsible for appointments. However, the WMU had the authority to direct how the funds were to be used. Additionally this women's society, which was granted full agency status, did have its own board, own elections, and control of financial matters. Historians have studied the institutional history of the WMU and its relationship to other Baptist denominational agencies as a macrocosm which represents the stories of thousands of individual Baptist women and their high-tension relationship to the SBC. Past presidents and leaders of the WMU have served as the voices of Southern Baptist women.

Scholars agree that the WMU guaranteed women opportunities in mission involvement, which indirectly allowed for creativity, freedom, and leadership within the churches and local, national, and international communities.<sup>57</sup> The WMU leader became the role model who traveled, talked, and educated women across the south. Yet, WMU members seldom voiced dissatisfaction with their own status in church or society.<sup>58</sup> Women of the WMU had no visible association with women's rights, but according to Allen "[women] campaigned for the liberation of women from the shackles of men who were 'heathens, infidels, alcoholics, and slaveholders.'"<sup>59</sup> Catherine Allen, like other historians and missiologists, proposes that these early women unselfishly wanted other women to experience liberation through Christ, broadening their influence to work abroad in foreign lands. "These leaders had more important things to do, things of eternal significance," states Allen.<sup>60</sup> When the WMU did officially form, women defended their independence, skills, and affirmed they were not overstepping sex boundaries, but this group would always be a point of contention and suspicion with the SBC.<sup>61</sup>

The history of women and the WMU exemplifies the friction between relegation and freedom in Baptist life, demonstrating how women slowly made progress within strict parameters. Nevertheless missionary activity also brought the most flexibility for women assuming leadership roles, because the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ushered in a heightened sense and appreciation for mission activity. With committed zeal and enthusiasm, Baptist women's evangelism was very successful, therefore rendering their activity difficult to challenge.

Women missionaries on the foreign field were outside the boundaries of convention control, and historians and theologians understood that female missionaries abroad assumed non-traditional Baptist female roles (church planters, pastors, teachers, etc.) out of necessity. Wayne Flynt suggests, “On foreign field, cultural barriers for women were flexible and many single women preached without apology.” For example, Alice Huey described in 1924 how she “taught and preached to crowds.”<sup>62</sup> Once again, Flynt’s analysis of Baptist women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century concurs with other historians who emphasize women and missions. “With or without the support of men, Alabama Baptist women charted a new course during the 1920’s, one with far reaching consequences.”<sup>63</sup>

Because mission education became the hallmark of the WMU, women’s interest in theological education was inevitable. Laine Scales’s work, *All that Fits a Woman: Training Southern Baptist Women for Charity and Mission 1907-1926*, investigates the place of Baptist women at the turn of the century at a WMU supported school that was to be “appropriate for their gender” as understood by SBC ideology.<sup>64</sup> Seminary professor John Johnson concludes that students at the Training School were unaware that they were challenging the limiting spheres of women, because they would insist upon preserving customs accepted by the larger Southern Baptist denomination.<sup>65</sup> Contemporary sociologists like Laine Scales and historian Patricia Hill, however, suggest that through women’s organizations like the WMU and the Training School allowed women to enlarge their domestic spheres by extending their roles as homemakers to the community. Sociologists and historians studying Baptist women rarely challenge the assumption that women stretched their talents to the world, indirectly challenging SBC mentality that a woman’s place was in the home, submissive to the man.<sup>66</sup>

The inescapable historical theme describes Baptist females as indirectly working within the denominational system. In her study of Southern Baptist mission education for girls (1953-1970), Lydia Huffman Hoyle asserts, “To understand the GA [Girls’ Auxiliary or youth training in missions], one must broaden understanding of power. Regardless of intent of male dignitaries within the church, GA girls and leaders were able to make their voices heard.”<sup>67</sup> The WMU helped women train women and set the agenda for many churches. At some level, these young students were taught the necessity of conformity, but in Hoyle’s words, “They also invested in them the promise of a purposeful, world-changing life.”<sup>68</sup> She attests that although mission’s literature reinforced the “southern lady” ideal, such as finding meaning in the role of the homemaker, the writings also demonstrated women could take active leadership roles in their homes and churches. Moreover, these young women also learned they could make a difference in their community and world through service ultimately possessed with an evangelistic edge.<sup>69</sup> Missions education fit within the patriarchal structure of the SBC, but it did provide an alternative for women to develop leadership skills and nurture God’s direction and calling in their lives. This independent auxiliary provided a base of power where women could indirectly lead their churches and directly diffuse opinions.<sup>70</sup>

Historians agree that for most of the twentieth century the opportunity for women and pastoral leadership has been effectively closed, but women could dedicate themselves to the outreach of the church. Many Baptist women ascribe missions education to encouraging responsibility and leadership, which are now key characteristics in their professional ministry careers. Through teaching Sunday school and participating in mission education, women became intimately involved in Biblical literature and extended these interests to the classroom. In 1901, a few women sat in the back of the schoolroom at Southern Seminary, but by 1914, the wife of a ministerial student enrolled in Southwestern Theological Seminary and both women and men

were receiving theological educations.<sup>71</sup> As Southern Baptist churches recognized that many of these women helped lead the world to Christ, a handful of churches began to ordain women for ministry, theoretically allowing them enter into pastoral occupations that were previously open to men only.<sup>72</sup>

Leon McBeth has suggested that after World War II a broader concept of ministry developed as women were increasingly filling staff positions at churches. Appointments in church music and education were regarded as ministry, and these positions were technically eligible for ordination as a professional designation.<sup>73</sup> The distinctions between ordained and non-ordained became blurred and each congregation addressed this situation differently, some choosing to call ordained “ministers” to serve in churches while other congregations did not. Thus, local church histories are ambiguous—one decade supporting women and another not--depending on changing congregational attitudes and church leadership.

According to Wayne Flynt’s analysis of Alabama Baptists and state Baptist presses, in the 1950’s most male denominational leaders were opposed to the ordination of women. Flynt fails to address that numerous women were also entering the work force during this time and subsequently WMU membership declined.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, Flynt proposes that the mid-century outlet for women in ministry was still indiscriminately the WMU. He stated, “Women continued a long-tradition of quietly but steadily enlarging their spheres of service, pushing constantly against barriers, moving forward in obstacles receded, pausing to regroup when they did not.”<sup>75</sup> Flynt’s conclusions summarize historical and sociological descriptions about the status of Baptist women and their intimate connection to missions.

### **Roots of Revolution: A Voice that Demands to be Heard (1964-1979)**

Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s women’s ordination became increasing popular, but the few women who braved traditional church work were limited to “associate” ministerial positions or educational administration--preaching was always discouraged. Ironically, as the number of ordained women increased, more women had served on SBC local church staffs during the 1940s and 1950s than did in the 1990s.<sup>76</sup> Some of these ordained women, however, used their talents as home and foreign missionaries, guided by the perpetual support of the WMU. The WMU publicly encouraged and affirmed all women (ordained and non-ordained), and the most activism for women’s church related vocational freedom came from mission orientations.<sup>77</sup> Historians writing about the period note the development of an obvious problem. Many more women were receiving a superior theological education in addition to mission's education, but they could not apply their skills due to vocational limitations for ordained and non-ordained women within the denomination.<sup>78</sup>

1964 is regarded as a watershed year for women in Baptist life, as Addie Davis became the first Southern Baptist clergywoman ordained by her local congregation, Watts Street Baptist in Durham, North Carolina. Historians writing about Baptist women never fail at the outset to mention this fact. The trend for women’s ordination was occurring in other evangelical denominations such as Presbyterianism and Methodism as well. Chaplain Libby Bellinger describes this period for women in ministry as a lonely, yet pioneering adventure when she stated, “Thousands of them served in professional capacities through the local church, denominational work, and missions without the benefit of a specific fellowship and support system.”<sup>79</sup> Like previous historians, she concludes that Baptist women in ministry have always existed, but often their work was hidden behind institutional scenes.

The researcher finds literature specifically addressing Southern Baptist women of the 1960s in journal or newspaper articles, which primarily remark on theological debates about ordination. In a broader context, the decade of the sixties was also a period when Biblical interpretation became a contested debate while many religious scholars regard this decade as a time of massive cultural and social change. During this era of perceived chaos, Southern Baptists had no official creed or list of doctrines to which all members were required to adhere, but the convention did release a resolution. Rather than a creed, the *1963 Baptist Faith and Message* was a statement of faith at a given point in history allowing Southern Baptist individuals and groups to interpret it to their own understanding. McBeth summarized the diversity of opinions shared at this time. Thus, it is difficult for historians to study Baptist women in relation to the larger denominational institution when the variety of individual narratives must be considered. He has posited that Southern Baptists could not “arrive at an official position on the ordination of women, it is doubtful they could do so. Southern Baptists accept no ultimate authority this side of the Bible and lordship of Christ.”<sup>80</sup>

Moving into the 1970s, the effects of the women’s liberation movement gained momentum in religious spheres, and scholars have concluded that it was a decade of conscious rising characterized by a shift in attitudes regarding women’s issues.<sup>81</sup> Within this decade a prolific amount of writing on the status of women in Baptist life was produced. Consider that much of the recovered history regarding early Baptist women and the women’s rights movement at the turn of the century was gathered during this period and compared to the women’s liberation movement of which the authors were taking part. This time issues concerning abortion, sexuality, and vocations contributed to the discourse. In 1973, Norman Letsinger produced his doctoral thesis “The Women’s Liberation Movement: Its Implications for the SBC.” After researching histories and periodicals on the status of Baptist women, gathering statistics on women in ministry in non-pastoral roles and in educational institutions, as well as tallying surveys on the attitude of Baptists towards women, Letsinger deduced, “the situation of women in the SBC is less than ideal.”<sup>82</sup> Letsinger concludes that Baptist women had a considerable amount of headway to make in a denominational Baptist life in order to catch up with secular advancements for women. Women were a small percentage of denominational leadership, their salaries were considerably less than their male colleagues were, and women faced persistent attitudes of sexual inequality.

The SBC Christian Life Commission’s theme for its 1974 conference focused on women in the church. Lectures gathered from the conference were published in *Christian Freedom for Women and Other Human Beings* as a “response to the human problems faced by females and males in our society.” Contributors concentrated on Jesus as a liberator of humanity, and because of this freedom, the authors insisted that most men and women were willing to work together within the church to bring about love and justice.<sup>83</sup> The book indicates that women’s movement and liberation themes were on everyone’s mind. According to the authors, social justice issues encompassing civil rights and liberation theologies generated a sense of urgency regarding the matter. These writings proposed an abstract sense of freedom, but not all Baptists were convinced.

Baptist periodicals were not indifferent, and publishers produced numerous articles on the same theme. The quarterly Baptist theological journal *Review and Expositor* published by the faculty of Southern Seminary, devoted its winter 1975 issue to women and the church. The preponderance of articles heeded the separation, oppression, and liberation of women in church life, and contributors arrived at the same conclusions as Letsinger’s 1973 thesis—things were not

optimistic. Case in point, article provider and sociologist Sarah Frances Anders's argument that the "church lags behind in most of its denominational expressions" for women encapsulates these reiterated findings. She imputed sexism within the church, differential treatment for women in theological and secular education, women's invisibility as pastors, women's limited representation among denominational government bodies, and basic gender inequality as severe compared to the larger secular women's movement.<sup>84</sup>

*Baptist History and Heritage's* January 1977 issue was dedicated to "The Role of Women in Baptist History," and topics covered in the issue are not unlike those mentioned thus far in this chapter--convention history, theological debates about ordination and deaconship and early twentieth century missions and suffrage-- all of which consign the status adjustment of women in Baptist life as a modest and slow, but a steady and progressive process. Yet, faced with opposition, Baptist women throughout history have pioneered enterprisingly.<sup>85</sup> In the same year Baptist, Ralph H. Langley re-examined the history of women in the church, and affirmed that, "The story is not always pretty, but it is revealing, and it does show signs of progress and change, albeit painfully and tediously slow."<sup>86</sup>

Frank and Evelyn Stagg published *Women in the World of Jesus* for the eleven SBC agencies that sponsored the 1978 "Women in Church-Related Vocations" conference in Nashville, TN, as a resource for stimulating discussion in Baptist life. Although the conference did not release any formal position regarding the status of women, it did serve as a base for consideration. The keynote speaker Gladys S. Lewis's accentuated the local church's connection and responsibility to women.<sup>87</sup> The pressing issue at the convention was not that Baptist women in ministry struggled with their identity or questioned theological controversies regarding their positions, but rather women's difficulty was in finding a place and function to serve.<sup>88</sup> Local church support was a place to begin soliciting and reinforcing support for women, but church autonomy also prevented swift cohesive momentum throughout the denomination for progress.

A survey done as a masters thesis project by Clay L. Price in 1978 predicted that Southern Baptists attitudes toward women would change with society, resulting in a greater acceptance of women in ministry over the following twenty-five years. Therefore, a year later when McBeth wrote *Women in Baptist History*, he felt as if he was at the crossroads of a revolution that had culminated from an abundance of prepared women who were educated and motivated to enter the ministry. Additional factors pinpointing McBeth's proposed junction included the pressing spiritual needs of the time, the response to the women's movement by society and additional denominations, the reinterpretations of scripture, and the expanded concepts of ministry. McBeth, adapted a dynamic sentiment esteeming the situation of women in Southern Baptist life, and after his review of history, he admitted that Baptist women's "ever-present leadership surprised him," but like the other historians, he was also dismayed that there had not been more betterment.

### **Women in Baptist Life after 1979**

The mounting attention to women's ministry roles within Southern Baptist life came to a screeching halt, or rather a pivotal climax in the early 1980s. A brief overview of the SBC changes in this decade is necessary for understanding the writings on women in Baptist life that ensued. However, it is important to be mindful that the literature spanning fifteen-plus years is



frequently characterized as moderate Baptist reactions opposing a fundamentalist (often labeled “conservative”) faction of the SBC gaining authority.<sup>89</sup>

Things worsened for Baptist women in 1979 when the conservative majority elected Adrian Rogers president of the SBC. Rogers cooperated with other fundamentalists to appoint conservatives to boards that ran seminaries, denominational colleges, and all other SBC sub-agencies. The fundamentalist representation on Southern Baptist boards crusaded for agendas defending the inerrancy of scripture. Baptist moderates refer to the 1979 election controversy and political maneuvering as “the takeover.”<sup>90</sup> Years of restructuring and conflict demonstrate the militancy surrounding the issue. Insisting in a less literal interpretation of the Bible, moderates persisted that scripture was to be interpreted by the reader while Christ serves as the mediator between man and God.<sup>91</sup> Moderates opposed the fundamentalist’s position that persons of prominence within churches (pastors) were better apt at Biblical interpretation and spiritual guidance than sincere laypersons.<sup>92</sup> Harping back to a century-long debate, the scriptural interpretation of women within the church became a point of contention between moderates and fundamentalists. Therefore, women in missions, as pastors, deacons, non-ordained staff members, convention messengers or in every general capacity have been affected by the resurgence of attention surrounding the “woman question.”

### **Reactionary, Angry, Confused, and Indifferent Women (1980-1993)**

The “takeover’s” expediency became evident when moderates were fired from seminaries and mission boards as conservatives quickly gained control of the Home Mission and Foreign Mission Boards, the two main sub-networks which the WMU supported. However, the special auxiliary status exempted the WMU from complete regulation by other Baptist agencies. The WMU was legally outside the fundamentalist grasp, but the conflict was still intense. In the beginnings of the SBC restructuring the WMU remained neutral, but its directors released statements pledging to support, network, and provide fellowship for women in ministry.<sup>93</sup> Overall, at the time female missionaries did not initially release published writings or reactions on the matter, and like the WMU, remained relatively silent until the 1990s when the SBC disseminated statements on women, marriage, and families.<sup>94</sup> In retrospect, many missionaries and those involved with the WMU admit that they simply ignored the fundamentalist agenda and thought the controversy was just a “trend” that would soon pass.<sup>95</sup>

Women directly involved in Baptist ministry and the men that worked with them had more adverse reactions. Some women ministers or those pursuing theological educations anticipated the fundamentalist shift and regrettably left the denomination due to inconsiderable opportunities for vocational placement. Others weathered the changes a short while before deciding to leave or to help organize oppositional groups, and an unspecified number of women remained in denial, attempting to carry on their daily ministries hoping the issues would resolve themselves. It was a period of mixed reactions, hurt feelings, fumbling organizational tactics and plenty of idle time spent waiting wondering what to do. Historians have had difficulty assessing this transitional period, because the women who did write and react were often leaders who eventually terminated their relationship with the SBC.<sup>96</sup> The women who remained were remarkably silent, perhaps due to confusion, frustration, and uncertainty.

Women, however, did continue to organize and Libby Bellinger’s examination of Baptist women is essential and unique to this decade, because she is the only person to write a more

recent institutional history of a group aptly called Baptist Women in Ministry. Bellinger's article is the most timely comprehensive study, yet it demonstrates that a historical survey of the last ten years is direly needed. For the most part her commentary begins in the early 1980s as women were trying to assess and predict changes in the convention. In 1982, an estimated 175 ordained women clergy were serving in the SBC and 10% of local church staffs were women.<sup>97</sup> However, the historian notices few publications related specifically to the status of women at this time, considering Bellinger's essay was written a decade later, scant information was left in between. Perhaps Baptist leaders were preoccupied with choosing conservative or moderate alignments. Whatever the reason, Bellinger's research suggests that meanwhile, women determined communication networks were necessary. Therefore, to learn about issues related to women during these transitional years, historians must locate records detailing discussions at conferences and network meetings, rather than information in Baptist periodicals whose publishing offices and editors were preoccupied determining dividing lines between moderates and fundamentalists. Ironically, Baptist presses did not publish articles about a key issue of the debate—women.

For instance, Nancy Hastings Sehested spearheaded formal organization of the group Baptist Women in Ministry (BWIM) through national and regional conferences and newsletters.<sup>98</sup> In a presentation in Louisville in March 1983, Sehested outlined goals for women in ministry in her speech "Southern Baptist Women in Ministry: Vision, Goal, Strategy, and Tactics."<sup>99</sup> Women continued to form task forces to discuss and discover who supported women in ministry or not. In June 1983, the first Baptist Women in Ministry meeting was held in Pittsburg prior to the annual SBC convention there. The following statement of purpose passed: "[WIM will] provide support for the woman whose call from God defines her vocation as that of minister or that of women in ministry within the SBC and affirm her call to be a servant of God."<sup>100</sup>

Later that year, women's ordination was a hot topic at state levels, as women in ministry became the single most important issue in Baptist life. In 1984 evangelical theologian Carl F.H. Henry gave an address to the SBC session that became rather binding. Before this point, no official resolution concerning women existed. Henry stated, "We encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination." Henry based his pronouncement on two primary principles: 1) man was created first and 2) woman was the first to fail by falling to sin.<sup>101</sup>

According to reports in the Baptist press and church records, state reactions differed regarding the resolution, and some churches were denied messengers to the national convention meeting because they supported women's ordination or had women deacons. At this point missionaries were also beginning to feel affects from the changes. The Home Mission Board denied funding for women and restricted women missionary appointments, including campus ministers. The Foreign Mission board was recalcitrant to withdraw support, but women missionary appointees plummeted.<sup>102</sup> No woman missionary had funding if she was ordained or served in a pastoral role, thus affecting dozens of women missionaries serving as pastors in some capacity.

Notable publications of the time include the *Review and Expositor* winter 1986 volume on "Women in Ministry." Several of the articles detail theological arguments supporting women in ministry. Southern Seminary professor Dr. Molly Marshall-Green advocates women can no longer keep silent and Nancy Hastings Sehested continues to note the intimate involvement of women in local churches.<sup>103</sup> *Baptist History and Heritage's* July 1987 edition is dedicated to

“Women in Southern Baptist History.” Contributors such as Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler report on Southern Baptist women in leadership positions, with mixed conclusions. Crumpler explains that the “‘Shape’ of today’s Southern Baptist women leaders are: missionary, supporter, associate, volunteer, underpaid, and strong commitment.” While these descriptions can be both positive and negative for the situation of Baptist women, she also asserts, “The informal survey of today’s leaders portrayed hope and optimism, not bitterness and hostility.” At this point Weatherford Crumpler’s perspective is rosy as she calls for remembering the faith and endurance of strong women pioneers who have blazed trails for women in the present.<sup>104</sup> Church history professor Carolyn Blevins is ultimately optimistic when writing about patterns of ministry in the issue. She describes the history of Baptist women as one of “diversity, opposition, and support.”<sup>105</sup> Leon McBeth contributed an article entitled “Perspectives on Women in Baptist Life” that reached the same conclusions as those in his *Women and Baptist Life* eight years prior.

These contributors and their contemporaries, such as missions historian Catherine Allen, would for the next decade become the primary producers of writings on women in Baptist life. However, their conclusions--Baptist women in ministry have faced much opposition and discrimination, but have managed to make unhurried progress--are still the same pejorative conclusions characterized by antecedent scholarship. In addition, like previous histories, they voice a glimmer of hopeful betterment and accede to gradual progress for women in ministry. It is a message of mingled conclusions and an acceptance of working within a denominational system of both freedom and relegation that thus far has not brought substantial results for improving the status of women.

By 1988 the WMU reported the “heat” it had been feeling as a result of its relationship with BWIM, but executive director Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler decided that the WMU would still foster the relationship with BWIM jointly, and both would continue to display booths at each others meetings. Likewise, this relationship demonstrates the continual linkage between women’s work and missions that historians could not afford to ignore.<sup>106</sup> Evelyn Wingo Thompson reiterates the connection, suggesting:

In the 1980s, Baptist women are writing about equality in the work place, women’s roles in the church and within the Convention, as they did in the 1880s. They are also writing across an ever-widening spectrum, including biblical interpretation, loneliness, simplifying one’s lifestyle, and women in ministry, while still retaining their most persistently recurring theme, *missions*.<sup>107</sup>

Historians were still employing the models of Baptist womanhood in relation to the WMU and missionary endeavors. Consider that late 1980s article of Gregory Vickers, “Models of Womanhood and the Early Woman’s Missionary Union,” suggests that men tended to use the image of wife/mother/homemaker to limit women to the private sphere, while women’s experience with mission work had expanded their positive understandings of women’s roles in churches. Similar to Scales’s work, which demonstrated examples of womanhood at the Training School, Vicker’s further concludes Baptist women redefined their roles as homemakers to a more inclusive community, while also extending the image of world mother as evinced by the church worker who cared for and supported overseas missions.<sup>108</sup>

During the final years of the eighties decade, BWIM gained recognition by moderate Baptist networks. It seems that this acknowledgement would have occurred earlier, if the “woman’s issue” was a central dividing point between Baptist conservatives and moderates, yet,

neither Bellinger's report nor other histories make a judgment on the matter. Taking into account several years had passed since the initial conservative shift, the original spontaneous reactionary groups were reaching more formal organizational standing and beginning to consolidate. For example, the Center for the Women in Ministry, based in Louisville, merged with Baptist Women in Ministry, and the moderate Alliance of Baptists organization gave its approval for BWIM. Meeting notes reveal these official reconstructions, but sources reporting how women felt or reacted to the changes are meager.

In the meantime the moderate factions of Southern Baptists were having separate meetings, and by 1991 the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) officially organized acknowledging, "The role of women was one of the nonnegotiable dividing lines between the SBC and CBF."<sup>109</sup> Many moderates vacated conservatively controlled SBC mission agencies to help start and work for the CBF. The traditionally neutral WMU gave no official statement on the matter, while BWIM was bolder, deciding to hold its annual meetings prior to CBF general assembly meetings.

Bellinger's BWIM history furnishes a detailed analysis of each annual BWIM meeting, including speakers, themes, persons attending, and major goals, through 1993. Her history tells of women coming together and voicing protest out of necessity, albeit they were reluctant to do so—maintaining hope that the steps backward for women in ministry were just temporary.<sup>110</sup> She suggests the original, loosely structured non-profit organization had no intentions of becoming an institution. Bellinger posits:

But this [the formal organization of BWIM] does not seem to be the intent of original foremothers. The organization has not modeled new forms of leadership for the church, but conformed to the white-male system of control and structure. At the same time Women in Ministry has encouraged women to follow ministries in the church and has provided an avenue for the sharing of the joys and struggle of women in ministry. Its leadership has made the 'invisible' the visible in Southern Baptist life.

Bellinger contributes to the historical claim that Baptist women in ministry have always gone against the "tides of ecclesiastical disapproval." Representing BWIM's position, Bellinger posits that instead Baptist women are accountable to God only, not to worldly authority.<sup>111</sup> This emphasis on eternal significance suggests that worldly structures mean little to these women—a fact often stated by historians but one that has not been significantly challenged. This seemingly irrefutable pronouncement needs to be investigated and understood in relation to the internalized ideologies of the women.

### **Baptist Women: Still Negotiating Within the System or Asserting Influence in New Spheres?**

Over the last twenty years a prolific amount of histories, sociological surveys, and anthropological perspectives have endeavored to explain the conservative changes in the SBC. These texts encompass the broad topics of women in ministry, missions, and the WMU. Those who claim to be writing as 'insiders,' affiliated with the denomination, and those claiming to be 'outsiders,' distancing themselves from political involvement, have generally reached similar denouements.<sup>112</sup> They agree that the Baptist "woman question" is an unresolved topic of

theological debate and point of contention for moderates and fundamentalists. Moreover, because women and women's groups (the WMU) have experienced a history of marginalization by the SBC, their progress in gaining authority and status with the convention's aegis has been extremely tedious. Affirmed to some degree in their ministries, women ascertain authority and leadership through non-traditional avenues, most notably, the WMU. Since the fundamentalists have acquired complete control of the SBC and its sub-agencies after 1995, most chroniclers have little hope for the status of women completely affiliated with the SBC. Instead, support and encouragement for women within Baptist life stems from various moderate Baptist groups, and a woman's own confidence that God grants her accountability.

Many writers, like sociologists Nancy Ammerman and Sarah Frances Anders, explain women's gradual prosperity through statistically documenting Baptist women in ministerial, education, and leadership positions as well as the number of women who are chaplains, executive directors, and ordained. Ammerman suggests that many young Baptist women especially benefited from the WMU's educational mission programs to become grown women who were "urged to listen to God's call to them" for special service, such as being called to be a pastor.<sup>113</sup> Anders has been tracking Ammerman's "called women" or Baptist women in ministry since the 1960's, and she continues to keep an updated file.<sup>114</sup> Through statistical measures, Anders and Ammerman represent the popular use of sociological models to explain power structures. Cultural historians have also incorporated these ideas into their narratives describing women in Baptist life in relation to sociological models of power and authority.<sup>115</sup> While the numbers reveal why women have abandoned formal ties to the denomination, the models do not necessarily explain why women persist within the tradition.<sup>116</sup>

Joe Edward Barnhart's 1986 *The Southern Baptist Holy War: The self-destructive struggle for power within the largest Protestant denomination in America* presents an argument detailing issues of authority. Moreover, the authority of the Bible and the inerrancy debate are essential elements of his conclusion that Baptist women have a history of relegation to subordinate roles--except when the WMU is considered.<sup>117</sup> Similar to Ammerman and Anders, Barnhart does not offer an inimitable analysis for women, but he does predict that because of each have a desire for power, a divorce between Baptist moderates and conservatives is inevitable.<sup>118</sup>

Moderate insiders likewise explain the changes in the convention and attitudes towards women as products of the fundamentalists securing calculated prepotency, but these authors (mostly men)<sup>119</sup> also intertwine issues of authority, as determined by sociologists, with debates about biblical interpretation and corrupted denominational politics. These writings are less apt to directly attribute the WMU to Baptist women's progressive leadership or suggest that women have the scantest intuition about liberty from within a conservative system. Rather, for Baptist moderates, theological debates and the suppression of professional and vocational Baptist women localize the "woman question." These insiders are also more likely to appeal to a "Baptist heritage" focused on the priesthood of believers, autonomy and the lordship of Christ as principles which succor women.

