

5-2018

Managing Church, Politics, and the End of the World: Analysis of Baptist Ecclesiology, Eschatology, and the Remobilization of Conservative Baptists in the Moral Majority

Nathan Taylor Barron

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The University of Southern Mississippi

Managing Church, Politics, and the End of the World:
Analysis of Baptist Ecclesiology, Eschatology, and the Remobilization of
Conservative Baptists in the Moral Majority

by

Nathan Taylor Barron

A Thesis
Submitted to the Honors College
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Science
in the Department of Political Science

May 2018

Approved by

Troy Gibson, Ph.D., Thesis Adviser
Associate Professor of Political Science

Edward Sayre, Ph.D., Department Chair
Department of Political Science

Ellen Weinauer, Ph.D., Dean
Honors College

Abstract

The sudden and formidable political mobilization of fundamentalist Christians in the mid-to-late 1970's quickly garnered the attention of politicians, pastors, and political scientists alike. Since the success of the Moral Majority in the 1980s, social science researchers have dedicated special attention to the intersection of religion and social life; however, such considerations have largely neglected to sufficiently discover why fundamentalist Christians were seemingly predisposed for the high levels of political activity characteristic of the Moral Majority. Building on a historical analysis of Baptist ecclesiological and eschatological development, the purpose of this research is to consider the theological framework behind the emergence of the Moral Majority from 1979 to 1981 by investigating the development of the Baptist political theology of political activity.

Historical and textual analyses are conducted, exploring relevant theological developments from 1533 to 1989 in ecclesiological and eschatological teaching. Initial findings signal that Baptists have a well-documented history of political activity in America and that the emergence and popularity of the Moral Majority likely paralleled the ecclesiological "Conservative Resurgence" in the SBC. Further, the role of the SBC as an alternative body politic is explored and ecclesiastical socialization is discussed. The final results of this research could be used to more precisely tailor methodologies for studies in the field of religion and politics for any religious or political group.

Keywords: political theology, religion and politics, church and state, political involvement, alternative body politic, Southern Baptist Convention

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Pascal Warren Barron, Sr., for his inexhaustible kindness, uplifting wit, imparted wisdom, and lingering encouragement. Few people could meet him and not be magnetically drawn to his humor, character, integrity, and love. Although this thesis is insufficient to afford him the honor that is due him, it is my pleasure to dedicate this research to my grandfather and fellow Southern Miss alumnus.

Acknowledgements

Foremost, I would like to knowledge my thesis advisor Dr. Troy Gibson for his incessant patience, direction, and redirection throughout this entire process. I will never forget where and when he agreed to be my thesis advisor: in downtown New Orleans only hours before Southern Miss won the 2016 R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl. This perhaps might have been my favorite memory of the thesis process.

In addition, I would like to thank the entire political science faculty at the University of Southern Mississippi for their invaluable instruction and guidance throughout my undergraduate career that has helped develop me as a student, as a researcher, and as a person.

It would be impossible to not recognize my good friend Ross Burkhart for his invaluable contributions to my thesis-writing endeavor. Without his gentle steering hand, it is quite possible that I may not have graduated at all.

Finally, and possibly most importantly, I would like to acknowledge the Swedish pop band ABBA for the countless hours of mentally-rejuvenating jam sessions that we shared in Cook Library. So, I say thank you for the music because, if it wasn't for the night, my thesis writing would have gone on and on and on. When I couldn't decide should I laugh or cry, you convinced me that, when all is said and done, the winner takes it all.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Literature Review	3
English Baptists	6
Colonial Baptists	11
Early SBC Baptists	17
Moral Majority Baptists	22
Conclusion	29
Methodology.....	30
Data	35
Discussion	37
A Practical Problem with the Reluctant Warrior Thesis	38
Alternative Thesis: Conservative Resurgence and the SBC as an Alternative Body Politic	41
Explaining the Liberal Southern Baptists	45
Conclusion	47

List of Tables

Table 2-A	Five Views on Church-State Relations	pg. 4
Table 2-B	Ecclesiological Typology of Baptist Eras	pg. 29
Table 2-C	Eschatological Typology of Baptist Eras	pg. 29
Table 3-A	Selected Texts by Baptist Era	pg. 31
Table 3-B	Ordinal Value Rubric	pg. 34
Table 4-A	Ordinal Value Assignment, General Set	pg. 36
Table 4-B	Ordinal Value Assignment, Conservative Set	pg. 36
Table 4-C	Ordinal Value Assignment, Liberal Set	pg. 36

Chapter One: Introduction

Much research has been conducted on the socio-political and behavioral foundations of the Moral Majority. Studies have shown the strong relationship between the Moral Majority and fundamentalists and evangelicals, social conservatives, and those who watch televangelists (Buell and Sigelman 1985; Wilcox 1987b; Wilcox 1991), with fundamentalist and evangelical identification emerging as the single greatest indicator of support. Increasingly, research on the Moral Majority began to consider the explicitly religious dimension of the Moral Majority political phenomenon (Wilcox 1987c, 1989b); evidence of the religious dimension was largely considered in terms of religiosity (Buell and Sigelman, 1985; Sigelman et al., 1987; Wilcox 1989c) and doctrinal beliefs (Wilcox 1987a, 1989c; Segleman et al. 1987). However, the examined doctrinal beliefs mostly remained either based on religious identification—such as self-identification as fundamentalist/evangelical or denominational identity—or religious behavior—such as church attendance. Although some theological considerations have been researched (Wilcox et al. 1991, on eschatology; Turner and Guth 1989, on eschatology; and Swatos (1988), on the role of Satan in worldly affairs), little meaningful research has been conducted to provide a historical theological perspective on why the Moral Majority suddenly achieved such a high level of support among Baptists. This thesis will endeavor to contribute an explanation as to why conservative Baptists re-emerged from relative political inactivity to suddenly mobilize in support of the Moral Majority.

Especially in the largest protestant denomination in the United States, the Southern Baptist Convention's own theological development should be expected to have wide-ranging political effects (Lewis 2014), which would be most evident in Christian

political advocacy and attempts to gain political influence. In order for such development to be relevant, the historical lineage of Baptist political theology since its earliest roots is considered, with attention to English Baptist heritage and particular emphasis on the Baptist experience in America. In this research, two historically relevant theological fields, namely ecclesiology and eschatology, are given particular attention in order to consider potential impact Baptist political activity.

This research operates under the hypothesis that Baptist political theology became a catalyst for Baptist political activity based either on an ecclesiological shift towards associationalism or an eschatological shift towards optimism. This hypothesis is tested by evaluating the historical development of Baptist ecclesiology and eschatology and then conducting a content analysis of relevant Baptist literature, confessions, and ecclesiastical statements related to political activity in order to determine any potential correlations. Further, the roles of political theology and ecclesiastical socialization are explored and its implications on individual political behavior are be discussed.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The importance of underlying religious beliefs on political behavior is often either overlooked or understated. This field of study, called political theology, attempts to provide a more accurate framework that acknowledges political behavior to be a subset of a larger metaphysical orientation on religious beliefs and practices. In *Theology and Social Theory*, John Millbank argues that, as theology attempts to “provide its own account of the final causes at work in human history,” distinct practices emerge from Christian communities, practices that can be explicated via doctrinal analysis (Millbank 1993, 380; Whitt 2003, 16). This approach does not suppose that doctrinal subscription necessitates one perfect model or practice but relies on historical development of those subscribing communities in explicating the doctrinal link to practice (Millbank 1993, 380). Lindbeck (1984) differs from this history-emphatic view, instead focusing on the permeating cultural-linguistic dimension of observation and ontological reasoning. However, Lindbeck’s attempt to establish an interpretative metanarrative elicits Millbank’s dissent; Millbank argues such a metanarrative to be “dangerously ahistorical” (Whitt 2008, 17). This thesis will work from Millbank’s framing, especially as the particularly fragmented and localized nature of Baptist theological development requires a more historically-sensitive analysis that considers shifting doctrines and doctrinal emphases.

Heretofore, the primary discussions on political theology have surrounded the contemporary American thoughts regarding church-state relations. In that conversation, Esbeck (1986) contends that there are five views at-large: strict separationism, pluralist

separationism, institutional separationism, non-preferentialism, and restorationism (378-9). Table 2-A offers the author’s characterization of each category.

