



The Truth about the SBC & Texas

A Message of Concern for Southern Baptists in Texas

Dear Texas Southern Baptist:

I write this letter to you in the spirit expressed by the apostle Paul when he said, *I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart ... not to grieve you, but to let you know the depth of my love for you* (2 Corinthians 2:4, NIV).

In recent months, a group of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) critics has been attempting to dissuade Southern Baptist churches in Texas from their longstanding, faithful, and generous support of Southern Baptist missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program. This is a cause for concern that merits your special prayers and attention. As a Southern Baptist leader, I am compelled to try to give you and your church information you need to counter misinformation that could lead to decisions that would harm our very necessary and fruitful work together as Southern Baptists. Our concern is not only for the health and success of the SBC but also for the health and success of our partner churches.

These SBC critics have made statements like the Southern Baptist Convention is no longer Baptist and that it has adopted practices that are untrue to our Bible heritage. Some are suggesting that the theological education and/or missions programs of the SBC are somehow corrupted and, therefore, not worthy recipients of missions gifts from Southern Baptist churches in Texas. **These assertions are false and the information in this document responds to these accusations.**

The truth of the matter is that the work of Southern Baptists, thanks to the grace of God and the faithfulness of the churches, is more effective than ever. By every objective measurement criterion, the Southern Baptist Convention has proven that it is your faithful partner to carry out Great Commission ministries on your behalf across the United States and around the world. SBC ministries consistently train ministers, send missionaries, publish the gospel, and influence the world for Christ at levels unmatched by any other denomination.

Some SBC critics have hinted at a new national convention to do these ministries. They want Southern Baptists to divert funding from institutions with a long, effective history, a current record of success, publicly stated confessional commitments, efficient administration, and absolute accountability. What is needed is not a new convention; rather, what is needed is the people called Southern Baptists confirming the authority of Scripture and banding together to reach the world for Christ.

What are we asking you to do?

- Be informed. Don't be misled by any who would encourage you to abandon your longstanding, fruitful partnership in the gospel with the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Urge the Baptist General Convention of Texas to reject these anti-SBC sentiments and affirm the partnership between the BGCT and the SBC.
- Challenge your Southern Baptist family in Texas to vigorously promote traditional support for the SBC Cooperative Program.
- Pray for reconciliation.

We felt it was important for you to hear from our perspective. My heart's desire is not to be unkind to anyone, especially fellow Baptists. But when someone is drilling holes in the boat, the crew must both bail water and try to repair the damage. Our common mission is too important to let untrue, damaging statements go unanswered. Thank you for taking the time to listen to our concerns and join us in praying God will give Southern Baptists divine wisdom and guidance in these days. May God continue to use Southern Baptists and our churches greatly for Jesus' sake.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Morris H. Chapman, President

Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention



Bibliolatry — A Fraudulent Accusation

by Bill Merrell

Vice President for Convention Relations

Reactions to the *Baptist Faith and Message* Committee report to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in Orlando were of two very distinct kinds. The first was an overwhelming affirmation and approval by Southern Baptists. The other was another kind altogether — suspicious, resentful, and hostile.

A particularly egregious example of this hostility is seen in the assertion that revisions to the *Baptist Faith and Message* (BF&M) have placed the Bible over Jesus. Detractors erroneously accuse Southern Baptists of being worshippers of the Bible — that we are “bibliolaters.” If that *were* true, every Southern Baptist ought to rise up as one man and repudiate it! But that, in fact, is not the case.

What is behind this accusation? Is it just an expression of anti-SBC sentiment, a ploy in which theological garb is draped over what is in reality a political objection to the SBC and its statement? The duplicity behind such

a charge would be bad enough. But the situation may be even worse than that! The truth is that those crying “bibliolatry” may be covering their own aberrant view of Scripture.

This was already a problem before Southern Baptists adopted their first confession of faith. In fact, for more than a hundred years, those who hold a low view of Scripture have seized upon any pretext to challenge its authority. Their own biases against the Bible stimulate them to irreverently attempt the impossible — to use Jesus as a wedge between God and the Scriptures He Himself inspired. Exhibiting sanctimonious fraud of the lowest order, and hoping to seize the high ground by appealing to the “spirit of Jesus,” they undercut the authority of whatever part of the Scriptures they wish to dodge or dismiss.

Let’s look at how Southern Baptists have addressed this question.

1925 — Mullins on Bibliolatry

Professor E.Y. Mullins was the primary architect of the 1925 BF&M. He was conversant with the

malignant attempt to exploit Jesus to devalue Scripture. In 1913, Mullins confronted such attempts in *Freedom and Authority in Religion*, directing a crushing barrage against those who would set Jesus against Scripture. In a lengthy passage, Mullins presents a closely reasoned argument against the low view of Scripture many held in his day.

In the passage cited, Mullins employs language slightly unfamiliar to our minds, referring to Christ as “the life,” and to the Bible as “the literature.”

Mullins contends that human “reason could not be trusted to preserve the truth about Christ after the incarnation and completed revelation. ... This is not to put the literature in the place of the Redeemer, but only to assert that the literature is a necessary medium for the transmission to us of a knowledge of him. Thus, ... the literature comes as the vehicle of objective truth about him and his salvation. ...”

