

Churches in Cultural Captivity by John Lee Eighmy

During a recent conversation that I had with Dr. Robert Parham of the Baptist Center for Ethics, Parham described John Lee Eighmy's *Churches in Cultural Captivity* as foundational reading for any student studying the history of the social attitudes of Southern Baptists. In just over 200 pages, Eighmy tells the story of Southern Baptist social thought from the beginning of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 through the 1960s. Eighmy argues throughout the book that Southern Baptist churches, more often than not, reflect the values held by their surrounding society. In other words, they have been held captive to culture. At the same time, in this fascinating volume, Eighmy relies on SBC annuals, state convention minutes and Baptist state papers to reveal a socially progressive side of the SBC unknown to many Southern Baptists. Unfortunately Eighmy, a professor at Oklahoma Baptist University, died before his work was published.

In his first two chapters, Eighmy traces the events leading up to the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention to the end of Reconstruction. With the vast expansion of slavery, Southerners, including Baptists, quickly developed a "biblical" defense of the slave system. Committed to racial inequality, Southern Baptists turned their moral support from slavery towards the Jim Crow system of discrimination after the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Eighmy identifies three major forces that restricted the social thought and action of Southern Baptists during the 19th century. These include the attack of Landmarkism on denominational structures, revivalism and its preoccupation with the spiritual and moral welfare of individuals, and pressure from culture on local churches to conform to the prevailing social attitudes of the South. Clearly, an examination of Southern Baptist social thought during the late

19th century demonstrates how Southern values gained acceptance from a denomination initially characterized by fragile organizations and a lack of institutional leadership.

Baptist spokesmen (editors, popular preachers, etc.) during the Progressive Era of the late 19th and early 20th century expressed attitudes that were more “Bourbon” (socially conservative) than “Populist,” according to Eighmy. These Bourbon Baptists identified with the bankers and merchants instead of the farmers. Adopting the Puritan social ethic which associated failure with deficiency of character, these spokesmen failed to offer a helping hand to the poor farmers. The Bourbon Baptists did not appear to comprehend the great economic challenges of a post-slavery world. Usually they supported the goals but not the methods of labor unions (i.e. strikes).

Southern Baptist involvement in the temperance movement and a strong support for prohibition are two glaring examples in which Baptists sought to control the morals of an entire society. As the South became more industrialized, Baptists began to feel that their traditional values were under attack. These attacks paved the way for greater involvement of the SBC in social and political issues.

Since the birth of the SBC, Southern Baptists have justified their lack of social activism by insisting that the church’s rightful mission was to save individual souls rather than society. Political action was deemed inappropriate and ineffective as a means of fulfilling the church’s evangelistic mandate. However, Southern Baptists considered alcohol so evil that this line of reasoning was laid aside to preserve the traditional moral values associated with the “Southern Way of Life.”

The Southern Baptist Convention’s active support of Prohibition introduced Southern Baptists to the social gospel movement of the North. According to Eighmy, when Southern Baptists joined the dry crusade they were beginning to affiliate with national movements of

social protest while adopting the essential idea of the social gospel – direct church participation in social causes. Eighmy argues that the social gospel movement had a profound influence on Baptists in the South. Evidence of this influence is indeed noteworthy considering the countless barriers (individualism, theological conservatism, decentralized authority and denominational isolationism) to cooperative social action by churches.

By the end of the Progressive era, the social gospel movement had made inroads into the life and social thought of numerous Southern Baptists. For instance, Southern Baptist seminaries had begun to offer courses on social Christianity. The various state conventions and their newspapers gave greater attention to social issues dealing with war, peace, race relations and economic matters. Social Service Committees were formed at both the state and national levels. Though the influence of the social gospel did not send the Southern Baptist Convention down the road of theological liberalism, it did leave a permanent denominational division between Baptists calling for collective action against societal evils and those who opposed any form of social involvement.

The second-half of *Churches in Cultural Captivity* deals almost exclusively with the history of the Social Service Commission of the SBC and of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. Established in 1913 at the urging of Wake Forest President, William Poteat, the SSC (renamed the Christian Life Commission in 1953) focused primarily on individualistic matters of personal morality such as temperance, gambling, and keeping the Sabbath. Little attention was given to the pressing issues of war, race, and economic reforms. Unwilling to take a controversial position on any subject, SSC Chairman A. J. Barton opined that the “social implications of Christianity” could only be realized through the fruits of personal evangelism.

A wide variety of social attitudes found expression in the Social Service Committees of the state conventions. While some committees strongly opposed church involvement in social causes, others fully endorsed the progressive goals of liberal Protestantism. A close study of these committees reveals a scattered group of socially progressive Southern Baptists, especially in states such as North Carolina. In most cases, the states (like Barton's SSC) refused to take strong positions on controversial social problems and instead preferred to represent the prevailing sentiment of their constituency.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's revolutionary New Deal programs helped to awaken the social conscience of many Southern Baptists during the 1930s. According to some Baptist leaders, several New Deal programs violated the Baptist distinctives of separation of church and state and freedom of conscience by forcing taxpayers to support religious institutions. To ensure religious liberty for all, Southern Baptists founded what later came to be known as the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a political action and education advocacy organization. Led by J.M. Dawson during the 1940s and 1950s, the BJC became one of the nation's foremost defenders of the separation of church and state.

