

**Reconstructing Religious Identity:
Southern Baptists and Anti-Catholicism, 1870-1920**

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how Southern Baptists utilized anti-Catholicism to reconstruct their religious identity from 1870 to 1920. It documents the beliefs, rhetoric, and actions of Baptists as they encountered Catholics both at home and abroad. It is the first manuscript detailing Southern Baptist perceptions of Catholics and Catholicism from the Reconstruction to the end of World War I. It offers a new point of departure for southern religious history by examining how the South's largest denomination responded to and was shaped by a non-Protestant religious group.

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There are so many people that deserve recognition. Archivist Laura Botts at Mercer University's Georgia Baptist History Depository, Lisa Persinger at Wake Forest University's North Carolina Historical Collection, and Gillian Brown at the Roman Catholic Diocese of Savannah all generously shared their resources and ideas with me. Bill Sumners and Taffey Hall made my research at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives a pleasant and productive experience. Committee members Charles Israel, David Carter, and Richard Penaskovic offered useful comments. For his meticulous editing, constructive criticism, and generosity with his time, I am grateful to my director, Wayne Flynt.

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Finally, I am grateful for a loving and supportive family. My parents, John and Barbara Mitchell, and my sister Angela, provided me with years of encouragement. My wife, Brooke, endured my "Boo Radley" years with grace and at times, nudged me back on course. Without her, I could not have completed this project. The birth of my son, Carter, has been transformational. He brought joy and hope into my life, making the final stretch of writing the easiest to complete.

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Introduction

In June 1994, the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution calling for Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics to engage in interfaith dialogue. The measure recognized historical differences in beliefs between the two groups, such as religious authority, church practices and rituals, and the nature and means of spiritual regeneration. However, it also established areas of common ground where dialogue might produce improved relations. Although there had been previous attempts at reconciliation, this was the first time since the Fundamentalist takeover of the SBC that Southern Baptists were officially willing to extend an olive branch.¹ Although some Southern Baptist intellectuals believed that the ensuing discussions encouraged mutual respect and understanding, other factions questioned the relevance of such activities. Baptist pastor Jerry Moser, who claimed his Louisiana church to be home to a number of converted Catholics, was one of the most outspoken critics. His rationale was that discussions

¹ Michael Clark's thesis is the best scholarly study of the recent relationship between Southern Baptists and Catholics. See Michael J. Clark, "Canonical Issues Emerging in the Southern Baptist - Roman Catholic Dialogue" (Catholic University of America, 2002); see also, Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservative and American Culture*, Religion and American Culture (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002).

Abstract

This dissertation examines how Southern Baptists utilized anti-Catholicism to reconstruct their religious identity from 1870 to 1920. It documents the beliefs, rhetoric, and actions of Baptists as they encountered Catholics both at home and abroad. It is the first manuscript detailing Southern Baptist perceptions of Catholics and Catholicism from the Reconstruction to the end of World War I. It offers a new point of departure for southern religious history by examining how the South's largest denomination responded to and was shaped by a non-Protestant religious group.

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encouraged the Roman Catholic Church to seek “ecumenical convergence and eventual visible unity.”²

The interfaith dialogue between Catholics and Southern Baptists proved to be short-lived. Suspensions swelled in 1999 when the SBC passed a resolution urging the denomination not to abandon its “historical distinctivities” and “the unique witness of Southern Baptists” for the sake of ecumenism.³ Two years later, Southern Baptist leaders informed the Roman Catholic Church that they were ending official conversations between the two groups. Phil Roberts, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and director of interfaith relations for the SBC’s North American Mission Board, explained that the justification for the separation was simply the realization that “We’re not ecumenists. We’re evangelicals committed to sharing the gospel.” Although trite, the response was a marker that offered adherents a sense of common identity and reaffirmed what Southern Baptists believed in and also what they stood against.

Some Baptists remain hopeful that the SBC will restart interfaith discussions. These critics depict the collapse of communication as a temporary roadblock to resolving misunderstandings, reducing antipathy, and healing the past.⁴ Baptist theologian Bill Hendricks, a long-time participant in the dialogues, pointed out that past efforts have yielded a “fertile exchange of theological ideas and scholarly concerns and ways in which

² Bob Allen, “Southern Baptists Ending Talks with Roman Catholics,” *Associated Baptist Press*, 5 April 2001.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Timothy George, “The Promise of Benedict XVI,” *Christianity Today*, June 2005; Bill Leonard, “Old/New Churches, Old/New Realities,” *Associated Baptist Press News*, 21 June 2012.

our mutual communities could agree on social ministries and theological affirmations.”⁵ In describing why interfaith activities failed, another participant, Timothy George (dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University), had a more fatalistic perspective. George, a long-time advocate for interfaith dialogue, stated that, for Southern Baptists, “ecumenism is not a high priority.”⁶ Both agreed that a small faction had hijacked control of the narrative by successfully framing the interfaith discussions as compromising historical Baptist beliefs. The group convinced SBC members that being true believers in distinctive Baptist principles also meant being anti-Catholic. It is a message as relevant today as it was a hundred years ago.

If, as historian Andrew Moore argues, anti-Catholicism has served as an “identity marker” for Southern Baptists, at no time was the SBC more in need of such symbols as in the decades after the Civil War.⁷ Alabama Baptist historian Wayne Flynt and Georgia Baptist historian James Lester both use the word “watershed” to characterize the circumstances of Southern Baptists in the 1860s and 1870s.⁸ Flynt argues that, faced with an uncertain future, Baptists reformed their theology, focusing more on political

⁵ Mark Wingfield, “‘We’re Not Ecumenists,’ SBC Says in Breaking Off Catholic Dialogues,” *Baptist Standard*, 2 April 2001.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Although Andrew Moore argues that anti-Catholicism served as an “identity marker for Baptists,” he also contends that it did not advance a distinctive Southern Baptist identity, claiming instead that Baptists and other evangelicals, “put aside their own theological differences to celebrate a universal Protestant heritage that transcended denominational boundaries and regional identity; Andrew Moore, “Anti-Catholicism, Anti-Protestantism, and Race in Civil Rights Era Alabama and Georgia,” *Journal of Southern Religion* 8 (2005).

⁸ Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 155; James Adams Lester, *A History of the Georgia Baptist Convention, 1822-1972* (Atlanta: Executive Committee, Baptist Convention of the State of Georgia, 1972), 201.

activism and religious separatism.⁹ Lester emphasizes institutional change, characterizing the period as “one of regrouping and forging ahead.”¹⁰ Both consider missions to have been an impetus for Baptist transformation. While the two authors might disagree with the nature and extent of change, both agree that Southern Baptists spent the two decades shaping their identity.

One of the most profound questions Southern Baptists needed to address was how best to serve its war-ravaged people. Although historians have found numerous answers to this matter of institutional identity, the points of emphasis remain the same— Baptists focused on evangelization, recommitted to sectional identity, and pledged to preserve the South’s social hierarchy.¹¹ This scholarship has served an important role in developing an understanding of southern evangelicalism. It also provides points of departure for further exploration, allowing future scholars opportunities to either contextualize or challenge these interpretations.

One of the least-utilized topics of research has been the ways in which other religious groups (such as Catholics) either directly or indirectly shaped the religious

⁹ Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, 155.

¹⁰ Lester, *A History of the Georgia Baptist Convention, 1822-1972*, 201.

¹¹ Notable works that address post-Civil War Southern Baptist identity include John Lee Eighmy and Samuel S. Hill, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987); Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*, The Fred W. Morrison series in Southern studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Samuel S. Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis*, (New York: Holt, 1967); Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920*, The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Rufus B. Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967); Randy J. Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

cultures of the South. For instance, outside of a few enclaves, Catholicism had a small presence in the 19th century Southeast.¹² Many Southern Baptists had no contact with Catholics and little personal knowledge of them. Based solely on exposure, Baptists had little to concern them. Yet at the very time their religious culture descended into crisis, Baptists increasingly expended their time, energy, and money battling Catholicism at home and abroad. They constructed an identity that defined them not only based on what they believed but also on what (and whom) they opposed. For Southern Baptists, anti-Catholic rhetoric became a means of raising money and supporting missions, establishing Christian education, promoting orthodox religious beliefs, and enforcing a moral code on southern society.