Moderate Baptist press Smyth and Helwys and Mercer University Press published these ideologies by way of producing works such as Grady C. Cothen's *What happened to the Southern Baptist Convention?*<sup>120</sup> Further Baptist histories from a moderate viewpoint include *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement*, edited by Walter Shurden, Bill Leonard's *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention*, or *Has Our Theology Changed? Southern Baptist Thought Since*

1845, edited by Paul A. Basden. Some of these writings are intensely passionate, demonstrating the hurt and deception many moderate Baptists feel toward fundamentalist agendas. Few of these writings, however, present a clear interpretation of the consequential changes for women in moderate or conservative Baptist life, nor do they propose agency tactics for both Baptist males and females who advocate gender equality. Instead, the historians chronicle the history of Baptist women as one of progress, despite setbacks, and they assert that the future remains uncertain.

Differing scholars claim their research on the Southern Baptist controversy and its implications for women is distinct for the reason that they seek to write from an objective, outsider position. For example, communication professors Carl Kell and Raymond Camp's unique study analyzing the rhetoric expressed by the SBC broaches an inventive perspective. Supplementing research on women's roles and the connections to literal SBC biblical interpretations, Kell and Camp demonstrate how Baptist women are subjugated through spoken word. They fail, however, to mention of how women organize and lead despite the challenges.<sup>121</sup>

David Stricklin's 1999 *A Genealogy of Dissent: Southern Baptist Protest in the Twentieth Century*, makes no significant contribution to discerning the status of Baptist women. Concurring with the theme that Baptist women face oppression, Stricklin optimistically assents that they also find alternative attitudes for service.<sup>122</sup> Historian Barry Hankins imparts a varied perspective on the same motif in *Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (2002). Hankins undertakes deciphering what it means to be a southerner and a Southern Baptist, and he specifically addresses women's roles. Setting forth to explain who the Southern Baptist conservatives are, Hankins warns that conservative Southern Baptists do not necessarily consign the "woman question" to biblical interpretation "as SBC conservatives would like us to believe." Instead, Hankins suggests that by attacking Baptist women's roles in society, fundamentalists are strategically constructing a modernist/secular dichotomy. If a woman's egalitarian role in contemporary society is the cultural mainstream, then the new, fundamentalist SBC stands opposed.<sup>123</sup> Unlike Stricklin, Hankin's analysis leaves miniscule hope for the prospect of women fostering leadership positions in the SBC of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Characteristically like antecedent historians, Hankins does not expound that viable options exist for most Baptist women.

Hitherto, none of these more recent works construes why those women leaders who allege to be Baptist remain connected to the tradition or why others have released formal conventional ties, but regardless claim a Baptist heritage. If these women cling to the Baptist history chronicled thus far, it seems that they recognize the ostensibly insurmountable obstacles before them, yet are willing to yield to snail's pace improvement—perhaps mythologizing what is happening as progress. Is this the Baptist history and heritage females claim? If so, the dynamics of this myth need to be assessed. Does an idealized past not allow them to move forward? What are the challenges, goals, and frustrations shared by women in ministry today? Do viable alternative options within Baptist life exist for women pastors, chaplains, educators, leaders, and missionaries? How do the women, themselves, explain their situation?

This survey of literature on the status of women in Baptist life concludes that historians, theologians, anthropologists, and sociologists have all circumscribed the status of Baptist women as one of limited authority regulated by male leaders and theological debates. However, they also recognize that women have developed leadership and opportunities for ministry through alternative means, such as serving as messengers to the convention, voting on local church

committees, laboring as Sunday school teachers and working with the WMU. Women seeking ordination or formal ministerial roles, such as pastors, chaplains, and missionaries have confronted more severe opposition. Although during the 1960s and 1970s women's ordination became tolerable within Baptist life, the "stained glass ceiling" these women faced was daunting and continues to be so.

What slow progress Baptist women made, the conservative and political changes in the SBC restricted their efforts, and the 1980s decade was one of confusion as women in ministry<sup>124</sup> attempted to distinguish between who supported them and who did not. Some women had limited confidence when anticipating progressive change and decided to leave the denomination, but others remain within the tension (usually in alliance with more moderate Baptists) and are aware of the obstacles ahead of them. Scholars have defined their situation as one of slow progress, but have not explained why.<sup>125</sup> I propose that contemporary women who claim this heritage construct a Baptist identity by accepting the disparity between hope and no hope to idealize a narrative of negotiation between freedom and relegation. The recent history and dynamics of this confusing middle position needs to be explained by researchers.

## CHAPTER 2

### RECONSTRUCTING THE IDENTITY OF BAPTIST WOMEN

#### **Historical Highlights from 1993-Present: Institutional and Individual Reactions**

In hopes of negotiating fundamentalist attitudes towards women, moderate Baptist women are appealing to a Baptist heritage for future hope in Baptist life.<sup>126</sup> Fundamentally aligned leaders have held complete control of Southern Baptist denominational boards and sub-agencies since 1995, while instate conventions, local congregations, and individuals have diverse responses and allegiances. Yet, the lines drawn between progressive and fundamental Baptists are becoming clearer with time. In the late 1990s, demarcation between these alignments grew evident when the SBC released two denominational directives. The 1998 resolution on the family and the submissive role of wife was the first to arouse controversy.<sup>127</sup> Many women who struggled to remain connected to Baptist life considered the SBC's 1998 resolution as a slap in the face. Although the resolution article states "husband and wife are equal before God," it also includes the clause: "A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband." At no time in history had Baptists ever made gender a doctrine until 1997 and 1998.<sup>128</sup>

The *2000 Baptist Faith and Message (2000 BFM)*, or second major fundamental edict released by the SBC, affirms that men only are biblically qualified to serve as "senior pastor." The SBC asked all agency employees and missionaries to sign the resolution. For instance, after the 2000 release, a job candidate interviewing at a Southern Baptist college after 2000 is required to sign the declaration, even if he or she does not personally ascribe to the statement. For some Baptists, even those with a more conservative theology, this quasi-creed mandated by the national convention was not so much an infringement upon gender equality, but a direct violation of denominational doctrine, primarily the SBC's tendency toward creedalism.<sup>129</sup>

#### **Who are the Baptists and Where are Their Voices Located?**

The terminology describing the various types of Baptist is complex and fluid. There are fine differences between terms and usage, especially during periods of denominational turmoil. For clarification purposes, two major differences classify fundamentalists and moderates.<sup>130</sup> Baptist fundamentalists are characterized as esteeming the Holy Bible as God's revelation of Himself to man and interpret the Bible by criteria and doctrines that are essential to the Baptist tradition of faith and practice. This includes confessions of faith for doctrinal accountability and submissiveness to the authority of interpreters. It is more difficult to classify the variety of Baptists called moderates.<sup>131</sup> Because of the primary differences regarding the doctrines of the priesthood of believers, church autonomy, scriptural interpretation, and the subsequent marked



variances mentioned above, individual church members and congregations who support the ordination of women and women in ministry generally are categorized as moderate Baptists. The voices of women in Baptist life reflected in the remainder of this study, therefore, subscribe to some level of moderate Baptist ideology.

Although moderate Baptist churches span a continuum of theologies ranging from traditional, to progressive, and to liberal, most fit somewhere in between. Individual church members represent the same multifariousness, and the remainder of the study explores the codependent relationship between moderate Baptist individuals and institutions. Yet, the primary institutions, which provide some sort of unification for moderate Baptists, are reluctant to call themselves institutions. Rather, they chose to describe themselves as umbrella networks, fellowships, and alliances. Weary of powerful, hierarchical organizations, and the risk of leaders abusing denominational power and control, these groups are reactionary assemblages to the fundamentally controlled Southern Baptist Convention.

Pastor Rick McClatchy further clarifies moderate Baptists, or those he calls traditional Baptists, as people who “value Baptist principles and the need to fulfill the Great Commission,” and those who are finding ways to relate to the fundamentalist’s control. The Alliance of Baptists and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship are groups of traditional Baptists who have chosen to withdraw away from involvement in national or state Southern Baptist conventions by creating new cooperative ministries. Most women in ministry who are currently serving in church-related vocational positions are in cooperation with one or more of these groups.

The Alliance of Baptists, begun in 1987, was the first moderately organized assemblage. Few congregations and individuals initially affiliated; but, presently, the Alliance has outreached to other groups, including an association with the United Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Considered as the most liberal of moderate Baptist organizations, Alliance emphasizes a strong interest in social justice issues, but it also works in cooperation with the larger Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF).<sup>132</sup> Many women in Baptist life have chosen the CBF as an alternative or default network of support, and women who feel comfortable affirming connections with the fellowship find that the CBF provides some degree of like-mindedness and security for women in ministry. The CBF gives no official position on women in ministry, but the fellowship adheres to the basic Baptist principle that a determination of a call to ministry belongs to the local church and that there is scriptural evidence for a full role for women in ministry. Generally, those Baptists who align with the CBF are some type of moderate Baptist, and I have chosen to describe the group as such.<sup>133</sup>

Regardless of how the fellowship officially and politically defines itself or how participating individuals explain the group, the CBF is a powerful communication tool for women in ministry and those that support them. Through national website forums, monthly newsletters, educational materials, and annual conventions, as well as the same activities on the state level, the CBF is a prime source for locating the voices of female contributors. Prominent spokeswomen for the CBF are past WMU leaders, professors affiliated with moderate Baptist sponsored colleges and seminaries, and CBF endorsed female chaplains and pastors.

Mainstream Baptists, which supplements the CBF, is a relatively new moderate Baptist network. Several female Baptist pastors have found an opportunity to preach or give their testimonies at the annual conference. The diffuse group also maintains an extensive website posting reactions to the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message* as well as additional issues pertaining to Baptist life. Mainstream Baptists ideally trust that the fundamental, traditional-conservative, moderate and liberal Baptists can agree on Christ’s “Great Commission” as a unifying principle

that rallies for and supports missionaries.<sup>134</sup> Fringe groups seek to create alternative partnerships in order to be, in their words, “a Baptist witness and preserve what is good.” For these small groups who do not want to directly fight fundamentalism, but desire to stand up to moderate principles, Mainstream Baptist Network, a loose coalition of autonomous state groups, is the organization for these believers. Like Mainstream Baptists, some state Baptist conventions promote that positive aspects resulting from unification for mission goals can be reached when a diversity of Baptists work together.<sup>135</sup>

The experiences of women in Baptist life can be traced temperately through these organizations and their separate institutional histories. Nevertheless, it the stories of individuals and their relationship (or lack there of) to associations that constitute a large part of women’s experiences and identity in Baptist life. At one end of the spectrum are women who attend conventional Southern Baptist churches, but independently donate funds to moderate Baptist organizations or specific ministries. Within this environment, traditional women in ministry are relegated to typical female positions, such as children’s director or those ministries that do not require ordination. At the opposite end of the spectrum is a fraction of women who graduated from Southern Baptist seminaries or who once worked for Baptist-affiliated organizations but have since left working for the denomination or do not currently attend a Baptist-affiliated church for reasons most likely attributed to the conservative leadership’s restrictions on women.<sup>136</sup> Despite tense relationships with denominational institutions, they too, however, speak of a personal Baptist heritage and identity. For the last twenty years, the majority of women in Baptist life fall in the middle of this spectrum, clinging to a Baptist legacy but regretting the fundamentalist SBC’s “steps backward” for women. After the release of the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*, however, many women have determined a working relationship or even a hope of reconciling with the SBC is virtually impossible. They seek alternatives, but alternatives with a recognizable Baptist identity.

2002 *Folio* editor Linda McKinnish Bridges pleads for women who remain in the SBC to recognize their self-dignity, to sense being affirmed by God and to “leave the family farm.” She reassures her readers that, “You [SBC women] have served well in a tradition that never, even from the beginning intended for you to lead. At least now in these days Southern Baptist have made their intentions very clear. You are not welcome home anymore...there are other places waiting for your leadership.”<sup>137</sup> However, the options for women leaders in moderate Baptist life or the opportunities for females to serve as head pastors are uncertain and not determinate. If Bridges is correct, that Baptists never intended for women to lead, then women who appeal to a Baptist heritage for joyous progress minimize their subjugation and invent creative power negotiations as exceptions to their situation.

The temptation for Baptist women in ministry to serve in an alternate denomination is strong. Sarah Jackson Shelton declined a proposal from the Methodist bishop explaining, “But I was a Baptist. Just as I desired to act responsibly, I held the expectation that my large, Baptist family would act responsibly as well.”<sup>138</sup> There are women who do chose to leave greater, recognizable Baptist life, but remain connected to Baptist principles. For instance, Rev. Jane Saxon\* attended a Baptist seminary and her present Alliance of Baptist congregation recently has submitted an application to join the United Church of Christ. Describing herself as a fifth generation Baptist, Saxon further comments:

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\* Name changed to protect interviewee’s request to remain anonymous

Those Baptist roots are deep in my blood—commitment to historic Baptist principles of religious liberty, the priesthood of every believer, the separation of church and state, and the autonomy of the local church...I have not left my parent denomination; it left me more than two decades ago as political fundamentalism enslaved all that was of value and sacred to my religious heritage.<sup>139</sup>

Saxon determines, “I am no longer willing to ‘fight’ in the tradition—but I am willing to work at finding some common thread of goodness and hope.” Others find hope in perseverance. One earnest church history professor exclaims, “I am not willing to cave into hostile attitudes as frustrating and even demeaning as it can be at times.”<sup>140</sup> Somewhere between leaving the denomination and submitting to denominational mandates, women in Baptist life and ministry are linked by a common identity. What is the heritage these contemporary women share in conformance?

### **Key Themes Construct Identity**

In order to explain the experience and dynamics of Baptist women in this confusing middle position, I solicited over 150 women in Baptist life to “tell me their stories.”<sup>141</sup> Through collecting narratives via live questioning, phone interviews, and written correspondence, I was able to recognize key response patterns appearing in their narratives. Secondly, I scanned issues of *Folio*, the quarterly newsletter of Baptist Women in Ministry, from its first edition in 1983 to winter 2002.<sup>142</sup> Because *Folio* is the only communication means for unifying Baptist women in ministry, the quarterly publication expresses a cacophony of Baptist women in ministry’s voices. Through its pages and many contributors, emerge central themes shaped by recognizable, reoccurring, and contradictory dynamics described these women.

The data is not necessarily empirical. Rigid quantitative data measured by figures, statistics and calculations cannot adequately explain the fluid nature of narratives. Voices have life, express creativity, inflect a passion, and are the words of raw encounter from the mouths of the authors. I have chosen to allow the women to speak for themselves, using their words whenever possible to demonstrate key themes in their collective experiences and ideologies.

Using methodology gathered from Susan Shaw and Tisa Lewis who employed a retrospective approach in their study, the goal of this project is to document the experiences of Baptist women and understand their identity from their own point of view, as well as conceptualizing their narratives in their social contexts.<sup>143</sup> Historian Marie Griffith’s work on the role of narrative in identity formation serves as a guide. She reminds readers that there is a “direct relationship between communal recited narratives of personal experience and formation of personal and religious identity.”<sup>144</sup> The following chapter will identify primary patterns shared by these women and then apply these larger themes to specific, assorted vocational positions of women in Baptist life.

Experience is central to the data. Moreover, scholars, historians, feminists and Baptist women in ministry first recognize the primal need for marginalized people to “tell their stories.” The narratives serve as exempla for others with similar life cycles and those facing analogous obstacles. Pastor and scholar LeAnne McCall Tigert in her work *Coming Out While Staying In* uses interviews and narrative histories to share the experiences of gay, lesbian, and bisexual Christians within the church. Her methods and interview techniques aptly apply to Baptist

women in ministry. Tigert explains, “It is faithful, it is spiritual, it is Christian to ‘love to tell the story.’”<sup>145</sup> This is especially true for women in ministry holding divinity degrees and serving as pastors who define their careers through spoken words. “Telling stories” is an ingrained expression of evangelical women’s theology and spiritual experience. Such a natural articulation is a custom, scheme, and practice allowing Baptist women in ministry to relate to a community of believers and heal relationships.<sup>146</sup>

The truism “silence represses stories” is an undeniable truth for Tigert, and she suggests that a severe danger manifests in the individual’s psyche when fear and anger are internalized and the community ignores justice. The women in this analysis voice confidence that by speaking and being heard a powerful reconciliation can occur for individuals and communities. It is not uncommon to hear encouraging “stories of the spirit” or Baptist women recounting their faith pilgrimages, which they attest are alive with examples of the Holy Spirit working in their lives. “All we have to do to see that God is working is to take time to listen to each other’s stories, and it is through sharing these stories that we are renewed, refreshed, and restored,” writes Pastor Melissa Lamm.<sup>147</sup> Others are optimistic that by sharing their individual narratives, complete with the rough illustrations of disappointments and hurt as well as the smooth instances of joy, happiness, and progress, that future women in ministry will remain exultant. Campus minister Carlene Holden, for instance, wishes that women would “share our stories and get a clearer understanding of the joys and challenges of women serving in...what the world refers to as, ‘a man’s job.’”<sup>148</sup>

Although upon enrollment Dr. Louie Andrews was the only woman in her seminary’s master of divinity program, she had lofty expectations. Andrews laments that when it came time for her to serve vocationally, there was no place for her in Baptist life. She eventually worked as a pastor in a Methodist church, but she emboldens other women to persevere in Baptist life. By sharing her track record, Andrews assumes, “Seems that [sharing my story] would be encouragement enough for the young women coming along. And seems it would be a basis of comparison with earlier histories.”<sup>149</sup>

In these narratives one recognizes that institutions, oppression and injustice not only deny women’s talents, creativity, adeptness, and value, but also deny God working within their life. If women shape their and identity through “telling their stories” in conjunction with explaining a Baptist heritage, then a woman’s tale of her God-called ministry becomes a central pattern in women’s narratives and subsequent identity formation. Women who appeal to an ultimate authority—a power greater than themselves—defend their positions as servants answering a “call from God.” Leanne Tigert’s experience as a pastor, and the participants of the Shaw/Lewis’s study all express a strong sense of calling into the ministry, and nearly all of the women interviewed and those who contributed narratives for this essay elucidate an intense sense of God summoning them to vocational religious work. These women explain that they recognized that God was directing their vocation and purpose, and they were willing to say “Yes!”

For Baptist women in ministry a call is more than a profession, it is an identity. Regional coordinator of the Kansas City Collegiate Ministries Department of the Missouri Baptist Convention, Constance McNeill, explains:

We may call it many things: our calling, our mission, our life’s purpose. It is the central understanding of how we uniquely achieve balance in our lives. It is the core around which all of our life in Christ is built. It is knowing who God needs and wants us to be...Our calling is a call to being, not simply a call to vocation. The call to vocation is

part but not the totality of our calling. If our call is our being, then being involves the whole of our lives.<sup>150</sup>

McNeil's excerpt appeared in *Folio*, and the majority of *Folio* editions contain a section entitled "Profile." Written by or about a woman in ministry, this column features a particular woman in ministry and explains the principal importance and fulfilling experience of God's purpose for her life. Contributing *Folio* editor Andrea Missey's profile extolling the accomplishments of ordained pastor Glynis LaBarre evinces the primacy of the call. "Her [Glynis LaBarre's] idea of a call is not that of a job description; instead, she considers it a dynamic movement of the spirit's leadership...God's call requires that Glynis know herself and hold close to her personal identity," writes Missey.<sup>151</sup>

The Holy Spirit becomes an irrefutable presence and assurance for these women. BWIM's mission statement, for instance, outlines its continued support and encouragement for women called to ministry: "It is our hope and prayer that the hearts of many will be opened that they might honor God by honoring the Spirit's call upon the lives of women called to serve in positions of ministry and leadership, including that of pastor."<sup>152</sup> Women in ministry insist on not letting authorities other than the Holy Spirit interpret scripture for them and direct their ministries. Pastor Joy Heaton exclaims:

I have a personal relationship with Jesus—and I will continue to listen to Jesus, who has been walking with me and talking with me for more than thirty years. I do not understand these voices that call out to me and tell me to stop preaching. I listen instead to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit, who calls me to go and preach the gospel!...The Holy Spirit has gifted me to be a pastor. The Southern Baptist Convention cannot give the gift and cannot take it away. It is a gift from God alone—a personal, holy calling that I can only prove through the life I lead.<sup>153</sup>

Women tell of consequences if they deny instructions from God. Narrative contributors report periods of internal torment, uncertainty, and discontent before accepting a call to ministry. Pastor Mary Armacost Hulst explains, "I happily volunteered to work in the church assuming that would let me off the hook with God...I experienced a frequent sense of restlessness. I love the role of homemaking. I loved being at home with my sons, but there was a continual private and interior struggle with my identity."<sup>154</sup>

Despite the certain obstacles and challenges inevitably encountered when serving as a Baptist woman in ministry, the stories of these women testify of a peace and assurance in their lives when following God's call, which for them ultimately outweighs the hurt and disappointment that goes abreast with being a faithful woman in ministry. Rev. Kathy Manis Findley worked very hard to have recognition as a Southern Baptist minister when pursuing her call. "I had to summon every ounce of courage within me just to persevere. But I was true to my calling and true to all that is best in my Baptist heritage...God ordained me long ago. It was a milestone when my church and denomination affirmed that," describes Findley.<sup>155</sup> Additionally, several of the respondents unassumingly disclose that during most of their lives as Southern Baptist laypersons, they never expected God would boldly call them to be pastors, yet they were willing to accept the challenges.<sup>156</sup> The dynamics of the patterns of contradiction emerge throughout their stories.

Baptist women in ministry attest with assurance that when being faithful to and trusting God, God's grace will sustain their ministries when they say "Yes."<sup>157</sup> For these women, God's power cannot be limited. Pastor Sarah Jackson Shelton recounts her lunch conversation with one of Alabama's leading Baptist pastors. While he insisted on discussing the differences between their churches, Shelton concentrated on numerous ministries that each church held in common. After he insisted that Shelton's position as a pastor could not be scripturally justified, in defense she rejoined by enlightening her listener about God's power. Shelton explains, "I talked about the amazing, miraculous God I met in scripture...One who could make waters part and feed thousands with a young boy's lunch, and of how I would not want to limited this wondrous God in any regard."<sup>158</sup> Pastor Mary Armacost Hulst also connects the Biblical reference in Matthew of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand by a powerless boy with God's power, understanding and healing. She writes, "God counts both [women and children] and counts on both women and men in ministry. I rejoice that Calvary recognizes that both men and women are needed for a fuller reflection of the love of God. Such full reflection enables our people to move to wholeness and healing."<sup>159</sup>

Women in ministry insist on first recognizing God's call on their lives and their understanding of the directives of a loving, just God. Then, repeatedly, women in ministry appeal to the Baptist belief in the local autonomy of the church, a constant theme in their shared experiences and ministry. Baptist churches voluntarily form larger conventions by joining under a coalition that affirms independent conscience, belief, and practice.<sup>160</sup> The independent, local church is the institution that supports and encourages these women's calls to ministry. However, an incongruous irony results for Baptists--because the church is free to choose its ministers, women are not free to minister in all Baptist churches.<sup>161</sup> Closely related to this loose institutional polity is the Baptist doctrine called the priesthood of believers. Each individual has direct access to God through Christ. Theoretically every member is a minister, relinquishing no distinction between laity and clergy. Church history professor Carolyn Blevins explains this Baptist doctrine in a pamphlet produced jointly by the Baptist History and Heritage society and the William H. Whitsitt Baptist Heritage Society.