Table 2-A: Five Views on Church-State Relations

Strict Separationism	“Strict separationists desire a secular state. By ‘secular’ they mean a state that is decidedly nonreligious, but not necessarily hostile to religion.” (Esbeck 1986, 379)
Pluralist Separationism	“Pluralistic separationists desire a neutral state. By ‘neutral’ they mean a state that doggedly avoids taking sides for or against religion and religious organizations... Each, within its own jurisdiction, is to remain independent of each other.” (Esbeck 1986, 385)
Institutional Separationism	“[A] functional interaction between church and state is inevitable and desirable as each pursues its own proper objectives.” (Esbeck 1986, 390)
Non-preferentialism	“Non-preferentialists argue that religion in general is crucial in the formation of good morals... Therefore, the state has a strong interest in preserving and fostering religious faith.” (Esbeck 1986, 394)
Restorationism	“Restorationists desire a confessional state... Restorationists argue that there is no easy dualism between the secular and the religious, that a neutral state is not only a myth but an impossibility.” (Esbeck 1986, 398)

In proposing his typology, Esbeck offers an analytic survey of position statements by which his typology is to be best understood and applied:

- a. the purpose and jurisdiction of government, and the nature of religion;
- b. the juridical protection accorded religious speech;
- c. the degree of autonomy accorded a church or other religious organization;
- d. discrimination by the state in the distribution of goods and opportunities, among religious groups and between the religious and those professing no religion; and
- e. the juridical protection accorded religious-based conscience.

However, this rubric assumes the Christian's passive relationship with the state, i.e. the rubric focuses on the state's rightful ability to influence or determine the Christian's activity rather than focusing on the Christian's instruction to influence or determine state activity. Although Esbeck is particularly focusing on church-state relations from the legal perspective, his research is representative of the larger conversation about church-state relations, i.e. the focus is on the state's action in regards to the Christian instead of the Christian's action in regards to the state. Such a passive view of Christians in the church-state debate ignores Christian activity and its doctrinal allowances and/or motivations. However, the model remains instructive as the rubric is modified to include an analysis of Christian's attitude toward the state. Such a modified rubric would necessarily consider the justification of Christian political activity, particularly by ecclesiastical or church-sponsored agents. After those modifications, the five-view typology for church-state relations could be expanded and improved.

Further, in his analysis of Colonial Baptist political orthodoxy and orthopraxy in *The Baptist View of the State*¹, Moehlman (1937) argues that Baptist theologians did not grapple with political theory to the same extent as other political theologians of that time. He suggests that the Baptists' numerical weakness, their recent origin, and their devotion to biblical literalism contributed to their silence on the issue (Moehlman 1937, 27-28). However, Moehlman rejects that such silence implies an expectation of the separation of church and state, instead highlighting the Colonial Baptists' avid active support of ecclesiastical exemption from levied taxes (Moehlman 1937, 30). Moehlman's argument

¹ The proposition in favor of a singular "Baptist View of the State" is arguably irresponsible, but the author's underlying analyses are well-taken.

suggests that doctrinal positions must be understood alongside actual practice. To refer back to Millbank, doctrine is not necessarily to presume like practice; rather, this thesis will look to the historical context of political behavior to explicate the link between political activity and doctrinal subscription.

The remainder of this review will emphasize literature concerning Baptist ecclesiology and eschatology throughout four distinct time periods of Baptist: (1) the English Baptists, (2) the Colonial Baptists, (3) the Early SBC Baptists, and (4) the Moral Majority-era Baptists.

English Baptists

The history of the English Baptists can be best understood by considering the time period of revolutionary religion, i.e. the division between those seeking to purify the Church of England from within versus those seeking alternative routes to promote the true church, e.g. the separatists, Baptists (Independents), Anabaptists, etc. Concerning the Baptists and Anabaptists², their professed anti-pedobaptist³ conviction was inseparable with an anti-state political message as infant baptism not only secured that child's place in the church but also his/her citizenship in the state; thus, to revoke one's baptism as a child was to symbolically revoke their citizenship in the state, not to mention that the unification of church and state further suggested that religious dissent implied political

² There is no consensus among Baptist historians whether or not Baptists in America share common ancestry with the English Anabaptists. This thesis will include, yet distinguish, Anabaptists in order to provide a fuller historical analysis surrounding those who professed anti-pedobaptism.

³ Especially early in the Baptist movement, many divergent views surrounded the doctrine of baptism. However, the universally unifying theme of Baptist theology is anti-pedobaptism, i.e. the rejection of infant baptism.

dissent. To this point, this thesis recognizes that the English Baptists' professing anti-pedobaptism was inherently political, regardless of their motivation. This undesired politicism of Baptist theology likely contributed to the general theme of independence that chiefly characterized the English Baptists in 1533 and continues to characterize the Southern Baptists contemporarily, an independence that was promoted in regards to soul liberty, freedom from persecution, and freedom from each other. Thus, the English Baptists must be understood as people who were: (1) familiar with a unified church and state; (2) politically engaged, however reluctantly; and (3) sympathetic to dissenters and those seeking independence.

Ecclesiology.

In describing John Smyth's personal theological development, Coggins (1984) points to Smyth's commitment to three primary ecclesiological considerations: (1) that Christ, in his role as King⁴, must exercise his discipline in the church, (2) that entry into the church must be covenantal in order that the congregant may knowingly submit to Christ's discipline, and (3) that the doctrine of the priesthood of believers shifted authority from the carnal, worldly authorities under Old Testament law to the spiritual, internal authority of the Holy Spirit residing in New Testament Christians (Coggins 1984). While Coggins notes that the pedobaptist separatists likewise recognize that Christ must exercise his discipline in the church, Coggins differentiates the separatist conclusion

⁴ Revelation 1:5 refers to a three-fold office of Christ, namely Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King. His role as Prophet grants him the authority over witness, his role as Priest grants him the authority over the sacraments, and his role as King grants him the authority over the discipline of his church.

(that a new civil magisterial order must be established) from the Baptist conclusion (that a new ecclesiastical order must be established). Coggins traces Smyth's logic that, if a new ecclesiastical order must be established in order to effectuate Christ's discipline, then the church must be predicated on submission to Christ's discipline, a submission that is necessary for the observance of the sacraments⁵. That submission, which was solidified as a written expression of personal commitment known as a covenant, could not be made knowingly by an infant; if an infant could not knowingly submit his to Christ as King, then he could not submit his to Christ as Priest, meaning that baptism could not be administered to the infant. On the third point, one of the defining progressions of Smyth's latter theology was his insistence on the internalization of authority, i.e. the rejection of carnal law enforcement of the Old Testament in favor of the internal regulation by the Holy Spirit. This final point was ultimately linked to his eventual rejection of the physical and carnal world and desired independence from it.

Marvin Jones (2017) explores the ecclesiological contributions of one of Smyth's early followers Thomas Helwys, focusing on (1) believer's baptism as the necessary component which constitutes the church, and (2) the separation of the civil and ecclesiastical (Jones 2017). On his first point, Helwys clearly establishes himself as Baptist, adopting a similar view as Smyth on the necessity of submission to Christ as King before enjoying him as Priest. However, Helwys better articulates the two-fold assertion that true baptism is only for those who profess belief and that the church is constituted by those who are truly baptized. Secondly, Helwys does venture to delineate

⁵ Observance of the sacraments was a likewise necessary component of the true church, as per Christ's role as Priest (Coggins 1984, 188).

the domain of the church, particularly as he distinguishes it from the domain of the civil (Jones 2017, 86).

Further, Renihan (1997) points to three main Baptist figures on the question of the role of the congregation and elders in church governance: Hanswerd Knollys, from the position of “modified independency” which supports a Presbyterian government with congregational input, even on matters of discipline (Renihan 1997, 137-142); Nehemiah Coxe, from the position of ministerial rule by elders and congregational consent; and Benjamin Keach, from the position of that the congregation empowers the singular elder to perform only a prescribed range of duties. Despite several differences, Renihan suggests that the various English Baptist positions on independency and church governance were nonetheless centralized on the principle of maximizing the rights of the people and specifically restricting the office of the elder to no more than explicitly ascribed in the Scriptures (Renihan 1997, 176). Just as Whitt (2008) argues that the church ecclesiology offers “an alternative body politic,” Renihan’s portrayal of the early Baptist debate over church governance could be quite instructive in understanding the *a priori* doctrinal expectation of governing leadership within the context of the church.

Eschatology.

In his exposition of Baptist eschatology during the English Revolution, Mark Bell (2000) introduces early Baptist eschatology primarily through the lenses of apocalypticism and millenarianism⁶, defining them as such:

⁶ Bell (2000) notes that such distinctions are “slightly anachronistic, as contemporaries did not observe modern differentiations” (5). However, these distinctions will be used to more accurately direct this analysis.

‘Apocalypticism,’ from the Greek *apokalypsis* ‘unveiling,’ also generally refers to beliefs about the end of the world, but denotes a greater emphasis on the sudden cataclysmic end of the world and the triumph of good over evil. Millenarianism, from the Latin words *mille* ‘thousand’ and *annus* ‘year,’ means not only that the world will end, but that God’s Kingdom will be established on earth and will last a thousand years (usually with Christ as the king) before God brings about the end in the final judgement (Bell 2000, 5).