Key to the advancement of evangelical ideals, printed media promoted the most important foundations of post-war Southern Baptist identity. Since Baptists historically had been congregational and autonomous, no ecclesiastical body beyond the local church could speak for them. Leaders feared that isolation might allow churches to fall under the spell of outside influences. Within these weekly or bi-weekly newspapers and circulars, readers from across the state kept up with the most pressing denominational matters, and more importantly, began to feel plugged into a larger spiritual community. Historian Daniel Stowell explains that:

... from the start, denominational leaders understood the important role religious newspapers could play in uniting disparate churches behind the common goal of religious reconstruction. In the pages of these journals,

¹² For the most sophisticated study of Catholic institutions in the antebellum South, see Randall M. Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn, *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1999).

southern editors proclaimed southern ideals and condemned northern denominations.¹³

Even though newspapers helped create a distinct southern religious identity, Southern Baptists simply did not have the publication capabilities to fulfill this need alone. This translated into papers that during many weeks carried articles from other sources, both northern and southern. They purchased literature and had their own materials printed by the American Baptist Association. In the 1870s and 80s, this meant that Southern Baptists became accustomed to reading northern critiques of the South, but it also exposed them to northern problems and perspectives. As Italians, Poles, and Slavs, all overwhelmingly Catholic, poured into northern cities, anti-Catholic stories trickled into southern newspapers reprinted from northern sources. While the SBC constructed an identity shaped in opposition to an increasingly foreign North, they appropriated northern anti-Catholic stories and assigned these a distinctive role in religious deviation from southern evangelical norms.¹⁴ In the 1890s, the SBC successfully built its own media conglomerate—the Sunday School Board. By then, its Baptist leaders were solidly in charge of the denomination’s identity. As immigrants arrived in the South in increasing numbers, Baptists didn’t break stride; they knew what to expect and how to exercise their cultural authority.

¹³ Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 201.

¹⁴ David Jansson argues that one way Americans have assigned identity is by constructing spatial binaries where negative characteristics of another culture help define the positive/opposite characteristics of the ideal. See David R. Jansson, “Internal Orientalism in America: W. J. Cash’s *The Mind of the South* and the Spatial Construction of American National Identity,” *Political Geography*, 22 (2003), 293-316.

Studies of anti-Catholicism in the United States initially framed it as an American condition, but offered little analysis of the South.¹⁵ The simplest explanation for this inattention is that historians followed the sources; other areas of the country received far greater numbers of immigrants, so researchers assumed that these areas were more likely to experience tension between Protestants and Catholics. Another explanation is that most major Catholic universities supporting research are also outside the South. These universities provided the funding, hired religious historians who specialized in American Catholicism, and collected substantial primary sources.¹⁶

Recent inquiries into the South have revealed a more sophisticated understanding of Catholicism in the region. Many of these historians have focused on the antebellum period, emphasizing early Spanish Catholic roots and their commitment to southern social and political causes. Ironically, these studies characterize anti-Catholicism as promoted by northern interests.¹⁷ Although slower to respond, historians of recent

¹⁵ As one of the first historians to offer an in-depth analysis of anti-Catholics, John Higham argued that anti-Catholicism bypassed the South because Catholic immigrants went elsewhere. See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955).

¹⁶ See, for example, Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Andrew M. Greeley, *An Ugly Little Secret: Anti-Catholicism in North America* (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1977); Mark J. Hurley, *The Unholy Ghost: Anti-Catholicism in the American Experience* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 1992); Donald Louis Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964); Robert P. Lockwood, ed. *Anti-Catholicism in American Culture* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000); Mark Stephen Massa, *Anti-Catholicism in America: the Last Acceptable Prejudice* (New York: Crossroad, 2003); Michael Schwartz, *The Persistent Prejudice: Anti-Catholicism in America* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 1984); William M. Shea, *The Lion and the Lamb: Evangelicals and Catholics in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁷ See, for example, Jeff Frederick, "Unintended Consequences: The Rise and Fall of the Know-Nothing Party in Alabama," *Alabama Review* (January 2002); Miller and Wakelyn, *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture*; W. Jason Wallace,

southern religion have added to the narrative of southern Catholics. While these authors have provided a nuanced understanding of the role Catholics played in shaping the southern religious climate, anti-Catholicism receives cursory attention.¹⁸ Andrew Moore remains the exception. His book, *The South's Tolerable Alien: Roman Catholics in Alabama and Georgia, 1945-1970*, was published in 2007 and is the first modern history detailing the acrimonious relationship between Catholics and Protestants in the post-World War II South.¹⁹ Although his study included Southern Baptists, he chose to lump them together with other Protestants, arguing that church groups abandoned their denominational identity in favor of an American Protestantism devoid of regional identity.

Not surprisingly, Baptist historians have remained relatively quiet. Most general denominational histories have detailed their successes in creating mission fields, fighting for social causes, and protecting religious liberties. They offer scant details about the religious clashes that ensued during the Baptist advance.²⁰ Baptist histories that have

Catholics, Slaveholders, and the Dilemma of American Evangelization, 1835-1860 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

¹⁸ See, for example, R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism, 1947-1956*, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005); James B. Bennett, *Religion and the Rise of Jim Crow in New Orleans*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Danny Duncan Collum, *Black and Catholic in the Jim Crow South: The Stuff that Makes Community* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006); Amy L. Koehlinger, *The New Nuns: Racial Justice and Religious Reform in the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁹ Andrew S. Moore, *The South's Tolerable Alien: Roman Catholics in Alabama and Georgia, 1945-1970* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007); For an earlier work detailing post-war Protestant/Catholic relations, see Lerond Curry, *Protestant-Catholic relations in America, World War I through Vatican II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972).

²⁰ See, for example, Catherine B. Allen, *A Century to Celebrate: History of Woman's Missionary Union* (Birmingham: Woman's Missionary Union, 1987); William Wright

acknowledged these anti-Catholic sentiments tend to be more socially-focused, seeing Baptists both as shapers and captives of southern culture.²¹ Biographies have added little to the narrative, the exceptions being those of Baptists J. Frank Norris of Texas, Sidney Catts of Florida, and Georgia's Tom Watson.²² Ira Birdwhistel's unpublished dissertation, "Southern Baptist Perceptions of and Responses to Roman Catholicism, 1917-1972," is the only previous historical work offering a detailed study of Baptists and Roman Catholics, including sections on missions, political confrontations, doctrinal differences, and the election of John F. Kennedy.²³ Although the author refrained from characterizing Baptist perceptions as anti-Catholic, his dissertation is filled with episodes of hostility and confrontation. It does not, however, account for the anti-Catholic beliefs of Southern Baptists from 1870 to 1920.

Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954); Keith Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996); Samuel S. Hill and Robert G. Torbet, *Baptists North and South* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1964); Lester, *A History of the Georgia Baptist Convention, 1822-1972*; Arthur B. Rutledge and William G. Tanner, *Mission to America: A Century and a Quarter of Southern Baptist Home Missions* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969); Walter B. Shurden, *Not a Silent People: Controversies that Have Shaped Southern Baptists* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1995).

²¹ See, for example, Eighmy and Hill, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists*; Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*; Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*; Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900*.

²² Wayne Flynt, *Cracker Messiah, Governor Sidney J. Catts of Florida*, Southern Biography Series (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); Barry Hankins, *God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris and the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism*, Religion and the South (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996); C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938).

²³ Ira V. Birdwhistell, "Southern Baptist Perceptions of and Responses to Roman Catholicism, 1917-1972" (doctoral dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1975); Although James Leo Garrett also wrote on Baptists and Catholics, he focused primarily on theological differences: James Leo Garrett, *Baptists and Roman Catholicism* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1965).

Because most historians have preferred to characterize anti-Catholicism as aberrant instead of normative, these scholars have focused on the “peaks” of anti-Catholicism, such as the activities of the 1890s group, the American Protective Association, or the 1920s Ku Klux Klan.²⁴ In ignoring the “valleys,” past findings have defined the narrative of anti-Catholicism as episodic rather than continual, implying that antipathy faded until another crisis re-ignited tensions.

One explanation may lie in defining the term “anti-Catholic.” Although *Collins English Dictionary* defines anti-Catholicism as being “opposed to the principles, practices, and adherents of Catholics,” most scholars have viewed it as overt hostility rather than more general opposition to Catholicism.²⁵ Practically all who read of Tom Watson’s salacious diatribes against the Catholic priesthood and his calls for convent inspections will agree this constituted anti-Catholicism. His rhetoric clearly exhibited religious antipathy. Fewer may see the anti-Catholic sentiments of a Baptist writer who published a humorous anecdote on the Eucharist or a Baptist leader who spelled out legitimate theological differences. While abstract sentiments are more difficult to qualify than concrete incidents, oppositional manifestations were much more prevalent in the

²⁴ See, for example, David Harry Bennett, *The Party of Fear : From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Greeley, *An Ugly Little Secret: Anti-Catholicism in North America*; Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*; Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: the American Protective Association*; Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason; Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970*, [1st ed., Patterns of American prejudice series, v. 5 (New York: Harper & Row, 1970)]; Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Les Wallace, *The Rhetoric of Anti-Catholicism: the American Protective Association, 1887-1911*, (New York: Garland, 1990).