Baptists believe in the priesthood of each believer because we believe that God creates competent persons. We believe that God gives every believer the skills and abilities to be priest both for self and for one another. All other Baptist beliefs relate to this one idea—that the individual is competent to handle personal relationship with God without someone to mediate....For Baptists, being our own priests means that we are responsible only to God. We are not accountable to another person, to a creed or confession, to a council or convention, or to any text other than Scripture. Our only sovereign is God. No other authority comes between us and God. We are accountable for being guided by God's Spirit.<sup>162</sup>

Women explain that the priesthood of all believers is a core principle of Baptist doctrine that commits all persons to the lordship and authority of Christ and allows Baptists to demonstrate the personal nature of the faith experience. Former president of Baptist Women in Ministry, Rev. Raye Nell Dyer elucidates:

It is because of our strong Baptist heritage that we hold fast to the historic Baptist principles of priesthood of the believer and local church autonomy. Every person, male

or female, is responsible to God, not human beings, for God's call upon his or her life. Every local church is responsible to God for affirming through ordination those they believe God has called to lead and pastor, male or female.<sup>163</sup>

In the pages of *Folio* and in collected narratives Baptist women in ministry insist on the importance of having an autonomous church that not only asserts Baptist women's ordination and doctrinal beliefs affirming trust in the Holy Spirit in the priesthood of believers, but also encourages, aids, and abets its members in the process. A female professor at a small Baptist college comments, "Since I have a church that affirms those beliefs [the priesthood of believers and church autonomy] it makes it easier for me to remain a Baptist."<sup>164</sup> Nearly all of the respondents serving as senior pastors spoke of "caring, precious, and faithful" congregations, and expecting more resentment than less, they sometimes were dismayed by church member's continued support. Without fear of contradiction, Mary Armacost Hulst attests, "Ordination was not in my plan [but now] I rejoice that I can preach the good news of Jesus Christ. I rejoice that I serve a church that affirms women in ministry."<sup>165</sup> Similarly Rev. Jean S. Pruett exclaims, "I was humbled and thrilled and awed and inspired and challenged as I was officially installed as the first full-time pastor of First Baptist Church of Moore, South Carolina. I, who once said I'd probably never see such a thing in my lifetime, am now pastor of a wonderful, loving community of faith –and it's Baptist!"<sup>166</sup>

For these women comfort resides in the support bestowed by their small communities of faith.<sup>167</sup> Because Baptists uphold a congregation-centered understanding of religious authority, autonomous local congregations make independent decisions. Baptist congregations that exert the religious freedom to ordain and affirm women are usually progressive and are still very much a minority compared to a sweeping conservative majority. Pastor Sarah Jackson Shelton brags that her "congregation has been known for its openness to issues and its inclusive spirit."<sup>168</sup> Larger denominational politics become irrelevant for Baptist women in ministry whose churches stand opposed to the SBC's failure to endorse ordained women or women pastors.<sup>169</sup> Instead, the local church is a source of affirmation, rather than a prominent national convention. Andrea Missey writes, "I was so comforted and challenged to hear her [Rev. Glynis LaBarre] repeatedly say that she wanted to do whatever it takes to keep her first love for Christ and the Church. This is a breath of fresh air in the world of self-promotion and politics."<sup>170</sup>

Multitudinous Baptist women in ministry have chosen to ignore the mandates of larger denominational politics by proudly claiming a historic Baptist polity that emphasizes democratic leadership styles.<sup>171</sup> It is impossible to describe a unified perspective for an ideal Baptist leadership style, but many particularize their leadership as servant-led and believe that everyone is a leader in a community and priesthood of believers.<sup>172</sup> "I see myself as a servant leader. I like to work with shared authority and by consensus as much as possible," comments practical theology professor Tracy Hartman.<sup>173</sup> Janice Johnson is the minister of administration at First Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, and extols her fondness towards her congregation's shared leadership:

I think I am overwhelmed at times by the sense of commitment and responsiveness in our laity. I appreciate that we don't have an 'us and them' attitude between staff and laity. We are a team within the staff as well as between the staff and the laity...Our church log says, 'We are a community of leaders—each member a minister.' I think that says a lot about who we are...Included in our list of core beliefs are diversity of membership; Christian

values and traditions; and openness. Community is a word you think of when you experience first Baptist.<sup>174</sup>

In a personal interview with the author, Johnson explained why she was not ordained. Johnson and her church subscribe to the belief that a person does not require a designation of ordination to be a minister.<sup>175</sup> It is interesting to note that Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang in their book, *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*, remark that Southern Baptist clergy women envision an ideal church where ordination would be obsolete. At the same time, however, the females sampled also expressed that more women should be ordained in their denomination.<sup>176</sup> It is an odd discrepancy and perhaps only explainable when one assumes that as long as ordination is required to fill most ministry and leadership positions, then as a matter of equality, Baptist women desire that more women receive ordination. Although they are not confident that an ideal church necessitates ordination, presently, these women are not serving in ideal situations, and they assume if ordination is required for leadership positions in most Baptist churches, excluding women from ordination is excluding females from recognized ministry. An ordained Baptist clergywoman explained to Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang, “As long as women are excluded from ministry, we are speaking an untruth in regard to God’s nature and God’s promises.”<sup>177</sup>

Baptist women in ministry explain God’s nature and promises, as well as Baptist principles to be the most open and liberating.<sup>178</sup> Baptist women fondly describe a by-gone era when Baptist theology was based on religious liberty, the competence of the individual, priesthood of believers, and trust in the Holy Spirit. Women in ministry regard the fundamentalist takeover of the SBC as an exclusive and severe restriction of these freedoms, describing the situation as a “step backward for women.”

Their voices disclose a belief in an accountability granted by God and they assert an unlimited freedom found in Jesus Christ. Claiming that historical Baptist principles uphold this liberation, a Baptist woman constructs her identity in a private self-worth grounded in God’s love, but reveals a public ministry considered heretical by the fundamental Southern Baptist Convention. Rev. Dawn Darwin Weeks recounts hearing and then understanding her call to preach, and like other female ministers, defends her call using scripture.<sup>179</sup> In her address to BWIM, Weeks fondly remembers the moment when she first comprehended that God’s love included her and how she now recognizes that, “Once we internalize the message of God’s inclusion of us, our question turns from ‘Does God include me?’ and becomes ‘Do others include me?’ ...Each of us gathered here [BWIM conference] has suffered the realization that while we are always included by God, we are not always included by others.”<sup>180</sup> Women in ministry, eschewed by opponents, appeal to an inner strength in God for assurance and hope. Kathy Manis Findley profiled Rebecca Gurney, a former president of BWIM, as a woman that has a passion and dream about seeing worldly power lessened and inner power transformed. She explains that Rebecca Gurney’s leadership encouraged women

...to discover, *within ourselves*, the power for our lives and ministries....She is intuitive enough to recognize that power in our denominational world still resides with the few rather than the many. But Becca Gurney would proclaim, with certitude and conviction, that power is not something we need to wrest away from those who seem to possess it. Rather power is something that already rests within us, placed there by the God who said something like ‘not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit.’<sup>181</sup>



The SBC's amendment to the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message* confirmed a woman's outsider position by announcing that the national convention would not recognize ordained women serving as pastors. Although reactions from both men and women to the *2000 BFM* were aplenty, more than before, women recognize their subordinate status in a fundamentally controlled system. *Folio* editor Rachel T. Keeney comments, "In case any of us had forgotten, the SBC amendment to the *Baptist Faith and Message* reminds us how alien we are in Southern Baptist-dom."<sup>182</sup> These women, however, look to a private, concealed strength granted by God, and pay little attention to larger politics. Pastor Jane Saxon summarized the feelings of female colleagues: "Women's challenges in ministry are bigger than the Southern Baptist Convention. And there are many of us who are able to celebrate life and ministry and calling beyond the battles."<sup>183</sup>

The final, crucial theme that contributes to the series of contradictory dynamics connecting the voices of Baptist women in ministry is the determinative conclusion, "I can be nothing else." Despite the guarantees that within Baptist life women's narratives certainly will be defined by each obstacle overcome, those that remain cannot comprehend the energy needed for formulating a new denominational identity. For an extensive time in their lives, their church provided tolerable aspects of a stable religious community. Reared immersed in Baptist church life, these women consider themselves rightly included in Baptist life, perhaps their acceptance is not at a national level or even a recognized in their local communities, but discovered at a relationship level. A distinguished church history professor and ordained Baptist woman comments, "I am who I am today because I grew up in a Baptist church that taught Baptist history and beliefs which I knew included me."<sup>184</sup>

Substantial contingencies of contemporary women in ministry speak of fathers who were ministers or mothers who were WMU leaders. These women grew up submerged in Baptist culture and report inheriting both positive and negative aspects of a conservative religious upbringing. Preaching professor and daughter of a Southern Baptist minister and administrator, Sandra Hack Polaski's comments are representative of most women in ministry. "I grew up in the bosom of the SBC—or should I say the belly of the beast?" admits Polaski. Although some women now disagree with their parents' patriarchal reinforcements or sexist ideologies, they also recount a recognition that their parents' unintentional misgivings were products of their time and place. Pastor Jann Aldrege-Clanton's father was a pastor. She reveres her father's intelligence, attributing much of her open and fair-minded thinking to his influence. Aldrege-Clanton idealizes her father, but she is disappointed to discover that even her father preached sermons quietly advocating sexism and women's roles as submissive wives.<sup>185</sup> Her parents left her no choice but immersion in Baptist life, and as a result, Baptist beliefs such as the local church, the priesthood of believers and the authority of Christ were formative for her religious-identity experience.

Baptist culture was a formative part of their identity as children, and regardless of the ever-present patriarchy distinguishable in their environment, women wish "the good in Baptist life" for their own children. For instance, Southwestern Baptist Seminary graduate Dianne Ford Lawton admits that the question "Why am I still a Baptist?" is a tough one. She responded by appealing to historical Baptist principles:

I guess you could say that I was born a Baptist—born to Baptist parents at the Baptist Hospital on Sunday afternoon. I was raised in a small Baptist church...attended Belmont College (Baptist affiliation)...I spent summers in high school and college working at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly and at a Baptist Associational Camp... I am a Baptist because

I do not believe in creeds but because I do believe in the priesthood of the believer. I am a Baptist because I just can't be anything else at this point in my life.<sup>186</sup>

Products of Baptist culture and tradition and now feeling the pressure and responsibility to raise children within the Baptist church, numerous respondents mention the realities of providing a community of believers for their families. Geography and accessibility to a moderate Baptist church where their gifts and calling to ministry have a greater chance of affirmation is a real concern for several Baptist women. Regretfully, several women holding master of divinity degrees from seminaries acknowledge that they attend traditional, conservative-fundamental Southern Baptist churches in their rural towns, because the nearest moderately aligned church is too far of a drive to regularly attend. Sheila Moss,<sup>\*</sup> for instance, desires for her daughter to connect with peers in their immediate community. "The main reason I am going to [a Southern Baptist] church is my daughter. I want her to be in a good youth group and to have Christian friends."<sup>187</sup> Interestingly, Moss does not consider attending another Protestant denomination in her vicinity that could provide the potential affirmation for women and young girls, like her daughter, that Moss desires.<sup>188</sup>

For others, remaining and serving in Baptist life is determined by vocational training. For women reared in Baptist churches, trained in Southern Baptist seminaries and expected to minister in Baptist churches or serve on the mission field, the thought of shifting to another denomination (especially Protestant denominations which require clergy endorsement from an assembly or bishop) is simply not an employment option. One female Baptist chaplain describes this predicament, "I introduce myself as being ordained in the SBC denomination, but belonging to the CBF...I am a Baptist because by credentials are Baptist. I go to a Methodist church because I am accepted somewhat more in Methodist church as a person, if not at all as a minister."<sup>189</sup> Some women avow that they are Baptist because the identity affiliation is (or was at one time) the only "right fit."<sup>190</sup> Professor Tracy Hartman is still a Baptist (although CBF and Alliance affiliated) because she believes in historic Baptist principles, such as priesthood of believers and autonomy of the local church. She explains, "Although it has been difficult to remain a Baptist because of the changes in SBC-life, I cannot find another denomination that is a good a "fit" for my theology."<sup>191</sup> Pastor Marnie Fisher-Ingram likewise describes her eventual, suitable affirmation in Baptist life.

By the time I was 16 I had been christened a Methodist, baptized a Baptist and confirmed a Presbyterian...However, my formative years were spent in a moderate Baptist congregation. I went to a Baptist college, worked for a Baptist camp, and ended up going to a Baptist seminary—all the time my dad telling me, 'Marnie, you'll end up Methodist, there is no place for women in a Baptist Church.'...I don't know if I every really thought about leaving the Baptist world. I just have always found a place that was challenging and affirming.

Fisher-Ingram's current congregation is a huge testament of a community that sustains a woman's ministry--local church support is a lifeline for Baptist women. Fisher-Ingram determines that her progressive congregation is able to move beyond the challenges of accepting women and gender issues. At writing, members were learning how to be a more justice-seeking church, inclusive and accepting of the homosexual population within the congregation and larger

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<sup>\*</sup> Name changed to protect anonymity.

community. Fisher-Ingram resolves, “It [homosexuality and the church] is another issue of acceptance, which ultimately is refreshing for a female Baptist minister. I have stayed and will stay until there is no longer a place for me.”<sup>192</sup>

Through storytelling and sharing their narratives, women in Baptist life describe their identity-forming experiences according to five general themes: the recognition of God’s call for their life and ministry, support, and dependence on the autonomous church, the doctrine of priesthood of believers, ultimate freedom in Jesus Christ (not institutions), and the resolution, “I can be nothing else.” It is nearly impossible to distinguish identity themes that grow directly from the Baptist tradition (including a heritage that even fundamentalists would recognize) from separate themes that are specific to women in ministry. For Baptist women, these characteristics are essential components for constructing a usable past and present identity, both fraught with contradictions that percolate into their lives and perpetuate a stagnant situation. They mythologize slow progress and buy into their own myths. To be a Baptist woman is to internalize a heritage that propagates relegation. The unstable contradictions become fixed parts of the grand narrative describing women in Baptist life. However, the contradictory patterns and dynamics of a Baptist woman’s identity are further refined and specified when considering the experiences of female pastors, chaplains, educators, leaders, and missionaries—some who are more aware of the ambiguities than others. Nevertheless, overall, a comprehensive theme of incongruities sculpts their identity and mythologized heritage.

### **Themes and Contradictory Dynamics of Baptist Women in Ministry’s Identity Applied to Specific Vocations and Positions**

The loose organization Baptist Women in Ministry’s publication *Folio*, is an exceptional source for tracing the series of contradictory dynamics pertaining to ordained women and also to women who are qualified for ordination but have not yet found a place (an affirming congregation) or time (in between careers, etc.) to do so. The women are usually pastors, chaplains, educators, and/or leaders--each division demonstrating a particular relationship and history within Baptist life. Just as individual Baptists and congregations are diverse, so are the voices of Baptist women, ranging from the proclaimed feminist to attacks against feminism.<sup>193</sup> Underlying feminist subtexts, however, are traceable through the majority of the articles. The discussion converges on gender issues, with the preponderance of article contributors advocating that ambivalence towards sexism is intolerable.<sup>194</sup>

Moreover, when an article contributor deems compelled to state that she is not a feminist, she juxtaposes ideas of freedom and relegation for women in Baptist life, an ideological conundrum that Baptist women have negotiated for decades. They have chosen to meet the challenges that befall being a woman in ministry by asserting their equality, worth, and adeptness, yet, are unwilling to admit such. Perhaps denying feminist ideologies is a maneuver to not “rock the boat” for Baptist women who anticipate an inevitable sinking in a southern, male-dominated tradition.<sup>195</sup> Claiming oneself as a feminist and as an ordained woman would be too radical for some Baptist women and men to tolerate. Yet, if a woman is serving in a pastoral position, she has internalized feminist ideals and a personal inner authority although she might not explicitly state them. Serving as a female pastor in Baptist life is bold, pioneering, and even radical. Without such assurance in her self-worth and abilities, her entry and success in a traditionally male-dominated vocation, would have been unattainable. Seminary student Elaine Brown recognizes her call from God, but discounts feminist ideals that led her to that point.

I have struggled with finding who I am. I came from a very conservative background. I found myself breaking a lot of barriers at one time. I discovered very quickly that my church and I had placed a lot of gender restrictions upon God that really were not there. The call to be ordained was from God and not a wish by some ‘feminist.’<sup>196</sup>

When Baptist women in ministry defend accusations of feminism, these women are willing to work within the status quo, negotiating power within a content middle position—not fully in the boundaries of traditional Baptist expectations, but not wholly outside the denominational norms either. They attest that their ministries focus on matters of eternal significance or those beyond earthly gender distinctions and denominational boundaries. Pastor Joy Heaton explains the transcendence:

Despite what some may say, I am not a feminist theologian. I would like to be perceived as a Christ-centered, Spirit-gifted pastor...My mission as a minister is not to promote feminism. My mission is to proclaim Christ. I am just as offended by matriarchal statements as I am patriarchal proclamations. ‘In Christ there is no male nor female.’ (Galatians 3:28). Let’s get past gender and on to Christ.<sup>197</sup>

Because pastors are the most visible figures in public Baptist life, the rarity of female Baptist ministers often captures the attention of state and denominational leaders as well as the press. Joy Heaton disseminated her above pronouncement to a public audience, but there are many voices that quietly continue in their ministries without giving much broadcasted attention to gender reform. Pastor Jane Saxon explains a more subdued struggle for acceptance. Her comments are indicative of women in ministry who lament for supposed better past times. Saxon’s congregation now collaborates with the United Church of Christ, but she wishes things could have been different. “Though I am no longer a Southern Baptist—what it was, was my heritage—and though the system has become damaged—it did have good in it at a time,” resolves Saxon.<sup>198</sup>

The Baptist female pastors who remain serving in Baptist churches adhere to an ideal hope in the present, despite their awareness of immense impediments. For many, finding vocational placement and salaries to provide food for the table is a daily reality.<sup>199</sup> The women who have found affirming, supportive congregations are rare exceptions. Associate-pastor Lia Claire Scholl summarizes what female clergy have known for years--especially for Baptist women in ministry--that there is “the lack of opportunities in really affirming places.”<sup>200</sup>

The duties of pastor and chaplain often overlap, and for female Baptist chaplains, the insecurities surrounding job placement have become painfully acute over the last three years. Male and female Southern Baptist ordained chaplains were once endorsed by the the North American Mission Board (NAMB). Now the SBC sub-agency and its employees must reflect the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*, denying women’s ordination for ministry. Maj. Rachel Coggins writes that the NAMB supported her for years. “Whatever was happening at the Convention level, the chaplaincy division remained somehow set apart and supportive,” attests Coggins.<sup>201</sup> In 2002, however, the trustees of the Southern Baptist Chaplain Commission truncated assigning ordained women to the office of chaplain. Because ordination is required for military chaplaincy, ordained women are now prevented from entering military chaplaincy through SBC agencies, although they can still be endorsed by their local church.<sup>202</sup>

Moderate Baptist organizations, such as the Alliance of Baptists, CBF, Baptist General Convention of Texas, and various state conventions immediately erected funding programs to endorse female chaplains. While it is premature to predict how many women are likely to face unemployment, the future of chaplaincy remains uncertain. Most report learning, however, that working with the SBC is no longer an option, and ignoring the denominations mandates or simply waiting until the controversy settles down will not cause effective transformations. Instead, they are choosing endorsement by other Baptist agencies. Perhaps regretfully so, but women are left with no choice. Assuming that female chaplains have endorsement by other Baptist agencies, the difficulties for vocational placement and overcoming cultural gender stereotypes nonetheless reside, often restricting female chaplains to hospital jobs, specifically children's hospitals.<sup>203</sup>

Twenty-four years after the initial fundamentalist takeover, women are less naïve. Yet, the combination of naivety and a misreading of history explain why so many women remain within an unsupportive denominational system. As women retrospectively comment on their relationship to larger denominational structures and politics, the examples of women who admit an ignorance of female relegation are overwhelming. Assuming that women's opportunities for leadership were progressing in Baptist life and ignorant of the improvements that needed to be made, numerous women enthusiastically enrolled in Southern Baptist seminaries to train for their calling, and once there or even early in their careers realized the controversies and realities surrounding the "woman question."

Shiela Moss's story is familiar. "Unfortunately, I had terrible timing. When I went to seminary I knew nothing about liberals and conservatives. I just knew God wanted me in some type of church-related vocation. I had been taught in GA's that God did call women. I was very naïve and really never considered the notion that I would have problems because of my gender," explains Moss.<sup>204</sup> Baptist campus minister Carlene Holden now acknowledges that, "When I went to seminary I was like an ostrich with its head buried in the sand. I had no idea there was controversy over women being in the ministry until someone spoke up in one of my classes and said, 'Women shouldn't even be here.' I turned around and looked at him like he was from outer space."<sup>205</sup> Patterns of contradiction prevalently persist. "Even though women were limited in their vocations at that time, it never occurred to me that any door would be closed just because I was a woman," admits former youth minister Georgie Lee Ruth.<sup>206</sup>

If women do find a ministry positions, regardless, they soon become aware of the actualities of skewed gender issues in church life. Inequality is especially clear for clergy couples, many who met and married in seminary.<sup>207</sup> Moss confesses that when beginning careers she and her husband had decided to pursue a position suited to his qualifications, and she laments, "One career always gets screwed, usually the woman's."<sup>208</sup> Pastor Kathy Manis Findley and her husband ministered in Baptist churches for fifteen years, and for most of their stint she served as "the minister behind the minister." After her husband began a secular career, Findley re-examined her own call from God. She recounts, "That re-examination was an intense experience from me, a time filled with grief, apprehension, even anger. For our 'together ministry' did not work out as we had planned."<sup>209</sup> Often times, the qualified female chooses to take a job in a traditional female occupation, such as a church secretary or educator. Several women with a certain degree of bitterness convey lack of vocational fulfillment and confusion, but remain connected to Baptist life.<sup>210</sup>

Associate pastor Nancy Baker Burke voices frustration when dwelling on how her church family actually regarded her ministerial functions. Although Burke received a great deal of

affirmation for her leadership as an interim worship leader, her congregation frequently reminded her that she should not traverse certain gender boundaries. Burke was discouraged from seeking ordination and was not permitted to perform baptisms.<sup>211</sup> When her church voted not to revisit the issue of women in ministry, Burke understood that her affirmation was not genuine and that she needed to find another congregation. She longed for a Baptist family that would wholly reassure and foster her call.<sup>212</sup> Burke's story exemplifies the general disappointment harbored towards an entire gendered system—a repeated tale of a woman in ministry's dismay at the ignorance of others, including sexist women in congregations.

Chaplain Mary London\* is incensed that females within Southern Baptist churches and some moderate churches remain sexist. "Satan is rejoicing because Southern Baptists taped the mouths of women and bound their hands...If the majority of Southern Baptists are female, the majority of Southern Baptists are sexist...I hate the fact women don't have brains...It's bad out there. I could play the game and could act like nothing has happened, but we must get the truth out," writes London.<sup>213</sup> London is not exactly sure how to "get the truth out," but she supposes writing, speaking, and educating women and men within churches about gender equality and the injustices endured by women in ministry would be a beginning.<sup>214</sup> London, like others, is hurt and angry from the realities of adequate job placement and dashed dreams, and it seems that she is willing to take a more radical stance for reform. In an afterthought and with a detection of surrender, she concludes, "Becoming a chaplain *was* my passion and calling." London has not given up hope for chaplaincy placement, but meanwhile she is pursuing a writing career in Christian resources for married couples and families. Her aspirations remain unfulfilled, commenting, "My hope is that when I am a successful author that doors of ministry will open for me, and perhaps other women...My reality is unemployment."<sup>215</sup>

Women in educational, administrative and non-ordained ministerial positions within both conservative and moderate Baptist life attest that they exhibit more opportunities for negotiating authoritative roles than their ordained sisters who bluntly stand outside of denominational tradition.<sup>216</sup> But one must consider these women are not directly challenging a "man's job" or position as head pastor, nor are they violating the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message* by seeking ordination. They are within an accepted, southern evangelical womanhood when working with the elderly or children for missions or educational causes. These women leaders have always existed within Baptist life and are often happy to chose to "work behind the scenes" of an institution, either figuring they yield more control and influence in this situation or, in actuality, they do not have much of a choice to imagine otherwise.

The Baptist doctrines of church autonomy and democratic processes become excuses for minimizing the unfairness of their limits and legitimizing their relegation. Campus minister Carlene Holden writes, "Basically I see myself as a quieter, more reserved woman in ministry as opposed to a 'banner waver.' I am far more likely to be accepted in this role if I am not argumentative or confrontational. I have always preferred the diplomatic way, and also a behind the scenes administrator."<sup>217</sup> Holden is not ordained, and therefore she has encountered less opposition to her ministry. Her influence is restricted to the campus, but she is personally and vocationally fulfilled when working in close relationship with students. Women who have not attended seminary and those who are serving in traditional women's roles express satisfaction in their ministries. Despite the lack of authoritative titles and the realization of gender boundaries, these respondents presuppose that their immediate jobs are unobstructed. Sandra Strunk, an ordained deacon, agrees, "People do not need titles to become God's servant...titles and rules

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\* Name changed to protect anonymity.

and laws stand in the way...Our job is to speak the Good News and titles should not stand in the way of that.”<sup>218</sup>

Joy Bazemore is the current minister to preschool in a First Baptist church in Alabama. Her commentary is demonstrative of other women’s explanations in similar positions. “My daddy preached from the pulpit and my mom from the kitchen sink. I have taken the torch from my mother. I preach from the kitchen sink, the driver’s seat in the car, my office, etc.,” explains Bazemore.<sup>219</sup> Deducing that her situation is not a compromise, she in fact determines that she “preaches” aplenty. Serving with two additional unordained women on her church staff, the minister to children and the minister to senior adults, Bazemore affirms that as women they are “allowed to have freedom of ministry.” In other words, women can teach discipleship classes, provide counseling, and even take part in staff meetings. However, Bazemore does not explicitly acknowledge that she or her colleagues ascribe to the traditional roles for women in Baptist life, nor does she challenge her limited ministerial capabilities. In fact, she attributes her freedom in ministry to a non-sexist pastor and “a church history that honors women believers as equal to men believers.” In her concluding sentence, Bazemore admits, “I could probably preach from the pulpit on a Sunday night if we called it sharing, but I don’t really want to do that.”<sup>220</sup>

Others recognize their relegated positions but are willing to ignore the matter or suggest that titles, politics, and controversies are irrelevant to their jobs. Finding affirmation in their status quo titles and flourishing in leadership positions, they respect their boundaries and rarely challenge their position in Baptist culture. Confident that she does not need official recognition, a minister to children shares an idiom that she repeats to herself and others habitually: “You don’t have to be ordained to minister, because God doesn’t always call the qualified, but he always qualifies the called.” For the two decades after the 1979 controversy, such attitudes were common. But with increasingly strict guidelines being passed by the SBC, more women in traditionally accepted positions are tediously recognizing that by not directly questioning their own status, they contribute to the injustices faced by all women. The more outspoken women in ministry are especially concerned for their sisters who remain in the SBC struggling to maintain value and dignity as leaders and women affirmed by God.<sup>221</sup> Although all women work amidst some level of contradiction, they have to decide to what extent they will negotiate within the contradictions. One such group of women is female missionaries who are accustomed to a situation where they lie on the extremities of denominational control, thus having the most opportunities for negotiation.

Most female missionaries are not ordained, but as demonstrated in chapter one, the progressive history of Baptist women’s status and leadership correlates with missions.<sup>222</sup> Consequently, it is within this sphere where the recognizable, contradictory key themes comprising a Baptist woman’s identity are taught and demonstrated, thus perpetuating the myth of progress. The fluid dynamics are complex as women are kept off-balance, and because missions is also the realm where women idealistically have remained within denominational boundaries while negotiating positions of power and leadership.<sup>223</sup> The majority of female missionaries serving overseas for most of the twentieth century were largely shielded from denominational politics in America. Naïve to the restructuring of the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) (formerly the International Mission Board) by the SBC, retired foreign missionary Marilois Kirksey remarks that from 1963 to 2000 she always felt accepted and respected for what she did. It was not an unusual scenario for Brazilian pastors to offer her the pulpit. However, Kirksey began to feel uneasiness when a visiting pastor from the United States said to

her, “You are free to do anything on the mission filed, aren’t you?” Kirksey comments, “My inner thoughts were: Why not? This revealed my ignorance of changes in the U.S.”<sup>224</sup>

Missionaries speak of creeping suspicions and distinguishable, subtle changes in missions theory and methodology propounded by IMB supervisors. However, generally foreign missionaries chose to ignore modifications assuming that politics did not aptly apply to their ministries or was something they did not fully understand. During the last ten years female missionaries have continued to reinforce traditional status quo Baptist women’s work by serving as children’s educators, song leaders, good mothers, and devoted wives. But they have also built thousands of churches, organized missions programs for entire countries, led tireless revivals, counseled the needy, evangelized through social ministries, and preached from the pulpit--recapitulating that titles matter little to most. Essentially many, particularly single, female missionaries are pastors.<sup>225</sup> Former SBC missionary, now CBF missionary, Betsy Thompson\* elucidates:

I basically believe that God calls all of us to serve and it is just a matter of geography as to where that might be. As a result, during the years with the FMB (now IMB) when I was simply labeled ‘home and church’ while my husband had more officious titles, I did what I did. To me the label didn’t matter because God knew what I was or wasn’t doing and I was accountable to him.”<sup>226</sup>

Betsy Thompson explains that she and her husband resigned working for the FMB when they were forced to justify issues that were contrary to what was essential to their call and service. They began working as missionaries for the CBF, while most missionaries remained employed by the SBC. The SBC mission boards still appointed women missionaries during the shifting organizational structures of the last two decades, but in lesser numbers. According to mission historian Catherine Allen, “Foreign missions is no longer the inviting channel of female ministry it once was.” She credits a portion of this decline is credited to the conservative control of Baptist mission boards that have shifted Baptist missions strategy to evangelism and church planting (predominately male work), therefore neglecting principle female occupations such as nursing, teaching and social work.<sup>227</sup> These agencies also encourage homemaker missionaries for direct evangelism, but ironically, the SBC also released an addendum for missionary wives, which implied that as Christian homemakers their God-called duty was to stay home and to care and attend for their children.<sup>228</sup> Inevitably, no female or male missionary who advocates women’s ordination or women in pastoral positions is likely to be appointed by Southern Baptist mission boards whose leaders devised the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message (2000 BFM)* stipulations.