He continues “the relations between the literature and the life of which it is the expression must never

The *Baptist Faith and Message* — Still Thoroughly Baptist!

Since the overwhelming approval of the *Baptist Faith and Message* (BF&M) this summer, certain SBC critics have claimed that it is a radical statement portending ominous changes for Southern Baptists. These claims are patently false and can easily

be demonstrated to be so by a simple reading of the document. The following questions have been raised by its opponents:

1. Is the SBC becoming creedal?

SBC detractors in Texas and elsewhere have accused the SBC of

adopting a creed that will be used to coerce the conscience of individual Baptists or churches. This is contradicted by the preamble to the BF&M itself:

“...the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the



be overlooked in defining the function of the Bible, if we are to avoid confusion. ... In the light of those relations, it appears how very groundless are the charges often made by the subjectivists against those who hold to the doctrine of an authoritative Bible. One charge is that they are 'bibliolaters,' worshipers of a book, or that they interpose a book between the soul and God." Mullins says of such an objector "his reason is convinced he has no ground for a rational belief in the Bible as an authority. The conclusion is inevitable, and the Bible is rejected as in any sense authoritative."

“Their own biases against the Bible stimulate them to irreverently attempt the impossible — to use Jesus as a wedge between God and the Scriptures He Himself inspired.”

Mullins says those who reject the inerrancy and authority of the Bible employ a method that “simply severed the literature from the life which gives it significance, and has judged the literature thus isolated from its true context in the life, and apart from its function. The outcome is directly opposed to the facts. For the literature

cannot be understood in isolation from the life.”

By use of an apt illustration from the science of astronomy, Mullins makes two points: 1) the indispensability of the Bible for knowing God, and 2) the folly and lack of integrity of those who wrongly charge believers with worshipping the Bible. He said, “The telescope is interposed between the eye and the heavenly body. The astronomer is not accused of

worshipping the telescope or advised to pursue the science of astronomy without its aid. The telescope tells him what he could never discover without it. He relies upon it as an ‘authority,’ and carries forward the discoveries of science.”

Mullins concludes that “the objector to an authoritative Bible is on the wrong scent altogether. He is unconvinced by arguments for an infallible or inerrant Bible, or he is unwilling to accept the decree of the early councils which may be supposed

to have fixed the canon of Scripture. From these premises he proceeds to the attempt to convict the others of bibliolatry. But he has missed the point entirely. He has torn the Bible away from its true context in its own spiritual order and judged it thus.”¹

Many “moderates” who often champion Mullins, will actually find little comfort in his writings. Their outlook is, in fact, profoundly antagonistic to his high view of Holy Scripture.

1963 — An Unseen Pitfall

When the BF&M was revised in 1963 to declare, “The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ,” many initially viewed the change as benign. However, during the intervening years, some who deny the trustworthiness of the Bible have used the phrase to cloak their denials with respectability. The teachings of T.C. Smith, former professor at Southern Seminary and Furman University, are illustrative.

Smith was an insider, not a curiosity on the fringes of his profession. His peers demonstrated their acceptance and respect by selecting him as president of the Association of Baptist

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Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience...they are statements of religious convictions, drawn from the Scriptures, and are not to be used to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life.”

Baptists have adopted confessions for centuries as the BGCT did in 1998 when it affirmed the 1963 version of the BF&M. Some

have hinted that the SBC will use the BF&M in a new way. Again, that is patently false. The confession will continue to serve, as Southern Baptist confessions always have, as “a consensus of opinion...for the general instruction and guidance of our own people and others concerning those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely held among us.” We are not creedal. But, neither are we ashamed to publish what Southern Baptists believe the

Bible teaches.

2. Have Southern Baptists abandoned those teachings which have been especially dear to Baptists such as the doctrines of the priesthood of believers, soul competency, or the separation of church and state?

Again, the answer is emphatically, “No!” The recently revised BF&M states, “Baptists cherish and defend religious liberty, and

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Professors of Religion (ABPR).

In the 1970 meeting of the ABPR, less than seven years after the BF&M revision, Smith attacked the inerrancy of the Bible. He declared, "We need to come up with a concept that is more suitable to ourselves, our students, and our conventions." He further insisted that modern Christians should have the liberty to determine their own canon of Scripture, claiming, "Modern scholarship has more valid criteria for selection of the canon than did religious leaders sixteen centuries ago."

In an article entitled "The Canon and Authority of the Bible" in the Spring 1974 issue of *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, Smith writes about the Bible, "**Some of the ethical standards, crude religious ideals, and behavior of the characters portrayed in its pages are strictly out of place in a civilized society. Judged by the teachings of Jesus much of its poetry dishonors the character of God. We can make such judgments about portions of the Bible because we possess the central fact of the record. This is the revelation of God in Christ. ... If we should ask questions about the authority of the Bible, it is not God's authority that we are questioning. It is the reliableness of the authors who**

wrote the various books. The letters of Paul to the churches at Corinth carry 'as much weight as we are prepared to allow to Paul as a religious teacher, but how far God speaks through Paul is another matter.' **Only**

The debated phrase, 'The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ' never appears in any historic Baptist confession until it was added to the 1963 version of the BF&M. Were all the Baptists in the world up till then guilty of worshipping the Bible?

in the sense that it is not incompatible with its human imperfections can we appropriately speak about the authority of the Bible."