Bell notes that early Baptist eschatology was predicated on a negative view of society (6); such a view would not be inconsistent with the political persecution that the Baptists faced for their rejection of infant baptism. During this early period, Baptist eschatology was oriented on a seemingly-near apocalypse, with particular thematic emphases on the proximity of the Antichrist, usually referring to either the Roman Catholic Pope or the agents of the Church of England; the “new light” and “further light,” which was the emphasis of a “new light” radiating from the apostolic church to illuminate the “shadow cast by the beast” and of a “further light” which was new revelation of truth; and the overall struggle against the “Beast” (Bell 2000, 23-31). Bell notes that Baptist eschatology largely remained pessimistic until the Interregnum, when Baptists’ began to shift away from the Apocalypse-proximate vision towards a more optimistic vision of the future, although other Apocalyptic groups—such as the Seventh-Day Baptists—remained (Bell 2000, 5-6, 206-228). Likewise, vanguard optimistic groups also appeared, most notably the Fifth Monarchists who subscribed to an eschatology resembling reconstructionist postmillennialism⁷; however, such groups were not mainstream as the

⁷ The Fifth Monarchists believed that Christian infiltration of the government will eventually usher-in a pietistic and theonomic state, i.e. the millennial rule of Christ (Bell 2000). Although an anachronistic term, reconstructionist postmillennialism refers to the belief that the church will continue gain influence through conversion and piety, then Christian integration with the state (Gentry 1992).

majority of the Baptist movement made only a simple, non-descriptive shift from pessimistic Apocalypticism to optimistic⁸ millennialism. Thus, as political conditions improved, the Baptists were more likely to interpret apocalyptic literature less pessimistically and more likely to engage in political activity. While this position seems contrary to this research's stated hypothesis, namely in that the political sphere affected the ecclesiological sphere, it is important to note that the English Baptists were heavily decentralized with little, if any, sense of the universal church. Thus, their world looked much smaller and much less optimistic than latter Baptists who enjoyed the benefits of increased communication and ecclesiastical organization and mobilization. However, perhaps it was precisely this optimistic shift that led the English Baptists to seek increased attempts to establish church oneness in the American colonies.

Colonial Baptists

The early American era is often popularly idealized for its supposed fidelity to high ideals, particularly—especially among religious communities—the ideal of religious liberty⁹. The legends surrounding the religious liberty are predicated on the well-documented, widely-espoused Baptist belief in soul liberty, i.e. that the government may not bind the conscience of the people. However, Bozeman (2006) and McLouglin (1971) suggest that the Baptist approach to religious liberty was more of a pragmatic, evolving stance rather than an absolute dogma, pointing to the exclusion of Quakers, Roman

⁸ Or, at least, less-pessimistic

⁹ Although religious liberty remains largely outside the scope of this research, the evidence of early Baptist intentions to limit religious liberty is of great significance on the topic of the Baptists' expected religious/sectarian influence.

Catholics, and others. Bozeman (2006) argued that the purpose of having the government allow religious liberty served chiefly spiritual purposes, namely to “propagate the Gospel” and to “[remove] obstacles to the conversion of the elect” (83-84). Moehlman (1937) goes further to highlight that the Rhode Island Charter specifically restricted the ability to hold political office from Roman Catholics and that non-Christians were disallowed citizenship (35-37). Additionally, Moehlman recognizes that the Massachusetts Baptists were likewise inimical towards Roman Catholics. However, although this perspective contemporarily seems unsatisfying as a classification of religious liberty, the Baptists were also attempting to disestablish national religion in the tightly-regulated colonies, a task that required nothing less than a tightrope walk on several political, religious, ethical, and legal grounds; the Baptists’ exclusion of particular non-Protestant or fringe groups was by no means unusual during that time period. Thus, in comparison to their contemporary counterparts, the Baptists were the most prominent advocates for religious liberty.

On more specifically political issues, Moehlman (1937) further notes that Rhode Island Baptists refused taxes on churches (38-40); and that the Virginia Baptists actively petitioned the Virginia Legislature, issued their own “propaganda for the disestablishment of the state church and the establishment of religious liberty,” and established well-maintained relationships with various political office-holders (40-48). These points are instructive in considering that the Baptists’ enjoyed robust influence on their government—benefiting from both protestant ecumenism and Baptist sectarianism—and they were regularly involved with their government, working to shape public opinion.

Ecclesiology.

When the Colonial Baptists wrote their confession *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith*, few changes were made to the *London Confession of Faith of 1689* (Tull 1960, 38); core Baptist ecclesiological distinctives were included, such as credobaptism¹⁰, baptism by immersion, membership in the church by baptism, etc. (Tull 1960, 39). However, as Renihan (1997) discussed concerning the English Baptists, the Philadelphia Baptist Association began deciphering the proper scope of the minister, particularly in relation to the dynamic share of rights between the individual, the congregation, the congregation's ministers, and the universal church (Tull 1960, 40). The Association's consideration focused on the ministerial authority in administering the sacraments; their conclusion was that only the called minister held the authority to administer the Lord's Supper and judge the credibility of petitioner's profession of faith prior to baptism (Tull 1960, 40-41). As Tull points out, this allowance of ministerial prerogative is important, as it signals a shift from congregational authority to the authority of the local elder (41).

However, local congregations remained stalwartly committed to the autonomy and sufficiency of the local church. Jeffrey Mask (1990) goes so far as to suggest that the Colonial Baptists “[lost] the idea of the universality of the church¹¹” (134), arguing that such a lamentable tragedy happened to “uphold the rights of the individual” (42). However, such a loss is not fully representative of how Baptist congregations were

¹⁰ Credobaptism refers to the practice of only baptizing those who make a credible profession of faith. Credobaptism is a more specific expression of antipedobaptism (the rejection of practicing infant baptism), which term was used to be inclusive of the early Anabaptists.

¹¹ “Universal church” here refers to all true believers in the world, as opposed to the “local church” which refers to those true believers belonging to a local congregation.

operating during the Colonial and early American period. Most notably, Baptist congregations began cooperating in units called “associations.” According to Hudson (1958) and Tull (1960), Baptist associations were developed for four main reasons: (1) mutual edification for the churches, usually through preaching, administration of the sacraments, and circular letter; (2) providing for a suitable and regular ministry for the churches; (3) furnishing of suitable literary materials for the building up of the churches in the faith; and (4) combining of the efforts of the churches in missionary endeavor. Although such an associational system might seem to re-approach a Presbyterian form of government, such associations were (1) completely voluntary, subject to congregational consent; (2) lacking any function of oversight or discipline in regards to the local church; and (3) aimed to achieve tasks that required resources that were otherwise difficult to obtain. Thus, even in their pragmatic approach to recognizing cooperation among the universal church, the Colonial Baptist retained their characteristic and essential principle of local church autonomy and independence.

One of the aforementioned objectives of the newfound Baptist associations was to pool resources for missionary endeavors, i.e. evangelism. The evangelistic emphasis of the early American Baptists—especially during the first part of the Great Awakening and the during the westward continental expansion—was the focal point of how the church was to interact with non-Christians; the developing evangelistic zeal was predicated on this theological assumption of “otherness” which Christians assigned to those outside of the church. This “otherness” was and is accentuated by the ultimate intention of Christian interaction with non-Christians: conversion; essentially, the church’s hyperactive focus on conversion positioned non-Christians as starkly-contrasted “others,” which was

somewhat alienating. Although some argue that the hyperactive evangelism led to a radical and rapid inclusiveness, such expansion was not widely present during the early American period. Neff (1996) highlights Roger Williams' own perspective on evangelism, noting that Williams was specifically reluctant to evangelize amongst the Native Americans because he was so convinced that any appearance of meaningful conversion would only be external or false; further, Williams argued that the church would have to be purified before evangelism could resume to "the rest of the Nations of the World" (Neff 1996). Further, Tull argues that Baptist evangelism was also contested by several mobilized groups led by Alexander Campbell called the Anti-Mission Controversy, which was a product of several issues such as hyper-Calvinism and congregations that were simply hostile to outreach (Tull 1960, 79-83; Benedict, 1860). Whatever the cause of Anti-Missions mobilizers, the increasing emphasis on evangelism ostensibly fostered a sharp Manichean division between "the Christians" and "the pagans" that could influence the Colonial Baptists' tendency to engage society.

Eschatology.

Unlike the pessimistic Apocalypticism of the English Baptists prior to 1640, the Colonial Baptists generally held less virulent views of society. Although the archetype of the Antichrist had modulated from the English presbytery to the American presbytery¹², the generally-held view of society was positive, built either on the advancement of person piety or on the ability of the Colonial governments to respect diverse Christian

¹² The "American presbytery" refers to the state-supported churches of several states, particularly in Massachusetts and Virginia, wherein Baptist religious liberty had been limited by either the Puritans or the Church of England in America (Episcopal).

denominations (McGloughlin 1968, 1403). Baptist minister Isaac Backus held that society was positively transforming through the means of personal piety and that the Kingdom of God was approaching in a positive, postmillennial manner, which was the generally preferred vision of society to the contemporary Americans (McGlouglin 1968, 1403). Even still, there remained followers of the Baptist minister John Clarke, a noted Fifth Monarchist who held that the contemporary American society was the time “wherein the Earth begins to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord” and that the imminent future was bringing the destruction of the Antichrist (Bozeman 2006). Even though Fifth Monarchism had been associated with violence and militancy both in the English and American contexts and was starkly contrasted from Backus’s and the mainstream’s idea of the inaugurating Kingdom, the movement was still generally optimistic: Christ’s Kingdom was being inaugurated.