The SBC mission agencies asked all employees to sign the resolution, and Baptist moderates have raised many objections, primarily their regret of the SBC’s tendency toward creedalism. *Stand with Christ*, edited by Robert O’Brien, is the most comprehensive collection of recent moderate reactions to the *2000 BFM* signing, tinged with edgy disappointment and disbelief that such a binding action requiring signing was taken by the SBC. From a moderate perspective, the implications of the *2000 BFM* plainly make reconciliation with conservatives almost certainly impossible. Baptist moderates are frantic that the SBC favors the authority of creedalism over the prioritized role of the Holy Spirit guiding scriptural interpretation for

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\* Name changed to honor anonymity.



discerning women's roles. According to moderates, the increased focus on doctrinal control is ultimately overshadowing the belief in mission goals that Baptists could once agree upon. Despite the lines of demarcation between the two Baptist groups, the advancement of all Baptist women in ministry remains in flux.

The WMU is uneasy about global missions implications attributable to denominational changes. Currently, Women's Missionary Unions in foreign countries have virtually nil funding and Southern Baptist mission boards rarely recognize their presence, despite that females inveterately comprise two-thirds of Southern Baptist church membership in foreign countries. Former WMU executive Catherine Allen asserts remembering the importance of WMU's work and international missions. "In historic Asian mission fields, such as China, Indian, and Burma, 'women's work for women' was a hallmark of cultural transformation. As a legacy of women's missions, these countries today have female majorities among Christians and large numbers of women in church leadership, including ordained pastoral work," writes Allen.<sup>229</sup> She connects the North American female Baptist mission heritage with contemporary women's leadership in Japan, assuming that the same progressive process occurred for women within American church life. She frets that the connection between missions and women gaining leadership in Baptist life is in great danger now that the fundamentally controlled SBC has "taken a step backward" for women.

It is likely that female Baptist church leaders in foreign countries and the American missionary appointees would laugh at the "family clause" and the *2000 BFM*. The resolutions regarding gender roles released by the SBC--a governing board of American, white, Protestant males--are not culturally congruent for most of the rest of the world that has different conceptions of gender. The message is contrary to survival tactics for innumerable international women who work each day to provide for their families. In addition, numerous missionaries serve in matriarchal countries or places where women are considered equally competent to serve as pastors as men. Former missionary Betsy Thompson elucidates:

In most of the places we served overseas there was little or know difference in my role and that of my husband. The shock for me has come in returning to the U.S. to find that in so many places women are sill being treated by so many as if they are less in the eyes of God than man. We visited two congregations last summer to which we have had connections through the years. In the one in England I was asked to pray for the elements and serve the Lord's summer, in the second in France, a woman (head of church council) preached as the pastor was gone. In neither instance would I have considered that an exception...So the positive side of serving overseas is the freedom I had to be who I am in ministry, while a negative for here is feeling hampered.<sup>230</sup>

Former Baptist missionary Earl Martin explains that historically Baptist missionaries have had a substantial amount of "wobble room" to negotiate theological and traditional roles of pastor and church in different cultures.<sup>231</sup> Moreover, several have chosen to pay scant attention to the SBC rules and regulations that do not aptly apply to their situations. Nevertheless, ministries spearheaded by international missionaries receive partial funding from the SBC, and most likely, the appointed missionaries receive the bulk of their salaries from mission boards. Therefore, the dictates imposed by the *2000 BFM* eventually affect everyone by permitting meager latitude for negotiation, even for those that find the resolution insensible and disregard agency regulations.

Now, under the SBC moderates worry that their message of gender equality and liberation demonstrated by Christ. They fear that the “needy and desperate women of the world” are being ignored.<sup>232</sup> Moderate Baptists argue that the *2000BFM* leaves no room for divine encounters and supernatural expressions, and believe that the SBC is delimiting the unlimited power of Jesus Christ for both men and women by restricting the leadership of Baptist women and relegating their ministries. The WMU and women wonder, “Who will teach and preach to women?” If the SBC no longer bases unifying principles on the emphasis of missions, some moderate women attest that social ministry and human ministry needs found on traditional Baptist mission fields are ignored. Allen predicts that SBC mission agencies are doomed to decline.<sup>233</sup> Appealing to women’s legendary missions endeavors of the early twentieth century, Catherine Allen asserts that for missions progress and a heightened awareness of women’s ministries to be made in the future, Baptists must return to models of their heritage.

Missionaries are women in ministry who along with female pastors, chaplains, and educators share a series of compromises in their narratives. For those that have retired and returned to the U.S., they now find themselves amidst denominational politics and the choice to become involved or watch from a distance. Like the reactions of female pastors and seminarians to denominational changes two decades prior, female missionaries are now entering a state of confusion and uncertainty for their own ministries. It has taken twenty years and severe denominational restrictions for missionaries to recognize the conservative SBC’s subjugation of women. Preferring to live in the gray area between freedom and relegation, this realization manifested after missionaries recognized their room for negotiation had been constricted. If these women appeal to Baptist mission history for current denominational reform, their actions are likely to be progressive, but painfully slow. They have mythologized what is happening as progress, and they have internalized a Baptist culture and adage (“that’s the way we’ve always done it”) discouraging hasty change.

While women and moderates appeal to an idealized past, current SBC leaders are swiftly restructuring and reorganizing institutional agencies, goals, and objectives to advance a conservative agenda. For instance, SBC leaders would be content with Allen’s assertion that WMU leaders were willing and now continue to wait for the next generation to deliver change.<sup>234</sup> If the women continue to wait for the next generation to “fix” the situation for women in Baptist life, Southern Baptist fundamentalists do not have to devise a strategy to keep women from initiating reform or rebellion, because by appealing to the past, women are content--sometimes joyfully content--working within a system fundamentally opposed to them.

WMU leaders are not the only expectant women; women missionaries also patiently wait. Generally conservative in theology, they rarely have questioned their status in Baptist life.<sup>235</sup> Because missionaries focus on the belief in personal, individual freedom and liberation in Christ’s message, they are not likely to recognize their relegated standing mandated by institutions, or if they do, they chose to ignore it. Former SBC missionary to Paraguay, Gladys S. Lewis admits, “We knew how to work within the system to make our contributions, fueling our personal sense of mission,” while Global women coordinator Suzanah Raffield presumes that, “My personal call to minister with women around the world is louder and more powerful than any denominational crisis.”<sup>236</sup>

Many female missionaries are determined that they can still work within some type of Baptist system. Some are unsure about future allegiances to the SBC, and they are beginning to consider partnership with state conventions or moderate groups. As one retired missionary confesses, “I do not feel I am a very good Southern Baptist anymore.”<sup>237</sup> Retired missionary

Ruby Miriam McCullough Bissett reaches a similar assessment. She writes, “I am still a Baptist, believe in Baptist principles and teaching, and doctrines. However, after the last *Faith and Message* was introduced, I said to most of my close friends, ‘Show me how to resign the SBC. I want no part of it now.’”<sup>238</sup> Although Ruby Bissett attends the annual CBF conventions (much to her conservative pastor’s dismay), contradictorily, she does not express discontentment outright. Bissett explains that she continues to encourage and aid women as best as she can, except within the setting of her church. Defending her strategy, she explains, “Coward? No! Just feel it best not to upset so many souls who have looked up to me for thirty years and how also love our present pastor, whom I also admire for his dedication.”<sup>239</sup>

Likewise, retired missionary from Brazil Ida Mae Hays, was ordained as pastor emeritus by her church in South America, but was shocked to learn upon her return to the U.S., that the SBC wanted to revoke her recognition. Hays exemplifies the passion many women feel for initiating change, but who also exhibit caution by suggesting progress can come quietly and within Baptist life. Hays states, “Persistence is important. I do not agree with passiveness all the time, eternally. No! There may be some times with passiveness is necessary. But, then a time will come to be forceful.” What exactly Ida Mae Hays considers as “force” is ambiguous because she further writes:

I believe we need to be active in a loving, low-profile manner to do all we can do quietly, but firmly, to turn the tide. And, I think we can do it. We, as women, need to be willing to work ‘behind the scenes’ to bring about this change. And, if we do so, then, one day, the men will just be overwhelmed when the women walk through the open doors. Yes, it may take years. But we can do it.<sup>240</sup>

According to Hays, Baptist women’s work “behind the scenes” has initiated headway in the past and she is confident that the same strategy will work now. Similarly, retired missionary Mareline Smith\* realized when she returned to the U.S. from Brazil that Baptist religious practices and beliefs were neither as they were in South America, nor as she remembered them being done in North America. Now residing in a small southern town, caring for an elderly father, she attends the local Baptist church, but harbors anger and frustration towards an inexperienced pastor who limits her participation.<sup>241</sup> Leadership restrictions contributed to a reverse culture shock for Mareline Smith. After expressing her regret for the difficulties Baptist missionaries are braving, and sharing how grateful she is that her retirement withdrew her from the immediate situation, Smith concludes, “I’ll just remain Baptist in my own form and seek to serve God as best I can.”<sup>242</sup> Because retired female missionaries feel too old, are too exhausted, or have too much invested in Baptist life and culture, each woman reasons that she would be risking ministry opportunities if she gave voice to her feelings and beliefs. Instead, they are willing to express hope for change in a quiet, individual matter, exemplified by their predecessors, thus relying on the next generation.

When describing their ministries and life cycles, women in Baptist life reveal their narratives and shape their identities by a series of contradictions. The dynamics of contradiction manifest in a shared content in the myth of progress. However, the varieties of voices often are dependent upon the particular vocational position. Within and outside of Baptist life ordained female pastors and chaplains’ boundaries are clearly drawn, but for non-ordained leaders and missionaries, their status is more complex and fixed within denominational systems. For women

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\* Name changed to protect anonymity.

like Mareline Smith, remembering her Baptist heritage and identity, defined by the contradictory characteristics and an ideology of slow progress, is a mechanism and agency for improving the situation for women in Baptist life.

## CHAPTER 3

### DEVELOPING AND RECOGNIZING IDENTITY AS AGENCY FOR CHANGE

A Baptist woman in ministry's identity is influenced fundamentally by her Baptist mission heritage, which propagates a series of contradictions that enable women to negotiate positions of leadership and work between the denominational boundaries of freedom and relegation. Some women in ministry assume that by retelling their mission heritage and by reconnecting to the dynamics emphasized in mission programs that progressive change occurs. This agency is dependent on the necessity of women mentoring the next generation, fully embracing an outsider status, and testing new missions organizational models. The history they tell, however, doubtfully is usable, because the stories told and mission strategies enacted trap Baptist women in their own myth of progress.

#### **Mentorship**

Historian Paul Harvey attests that leaders of the WMU do not fit the southern evangelical submissive women stereotype. Instead, they pursue evangelical aims by using implicit feminist goals and defining their ministries by self-sacrificing rhetoric.<sup>243</sup> Women use the language of Christian self-sacrifice, self-denial, and devotion to validate their causes and defend their actions. An attitude of self-denial, however, may be a necessary requirement. For instance, Amanda Porterfield, in her work on the nineteenth century American missionary movement, suggests, "for a time, heroic self-denial was often a prerequisite for action."<sup>244</sup> If women could forsake all for Christ's sake, then their efforts could transcend institutional authority and worldly desires. As a result of this maneuvering, the theme of compromise and negotiation endures in Baptist missions theory and methodology.

When following God's call, Harvey attests that the WMU leaders refuse to be subordinate, but also champion selflessness. He acknowledges that the WMU has provided scant upward mobility for Southern Baptist women, allowing women to fit into a religious culture that is neither feminist nor fundamentalist.<sup>245</sup> Although he situates Baptist women leaders in the standard status quo of southern evangelical culture, Harvey implicitly buttresses the myth of progress. Yet he fails to explain adequately how WMU compromises mission history and bolsters the myth and effects all types of Baptist women in ministry, including the missionaries it supports. The paradox between refusing to be subordinate while remaining saintly is just but one dynamic of a series of incongruities in Baptist women's lives. Baptist female pastors, chaplains, educators, leaders and missionaries have inherited an identity of contradiction and compromise from their Baptist missions history and education.

Learning from the stories of past missionary foremothers, it is not surprising that most respondents regard single female mission activists Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong as their personal heroines. Moon and Armstrong are the foremost-celebrated female missionaries in Baptist history, representing the epitome of female strength and adventure.<sup>246</sup> Charlotte (“Lottie”) Diggs Moon was the first unmarried Baptist female appointed missionary to China, serving from the 1870s to 1915. She began her career as a privileged, southern Caucasian woman who sacrificed her upper-class comfort in the service of her Lord to save the “heathens” in foreign lands. Moon entered the mission field with some degree of elitism, but by the end of her career, she had adopted native dress, fed thousands of starving people, and significantly altered her mission methodology. Later, she refused to use the term “heathen,” and voiced complete frustration at the denomination’s misunderstanding of her situation, whose leaders chastised Moon for teaching men and preaching, subsequently restricting her ministry and funding. Confused by the convention’s mixed messages between formative, expressive religious convictions and denominational relegation, she contemplated retirement.<sup>247</sup> Exasperated, she asked, “How can I help but speak when I have the words of eternal life?” Moon was aware of the contradictions in her life and ministry. Paul Harvey has suggested that, “Moon perfectly represented the WMU in her own careful negotiation of opportunities in the perceived roles of Southern evangelical womanhood.”<sup>248</sup> Her obsequious words may have appeased the convention’s endorsement, but the language of subservience did not exactly model her actions and radical life in China.<sup>249</sup>

While Moon worked abroad, Annie Armstrong’s evangelical zeal and tireless efforts for early twentieth century mission work in North America is legendary. Historians attribute Armstrong to innovating new roles for Baptist women, such as helping women organize mission societies, publish missions curricula, and serve as mass fundraisers. Her efforts were not without opposition. In a moment of irritation over gender restrictions, a perturbed, unmarried Armstrong remarked, “I have heard so much about the ‘woman’s sphere,’ and her going beyond proper bounds, that I think I am beginning to feel on this point as the children do when they are told ‘children should be seen and not heard.’”<sup>250</sup> Interestingly, Armstrong denied accusations that the WMU advocated secular women’s rights when she deemed the inculcation as “absurd.”<sup>251</sup>

Using the rhetoric of self-sacrifice, self-denial and devotion to Christ, Armstrong rarely challenged her role as a Southern evangelical woman. The language of self-sacrifice was so important for these women because, as Amanda Porterfield has proposed, self-sacrifice was an area in which female Christian women could adequately compete with men. The virtues of submission, gentleness, and compassion were associated with a social context for which nineteenth century women as wives and mothers were familiar. Armstrong used these attributes to advance her agenda. Renouncing some principles of gender equality in missions in order to protect other compromises, Armstrong denied status recognition for herself and insisted that she was unselfishly spreading the love of Jesus Christ. She compromised by voluntarily working behind institutional scenes as for to not upset men and defy scriptural interpretation on women. Never preaching from a pulpit, Armstrong avoided public controversy if she could be accused of Biblical injunctions. However, her religious activism, voluntarism, and benevolence was anything but reserved. Armstrong made strong alliances with influential Baptist men who petitioned her activism to the broader, traditional convention, but when some key men differed with her in public, she quit. Although not always tough, Armstrong’s insistence that women everywhere should be sacrificing for the missions cause was a difficult directive for men and women to oppose.<sup>252</sup>

Missionary Diana Milner's response summarizes the empathetic connections Baptist women in ministry make to heroines Moon and Armstrong. For Milner, these Baptist foremothers are considerably more assertive and radical than historian Paul Harvey has explained, but Milner's own story emphasizes the sacrifices and selflessness she assumes needed for contemporary missionary service. She, like Moon and Armstrong is also tempted to requite because of inadequate institutional support, but she continues to live amidst the tension, conceiving no other viable options.

[My heronies are] Lottie Moon because she told the men that it was disgraceful if they couldn't come up with enough money to send one little woman back to China in an era when women didn't get to say much of anything. Likewise, Annie Armstrong, because they said she couldn't teach men, so she wouldn't say anything with a male in the room. Gave her a lot more freedom and made them really work to find things to yell about. They wouldn't give her an office so she took the attic. Everyday, directly in front of the business community and building, she climbed a ladder up to the attic until they found an office for her. She also wrote thousands of letters a year, but only five have survived. Of those five, two were to presidents of the SBC and they are telling the president that he is wrong, and history has proven she was right. Three out of five were fiery criticisms, scripturally backed. How many more were written with some passion and fire?<sup>253</sup>

The precedent for contemporary Baptist women was fashioned over a century ago by women like Moon and Armstrong who, albeit considered radical, nevertheless negotiated within a denominational system of contradiction to achieve limited progress. Although their legends tell of adventure and advancement, what is often forgotten is that both these women eventually gave up, either they resigned for missionary service or were bitter towards denominational leaders. Baptist women in ministry have misread, overlooked, or ignored the unpromising conclusions of their foremother's tales, but they are fearful that the fabled legacies will be forgotten due to the lack of educational mission priorities in moderate churches and insufficient mission programs in SBC churches. "There is a generation of SBC folk who have little or no idea about missions and missionaries," writes a worried Ida Mae Hays. "It is an absolute miracle of how God calls men and women to missions when they have had so little missions education in the church. Today there are now heroes or heroines. And, I am not sure how we can turn that around."<sup>254</sup>

Because Baptist mission heritage is a substantial component of Baptist women's identity and culture, the key dynamics (recognizing a call from God, trusting in church autonomy, and believing in the priesthood of believers) and the contradictions women live amidst (repeated restrictions on these ideas) shared by Baptist women in ministry are best revealed, demonstrated, and repeated in missions history. The mythologized missions heritage is why women like Ida Mae Hays are anxious about an invested hope in the future. The missions sphere is where women ministered to women, sharing personal stories, accentuating the tales of those before them, and inspiring women to have vivid convictions. Eighty-year old Ophelia Humphrey recalls:

Some of the fondest early memories include the meetings of my mother's WMU Circle in our home...I loved hearing the women discuss mission work in other lands as well as their own involvement in 'personal service' within our city. (In those days, women's

activities were never identified as ‘ministry.’) My foundation in love of missions began thus. I also recall that our home usually provided a place for visiting missionaries, and I loved to hear their stories of the children in other lands. In those years WMU was the only acceptable role of church leadership for women.<sup>255</sup>

As a result of WMU and missions education, girls and women shared their adventures and dreams, mastered principles of religious freedom from mentors, and recognized God’s call on their lives. Baptist women in ministry mentored by Girls’ Auxiliary (G.A.), or similar mission programs for junior girls, learned to open their lives to the possibility of God’s call for full-time-vocational service. The G.A. theme song, “We’ve a Story to tell to the Nations,” taught girls that Christians should be prepared for what God was calling them to do. One seminary graduate, now educator admits, “When I was a little girl, my heroes were my G.A. leaders.”<sup>256</sup> Former missionary Betsy Thompson agrees:

More Southern Baptist missionaries that I can name are my heroes (the Lottie Moons, etc.), but also the ordinary types who are just out there everyday doing what God has led them to do. My grandmother, especially, and then all those, both men and women, who taught me in Sunbems, Sunday school, G.A.’s, etc. They instilled a sense of missions and God’s purpose in all of us of a certain generation I think, and for that, they were leaders. Also those single female missionaries who followed God’s call and did it alone.<sup>257</sup>

Carolyn Hale reminisces about her missions education experience: “We heard nothing about limitations due to race, economic status or gender. We did hear that our God was limitless and could do everything.”<sup>258</sup> Hale’s report is indicative of more than half of the responses who directly state a missions influence on their lives, while most of the others imply that the Baptist missions emphasis is an vital component of their Baptist heritage.<sup>259</sup> The missions message buttressed the key characteristics of a Baptist woman in ministry’s identity, while teaching them that conflict is expected and negotiable.

Women in ministry name authority figures as mentors, those who openly or in secret affirmed and nurtured their call.<sup>260</sup> These tutors are past Sunday school teachers, pastors, and seminary professors who taught the importance of a fellowship of believers (local autonomy), emphasized the importance of prayer and Bible study for ministering in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (priesthood of believers), and promoted understanding and participation in missions. Because of these mentors, women identified with a Baptist heritage and formulated a Baptist identity that was, as one respondent articulated, the “right fit.”<sup>261</sup>

Former WMU president Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler cites pastors, Baptist Student Union directors, seminary professors, and women in missions as influential exemplars in her narrative. Advisers who, according to one female pastor, “were open to new ideas” are synonymous with success for women leaders in Baptist life, and become important characters included in women’s stories. Women remember these tutors’ wisdom and encouragement who, according to their recollections, transcended gender restrictions to shape their ministry and call. Through storytelling, heroes, heroines, and mentors are recreated and revived to become figures in a living Baptist heritage which reminds women in Baptist life that they are to return the gesture. They are to blaze the trail for those women to come.

At the age of sixteen, Crumpler made the decision to go into “full-time Christian service,” and in 1946, such a commitment meant becoming a missionary. She told her pastor of



her decision and he was very encouraging, affirming, “A call to serve is a call to prepare.” Crumpler gladly reports that her pastor assigned her numerous jobs, such as teaching boys in Sunday school and directing the Baptist Training Union organization in her church-- all the while, learning from this pastor mentor. Similar to the college experiences illustrated by a preponderance of respondents, Crumpler became very active in the Baptist Student Union where she experienced the young, energetic leadership of a female director.<sup>262</sup> But later, as a woman entering seminary in 1956, Crumpler could not enroll for a theology degree in seminary (although she did take every elective in theology.)<sup>263</sup> She reports that both her New Testament and Old Testament professors “were both strong advocates for women, but, of course, at that time, women’s ordination not yet an issue.”<sup>264</sup> Although pastors and seminary professors served as encouragers and mentors for many of these women, contradictorily, women received little affirmation apart from their mentors’ individual attention. The complicated dynamics of compromise persisted and pervaded their lives. For instance, Crumpler was excited and encouraged to interview for a missions volunteer position. But at the interview she vividly remembers an executive from the Florida Baptist Convention’s words: “Find yourself one of these preacher boys and come back to Florida as a pastor’s wife.”<sup>265</sup>

Crumpler’s tale is illustrative of most other Baptist women in ministry who were reared in southern-evangelical Protestantism. “My life revolved around church activities,” admits retired missionary Janice Ruth Bell Capps, “and the very strong influence of missions-minded women, specially my mother, kindled a strong interest in praying for and supporting missionaries.”<sup>266</sup> Pastor Sarah Jackson Shelton mentions how her mother, a Sunday school teacher and state WMU director influenced Shelton by introducing her impressionable daughter to “Baptist giants like Alma Hunt.”<sup>267</sup> Shelton reports, “Over and over again, I responded to the gospel as it was presented to me in Sunday school, in church training, in G.A.’s, in choir, in vacation Bible school, at all those other Baptist meetings and in the lives of believing persons that parents consistently included in my life.” Receiving encouragement from mentors, she pursued a theological education, but, ironically, her mentor’s influence also reiterated traditional roles for women. While in seminary, for instance, Shelton received a scholarship from the Alabama Baptist WMU and had all intentions of becoming a director of church kindergartens. She confesses, “It [a children’s director] was, after all, the only way I had seen women serve on church staffs. But within my first semester, I felt God nudging me to reconsider.” After talking with her professors, Shelton unburdens a calling from God to preach, but she was fearful for “never having seen it done before.” Dr. Findley Edge asked her, “Oh Sarah, wouldn’t you rather be a part of something new than a part of something that has always been?” Since that time, Rev. Shelton has responded with an affirmative, “Yes!”<sup>268</sup> Pioneers like Shelton are beginning something new for women in Baptist by standing in direct contradiction with denominational tradition. At the same time, living with contradiction is nothing novel. Contemporary women in Baptist life are so closely linked with the missions heritage and the identity of compromising Baptist women before them that serious, swift, and collective advancement for women in ministry is unlikely.

Baptist women in ministry of an older generation, those who are former missionaries or WMU leaders, proudly tell stories of the small steps and gender obstacles overcome which eventually allowed for modern female pastors like Sarah Jackson Shelton.<sup>269</sup> National and state WMU leaders had the responsibility to promote Baptist missions through workshops, leading prayer retreats, and speaking engagements in churches and associations. Typically churches invited foreign or home missionaries on furlough to speak at Sunday evening services, or

opportune in the morning services. Progress was a pastor who courteously offered a podium or microphone stand on floor level down in front of the pulpit for women addressing the congregation. Former Texas WMU president, Ophelia Humphrey rejoices, because in comparison to her generation, she attests that leadership and pastoral positions for women have become increasingly accepted. She remembers:

Occasionally the host pastor would very thoughtfully tell me: 'I know you will be more comfortable speaking from the floor level instead of the pulpit' and he would graciously see that a small speaker's stand was placed below and in front of the pulpit. No pastor would have assumed that a man would be 'uncomfortable' in the pulpit. But we were graciously thanked those pastors 'for their thoughtfulness,' realizing that those were the conditions that allowed us to begin paving the way for those who would follow.<sup>270</sup>

Because they were not directly exhorting from the pulpit, formally, these women were not preaching—rather, they were teaching. Some respondents describing their work as “behind the scenes” traditionally avoided controversy and would never fathom preaching from a pulpit. While others, like Ms. Humphrey, were quite aware that despite formality and protocol they were in actuality preaching, although their compromising efforts were labeled as “teaching.” The older generation affectedly considers these small steps as contributing to modern women in ministry's advancement, especially pastors.