In its early years, lack of funds limited the SBC's Social Service Commission's potential to engage in direct social action. Thus, the agency was forced to function as an educational ministry with the task of influencing the social attitudes of Southern Baptists. Unlike in the 1920s and 1930s, the promotion of Puritan morality did not dominate the work of the commission in later decades. The SSC exercised more initiative and leadership in dealing with issues such as world peace, economic order, and civil rights. The SSC's greatest contribution was its response to racial issues. The SSC endorsed and successfully urged the SBC to endorse the landmark 1954 Supreme Court ruling against segregation in public schools. Clearly, the SSC

found her voice during the Civil Rights Movement. Most would attribute this accomplishment to the SSC's not-so-timid executive director, Foy Valentine. Despite the SSC's willingness to challenge the prevailing social attitudes of the South, no Southern Baptist executive publicly associated himself with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s movement.

Any widespread changes in the social attitudes of Southern Baptists were made within the institutional and ideological framework of the Convention. Eighmy concludes by arguing that the ability of Southern Baptists to influence the secular world in the future will largely be determined by the extent to which vocal pastors and professors are allowed to shape denominational social attitudes and action.

I do take issue with Eighmy's attempt to divide moral issues into two distinct categories: personal and social. Eighmy classifies liquor, gambling, marriage/divorce and pornography as strictly issues of personal morality while classifying war/peace, race, and the economy as purely social issues. Surely abuse of alcohol, an increasing divorce rate, and addiction to pornography have consequences that affect all of society. Often where Eighmy sees black and white, others see shades of gray.

Nonetheless, Eighmy does an excellent job of proving that Southern Baptist churches reflect the values of their culture and have always done so. History shows that Southern Baptists have struggled to define the church's responsibility in the area of social reform. Without a doubt, the influence of the social gospel movement on some progressives played a large role in creating a permanent division among Baptists in the South. Even today, some Southern Baptists do not understand the importance of having a denominational agency such as the ERLC that deals exclusively with present-day social concerns. A focus on social issues still worries some Southern Baptists that personal evangelism will suffer and churches will become more like

secular social agencies. And some critics still contend that Southern Baptist social concerns reflect captivity to their conservative culture.

A Genealogy of Dissent by David Stricklin

In *A Genealogy of Dissent: Southern Baptist Protest in the 20th Century*, historian David Stricklin further supports John Eighmy's thesis that a faction of Southern Baptists were greatly concerned about social issues. Through his incredible research, consisting mostly of primary sources and oral history interviews, Stricklin demonstrates that there was indeed a strong, dissenting progressive voice in Southern Baptist life concerned with issues of social justice.

Stricklin's first chapter is devoted to a discussion of the deep historic roots of dissent in colonial Baptist life against state-established religion and its coercive expressions of religious beliefs. Despite these radical roots, Stricklin concurs with Eighmy that Southern Baptists, for the most part, were held captive to their culture. They had become the archetypal southerners: "racially and sexually hierarchical, suspicious of 'modern' viewpoints, complacent about the exploitation of the economically disadvantaged, militaristic, nationalistic, and generally hostile toward the reformist (and northern) social gospel." Stricklin argues that a "genealogy of dissent," a small faction of Southern Baptist individuals and groups rebuffed their culture's values, refusing to be, as Rufus Spain said, "at ease in Zion."

These dissenters (or progressives) functioned in many ways like a family. The spiritual father of this family tree was Walter Nathan Johnson, a radical North Carolina Baptist and pioneer racial integrationist who created a network of supporters and sympathizers from the 1920s through the 1940s. From this network came civil rights advocates, labor organizers, peace activists, and advocates of women in ministry. The social thought of Johnson trickled down this family tree of dissenters to influence even those who had never heard his name.

The second chapter of *A Genealogy of Dissent* examines Walter Johnson's influence on progressives Martin England and Clarence Jordan. Johnson's progressive views on race inspired England and Jordan to create the interracial community known as Koinonia Farm as a "demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God." According to Stricklin, England and Jordan were the two principal links between Johnson's "vision of the South brought under the leadership of Jesus" and other branches of the Southern Baptist dissident family tree. England, and particularly Jordan, had a profound impact on Foy Valentine who lived and worked at Koinonia Farm. Known as the "conscience of Southern Baptists," Valentine served as the director of both the Christian Life Commission of Texas Baptists and of Southern Baptists. England also played an influential role in the life of Carlyle Marney, one of the most powerful and one of the most liberal preachers in Southern Baptist history.

Other notable Southern Baptists influenced by England and/or Jordan include Martha Gilmore (pioneer woman minister), Bob McClernon (progressive pastor), Will Campbell (iconoclastic preacher, Civil Rights worker and prominent author), Ken Sehested (founder of the Baptist Peace Fellowship), and Nancy Hastings Sehested (the most visible woman minister in the SBC in the 1980s). Stricklin does an excellent job of developing this "genealogy of dissent" and emphasizing the pioneer influence of Walter Johnson. However, not all Southern Baptist progressives were influenced directly or indirectly by Walter Johnson, Clarence Jordan, or Martin England. In fact, a separate "genealogy of dissent" could likely be formulated beginning with members of the influential Poteat family of North Carolina.

In the next three chapters, Stricklin studies the social issues around which progressive dissent arose in the SBC. Unlike the denomination as a whole, the dissenters took their boldest stands on issues pertaining to civil rights for all African-Americans. Stricklin contends that for a

majority of white Southern Baptists, their God was the God of John Calhoun and Nathan Bedford Forrest. Racism was fundamentally ingrained into the thinking of many Southern Baptists and their leaders. As a result, the resolutions on race approved at the annual meeting of the SBC rarely translated into changed behavior among millions of rank and file Southern Baptists. Furthermore, progressive positions on race adopted by the Foy Valentine-led CLC alienated many Southern Baptists who desired denominational unity and a maintenance of the segregated social order.