²⁵ “Anti-Catholicism,” Dictionary.com, *Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition*, HarperCollins Publishers, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/anti-catholicism> (accessed: November 03, 2012).

South, where there were fewer Catholics and therefore, fewer overt threats to southern evangelical hegemony. Just as lynching and de jure segregation do not fully explain the depth and complexity of the South's race relations, neither do pogroms nor the rise of the 1920s Ku Klux Klan fully contextualize Southern Protestant/Catholic relations.

This study investigates how manifestations of anti-Catholicism infiltrated every part of Southern Baptist life. The primary records that form the basis of inquiry include state Baptist newspapers from Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee; proceedings of Baptist associations and conventions; personal correspondence; sermons; and the books, pamphlets, tracts, and unpublished works of Baptist leaders. Although the scope of study is limited to four states and omits those with large Catholic concentrations such as Louisiana, the sampling offers a comprehensive look at the perceptions of most Southern Baptists.²⁶ During the period of inquiry, these states had similar religious compositions, politics, and economies. Among the four there were differences of course. In 1910, Alabama was the most industrial southern state and had the highest Catholic population, while North Carolina was the most rural and had the fewest Catholics. Every state (except North Carolina) had at least one Catholic enclave: Tennessee had Memphis, Georgia had Savannah and Atlanta, and Alabama had Birmingham and Mobile.

While this study limits the scope to four states, there is tremendous overlap. Because the SBC is headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee houses state resources and also national convention records. Convention leaders emphasized denominational unity

²⁶ Other studies have limited the scope of their research to these states to draw conclusions about southern evangelicals. See, for example, Joe L. Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007); Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920*.

and advocated policy on behalf of the entire South. Preachers moved from state to state, sometimes from region to region. Baptist leader Lansing Burrows was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and spent time in Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and Virginia. W. J. E. Cox pastored in Baltimore before moving to Mobile. Alabamians followed Baptist/Catholic relations not only in Mobile, but also New Orleans, Galveston, and Norfolk. Georgia Baptists not only supported their state, but also committed to Italian missions. State newspapers were repetitive. Anti-Catholic anecdotes were passed among editors so often that at times newspapers repeated the same stories.

Instead of a viewing anti-Catholicism as a chain of chronological events, chapters have been divided into themes. Each chapter attempts to uncover the relationship between anti-Catholicism and other important areas of Baptist life, demonstrating how deeply intertwined ideas about doctrine, missions, education, gender, and social conditions became.

There are drawbacks with thematic studies. Occasionally, they oversimplify complex issues that may better be understood within a chronological framework. For instance, there are many explanations for a 1915 anti-immigration sermon, including anxieties over educational control, promoting missionary zeal, and preserving cultural identity. By analyzing it solely through the lens of a Baptist missionary impulse, thematic-based monographs risk ignoring important social, cultural, and intellectual confluences, such as early twentieth-century Progressivism. To minimize reductionism, nearly all chapters in the study utilize chronological elements to explore how Baptist perceptions of Catholics evolved over a span of fifty years. By framing important religious issues within historical periods, such as the rebuilding years from 1870-1885,

the denominationally formative era between 1885-1900, or Baptist Progressivism in the first two decades of the twentieth-century, chapter subheadings further echo the approach of analyzing topics through both thematic and chronological considerations.

The most apparent downside is redundancy. Prohibition is an example. Religious newspapers are filled with articles about Catholic consumption of alcohol. Baptists viewed this through prisms of missions, education, race, and gender, and re-prioritized concerns year-to-year, decade-to-decade. Another issue, public funding of parochial schools, affected mission programs, distilled Baptists theology, and raised fears about the erosion of southern culture. Chapters overlap, as did Baptist beliefs. Hopefully, the organizational redundancy will underscore the comprehensive nature of anti-Catholicism.

Chapter one lays the foundations for the following chapters by examining doctrinal differences. Baptist beliefs were central to their denominational identity because they shaped viewpoints and influenced how Baptists attempted to either influence or, in some cases, transform society. Baptists perceived Roman Catholicism as contradicting their key principles such as baptism, the separation of church and state, and religious authority. In advancing their doctrine, Baptist writers advanced religious identity by emphasizing tribalism; they celebrated their distinctive beliefs and differentiated themselves against Catholicism, a designated out-group. These authors attacked Catholic beliefs and practices, taking issue with such theological traditions as papal infallibility, religious authority, Church hierarchy, the sacraments, the worship of saints, symbols and icons, and the nature of salvation.

Chapter two deals with anti-Catholicism in Southern Baptist Missions. In 1870, Italy opened its borders to Protestant missionaries. Civil War and reunification had

loosened the tight grasp that the Roman Catholic Church previously held over the Italian region. Through its Foreign Mission Board, the SBC immediately placed a priority on building churches and converting “pagan” Catholics. In their own hemisphere, they combatted Catholicism in Mexico, Brazil, and other South American countries. Through both the Home Mission Board and state mission efforts, Baptists hoped to contain the influence of Catholicism in the South by establishing mission programs for New Orleans, Cuba, and the expanding western frontier. They sent missionaries to key immigration ports such as Norfolk, Tampa, and Galveston. When immigrants finally came to the inland South, Baptists created city missions in areas of concentration such as Birmingham, Memphis, and Atlanta.

Chapter three charts the role of anti-Catholicism in shaping Baptist views on education. Increasingly, Baptists believed that education played a crucial role in maintaining cultural hegemony in a changing South. To achieve their goals, they created their own educational and publishing arm, the Sunday School Board; fortified their seminaries and denominational schools; and promoted their own agenda for public education. Although they clashed with Catholics on a number of educational issues, practically all involved matters of control. Baptist writers argued parochial schools were indoctrinating legions, blasted Catholic attempts to educate the Freedmen and American Indians, and openly opposed public funding for religious schools.

Chapter four addresses Baptist attempts to preserve southern culture through moral reform. During this period, the most sustained social conflict was over the control of alcohol. Although some Catholics were involved in temperance movements, most opposed Prohibition. Baptists painted Catholics with a broad brush, labeling them “wets”

who were devoid of self-restraint and accused the Church of obstructing attempts to limit alcohol consumption. Especially after 1900, Baptists were also concerned with Catholic foreigners pouring into the South. Baptists were familiar with New Orleans' Mardi Gras celebration through lurid tales printed in religious newspapers, so they knew that such alien customs would accompany Catholic immigrants. Anti-Catholicism stemmed in part from cultural conflicts inherent in religious contests over space; it also owed much to fear of the erosion of southern religious orthodoxy.

Chapter five investigates the relationship between Baptists' conceptions of gender and anti-Catholicism. Baptists fought hard to protect the sacred image of southern womanhood that they categorized according to race, class, morality, and religion. They portrayed priests as mechanisms of a vast Catholic conspiracy that lured women into the faith, brainwashed them, and then violated their purity. They also attacked gendered notions of Catholicism, such as feminine symbols of the Church and the exaltation of the Virgin Mary. They labeled convents "dens of inequity" and eventually called for laws that allowed for convent inspection.

These chapters reveal the extent to which Baptist ideas about who they were and what they believed both shaped and were shaped by their impressions of Catholicism. This is a history about faiths, practices, fears, and conflicts experienced between Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics. For Baptists, it was, ironically, a relationship of dependency, where one's own identity cannot be fully understood apart from notions of an "other."

Chapter One

Gospel Warfare: Advancing Baptist Doctrine Through Anti-Catholicism

When Edgar E. Folk began writing a series of articles to be published in the *Baptist and Reflector*, he based the stories on personal letters he had written to his son. The letters encapsulated Folk's thoughts about basic Baptist principles such as religious liberty, separation of church and state, and regeneration; in all, he printed twenty-six letters. The personal style of father to son correspondence symbolized the importance of families passing down the verities of their faith lest these be usurped by what Folk referred to as "the ignorance of this world."¹ Eventually, the letters became a book that outlined Southern Baptist doctrine during the twentieth-century. While admitting there were "a good many books discussing Baptist doctrines of many kinds," Folk concluded that there were "very few which discuss the fundamental Baptist principles in a comprehensive form."²

The purpose of the wide-ranging book on Southern Baptist doctrine, one supported by the endorsement of the Sunday School Board, was twofold. First and foremost, it was, as Folk explained, a collection of essays that advanced Baptist identity—"who they are, where they came from, what they believe, and why they believe it." Secondly, it was a means by which they measured themselves against a quantifiable

¹ Edgar Estes Folk, *Baptist Principles, Letters to My Son* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1909), 4.