The responsibility to serve as a mentor is integral for ensuring the development of women in ministry. Each woman is encouraged to reveal and celebrate her narrative. Crumpler is a leading advocate for this cause, and she recounts the time she realized the necessity for female mentorship.<sup>271</sup>

By this time [around 1970] several women had been ordained to the ministry by Southern Baptist churches. The Women's Liberation Movement was in full swing. I remember sitting in the coffee break room in the Florida Baptist Building talking to some young women. I tried to tell them that the 'movement' inside and outside of the church was not my battle – I had my calling, I was in the place I was supposed to be, I didn't need to fight. I shall never forget the sincerity of those young women who said, 'But, Miss Weatherford, you are our leader, and this **IS** our battle. You must stand with us.' At that moment, I began to stand!<sup>272</sup>

Thirty years later the same battles exist, and concerns questioning the effectiveness of narrative history and individual mentoring encounters as agencies for progress need consideration. A female Baptist college professor worries that the strategies for advancement that have worked in the past could be negated by increasing fundamentalist doctrines. “The current hostile attitude Southern Baptist leadership toward women in ministry is a negative which confuses and intimidates many women whose gifts are needed. As a consequence we are losing some of our best and brightest young women to other denominations—a tragic loss for which we will pay for generations.”<sup>273</sup> Rev. Charlotte Fairchild Liphart also is nervous about the future, but she voices reassurance in the capabilities of mentorship: “Little girls are deciding now, and being called now to what their future calling will be. Lottie Moon influenced me mightily...those stories will not go away.”<sup>274</sup> Their young daughters, or the next generation, depend on their perseverance and example. Rev. Dawn Darwin Weaks exhorts the same ideas in

a sermon published in *Folio*. Metaphorically, she reminds listeners that, “Our propensity to compare ourselves with our sisters will be transformed when we discover that God pours out the Spirit not just on a daughter, but on daughters!”<sup>275</sup> Likewise Professor Hartman affirms her accountability to those close to her and to all women, announcing, “As a woman in ministry I am also a role-model to my teenage daughter and other young women that they can be and do whatever God calls them to do.”<sup>276</sup> Missionary Betsy Thompson agrees, “Being the mother of five daughters, you can imagine what my hopes for their future would be—that my daughters can live their Christian calling to the fullest,” while Chaplain Rachel Coggins declaration rallies a call for continued hope. “The motivation for mentoring is directly connected to our motivation for ministry—in short: we have a calling to be mentors!”<sup>277</sup>

The women recognize that corporate change for Baptist women in ministry is painfully slow, but paradoxically, they assume that the progress will be made in soon enough time for their daughters. Laywoman and Global Women Gathering attendee Pati Andrews attests, “We can make a difference by mentoring.” Using the dynamics of compromise learned from their missionary foremothers, one-on-one relationships are considered more important than fighting for women’s rights or feminism. Through individual education, storytelling, and personal attention for younger women, Andrews and other women’s mentoring strategies negotiate within acculturated and traditional opposition to women in ministry by “taking it slow and working behind the scenes.”<sup>278</sup>

### Exile Status

Generation after generation summons the next to be better than the last. Women in Baptist life employ a liberating grand narrative, rhetorically moving away from exile, captivity, and subordination, while also using their relegated “outsider” status as motivation for change. Rev. Addie Davis has hope that the future will ensure liberation. In a sermon printed in *Folio*, Davis exhorts women to remember the limitless realm of God’s spirit: “Women have always been pioneers, so keep on dreaming and cherish the dream God has given you! YOU WILL BE DELIVERED FROM EXILE.”<sup>279</sup> Women in Baptist life testify that the Lordship of Christ is the ultimate authority, leading them to a promised land where both men and women are free to follow God’s call. They tell histories of women belonging to God, not to man and a Baptist heritage that recognizes the individual service, contribution and conscious of every believer, despite a history of incongruous setbacks. Submitting to divine authority, women extol that hope is in the liberating power of Jesus even if attained liberty befalls the cost of persecution. Pastor Joy Heaton exclaims:

Jesus is the author and perfecter of my Baptist faith (Heb. 12:2). Christ—and Christ alone—is my Baptist message. I have no other Baptist faith or message...Jesus called me to preach the gospel, and that is what I am doing. Even if the Southern Baptist Convention tells me to stop, I will take my stand—along with you—on the firm foundation of freedom in Jesus Christ as a Baptist.<sup>280</sup>

Despite their diversity, theoretically, Baptists are loosely united under a mission emphasis exhorting the Great Commission of Christ and basic liberating Baptist doctrines--this is the inclusive heritage moderate Baptists claim. However, now some women in ministry are

confident that unity and reconciliation (even for mission causes) with the current SBC is unattainable. Because fundamentalists have distinguishably polarized the contradictions between relegation and freedom, no room remains for negotiation. At the same time, moderate Baptist women in ministry yearn for a Baptist heritage and culture defined by a series of contradictions which constitute a gray area for compromise. If the gender boundaries remain obscure, then a woman's recognition and status lingers as questionable.

Rev. Weaks encourages all to join her metaphorical dance for gender-equality justice, but she urges listeners not to waste time on those "that do not applaud the dance." She preaches:

We no longer need to spend our energy trying to convince those who refuse to join us to be our dance partners. We no longer need to stay focused on making sure we are invited to the party... We are no longer to be only defenders of our own inclusion; we are to be celebrators of it! ...God is working our prophetic voices together in a divine dance that is rocking the Church and helping people to realize that they, too, are included in the Gospel story.<sup>281</sup>

Her message is progressive and hopeful, and women in ministry like Weaks desire for Baptists to embrace a type of idealized Baptist heritage defined by individualism, unity through diversity, inclusivity, and core Baptist doctrines. Yet, the Southern Baptist Convention leaders also claim a Baptist heritage and doctrine, but one that historically excludes women and the inclusivity that Weaks yearns for. Women in ministry have at times misread their heritage and current work as radical, or as according to Weaks, "rocking," when in fact, her metaphorical dance has been revealed painfully slow.

Some women in ministry are using their exclusion and minority positions as reasons to break fully from reconciliatory notions with the SBC denomination as they remember it. To a certain extent they recognize that their "outsider" position as women in Baptist life is something that has always been. Yet, they consider a subordinate rank as a tool for progress, which has at times been used for women's negotiable advantage when able to distance themselves from institutions led by men.<sup>282</sup> *Folio* editor Rachel Kenney urges SBC women to be genuinely different by recognizing their self-worth and right to equal authority. But her intentions are questionable, because she is asking them to still embrace a Baptist identity as outsiders, a position unequal to insiders. She explains that the SBC amendment to the *Baptist Faith and Message* reminds women how alien they are in Southern Baptist-dom. Kenney asks what can be learned from the "reinforced message of refection, denial, antagonism and pain." Paradoxically, pain and hurt are not at all unfamiliar for moderate Baptist women in ministry either, but are poignancies embraced and mythologized to help one persevere as an outsider. Urging readers not to walk away from alternatives and not to remain in their own naivety, she posits:

We learn again that we are the minority – that we are *different*. And if we are *different*, we might as well go for it! We can't use power tactics because we have so little power, we reject manipulation as unChristian and unworthy of us and the people we encounter. We are tired of fighting, tired of losing what we have loved, tired of being insulted and worse. We turn our attention to doing what good we can do, in our churches, in CBF, in BWIM.

Kenney suggests that there is an entire ministry waiting for women to comfort people hurt and confused by the SBC pronouncements. For instance she assumes, “There may be women in the ‘women’s programs’ at SBC seminaries who are beginning to hear a call from God that doesn’t fit the required pattern.”<sup>283</sup> They, too, are learning that they are *different*...[we] are willing to love them in Jesus’ name even though they are *different*.”<sup>284</sup> But how different are SBC women who are pastor’s wives or children’s directors if they, like moderate Baptist women, have learned from their missionary foremothers to negotiate an identity defined by compromise. All Baptist women work within the contradictions pervasive in Baptist women’s history. Women continually embrace the incongruous heritage in the present, just at different points on the grand women in Baptist life narrative conundrum. Conservative pastor’s wives and children’s directors are insiders traversing boundaries of power, while moderate women embrace an outsider status as a liberating negotiation of power.

To be a Baptist woman is to compromise. At a 2001 Mainstream Baptist conference, former SBC missionary Gladys S. Lewis answered the question “Why are you still a Baptist?” by speaking about her captivity, exodus and pilgrimage as a Baptist. The dynamics of contradiction become evident as she exhorts:

We should feel at home as Baptist in our culture if we understand the secular expression to be a fruition of an ancient correlation between Old Israel and new Israel as our founders compared themselves. We go into the wilderness for testing and growth...Our task as human beings and Baptist women? Learn our stories well and teach them ethically as we learn in the exodus how divine and human interact to shape us...we can make [captivity] more negotiable, more pragmatically useful if we learn from marginal experience and teach our communities.<sup>285</sup>

Lewis suggests that people connect with each other most completely and learn compromise through interchanging stories. She acknowledges women’s captivity, exodus, and pilgrimage by linking these interpretive strategies with the Baptist adherence “to soul liberty and soul competency in the captivity; individual freedom in Bible study and prayer in the exodus; and priesthood of the believer and church autonomy in the pilgrimage.”<sup>286</sup> In her attempt to create a usable past, Lewis eternally dooms Baptist women to captivity, but she considers the position negotiable by compromise. Lewis has revealed a reality of limited progress.

Women who enjoy being on the fringes or “cutting edge” of what they consider progress in Baptist life have assimilated Lewis’ ideas of exile status. Although most attention received is disapproving, women in ministry use their unique outsider position and even other’s condemnation as motivation for legitimizing and advancing their ministries. Obstacles are expected and embraced. Associate pastor Lia Claire Scholl discloses, “Positives [of being a Baptist woman in ministry] are that look you get, the ‘I can’t believe you are ordained look,’ that people give you all over the place, from hospitals to libraries.”<sup>287</sup> Pastor Kathy Manis Findley gives a similar assessment:

The positive [as a Baptist woman in ministry] is to have been a trailblazer, having had to forge ahead with courage and determination in the face of what were, at times, insurmountable obstacles. The experience built a strong sense of call, a sense of self, and a strong ministerial identity. It was hard to always have to work harder and be better just to be accepted, and then to not be accepted anyway. It was hard to know that most

churches would not consider having a woman as a pastor, and yet they would readily admit that in pastoral care, creativity in worship, and congregational nurture, a woman is usually more effective than a man.<sup>288</sup>

Most of these women recognize their outsider position, but they regard their literal and metaphorical exile as something worldly and insignificant of eternal importance. Recognizing that they will never be free from captivity, women in Baptist life persevere in their marginal positions when they have the power to make incongruities more negotiable in order to sustain their ministries, thus legitimizing the work of those before them.<sup>289</sup> Moderate female pastors, chaplains and--now after the *2000 BFM*--missionaries, leaders, and educators use compromising strategies in their own vocational roles, but many are also concerned that presently there is no room for women to navigate positions of authority within a fundamentalist SBC.

“The institution [SBC] is already dead to us,” concludes Rachel Keeney.<sup>290</sup> Pastor Mary Wilson’s church is now American and Alliance of Baptist aligned. She attests, “Women in leadership in the SBC is not hopeful. Personally, my ties to the SBC have long been let loose and I have found avenues for ministry in other ways. I suspect this will continue to happen within SBC life.”<sup>291</sup> Pastor Jane Saxon determines, “I do not have a lot of hope for that [SBC] system apart from seeing it crumble. It is not far too dysfunctional to encourage young women to think they can survive it in a healthy manner. It was difficult enough in my generation of women – and, I would not encourage any person I know to take that route.”<sup>292</sup> Individual women are anxious for new unifying denominational structures, but they are experimenting largely on their own without much widespread support. Nevertheless, a woman in ministry’s lonely battles and obstacles are parts of women’s claimed Baptist history. The contradictory themes of freedom and relegation are culturally ingrained as formative components of a Baptist woman’s identity and contribute to the myth of slow progress. Professor of theology Molly Marshall advises women to lay appropriate claim to their Baptist heritage. “It is because we are Baptist that we courageously persevere in the face of opposition; our confessional background argues for the propriety of our ministerial pursuits.”<sup>293</sup>

The negotiation within southern evangelical and denominational systems impede leaders from developing novel archetypes that include women. Moderate Baptists are struggling to create progressive Baptist models based on what they believe to be Baptist heritage. Yet, it is a heritage of individual compromise and working within religious systems where inescapable hierarchal power structures exist. Women in Baptist life seem trapped in schemes of disbelief and repeated hurt in which they are unable to escape totally. Rev. Saxon explains the dilemma: “There have got to be new structures, but certainly within Baptist life—those capable of doing so, are still recovering from their own faith traumas of two decades of assault.”<sup>294</sup> Negotiating a series of compromises from Baptist life and doctrine like the women before them, some contemporary women in ministry remain subjugated with limited authority, convincing their consciousnesses that if they acknowledge ideal gender equality in unforeseeable Baptist life, then they have done enough--imagining the future becomes sufficient progress in the present. It is impossible to determine if campus minister Caroline Holden is entirely satisfied or understands her self-worth in Baptist life, but she esteems that her ministry is sustaining at the moment. “I am still Baptist because they continue to respect my leadership among college students and the Baptist denomination still has much of which to be proud. Yes, I am quite aware of the conservative takeover of most of the agencies and fortunately, I have not been on the front lines of the battlefield.”<sup>295</sup> Holden regrets that her close friends and colleagues have received their

termination papers and are now struggling to get their lives back together, but church donations and partial funding from the SBC pay Holden's salary. With a breath of relief, she admits, "I am still 'protected' from the firing line (no pun intended)."<sup>296</sup> Holden tolerates employment uncertainty, but remaining expectant, she hopes that all Baptists will respect women in whatever role they choose and fairly hire both males and females according to who is best qualified for the job.

### **New Models**

Holden may soon realize that her expectancies are best met through one of the moderate Baptist organizations that are experimenting with Baptist archetypes. Baptist Women in Ministry, Alliance of Baptists, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and Global Women all have lofty goals for women in Baptist life, but each also encounters financial, organizational, and ideological challenges. They share in the realities of chipping away at a deep, cultural, and idealized Baptist heritage to reveal the unpleasant truths, while at the same time reevaluating their own organizational structures, beliefs, and practices that harbor injustice. A delicate balance exists between preserving and being proud of what "once was" and recognizing that traditional negotiation within the dynamics of a Baptist cultural system is not active, communal change. Rather, they appeal to a Baptist heritage that traps women in the contradictory dynamics that define their identity influx, while reinforcing patterns of contradiction, making an ideological release for Baptist women difficult.

Although the Alliance of Baptists is the most progressive Baptist group, a lack of individual and congregational funding limits its capabilities. The majority of Baptists, even moderates, have traditional conservative-leaning theologies, thus they are tentative to give support Alliance and its "liberal" connotations.<sup>297</sup> Assistant Alliance of Baptist director Jannete Holt describes the group's issue oriented, social justice agenda. With a special attentiveness for gender issues, Alliance advocates acceptance and awareness for women in ministry and is encouraged by the growing list of women pastors. Nevertheless, for Holt and her colleague Stan Hastey, another challenge for women's advancement exists. They dedicate their work at the next level to helping women move from associate-pastor positions to head pastor. The few women who serve as head pastors are often limited to small, rural congregations and rarely ascend the ministerial vocational ladder, while men climb quickly.<sup>298</sup> Alliance also influences church pastoral search committees in hopes of convincing the committees to broaden their search criteria and consider women for ministerial positions.<sup>299</sup> Holt contributes yet another dynamic to the myth of progress when admitting that Alliance's strategy--working with individual churches--is tedious, but she supposes her work is better than none at all. Holt assumes that at least people are thinking and talking about women in ministry when she or Alliance is present.

Some women in Baptist life find that the larger moderate Baptist network group, the CBF, provides adequate opportunities for women. Unlike the Alliance of Baptists, the CBF does not enact practical employment resources, such as search committee involvement for women's vocational placement. However, the CBF does provide broad connections and a usable network of individuals who may influence and educate colleagues and churches about gender equality and the possibilities for considering a woman in a ministry position.

Some women fear that the old, oppressive, and patriarchal southern-cultural structures are likely to develop in an umbrella Baptist organization. As the CBF's power and influence grows,

women apprehend that their voices will fade into a marginalized, familiar “good-ol’ boy” network.<sup>300</sup> In the attempt to preserve a “Baptist heritage,” the CBF runs a risk of perpetuating the excuse “we’re working on it,” and reinforcing the myth of progress ingrained in Baptist culture. After all, several self-acclaimed, ‘moderate’ churches and some affiliated with the CBF still refuse to ordain women or have women deacons. For instance, after a Georgia CBF congregation notified Rev. Mary London that her preaching skills were not welcomed, London’s frustrations with the CBF burgeoned. Qualified and ready to serve, she cannot find a job.<sup>301</sup> Women have lofty hopes of affirmation, but even the best options in Baptist life are determinate.

Confronting the realities of resistance even in so-called progressive Baptist churches leaves women in ministry disappointed and helpless.<sup>302</sup> The excuse that “our moderate church is not quite ready” to hire a woman pastor is a familiar rejection heard by women in ministry.<sup>303</sup> New Testament professor Sandra Hack Polaski calls this denial a ‘crisis of imagination’ or the inability to imagine and support a woman preaching as a result of never having seen it done before. Polaski comments:

I continue to be concerned with helping women face the continuing obstacles to ministry in Baptist life, without either giving up on ministry career or leaving the Baptist denomination altogether. It is disheartening to see self-identified ‘moderates’ duck the issue of women in ministry or argue that their congregation ‘isn’t quite ready’ to consider a woman for an open position—and to see women get passed over for jobs because they don’t have the needed experience (and I don’t advocate hiring a woman with less experience than a job really needs, because that’s setting her up for failure—but where is she going to get the experience, if ‘entry-level’ churches and church staff positions aren’t open to her?).<sup>304</sup>

Meanwhile, female pastors and chaplains are best served by the Alliance of Baptists and the CBF, while moderate female missionaries network through a variety of resources. Faced with denominational changes, some Baptist women missionaries, both the few who are ordained and mostly those who are not, have chosen to work for Baptist organizations not aligned with the SBC, paralleling the fact that the WMU and past leaders have also broadened their support and working relationships with missionary organizations outside of the SBC.<sup>305</sup> Although the WMU still holds auxiliary status to the SBC, it began publishing materials for other Baptist organizations in the early nineties. Presently under new leadership, the WMU is preoccupied with remaining financially stable. In order to do so it must pacify fundamentalists while attempting to appease the variety of Baptist groups. Under pressure from the SBC in 2000, the WMU blocked printing materials for the CBF.<sup>306</sup> Ironically, in 2001 the CBF reported that 51% of its full-time missionaries were female and that several were ordained, credited to the support of WMU.<sup>307</sup>

Fearing that the WMU will continually faces hindrance by the SBC restricting negotiating room, Baptist women have also assembled mission organizations separate from the WMU in anticipation of revitalizing a social-missions emphasis in moderate Baptist churches. December 2001 marked the formation of a new mission consortium called Global Women, an evangelical mission conglomerate which pinpoints the specialization of worldwide ministry and witness by women. Organizers hope to educate people about the international needs of women (child care, AIDS, women’s health, literacy, birth rates and education), and according to Global Women’s literature, the group attempts “to create and cultivate global friendships among women for shared learning and service for all of humanity.”<sup>308</sup>



Global Women was initiated by Baptists, but encourages full participation from all “missions-minded evangelicals” (women and men). Several of the founders were former leaders of the WMU, but also younger women, some of whom have graduated from moderate Baptist seminaries, are convinced that a new mission organization will appeal to their social-justice generation and provide women opportunities for service and leadership. Before launching Global Women, founders pondered the inadequacies of existing missions-delivery systems, analyzed the history and demographics of women missionaries, and discussed aspects that encumber women from following God’s call. The president of Global Women, Dorthy Sample, a former WMU executive director, anticipates this new organization will offer many women in the missions field a chance to network.<sup>309</sup> This concept is essential for Baptist missionaries who have felt disenfranchisement, confusion, and the necessity to choose denominational sides, after a subsequent shift in mission theory and practice resulted from the transferred control of missions.<sup>310</sup>

Nevertheless, Global Women coordinator Suzanah Raffield asserts that Global Women was not formed because of a denominational crisis or actions of certain conventions.<sup>311</sup> Global Women wants to complement the efforts of both the WMU and CBF through nurturing women for global service and helping to relieve the problem of mission sending organizations. The SBC will not send ordained women or those who oppose the *2000 BFM*, and the CBF does appoint women on a scale that Global Women envisions. Appealing to past missionary heroes, supporters, and women’s gradual accomplishments in Baptist life, Global women fashions a new missions model, while still appealing to Baptist heritage. Raffield asks, “Do you see how missions heritage becomes missions future? It is imperative that we connect the two.”<sup>312</sup>

Wanting to multiply women missionary appointees, Global Women serves to “be an advocate and also an action agent for women in missions.”<sup>313</sup> The group nostalgically recollects active women’s mission organizations and confident leaders of over one hundred years ago, but currently women in ministry hope to rekindle late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Christian work as a revised, non-elitist and human-needs ministry to women in foreign communities.<sup>314</sup> Like their missionary foremothers, organizers espouse Global Women is “not a feminist idea,” and blame the 1960’s and 1970’s as decades when mission theories of responsibility, friendship, and exclusive relationships specifically with women fell out of favor. Mission theorists discouraged women’s work for women, considering the sole concentration on women as sexist.<sup>315</sup> Now through developing leadership and partnership with other mission agencies, Global Women seeks to reinvent and encourage “old-fashioned” Baptist women’s work for women. Historian and professor of International Mission, Dana Robert avows that mission theory specifically attending to women is essential to the growth of Christianity, because “statistically and historically speaking, Christian growth is a woman’s movement.”<sup>316</sup> For Baptists, the Christian woman’s movement is not entirely separate from men and institutions, because the myth of slow progress guides women to work within contradictions, including compromising gender issues. Women navigate their individuality and doctrines of freedom through obscure boundaries set by authoritative relegation.

Baptist women missionaries or those involved in missions seek to refashion new, creative, and dynamic mission opportunities for women by women. Although many women Baptist missionaries’ circumstances have changed, they protest that many women of the world still struggle for liberation similar to circumstances of over a century ago. Through refining social ministries and concentrating on global issues that affect women, their message proclaims that freedom and equality is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>317</sup> Evangelizing the

message of Jesus' liberation is of primary importance for Baptist women, but at a close second is the need to impart emancipating and flexible Baptist doctrines. It is likely that this reformulated and renewed encompassing mission emphasis will prosper in moderate denominational environments supportive of women. But similar to WMU's auxiliary strategy, Global Women negotiates gender boundaries by simply avoiding men and working semi-independently. By doing so, the group avoids moderate and conservative denominational friction, opposition, and controversy. Men's support is encouraged, but leaders claim that only "women can reach women." Perhaps this is an ideology easily adapted in foreign countries where women are removed from direct denominational relegation. Although in order for significant progress for women to be made in a southern, evangelical context, the group must correct the misreadings of Baptist heritage in North America.

When growing more distant from Baptist heritage, women escape the dynamics of compromise and stand radically independent. Perhaps the Global Women model is moving in this direction. Recognizing that most progress for women has resulted from some type of autonomous independence, Global Women continues to work with the old models of compromise but does not want to upset a status quo Baptist culture by calling for radical reform.

Overall, most moderate Baptist women persist in a tradition by sharing stories of their Baptist heritage and identity shaped by contradiction, while they also mentor each other to navigate the compromising area between relegation and freedom. Amidst the hope, they are apprehensive about the future success of mentoring the next generation of Baptist women in ministry. Due to the low priority of mission programs in moderate Baptist churches, they fear young women's success will be negated if the legends of women's progress and missions history-- subsequently a large portion of Baptist women's identity--are lost, leaving younger women little missions education, mentoring, and history to relate to. Nevertheless, women continue to retell their heritage slowly seeking, reshaping and recounting a continued sense of expectancy for women in Baptist life. Female pastors and chaplains who have learned to follow God's call, trust in local church autonomy, and believe in the priesthood of believers from mentors who imparted a Baptist missions heritage, use the same narrative and storytelling tactics as their sisters in mission to create a usable past. The construct a heritage and identity of contradiction by negotiating individual beliefs within Baptist denominational boundaries.<sup>318</sup>

## CONCLUSION

### **The Myth of Progress**

Baptist women in ministry idealize their Baptist heritage, internalizing contradictions and an acceptance of slow, negotiated progress. Sometimes the voices of the status quo do not even recognize their limited capacities or ambiguous positions from years of denominational and a cultural context of contradiction. The dynamics of disharmony reveal that through sharing personal narratives recounting the stories of Baptist foremothers, proclaiming liberating Baptist doctrines and heightening awareness to missions education and history, women in Baptist life have constructed a collective Baptist identity from a series of contradictions. Despite the incongruities, Baptist women leaders yearn for collective, systematic change. In reality, their unsettling relationships with denominational authorities, identities and primary labors are negotiated, localized and limited to individual mentoring encounters, just as the gradual efforts and protests of those before them.

The slow progress that they have always accepted is enough to remain hopeful. “I hope that more and more Baptists will become more accepting, even affirming of women in ministry,” express a female church history professor, “I hope that a Baptist girl can realistically aspire to fulfill whatever call she has from God. That is my dream. Realistically, I know that is a long journey. But I believe some of us must stay in Baptist life and keep that voice alive until it happens.”<sup>319</sup> The respondent recognizes that God’s power is limitless, but denominational power is limiting. Hoping that the few voices and stories of women bring improvement, she gently accepts a Baptist identity limited by traditional, unhurried improvement.

Historian Marie Griffith has explained how the role of narrative in identity formation focuses on two central themes: the renegotiations of power and the reshaping of personal identity.<sup>320</sup> As Baptist women share their spiritual life stories, they blend personal experiences of a Baptist identity shaped by incongruities and traditional, historical expectations that reinforce the contradictions.<sup>321</sup> Griffith suggests that evangelical women “constitute a series of vignettes constructed with an end in view, that of God’s constant guidance and care and the storyteller’s realization of her need to surrender to God’s loving will.”<sup>322</sup> Using this same process, Baptist women in ministry extend the denomination’s gender rigidity towards a more fluid, moderate flexibility. Yet, Baptist women who perceive pliant room for negotiation cooperate largely within the status quo. These women reconfigure their personal narratives by telling stories of hardships, service, self-denial, devotion to Christ, and healing, whilst incorporating their perceptions of freeing Baptist doctrines. The contradictory dynamics meld into a general pattern of ambiguity. But for Baptist women, the ambiguities offer a consistent identity--an identity continuously defined by women who are “off balance.” The struggle for coalescence is a process that mythologizes collective improvement. Deeply invested in Baptist culture,

individual Baptist women rework their own perceptions of authority, freedom, self-reliance, and womanhood within their religious institution and broader culture.<sup>323</sup>

Baptists are famous for their resistance to change, and the anecdote: “That’s the way we’ve always done it,” is unsettling for women who long for transformations in Baptist life. Those that remain within tradition with a raised conscious have varied goals for institutional or individual revitalized transformation, but overall, they are able to convince themselves that men and women can one day be equal in Baptist life. The vignettes create a hopeful resolution. By letting the guidelines of Jesus permeate their lives in interpersonal, social, cultural, and political areas, women explain that the sacred possibility of change and growth exists.<sup>324</sup>

Yet, Baptist women internalize, mythologize, and endure improvement as exceedingly protracted progression. An 1881 SBC committee statement illustrates the reluctance to appoint women to mission work and establishes a precedent for continued apathy toward women in Baptist life. “Realizing that a false step now might entail fatal embarrassments in years to come, we have chosen to move slowly and cautiously,” report authorities.<sup>325</sup> One hundred years later Evelyn Stagg wrote an article calling for the acceptance of Baptist women in ministry. Ironically, she asks readers to remember the mission heritage of Baptist women who worked quietly through what she indistinctly calls ‘the gender segregated years’: “Women dedicated to ministry today know the hazards but share the spirit and courage of their predecessors. Slowly, but with certainty, women are finding places of ministry in all the areas we call vocational church work, including the pastorate.”<sup>326</sup> She shares the same conviction--a steady reliance on slow adjustments--as her male oppressors of over a century prior.