Progressives from the “genealogy of dissent” embraced a conciliatory attitude toward race relations. Unlike the few progressive-minded denominational leaders of the SBC, some dissenters, most notably Martin England and Will Campbell, became active in the Civil Rights Movement. Other progressives hosted interracial gatherings between local black and white ministers. Frustrated with progressive denominationalists like Foy Valentine who refused to work outside of the Convention system, some dissenters left the SBC and affiliated with the northern American Baptist Churches USA. Stricklin strongly criticizes Valentine on this point. However, Valentine’s gradualist and pragmatic approach to social issues proved to be at least somewhat successful in the end. Valentine realized that his educational efforts were necessary due to the lack of ethical awareness or social consciousness of many Southern Baptists. Nonetheless, Valentine was remiss for not reaching out to rather than neglecting these progressive dissenters.

Through their involvement in the civil rights struggles, many from the “genealogy of dissent” were inspired to become peace activists. These peacemakers believed that peace meant reconciliation, not just between conflicting nations, but between classes and individuals as well. Third generation dissenter Ken Sehested helped form and served as the executive-director of the

Baptist Peace Fellowship in 1984. Seminary professors Glenn Hinson and Glen Stassen also helped to inform, encourage, and assist Southern Baptists in the mission of peacemaking. Like Valentine, key moderate pastors and denominational leaders refused to encourage nontraditional methods (peacemaking) or organizations (Baptist Peace Fellowship, Seeds) that did not appear within the structure of ordinary Southern Baptist life. Instead of forming a partnership with the Peace Fellowship, Valentine and other moderate leaders chose to regard it as a competitor. By doing so Valentine further alienated the dissenters from Southern Baptist life. Valentine's demand to the dissenters that "you're either with us or against us" sounded eerily similar to the same demands made by the "fundamentalist dissenters" during the fundamentalist/moderate Controversy.

The group of progressives that threatened Southern Baptist traditionalists the most was dissident women who sought to be ordained ministers. These women were largely ignored by many of the male-dominated "genealogy of dissent." Women pastors such as Martha Gilmore and Addie Davis struggled to find acceptance in Baptist life. Finally, in the 1980s dozens of ordained women ministers came together to form Southern Baptist Women In Ministry (SBWIM). Their purpose was to help women ministers assimilate into the everyday life of Southern Baptist service. Ultimately their goal was never realized as the SBWIM cut ties with the SBC and began to coordinate their events with the annual meeting of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Southern Baptists never could accept that ordination was the logical extension of Christian commitment. Stricklin is correct in his observation that few moderate men helped to form a base of acceptance for women in ministry. Not too much has changed in recent years. Yes, moderates do wholeheartedly affirm in theory women in ministry (i.e. pastor). However, moderate churches have not done their part in calling qualified and capable women to serve as

pastors. Moderate seminaries are training more and more women and a crisis of leadership is on the horizon unless more churches practice what moderate leaders have been preaching.

In the sixth and final chapter, Stricklin identifies a second group of dissenters in Southern Baptist life. According to Stricklin, these “fundamentalists” who feared and rejected progressive Baptist ideas and agendas eventually took over the Southern Baptist Convention. He argues that the Christian Life Commission was immediately transformed. Stricklin laments that the CLC became “a model of fundamentalist rectitude and utility” under Valentine’s successor, Richard Land. Stricklin notes that the greatest irony produced by the “fundamentalist takeover” of the SBC was the fact that the fundamentalists correctly viewed themselves as dissenters. Like the progressive dissenters, the fundamentalist dissenters departed from the norms of Southern Baptist belief and behavior.

Stricklin concludes that the “fundamentalist dissenters” were “the closest of the three groups (progressives, moderates, fundamentalists) theologically and culturally to the Southern Baptist majority.” This assumption is naive. Believing that Paige Patterson best represented the perspective of the average Southern Baptist during the takeover is a tough pill to swallow. Loyalty to the convention system, among other factors, is at least one reason that explains the actions (or inaction) of the majority of Southern Baptists in recent years. Nonetheless, Stricklin’s *A Genealogy of Dissent* is indeed an excellent work and a great contribution to the study of Baptists. With that said, Stricklin’s sixth chapter regarding the “fundamentalist dissenters” should be expanded and included in another volume. The idea of fundamentalist dissent is compelling, but no author can adequately explain the complexities of the Southern Baptist Controversy in one mere chapter.

An Interpretative Study of the CLC by David Stricklin

In *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, John Lee Eighmy briefly addresses the various Southern Baptist Christian Life Committees established to address society's pressing social concerns. One such agency was the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. David Stricklin's *An Interpretative History of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1950-1977* is thus far the only detailed study of one of these important organizations. In just over 300 pages, Stricklin tells the previously untold story of the Texas CLC. He examines the CLC's antecedents, ideological roots, founders, growth, position statements, and evolution of philosophy and methodology.