Nonetheless, less optimistic views emerged and persisted, particularly like those of prominent American Baptist Roger Williams. Williams held a pessimistic premillennial view of social history, that “the world was in the hands of antichrist and would short come to a disastrous Day of Judgement” (McLouglin 1968, 1403). Based on a literal hermeneutic that understands the book of Revelation to be a historical representation of history, the premillennial view suggests that world affairs would continually worsen until utterly unbearable before the return of Christ. Williams’ view was no doubt indicative of his experience with his observed persecution of the Baptist church in Massachusetts; however, while other prominent Baptist ministers and even some of Williams’ companions (such as Clarke) were also aware of the persecution of Baptists throughout the colonies, many decided to interpret the establishment of Rhode

Island and increased religious liberty throughout the colonies to indicate a positive shift towards ecumenicism in political control¹³. This perceived positive movement resulted in a widely—though by no means uniformly—optimistic eschatology.

Early Southern Baptist Convention

In considering the mid-19th century to early mid-20th century, a proper cultural typology of the Southern Baptists is useful, especially in considering its geo-political consequences. In developing an early typology of church culture, Ernst Troeltsch argued that two church-society models existed: the church-type and the sect-type. The church-type, or *ecclesia*, was a church-society model that involved the highest level of inclusivity as the “religious organization was largely coterminous with the society” (Hankins 1987). The sect-type was a church-society model that was more exclusive, and membership required a personal experience that warranted entry to the church, i.e. prior authentic conversion. However, the American church-state structure is admittedly not nearly analogous to the European structure that Troeltsch was describing and thus a direct application is neither sensible nor advantageous. However, if the concept of the church-type model is considered as the church’s being an established social institution wherein the distinction between the religious and the political is diluted, and if the concept of the sect-type model is considered as the strict and defined separation of the religious and the political, then the early Southern Baptists largely adopted the church-type model such

¹³ This “ecumenicism” is markedly protestant—and reserved for “well-behaved” protestants at that. It is often made clear that Roman Catholics and Quakers were usually excluded from most religious protections that were eventually afforded to the Baptists.

that society was largely shaped by the SBC while the SBC received little challenge to its cultural dominance in the south (Hankins 1987; Troeltsch 1992).

Expanding Troeltsch's model, H. Richard Niebuhr presents five different relationships between Christ and the culture: (1) Christ against culture; (2) Christ of culture; (3) Christ above culture; (4) Christ and culture in paradox; and (5) Christ the transformer of culture (Hankins 1987; Niebuhr 1951). Within this framework, Hankins argues that Southern Baptists, until the early 20th-century, employed a Christ-of-culture model, which is caught between interpreting the culture through the lens of Christ and understanding Christ through cultural applicability and acceptance; this tendency towards indistinction resembles Troeltsch's church-type (Hankins 1987).

The most prominent evidence of this Christ-of-culture attitude in the early Southern Baptist Convention is the SBC's position on slavery. Especially as the SBC was established on the premise that slave-owners should not be barred from entry into missions programs, slavery was the foremost political issue with which the early SBC had to grapple. Najar (2005) suggests that, although anti-slavery movements did exist within the SBC, that such movements were small and uncharacteristic of the Convention's majority; however, this is not to suggest that the majority of Southern Baptists were pro-slavery *per se* but that they believed that slavery was a political issue that should not be the business of the church. Nonetheless, although the Early Southern Baptist position could be framed as the Church's refusal to consider hot political issues, it was clear that the Southern Baptist refusal to adopt an anti-slavery position was more pragmatic than idealistic. Najar characterizes the Southern Baptist perspective as such:

In the late eighteenth century, Baptists churches had claim [sic] a broad jurisdiction over all aspects of their members. Baptists believed they

answered a divine calling to build covenanted churches of the faithful, and they asserted godly authority wherever they could. They demanded the right to judge each other's' business practices, land disputes, parental decisions, leisure activities, and marital relations. In this context, it was natural that churches would insisted on their right to monitor master-slave relations and to debate the morality of slaveholding. But efforts to resolve the contradictions between the belief in the equality of all souls and the presence of slaves and slaveholders in their churches threatened to tear the denomination apart. To stem the developing crisis, Baptists redefined slavery to be a civil rather than a moral and religious issues...For the first time, they defined an issue as being outside the province of the churches and exclusively the concern of the civil government. Thus, the 'separation of church and state' ...was the political and legal face of a broader reconceptualization of secular and sectarian bodies in the postrevolutionary era. In other words, as debates over slavery reveal, it was a reconstruction of civil and religious authority. (Najar 2005).

This rendering suggests that Southern Baptists were selective in their assessment of whether an issue was solely a matter of the state or whether it required church intervention or advocacy. Nonetheless, this rendering confirms that the Southern Baptists were willing to remain *laissez-faire* on social maladies, if not altogether conform to social norms, in order to best serve the Convention's interest. The SBC's willingness to defer to culture firmly validates the Christ-of-culture typology.

Finally, the capstone to this era was the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, which ravaged most protestant denominations in the early 20th-century but remained relatively muted in the Southern Baptist Convention until the 1970's. To this point, there exists an interesting paradigmatic paradox within the SBC, particularly with regards to the conservatives and the liberals¹⁴: the conservatives (a majority of SBC congregants)

¹⁴ Here, "conservative" and "liberal" refer to theology, with the primary difference being the conservative appeal to Biblical literalism and the liberal appeal to higher criticism. Additionally, "pessimistic" and "optimistic" refer to their views on the general movement of history, with the "pessimistic" view being premillennial (discussed herein) and the "optimistic" view being postmillennial.

were more favorable towards a negative view of social responsibility and the liberals (a majority of SBC institutional leaders) were more favorable towards a positive view of social responsibility.

Ecclesiology.

John Utzinger (2000) describes the major themes of Baptist ecclesiological development of the 1887-1937 period as happening as a contrast between social-orientation and evangelism. On social-orientation, Utzinger notes that the church began to emphasize making itself “free, open, and institutional,” meaning that “churches ought to abolish pew rents, keep their doors open during the week as well as Sunday, and offer neighborhood services which could benefit its children, unemployed, and poor as well as its irreligious” (53). However, as an alternative to the cost-heavy institutionalism, Baptist minister Walter Rauschenbusch introduced the importance of the social gospel, arguing that “[the] Church could not only solve these problems...by changing society itself and not trying to act its part” (65). Rauschenbusch’s approach was optimistic about the Church’s ability to influence society and “institute the kingdom of God within American society” (65). As a direct response against the social gospel movement, several Baptist ministers charged towards an evangelistic agenda¹⁵, a movement which is well-presented by Baptist pastor William Bell Riley:

“There is an institutional church that dotes upon ice-cream suppers, full-dress receptions, popular lectures, chess boards, bowling alleys, the social settlement, not to speak of the occasional dance and amateur theatricals; And there is the institutional church that expresses itself in the

¹⁵ The evangelistic agenda accepted the institutional approach but rejected Rauschenbusch’s social gospel.

organization of prayer meetings, mission circles, Bible study classes, evangelistic corps, and multiple mission stations” (Uttinger 71).

Thus, although the proponents of the social gospel would by no means deny the importance of evangelism, those with anti-social gospel sentiments adamantly attempted to de-spiritualize social gospel efforts, claiming that the social gospel ignores man’s soul in order to save his body. This division between the emphasizees of social gospel and those of evangelism, along with a deeply-affecting hermeneutical division which is beyond the scope of this research, drew on the lines of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy that lingered with the SBC until the “conservative resurgence” of the 1970’s and 1980’s.

Eschatology.

Especially after the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the origin of Species* and the Scopes Trial, Christians across America were trying to understand why a seemingly anti-Biblicist movement was not only happening but gaining momentum (Harder 2014). Up to this point, the mainstream eschatological view was a postmillennial variate¹⁶ which suggested that Christ was already in his millennial reign, but it was a non-physical reign in heaven. According to this view, church history should be generally improving, with evangelism and the spread of the gospel becoming more and more expansive and more and more effective. However, cultural trends were suggesting otherwise. Trying to explain the social phenomenon, a growing percentage of Baptists turned to dispensationalism, a previously immobilized method of interpreting Scripture by dividing

¹⁶ Although the distinction may be anachronistic, the early SBC postmillennialism more closely resembled what would be presently recognized as amillennialism.