Nearly a decade following Stagg’s comments Baptist women continue to work within a denominational culture and are guided by an idealized history. At one level, contemporary Baptist women fear and distrust institutions, choosing rather to rely on individual and private themes in women’s Baptist history.<sup>327</sup> In an attempt to create a usable past their stories share patterns of trusting in a call from God, believing in the autonomous church, deeming the importance of the priesthood of believers, and exclaiming the authority of Jesus—all of which at another level contradict institutional Baptist cultural history. They share personal narratives as Baptist women who have lived a life of compromise, a mentorship exercise which links women in a collective Baptist identity. As methods of agency, narration and mentorship confusedly perpetuate the myth of progress by reinforcing contradictions as status quo situations in which each woman must live, and can even thrive.

As long as the next generation is to gather strength and encouragement from their foremothers, they will never fully break free from a heritage of codependency. The task of enabling effective change could result if the next generation has fewer ties to Baptist identity invested in an incongruous heritage, but if this scenario were to occur, more likely, the young women would leave a denomination with which they could not reconcile the ambiguities (which is already a recognizable trend.) Perhaps future women in ministry will not be able to extract the “good” out of an identity and heritage that never completely supported, nor completely rejected them. But contemporary women in Baptist life sustain in a codependent relationship reinforced by a myth of progress. Each generation hopes to move past the hurt and disappointment to encounter a future generation not wounded and hurt by controversy.<sup>328</sup>

Women in Baptist life have historical expectations, which encompass the incongruous dynamics of their constructed identity. By appropriating claim to a Baptist heritage and emphasizing prime importance that remembered theological distinctions not be lost or dissolved, women are grateful they can remain connected to historical Baptist churches.<sup>329</sup> Despite

persisting setbacks, Baptist women paradoxically embrace their history of facing sophisticated obstacles.<sup>330</sup> They are hopeful and bold, but in reality, the uncertainty continues. BWIM president Karen Massey reminds women to be persistent: “Our feet are firmly planted in the landscape of Baptist life, however, that may look in years ahead.”<sup>331</sup> For these women, the future is immeasurable. Retired missionary Ida Mae Hays describes an enlightening “ray of light” spurred by a pastor’s request to “share her story and ministerial ordination.” Her dreams, comparable to other women in ministry, are delightfully simple, but the actualities of enabling her vision amidst the contradictory culture are complex. She recounts:

In the course of the conversation, the pastor friend said, ‘One of these days, the women will win out.’ And, he meant that some day, in the future, the pendulum will swing back and women will be able to resume leadership roles in the church, be ordained, and pastor churches. I was surprised that he said that. But I agree with him. How long that will take, no one knows.<sup>332</sup>

Historians describing women in Baptist life and the contemporary women themselves have accepted the myth of progress. Historians iterated the theme of contradiction early in Baptist women’s history. Leon McBeth and Catherine A. Brekus have shed some insight on early Baptist women leaders, but each concludes that women are making continual slow progress within limiting denominational and cultural parameters. The institutional histories of Williams Wright Barnes and David Stricklin and the social history of Rufus Spain detail some of the flip-flop convention decisions for women’s leadership within Baptist life. As the SBC granted women more freedom for independent organization and leadership, the same generation of women soon was restricted by confusing denominational retractions pronouncements. The pattern continued until the fundamentalist control of the SBC in 1979. After 1979, fundamentalist opposition to women in ministry became more acute. Yet, historians, such as church history professor Carolyn Blevins, still describe the history of Baptist women as one of “diversity, opposition, and support.”<sup>333</sup> Although most scholars mention the contradictions, they never fully explain how the incongruities in Baptist women’s lives contribute to the myth of slow progress or how the women explain their situation.

Contemporary women passionately tell the collective tales of ancestral Baptist heroines and their own individual narratives without disclosing an unequivocal conclusion. It is problematic to imagine a resolution if dualistic modes of thought percolate from these women’s histories and permeate their immediate lives. At one level, women in ministry recognize their self-worth and decisiveness, but they also have no clear compelling goals for effective coalescence or itemized advocacy steps designated for the community of believers. The result is slow, inconsistent change. Unpretentious strategies for hope rest in “God’s time” or the assumption that major progress for Baptist women will not happen in their lifetimes, but rather in an unforeseeable future. Women in Baptist life have reconstructed their identity by appealing to a celebrated heritage mythologized by slow progress. However, one has to wonder if the past was in actuality so glorious for Baptist women. It is a paradoxical legacy of hurt, opposition, setbacks, individual struggles, and complex ideological compromises.

Rev. Molly Marshall admits, “Baptist women today are in step with our courageous forebears, going against the tide of ecclesiastical disapproval, choosing instead to be accountable to God. But, being a true Baptist never was for the faint-hearted!”<sup>334</sup> The faint-hearted are not submissive, but they are willing to negotiate within denominational and cultural frameworks just

as their predecessors upheld for decades. “I know that God is in control and regardless of what happens, He will be magnified. I believe it is important to try to ‘work within the system,’ lovingly, but firmly,” concludes Ida Mae Hays.<sup>335</sup>

Baptist women in ministry tell their stories in an attempt to formulate a usable past and confidence for the future. Yet, perhaps they have misread the inordinate amount of contradictions in their lives as acceptable aspects of their cultural history. Their individual lives exhibit an understanding of self-worth and authority, promulgated by Baptist doctrine and missions education, which both accentuate God’s call on everyone’s lives, the priesthood of believers, local church autonomy and freedom in Christ. But the Baptist denominational heritage maintained has never fully granted women the characteristics they describe. Instead, they have continued to shape an identity molded by contradiction, resolving that they are Baptists and can be “nothing else.” Their individual lives and relationship to Baptist culture is codependent. Without their Baptist heritage and identity, some women would feel bereaved and left with nothing, and without women, there would be no sustainable Baptist cultural heritage and ensuing identity.

## APPENDIX A

### SAMPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT LETTER SENT VIA E-MAIL AND POSTAL MAIL

Good Day!

My name is Howell Williams and I am an American Religious History graduate student at Florida State University. Currently, I am gathering information for a master's thesis on Southern Baptist Women. I am disseminating this message to a long list of women in Baptist life or women who have had some history with the denomination. (I am grateful for Carolyn Weatherford-Crumpler, Catherine Allen, Melanie Williams and Robert O'Brien's help with this compilation).

I am hoping to compile a more recent history of Baptist women in all facets of ministry (pastors, missionaries, chaplains, and educators) and I hope to formulate this information into a new set of perspectives. As of now, my specific angle of investigation focuses on individual women's personal narratives. I hope to gather collective themes found throughout their experiences that will emerge when analyzing a number of these stories.

All this is to say, your willingness to share some reflections would be greatly appreciated and "poured over" by an eager student looking to fashion a new perspective on the matter. I am asking ordained and non-ordained women to tell me "your story" of what it means to be a Baptist woman in ministry and how you describe your connection to a "Baptist heritage."

Below are some suggested topics that could be included in "your story." However, if you feel comfortable, for research purposes, a few general answers to questions would be beneficial:

- Age: (or close to it :o))
- Occupation title and description (please include if you are ordained or not ordained)

Some suggested areas of inclusion are:

- Details of your affiliated congregation or organization's "alignments," such as where funds are distributed, etc.
- If a missionary, details of your missionary assignment (location, people working with, etc.)
- If a chaplain, military branch of service, hospital, prison, etc.
- How do you define yourself—personal philosophy, philosophy of ministry?
- Why you are still a Baptist or not?
- Who are your heroines or heroes? Mentors? Leaders?
- What are the positives and negatives of being a Baptist woman in ministry?
- Hopes, ideals, realities, frustrations.....

Please choose one of the following disclaimers with your response:

1. I give Howell Williams permission to use **my name and story** for research purposes knowing there is a possibility of publication.
2. I give Howell Williams permission to use **my story but not my name** (I wish to remain confidential **to the extent allowed by law**) knowing there is a possibility of publication
3. I **DO NOT** grant Howell Williams to use my story nor name

The printed responses (transcripts) will be held under lock and key at Florida State University in the office of the Institute for the Study of Emotion (Dodd M04). This file will be maintained until June 1, 2014 when it will be destroyed.

I eagerly look forward to reading your responses and stories. However, I am aware this endeavor is a time commitment. If you only are able to contribute a small amount, any contribution (no matter what length) would be greatly appreciated. I am looking for no specific length, just what you are willing to contribute as a portion of “your story.” Another option is a scheduled phone interview at your convenience. If e-mail (Word document or PDF attachments) is not a preferred medium of communication for you, I would be happy to reimburse any mailing expenses incurred.

I hope to gather all the responses throughout the rest of the end of this semester and to begin writing this summer.

The ideal date to hear back from you would be by May 30, 2003, or sooner, if possible.

Please, if you have any questions, concerns, comments, suggestions for contacts, etc., please feel free to contact me at [HowellWilliams@yahoo.com](mailto:HowellWilliams@yahoo.com) or 850-443-6371.

My home address is:

Howell Williams  
516 W. Jefferson St. #214  
Tallahassee, FL 32301

My office address:

Howell Williams  
Department of Religion  
Florida State University  
M05 Dodd Hall  
Tallahassee, FL 32306

Sincerely,

Howell Williams



## APPENDIX B

### HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER

Florida State UNIVERSITY  
Office of the Vice President  
For Research  
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2763  
(850) 644-8673. FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM  
Human Subjects Committee  
Date: 4/24/2003

Howell Williams  
516 W Jefferson #214  
Tallahassee, FI32301  
Dept.: Religion 1  
From: David Quadagno, chawlj>1P-.  
Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research Baptist Women in Ministry 1979-2003

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be exempt per 45 CFR § 46,101(b) 2 and has been approved by an accelerated review process. The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required. If the project has not been completed by 4/23/2004 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project. You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others. By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.  
Cc: John Corrigan  
HSC No. 2003.182

## APPENDIX C

### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CBF</i>	Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
<i>FMB</i>	Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board – IMB)
<i>HMB</i>	Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board – NAMB)
<i>SBC</i>	Southern Baptist Convention
<i>BWIM</i>	Baptist Women in Ministry
<i>WMU</i>	Woman’s Missionary Union

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present*. Bendroth extends the discussion to fundamentalists in general. She calls this replay of arguments the “evangelical–feminist controversy.” Bendroth assumes that the “woman question” will never be irrelevant, because evangelicals are “domed to repeat the past if they can’t remember it,” 118.

<sup>2</sup> For the most part, past scholarship, excluding some early, poor church histories have done the same. Scholarship that is more recent has attempted to extend specific denominational and theological debates to broader cultural and social contexts in which church histories are situated.

<sup>3</sup> The issue of women deacons or deaconesses gained new attention in the 1970’s. See Charles W. Deweese, “Deaconesses in Baptist History,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 12 no. 1 (January, 1977), 52-57. However, Southern Baptists have debated the theological meaning of the word “deacon” since denominational formation. Theologians and pastors have produced thousands of books and articles on the subject. Yet ultimately, the Baptist principles of autonomy permit each local church to chose and ordain their own deacons. In theory, a church that has woman deacons is its own prerogative to do so, but sometimes these churches have been politically excluded from conservative regional Baptist associations or state conventions that oppose women deacons.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen M. Rosenberg, “Serving Jesus in the South,” in *Women in the South: An Anthropological Perspective*, edited by Holly F. Mathews (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 125.

<sup>5</sup> Leon McBeth, *Women in Baptist Life* (Nashville: Broadman 1979), 38.

<sup>6</sup> John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists: Together with Some Account of their Principles and Practices* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1922), 311.

<sup>7</sup> Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 50-51.

<sup>8</sup> Morgan Edwards, *Customs of Primitive Churches* (n.p., 1774), 41.

<sup>9</sup> Brekus, 50, 65.

<sup>10</sup> Brekus, 59, 61. The examples of associations changing policies affecting women are numerous, such as the Kehukee Baptist Association of North Carolina that decided in 1785 women could not speak unless called upon.

<sup>11</sup> Brekus, 66. Also see David Benedict (1779-1874), *A General History of the Baptist Denomination*. 2 vols. (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1813; vol. 1 and Boston: manning and Loring, 1813; vol. 2), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Brekus, 243, 166.

<sup>13</sup> Brekus, 131.

<sup>14</sup> See Rufus Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of the Southern Baptists 1865-1900* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1961, 1967), 169.

<sup>15</sup> McBeth, 71.

<sup>16</sup> Salley Dean Holt, “The SBC and the WMU: Issues of Power and Authority Relating to Organization and Structure.” Ph.D. diss., Graduate School of Vanderbilt University, May 2001, 52. Holt’s analysis uses sociological models to explain how women were affected by the fundamentalist/moderate controversy.

<sup>17</sup> Missionary Luther Rice spearheaded efforts to unify the scattered Baptist churches through the Triennial Convention. By encouraging churches to send delegates to the meeting. He is accredited to expressing his approval for women’s missionary societies, but it was the delegates at the Convention who opposed women organizing..

<sup>18</sup> The SBC’s founding priorities for missions and evangelism is well documented in Baptist historiography. However, non-Baptist church historians assume that slavery was the conclusive constituent for the formation of the SBC. Walter B. Shurden and Lori Redwine Varnadoe’s article “The Origins of the Southern Baptist Convention: A Historiographical Study,” investigates why the slavery issue has been ignored or defended by Baptist historians and theologians. Shurden and Varnadoe agree that the schism between northern and southern Baptists occurred in mission societies. However, the dividing issue determined if the society would appoint slaveholders as

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missionaries. For specifics see Shurden and Varnadoe's section on the first period (1845-1900) of Baptist denominational history.

<sup>19</sup> David Stricklin, *A Genealogy of Dissent: Southern Baptist Protest in the Twentieth Century* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 115.

<sup>20</sup> Spain, 165.

<sup>21</sup> The following are common Southern Baptist scriptural interpretations in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Man was created before woman (1 Timothy 2:13), the woman was first deceived by the serpent (2 Timothy 2:14), the law forbids women preaching (Genesis 3:16), and humans are to keep God's commands (1 Corinthians 14:37). The argument that Christ appointed no woman to a church position was also used. The most positive biblical passages for women were Galatians 3:28 and Jesus' loving attitude toward women.

<sup>22</sup> William Wright Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1953* (Nashville: Broadman, 1954), 140.

<sup>23</sup> Spain, 165.

<sup>24</sup> W. Harrison Daniel, "Virginia Baptists and Feminism, 1865-1900," *Virginia Social Services Journal* 5:78 (Nov. 1970), 85.

<sup>25</sup> For additional information on the culturally defined image of a southern lady and the effect of this image on women's behavior, see Anne Frior Scott, *The Southern Lady From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Frior Scott mentions that Baptists agreed that women should preach in order to protect feminine modesty and these opinions did not change much throughout the years, pp. 137-138.

<sup>26</sup> Barnes, 142-145.

<sup>27</sup> The *Religious Herald* (Virginia) evinced the liberal thought of Baptists in the upper south, while the *Christian Index* (Georgia) was a more conservative paper.

<sup>28</sup> Barnes., 146.

<sup>29</sup> B.F. Riley, *A History of the Baptists in the Southern States East of the Mississippi* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1898), 300. Quoted in Norman Herbert Letsinger, "The Women's Liberation Movement: Implications for Southern Baptists," Th. D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, June 1973, 95. Both Riley and Letsinger used state Baptist newspapers for their analyses, and this approach has proven useful for most historians for researching women. Some common periodicals include the following: *Religious Herald* (Richmond, VA 1828), *Baptist Courier* (Greenville, SC 1869), *Baptist Standard* (Dallas, TX 1888), *Christian Index* (Atlanta, GA 1821), *Florida Baptist Witness* (Jacksonville, FL 1884), *Word and Way* (Kansas City, MS), *Western Recorder* (Louisville, KY 1825), and *Foreign Mission Journal* (Foreign Mission Board, 1869).

<sup>30</sup> Barnes, 148.

<sup>31</sup> Barnes, 152. Alma Hunt specifically identifies four forces that united women for the cause of missions: 1) the *Heathen Helper* (1882), 2) the *Baptist Basket*, a Kentucky Baptist newspaper, 3) the circulation of Lottie Moon's letters describing her missionary adventures in Japan, and 4) Ruth Alleyn's editorials that were started in 1887 in the *Religious Herald*. Alleyn's column reported the history and achievement of women and missions and was a rather progressive voice for women.

<sup>32</sup> Barnes, 153.

<sup>33</sup> As quoted in Alma Hunt, *History of Woman's Missionary Union* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1964), 31-31 and McBeth, 96-97.

<sup>34</sup> Barnes, 153.

<sup>35</sup> Ethlene Boone Cox was president of the WMU 1925-1933.

<sup>36</sup> Ethlene Boone Cox, *Following His Train* (Nashville: Broadman, 1938). Boone Cox stated, "The SBC was in session at the First Baptist Church a short distance away. While the women were forming the organization in the Methodist Church, there was uneasiness in the Convention. The attitude of the many there might be expressed in the words of one pastor who, suffering the same uneasiness, said he always felt it safer to attend the women's meetings, as 'you never could tell what the women might take to praying if left alone.' The discussion on the Convention floor as to the organization for women grew heated. Some predicted the women would follow other women's organizations and control their own money; send out their own missionaries; desire to serve on boards; and in the end, seek to run the Convention. It is said a preposterous and humorous story told by a member from the floor set the Convention to laughing and the presiding officer passed on to other business. So a crisis was avoided," p.64.

<sup>37</sup> McBeth, 102.

<sup>38</sup> Perhaps women were re-granted SBC voting rights once the church had significantly distanced itself from the secular woman's movement. Although Barnes, Hunt, and McBeth all speak of the convention's flip-flop resolutions regarding Baptist women's suffrage, none specifically state why it was reinstated in 1915. Perhaps theological debates shifted to favor women. All three accounts, however, mention women and successful mission endeavors. It

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can be inferred that the male convention leaders recognized denominational growth would not have occurred without the women's mission impulse. Therefore, female representation was needed for further success. Scholars, such as Norman Letsinger have studied the SBC and Baptist women in relation to the secular Women's Rights Movement, and McBeth's proposal that Baptists desired to distance themselves from the secular movement seems accurate. For specific connections between Baptist history and the secular suffrage movement, see Bill Summers, "Southern Baptists and Women's right to Vote, 1910-1920," *Baptist History and Heritage* 12 no. 1 (Jan. 1977), 45-51.

<sup>39</sup> Norman H. Letsinger, "The Women's Liberation Movement: Implications for Southern Baptists," Th. D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, June 1973, 100-101. Letsinger gives an excellent outline of methods used. Specifically, he only surveyed convention report histories that had a usable index. Letsinger's thesis explores women in Southern Baptist life using six specific analyses: women leadership roles, polled attitudes regarding women, mentions of women in periodicals (1962-1971), women in educational institutions, and women in campus ministry, p. 149. He also surveyed 124 state Baptist articles (1865-1940) that related to women's issues. Most (76%) had a negative stance and were usually SBC letters to the editor, general articles, or editorials, p. 127. See Patrick Hill and Carl P. English's thesis, which analyzed these editorials to not intense opposition toward women (p. 134 in Letsinger). Hill notes that there was "safety in silence" because few pieces in newspapers refer to women. Hill's study demonstrates editors favored enfranchisement but not all favored messengers to the SBC. All expressed disapproval for ordaining women as pastors.

<sup>40</sup> Letsinger, 132.

<sup>41</sup> As quoted in McBeth, 112.

<sup>42</sup> Edward Bagby Pollard, "Women, Home, and Government: An address delivered...before the Baptist Ministers of Philadelphia" (New York: National Woman Suffrage Publication, 1915(?)) 4p. Reprinted from *Baptist Commonwealth*. Historians do reference to these minority opinions, however, such patronage must typically be inferred from the scant documentation. A comprehensive collection of direct quotes from Baptist primary sources that advocate women's activity has not been compiled.

<sup>43</sup> We are left to assume that these proclamations in support of women were of a great number in order to sway opinion. Moreover, as mentioned in the above endnote, historian's evidence to explain why the convention delegates' shifted their vote in support is lacking.

<sup>44</sup> Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 176.

<sup>45</sup> McBeth, 15.

<sup>46</sup> McBeth., 105.

<sup>47</sup> McBeth, 178-179. Also note, Brekus includes several examples of women defecting to the Free Will Baptists fifty years prior.

<sup>48</sup> Historians have contended that recognizing women in missions is vital for understanding the history of Baptist women. Consider that W.R. White in *Baptist Distinctives* (1946) stated, "Nothing stimulates us to our best like the appeal of a worthy missionary crusade," p.67. Williams Wright Barnes also stated in *The Southern Baptist Convention (1945-1953)* that, "It may be seen again and again in history that the teaching and practice of missions react on the home base and completely modify the life, the outlook, the activity of Christian men and women," p. 239. Helen Falls, professor of missions at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, quoted Mrs. WJ Cox in *Following His Train*. Cox stated, "To omit woman's part in the missionary movement is to read mission history with one eye tightly closed" (p. 45). Helen Falls agrees this is especially true of Baptists. A decade later Evelyn Wingo Thompson stated, "In many ways, the writings of women have made Southern Baptists what they are, a denomination committed to missions, the chief work of the church," p. 57.

<sup>49</sup> Evelyn Wingo Thompson, "Southern Baptist women as Writers and Editors," *Baptist History and Heritage* 22 no. 3 (July 1987), 55. Thompson notes four primary WMU histories: Fannie E.S. Heck, *In Royal Service* (1928); Ethlene Boone Cox, *Following His Train* (1938); Alma Hunt, *History of Woman's Missionary Union*; and Catherine Allen, *A Century to Celebrate* (1987).

<sup>50</sup> McBeth summarizes the historians agreement that, "Through their mission structures, women have helped set the agenda for the denomination, and by their leadership, inspiration, and effective funding have helped bring it to pass" p. 125.

<sup>51</sup> Alma Hunt, *History of Woman's Missionary Union* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1964), vii-ix.

<sup>52</sup> The examples of individual women overcoming opposition and obstacles abound throughout Hunt's history. For example, perhaps the most widely respected heroine of Southern Baptist missionaries is Charlotte Diggs Moon (Lottie Moon) who is the subject of countless histories and regarded as a pioneer for women missionaries. McBeth

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states that there is “literally no way to calculate the impact this woman had upon Southern Baptist Missions...[Lottie Moon] informed, inspired, and challenged millions of Baptist women,” p. 92.

<sup>53</sup> Ruth a Tucker and Walter Liefeld. *Daughters of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1987), 313. Additionally, see Gregory Victors, “Models of Womanhood and the Early Woman’s Missionary Union,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 24 (Jan 1989): 41-53.

<sup>54</sup> Catherine B. Allen, *A Century to Celebrate: History of Women’s Missionary Union* (Birmingham: WMU, 1987), 326. Bendroth also suggests the missions movement is credited for mounting feminist zeal, p. 15.

<sup>55</sup> Holt, 35.

<sup>56</sup> Tucker and Liefeld, 314.

<sup>57</sup> Allen, 113. Retired president of the WMU of Texas, Ophelia Humphrey stated, “Through the excellent training conferences of Women’s Missionary Union of Texas and SBC WMU, wider fields of leadership opportunities came my way. In those years, WMU was the only acceptable role of church leadership for women” (Interview 37).

<sup>58</sup> Allen, 325.

<sup>59</sup> Allen, 325.

<sup>60</sup> Allen, 326. True, but women could not teach and preach at home like they did on the mission field. Additionally, see Bendroth who addresses Baptist battles concerning the philosophy of missions. Southern Baptists have traditionally emphasized verbal faith and confessions along with social interests, such as teaching and health care, while other evangelicals have often concentrated on one or the other.

<sup>61</sup> Holt, 34.

<sup>62</sup> Flynt, 335-336.

<sup>63</sup> Flynt, 338-339.

<sup>64</sup> Laine T. Scales. *All that Fits a Woman: Training Southern Baptist Women for Charity and Mission 1907-1926* (Macon: Mercer UP, 2000), 1.

<sup>65</sup> John N. Johnson, editor, *God’s Glory in Missions* (Louisville: private publisher, 1985), 3.

<sup>66</sup> Johnson, 2. See also Patricia Hill, *Their World Their Household* (Ann Arbor, 1985). Hill also links the decline of women’s missionary organizations to the secularization of their original mission. Prayer and personal sacrifice became less important and humanitarian efforts more essential. Also see, Wendy J. Deichmann, “Domesticity with a Difference: Women’s Sphere, Women’s Leadership, and the Founding of the Baptist Missionary Training School,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 9 (S 1990) 141-157.

<sup>67</sup> Lydia Huffman Hoyle. “Queens in the Kingdom: Southern Baptist Mission Education for Girls 1953-1970. In *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers* edited by Dana L. Robert. (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 103.

<sup>68</sup> Hoyle, 105.

<sup>69</sup> Hoyle, 106-107. For additional information on the “southern lady ideal,” see Anne Prior Scott, *The Southern Lady*. Prior Scott asserted the public life of the southern woman began in church societies. She quotes Baptist historian B.F. Riley in his *A Memorial History of the Baptists of Alabama* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1923) who reported, “The struggle that it cost the women to attain to the ultimate goal, a satisfaction of a conviction that the right was theirs to labor for the lord, only served to qualify them the more for greater success, when once the end sought was reached,” 141.

<sup>70</sup> Hoyle, 112.

<sup>71</sup> McBeth, 16, 126. Although a specific historical analysis and summary of the literature related to women and the theological training is not presented in this essay, sociologists and historians have analyzed the status of Baptist women in connection to education. Female enrollment in seminaries has been the marker for progress. For further information, see Letsinger’s section entitled “The Involvement of Women In Southern Baptist Educational Institutions” beginning on page 173 of his dissertation. McBeth also has a long section on women and seminaries in *Women in Baptist Life*. Sociologists Sarah Frances Anders and Nancy Ammerman also run these statistics. Recently church history professor Pamela R. Ruso has concluded that Southern Baptists in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, “were progressive on the issue of women in theological education” (p. 67). Ruso provides plenty of statistics in “Diverse Baptist Attitudes Toward Women in Theological Education.”

<sup>72</sup> For an excellent study from a sociological perspective, see Nancy Ammerman’s *Baptist Battles*. She specifically links SB missions emphasis with women’s leadership and call for serving as pastors, 90-91.

<sup>73</sup> McBeth, 164.

<sup>74</sup> Flynt, 440.

<sup>75</sup> Flynt, 438.

<sup>76</sup> Flynt, 536.

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<sup>77</sup> Allen, 115.