² *Ibid.*

other. Those who stood in starkest contrast were Catholics. In fact, in the very first published letter, “Loyalty to God’s Word,” Folk set the tone by arguing that although all Christian denominations believed the Bible to be a foundation of faith, when examining the distinctive characteristics of Christianity, “the greatest contrast is between the Baptists and the Catholics.”³ Out of twenty-six essays, half employed Catholicism as the primary juxtaposition in defining Baptist principles.

The theological divide between the two groups went much deeper than semantics. Southern Baptists considered Catholicism antithetical to their belief system. Catholics felt the same about Baptists. The *Christian Index* referred to the contest for souls as “gospel warfare,” and the *Alabama Baptist* made its case for “The Gospel vs. the Roman Church.”⁴ To concede a doctrinal point to the other side could call into question the very foundations of one’s convictions. This was a battle for the hearts and minds of the world, a public debate where Baptist and Protestant teachings corresponded to the philosophies of Jesus and Catholic beliefs did not.

The cornerstones of the Baptist faith were reliance on the New Testament as the ultimate authority concerning spiritual guidance, a belief in salvation by faith, the practice of adult baptism, separation of church and state, and adherence to the priesthood of the believer.⁵ They believed these principles to be biblically sound. As counterpoint, they took aim at Catholic beliefs and practices that they viewed as contradictory to the Bible. These included the emphasis on the sacraments, the centrality of the Pope, and the

³ Ibid, 6.

⁴ “The Gospel vs. the Roman Church,” *Alabama Baptist*, 9 September 1903; “The Recorder,” *Christian Index*, 25 July 1878.

⁵ Rufus B. Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), 3.

religio-political relationship between the government of Italy and the Church. As missionary John Eager observed:

The real animus of Romanism in Italy is perhaps seen better in its attitude toward the Bible than in anything else, and I do not hesitate to affirm that it is an attitude of persistent hostility. But, really, how could it be otherwise? The doctrines of Romanism and the doctrines of the Bible are quite antagonistic.⁶

The Battle Over Ideas

In 1890, Baptist A. C. Dixon wrote a book entitled *The True and the False*. This anti-Catholic book revealed how Baptists transmitted their religious beliefs to followers. Dixon divided the book into two parts. The first nine chapters focused on the theology of Jesus (“the truth as it is in Jesus”). Baptists would have found much of this appealing, since it represented traditional Reformation arguments against Catholicism, but also because it reassured readers that this was theology as Jesus intended. It stood in stark contrast with the last ten chapters, which purported to examine “Roman Catholicism in the light of the Bible.”⁷ The author’s purpose was to create an adversarial debate where readers could recognize unmistakable distinctions between Catholic superstitions and Baptist truths.

The chapter titles contrasted differences between Baptist and Catholic beliefs. In one chapter entitled “The Christ of the Bible and the Christ of Romanism,” Dixon criticized Catholics for regarding the Pope rather than Jesus Christ as head of the church (the Church did *not* advocate this belief, they regarded Jesus as the invisible head and the Pope as the visible head), questioned the worship of Mary, and challenged the reverence

⁶ John H. Eager, *Romanism in its Home* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1894), 207.

⁷ A. C. Dixon, preface to *The True and the False* (Baltimore: Wharton, Barron, 1890).

of saints.⁸ Other chapters that made adversarial comparisons included “The Miracles of the Bible and the Miracles of the Papacy,” “The Lord’s Supper Versus the Mass,” and “Peter Versus the Pope.”

Although such anti-Catholic comparisons were readily available to Baptists, most did not develop their tribal beliefs exclusively from provocative books like *The True and the False*; the process was more insidious. Much of Southern Baptists’ anti-Catholic sentiment was deeply rooted in theological differences tracing back to the Protestant Reformation and served as a barometer for Baptist perceptions of Catholicism. For instance, Baptist missionaries to Italy appear to have been well-versed in Reformation history. Charles F. Fox wrote of the “strange,” feeling of being in Rome for the first time. He described his admiration for the city’s rich history and its intoxicating beauty, but reminded himself the historical images and artifacts were of “The same Rome from where walls depicted the valiant Luther sickened by popish treachery and ecclesiastic fraud....”⁹ His words paint a picture of a missionary familiar with Catholic beliefs, practices, and history in Italy. In closing the letter, Fox forecast future stories that would describe “some of the awful practices of Roman Catholicism here in Italy” the particulars of which would make a Baptist’s “blood boil.”¹⁰

While Baptists like John Eager recognized that Luther had “appeared on the scene” and had shaken “the very foundations” of “Romanism,” they considered themselves an evolved body of believers willing to take up the torch and carry it

⁸ Ibid, 67-76.

⁹ “Charles J. Fox, ‘Letter,’” Charles James Fox Papers PC148, North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection (hereafter cited as NCBHC), Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

¹⁰ Ibid.

forward.¹¹ Baptists believed their principles were distinctive from other Protestants and well suited to counter Catholicism. When asked if Georgia Baptists would answer the call to unite with other evangelical branches and implement “gospel warfare” against the spread of Catholicism in the U. S., the *Christian Index* responded that “Baptists are not ‘Protestants’ as everybody ought to know, and we recognize no authority in ‘evangelical branches,’” but the *Index* nonetheless had an obligation to pass along the information to its readership.¹²

For most Southern Baptists, theology was both familial and familiar. Much like E. E. Folk’s intimate letters to his son, Baptist laypersons received their theological instruction through their family and their local church. Additionally, some supplemented their instruction by subscribing to religious periodicals such as newspapers, books, and tracts. They expected to read religious periodicals that reinforced familiar Baptist themes, ones that transcended generations of fathers and sons. The typical Southern Baptist concerned himself with his personal salvation, moral certitude, and religious orthodoxy sustained through sound doctrine.¹³

In order to better convey orthodoxy, Baptist newspapers printed lessons of faith. Writers shared homilies, testimonies, and sermons that conveyed what it meant to be Baptist and also offered counterexamples that were *not* in keeping with the faith. One example was adult baptism. In 1874, the *Alabama Baptist* newspaper extolled the virtues of Baptist beliefs and practices in a series entitled “How I Became a Baptist.” In one of

¹¹ Eager, *Romanism in its Home*, 136.

¹² “The Recorder,” *Christian Index*, 25 July 1878.

¹³ This is a reference to Southern Baptists’ otherworldly theology. See, Samuel S. Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis*, (New York: Holt, 1967).

the articles, author F. L. Hearn defended Baptist adherence in adult baptism by arguing that historically the apostolic church was composed of adults only (those who had the capacity to understand and believe). Church membership was also adult only. This was why, according to Hearn, “infant baptism is not mentioned in the New Testament.”¹⁴

The intent of the article was to justify adult “believers” baptism against Catholics or other Protestants who had questioned this practice. Although many sister denominations practiced paedobaptism, Hearn explained that “infant baptism and infant church-membership are among the unscriptural innovations, made by the Church of Rome and which unfortunately were not condemned and discarded in the day of the Reformation.”¹⁵ When state Baptist magazine editors debated baptism with the editors of Methodist and Presbyterian newspapers, they condemned the practice of sprinkling members instead of full immersion, and associated the practice of infant baptism with Catholicism as a means of sullyng the denomination, thus linking it with heresy. In a back and forth with the editor of a Methodist paper, the *Southern Christian Advocate*, the editor of the *Christian Index* accused John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, with belonging to the “High-Church” school of theology and the Methodist Church of possessing “Romanizing tendencies.”¹⁶

Leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention believed the practice of baptism to be important enough that its Sunday School Board published an entire book on the subject.

¹⁴ F.L. Hearn, “How I Became a Baptist, IV,” *Alabama Baptist*, 3 November 1874.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Ad Hominem,” *Christian Index*, 6 June 1872. In his dissertation, Ira Birdwhistell argues that from 1917-1972, Baptist writers commenting on Catholicism paid little attention to the sacrament of baptism: Birdwhistell, “Southern Baptist Perceptions of and Responses to Roman Catholicism, 1917-1972,” 151-52.