Founded in 1950, the Christian Life Commission was the brainchild of four influential Texas Baptists: A. C. Miller, T. B. Maston, W. R. White, and J. Howard Williams. Realizing that Texas Baptists had failed to apply moral ideas and principles of the Gospel to all aspects of life, these men called for a program to address a broad range of ethical issues, both social and personal, and to provide leadership for Texas Baptists. Stricklin illustrates that the history of the leadership of the CLC of the SBC itself is in fact an extension of the leadership of the Texas Baptist CLC. The Texas CLC and her leaders have had a profound influence on ethical and moral perspectives extending well beyond the borders of Texas. Of the four directors covered in this study, two left the CLC to run other national organizations funded by the SBC. Dr. Foy Valentine left the Texas CLC in 1960 to lead the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and Dr. James Dunn left in 1980 to run the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

According to Stricklin, the social application of Christianity by the Social Gospel Movement provided the ideological background from which the aforementioned founders and

directors of the CLC learned to apply the gospel to all of life. During the first half of the 20th century, social activism was not popular with the majority of Texas Baptists. In these years, Texas Baptists through the Civic Righteousness Committee addressed a variety of issues such as Christian citizenship, Sabbath observance, marriage and divorce, religious liberty, war, gambling, and appropriate forms of entertainment. Divergent in their ethical concerns, an overwhelming majority of Texas Baptists opposed the alcohol industry. This narrow list of primarily individualistic concerns greatly expanded after 1950 under the newly formed CLC. Though not mentioned by Stricklin, the social thought of directors Jimmy Allen and Foy Valentine was heavily influenced by the writings of Reinhold Neibuhr while James Dunn was impacted by the thought of Walter Rauschenbusch and J. M. Dawson. All three men were doctoral students under T. B. Maston who was perhaps the person most responsible for the formation of the Texas CLC.

Under each of the four directors (A. C. Miller, Foy Valentine, Jimmy Allen, and James Dunn), the CLC grew in terms of staff, status, and membership. Through the years, the individual philosophies and methodologies of operation have in reality been an extension of the personality and training of each director. A. C. Miller understood that his “primary” purpose was to educate Texas Baptists to have “an awareness of Christian responsibility concerning social issues.” Consequently, Miller produced and distributed literature and also sponsored Christian Life Conferences in local churches. Without evidence to the contrary, it seems that Miller’s only purpose was education. His CLC was definitely not “action-oriented.”

Like Miller, Foy Valentine’s goal was to win the acceptance and support of Texas Baptists. From its inception, the CLC had to defend the legitimacy of its work. Valentine’s educational efforts were directed primarily towards changing the minds and hearts of

segregationist Southern Baptists in a post-Brown v. BOE America. Unfortunately, Stricklin does not give attention to the group of naysayers that threatened the existence of the CLC. Given their positions on race, one can deduce that the commission's opponents consisted mostly of racist Texas Baptists.

While the educational function of the CLC remained at the center of its work, Jimmy Allen and James Dunn added a new dimension to the methodology of the commission. They believed that social change could also be effected through political action. Increasingly, they involved the commission in direct political activity as lobbyists in Austin. This was especially true of Dunn's tenure.

Far from being a single issue interest group, the Texas CLC has addressed a wide range of issues. The areas receiving the bulk of attention were family life (sexuality, adultery, divorce, birth control, and sex education), economic life (poverty and world hunger), religious liberty (Christian citizenship and church-state separation), race relations, and other moral issues (war, peace, capital punishment, prison reform, pornography, and abortion). All four directors were committed to a strict separation of church and state. For example, the CLC opposed sending an ambassador to the Vatican, parochial aid, the presence of garbed nuns, Bible teaching in public schools, and all school prayer amendments.

Throughout its history, the CLC maintained contact with the consensus opinion of Texas Baptists. For instance, the CLC led campaigns against liquor, gambling and obscenity – issues that were near and dear to the hearts of many Texas Baptists. However, the CLC did not hesitate to be prophetic and take unpopular positions on issues regarding public school desegregation, equal rights in housing, and support for sex education. Despite their unpopular positions, there have been no organized attempts to censure the commission or control its work. This lack of

conflict is frankly unbelievable considering the organized attacks by Southern Baptists against the SBC's Christian Life Commission and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Stricklin suggests that the CLC avoided strong and concerted opposition because it frequently appealed to biblical principles and the authority of the Bible when taking a certain position. Perhaps merely appealing to biblical authority in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s was enough to pacify Texas Baptists. However, appeals made to biblical authority by Foy Valentine of the SBC Christian Life Commission and James Dunn of the Baptist Joint Committee did not satisfy fundamentalists and conservatives in the 1980s. The fragmentation of Southern culture and Southern Baptist life was then well underway.

When speaking to Texas Baptists, the CLC justified every area of its work on Scriptural grounds. However, when speaking outside of Baptist circles, the CLC found other arguments to support its positions without contradicting biblical principles. Throughout its relatively short history, the CLC has maintained a tension between its appeal to biblical principles and to modern research. The CLC also has faced the difficult task of reflecting a Texas Baptist consensus while simultaneously being prophetic and maintaining a healthy balance of idealistic philosophy and pragmatic action. The CLC has earned great respect among Baptists and non-Baptists alike due to its ability to adequately balance these tensions.

Stricklin's study of the Texas CLC is indeed a great contribution to Southern Baptist social history. This type of regional history can shed light on larger denominational trends and/or reveal the work of lesser known organizations. Unfortunately, Stricklin was not able to answer intriguing questions such as: how effectively has the CLC shaped the ethical attitudes of Texas Baptists? Since Stricklin's study covers the commission's history through 1977, a new study of the Texas CLC is desperately needed!

For The Healing Of The Nations: Baptist Peacemakers by Paul Dekar

In his book, *For the Healing of the Nations: Baptist Peacemakers*, Paul Dekar traces a seemingly unnoticed peacemaking legacy from seventeenth-century Baptist origins to the present day. To many observers, Dekar's title, *Baptist Peacemakers*, may sound like an oxymoron. Baptists in recent years have been more identified with brawls and battles than with peacemaking. In the current crisis in Iraq, Southern Baptist leaders are some of President Bush's strongest and loudest supporters.