<sup>78</sup> Scales, 259. This is McBeth's primary concern in *Women in Baptist Life*. He describes these women how have degrees but no jobs as "women in waiting" (p. 184). He is frustrated that these women who have "heard the gospel, had a call, and have a need to respond" face so many obstacles ahead of them.

<sup>79</sup> Libby Bellinger, "More Hidden than Revealed: The History of Southern Baptist Women in Ministry," in Walter B. Shurden, *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamental Movement* (Macon: Mercer, 1993), 130.

<sup>80</sup> McBeth, 23.

<sup>81</sup> Bellinger, 130 and Letsinger, 108. State Baptist presses also reported trends and changes. For example, see "Current Trends Among Southern Baptists," *Western Recorder* 5 Aug. 1976 pgs. 2-3.

<sup>82</sup> Letsinger, 173.

<sup>83</sup> Harry N. Hollis Jr., Vera Mace, David Mace, and Sarah Frances Anders. *Christian Freedom for Women and Other Human Beings* (Nashville: Broadman, 1975).

<sup>84</sup> Sarah Frances Anders, "Woman's Role in the Southern Baptist Convention and its Churches as Compared with Selected Other Denominations," *Review and Expositor* 72 no. 1 (Winter 1975): 38-39.

<sup>85</sup> *Baptist History and Heritage* 12 no. 1 (January 1977).

<sup>86</sup> Ralph H. Langley, "The Role of Women in the Church," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 19 no. 2 (Spring 1977): 61.

<sup>87</sup> Lewis stated, "Whatever we do in terms of church-relatedness as vocations must be in perspective with the priority scale and value system of the church itself and the will of the father," as quoted in McBeth, 174.

<sup>88</sup> McBeth, 184.

<sup>89</sup> There are fine differences between terms and usage describing the various types of Baptists. Chapter Two provides a more detailed explanation of the differences. I have chosen to use the term fundamentalist and conservatives interchangeably. But it is important to note that a Baptist can ascribe to conservative theology but moderate denominational politics and structures.

<sup>90</sup> The "Controversy" is called the "conservative resurgence" by conservatives and "the takeover" by moderates.

<sup>91</sup> Conservatives also believe in this Baptist doctrine, but it conservative leadership defended words such as "inerrancy" and "infallibility," rejecting historical and literary criticism for scriptural interpretation. Moderates, sometimes identified as "liberals," champion terms such as "reliable" and "authoritative." See Slayden A. Yarbrough, 60-61 for more information.

<sup>92</sup> Holt, x. Also see Carl Kell's *In the Name of the Father* for a detailed analysis of rhetoric and the conflict over Biblical interpretation concerning women.

<sup>93</sup> Bellinger, 131.

<sup>94</sup> See Elwood Lacy. "Affirming Faith Statement Creates Dilemma for Some Missionaries," *Baptist History and Heritage*. The 1998 family article was added after messengers at the SBC annual meeting voted for its approval. Although the article states that "husband and wife are equal before God," it also includes the clause: "A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband." At no time in history had Baptists ever made gender a doctrine until 1997 and 1998.

<sup>95</sup> Bendroth reinforces the idea that women have routinely voiced that they do not have time to quarrel over doctrinal controversies. Instead, with apolitical attitudes, they ignored the debates, p. 61. Also see, Catherine Allen, "Unshackle the Servants of God," in *Stand with Christ*, edited by Robert O'Brien, p. 119. Allen summarizes the breaking point of those who denied the SBC changes, "Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that the mission boards of the Southern Baptist Convention would turn against women, whose hands fed them for more than a century. It hurts to confront the truth. Ten years passed before I could face the facts. Then in 1999 I finally ready the article on the family, which had been voted into the *Baptist Faith and Message* statement in 1998, together with its lengthy commentary. It was alarming, but I thought it would be ignored without direct harm the missions cause...The hopes were seriously wounded in June 2000, when the SBC in session passed the revised *Baptist Faith and Message* statement. It was done with cavalier speed and callousness toward the women ministers and missionaries who would be affected. Like millions of others, I still clung to hope for the system—for the sake of missionaries." Kathy Johnson, a missionary to Mozambique, wrote in a letter to Bruce Presscot that, "My husband would remind me that we weren't being prevented from pursuing our callings so we continued to carry on quietly with our work...Perhaps I need to ask your forgiveness for not speaking out until now."

<sup>96</sup> Some outspoken women were Southern Seminary professor Dr. Molly Marshall and Addie Davis, the first Southern Baptist ordained woman.

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<sup>97</sup> Bellinger, 131.

<sup>98</sup> The group was initially called Women in Ministry, but later added the title “Baptist.”

<sup>99</sup> Bellinger, 132.

<sup>100</sup> “WIM, SBC Proceedings,” June 1983 minutes, see Bellinger, 133.

<sup>101</sup> Bellinger, 134.

<sup>102</sup> Allen, 116.

<sup>103</sup> See the following articles in *Review and Expositor* 83 no. 1 (Winter 1986): Pamela J. Scalise, “Women in Ministry: Reclaiming our Old Testament Heritage,” 7-13; Roger L. Omanson, “The Role of Women in the New Testament Church,” 15-25; Molly Marshall Green, “When Keeping Silent No Longer Will Do: Theological Agenda for the Contemporary Church,” 27-33; Nancy Hastings Sehested, “Women and Ministry in the Local Congregation,” 71-79.

<sup>104</sup> Carolyn Weatherford, “Shaping of Leadership Among Southern Baptist Women,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 22 no 3 (July 1977): 18-19.

<sup>105</sup> Carolyn Blevins, “Patterns of Ministry Among Southern Baptist Women,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 22 no. 3 (July 1987): 48.

<sup>106</sup> Dana Robert, “Women in Mission: Yesterday and Today,” lecture presented at A Gathering of Global Women, St. Petersburg, Florida, 12 April, 2003. Robert suggests that Protestant missions has been defined by “women’s work.” Robert, a professor of International Mission at Boston University, describes this mission theory that specifically attends to women as a Protestant mission focusing on evangelizing and reaching women. Robert suggests that for missionaries to attend solely to women, women missionaries promoted a mission of responsibility, friendship, and relationships.

<sup>107</sup> Thompson, 55.

<sup>108</sup> Gregory Vickers, “Models of Womanhood and the Early Woman’s Missionary Union,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 24 no. 1 (Jan. 1989): 52. The same conclusions were reported by Patricia Hill in *Their World Their Household* (Ann Arbor, 1985) and Wendy J. Deichmann in “Domesticity with a difference: Woman’s Sphere, Women’s Leadership, and the founding of the Baptist Missionary Training School,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 9 (S 1990) 141-157.

<sup>109</sup> Bellinger, 117. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship gives no official positions on women in ministry, but the fellowship adheres to the basic Baptist principle that a determination of a call to ministry belongs to the local church and that there is scriptural evidence for a full role for women in ministry. Generally, those Baptists who align with the CBF are some type of moderate Baptist (and I have chosen to describe the group as such). CBF coordinator Daniel Vestal, however, asserts that the CBF is not liberal, moderate, or conservative organization. He recognizes that others describe the CBF and the media as composed of moderates, but he wishes to avoid this terminology in order to avoid political connotations and rather focus on a faith stance. Vestal declares the CBF is not a denomination or convention structure, but a hope for a new model of Baptist unity that will “emphasize historic Baptist principles and ideas more than an organizational structure.” The CBF is a resource network of churches “who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice.” For additional information, see “About CBF: Daniel Vestal Q & A,” *Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Online* <http://www.cbfonline.org/about/coordinatorinterview.cfm>.

<sup>110</sup> Specifically, see Bellinger’s report of Susan Lockwood’s 1986 address at the WIM conference and the oral history project for WIM at Baylor University, 138.

<sup>111</sup> Bellinger, 149.

<sup>112</sup> When referring to insiders, I am referring to Baptist moderates. However, Daniel W. Stowell’s article, “The State of Baptist Histories,” noted that insiders can be either conservative or moderate. In his words, “Within the past five years scholars have published several histories of Baptists within a particular state. Each of these histories has been written by a Baptist ‘insider,’ and most have been published under the auspices of the statewide convention or association,” p. 97.

<sup>113</sup> Nancy Tatom Ammerman *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers, 1990), 90-91.

<sup>114</sup> Sarah Frances Anders, “Re: researching Baptist women in ministry.” 10 February 2003. Personal email (10 February 2003). Anders also sent the author a list of clergywomen name and addresses selected at random from her file on Feb. 19, 2003. Her 1996 research on ordination trends revealed 1,160 SBC ordained women for ministry: 65 pastors/co-pastors, 92 associate pastors, 233 church staff positions, 300 chaplains, 20 professors, 21 denominational workers, 12 campus ministers, and 7 missionaries (6 had died). Anders’ latest totals were printed in an article entitled “Keeping Track of Women Ministers,” in the July 2003 edition of *Baptists Today*. She states that there are



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1,825 confirmed clergywomen but guesses the actual total is closer to 1,900. Of that total Andrews reported that 119 are pastors, 26 are co-pastors, 94 are associate pastors, and 383 are chaplains. But she also suggests there are other women serving in variety of vocational roles, such as “professors, missionaries, students, in secular positions, homemakers, retire and (as ministers) in other denominations.

<sup>115</sup> See Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Baptist Battles and Southern Baptists Observed: Multiple Perspectives on a Changing Denomination* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993). Since Ammerman’s publications, the organization Women in Ministry has released the most updated statistics. As of 1998, there were 1324 confirmed women in Baptist ministry. Just under 100 were listed as pastors or co-pastors, 103 associate pastors, 275 professional staff and 314 chaplains.

<sup>116</sup> See Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*. Ammerman’s survey reveals that most conservative pastors did not support women pastors. However, most pastors surveyed determined that action should not be taken against agencies or churches that disagreed. Ammerman also notes the slow change in Baptist viewpoints regarding the status of women, but she also documents a degree of tolerance for divergent and different attitudes, p. 97.

<sup>117</sup> Joe Edward Barnhart, *The Southern Baptist Holy War: The self-destructive struggle for power within the largest Protestant denomination America* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1986), 259.

<sup>118</sup> Barnhart, 142

<sup>119</sup> Such as Walter Shurden, Daniel Vestel, Stan Humphrey, Cecil Sherman.

<sup>120</sup> Grady C. Cothen, *What Happened to the Southern Baptist Convention?* (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 1993).

<sup>121</sup> Carl Kell and L. Raymond Camp. In *The Name of the Father: the Rhetoric of the New Southern Baptist Convention* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1999).

<sup>122</sup> Stricklin, 115.

<sup>123</sup> Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 239. Margaret Bendroth uses this same argument when referring to evangelical fundamentalism. She suggest the debate over fundamentalism is not all theological. “It lies in that murky area where sincerely held doctrinal beliefs meet unexamined cultural attitudes toward gender,” p. 119. Since the women’s movement, the use of masculine language by fundamentalists was ineffective; thus, the rhetoric returned to scriptural debate.

<sup>124</sup> In this instance, the phrase “women in ministry” is referring to general Baptist women serving in leadership positions, but the formal organization Women in Ministry (later Baptist Women in Ministry or BWIM) also resulted from this confusing decade.

<sup>125</sup> Bendroth has demonstrated this slow progress is relevant to evangelicals in general. She stated, “Still the tenacity of each side in pursuing the conflict, for nearly thirty years now, believes a picture of slow infiltration. Evangelicals remain keenly aware of the progress, or lack of progress of feminist ideals in their schools and churches,” 119.

<sup>126</sup> The descriptive term “fundamentalists” will be used interchangeably with “conservatives.”

<sup>127</sup> “Article XVIII: The Family,” *The Baptist Faith and Message*, Revised 1998 (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 1998), 21. Pastor Jane Saxon’s comment summarizes most moderate women in ministry’s position on the matter. “My fear about the silence and submission is the abuse that often is underlying it...certainly verbal and often physical. At t aver minimum, the structures of patriarchal hierarchy and control leave women damaged emotionally and spiritually—never developing or accessing their God-given potential” (Narrative 12).

<sup>128</sup> See Elwood Lacy. “Affirming Faith Statement Creates Dilemma for Some Missionaries.” The 1998 family article was added after messengers at the SBC annual meeting voted for its approval. State reactions were mixed. For instance, Oklahoma and New Mexico accepted the revised Baptist Faith and Message, while Virginia and Texas rejected the revised version, voting to endorse the 1963 version.

<sup>129</sup> The Baptist denomination is composed of confessional people, and a tradition that is tardy to adopt confessional statements, the first being the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message*. Traditionally, the denomination has feared creeds and the possibility of “confessions” becoming more creedal. However, after the 1979 controversy, a growing emphasis on creedalism was evident and a large part of the polemical debate. See Slayden A. Yarbrough, *Southern Baptists: A Historical, Ecclesiological, and Theological Heritage of a Confessional People* (Brentwood and Nashville, TN: Southern Baptist Historical Society and Fields Publishing, 2000) and “Is Creedalism a Threat to Southern Baptists?” *Baptist History and Heritage* 28 (April 1993), 21-33.

<sup>130</sup> I will use the terms “fundamentalists” and “conservatives” interchangeably.

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<sup>131</sup> Fundamentalists call moderates “liberals.”

<sup>132</sup> For further information see, “Who We Are: What we Believe,” *Alliance of Baptists Website*, last updated May 14, 2003 <http://www.allianceofbaptists.org> (4 June 2003).

<sup>133</sup> The CBF serves as an umbrella for other ministries, including the Alliance of Baptists, Women in Ministry and the periodical *Baptists Today* (formerly *SBC Today*). CBF coordinator Daniel Vestal, however, asserts that the CBF is not a liberal, moderate, or conservative organization. He recognizes that others, including the media, describe the CBF as composed of moderates. He, however, wishes to avoid this terminology in order to avoid political connotations and focus on a faith stance. Vestal declares the CBF is not a denomination or convention structure. Rather, it is a hope for a new model of Baptist unity that will “emphasize historic Baptist principles and ideas more than an organizational structure.” The CBF is a resource network of churches “who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice.” The CBF serves as an umbrella for other ministries, including the Alliance of Baptists, Women in Ministry and the periodical *Baptists Today* (formerly *SBC Today*). For additional information, see “About CBF: Daniel Vestal Q&A,” *Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Online* <<http://www.cbfonline.org/about/coordinatorinterview.cfm>>.

<sup>134</sup> This notion theoretically is ideal, but fundamental and moderate Baptist mission theories vary greatly. Fundamentalists prioritize church planting and evangelization, while moderates are concerned about social service ministries and education.

<sup>135</sup> Robert O’Brien, *Stand with Christ* (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2002), 10-11. The Baptist General Association of Virginia has also initiated new models for the purpose of unification. It launched the agenda called “Kingdom Advance,” a program “under which diverse Baptists may cooperate on the ‘main thing’—spreading the gospel and ministry of Jesus Christ while maintaining their church autonomy and freedom to choose.” It is difficult to predict if the disparate Baptist churches focused on one goal will prove a successful consolidation. The Baptist General Convention of Texas has stated that it will cooperate with the SBC, but it will not exclude the incongruous Baptists that do not conform to the SBC’s *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*. See Charles Wade’s chapter, “Texas Baptists Take a Stand” for specifics. As the executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, he stated, “Some will say that we are distancing ourselves from Southern Baptists. Let me say again, as I have said before, we stand ready to work with Southern Baptists. We have not wanted the things that have happened...to happen. We are focused on a lost world that needs our Savior and his gospel. Why these distractions? Why these extra requirements?”

<sup>136</sup> Susan M. Shaw and Tisa Lewis, “‘Once There was a Camelot’: Women Doctoral Graduates of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982-1992 , Talk about the Seminary, the Fundamentalist Takeover, and Their Lives,” *Review and Expositor* 95 (1998). Shaw and Lewis report that of the 21 women interviewed who were Southern Baptist, only 3 were still Southern Baptist. 6 were members of the cooperative Baptist Fellowship, 10 have joined various denominations, and 2 no longer claimed a particular religious community. 20 out of the 21 were hoping to work in a Southern Baptist context following graduation (p. 400). Shaw and Lewis report that those that have left the denomination appear “‘happier’ or at least less frustrated than those who have stayed.” They speculate more of their sample would have stayed in Baptist churches if the controversy did not occur (p. 406).

<sup>137</sup> Linda McKinnish Bridges, “Travel On, Sister,” *Folio* 18 no. 1 (Summer 2000).

<sup>138</sup> Sarah Jackson Shelton, “Testimony for Mainstream Baptists,” given at the Mainstream Baptist Conference, Birmingham, AL, 7 February 2003, 2. Pastor Marnie Fisher-Ingram also speaks of her persuasion to the United Methodist Church, but stated, “I have stayed and will stay until there is no longer a place for me,” (Narrative 13).

<sup>139</sup> Narrative 12. It is not uncommon for Baptist women in ministry to serve in a Methodist or Presbyterian churches, reasoning that their call to ministry is more important than denominational alignment. However, the majority of these women also identify themselves as Baptists and if the opportunity arose, they would gladly serve in a Baptist church.

<sup>140</sup> Narrative 6.

<sup>141</sup> The author explained this call for story submission to the interviewees through a standard letter sent via e-mail or a printed letter to their home address. After initial contact, often times, interviewees preferred to speak via the phone and the author conducted approximately 4 phone interviews. This correspondence was mailed via e-mail or printed letter to 150 women who held or once held a position of ministry in a Baptist church or an affiliated ministry or organization, such as campus ministers, chaplains, Baptist missionaries, and a few women deacons. The names of women were collected from a variety of sources and can be divided into two major categories—1) those ordained and 2) those not ordained.

Dr. Sarah Frances Andrews keeps a historical record of all ordained Baptist women. She was kind enough to submit names and addresses for the author to contact. Ordination is a designation obviously given to women who

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have been ordained for full ministerial status by their local churches. Constant H. Jacquet Jr. of the National Council of Churches in his article “Women Ministers in 1986 and 1977: A Ten Year Review” defines ordination as an “unrestricted set of functions relation to the ministry of the Gospel.” For further information on ordination, see Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair T. Lummis, and Patricia Mei Ying Chang, *Clergy Women an Uphill Calling* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998) for further information.

Most of the respondents have attended a Southern Baptist seminary, but a few of the narratives collected were from women who had not attended seminary. These were often laywomen serving as deacons in Baptist churches, rather than in paid, vocational ministerial positions. In addition, most Baptist female missionaries are not ordained. However, no one in Baptist life would deny these women have full-time ministerial jobs (the SBC would just say they cannot be pastors). The debate surrounding women’s ordination in Baptist churches continues to be hotly contested issue, which is complicated by Baptist polity allowing each church to serve as an autonomous body. Although the SBC denies recognizing ordained women, some churches continue to do so. As of date, there is a movement in moderate Baptist life that fully supports and encourages the ordination of women and advocates this title as recognition of God’s call on their lives.

Additional names and addresses were gathered from women affiliated with the organization Baptist Women in Ministry or through missionary contacts made at the Global Women’s Gathering in St. Petersburg, FL (April 2003). 41 usable narratives were returned to the author who was granted permission to use their responses in publication. The narratives were cataloged as response narratives 1-41 and entered into a data system. Some women requested that their story be used, not an identifiable name. Several names have been changed to protect anonymity.

<sup>142</sup> I specifically concentrated on a more recent history of Baptist women in ministry encompassing the years 1990-2002, because historians have overlooked the specific experience of Baptist women during this recent era.

<sup>143</sup> Shaw and Lewis, 398. For examples of similar methodology and the use of interviews/ narratives, see Daniel J. Levinson, *The Seasons of a Woman’s Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), Miriam Therese Winter, Adair Lummis, and Allison Stokes, *Defecting in place: Women Claiming Responsibility for their Own Spiritual Lives* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), and R. Marie Griffith, *All God’s Daughters* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997). Although Leanne McCall Tigert’s work *Coming Out While Staying In* speaks about the experience of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people within the church, her methods of interview, inquiry and insistence on the human need for all people to “share their stories” can aptly be applied to Baptist women in ministry.

<sup>144</sup> Griffith, 17.

<sup>145</sup> Leanne McCall Tigert, *Coming Out While Staying In* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1996).

<sup>146</sup> For further information on spiritual life stories, see R. Marie Griffith, *All God’s Daughters*, 17-20.

<sup>147</sup> Melissa Lamm, “‘Stories of the Spirit’ –Sermons from the Annual Meeting,” *Folio* 17 no 2 (1999), 6-7.

<sup>148</sup> Narrative 1.

<sup>149</sup> Narrative 16.

<sup>150</sup> Constance McNeill, “Being Faithful to God and Ministry and Self and...,” *Folio* 15 no. 3 (Winter 1997-98), 1-2.

<sup>151</sup> Andrea Missey, “Profile: Glynis LaBarre,” *Folio* 15 no. 3 (Winter 1997-98), 3.

<sup>152</sup> Raye Nell Dyer, “A Response to the Revised Baptist Faith and Message,” *Folio* 18 no. 1 (Summer 2000). 1.

<sup>153</sup> Joy Heaton, “Manuscript of Testimony: Joy Heaton, Pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Einfield, North Carolina,” presented at the First Annual Mainstream Baptist Network Convocation, Charlotte, North Carolina, 15 February 2002.

<sup>154</sup> Mary Armacost Hulst, “Profile: Mary Armacost Hulst: Senior Pastor,” *Folio* 14 no. 4 (Spring 1997), 4.

<sup>155</sup> Narrative 35.

<sup>156</sup> Examples include Joy Heaton, Sarah Jackson Shelton and Julie Pennington-Russell.

<sup>157</sup> McNeil, 2.

<sup>158</sup> Shelton, 2.

<sup>159</sup> Hulst, 7.

<sup>160</sup> Yarbrough, 28-29.

<sup>161</sup> See Edwin K. Bradhead, “Sharing the Keys,” *Folio* 5 no. 4 (Spring 1988) for further discussion on theological and cultural resistance to women in ministry.

<sup>162</sup> Carolyn Blevins, “Doing Ministry Baptist Style: The Priesthood of Believers,” a *Baptist Style Pamphlet Series* jointly sponsored by the Baptist History and Heritage society and the William H. Whitsitt Baptist Heritage Society (Brentwood, TN, 2001).

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<sup>163</sup> Dyer, 1.

<sup>164</sup> Narrative 6.

<sup>165</sup> Mary Armacost Hulst, "Profile: Mary Armacost Hulst: Senior Pastor," *Folio* 14 no. 4 (Spring 1997), 7.

<sup>166</sup> Jean S. Pruet, "A Grateful Response to God's Call," *Folio* 15 no. 2 (Fall 1997), 4. Pruet later explains her church affiliates with the SBC and supports the CBF.

<sup>167</sup> The Winter, Lummis, and Stokes study gives some indication as to why feminist and alienated Protestant women are still members of their local churches even if they are dissatisfied. They posit, "Despite sexism, exclusive language, and insufficient spiritual nourishment, some women still feel that the congregation is a community where they have received and can continue to receive essential encouragement and support from other persons."

<sup>168</sup> Shelton, 4.

<sup>169</sup> See Zikmund, Lummis and Chang whose study contains a sample of 116 ordained Southern Baptist women.

<sup>170</sup> Missey, 3.

<sup>171</sup> Zikmund, Lummis and Chang, 58-59. Women such as former youth minister Georgie Lee who describes her Baptist background as "old school." She states, "I believe in the Priesthood of the believer. I believe that God leads a pastor to a church to lead it, not to dictate it. I believe each believer with the help of the Holy spirit can interpret scripture in their own way and with their own needs I believe that SBC has taken a step backwards and even though I don't like the division that has come I cannot in all good conscious support SBC" (Narrative 30).

<sup>172</sup> The Zikmund, Lummis and Chang study reports: "Not only do considerably more Southern Baptist clergy women than clergy men believe that women share power more than men, but Southern Baptist clergy women are 20% more likely than clergy men in their denomination to see themselves as very democratic in leadership style. This substantial difference between the self-defined leadership style in SB ordained women and ordained men reflects a similar gap in their understandings of ministry. These clergy women are also far more likely than SB clergy men to endorse the position that lay women and clergy women should share equally with men in local and national church leadership," 58-59.

<sup>173</sup> Narrative 29.

<sup>174</sup> Smith, Smith, Shannon Pearson. "The Church Executive Interview: Janice Johnson, First Baptist Church, Greenville, SC," *Church Executive Magazine* July 2002, [http://www.churchexecutive.com/2002/07/The\\_CE\\_Interview.asp](http://www.churchexecutive.com/2002/07/The_CE_Interview.asp) (16 Feb., 2003), 2-3.

<sup>175</sup> Narrative 5b.

<sup>176</sup> Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang, 110.

<sup>177</sup> Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang, 10.

<sup>178</sup> Specifically see Narratives 12 and 6.

<sup>179</sup> Weaks is specifically referring to Joel 2:28, Genesis 1:27, and Galatians 3:28.

<sup>180</sup> Dawn Darwin Weaks, "Our Dance Partners," (manuscript of sermon preached at the Annual Meeting of BWIM, June 25, 1998), *Folio* 16 no. 2 (Fall 1998), 4.

<sup>181</sup> Kathy Manis Findley, "Transforming Power: A Profile of Rebecca Gurney," *Folio* 16 no. 4 (Spring 1999), 8-9.

<sup>182</sup> Rachel T. Keeney, "Editor's Column: A Chance to Be Really Different," *Folio* 16 no. 2 (Fall 1998), 12.

<sup>183</sup> Narrative 12.

<sup>184</sup> Narrative 6.

<sup>185</sup> Jann Aldredge-Clanton, *Breaking Free: The Story of a Feminist Baptist Minister* (Austin: Eakin Press, 2002).

<sup>186</sup> Narrative 26.

<sup>187</sup> Narrative 22.

<sup>188</sup> Sheila Moss was a respondent who not only felt mentally and socially connected to Baptist life, but physically as well. She explained that she begrudgingly attended the local, conservative Baptist church in her area only for the reason that her daughter would have the support and network of a youth group.

<sup>189</sup> Narrative 28.

<sup>190</sup> Narrative 13. Fisher-Ingram uses the term "right fit."

<sup>191</sup> Narrative 29.

<sup>192</sup> Narrative 13.

<sup>193</sup> The complex term *feminist* has mixed connotations and denotations for these women and for readers. When referring to women and religion, it is helpful to consider Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang's description of feminism. Their studies divided feminism into 1) structural feminism, or advocacy for more female leadership in church roles, and 2) spiritual feminism or the advocacy for inclusive language. It is difficult to find a Baptist woman in ministry who does not strongly endorse values for more women in leadership. Also, many women come to feminist

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consciousness on their own, and assert an individuality that is compatible with the autonomy principle of Baptist doctrine. The defense “I am not a feminist,” is usually in regard to the latter. The women in ministry who do have a feminist consciousness began with sharing their experiences. Story telling and narratives are essential for these women. Winter, Lummis and Stokes posit, “Sharing with other women their feelings of pain, frustration, and rage, women discover they are not alone. They learn to identify patriarchy and what it has done to women in society and in the church” (Miriam Therese Winter, Adair Lummis, and Allison Stokes, *Defecting in Place: Women Claiming Responsibility for Their Own Spiritual Lives* (New York: Crossroad, 1995). For a defense of ‘Baptist’ and ‘feminist’ as compatible, see Jann Aldredge-Canton, *Breaking Free: The story of a Feminist Baptist Minister*.