William J. McGlothlin's *Infant Baptism* noted that the Catholic Church codified baptism into a sacrament and contended that, "The whole character of Christian history would certainly have been very different had faith-baptism been preserved inviolate." Furthermore, without infant baptism, Catholic practices such as "sacramental salvation, compulsion of conscience, bloody persecution and union of Church and State, would have been impossible...."¹⁷

Ironically, McGlothlin parsed his words when condemning infant baptism among Protestants. He implied that when the Reformation occurred, infant baptism had slipped through the cracks; it had not been properly vetted for biblical legitimacy. The book examined the history of the practice, questioned the soundness of the doctrine, and placed the blame squarely on Catholics for creating the tradition. McGlothlin explained that although "there is much difference between the conceptions of infant-baptism as held and practiced by Catholics and evangelical Protestants," he had a "very firm conviction" that both were evil and dangerous.¹⁸

Although Baptist writers advanced adult baptism as a distinctive element of their denominational identity, it was primarily a public profession of faith that followed regeneration. Being "born-again" was the single greatest evangelical tenet, so evangelicals vigorously defended their doctrine against alternative paths to salvation. The Catholic Church offered such an alternative. E. E. Folk explained the belief, as he understood it:

Catholics make no bones of saying that salvation is to be obtained in the church [sic]. They say if you are a member of the church—of *the*

¹⁷ William Joseph McGlothlin, *Infant-Baptism: Historically Considered* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1916), 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

church—you will be saved, no matter what you are, no matter what you do. If you are not a member of the church, you will not be saved, no matter what you are, no matter what you do.¹⁹

Baptists argued that the problem with achieving salvation through the Catholic Church was that one could spend a lifetime seeking assurance and only realize it at the end of life. Salvation was contingent upon the actions of the attending priest, who performed the Last Rites as preparation for death and the afterlife. For instance, the *Alabama Baptist* challenged this tradition:

The devout Catholic leans upon the aid of a sinful priest to secure for him pardon of sin, and then upon churchly ceremonies to sanctify his nature, and then upon oil-anointing to prepare him for death, and finally, upon post-mortem masses to take him out of purgatory—all the while struggling to work out an atonement for sin, all the while uncertain of the efficacy of this or that expedient.²⁰

On the contrary, “Protestantism,” wrote the *Christian Index*, “placed the personal assurance of salvation at the beginning of the Christian life—a thing which is a present possession to the believing man....”²¹ While these arguments represented an oversimplified understanding of Last Rites, Baptist writers either lacked the capacity to adequately understand the Catholic ritual or preferred straw man arguments over theological complexities.

By publishing anti-Catholic stories about death and salvation, Baptist writers recognized that they could expose insecurities about belief in the afterlife and bolster their own spiritual narrative. One account described the circumstances of French Jesuit Priest Louis Bourdaloue, a man who dedicated his life to his faith and to charitable works

¹⁹ Folk, *Baptist Principles, Letters to My Son*, 117.

²⁰ “Romanism in Life and Death,” *Alabama Baptist*, 1 February 1877.

²¹ *Christian Index*, 22 March 1888.

in his community. The story reads like an Old Testament parable, detailing how the dying Priest requested retirement from the Jesuits in order to prepare spiritually for his death but was uncertain he was worthy for heaven. Tragically, he spent his dying moments unsure of his salvation. The *Alabama Baptist* editorialized that “the death of Bourdaloue, which occurred soon after, exhibited the same mournful *struggle between the fears of the Catholic and the confidence of the Christian* [sic].”²²

Another Catholic doctrine that Baptists criticized was the sacrament of the Eucharist, commonly known as Holy Communion. Historian Russell Shaw explains that for Catholics, the Eucharist was “food and drink, a sacred meal taken at the altar, the table of the Lord.”²³ Performed during Mass and administered by priests, it symbolized Christ’s actions at the Last Supper, where he offered himself “as spiritual nourishment to his Apostles.”²⁴ Baptists had few qualms with the symbolic meaning; in fact, during their own communion ceremony (the Lord’s Supper), they shared food and drink and celebrated community in remembrance of Christ’s Last Supper. But they found other components of the Eucharist more troublesome.

Catholics believed the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup had both symbolic and literal meaning. Symbolically, it represented remembering the actions of Jesus and his disciples during the Last Supper. It was the literal act, known as transubstantiation, that disturbed Baptists. Catholics believed that during communion, the presiding priest performed a miracle, turning the bread and wine into the body and

²² “A Dying Catholic,” *Alabama Baptist*, 10 August 1875.

²³ Russell B. Shaw, *Our Sunday Visitor's Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 1997).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

blood of Christ. Christ literally became present within each participant. Baptist writers questioned the soundness of the doctrine. John Eager referred to the ritual as filled with “superstition, idolatry, delusion, and immorality.”²⁵ W. J. E. Cox called it an “absurd and repulsive doctrine.”²⁶

Like Baptism, transubstantiation offered Baptists further proof of a distinctive identity measured against Catholicism. While both ceremonies emphasized community between God and their body of believers, Baptists treated it as a memorial rather than a spirit-inducing ritual.²⁷ W. J. E. Cox explained:

We do not agree with the Roman Catholics, who teach transubstantiation, nor with the Lutherans, who teach consubstantiation, or even with other Protestants, that a special spiritual blessing is imparted to those who partake of the Supper, which is not received unless it is partaken of. We believe that the Lord’s Supper is a blessing to us only as it reminds us of our Savior’s sacrifice for us and kindles grateful affection toward him.²⁸

Baptist writers focused much of their scorn on the mystical qualities of the ceremony. They mocked Catholics for blindly subscribing to such delusions. F. H. Sills wrote that “these ceremonies, like the rest of their work, are their own inventions, and they know it.”²⁹ Another critic implied that transubstantiation was little more than sorcery:

It is stated that a Baptist church in the South was thrown into confusion by the intrusion of a dog, which, just as the pastor was about to administer the communion, slipped up slyly, laid hold of the loaf of bread and made off

²⁵ Eager, *Romanism in its Home*, 245.

²⁶ W. J. E. Cox, “Transubstantiation,” *Alabama Baptist*, 30 May 1906.

²⁷ Norman Hill Maring and Winthrop Still Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), 136-41.

²⁸ W. J. E. Cox, “Transubstantiation,” *Alabama Baptist*, 30 May 1906.

²⁹ F. H. Sills, *Roman Catholicism Investigated and Exposed* (Savannah: Savannah Morning News, 1911), 57.

with it. The circumstance gives our Catholic friend in Baltimore [probably the editor of the *Mirror*, a Catholic paper in Baltimore] occasion to say that the bread was only bread after the Baptist minister had pronounced the consecrating words, whereas when a priest pronounces them the bread is miraculously changed into our Lord's body... We acknowledge no divine Sovereign whom a dog or a rat can devour.³⁰

Another problem was the role of the clergy during mass. The central complaint was that the Eucharist bestowed too much power on the clergy. Baptists were leery of placing too much authority into the hands of one individual, preferring to place control in the hands of the church body. They viewed transubstantiation as a violation of their principles because it invested in priests supernatural powers, the capacity to perform a miracle. This placed them in a position of extraordinary influence over their congregation. One writer summed up Baptists' concerns:

Transubstantiation places a power in the hand of the consecrating priest, which puts him in command of Christ himself. He performs a miracle at pleasure, and transforms bread and wine into the actual Christ, body and blood, soul and Godhead, and gives him literally to the people; and though our Lord 'offered himself once and for all,' the priest makes an offering of him every time he 'consecrates' the elements, and so it teaches that the death of Christ was not sufficient, but must be repeated by every priest at every communion, and thus it degrades the atonement, puts the faith of the people in a man, and in ceremony wholly under the control of man, and reduces the glorious Christ to a miracle performed by on the *material* [sic] of a so-called sacrament.³¹

Some Baptist writers had a different view of the Eucharist. Put plainly, they argued that many Catholics did not believe in transubstantiation. It was a ritual devoid of meaning where believers went through the motions but placed little religious value on the ceremony. Baptist missionary A. J. Wall remarked that,

A priest told him one day that he had ceased to believe in the efficacy of the sacraments, and the power of the church, for reasons of this kind he

³⁰ "Splinters," *Alabama Baptist*, 14 October 1910.