Biblical history into dispensations, wherein God deals with humanity in various ways appropriate to the characteristics of the dispensation. This shift was monumental, largely abandoning the more traditional, yet not universally-held, Covenant Theology that had somewhat guided Protestantism to that point. On the question of eschatology, dispensationalism re-introduced premillennialism¹⁷. To Christians trying to understand their situation, the dispensational theory of end times made sense—it fit with what they were observing about society. Further, according to the dispensational premillennial view, efforts for positive change are essentially useless as the book of Revelation is interpreted that history will continue to get increasingly worse. By the end of the early SBC period, the Baptist majority had shifted from optimistic amillennialism to pessimistic premillennialism.

Moral Majority-era Baptists

Around the middle of the century, there was an increasing dissatisfaction among a growing number of conservative Christians who were uncomfortable with the liberal social gospel and its accompanying higher criticism but were also critical of the anti-cultural and anti-intellectual tendencies of the fundamentalist movement. Harold Ockenga, who would later become a co-founder of Fuller Theological Seminary, helped

¹⁷ John Nelson Darby's premillennial concept was more specific than prior premillennials' to that point. Darby taught that Christ's millennial reign would be physical, that there would be a literal 7-year tribulation, that Christ would "rapture" believers before that tribulation, and that the physical second coming of Christ would occur after the millennial reign. In dispensational premillennialism, Darby noted that the world would veer further away from Christ and the Gospel until the rapture of the church and the culmination of Christ's judgement on the earth is actualized in the tribulation and millennial reign.

organize the National Alliance of Evangelicals in 1942 for the purpose of providing a pro-social agenda for conservative Christians. Ockenga recalled his pursuit of a new evangelicalism in his foreword to Lindsell's *The Battle for the Bible*:

Neo-evangelicalism was born in 1948 in connection with a convocation address which I gave in the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena. While reaffirming the theological view of fundamentalism, this address repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory. The ringing call for a repudiation of separatism and the summons to social involvement received a heart response from many Evangelicals. ... It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life. (Lindsell 1976).

This perspective was a characteristically ecumenical movement among conservative Christians; however, at the time, the Southern Baptists had the most resources in order to effectuate such a reemphasizing of the gospel through evangelism—which was most notably conducted through the Southern Baptist evangelist Bill Graham. Throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, Billy Graham was leading his “crusades” across the nation, to which thousands of people would flock. Apart from leading a 20th-century nation-wide evangelism, Graham’s movement was also undoubtedly political. Graham had notably been against the civil rights movement, against abortion, against homosexuality, and was known to actively seek influence among prominent politicians, including Presidents. His influence was dual-sided, reaching into the overtly religious and across into the overtly civil. His magazine *Christianity Today* was also built on the premise the gospel was the primary tool by which social ills could be defined and cured. His political utilization of the gospel began a revolution of conservative political activity with the Bible as its source of motivation.

Moreover, from the 1930's to the 1980's, Southern Baptists overtly engaged in political advocacy, a movement that was largely influenced and propagated by theological liberals who also held political views that were more left-leaning than the majority of SBC congregants. For example, after the Baptist Joint Committee (BJC) was established by the Convention in 1936, it lobbied for a strictly separationist view that included pro-choice policies, rejected school prayer, tuition tax credits, religious displays, and creationist school curriculum (Lewis 2011, 172-173). However, during the era of the Conservative Resurgence¹⁸, the BJC became a primary target for the wave of Conservatives becoming more active in SBC affairs such that conservatives attempted to defund the BJC in 1984, were able to reduce funding in 1990, and eventually successfully defund the BJC in 1991 (Lewis 2011, 175). The BJC was replaced by the much more conservative Christian Life Commission¹⁹ that supported public religious expressions (Lewis 2011, 4). The tension between liberal and conservative theology, which residually expressed itself in liberal/conservative politics, gave a newfound energy to the conservatives who were determined to not lose control of their own Convention. As a result, the very act of regaining control of the SBC was a political act that relied on conservatives' identification as fighting for good amidst otherwise prevailing bad, a theme that was shared in its ecclesiological and eschatological beliefs.

¹⁸ The "conservative resurgence" refers to the formal establishment of conservative theology within Southern Baptist institutions; the Conservative Resurgence is generally dated from 1979 (election of first conservative SBC President) to 2000 (the publication of the Baptist Faith and Message of 2000).

¹⁹ Later renamed the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

Ecclesiology.

Even as the fundamentalist-modernist²⁰ controversy hit its height in the 1920's for most Presbyterian, Methodist, and northern Baptist congregations, the Southern Baptist Convention was reluctant to separate because of internal discrepancies and remained relatively comfortable together, even as particular leaders within the SBC tried to stir the Convention one way or another, either towards or away from Biblical inerrancy. Thus, in the same era that birthed the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Southern Methodists, the Southern Baptists remained intact for the time being. However, the modernists could not maintain control of the highly conservative SBC for long, especially as the Southern Baptists' confessional statements had already been rewritten twice, once in 1925 and again in 1963, which meant that the depth of theological clarity was a constant conversation for the Convention. The Baptist Faith & Message of 1925 (BF&M of 1925) and the Baptist Faith & Message 1963 (BF&M of 1963) both acknowledge the Bible to be "without any mixture of error"²¹, thus clearly defining the official stance of the Convention on the issue of inerrancy, i.e. the stance on the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, especially after E. Y. Mullins' push for fundamentalist movement in the SBC in the early 1920s and the "Genesis Controversy" of Dr. Ralph Elliot's non-literal stance on the creation account in Genesis in the early 1960s. However, the SBC's fundamentalist-modernist climax came during a heated exchange at the 1970 Convention over the Broadman Bible Commentary and its non-literal depiction of Genesis; this spurred the conservatives' 10-year plan to elect conservative presidents of the SBC so

²⁰ This refers to the controversy between conservative and liberal theology.

²¹ <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfmcomparison.asp>

that, when the SBC appointed people to the various boards of the Convention and appointed the trustees of the seminaries, the SBC institutions would be restored to conservative, inerrantist teachings.²² The first President resulting from the burgeoning conservative resurgence was Adrian Rogers of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, TN; the resurgence continued on track for the next twelve election cycles as new board members and new seminary trustees were appointed. In 1990, a large group of modernists/moderates/liberals broke away from the SBC to form a moderate denomination the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Quickly thereafter, the conservative seminary trustees were able to further oust modernist seminarians and install conservative seminary Presidents at Southeastern Seminary in 1987, Southern Seminary in 1993, and at Southwestern in 1994, also requiring the faculty to subscribe to either the Baptist Faith & Message of 1963 and/or the 1858 Abstract of Principles. Then, in 2000, the Southern Baptist Convention rewrote its Baptist Faith & Message to further clarify and more thoroughly define its conservative theological positions that favored the inerrancy of Scripture and its literal interpretation; among the members of the 2000 BF&M drafting committee were Adrian Rogers, first resurgence SBC President who served as Chairman of the committee; Charles “Chuck” Kelley, President of New Orleans Seminary; Al Mohler, President of Southern Seminary; Fred Luter, who later became President of the SBC; and Steve Gaines, who succeeded Adrian Rogers at Bellevue Baptist Church and later became president of the SBC.

²² McBeth, Harry L. *Texas Baptists: a Sesquicentennial History*. Dallas: BaptistWay Press, 1998.

One of the interesting points of this segment of denominational history is that, for the first time in Baptist history, a free association of Baptists essentially excommunicates a collection of churches based on their theological position. Although this “excommunication” of liberal Baptists was not explicit, the consequence of the conservatives’ concerted political maneuvering was inarguably partisan against liberal theology, thus shifting from the English Baptist concept of free, individual churches governed by “believers-as-priests” towards a more centralized denomination²³.

Eschatology.

By the late 20th-century, those holding premillennial views were definitely engaging society, particularly on environmental issues (Barker and Bearce 2012; Guth, Green, Kellstedt, and Smidt 1995) and political activity (Wilcox et. al 1991). Although premillennialism can have apathetic responses towards particular issues such as environmental ones, Wilcox, Linzey, and Jelen (1991) note that premillennialists remain politically active, for the most part. Their theory is that belief in an “active devil” in society and the belief that the church will be reduced to a faithful remnant actually yields what they call “reluctant warriors.” Thus, instead of being dissuaded from action because of apparent future hopelessness, premillennialists discovered that political activity was necessary because the current social struggles were actually a fight between good and evil, between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Especially in this regard, dispensational premillennialism fomented political activity based on the idea that the

²³ It is important to note that church governance remained local. However, the practice of disassociation from—and consequential alienation of—dissenting churches nonetheless signaled a major shift in the Baptist understanding of unity within the “universal church.”

faithful, i.e. those who fight the good fight, will be rewarded for their work and faithfulness²⁴. Thus, premillennialists were mobilized for political action, now being naturally expected to be politically engaged to some degree and generally unwilling to compromise on many or even most social or political issues.