(emphasis added)

Smith, in reality, equates the standards of *his* conception of "a civilized society" with "the teachings of Jesus." And he has the audacity to blame his rejection of Scripture on Jesus! In this system, it is not what Jesus specifically said, or actually taught, but what biased interpreters think compatible with "civilized society" — that mysteriously becomes the "teaching of Jesus."

We are not left to wonder what Jesus' teachings about the Bible were. He is on the record! He referred to the Scripture in its entirety as the very Word of God.² He taught that it was irrevocable and permanent.³ He treated it as fully authoritative.⁴ Praying for His disciples, He asked the Father, "Sanctify them in the truth, Thy Word is truth."⁵ He taught that it points to Him,⁶ and that He is its fulfillment.⁷

Misrepresenting the teachings of Jesus is an affront to God the Son! This approach is precisely why many concerned Southern Baptists came to mistrust the revised language. They may not have known all the nuances of theological categories, or the sophistries of theological elites, but they knew that those who wished to undermine and undercut the authority of Scripture too easily subverted the

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deny the right of any secular or religious authority to impose a confession of faith upon a church or body of churches. We honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers, affirming together both our liberty in Christ and our accountability to each other under the Word of God."

It further states, "A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal,

and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power."

The BF&M demonstrates that the SBC remains soundly "Baptist" in every way. Those who say otherwise ought to take the time to read the BF&M. Those who *have* read it and continue to say the SBC is no

longer Baptist make us wonder about their motivation.

3. Does the SBC affirm the autonomy of the local church?

Once again, listen to the BF&M: "A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers...." The autonomy of the local church, as well as



phrase. It has become a gaping hole in the wall of sound Bible interpretation through which a rapid succession of erroneous teachings, especially in the institutions of higher learning, invaded our community of faith.

2000 — A Necessary Corrective

The peril that menaces the body of Christ is not exalting the Scripture over the Son — but exalting human reason over both Scripture and Son! The intellectually honest know there is not a scintilla of a hint in the 2000 BF&M that Jesus Christ, as the moderator-elect of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship claims, has been “demoted.”⁸ A review of the pertinent articles of the confession makes that crystal clear. They teach rather that Jesus Christ is “the eternal Son of God,” and “The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. ... All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”

The Bible does not stand over Christ — but, as the BF&M declares, it indeed stands over all “human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions!” There is no dispute between Jesus and the Bible! Jesus is to be

worshipped — the Bible is not to be! I submit that the view Professor Smith espoused is not dead, it is not rare, and that it finds veiled expression in the current dispute.

It should be noted that the change in the most customary way Baptists talk about Scripture did not take place in 2000, but in 1963. The debated phrase, “The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ” never appears in any historic Baptist confession until it was added to the 1963 version of the BF&M. Were all the Baptists in the world up till then guilty of worshipping the Bible?

The BF&M statement was revised for the very reason that numerous influential people have used the language as a dodge — a maneuver to sidestep the historic Christian and Baptist view of Scripture.

Hear this, Southern Baptists! Those who sincerely believe the Bible is true and trustworthy have nothing to fear from the BF&M statement on Scripture. Those who look for a loophole through which to cast off parts of Scripture will complain about the change — their cloak has been taken away!

A statement by John R.W. Stott to Billy Graham’s Amsterdam 2000 conference for evangelists provides a timely and needed exhortation. He

said, “The Scriptures have the content, authority, and power for a proper evangelistic message. ... God has clothed His thoughts in words, and there is no way to know Him except by knowing the Scriptures. ... We can’t even read each other’s minds, much less what is in the mind of God.”

The accusation of bibliolatry is fraudulent! We submit that anti-SBC leaders cannot tell Southern Baptists of one example of a conservative Baptist worshipping the Bible or placing the Bible over Jesus. On the other hand, it *can* be demonstrated there are those who have tried to use Jesus to drive a wedge between God and the Bible. We pray those days have ended for Southern Baptists.

¹E.Y. Mullins, *Freedom and Authority in Religion*, pp. 350–352.

²Mark 7:13; John 10:34, 35; Luke 24:27, 44, 45.

³Luke 16:17; John 10:35.

⁴Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; Matthew 22:29–32; Mark 11:17.

⁵John 17:17.

⁶Matthew 21:42–44; Luke 24:27, 44.

⁷Matthew 5:17.

⁸Jim Baucom, *Demoting Jesus*, CBFOnline, June 30, 2000.

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the autonomy of associations or conventions of local churches, has been and continues to be, strongly affirmed by the SBC.