³¹ "Transubstantiation," *Alabama Baptist*, 23 January 1883.

was called on one occasion to perform mass, and a large number of people were expected to be present, but only a few communicants came, he being expected to eat all the wafers left, suffered terribly from indigestion.³²

Although Baptist writers took special aim at Catholic Mass, they did not spare other religious customs that fostered both the detached attitude of the clergy and the lack of spirituality in the laity. Some of these criticisms spelled out the trivialities of Catholicism. Baptist missionary Hugh McCormick reported that in Zacatecas, Mexico, Priest Feliz Angel conducted a prayer for the local “horses, goats, fish, etc.,” implying that these animals had souls.³³ McCormick referred to the litany as nothing more than “animal and devil worship,” further evidence of how Catholicism combined superstition with religion.³⁴

Although Southern Baptist preachers would likely have prayed for rain, crops, and livestock, all crucial for the survival of a family farm in 1891, they did not view this as superstition. God was a daily presence and an active agent in people’s lives. They did not believe that Christians needed to wear religious jewelry or carry a talisman to enjoy God’s presence. They considered Catholic reliance on religious imagery absurd. W. J. E. Cox wrote extensively about iconoclasm within the Catholic Church. He argued that the use of candles was a contrivance, writing that “the burning of candles was part of the religions [sic] service of the Pagans and it was strongly condemned by the early Christians.”³⁵ He contended that religious relics were not only idolatrous, but also “a

³² *Christian Index*, 12 August 1874.

³³ Hugh McCormick, “A Roman Catholic Litany. ‘Indulgences’ for Prayers Addressed to Horses, Goats, Fish, Etc., Etc.,” *Alabama Baptist*, 2 April 1891.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ W. J. E. Cox, “Corruption of Worship—Holy Water, Candles, Incense, Mass, etc.,” *Alabama Baptist*, 27 June 1906.

plain violation of the second commandment and utterly contrary to the genius and spirit of Christianity.”³⁶ Additionally, he labeled Lent as “an artificial, sacred season” observed by those who have “foolishly undertaken to imitate Romish ceremonies” such as Ash Wednesday.³⁷

Rebels with a Cause: Baptists and Religious Authority

Baptists cherished religious autonomy, which they believed to be among the most distinctive characteristics of their faith. One of the primary religious principles to which they subscribed was the doctrine of soul liberty (or *Sola Scriptura*, meaning the Bible alone), which asserts that each person has the right to read the Bible and interpret scripture for his or herself.³⁸ Daniel Webster Key explained what the concept meant to Southern Baptists in an 1887 sermon delivered in Williston, SC:

In matters of religion, let every man be guided by his own conscience enlightened by the Bible or other systems of religion that he may prefer. Equal liberty for all is Baptist [sic]...the individual soul must accept the gospel or reject it when it is preached and the State shall neither help nor hinder.³⁹

Baptists believed that the source of religious authority was one of the fundamental differences between themselves and Catholics. Like all evangelicals, Baptists believed in having a personal relationship with God, one that included prayer and reading the Bible. They believed all Christians should seek God’s plan in this manner; consequently, they

³⁶ W. J. E. Cox, “Saints, Images, and Relics,” *Alabama Baptist*, 20 June 1906.

³⁷ “Catholic Rules of Behavior,” *Alabama Baptist*, 6 April 1904.

³⁸ Birdwhistell, “Southern Baptist Perceptions of and Responses to Roman Catholicism, 1917-1972,” 146.

³⁹ “Sermons-Assorted Notes,” Box 1, Daniel Webster Key Papers, Georgia Baptist History Depository (hereafter cited as GBHD), Tarver Library, Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.

bristled at religious practices that violated their independence such as the practice of intercession. The act of intercession required that a Catholic priest serve as mediator (not in all cases) between God and man. Religious proxy was anathema to Baptists. For them, this translated into religious hierarchy and unchecked power, two issues that clearly contradicted their commitment to religious autonomy. The *Alabama Baptist* carried a syndicated article that labeled intercession in the Catholic Church, “the most stupendous fraud ever perpetrated in the name of Christianity,” claiming that priests usurped “Christ’s office and authority as our sole prophet, priest and king. . . .”⁴⁰

Although the practice of intercession had no chance of being adopted by Baptists, they felt compelled to denounce it because it interfered with spreading the Gospel. They believed that part of their witness was to participate in a public (and one-sided) discourse with American Catholics. Baptists did not interpret their missionary work as intercessionary, convinced that they offered people freedom of choice. At times, their calls for religious freedom broke down into hyperbolic, anti-Catholic stories, some of which were almost certainly fabrications. In response to a *Catholic Mirror* statement that “the Bible has at all times been accessible to Catholics,” the *Alabama Baptist* published an incendiary account of Catholic life in Toluca, Mexico.⁴¹ A Protestant missionary on location there claimed that Catholic priests had restricted people’s access to the Bible, going so far as to intimidate villagers and burn Bibles. He described the spectacle,

The plaza alive with people; in the midst of the excited crowd a number of Catholic priests, and out of the midst of the priestly circle a pyramid of flame and a column of smoke from a pile of burning Bibles! Inquisitorial visits from house

⁴⁰ “Christ the Only Priest. The Priesthood a Fraud.” *Alabama Baptist*, 3 August 1899.

⁴¹ “Rome and the Bible,” *Alabama Baptist*, 15 November 1888.

to house, threats of penance, purgatory and perdition have extorted from trembling families their copies of the Word of God for the fagot [sic] pile!⁴²

Baptist writers frequently labeled Catholics as primitive, superstitious, and uneducated, but placed the brunt of responsibility on the Church, not its followers. One of the chief complaints was that it intentionally kept followers ignorant. Proscribed rituals supplanted personal spirituality. When Reverend John Daley, an associate priest at Saint Aloysius Church in Bessemer, Alabama, publicly condemned the Alabama Baptist Convention for its verbal assaults against Catholics, one writer responded that Baptists needed to give people a voice with which to refute the Church. Catholics had “reserved the right to speak for its subjects, keeping them in ignorance, and convincing them... that a little pope in Rome, and cardinals, and bishops, and priests have their souls in keeping....”⁴³

Most Baptists believed that Catholics disregarded the Bible completely. The *Christian Index* offered an explanation as to why Catholics relied so little on reading the Bible: the Catholic Church claimed to have existed before the New Testament was written, and that one can receive the gospel “only as it was authenticated by the Church.”⁴⁴ Because of this crucial assumption, “the Roman church has never cared to have her people read the Scriptures.” Religious scholar Richard Penaskovic argues that it had little to do with historical precedence. Bishops feared that if every person interpreted

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “A Ranting Catholic Priest,” *Alabama Baptist*, 21 May 1891.

⁴⁴ “The Catholics and the Bible,” *Christian Index*, 4 May 1893.

the scriptures individually, the Church would have to continually address other reformers like Luther, Calvin, etc.⁴⁵

Pastor of the St. Francis Street Baptist church in Mobile, Alabama, William J. E. Cox, argued that different attitudes toward the Bible were among the most distinguishing features between Baptists and Catholics. “Baptists believe, and Protestants generally agree with them,” Cox asserted, “that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and the only infallible rule of religious faith and practice.”⁴⁶ Catholics believed that its members must interpret the Bible however the Church deemed because the “interpretation of the written and unwritten Word of God by His Holy Spirit keeps the church, that is, the Roman Catholic Church, from committing error in matter of religious faith and practice.”

In addition to disagreements over the role of scripture, W. J. E. Cox took issue with many Catholic beliefs that he believed stood in the way of individual salvation. He argued that “the so-called sacrament of penance as taught by the Roman Catholic church” had no scriptural basis and was “contrary to the fundamental doctrine of the gospel—the sufficiency of the statement of Christ for the sins of men.”⁴⁷ The problem with penance, Cox continued, was that it “teaches that there must be a supplementary atonement by the works of suffering of the sinner himself, thus making the atonement of Christ only partial.”

⁴⁵ Penaskovic, Richard. Interview with Richard Penaskovic. Personal interview. October 8, 2012.

⁴⁶ W. J. E. Cox, “The Attitude of Baptists and Roman Catholics Toward the Bible,” *Alabama Baptist*, 18 April 1906.

⁴⁷ W. J. E. Cox, “Penance and Indulges,” *Alabama Baptist*, 13 June 1906.

Penance raised important questions about religious authority. Catholics believed that only God could forgive sins, using the priest as mediator. Baptists were convinced that confession to a priest denied the biblical teaching of God's exclusive power to forgive sins and that no mediator was necessary for atonement. Missionary John Eager claimed that in certain cases, penance allowed priests unlimited power over their flock. For instance, in his book *Romanism in its Home*, Eager included a short chapter on how Catholics practiced the sacrament in Rome, criticizing it with words such as "torture," "horrible," and "Satanic."⁴⁸ He explained that although much of the "cruel forms of penance" had died out in other parts of Europe, "this heathen custom is still sadly practiced in Italy."