<sup>194</sup> Nancy Ellett Allison, “Excuses! Excuses!” *Folio* 15 no. 4 (Spring 1998), 1.

<sup>195</sup> For an excellent discussion on private, personal, and spiritual feminism see Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang, 17-18. Also see, Winter, Lummis and Stokes, *Defecting in Place* for more examples of the gap between rhetoric of equality and the daily reality of deeply embedded gender discriminations, 53.

<sup>196</sup> Elaine Brown, “One Woman’s Yes,” *Folio* 14 no. 3 (Winter 1996-1997).

<sup>197</sup> Heaton, 2.

<sup>198</sup> Narrative 12. All of the respondents in the Shaw/Lewis study metaphorically refer to Southern Seminary as a “Camelot”—a Baptist institution and identity that once was.

<sup>199</sup> Almost every issue of *Folio* reports on this issue. For information on vocational placement for women ministers in a variety of Protestant denominations, see Winter, Lummis, and Stokes, *Defecting in Place*.

<sup>200</sup> Narrative 8.

<sup>201</sup> Rachel Coggins, “Viewpoints: Facing a Frozen Chaplaincy,” Forum CBF Online posted 5 Aug. 2002. <http://www.cbfonline.org/forum/viewpoint.cfm?forumId=2413&action=1> (16 May 2003).

<sup>202</sup> See Al Hill, “Fw: Alabama Baptist Editorial,” personal e-mail 19 March 2003, for a specific discussion on military chaplaincy. The contested issue is that the NAMB recently decided to endorse people for chaplaincy who have not been ordained. Because chaplains function as pastors, it is odd that the NAMB endorsed this unordained woman. The pertinent issue then becomes the formality of credentialing. As Baptists, only local churches can license individuals for gospel ministry. Associations, conventions, and state agencies do not have the authority to license anyone to ministry for chaplaincy. The NAMB’s endorsement of unordained women (or even men) for chaplaincy who have no local church recognition is considered a violation of Baptist doctrine. This dilemma is nowhere close to being resolved.

<sup>203</sup> Narrative 28.

<sup>204</sup> Narrative 22.

<sup>205</sup> Narrative 1.

<sup>206</sup> Narrative 30. Georgie Lee attributes that belief to a strong-willed mother “who taught that with God all things are possible.”

<sup>207</sup> Narrative 25. Dr. Hack Polaski reports on her seminary’s rate of student placement, “I’ve noticed to my dismay that, particularly with married couples, it seems that the couple usually ends up going where the husband is hired, and the wife must look for a job in the same area.”

<sup>208</sup> Narrative 22. “When Tom and I married in the summer of 1981, 14 other seminary student couples were also married. I have often wondered what happened to them. It has been very difficult being a clergy couple.”

<sup>209</sup> Narrative 35.

<sup>210</sup> Nancy Baker Burke, “This is My Story,” *Folio* 14 no. 4 (Spring 1998), 4. Narrative 22. Narrative 33. It is not uncommon to read of female missionaries that speak of leaving their missionary posts to return home to marry a pastor or how they gave up their work to support their missionary husband. The focus immediately becomes the children and home. Female pastors, however, speak of the necessity of balance in their lives and ministry between work and home-life.

<sup>211</sup> Burke notes the painful experience of having to plan her husband’s ordination service during this time of denied ordination for herself.

<sup>212</sup> Burke, 4-5.

<sup>213</sup> Narrative 28.

<sup>214</sup> The respondent faced extreme injustices when attending a Southern Baptist seminary in 1981. A woman friend who lived on her hall was also studying to receive her M.Div. and enter the ministry. The woman received death threats and harassing phone calls. The rhetoric of a “holy war” used to describe the fundamentalist-moderate controversy is not an overstatement for women such as this. The wounds are deep.

<sup>215</sup> Narrative 28.

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<sup>216</sup> Specific examples of such positions include: ministers of music, children, and senior adults; college professors; campus ministers; youth leaders; those that work for state and national conventions or fellowships; women who work for publishing houses; and most executive-level positions at the WMU headquarters.

<sup>217</sup> Narrative 1.

<sup>218</sup> Narrative 10. Also, narrative 33 stated, “I am not ordained...I feel I have not need the title to do the work I have done.”

<sup>219</sup> Narrative 27.

<sup>220</sup> Narrative 27.

<sup>221</sup> Linda McKinnish Bridges, “Travel On, Sister,” *Folio* 18 no. 1 (Summer 2000).

<sup>222</sup> It is important to remember that the title “missionary” is not a fixed job description for women in Baptist life. Female missionaries traditionally serve in education, health, and childcare ministries, but this is not always the case, especially for single female missionaries. Also, the SBC has changed job classifications for “career status” missionaries.

<sup>223</sup> It is important to note that BWIM has attracted very few missionaries. Certainly, many missionaries fit the full criteria for women who are ministers, but it’s just that so few women missionaries are ordained. Most of the women who affiliate with an organization like BWIM are the brave few who have been ordained.

<sup>224</sup> Narrative 32.

<sup>225</sup> Missionary Ida Mae Hays is an example. See, “Building the Kingdom Brick by Brick,” *The Birmingham News*, March 4, 2001, page 22A; “Baptist Women work for Equality in Pulpit,” *Ft. Worth Star Telegram*, June 28, 2002, page 3B; and “Retired Missionary Finds Affirmation, Opposition at End of 31-Year Career,” *Baptists Today*, November 2002, page 8. Also, there are dozens and dozens of missionary women, current, resigned and retired, who consider themselves full ministers without the benefit of ordination. Their stories deserve to be heard also.

<sup>226</sup> Narrative 40.

<sup>227</sup> Catherine Allen, “Unshackle the Servants of God,” in *Stand with Christ*, edited by Robert O’Brien, (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2002), 107-122.

<sup>228</sup> Catherine Allen, “Shifting Sands for Southern Baptist women in Missions,” in *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers: Missionary Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, edited by Dana L. Robert (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 124. In an e-mail correspondence with the author, Allen stated, “That when the SBC voted in favor of anti-woman doctrinal statements in 1998 and 2000, it was clear that women would not be encouraged to serve as any sort of missionary other than silent, submissive wives. And it was clear that the distorted version of Christianity that missionaries would be required to preach would not reach or benefit women. It would be just another world religion that suppresses women.” Also see Martha Skelton. “Gap in Women’s Needs Addressed,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 22 no. 4 (O 1986), 411-415.

<sup>229</sup> Allen, “Shifting Sands,” 125-126. The Fellowship of Japan Baptist Convention Women Pastors and Ministers, “Letter to President James Merrit,” 22 May 2002 states: “...almost all of our group members are the women pastors and ministers in the Japan Baptist Convention...Among the JBC churches, there are 360 ordained pastors now working in their local congregations, and 40 of them are women pastors with the ration of 11%. In additions to this, we also have 14 women ministers, plus 3 women missionaries serving in Singapore and Thailand.”; Lydia Barrow Hankins, “Japan Baptists,” *Mainstream Baptist Press Release* 3 June 2002 [www.mainstreambaptists.org](http://www.mainstreambaptists.org).

<sup>230</sup> Narrative 40.

<sup>231</sup> Earl R. Martin, “What Happens When Missionaries Sign?” in *Stand with Christ*, Robert O’Brien editor (Smyth and Helwys, 2002), 142-143.

<sup>232</sup> This is the prime concern for the group Global Women.

<sup>233</sup> Allen, “Unshackle the Servants of God,” 115.

<sup>234</sup> Catherine B. Allen, *A Century to Celebrate: History of Woman’s Missionary Union* (Birmingham: WMU, 1987), 325.

<sup>235</sup> Retired missionary Susi Lockhard’s story is typical of Baptist women in ministry during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lockhard recalls that when she was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade that WWII was coming to a close, and she was being challenged to seek God’s will. Lockhard’s story demonstrates the limited opportunities for women at the time. She reports, “I went to see my pastor and told him that I thought God might be calling me into some special religious work. I asked: ‘What do Baptist do with women who want to dedicate themselves to special service?’...My pastor didn’t really know what to tell me to aim because Baptists at that time didn’t have many full-time opportunities for women in church work. He did tell me that perhaps I could be a missionary. The foreign mission board did take women as teachers, nurses, and of course, wives of dedicated men. I like that idea.” Interview 24.

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<sup>236</sup> Narrative 3. Gladys S. Lewis, “Still a Baptist Woman,” *Mainstream Messenger* 2 no. 2 (June 2001), 8-9.

<sup>237</sup> Narrative 33.

<sup>238</sup> Narrative 34.

<sup>239</sup> Narrative 34. See Paul Harvey, “Saints but not Subordinates: The WMU of the SBC,” in *Women and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Protestantism*, edited by Margaret Lamerts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 4-24. Harvey reminds readers that “informal influence never equaled power” for women affiliated with the WMU. According to Harvey, the WMU stands for southern evangelical womanhood. Perhaps this is true for the institutional WMU and those affiliated with the organization, but these ideas cannot directly be applied to female missionaries that have had experience outside the US and traditional boundaries of southern evangelical womanhood.

<sup>240</sup> Narrative 20.

<sup>241</sup> Narrative 32. “Now I am trying to adapt to new ways and realize there are limits to my participation.”

<sup>242</sup> Narrative 32.

<sup>243</sup> Harvey, 5. Harvey suggests that seeped in southern evangelicalism it seems that the Southern Baptist tradition would require saintly women to also be subordinate, but he contends that contemporary Southern Baptist female missions leaders exhibit qualities of saintliness but refuse to be subordinate. Harvey’s analysis confirms historians’ explanations that Baptist women negotiate power within denominational boundaries. However, his assumptions need to be clarified when considering moderate Baptists. There are exceptions and updates to Harvey’s conclusions. Presently, the WMU is acting in a subordinate manner to the SBC and new mission organizations separate from the SBC are refusing to submit to relegation or the limitation on women’s ministries.

<sup>244</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (Oxford: New York, 1997), 6.

<sup>245</sup> Harvey, 21.

<sup>246</sup> “For Southern Baptists, Lottie Moon has and still is the ‘missionary heroine.’ And, she was a single woman and quite courageous, standing up to the missionary men of her day, insisting that she ‘teach and preach the Word’ to the Chinese. She was willing to go where no missionary man was willing to go. She was NOT submissive. I do not think that women will completely remain silent and submissive. There will always be a group, though small, that will continue to step out front to lead” (Ida Mae Hays, Narrative 20). Yet, missions historian Catherine Allen describes Moon and Armstrong as “lady-like” radicals or women who ventured out further than any other women did, while still considered “southern ladies.”

<sup>247</sup> According to mission historian Catherine B. Allen, Moon insisted on professional equality with men missionaries and even offered her resignation when mission policy seemed to deny single women the right to have a say in mission policy. Catherine B. Allen, “Re: Research Update,” 29 July, 2003, personal email (30 July 2003).

<sup>248</sup> Harvey, 9. Catherine Allen agrees that Moon was a creature of southern culture, but argues that Moon and Armstrong’s time was prior to any thoughts of “evangelical” definitions. She warns against using the trendy term anachronistically.

<sup>249</sup> Allen supposes that Moon’s more radical forays were reserved for the Chinese, and that her behavior was much more subdued in the USA as to not undercut herself.

<sup>250</sup> As quoted in Harvey, 10.

<sup>251</sup> Allen, “Re: Research Update.” Allen attests that scholars actually know very little of what Armstrong actually believed about women’s roles at a philosophical level. She suggests that since Armstrong hid her options on women’s rights, that she was probably quite radical, but we can only judge from her works.

<sup>252</sup> See Harvey for a more detailed explanation of Armstrong’s life. Allen describes Armstrong as a pragmatic radical who denied herself many privileges. Note, she refused to be married and receive a salary.

<sup>253</sup> Narrative 36.

<sup>254</sup> Narrative 20.

<sup>255</sup> Narrative 37. Women from age 40 to 83+ report that when they first considered a call to ministry at a young age, when assumed they would eventually become a missionary because it was the only “church-related vocation” (the dominant terminology for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) that women could imagine themselves in.

<sup>256</sup> Narrative 26.

<sup>257</sup> Narrative 40.

<sup>258</sup> Carolyn S. Hale, “Grace to You...” *Folio* 18 no. 3 (Winter 2001), 12.

<sup>259</sup> 21 of 41 response narratives directly state missions education, WMU leaders, or missionaries as mentors for their current ministries. For example, seminary graduate Dianne Ford Lawton reported, “At the age of 13, I experienced a call to missions while attending Queens Court (a G.A. event for those attaining the rank of Queen and above),” Narrative 26.

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<sup>260</sup> Narrative 28's response was typical. "My mentors were Lottie Moon, missionaries, and the ministers (even male) I encountered growing up. Also, my professors at seminary (none women)."

<sup>261</sup> The assertion of a "right fit" does beg the question, was it a "right fit" because women were ascribing to the southern evangelical womanhood status-quo or acceptable positions as missions participants.

<sup>262</sup> Narrative 21. Other responses were similar. Pastor Betty Pugh comments, "My mentors were folks who were youth ministers, BSU directors and many college and seminary professors who encouraged both my study of theology, my own thinking, and my love for the church" (Narrative 14). Dr. Sarah Frances Anders provides details: "I grew up in a Baptist Church with pastors who encouraged both genders to be all they were called to be. My pastors become convention presidents, home mission board staff, major pastors. They encouraged me" (Narrative 15). Youth leader Georgie Lee names, next to her mother and sister, her BSU director as the person who influenced her most (Narrative 30).

<sup>263</sup> Weatherford Crumpler stated, "It was a jolt to my system to be told that I couldn't enroll in theology, because I was a woman" (Narrative 21).

<sup>264</sup> Examples abound. Consider that Professor of Practical Theology Tracy Hartman's response regarding mentors was typical. She listed who listed her pastor who encouraged her call to vocational ministry as a youth and three influential professors (Narrative 29).

<sup>265</sup> Narrative 21.

<sup>266</sup> Narrative 11.

<sup>267</sup> Alma Hunt is a missions entrepreneur legendary Southern Baptist missions leader. She served as executive secretary of the SBC Woman's Missionary Union from 1948-74. At age 94, Hunt is an author and activist for women in ministry and women's ordination.

<sup>268</sup> Shelton, 2.

<sup>269</sup> This general reference applies to women 60 years and older who supposed that they could never be pastors when seeking their calling.

<sup>270</sup> Narrative 37.

<sup>271</sup> Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, "The Mentored Life," Session discussion and panel at the Global Women's Gathering, St. Petersburg, Florida, 11 April 2003. The panel determined that the older generation of Baptist women needs to encourage younger women, but the group was uncertain how to enact a plan for their concerns. It was decided that there was no choice for women but to "always be mentors." Crumpler encouraged, "There is a lot of opposition and misunderstanding about what we [Global Women] do...but we must press on."

<sup>272</sup> Narrative 21.

<sup>273</sup> Narrative 6.

<sup>274</sup> Rev. Charlotte Fairchild Liphart, "Fellowship Feedback: Facing a Frozen Chaplaincy," *Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Network Forum, CBF Online*, posted 5 Aug. 2002  
<http://www.cbfonline.org/forum/feedback.cfm?feedbackid=337&forumid=2413> (16 May 2003).

<sup>275</sup> Weeks, 4.

<sup>276</sup> Narrative 29. Similar concern for the "future of daughters" was an issue at the Global Women's Gathering in St. Petersburg, Florida, 11 April 2003. There, Patti Andrews expressed concern that her 22-year-old daughter will not know that she can do anything God calls her to do if she continues to not have mentors while remaining in a SBC environment.

<sup>277</sup> Narrative 40. Coggins, 3. In this instance, she quotes Army Chief of Chaplains Maj. Gen. Gaylord T. Gunhus.

<sup>278</sup> Patricia L. Andrews, interview by author, Global Women's Gathering, St. Petersburg, Florida, 11 April 2003.

<sup>279</sup> Addie Davis, "A Dream to Cherish," *Folio* 3 no. 2 (Autumn 1985).

<sup>280</sup> Heaton, 2. She is specifically referring to the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.

<sup>281</sup> Weeks, 5.

<sup>282</sup> For further information on churchwomen as both insiders and outsiders see, Virginia Lieson Brereton, "United and Slighted: Women as Subordinated Insiders," in *Between the Times: the Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America 1900-1960*, edited by William R. Hutchinson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), 143-167.

<sup>283</sup> In March 1997, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary began a women's studies program. According to historian Pamela R. Durso five of the six Southern Baptist Seminaries have certificate programs for minister's wives and offer classes such as "Marriage and the Family" or "Ministering to Women in the Local Church." Southeastern Seminary offers classes, such as: "Basic Sewing Skills," "Gardening to Canning," "Hospitality in the Home," "Holiday Decorating," and "Serving as Pastor's Wife" (Durso, "Changing Baptist Attitudes toward Women in Theological Education," 67).



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<sup>284</sup> Rachel T. Keeney, "A Chance to be Really Different," *Folio* 16 no. 2 (Fall 1998), 12.

<sup>285</sup> Gladys S. Lewis, "Still a Baptist Woman," *Mainstream Messenger* 4 no. 2 (June 2001), 1.

<sup>286</sup> Lewis, 1.

<sup>287</sup> Narrative 8.

<sup>288</sup> Narrative 35. Findely's situation is somewhat unique. She has served as a chaplain and Baptist pastor, but currently she is the director of a center for victims of violence and pastors a Presbyterian church. She claims, "I'm still a Baptist, but I serve a Presbyterian church."

<sup>289</sup> Lewis, 2.

<sup>290</sup> Kenney, 12.

<sup>291</sup> Narrative 23.

<sup>292</sup> Narrative 12.

<sup>293</sup> Molly Marshall, "Toward Encompassing Theological Vision for Women in Light of Baptist Tradition," *Folio* 4 no. 2 (Autumn 1986).

<sup>294</sup> Narrative 12.

<sup>295</sup> Narrative 1.

<sup>296</sup> Narrative 1.

<sup>297</sup> A substantial number of moderate Baptists dislike the term "moderate" and prefer something like "progressive conservative."

<sup>298</sup> Holt knows of only one woman who moved from a smaller congregation to a larger. Generally, this vocational progression moves ministers from youth, children or associate ministerial positions to head pastorships or from a small congregation to a larger.

<sup>299</sup> In Baptist churches the task of hiring a new pastor is assigned to an elected pastoral search committee. Holt recognizes her work with individual committees is a slow process and not everyone on a search committee is persuaded to consider women. Yet, she asks committees to rethink the implication of their search criteria, because often women are excluded from committees who require applicants to have 10 years experience or a PhD. The Alliance recognizes women need to get their foot in the door to have any experience whatsoever.

<sup>300</sup> Narrative 28. Also, *Folio* editor Rachel Keeney expresses her disappointment that the CBF "would rather walk away and pretend it [1998 amendment to the *Baptist Faith and Message*] never happened." *Folio* 16 no. 2 (Fall 1998).

<sup>301</sup> Baptist women in ministry's support is usually greater in moderate churches, but they still confront gender inequality. Rev. Aldredge-Clanton admits, "Confronting the realities of resistance even in these so-called progressive Baptist churches left me weary and discouraged" (Aldredge-Clanton, 192.).

<sup>302</sup> Aldredge-Canton, 192.

<sup>303</sup> Keith Eichen, "Women in Leadership at Highland Baptist, or, What are you doing to get ready?" *Folio* 16 no. 4 (Spring 1999), 1. *Folio* editor Rachel T. Keeney responds to the objection to women ministers or "Our church just isn't ready for a woman," by asking, "What are you doing to get ready?"

<sup>304</sup> Narrative 25.

<sup>305</sup> It is difficult to determine just what state conventions, Baptist "affiliated" organizations, and local churches are "outside of the SBC." For example, James Wade, former director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, explained that "Some will say that we are distancing ourselves from Southern Baptists. Let me say again, as I have said before, we stand ready to work with Southern Baptists. We have not wanted the things that have happened... to happen. We are focused on a lost world that needs our Savior and his gospel. Why these distractions? Why these extra requirements?" The Baptist General Convention of Texas voted to establish a Chaplaincy Endorsement board for all qualified men and women while also voting to create funds (beginning with a \$1 million pledge donation) to help relieve expenses of any missionary that refused to sign or fired. See Charles Wade, "Texas Baptists Take a Stand," in *Stand with Christ*, edited by Robert O'Brien (Smyth and Helwys, 2002), 96. Also consider that the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV) in November 2002 endorsed a program called "Kingdom Advance," a plan that recognizes the diversity of Baptists (church autonomy and freedom to choose), but hopes to foster unification under the "main thing" or spreading the gospel and ministry of Jesus Christ. According to Robert O'Brien, Kingdom Advance is a "flexible approach with missions that would avoid competing with other Baptist bodies" (11). But these recent unification endeavors yet to prove their effectiveness or how exactly the WMU would be incorporated or funded. Also see, Robert Dilday, "Virginia Baptists Endorse New Missions Vision" *Associated Baptist Press News* vol. 02-107 Nov. 13, 2002.

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<sup>306</sup> Wanda Lee became the WMU executive director and truncated publishing materials for the CBF. It is unlikely the WMU will rebel against the SBC's hyper-conservatism.

<sup>307</sup> Allen, "Unshackle," 125.

<sup>308</sup> Suzanah D Raffield. "Graduate Research," 12 September 2002. personal email (13 September 2002). Suzanah is and ordained minister and the full-time coordinator for Global Women. Bob Allen, "Agency formed to Magnify Women's Role in Missions," *Associated Baptist News Press* v01-105 December 13, 2001.

<sup>309</sup> Bob Allen.; See Barrow-Hankins, Lydia, "Letter to Pulaski-Bleckley Baptist Association [Eastman, Georgia]," 23 November 2002. Barrow Hankwins asserts at time of writing that, "26 couples have resigned rather than compromise their integrity and any number more, including Ron and me, have refused to sign and compromise our ministries. We may be terminated as missionaries any time now because of the authoritarian policies now in force at all levels of the Southern Baptist Convention."

<sup>310</sup> Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler. "Now Researching from Florida." 9 September 2002. personal email (10 September 2002). When talking with Carolyn, she was specifically referring to missionary Ida Mae Hays.

<sup>311</sup> Susanah Raffield, "Testimony to Mainstream Baptists," delivered at the Mainstream Baptist conference, Birmingham, AL, 7 February 2003, 4.

<sup>312</sup> Raffield, 4.

<sup>313</sup> Allen, "Agency formed to Magnify Women's Role in Missions," 1.

<sup>314</sup> Suzanah D Raffield. "Graduate Research," 12 September 2002. personal email (13 September 2002). She stated, "It is amazing to me how much more freedom our women missionaries had in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Yikes! Something is wrong."

<sup>315</sup> "Panel Discussion," Global Women's Gathering, St. Petersburg, Florida, 11 April 2003.

<sup>316</sup> Dana Robert, "Women in Mission: Yesterday and Today," Paper presented at Global Women Gathering, St. Petersburg, Florida, 11 April 2003. For further information, see *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997).

<sup>317</sup> Catherine Allen, "Re: Women in Missions Topic," 23 January 2003, personal email (23 January 2003). Issues include education (literacy rates, years in school, and technical training), women's health (anemia, birth control, infant mortality rates, birthing assistance, percentage of clinics available to female population), economic independence and autonomy, civil rights and rights to chose faith involvement.

<sup>318</sup> As this work went to press, BWIM was celebrating two decades of service. However, this organization is likely coming to an end in its current form. This is a timely example of how new institutional models, support systems and networking are being created by Baptist women. Most expect the organization to fold due to financial reasons, but also are in favor of state or regional groups that should provide more local support. Reba Cobb, resource center coordinator for the CBF admits that, "No it's time to move onto something else." Just what that will be is uncertain, but task groups are forming to carefully look at the best options for serving women in ministry. For further information, see John Pierce, "BWIM Celebrates Two Decades of Service, Evaluates its Future," *Baptists Today* 21 no. 7 (July 2003), 10-11.

<sup>319</sup> Interview 6.

<sup>320</sup> R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>321</sup> For further information on spiritual life stories, see, Elaine Lawless, "Rescripting Their Lives and Narratives: Spiritual Life Stories of Pentecostal Women Preachers," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 7 no. 1 (Spring 1991), 53-71.

<sup>322</sup> Griffith, 17. Griffith's discussion on power and practice specifically concentrates on the Women's Aglow Fellowship, a charismatic, evangelical women's group. However, her methods and study aptly apply to Baptist women in ministry. Also, Griffith's reminder that the reader and researcher must be careful not to place too much emphasis on resistance or liberation, but to always consider power structures is an applicable warning.

<sup>323</sup> Griffith, 20.

<sup>324</sup> Narrative 21.

<sup>325</sup> As quoted in Evelyn O. Stagg, "Looking Back in Order to Move Ahead Baptist Women's Heritage," *Folio* 2 no. 4 (Spring 1985).

<sup>326</sup> Stagg, 1.

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<sup>327</sup> For instance, BWIM president Karen Massey assures women that, “We [BWIM] will not fall prey to the corporate, institutional mindset that ensnares so much of religious life today. We will still be about those things that women do best: Building homes, non-threatening relationships between men and women; supporting women who clearly have heard God’s call in their lives; networking to help women find resources and places of service; proclaiming the scriptures to that they stories of women are heard clearly...” *Folio* 19 no. 4 (Summer 2002), 12.

<sup>328</sup> *Folio* 19 no. 2 (Winter 2002)

<sup>329</sup> Narrative 7 and Narrative 12.

<sup>330</sup> Lewis, 6. Molly Marshall’s comment that, “It is because we are Baptists that we courageously persevere in the face of opposition,” is a classic appeal for women in Baptist life.

<sup>331</sup> Massey, 12.

<sup>332</sup> Narrative 20.

<sup>333</sup> Blevins, “Patterns of Ministry Among Southern Baptist Women,” 18-19.

<sup>334</sup> Molly Marshall, “Toward Encompassing Theological Vision for Women in Light of Baptist Tradition,” *Folio* 4 no. 2 (Autumn, 1986), 3.

<sup>335</sup> Narrative 20.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Howell Williams recently completed her MA in the religion department at Florida State University under the concentration of American religious history. She began doctoral coursework in fall 2003. Miss. Williams came to Florida State University with a BA in religious studies from Western Kentucky University. Her specific interest continue to evolve, but generally contain deal with questions surrounding issues and methodology of gender study and religion. In Spring 2004 she will be teaching Gender and Religion with fellow graduate student Kelly Baker. Miss. William's publications include numerous encyclopedia articles and various book reviews for the *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*. Currently she is working on articles from her completed project "'That's the Way We've Always Done It,' the Myth of Progress and Identity of Women in Baptist Life." Miss. Williams will be presenting on the same topic at the Southeast American Academy of Religion Conference in March 2004.