As Baptists know, the exercise of autonomy by a local church does not mean it will never be disciplined or disfellowshipped by another Baptist body. This happens occasionally when associations or conventions have conflicts

with local churches that find no other resolution. From time to time, the SBC has refused to seat messengers when circumstances have warranted. This in no way contradicts the doctrines of the priesthood of believers or the autonomy of the local church. Rather, it affirms an equally true proposition — that the autonomy of one Baptist body does not nullify the autonomy of others.

Much of the argument against the Baptist Faith and Message depends upon a distortion of truth. Those who misrepresent the BF&M may hope you won’t read the document, but just take their word for it. See for yourself. For the full text of the BF&M, log on to www.sbc.net or you can call 866-722-5433, and we’ll send you a free copy.



“Texas First, Texas Only” – Not the Spirit of Southern Baptists in Texas

by David Hankins

Vice President for Cooperative Program

Cooperative Program giving from Southern Baptists in Texas supports the ministries of both the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Recently, certain SBC critics in Texas have been suggesting that Baptists in Texas should cut back on their support of SBC missions and keep more of the money in Texas. To justify this, some Texas leaders have pointed to the fact that the population in Texas is approaching 21 million persons, millions of them without Christ. Others have talked about the need for more money for children’s services. Still others have questioned the amount of funding for SBC seminaries versus funding for Texas affiliated theological schools. Are there more pressing needs for BGCT ministries than SBC ministries?

What are the facts?

There are no doubt great needs for Baptist ministries in Texas — from evangelism to compassion ministries to Christian higher education. **But those needs are not enough to justify cutting the gifts already allocated for missions outside of Texas.** Consider the following:

1. THE TEXAS CHURCH GIVING THAT ALREADY STAYS IN TEXAS.

The average percentage that Baptist churches give to the Cooperative Program is about 8.3% of their undesignated contributions. This means that around 91.7% of Baptist money in Texas goes to local church ministries and missions, associational missions in Texas, and local projects. Of the amount given through the traditional track of the Cooperative Program, 67% goes to the BGCT and 33% goes to the SBC (see chart on page 9 for actual distribution). Of the undesignated gifts to Southern Baptist

churches in Texas, **approximately 97% stays in Texas.** (The equivalent of approximately another 3% is given by Baptist churches in Texas designated to the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong Offerings.) Is \$0.03 of each dollar too much to go toward national and international missions?

2. THE RATIO OF SOUTHERN BAPTISTS IN TEXAS TO GENERAL POPULATION.

Texas has a population of approximately 20 million. Over 2.7 million of the citizens are Southern Baptists or more than 1 of every 8 Texans. The population of California is 33 million with a Southern Baptist membership of 334,000 or 1 of every 100 Californians. The population of New York is 18 million with a Southern Baptist membership of 27,000 or 1 of every 667 New Yorkers. There are 5,000 Southern Baptist churches in Texas or 1 for every 4,000 citizens. There are 1,385 Southern Baptist churches in California or 1 for every 24,000 citizens. There are 264 Southern Baptist churches in New York or 1 for every 68,000 citizens. The budget for BGCT is over \$51 million compared to \$7.2 million for the California Southern Baptist Convention and \$2.7 million for the Baptist Convention of New York. The contrast is more striking when you take into consideration the large population of other evangelical Christians in Texas whose ratio against the population of Texas is also much greater than these groups’ ratios

against the populations of California or New York. It is obvious that there are much greater resources per capita for Christian ministry and witness in Texas than other major population centers of the United States. Incidentally, Baptist leaders in California and New York are challenging their constituencies to give a larger, not smaller, percentage to the Southern Baptist portion of the Cooperative Program.

3. TEXAS NEEDS VERSUS WORLD NEEDS.

An even more drastic picture emerges when Texas resources in churches, church members, and finances are compared to available Christian resources around the globe. While it is commendable that we have over 4,000 international missionaries, with a world population now exceeding 6 billion, we are only beginning to provide the Christian witness needed by the

Ratios of Southern Baptists to General Population





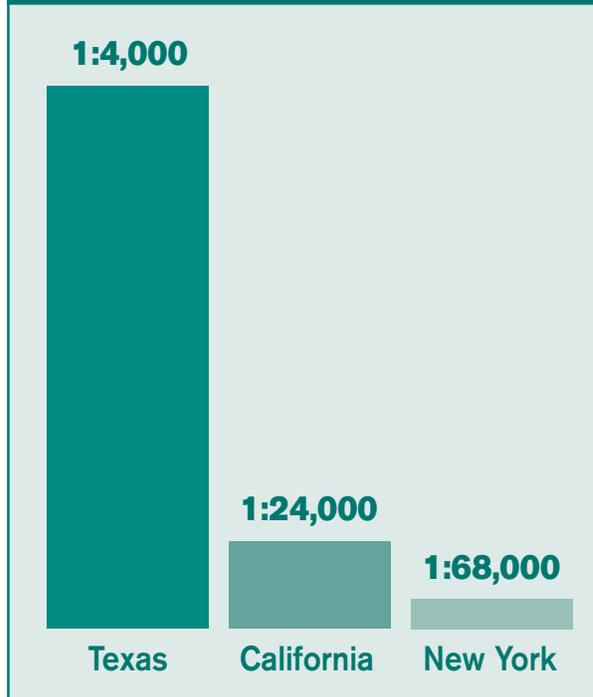
burgeoning lost population of the world. We are not suggesting giving to the BGCT be ignored. But, the Lord Jesus said, “from everyone who has been given much shall much be required.”¹ Do you really believe it is time to cut national and international giving? We have confidence that Southern Baptists in Texas recognize the needs of the world are too great to divert world missions gifts for Texas needs.