Conclusion

From the preceding literature review, simple dichotomous typologies of Baptists' historical views of ecclesiology and of eschatology were devised.

The ecclesiological typology utilized contrasts individualism and associationism in ecclesiological practice. For the purposes of this typology, "individualism" will be defined as the emphasis of individual units—whether as the person or as the local church—in determining religious practice; such examples would be emphases on the priesthood of believers and congregational governance. "Associationism" will be defined as the emphasis of representative (usually ministerial) units—whether as the minister or as the association/convention—in determining religious practice; such examples would be emphases on pastoral/eldership prerogative and associational establishment and involvement. (Table 2-B)

The eschatological typology utilized contrasts pessimism and optimism in eschatological belief. For the purpose of this typology, "pessimistic" eschatology includes those views in which human society is in a state of degradation that will result in a cataclysmic end of the world, e.g. premillennialism. "Optimistic" eschatology includes

²⁴ This view espouses a Manichean view of society, i.e. there are two categories into which all social occurrences can be classified: good and bad.

those views in which human society can be continually improved in order to induce, institute, and/or further Christ’s Kingdom, e.g. postmillennialism and amillennialism.

(Table 2-C)

Table 2-B: Ecclesiological Typology of Baptist eras

<i>Baptist Era</i>	<i>Ecclesiological Typology</i>
English Baptist	Individualist
Colonial Baptist	Associational
Early SBC	Individualist
Moral Majority-era	Associational

Table 2-C: Eschatological Typology of Baptist eras

<i>Baptist Era</i>	<i>Eschatological Typology</i>
English Baptist	Pessimistic
Colonial Baptist	Optimistic
Early SBC	Optimistic
Moral Majority-era	Pessimistic

Chapter Three: Methodology

This study considers Baptist political theology in the context of Christians' being involved in the state. For the purposes of this research, "involvement in the state" will be defined as the Christian's ability to justly participate in political action, such as running for office or issue advocacy. The stated hypothesis is that Baptist political theology became a catalyst for Baptist political activity during the Moral Majority era based on an eschatological shift towards optimism or an ecclesiological shift towards associationalism.

In order to test the hypothesis, a close reading of relevant²⁵ Baptist theological writings was conducted. The historical analysis included four distinct time periods of Baptist history: (1) the English Baptists, (2) the Colonial Baptists, (3) the Early SBC Baptists, and (4) the Moral Majority Baptists. Select confessions and writings from each period were included in the analysis. Included texts and authors are given in Table 3-A. It is important to note that, although a much larger amount of texts was reviewed, only the following were found to reasonably consider political involvement, whether explicitly or implicitly²⁶.

²⁵ Herein, "relevant" refers to texts concerning the relationship between the church and the state or the Christian and the state.

²⁶ The increasingly fewer amount of relevant texts could be a result of Baptist Biblicism, which would not recognize political activity as a valid Biblical or theological subject (Moehlman 1937).

Table 3-A: Selected Texts by Baptist Era

<i>Baptist Era</i>	<i>Selected Texts (and Author)</i>
English Baptist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + <i>Propositions and Conclusions</i> (Smyth) + <i>Character of the Beast</i> (Smyth) + <i>Paterne of true Prayer</i> (Smyth) + <i>Schleitheim Confession</i> + <i>Waterland Confession</i> + <i>A True Confession</i> + <i>Helwys Confession</i> + <i>London Baptist Confession of Faith</i> + <i>Second London Baptist Confession of Faith, 2nd Edition</i>
Colonial Baptist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + <i>Letter to Thomas Jefferson</i> (Danbury Baptist Association) + <i>Charter of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations</i> + <i>Government and Liberty Described</i> (Isaac Backus) + <i>Philadelphia Confession of Faith</i>
Early SBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + <i>Axioms of Religion</i> (Mullins) + <i>Social Gospel</i> (Rauschenbusch) + <i>Confession of the Faith of the Fundamental Fellowship</i> + <i>Baptist Faith and Message of 1925</i> + <i>Resolutions on Religious Liberty</i> (1855, 1853, 1859, 1866, 1898, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1919, 1920) + <i>Resolutions on Tobacco</i> (1920) + <i>Resolution Concerning Government</i> (1921, 1926) + <i>Resolution on Peace</i> (1863, 1911) + <i>Report on Temperance And Prohibition</i> (1886, 1887) + <i>Resolutions on International Justice</i> (1904, 1906, 1909, 1925) + <i>Resolutions on Christian Social Concerns</i> (1905, 1913) + <i>Resolutions on Law and Order</i> (1907, 1911) + <i>Resolution on Child Labor</i> (1910) + <i>Resolution on Public Health</i> (1910) + <i>Resolution on Drugs</i> (1920) + <i>Resolution on Tax/Taxation</i> (1920, 1920) + <i>Resolutions from the Committee on Social Service</i> (1922, 1929, 1929, 1929, 1929, 1930, 1930)
Moral Majority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + <i>Baptist Faith and Message of 1963</i> + <i>Resolutions on Peace</i> (1970, 1971, 1972) + <i>Resolutions on Drugs/Alcohol</i> (1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1978, 1979) + <i>Resolutions on the Environment</i> (1970) + <i>Resolution on Education</i> (1970, 1971, 1971, 1974, 1975, 1978, 1979) + <i>Resolution on Abortion</i> (1971, 1974, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979) + <i>Resolution on Prison Reform</i> (1971) + <i>Resolution on Christian Citizenship</i> (1972, 1975, 1977) + <i>Resolution on Religious Liberty</i> (1972, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978) + <i>Resolution on Taxation</i> (1972, 1974, 1977, 1979) + <i>Resolution on Welfare</i> (1972) + <i>Resolution on Homosexuality</i> (1976, 1977)

In selecting sample literature, confessions, and ecclesiological statements, a coded analysis was conducted under the general guidelines presented in Saldaña's *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2008). The following codes were used:

Category 1: political activity (used for literature)

- Code: state
- Code: government
- Code: civil
- Code: society; social
- Code: secular
- Code: magistrate
- Code: parliament
- Code: congress
- Code: vote
- Code: freedom
- Code: regulate
- Code Phrase: separation of church and state

Category 2: political involvement (used for confessions)

- Code: civil
- Code: magistrate
- Code: society
- Code: liberty
- Code: conscience
- Code Phrase: separation of church and state

Category 3: political advocacy (used for ecclesiological statements)

- Code: government
- Code: society; social
- Code: public
- Code: law
- Code: reform
- Code: peace; peaceful
- Code: international
- Code: tobacco
- Code: alcohol
- Code: drugs
- Code: abortion
- Code: education
- Code: tax; taxes; taxation

Following the initial coding, a further analysis was conducted to narrow-down initial sources to those that referred to the nature of Christian political involvement. Finally, for those texts discerned to be relevant, a close reading was conducted.

From the close reading, the sources were then assigned ordinal values (Table 3-B). Those values were then weighted and averaged for a weighted composite value for their respective Baptist era; the weighting scale used was as follows: confessions were weighted 200%, ecclesiological statements were weighted 150%, and literary sources were weighted 100%. Pearson's correlation analysis was performed using the weighted composite values to determine a correlation between Baptist positions on ecclesiology, eschatology, and political activity. These results are classified as General Set.

Finally, two additional sets are generated to take into consideration three main factors: (1) the optimistic eschatological view espoused by liberal Southern Baptists, (2) the non-representativeness of the Early SBC ecclesiological statements for the conservative Southern Baptists, and (3) the non-representativeness of the Moral Majority-era ecclesiological statements for the liberal Southern Baptists. The set taking point (2) into consideration is classified as the Conservative Set; the set taking points (1) and (3) into consideration is classified as the Liberal Set. A Pearson's correlation analysis was performed on these sets as well.

For all sets, the correlation was determined to be weak if the absolute value of the calculated coefficient was between 0.0 and 0.4, moderate if between 0.4 and 0.6, strong if between 0.6 and 0.8, or very strong if between 0.8 and 1.0. Positive values will suggest correlation between political activity and either associational ecclesiology or optimistic eschatology. Negative values will suggest correlation between political activity and either individualist ecclesiology or pessimistic eschatology.

Table 3-B: Ordinal Value Rubric

<i>Value</i>	= 1.0	= 0.5	= 0.0
Political Activity	Encouraged	mixed/inconclusive	Discouraged
<i>Value</i>	= 2.0*		= 1.0*
Ecclesiology	Associational		Individualist
Eschatology	Optimistic		Pessimistic

**Non-zero values required for Pearson's Analysis*

Chapter Four: Data

The assigned ordinal values for the General Set is given in Table 4-A. The Pearson's correlation coefficient for political value with respect to ecclesiology is calculated to be 0.41, suggesting a weak-to-moderate correlation between associational ecclesiology and political activity. The Pearson's correlation coefficient for political value with respect to eschatology is calculated to be 0.40, suggesting a low-to-moderate correlation between optimistic eschatology and political activity.