Dekar defines peacemaking as "a process by which one endeavors to live at harmony with oneself, the created order, and the Creator God." Thus, a Baptist Peacemaker is one who seeks peace by using peaceful methods such as conciliation and arbitration to resolve conflicts, and who builds more just and stable relationships. Baptist Peacemakers also pursue a better world in which injustice, violence, and war no longer exist. Dekar's aim is to recover the legacy of Baptist peacemakers for future generations so that perhaps their stories may motivate other believers to seek the "healing of the nations."

Among early Baptists, non-resistance or pacifism was not an isolated phenomenon. In fact, until the War of 1812, non-resistance was a persistent position among Baptists, particularly among General and Freewill Baptists. Dekar counts Catherine Scott, Anne Hutchison's sister, as one example of a Baptist (she later becomes a Quaker) who advocated non-resistance.

Baptists, especially British Baptists, took part in the Peace Crusades of the early 19th century. Drawing on Christian non-resistance and the Enlightenment, Baptists in Britain organized peace societies which argued against war on the basis of Scripture, and they summarized their faith in the gospel of Christ as a gospel of peace. Dekar highlights Charles Haddon Spurgeon as one of the most vocal and influential British Baptist peacemakers of the

nineteenth century. Ironically, those who quote Spurgeon the most today tend to lean toward militarism rather than pacifism.

Continuing his emphasis on British Baptist Peacemakers, Dekar examines two men who worked tirelessly for negative peace (i.e. absence of war and violence): John Clifford and James Henry Rushbrooke. John Clifford, who headed numerous organizations including the Baptist World Alliance and the Christian Socialist League, was a champion for the rights of non-conformists and a vocal opponent of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. Another Brit, James Henry Rushbrooke, worked for peace through his numerous positions with the Baptist World Alliance and as editor of *The Peacemaker*. Though not a pacifist, Rushbrooke supported those who were and opposed conscription. After World War I, he contributed to the healing of relations between the peoples of Europe as executive-director of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches.

In the second section of *Baptist Peacemakers*, Dekar examines the Baptist peace heritage through the concept of positive peace. Positive peace is more than just the absence of violence and war; it is the presence of social justice through equal opportunity, a fair distribution of power and resources, and equal protection and impartial enforcement of the law. Included in this category of positive peace are those Baptists who have sought to eliminate conditions that engender war such as human rights violations, illiteracy, infected drinking water, poverty, racism, and slavery.

Dekar considers religious liberty to be an essential component of positive peace. Leonard Busher, a Baptist Peacemaker of the seventeenth century, often compared religious persecution and forced worship to rape. Busher contended that religious peace was a byproduct of religious liberty.

Like Busher, Roger Williams emphasized that religious persecution was entirely contrary to Jesus' Gospel of Peace. While Dekar does not mention it, Williams also uses the idea of forced worship as spiritual rape. Although not quite a pacifist, Williams believed his radical ideas about religious freedom would "engender peace, truth, and tranquility while preventing war." According to Dekar, Williams understood that genuine freedom also includes economic, political, and social freedoms for all. Dekar concludes by suggesting that if alive today Williams would still champion the cause of those who struggle against tyranny and oppression and would affirm the role of non-violent mass movements as means for social change. While most moderate Baptists today tend to identify Williams with eighteenth century Baptist, John Leland, and perhaps even James Dunn and his recent work at the BJC, Dekar seems to suggest that Williams was more the predecessor to the prophetic leadership given by Martin Luther King, Jr.

After highlighting Roger Williams' contribution to positive peace, Dekar turns his focus to anti-slavery campaigners George Liele (African-American) and William Knibb. Both men recognized that perpetuation of slavery would engender more violence. Through a transformation of society, Liele and Knibb hoped to put an end to this barbaric practice. Other nineteenth century Baptist Peacemakers such as William Hickman and David Barrow were staunch anti-slavery advocates. After his church was expelled from their local association due to his anti-slavery views, Barrow formed the Friends of Humanity Association (Kentucky) which excluded churches for slavery-friendly positions. Dekar concludes his section on positive peace by briefly highlighting over a dozen mostly unknown Baptist Peacemakers who served as missionaries around the world. He states that these missionaries served as agents of peace and reconciliation in mostly third-world countries.

In the third and final section of *For The Healing of the Nations*, Dekar concentrates on prophetic voices from the Baptist tradition. He honors the witness of Baptist martyrs from the English Seventh-Day observer Dorothy Traske (d. 1645) to the El Salvador teacher Maria Gomez (d. 1989). Baptists today who are actively participating in the peace movement will find Dekar's discussion of martyrs especially useful. Most Southern Baptists are familiar with Lottie Moon, a celebrated missionary and martyr. However, how many Baptists are familiar with other missionary martyrs such as Catharine Pope Farthing, Bessie Campbell Renault and Rev. John Underwood? Whether one is a dove or a hawk, the memory of martyrs should be recovered by Baptists.

Dekar also gives attention to figures who significantly shaped 20th century thought and action for peace such as Walter Rauschenbusch, Muriel Lester, and Martin Luther King Jr.. Unfortunately, these brief biographies are more descriptive than analytical and do not offer any new insight for those already familiar with Rauschenbusch and King.