4. SUPPORT FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION.

The *Texas Baptist Standard* recently printed an article (8-7-00) entitled “Funding debate questions equity of money sent to SBC vs. Texas needs.” It noted anti-SBC leaders are making much of the fact that more Baptist money from Texas gets to Southern Seminary which has only 34 students from Texas than to the two new Texas Baptist divinity schools which have 300 students from Texas. The implication of this argument is that Baptists in Texas are paying more than their fair share of seminary training. However, approximately 1,750 (14.5%) of the 12,000 students enrolled in the six SBC seminaries are from Texas and about 14% of the CP receipts for seminary education is from Texas churches. If equity is the goal, giving from Texas for theological education of Texas students is just a fraction low.

The worse implication, however, of this “equity” argument is that it makes selfishness the motivation for giving to the CP. The *Standard* article quoted the deans of Truett Seminary and Logsdon School of Theology (both of which are affiliated with BGCT institutions) as describing their schools as “heavily Texas focused, drawing students primarily from Texas and sending ministers primarily into Texas churches to serve.” Is this really how we want to make our decisions about missions giving — based on whether we

Ratios of Southern Baptist Churches to Citizens



get any direct benefit? Would these two deans be pleased if the many churches in Texas who have no members enrolled in Truett or Logsdon refused to give any money to those schools because they are not directly serving their church? Or should the Baptists in Kentucky not support Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth because it is full of Texas students but not Kentucky students?

Conclusion

The real heart of Baptists in Texas is exemplified by the 1,600 Texas-related students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (which historically provides the majority of our international missionaries) who are preparing to go anywhere God calls them. Southern Baptists from all over the country are giving sacrificially to train and support ministers and missionaries regardless of which state they call home. This is how the Cooperative Program works. It has been a way to fund those ministries in areas where Baptist witness is not as strong as it is in the South. And, it has been a way to prepare God-called men and women, not just to stay in their home

state, but to go anywhere in the world God leads them.

What a disaster if all state conventions said, “We will only support those things that benefit our own people.” If the support for missions in Texas is not keeping pace with the needs, why not appeal to the generosity of the faithful Southern Baptists in Texas? We believe they will rise to the challenge. But it is wrong to attempt to divert resources from the small percentage that has been supporting world ministries. Jesus sent us not only to “Jerusalem and Judea” but also to “Samaria and the uttermost part of the world.” A self-centered, Texas-first mentality has never been the attitude of everyday Southern Baptists in Texas and we don’t believe it is now.

In summary, why should funds not be diverted from the SBC to stay in Texas?

- The needs in Texas are great but the needs in the rest of the country and the world are greater.
- The resources per capita are much, much greater in Texas than in most of the U.S. and the world.
- The great preponderance of the churches’ gifts is already utilized in Texas.
- The ministries performed by the national and international agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention are second to none and depend on the faithful support of Southern Baptist churches all over the nation, especially those in Texas.

If you agree that support should not be diverted from the SBC, talk to your church leaders and your state convention leaders. The SBC is committed to providing resources and information to the churches for these discussions. If the sad event occurs that your gifts to the SBC cannot be made easily and efficiently through your state convention, the SBC will make it possible for you to have such a channel of giving through other means. However, you can help make such an action unnecessary by persuading your state convention to maintain its historic and traditional agreements with the Southern Baptist Convention. Don’t let our great partnership be destroyed.

¹Luke 12:48.



Anti-SBC Leaders Threaten Cooperative Program

A Brief History

For seventy-five years the Cooperative Program has been the means whereby Southern Baptist churches could support all the ministries of their state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Prior to this unified giving plan, appeals for support were made by the various mission boards, schools, benevolence ministries, and other enterprises directly to the churches. The results were uneven, costly, and ineffective. The SBC in coordination with the state conventions developed the Cooperative Program so that churches could support the whole program of Baptist work with one regular monthly gift. The results have been wildly successful with tremendous growth in all phases of our mission work.

From its inception, the Cooperative Program has depended largely upon the state conventions for its promotion. The work the Southern Baptist Convention has done in this area has been basically through the state conventions. The agreement was the state conventions would collect money from the churches and, after covering expenses of promotion and other agreed upon deductions, divide the receipts equitably between the state and the Southern Baptist Convention. As a part of this responsibility, the states agreed to promote the “whole” program, i.e., they would promote the SBC side of the Cooperative Program as vigorously as they did the state side. Because the SBC has believed it would be treated as a true partner, it has been pleased for the state convention to set the distribution percentage.