Others were more concerned with how penance undermined morality. Although Baptists believed that God forgave those who asked for forgiveness, this was no substitute for possessing high moral standards. Shaped by Calvinist theology, Baptists believed that one's personal relationship with God sustained righteous living. Conversely, Catholics disregarded virtuosity because penance gave Catholics a license to sin. Like other Protestants, Baptists considered this practice a corrupt bargain between the Church and its members, one that could be exploited in a mutually beneficial manner. The masses could easily atone for their sins via charitable donations, and the Church received needed funding. This was a continuing problem that went back to the days of Martin Luther, Baptists writers argued, when Johann Tetzel peddled indulgences to any willing person with the financial wherewithal. In Italy, the *Christian Index* reported, "the pockets of the poor are continually drained" by priests driven to fund Church

⁴⁸ Eager, *Romanism in its Home*, 77-81.

expansion.⁴⁹ The masses “pay the priest to absolve them from their sins” and therefore had no incentive to lead morally-centered lives.⁵⁰

In 1910, F. H. Sills of Savannah, Georgia, published *Roman Catholicism Investigated and Exposed*. The book focused primarily on theological differences between Baptists and Catholics. Although the author devoted entire chapters to infallibility, baptism, indulgences, purgatory, and matrimony, he explained in the preface that he meant no ill will toward Roman Catholics who respect “the laws of his country” and “live an honorable, upright, moral, and Christian life.” Rather, he targeted those “who disown and disregard the religious, maral [moral], and civil rights of others”—such as the Pope and “other agents of the Roman Catholic Church.”⁵¹

Although differing beliefs absorbed most attention from Baptist critics, the institution of the priesthood was an important secondary target. During the early twentieth century, anti-clericalism ran rampant in religious publications and secular literature alike.⁵² Accusations ranged from corruption to licentiousness. Baptists believed that clergy were soldiers of the Catholic Church responsible for advancing doctrine, rooting out heresy, and exerting dominion over members. T. S. Callaway claimed that in Catholic-controlled countries throughout the world, priests, “who are supposed to be educated,” were the cause of “ignorance, illiteracy, and immorality among

⁴⁹ Richard F. Willingham, “Observations of Catholicism,” *Christian Index*, 12 October 1905.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ F.H. Sills, *Roman Catholicism Investigated and Exposed*, 7.

⁵² Lou Baldwin, "Pious Prejudice: Catholicism and the American Press Over Three Centuries," in *Anti-Catholicism in American Culture*, ed. Robert Lockwood (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000), 67.

the natives.”⁵³ The *Alabama Baptist* described how Baltimore parochial schools indoctrinated children about religious authority. In one exercise, students were asked “what kind of Christ do they [Protestants] believe” and were directed to respond, “in such a one of whom they can make a liar with impunity, whose doctrine they can interpret as they please, and who does not care what a man believes, provided he be an honest man before the public.”⁵⁴

Baptist writers had plenty to say about Catholic newspapers, especially the “editor-priests” who lacked integrity yet controlled the storylines. J. F. Love wrote that the newspapers exhibited a “coarseness” that revealed the “low ethical and aesthetic ideals of Romanism.”⁵⁵ In one Sunday flier, he claimed to have counted “seventeen liquor and beer advertisements;” in another there were announcements for “church dances and church card parties.” Another complaint was censorship. He claimed that Roman Catholic officials kept tight control over their message and suppressed outside editorials that questioned dogma. Still another charge was that the Church distributed “scurrilous and abusive” propaganda against Protestants.

The editors of Baptist newspapers closely followed publications such as the *Catholic Standard and Times*, the *Watchman*, the *Mirror*, and the *Progress*, and looked for opportunities to interject their own doctrinal positions. Because Baptists identified with the American free-press tradition, they resented that they had little chance of having their open letters published in their adversaries’ publications. Their strategy was to

⁵³ Timothy Walton Callaway, *Romanism vs. Americanism: The Roman Catholic System* (Atlanta: Index Printing Company, 1923), 81.

⁵⁴ “Ultramontanism vs. Protestantism,” *Alabama Baptist*, 10 June 1888.

⁵⁵ J. F. Love, “Religious Aspect of the Catholic Question,” *The Home Field*, March 1912, 4-5.

dissect and refute Catholic dogma and to respond to what they viewed as unwarranted, slanderous attacks on Baptist principles. Readers became absorbed in the public discourse and wrote letters expressing their endorsement of Baptist positions.

An anonymous letter to the *Alabama Baptist* reveals the impact that anti-Catholic articles could have on readership. While attending the annual Southern Baptist Convention in Chattanooga, a Baptist claimed to be “passing the Catholic church” on his way to convention events when he stopped to hear Father Healy preach on the doctrine of purgatory. Noting the large audience in attendance and the questionable content of the sermon, the Baptist eyewitness testified that Healy’s sermon “only goes to show that the Catholics are doing all in their power to proselyte non-Catholics and that the able series of sermons by Dr. W. J. E. Cox are most timely.”⁵⁶

Anti-Catholic newspaper articles, books, and pamphlets educated readers on how the Church instilled its notions of authority from cradle to grave. Baptists believed that priests held enormous power over laity, power that jeopardized Baptists’ success in spreading the Gospel. Popular Baptist author Victor Masters branded Catholic priests “subversive” and suggested “constant vigilance” against those he considered “dangerous” to liberty-loving Americans.⁵⁷ Ever cognizant of the insidious character of Catholic clergy, the *Christian Index* encouraged its readers “... not to commit the training of their children to those who do not believe and teach the Baptist doctrine.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ “The Catholic Mission,” *Alabama Baptist*, 16 May 1906.

⁵⁷ Victor I. Masters, *Making American Christian* (Atlanta: Publicity Department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1921), 35.

⁵⁸ *Christian Index*, 6 August 1896.

In Williston, Georgia, Daniel Webster Key warned his congregation of the power the Catholic Church possessed. Preaching from the text in Isaiah 54:17, he described how the Roman Catholic Church had used every available weapon— from sword to the marriage of church and state to finally a clerical assault on science— all with the expressed purpose of weakening the influence of Protestant Christianity in the United States. Most notably, Key delivered the sermon on Christmas Day, 1887. Instead of focusing on the birth of Jesus, as many pastors traditionally did at Christmas, he challenged the audience on “this day, the birthday of Jesus,” to spread “the gospel and build houses of worship in every civilized nation on earth.”⁵⁹ Drawing inspiration from the teachings of the Old Testament and with the word of God thundering in his own voice, Key promised that, like the Israelites before them, “no weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment.”⁶⁰

At times Baptist writers drew inspiration for such anti-clerical sermons and articles from local disagreements with Catholic priests. Religious newspapers were filled with these back and forth exchanges. Rarely did these exchanges produce thoughtful discourse. Neither group tried to understand the other. Mostly, these were personal rivalries where local preachers “quoted freely” from the available anti-Catholic literature in an attempt to flood the public arena with a preponderance of evidence.⁶¹ Conflicts were contests over space, especially the opportunity to control the public narrative. Since Baptists were anxious about Catholic incursions in the South, they used every avenue to

⁵⁹ “Box 1, Sermons,” Daniel Webster Key Papers.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Callaway, *Romanism vs. Americanism: The Roman Catholic System*, 8.

exert their own religious authority. In Chattanooga, Tennessee, when Francis Sullivan of the St. Peter's Catholic Church preached a sermon asserting the primacy of the Catholic faith in America, Baptist T. W. Callaway became outraged.⁶² Initially, he devised a series of sermons intended to refute all aspects of Catholicism. Later, he expanded the sermons into a manuscript entitled *Romanism vs. Americanism: The Roman Catholic System*. Unlike many other anti-Catholic books of the era, it focused almost entirely on the priesthood.

W. J. E. Cox experienced a similar experience. During his formative years in the pulpit, he served as pastor in Baltimore, Maryland, a seedbed for Italian immigration and a focal point for Baptist missions. Although his Baltimore experiences were seminal, he rose to ministerial prominence while pastoring a Mobile church. During a Catholic missionary campaign in the city, Catholics encountered unified Protestant resistance led by Cox. One eyewitness wrote the *Alabama Baptist*:

For the past two weeks a Catholic priest has been lecturing in the city on things doctrinal, trying to make Catholics of protestants [sic]. These lectures... elicited replies last Sabbath from a number of protestant ministers in the city. These pastors gave notice that they would tell from their respective pulpits 'Why Protestants are not Catholics....' My observation is that they [Catholics] can be reached just like other people when you can get them to investigate the other side of the question. The writer [Cox] has baptized some half dozen Catholics during the past five years.⁶³

Afterwards, Cox expanded his anti-Catholic rebuttal into a series of twelve sermons on the theme, "Why Baptists are not Roman Catholics."⁶⁴ Frank Barnett, an unusually well-

⁶² Ibid, 5-8.