For The Healing of the Nations concludes with two nice summaries of the histories of the British Baptist Pacifist Fellowship and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. After World War I, the British Baptist Pacifist Fellowship was organized by Baptist pastors involved in the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the No Conscription Fellowship. With a strong focus on the individual conscience, the BBPF directed its attention to issues such as conscientious objection and military chaplaincy. In the aftermath of World War II, BBPF focused on Britain's nuclear weapons program, post-war conscription, and arm sales. In 1989, the BBPF modified its requirements for membership, and consequently allowed non-pacifist Baptists with broad sympathy for their mission and concern for issues of peace and justice to join the group. Dekar

stresses that since its inception the BBPF has been a major instrument of healing among the nations of Europe.

During World War II, Baptists, primarily affiliated with the Northern Baptist Convention, organized the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship as a mechanism to bring together like-minded Baptists in fellowship and to strengthen support for conscientious objectors. Dekar provides numerous examples of the ways in which Baptist pacifists were able to influence denominational positions concerning World War II. After the war ended, the BPF began to concentrate on “preventing a peacetime draft, raising funds for post-war relief, nurturing healing among the nations, and righting such wrongs as the wartime relocation of Japanese Americans.”

As members of the BPF came to recognize that there was no single way to peace, the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship became the Baptist Peace Fellowship and began to accept members who did not hold absolute pacifist convictions. Dekar does not examine in depth the reasons for this change. However, I suspect the change was made to attract new members and more funds.

Dekar notes that the growth of peacemaking initiatives among Southern Baptists was remarkable after the Vietnam era. In 1979, Southern Baptists launched a paper, *Baptist Peacemaker*, and many congregational peace groups. The peace groups of Southern Baptists were united with the Baptist Peace Fellowship in 1984 with the formation of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

Interestingly, Dekar fails to mention the BPFNA’s controversial statement in 1992 which both welcomed and affirmed gays and lesbians as members of their organization. Shortly after this book was published, BPFNA announced that transgendered persons and bisexuals would be added to the list of welcome members. BPFNA Executive Director Ken Sehested argued that the full inclusion in church life of gays and lesbians was an issue of justice. The BPFNA’s

“welcoming and affirming” position led to its defunding by the American Baptist Churches USA and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. By adding a pro-homosexuality plank to their platform, the BPFNA has created an organization in which conservative and moderate pacifists and anti-war Baptists are unable to join. Dekar’s readers can only wonder why he did not include this important piece of BPFNA history.

However, for those interested in unearthing the peacemaking tradition of Baptists, Dekar’s *For The Healing of the Nations* is the book to read. Though not very analytical, Dekar has written an incredibly well-researched and inspiring book full of passion.

Getting Right With God by Mark Newman

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled in the landmark decision *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. With the Civil Rights Movement pressing full steam ahead, Southern Baptists were forced to address issues pertaining to race. As Mark Newman explains in *Getting Right With God: Southern Baptists and Desegregation, 1945-1995*, the largest Protestant denomination did not respond to the racial debate with a single, monolithic mindset. Instead, the attitudes of Southern Baptists tended to fall into three broad categories. Racial conservatives or “hardliners” embraced white supremacy and rejected integration based on their understanding of the Bible. Racial moderates accepted segregation as part of the “Southern Way” but became open to change following the *Brown* decision. Racial progressives rejected discrimination, inequality of the races, and encouraged their Southern Baptist brothers and sisters to abandon their racist attitudes and commitment to segregation. Meticulously researched and well-written, Newman demonstrates that Southern Baptists held diverse views on racial issues defying the bigoted stereotype perpetuated by historians and journalists.

In his first chapter, Newman provides an overview of the relationship between African-Americans and the Southern Baptist Convention during the period of 1845-1944. Very little new ground is covered here and Newman relies to a great extent on the work of John Lee Eighmy's *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists*. After the Civil War, messengers to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention voted to exclude African-American churches from Southern Baptist associations and state conventions.

At the turn of the century, the all-white SBC became deeply involved with social issues such as alcohol. However, the issue of racial inequality was never publicly addressed. Finally in 1920 the newly found Social Service Commission and the Woman's Missionary Union spoke out against lynching. Around 1940, the Home Mission Board began to speak out against racial supremacy and racial inequalities in education and housing. The goals of these organizations were to improve the inequalities of a segregated society rather than integration. According to Newman, Southern Baptists became most outspoken on race whenever racial problems threatened disorder, notably in 1941 and 1943 when they feared that whites might defy Supreme Court decisions favoring African-Americans.

Until the mid-1960s, the majority of white southerners and Southern Baptists favored segregation. A progressive minority of Southern Baptists harshly criticized racial discrimination, and argued that blacks should be afforded equal treatment within segregation. However, a few Southern Baptist progressives criticized racial separation as early as 1945. These racial progressives mostly included denominational officials, heads of SBC agencies, editors of Baptist newspapers, and employees of the Texas and SBC Christian Life Commissions. Newman fails to mention that many of these racial progressives were not progressive on all issues. As David Stricklin emphasizes in *A Genealogy of Dissent*, racial progressives who were denominationalists

were in fact moderates who sought to effect change within the confines of convention agencies and not through a grassroots movement.

Newman argues that most Southern Baptists passed through three stages in their response to *Brown* and desegregation. In the first stage, between 1945 and 1954, Southern Baptists continued their support of segregation but argued that African- Americans should be afforded equal opportunities within it. In the second stage after *Brown*, Southern Baptists began to reluctantly and slowly accept change. To demonstrate this slow change, Newman used examples of well known flip-flopping fundamentalist Baptists such as W.A. Criswell who in the 1950s was a staunch segregationist, but one decade later declared that biblical segregationists “do not read the Bible right.” Above all, Southern Baptists desired peace and order. Only the Christian Life Commissions were willing to take a strong stand in favor of integration. Pastors were pressured by segregationists not to speak out in favor of integration and those who did often lost their jobs.