In the same spirit, state convention leaders have been unselfish when determining the amount retained in the state convention for its work versus that forwarded to the SBC for its ministries. Each has recognized the historic and healthy division of labor between the Southern Baptist Convention and the state conventions that basically gives the lead to the state convention for ministry within the state and to the Southern Baptist Convention for ministry outside the state. This arrangement has maximized efficiency and minimized duplication of effort. It also has allowed plenty of opportunity for working together on a myriad of ministries and projects without the sense that there was a violation of “turf.”

Historically, the state conventions have also valued the ministries of the SBC as their own and labored diligently to challenge the churches to support the national and international ministries with the same enthusiasm as state convention ministries. They recognized that Cooperative Program money given by the churches was intended for both the state convention and the SBC and did not begrudge the portion going for SBC missions. Most state conventions regularly seek to increase the percentage going to national and international causes and any decreases have been made with great reluctance.

A Cause for Alarm

In recent years, the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) adopted giving plans for the Cooperative Program that have the effect of supporting the state convention but curtailing support for the SBC. We were concerned with this fundamental change of definition of Cooperative Program at the time. Now, some SBC critics in Texas are

Your church is being asked by anti-SBC leaders in Texas to abandon its support of SBC missions during days of unparalleled effectiveness and opportunity around the world.

pushing further and are attempting to dissuade churches from giving to the SBC. They have made various charges regarding the faithfulness, effectiveness, and necessity of SBC ministries (charges that are addressed elsewhere in this document). This is a serious breach in the long-standing, useful partnership between the state convention and the SBC.

No one can tell individual Southern Baptist churches how to give their money. That is the reason we have always made provision for designated gifts. But we can encourage the churches in a particular direction. The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention’s position is that all churches are encouraged to give without designation to the Cooperative Program through the state convention. We have resisted creating any other track for giving because we believe it harms the idea of the Cooperative Program



and breaks faith with our state convention partners.

In place of its long-standing practice, your church is being asked by anti-SBC leaders in Texas to abandon its support of SBC missions during days of unparalleled effectiveness and opportunity around the world. Not only is there no good reason to cut back, there is every reason to support the SBC more fervently. The agencies of the SBC have a track record of distinguished service to Christ and to Southern Baptists and are at their zenith in effectiveness — more missionaries under appointment than ever before, more candidates for missions service than ever before, more church starts in a single year than ever before, more students enrolled in the six seminaries than ever before.

We are extremely disappointed that anti-SBC leaders in Texas have persuaded the state convention to adopt what is at best a neutral attitude toward the SBC portion of the

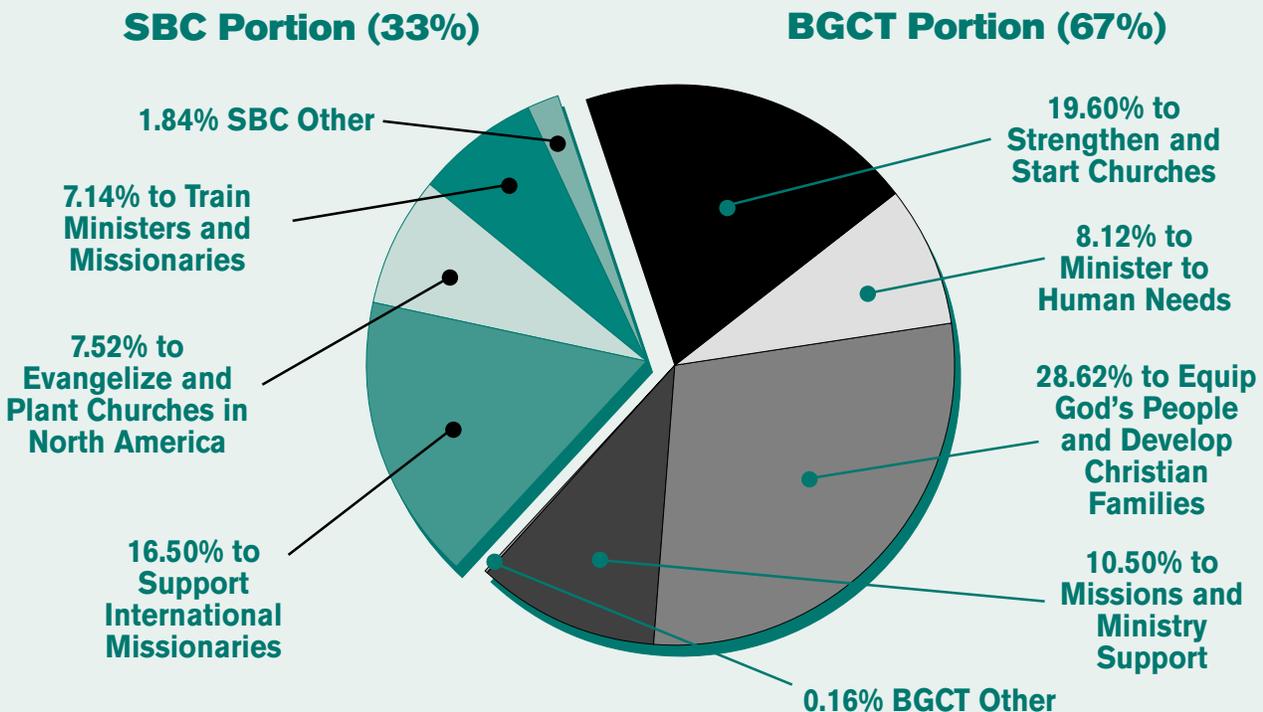
Cooperative Program and to promote other groups as *bona fide* recipients of Cooperative Program giving. This is a fundamental violation in the state convention/SBC partnership.