The assigned ordinal values for the Conservative Set is given in Table 4-B. The Pearson's correlation coefficient for political value with respect to ecclesiology is calculated to be 0.96, suggesting a very strong correlation between associational ecclesiology and political activity. The Pearson's correlation coefficient for political value with respect to eschatology is calculated to be -0.20, suggesting a weak correlation between pessimistic eschatology and political activity.

The assigned ordinal values for the Liberal Set is given in Table 4-C. The Pearson's correlation coefficient for political value with respect to ecclesiology is calculated to be -0.09, suggesting a very weak correlation between individualist ecclesiology and political activity. The Pearson's correlation coefficient for political value with respect to eschatology is calculated to be 0.68, suggesting a moderate-to-strong correlation between optimistic eschatology and political activity.

Table 4-A: Ordinal Value Assignment, General Set

	Ecclesiology Value	Eschatology Value	Political Value
English Baptists	1	1	0.40
Colonial Baptists	2	2	0.80
Early SBC	1	2	0.99
Moral Majority	2	1	1.00

Table 4-B: Ordinal Value Assignment, Conservative Set

	Ecclesiology Value	Eschatology Value	Political Value
English Baptists	1	1	0.40
Colonial Baptists	2	2	0.80
Early SBC	1	2	0.39†
Moral Majority	2	1	1.00

† denotes an alteration from the General Set

Table 4-C: Ordinal Value Assignment, Liberal Set

	Ecclesiology Value	Eschatology Value	Political Value
English Baptists	1	1	0.40
Colonial Baptists	2	2	0.80
Early SBC	1	2	1.00†
Moral Majority	2	2†	0.52†

† denotes an alteration from the General Set

Chapter Five: Discussion

[We] urgently call upon all Southern Baptists to carefully consider the vital moral issues in this year's campaigns, examine the moral positions of the candidates, scrutinize the platforms of the political parties and the economic interests supporting the candidates, apply Bible truths and Christian insights in arriving at decisions related to politics, and prayerfully work for those who seem nearest to a responsible Christian position.

-SBC Resolution on Christian Citizenship (1972)

In trying to understand the political mobilization of Southern Baptists in the New Christian Right and Moral Majority, much of the previous academic literature has pointed to religious demographics and surface-level analyses of theological belief. However, while no distinguishable correlation between ecclesiology, eschatology, and political activity is apparent in the General Set, Conservative Southern Baptist political activity is highly correlated to its associational ecclesiology ($=0.96$) and Liberal Southern Baptist political activity is highly correlated to its optimistic eschatology ($=0.68$). Further, no significant relationship between conservative political activity and eschatological views was present, which contradicts the claims of much literature on the theological foundations of the Moral Majority, namely that provided by Wilcox et al. (1991). However, the “reluctant warrior” modulation theory, as is suggested by this research, is unsatisfying in explaining conservative political behavior.

The Practical Problem with the Reluctant Warrior Thesis

The chief means for promoting the Kingdom of God on earth are preaching the gospel of Christ, and teaching the principles of righteousness contained therein... And it is the duty of all Christ's people to pray and labor continually that his Kingdom may come and his will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

-Article XXV on The Kingdom, Baptist Faith and Message of 1925

As a Christian tradition founded on the principle of soul liberty, the Baptists have long accepted variation in beliefs concerning “non-essential” doctrines, i.e. those doctrines not interfering with the obtaining of salvation—a category into which eschatology would unquestionably fall. Yet, in order for the *Reluctant Warrior* thesis to hold true, there are a few presumptions that must hold true: (1) conservative Southern Baptists must have adopted a pessimistic premillennial view in the early 20th-century, (2) that the political consequences of pessimistic premillennialism was either being taught in the church or was naturally understood, (3) that conservative Southern Baptists made a nuanced distinction in their premillennial view such to arrive at the “Reluctant Warrior” position by the 1980s, and (4) that conservative Southern Baptists were so convinced of their nuanced perspective that they catapulted themselves into national politics in the late 1970s and 1980s. Each of these points is important if one is to suggest that a decentralized denomination individually-cultivated a nuanced perspective on a tertiary theological concept that caused mass political mobilization by the 1980s.

Historian George Marsden (2006) has well-noted that conservative Christians adopted a premillennial view in the early 20th-century as a result of increasing evidence of rapid secularization. Although further historical research could be conducted to determine the extent to which anti-political involvement premillennial topics appeared in Southern Baptist pulpits to determine how present were premillennial views in

conservatives' withdrawal from political platforms, the general statement that premillennial and apocalyptic views persuaded conservatives' whole-view perspective to turn towards pessimism and non-involvement. However, the foremost malady of the Reluctant Warrior thesis is the third presumption: that conservative Southern Baptists arrived at a nuanced view within premillennial theology *en masse* within a relatively short time span²⁷. Eschatology has long been a minor point within systematic theology, usually with local churches accommodating a wide range of eschatological views within their congregation. Even further, for most of history prior to the early 20th-century, full eschatological interpretative schemes were seldom offered by prominent theologians—and when they were offered, they were usually provided with a disclaimer of ecumenicism amongst different interpretations of prophetic literature. However, the Reluctant Warrior thesis suggests that eschatological views were comprehensive, formalized, and robust for nearly the first time in Baptist history²⁸. Further, in a significantly rural denomination where several pastors may have never received formal theological education and—even for those that did—most likely did not study eschatology in-depth, the suggestion that entire congregations of conservative Baptists were compelled to develop a nuanced theology linking the “faithful remnant” of the Israelites in the Old Testament approaching the first coming of Jesus Christ directly

²⁷ The assertion that such a shift must have taken place in a short time span is founded on that the political ramifications of mobilized conservative Baptists would have been clearly and profoundly evident in elections throughout the South prior to the 1970s. However, no such overtly concerted activity is evident until the formation of the New Christian Right and the Moral Majority.

²⁸ It should be noted that there are ample examples of specialized Baptist communities built on specific readings of apocalyptic literature, e.g. the Fifth Monarchists and Seventh-Day Baptists during the 17th-century. However, no such univocal coordination of eschatological belief is apparent in the American Baptist history of the local church.

corresponded to the “faithful remnant” of the Christians in the New Testament approaching the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The skepticism towards the thesis is, in essence, built on the impracticability of such a coordinated effort in an uncoordinated denominational structure, not to mention the remaining necessity that conservatives then materialize their new nuanced eschatological perspective into a politically-mobilized force. It would be assumed, with such an organic instigator of heightened political activity such as the development of privately-held eschatological views, that the resulting political mobilization would happen gradually, with the consequential effects occurring over a longer period of time; although there is no prescribed duration of that time period, it would be reasonably expected to last longer than the five years between 1975 and 1980.

The Reluctant Warrior thesis insufficiently offers a convoluted explanation as to why conservative Southern Baptists mobilized in late 20th-century. The catalyst for such a shift must demonstrate a more direct approach in order to assert that a decentralized denomination so uniformly accepted the political mobilization of the New Christian Right and the Moral Majority. As a result, the catalyst would be expected to assume less of a metaphysical nature and more of a participatory nature; that is, the common holding of a minor and obscure theological point is a less attractive explanation of conservative political mobilization than an explanation that involves denomination-wide engagement, i.e. something occurring in all SBC churches at the same time. Such an explanation can be found in the ecclesiological activity of the conservative Southern Baptists in the 20th-century.

Alternative Thesis: Conservative Resurgence and the SBC as an Alternative Body Politic

Every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in his own life and in human society...Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love.

*-Article XV on the Christian and the Social Order,
Baptist Faith and Message of 1963*

That we call upon all Christians to involve themselves more actively in the American political process to the end that God may be glorified and that the nation may be strengthened as a guarantor of liberty and justice for all.

-Resolution on Integrity and Morality in the American Political System

As Whitt (2008) points out, Cavanaugh (1995) attempts to classify the church as an alternative body politic in the sense that the church may serve as a respite from frustrating public interaction; however, this is not the meaning that this research suggests. The data presented here would instead encourage a perspective that realizes the Southern Baptist Convention to be a laboratory of political activity, a forum of participatory learning that is translated into general reference. This explanation, herein referred to as the Alternative thesis, suggests that conservative Southern Baptists learned political advocacy, activities, and mobilization through the burgeoning Conservative Resurgence in the SBC; as a result, the surging mobilization of conservative Baptists in the New Christian Right and Moral Majority was largely connected to the parallel mobilization of conservative Baptists in denominational advocacy and politics during the fomenting Conservative Resurgence. The Alternative thesis relies on the following developmental trajectory: (1) that the liberal-conservative disjunction became increasingly intolerable with rising pro-social sentiments among conservatives and the legalization of abortion in 1972; (2) that, because local conservative congregations were active throughout the

Conservative Resurgence—especially noted by the incredibly high levels of delegates²⁹ sent to the Annual Conventions³⁰—the Conservative Resurgence was a direct ecclesiological result of the conservatives’ increased political activity in denominational affairs; and (3) that this increased political activity within the SBC transferred attitudes about political activity and advocacy mobilization to conservative Baptists in the secular realm.