In the final stage after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, more and more Southern Baptists abandoned their commitment to segregation. The following year, messengers to the SBC passed a resolution that promised to promote “peaceful compliance with laws assuring equal rights for all.” Resolutions passed by the SBC in 1969, 1970, and 1971 commended churches with open admissions policies and condemned racial bigotry. Newman concludes that by 1971 the SBC resembled other white American denominations in their approach to race relations. Southern Baptist progressives had successfully helped persuade many of their coreligionists to abandon their segregationist past. Most Southern Baptists had accepted school desegregation in principle and rejected overt racism.

Newman stresses that a group of Baptist progressives played a significant but secondary role in undermining Southern Baptist support for overt discrimination and segregation. A few of

the racial progressives were liberal in theology; however, most like T. B. Maston and Foy Valentine were committed theological conservatives or moderates. Newman briefly acknowledges David Stricklin's thesis in *A Genealogy of Dissent* that a group of racial progressives were heavily influenced by both Clarence Jordan and Martin England, the cofounders of Koinonia Farm.

Newman claims that progressives achieved minimal integration within the SBC, but they did help to make segregation and discrimination unacceptable among most Southern Baptists. The SBC's Christian Life Commission deserves a large amount of credit for the progress made in the attitudes of Southern Baptists. Like the Texas CLC examined by Stricklin, the SBC CLC produced denominational literature that called for an end to segregation and also sponsored conferences and meetings that championed interracial cooperation.

Newman admits that while racial progressives helped to make discrimination and segregation unacceptable practices, "most Southern Baptists wanted maintenance of public school education with minimal integration." In fact, the majority of Baptists consistently supported attempts by politicians to evade, delay, and limit school desegregation. Unable to become truly reconciled to integration, most Southern Baptists strongly opposed school busing, quotas, and affirmative action.

After a detailed discussion of how individuals and state conventions responded in the aftermath of *Brown* and to the process of integration, Newman concludes his study with an overview of Southern Baptists and African-American relations between the years of 1972-1995. During the Southern Baptist Controversy of the 1980s, new issues arose that displaced race on both the Baptist and national agenda. Even so, beginning in the mid-1970s the SBC watched as increasing numbers of black churches became dually aligned with Southern Baptist associations.

Clearly, there were some signs of improvement on the so-called race problem, but Newman admits that such efforts are best described as tokenism. For example, in 1965 the SBC established Race Relations Sunday to encourage pastor exchanges between black and white churches and to promote interracial services. However, while more and more Southern Baptist congregations adopted open membership policies, little effort at integration was made. Although many national agencies integrated their staff with one token African-American, many state conventions did not even achieve tokenism. In giving its implicit approval to whites-only Southern Baptist academies, SBC messengers adopted a resolution in 1979 that opposed an IRS proposal to deny tax exempt status to private schools unless they could prove that they did not discriminate.

Newman's analysis of this 1979 resolution is quite telling in light of Randall Balmer's latest book, *Thy Kingdom Come*. Balmer alleges that the Religious Right constructed an "abortion myth" in the 1980s which states that their movement began in direct response to the Supreme Court's controversial *Roe v. Wade* decision. Instead, Balmer contends, the Religious Right was formed as a response to the attempt of the IRS to rescind the tax-exempt status of Bob Jones University because of its racially discriminatory policies. Whether Balmer's myth holds water or not, it is obvious that many Southern Baptists had not completely abandoned their segregationist predilections. Even polls conducted by Nancy Ammerman in the mid and late 1980s found that 55 percent of "self-identified fundamentalists" disagreed or were unsure that the civil rights movement had led the nation in the right direction.

Whether Newman's assertion that Southern Baptist progressives played a "significant" or even a "secondary role" in undermining Southern Baptist support for overt discrimination and segregation is a contention that can be debated (and should be) by historians. Today, many

fundamentalists will argue that the “moderates” were wrong about much but they got it right when it came to addressing the race issue. In my opinion, Southern Baptist racial progressives did play an important or significant role in the race debate. Without men like T.B. Maston, A.C. Miller, Foy Valentine and the various Christian Life Commissions, Southern Baptist history on race would be even more humiliating. Indeed, Luther Copeland has called race the “original sin” of Southern Baptists (in *The Southern Baptist Convention and the Judgement of History: The Taint of an Original Sin*).

Mark Newman’s *Getting Right with God* is a volume that should be on the shelf of all students of religion and the South. Baptists especially cannot act as if the “race issue” is over. Georgia governor and Georgia Baptist layman Sonny Purdue recently said that he does not think Georgians need to apologize for slavery. The attitude is still typical among many Baptists in the South. Perhaps the movement being promoted by President Jimmy Carter called the New Baptist Covenant is a good sign for the future. Representatives from white and African-American Baptist denominations appear to be cooperating in the planning of the meeting.

Baptists in America by Bill Leonard

In his most recent book, *Baptists in America*, historian Bill Leonard examines ten different areas of Baptist life: Baptist Beginnings, Baptists in the Twentieth Century, Baptist Beliefs and Practices, Baptist Groups, Bible, Ordinances, and Polity; Baptists and Religious Liberty, Ethnicity and Race, Women, and Baptists in American Culture. Leonard’s much needed survey demonstrates that Baptists are not a monolithic bunch but instead are an unbelievably diverse group of believers who share perhaps only a few core distinctives.