We are even more disappointed in the unwarranted and divisive criticism of SBC missions by those who would divert the gifts of faithful Southern Baptist churches in Texas to their own control. It would be sad indeed if Southern Baptist churches in Texas were dissuaded by a vocal minority of anti-SBC leaders from supporting the SBC portion of the Cooperative Program or denied a vehicle through the state convention for forwarding their gifts to Southern Baptist Convention missions causes. We hope neither of these practices becomes a reality. However, the Southern Baptist Convention is committed to relating to Southern Baptist congregations in Texas and will find a way to partner together in the event the traditional methods are unavailable.

What can you do?

1. Communicate your support of SBC missions and ministries to your church and the state convention.
2. Encourage a return to the historic state/SBC partnership through the Cooperative Program.
3. Continue giving enthusiastically to SBC causes.
4. Inform yourself and encourage your church to send its maximum number of messengers to the meeting of the BGCT meeting October 30-31 in Corpus Christi.
5. Pray for the Lord's guidance and blessing on all our ministries as we work cooperatively.

2000 BGCT Cooperative Program Allocation for SBC and State Convention





Southern Baptists and Women Pastors

The revision to the *Baptist Faith and Message* which reads, “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture,” has received a great deal of attention. Some critics have charged it is not baptistic for a convention to take a position on this. Others charge it is anti-woman, while others still wonder whether it ought to be addressed at all in a confession of faith. Does the BF&M get it right? What are the facts?

The preamble to the *Baptist Faith and Message* states that confessions of faith “constitute a consensus of opinion of some Baptist body.” The consensus opinion of Southern Baptists is obviously that the pastoral role is to be filled by men. The vast majority of Southern Baptist congregations call only men to serve as pastor. About 30 of over 40,000 churches currently have a woman as pastor – only 2 of 5,000 Southern Baptist congregations in Texas. Even those most vigorously promoting the idea of having women as pastors are not in fact calling women to pastor their own churches. Some wonder whether they actually believe in the importance of women pastors, or are they hoping for political advantage by making the SBC appear anti-woman?

Critics argue that Baptists are merely behind the times, or have been unduly influenced by a “patriarchal” society. However, we think Baptist churches have male pastors because they believe they are so instructed by the New Testament.

Southern Baptists believe the place to begin in this, as in all doctrinal questions, is to ask, “What does the Bible say?” Even a cursory reading of the pertinent texts prompts three important observations: 1) there were no known women pastors in New Testament times; 2) none of the instructions regarding church order include instructions for women pastors; and 3) some texts on church order explicitly forbid women to occupy that role. In 1 Timothy 2:12, written with the specific purpose of regulating the office of pastor and the orderly function of the churches, Paul writes, “I do not permit a woman to teach

or to have authority over a man” (NIV). Paul does not expect that women will not or cannot learn or teach (compare with Titus 2:3-5 and 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14,15). He concludes women cannot have a pastoral position, or perform the pastoral function, for that puts them in authority over men in the life of the church.

The question at hand is not whether women are of equal value to men, nor is it whether they can minister effectively. They are, and they do! Nor, is it an issue of the autonomy of the local church. It is, rather, that the Scripture assigns the role of pastor to males.

The Bible’s teaching on pastoral qualifications does not mean it is anti-woman. On the contrary, numerous passages speak clearly and forcibly to the inherent worth and value of women. Women in the New Testament engaged in significant ministry, performing valuable service in sometimes difficult situations. This is readily seen in the Acts of the Apostles. Both Priscilla and Aquila spoke privately to Apollos at Ephesus (Acts 18:24-26), correcting his incomplete and flawed theology. Further, women clearly played a considerable role in the work of the apostle Paul. In his letter to the Romans, Paul identified sixteen noteworthy helpers in ministry (16:1-16), and at least ten of them were women. Women in the New Testament, as they do today, participated in varied ministry, which served to strengthen and conserve the churches.

Southern Baptists are not anti-woman; indeed, they affirm the leadership of women in family, business, politics, and a wide array of human endeavors. Furthermore, women are an integral and invaluable part of the Body of Christ, serving in a broad variety of important roles both as volunteers and vocational ministers. **We don’t know how to say this more strongly: women and men are of equal value!** However, because Scripture speaks specifically to the role of pastor, churches are under a moral imperative to be guided by that teaching, rather than the shifting opinions of human cultures.

“*Baptist churches have male pastors because they believe they are so instructed by the New Testament.*”



The Root of the SBC Controversy

by **Morris H. Chapman**

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“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”

— 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NASB)

SBC critics such as *Texas Baptists Committed* assert that the controversy in the SBC was about power and politics. This is not so. The root of the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention was about theology!