As evident throughout the literature review, the disjunction between liberals and conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention was historical and dated back to the earliest years of the Convention. One such disjunction was over the nature of the church, i.e. whether the church should be pro-social institutional, anti-social institutional³¹, or whether it should adopt the social gospel of Rauschenbusch. That disjunction was exacerbated with the establishment of the Baptist Joint Commission in 1936 and its support of strict separationism and pro-choice policies (Wilson 2011, 172-173). While the dissonance between the pro-social liberals and the less-social conservatives continued to grow, the evangelistic explosion of the mid-20th-century, particularly via the Billy Graham Crusades, pushed the conservative Baptists to a more pro-social perspective, i.e. the evangelistic revival of the 1950s and 1960s encouraged conservative Baptists to focus

²⁹ Delegates to the Annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention are called “messengers.”

³⁰ “In 1985 alone, a record 45,000 messengers attended the convention, spilling into overflow seating. That same year Phil Donahue -- then the king of daytime talk -- devoted an entire program to the SBC controversy, as did ABC's "Nightline." *From Foust (2004)*.

³¹ The reference to “pro-social” or “anti-social” institutionalism is made in regard to whether church activities should reflect social activities (such as athletic ministries, bowling ministries, etc.) or should reflect religious activities (such as prayer meetings, bible studies, etc.).

more on engaging society for the purpose of winning souls. However, with conservative Baptists now more directly competing with liberal Baptists for the social direction of the Convention. The conservative pro-social tenor that resulted from the evangelistic explosion came to a crossing point on the issue of abortion, which was thrust to the center stage of the conservative-liberal power struggle to control the “prophetic voice³²” of the Convention, a struggle that the liberals temporarily won in the early 1970s. This constricting tension between the liberals and conservatives made ripe the 1970s for conservative ecclesiastical action.

In describing the state of the Southern Baptist convention leading up to 1979, Ammerman (1990) asserts that the SBC’s institutions were controlled by liberals and that conservative pastors were often “isolated and excluded” from denominational leadership. As a result, the SBC’s political climate in the 1970s provided the perfect laboratory for political exercises in an alternative body politic. Detailing a political assessment begun in 1967 with a young lawyer Paul Pressler, Dr. Paige Patterson³³ (2012) offered the following insight to their directional intention:

1. All previous attempts at reform had failed. We had to determine why.
2. We had to do our homework. We had to know the bylaws of the convention and use them effectively.
3. We knew that our people were suspicious that the emperor had no clothes, notwithstanding his protests to the contrary. We had to find some courageous souls who would point this out.
4. Education about the actual state of the SBC, as well as on how it functioned, had to be begun and vigorously pressed.

³² “Prophetic voice” refers to the ability to speak with religious authority on cultural issues. The struggle over the Convention’s prophetic voice was not necessarily in regards to actualizing any political result through advocacy or influence. Rather, the conservatives primarily wanted internal authority, regardless of any external influence.

³³ Dr. Paige Patterson was recognized a central figure in the Conservative Resurgence. In 1992, he became the first conservative Seminary President installed at one of the SBC seminaries. He was also later elected President of the SBC in 1998 and 1999.

5. Once education progressed, churches had to be convinced to elect and send to the convention each year every allowable messenger.
6. Potential presidents, who enjoyed appointive powers, had to be protected, and kept as long as possible at arm's length from the organizers of the effort.
7. Patience was essential. The whole process would need ten years.

Patterson's account is crucial in asserting that the Conservative Resurgence was intimately political, i.e. closely related to the assumption and wielding of power by procedural and democratic maneuverings. Paul Pressler, the lawyer who met with Patterson in 1967, was regarded as a "brilliant, optimistic...student of grassroots politics, [leading] a coterie of pastors and laymen, who canvassed to find in each state a pastor and layman who had both sufficient courage and profound conviction and willingness to promote the necessary educational efforts and strategic attendance at the annual conventions" (Patterson 2012, 22). Although little historical research has been conducted on the nature and scope of Pressler's expansive grassroots campaign, his efforts relay the conservatives' strategy of leveraging democratic support through a localized and highly-concerted effort, and by utilizing political maneuvers to avoid procedural hurdles—both of which are highly political activities performed in the ecclesiastical body politic.

The conclusion of the Alternative thesis is that conservatives transferred their gained political knowledge, values, and skills from the ecclesiastical sphere to the public sphere. Working from Whitt's (2000) theory of the alternative body politic, the transmission of knowledge, values, and skills are not unlikely; in fact, they are rather probable. Much research has been conducted that suggests that ecclesiastical polity served as a primary reference point in statecraft and the establishment of civil institutions, particular in regards to congregational churches and democratic government. Agent socialization theory would also confirm this claim, noting that the church is a noted social

institution in which education is a primary function and sharing common beliefs and practices is highly valued. Moreover, the data found within this research would firmly validate this conclusion as well.

Explaining the Liberal Southern Baptists

The Kingdom of God is not a matter of getting individuals to heaven, but of transforming the life on earth into the harmony of heaven.

-Walter Rauschenbush

With the acceptance of the Alternative thesis, the position of the liberal Baptists remains left unexplored. Mostly, liberal Baptist political activity is outside of the scope of this research as liberal Baptists were not constituent members of the New Christian Right or the Moral Majority. Nonetheless, this research's data suggests that liberal Baptist eschatology is highly correlated to political activity. Although this explanation faces the same primary difficulty as the Reluctant Warrior thesis did—i.e. that eschatology is a relatively minor and deemphasized theological point—the optimism encompassing the amillennial view does resonate throughout liberal theology. Particularly, it is also important to recognize that liberal theology widely-accepted the social gospel argument proposed by Walter Rauschenbusch. Thus, the mission of the liberal church would be to promote personal and social wholeness in order that spiritual wholeness can be better desired or achieved, lending liberal political theology to a firm commitment to political activity and involvement. However, the liberal-conservative division is necessary to understanding the difference between liberal political theology and its accompanying consequences and conservative political theology and its accompanying consequences.

The sharp division between liberal and conservative Baptists in the 1970s seems to demonstrate and resemble more of a Manichean divide than a principled commitment to the doctrine of soul liberty, at least from the conservative perspective. To the conservative, the Christian must fight for truth in a society that is unequivocally antithetic and hostile towards truth. To the liberal, the Christian must fight for good in a society that genuinely seeks good things but finds it difficult to obtain or realize. Potential explanations for this divide between the Baptists, which now manifests itself between the SBC and the Cooperative Baptists Fellowship, are likely to include the presence of pervasive “otherness” as a result of conservative evangelicalism or the effect of liberal higher criticism on the evangelistic preeminence of the Gospel, in addition to many other doctrinal explanations. However, as this research was designed to explore conservative theological and political thought, further research should be conducted to consider the development of Baptist liberal political theology.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

From the collected data and proceeding discussion, the first hypothesis—that an eschatological shift towards optimism was correlated to the increased political activity of the Moral Majority era—was rejected for the Conservative set based on the findings that eschatological beliefs were not significantly related to political activity. Herein, the popular Reluctant Warrior thesis, and more broadly the eschatological explanation, is discussed and declined as influential in the rise of the New Christian Right and the Moral Majority.

The second hypothesis—that an ecclesiological shift towards associationalism was correlated to the increased political activity of the Moral Majority era—was not rejected for the Conservative set based on the high Pearson's correlation analysis (= 0.96). The underlying ecclesiological activity of the conservative Southern Baptists leading up to the initiation of the Conservative Resurgence is explored and entertained, with additional suggestions for research.

This research has operated extensively under the premise that the Southern Baptist Convention acts as an alternative body politic, wherein learned political knowledge, values, and skills can be utilized in other body politics, namely civil governance. However, further research is desirable on the nature and transferability of these learned traits across body politic platforms, such as religious, socio-economic, and sex-based platforms etc.; such research would provide a better understanding of political theology and political socialization as a whole.

Further, this research suggests the need for further historical, social, political, economic, and geographic studies investigating the nexus of social science and religious

studies. Particularly, research should trend towards understanding religious phenomenon through a social science lens in the context of learned traits—such as knowledge, values, and skills—rather than in the context of its messaging.

Altogether, this research attempts to divide the gap between social science and religious study in the context of understanding how political theology can result in actual political consequences, as evident in the New Christian Right and Moral Majority. In doing so, the nature of the Southern Baptist Convention as an alternative body politic and the actors of the Conservative Resurgence as engaging in political exercises was explored and defended, suggesting that a conservative ecclesiastical movement in the Southern Baptist Convention provided for the mass political mobilization of conservative Baptists in the Moral Majority.

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