After a brief introductory chapter, Leonard concisely surveys the history of Anglo-American Baptists from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century. For those outside of

Baptist life who are seeking to understand Baptist roots in a concise fashion, this chapter is quite helpful.

Leonard's third chapter on 20th century Baptists emphasizes his main theme of Baptist diversity. During this period, theological disputes resulted in the birth of new Baptist groups or denominations such the Conservative Baptist Association, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Alliance of Baptists and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Baptists became more ethnically diverse in the 20th century. Increases in immigration resulted in the growth of specific ethnic groups which included German, Norwegian, Swedish, and Japanese Baptists. Leonard notes that the worship styles of Baptists were also incredibly diverse in the 20th century.

Continuing his theme of diversity, Leonard notes that since the Civil War, Baptists have been divided on the subject of war. Most but not all wars have been wholeheartedly supported by Baptists with Vietnam being the most divisive. Even today, Baptists remain deeply divided over war, especially the current war in Iraq. In his concluding thoughts, Leonard notes that Baptists multiplied by dividing into new denominations throughout the century.

Leonard's fifth chapter is particularly useful for Baptists and non-Baptists alike who are interested in learning about different Baptist denominations, sub-denominations, and churches within the United States. Leonard notes that more than sixty distinct groups in the United States claim the name of Baptist. These Baptist groups, old and new, reflect a surprising diversity of theological positions. Those groups surveyed by Leonard include the American Baptist Churches, Southern Baptist Convention, Seventh Day Baptists, Appalachian-Based Baptists (i.e. Primitive Baptists), and Arminian Baptists (i.e. Free Will Baptists). He also examined denominations that traced their beginnings to immigrant or ethnic-based churches such as the Baptist General Conference (Swedish), North American Baptist Conference (German), Hispanic

Baptist Convention, National Baptist Convention, USA Inc. (African American), and the Progressive National Baptist Convention (African-American).

While providing these good overviews, Leonard fails to mention that many smaller ethnic Baptist groups have traditionally been strong supporters of religious liberty and the separation of church and state. Unlike the Southern Baptist Convention, theologically conservative bodies such as the Baptist General Conference, Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, and the North American Baptist Conference have remained wholeheartedly supportive of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

In the sixth chapter, Leonard analyzes popular debates and divisions among Baptists relating to the Bible, ordinances, and polity. Baptists take the Bible very seriously and are committed to the authority of Scripture for their understanding of the nature of faith, doctrine, and morals. Despite their commitment to the Bible, Baptists differ strongly over its interpretation and the nature of biblical authority itself. Leonard reminds the reader that Baptists multiply by dividing. The Bible has always been at the center of every major debate, division, and schism in Baptist life.

Like the commitment to the Bible, baptism by immersion remains at the center of Baptist identity. Leonard suggests that “perhaps no other issue has been as consistently divisive as baptism in Baptist theology and practice. Baptists unite and divide over the meaning of baptism and its role in Christian communities.” Even in a Post-Takeover SBC, Southern Baptists are arguing over new policies adopted by the International Mission Board which require missionary candidates to have been baptized in a Baptist church by a pastor who holds to a belief in eternal security.

Debates regarding “open” and “closed” membership also continue among both moderate

Baptists and conservative reformed Baptists. Recently in Waco, one moderate congregation dealt with whether a non-immersed believer could be granted membership. Also, Henderson Hills Baptist Church, a reformed Southern Baptist congregation in Oklahoma, proposed in recent months to adopt an open membership policy regarding baptism. Other hot topics that continue to be debated by Baptists regarding baptism include the “age of accountability.” With such a strong emphasis on evangelism and baptismal statistics, many Baptist congregations find themselves immersing children well below the age of twelve.

Like the Bible and baptism, support for religious liberty has been traditionally considered a key distinctive of Baptists. Leonard argues that Baptists, as the most outspoken advocates of religious liberty in modern Protestant history, were the first English-speaking religious communion to advocate complete religious liberty. Beginning with seventeenth-century Baptists Thomas Helwys and Roger Williams, Leonard traces the development of the Baptist understanding of church and state. Leonard depicts “early culture wars” during the first half of the twentieth century between Baptists and American Catholics. Baptist leaders such as J. M. Dawson and Congressman Brooks Hays feared a Catholic hegemony in American religious life, which in their view would inevitably lead to the erosion of the wall of separation between church and state. Out of this fear, Dawson and Hays formed a separationist lobbying agency now known as Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.

Though many Baptists remained separationists and consistently opposed state funds for parochial schools, another group of Baptists emerged who believed that government should accommodate religion as extensively as possible. These accommodationists are often associated with the Religious Right. The pitting of separationists against accommodationists ultimately led to the Southern Baptist Convention defunding the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

and the creation of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the SBC. The separationist versus accommodationist perspectives held by Baptists has unfortunately caused much confusion among politicians on Capitol Hill and in American society. However, confusion is to be expected when such a diverse group of believers can claim both Jerry Falwell and Jesse Jackson.

Leonard's survey of Baptists in America is remarkably thorough and comprehensive. Even a scholar of Baptists will find a nugget of new and worthwhile information. While a theological progressive, Leonard successfully resists any temptation to inject his personal views into the Baptist debates he covers. Although mostly descriptive and not analytical, *Baptists in America* is without a doubt both fair and balanced. Leonard's thematic approach and inclusiveness makes this book an important contribution to Baptist studies. It will complement the chronological study, *Baptist Ways*, that he has already published.