The seeds of the controversy, which returned the Southern Baptist Convention to its historic commitments, had been germinating as early as the late 1950s. The steady growth in number and influence in the Convention, especially in the colleges and seminaries, of the “anti-supernaturalists” was producing more and more liberalism in writing, proclamation, and publication. The adoption of a hermeneutic of suspicion which elevates man’s reason above the clear statements of the Bible (see “Bibliolatry” article in this publication) resulted in a diminished view of Scripture with attendant faulty applications in areas of doctrine and practice (e.g., soteriology, sexual ethics, sanctity of life issues). Correspondingly, there was more and more discomfort and outright anger among many pastors and churches.

The attempts by denominational leaders to “keep the peace” by such actions as recommending the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* and the reluctant republication of volume one of the *Broadman Commentary* were ineffectual in addressing the real problem: the continued influence of many teachers and leaders who did not hold to a high

view of Scripture. When moral suasion, passionate appeals, and public criticism failed to alter the *status quo*, conservatives devised and publicly announced a strategy to utilize the time-honored, democratic electoral system of the Southern Baptist Convention to elect conservative presidents, officers, and directors of the agencies, who would seek conservative personnel to serve Southern Baptists.

What motivated these Baptists to risk personal criticism, jeopardize careers, lose friends, and embroil the Southern Baptist Convention in a controversy that could have eventuated in its disintegration? Was it power lust or right-wing secular politics or an affinity for fighting as some have accused? Absolutely not — these accusations are totally unfounded.

The central issue that spawned and sustained the movement was the nature of Scripture and its significance for the practice of Christianity as expressed through Southern Baptists. The controversy was ignited by the diminution of confidence in the Bible as the accurate and trustworthy written Word of God. Scores of God-called young people who had been birthed, baptized, and discipled in Bible-believing Southern Baptist churches went off to Baptist institutions of higher learning where they were robbed of their faith in the truthfulness of Scripture by the very folk who were being paid by Baptists to strengthen their

faith and prepare them for vital ministry. Many of these potential leaders abandoned Christian ministry. Worse yet, some remained to poison the churches with the same false doctrine. What tragic results of this lamentable epoch of unfaithful teaching! Gratefully, many of the

young preachers weathered the assault on their Bible and their faith and were the very ones who led the Southern Baptist Convention to return to its roots.

Some Baptists may find it difficult to believe there was growing liberalism afoot in the SBC but the facts bear it out. Others may have viewed the internal conflict in the denomination as dis-

tasteful and disturbing, but it was necessary if sound biblical theology were once again to be the platform for our Convention’s work.

We know Southern Baptists in Texas are not looking for a fight. They desire to be peaceable, cooperative, and harmonious — but not at the expense of compromising Christian truth!

In recent years, America has been honoring the veterans, living and dead, of World War II. No one likes war. But how grateful we are for those who sacrificed in war to preserve those things worth fighting for.

We pray that the issue of sound doctrine is settled for Southern Baptists and that more controversy will not be necessary. But we are thankful that Baptists, in Texas and elsewhere, can be counted on to stand for Christ’s truth whatever the cost.

“The central issue that spawned and sustained the movement was the nature of Scripture and its significance for the practice of Christianity as expressed through Southern Baptists.”

Your Church Reaching the World for Christ

When you give through the Southern Baptist Convention portion of the Cooperative Program, you fund the following:

50% supports over 4,800 missionaries in over 150 countries around the world leading to 400,000 baptisms and 4,700 new churches started last year overseas.

22.79% supports church planting and evangelism in North America through 5,000 missionaries and nearly 200,000 volunteers with over 1,700 new churches planted last year; also, supports nationwide radio and television ministries.

21.64% trains over 12,000 ministers and missionaries in six seminaries.

1.49% promotes religious liberty and Christian values in multiple venues including daily live nation-wide radio broadcasts.

.76% supports low income retired Baptist ministers and widows.

3.32% provides accounting, legal services, communications, promotion, convention meetings, and administration.

Total 2000-2001 SBC CP Budget is \$167,996,385.

Together We're Carrying Out the Great Commission!

For More Information...

Among the several publications sent to Baptists in Texas, is the *Texas Baptist Standard* — the official newspaper of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. It has a very pro-BGCT stance, as it ought to have. Sadly, however, the editors also seem to be very sympathetic to the anti-SBC group in Texas. This appears to shape the information selected for publication.

You have the right to direct access to news and information about your convention and its work. Let us encourage you to log on to www.sbc.net. It is the very helpful site managed by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. You can subscribe there to *SBCLife*, the news journal of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. You will also find directions on how to receive *Baptist Press* five days a week for free. These two publications will enable you to have unfiltered news and information from an SBC perspective.

You can read the *Baptist Faith and Message* for yourself by clicking on the *Baptist Faith and Message* button on the opening page of the Web site. The Web site also has additional information about the views, practices, and ministries of Southern Baptists.

Another Web site, www.Baptist2Baptist.net contains materials of special interest to Southern Baptists in Texas. You may use it and refer your friends to it for a copy of this paper and numerous other articles and items.

We want you to have all the facts.

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