⁶³ W. J. E. Cox, "Things Doctrinal," *Alabama Baptist*, 14 February 1906.

⁶⁴ "Why Baptists are Not Roman Catholic," *Alabama Baptist*, 4 April 1906.

educated and erudite editor of the *Alabama Baptist*, requested that transcripts of the sermons be submitted to the newspaper for publication.

The sermons were so well-received statewide that Barnett and other Baptist leaders urged Cox to develop the collection into *Errors of Romanism*, an anti-Catholic book that catalogued theological differences between Baptists and Catholics.⁶⁵ Although the book accurately reflected Baptist perceptions of Catholic doctrine during the early twentieth century, not everyone endorsed Cox's dramatic delivery. The Sunday School Board, the largest publishing vehicle of the Southern Baptist convention, decided that the sermons were too caustic and declined publication, leading him to self-publish his book.⁶⁶ *The Converted Catholic*, an anti-Catholic newspaper edited by a former Catholic priest, reviewed the author's work, proclaiming him to be "fully alive to the pretensions of the papal agents in this country, and to the peril to our national institutions involved in them" and an "authority of the highest kind."⁶⁷ A pastor in Arkansas, G. M. Provence, found the book so important that he ordered five copies. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Cox had become one of the leading Baptist critics of Catholic doctrine in the South.

Doctrinal Conflict and the Democratic Impulse

Although many affirmations of the doctrine of separation of church and state were overtly anti-Catholic, Baptists believed their criticism served a higher purpose. They

⁶⁵ This is not a distinctive Baptist principle, but rather a belief associated with all Protestants. It was a key principle of the Protestant Reformation. For soul liberty among Baptists, see Maring and Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice*, 4.

⁶⁶ *Alabama Baptist*, 21 August 1907.

⁶⁷ James O'Connor, "New Books," *The Converted Catholic*, April 1908.

were convinced that Roman Catholicism was incompatible with democracy and pointed to Italy as proof. To Baptists, the Pope constituted the ultimate example of how religious hierarchy obfuscated liberty. Alluding to the history of the Church's theocratic power in the region, a Baptist missionary to Italy labeled the Pope "ambitious" in his "desire to regain temporal power" and described the papacy as "the curse of Romanism in Italy."⁶⁸ Other Baptists also wrote extensively about the Pope and the errors of the papal institution.

One concern was the Catholic philosophy of Ultramontanism, which Baptists defined as "the fundamental principle [that] the church means the Pope."⁶⁹ As the *Alabama Baptist* explained the doctrine, Catholics believed that,

... their own faith and religious life flow from him (the Pope); that in him is the bond which unites Catholics to one another, and the power which strengthens, and the light which guides them; that he is the dispenser of spiritual graces, the giver of the benefits of religion and the protector of the oppressed.⁷⁰

One critic expressed concern about the far-reaching implication of the doctrine. Taken literally, all instruments of the Church, including those from within the United States, served at the pleasure of the Pope. Baptist writers hammered the Church, leaving readers aghast at the potential ramifications. They challenged the loyalty of Catholic politicians, accused the clergy of being Roman puppets, and questioned the legitimacy of parochial schools beholden to a Pope who was hostile to public education.

⁶⁸ D. G. Whittinghill, "The Curse of Romanism in Italy," 1329 Pamphlet Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archive (hereafter cited as SBHLA), Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶⁹ "What is Ultramontanism?," *Alabama Baptist*, 22 June 1875.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Some American Catholics were also concerned with papal authority. One group met in Cooper's Union, New York, and issued a public statement affirming their catholicity as separate from American politics. They pledged loyalty to "the authorities of the church in matters of religion," but "denounced the right of the Pope, propaganda or archbishop to prescribe for American Catholics, lay or cleric, what economic opinions they shall persue [sic] or abstain from."⁷¹ When he ran for President in 1928, Catholic Al Smith was regularly questioned about his allegiance. Because American Catholics failed to find consensus, John F. Kennedy encountered the same questions thirty-two years later.

Papal Infallibility was another point of contention closely linked with Ultramontaniam. Critics charged that it had a direct impact on church doctrine. The papacy, which dictated "dogma by virtue of its authority," drove Catholic Church doctrine.⁷² Baptist S. E. Jones asserted that "when anyone, Pope or who-ever (human) [sic] sets himself up and his dogmas as authoritative and binding, he justly merits the unqualified censure of all reasonable persons." Baptists contended that the problem with Papal dogma was that it assumed infallibility, thus inferring that as beyond debate. John Eager testified that he "... once heard a preacher declare from the pulpit of the cathedral of Florence that there could be no salvation except by submission to the Pope."⁷³ The preacher allegedly added that anyone who failed to accept the Pope's dogma "... not in part, but altogether, cannot properly call himself a Roman Catholic."⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Alabama Baptist*, 3 February 1887.

⁷² S.E. Jones, "Dogmatism and Liberalism," *Alabama Baptist*, 19 October 1904.

⁷³ Eager, *Romanism in its Home*, 108.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Not only did Baptists believe that the Bible constituted the sole source of their doctrines, many also maintained that this belief was doctrine unique to them. E. J. Forrester explained that this belief gave them a “peculiar” identity and offered an “antipodal position” where “the Romish church stand [sic] alone at one end, so the Baptists stand alone at the other.”⁷⁵ Other Christian faiths fell somewhere in the middle. Forrester displayed a more sophisticated understanding than most Baptists, choosing to see differences as historical marks of faith. While he believed the doctrine of infallibility to be flawed, its mere existence did not threaten Baptist beliefs, it bolstered them. By marking their doctrine in polar opposition of Catholicism, Baptists validated them as biblically sound. In this regard, anti-Catholic writings affirmed Baptist beliefs, distilled religious ideals, and contributed to denominational authenticity as much as they challenged Catholicism.

Other Baptist writers did not share Forrester’s magnanimous approach, but they did agree that history could shed light on infallibility. They explained that throughout the history of the Church, a number of Popes had lacked decency and morality, which raised questions about infallibility. W. J. E. Cox offered numerous examples. He wrote that Pope Stephen had “...rescinded the acts and decrees of his infallible predecessor, Formosa,” and had the former Pope’s body exhumed, tried, and convicted before a court, and thrown in the river Tiber.⁷⁶ Cox explained that the christening of Benedict IX as Pope was purchased by gold. Before being expelled by the Romans, “the boy Pope” was “said

⁷⁵ E. J. Forrester, *The Baptist Position* (Baltimore: R. H. Woodward and Company, 1893), 29.

⁷⁶ William J. E. Cox, "Errors of Romanism," (Mobile: n. p., 1907), 62.

to have dealt in sorcery and to have sacrificed to demons.”⁷⁷ John Eager added to this indictment, “Innocent III, who founded the Inquisition,” and “Pius V, who covered Europe with burning funeral piles.”⁷⁸

A few writers, not content with the historical record of the papacy, resorted to demagoguery and ad hominem attacks. Thomas Watson was the most notorious of these critics. His numerous books and articles on the Catholic Church shared a common theme: the Pope had a secret plan to infiltrate the United States and take over the government. He claimed that the Catholic Church operated a “deadly secret society” that had “compelled our [United States] Government to connect itself officially with the Italian popes.”⁷⁹ According to Watson, the result was that

Never a Congress expires that does not lavish public money on the pope’s charitable institutions in Washington, and on his Indian schools, in which his teachers wear their religious garb and, practically teach the pope’s religion. Never a Congress can come and go, without the pope’s lobby clamoring for more chaplains and more authority to compel non-Catholics to surrender their religious freedom.⁸⁰

In 1894, the *Atlanta Constitution* sparked a firestorm of controversy when it published Dr. James Hawthorne’s sermon on religious liberty. The controversy stemmed from the minister’s endorsement of the American Protective Association, a fraternal organization whose goal was to exclude Catholics from holding public office. The sermon created a debate among Baptist leaders. *Alabama Baptist* editor W.B. Crumpton published a ringing endorsement, explaining that although he did “not know about the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁷⁸ Eager, *Romanism in its Home*, 109.

⁷⁹ Thomas E. Watson, *The Italian Pope's Campaign Against the Constitutional Rights of American Citizens*, (Thomson: The Tom Watson Book Company, 1915), 4-5.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 6-7.

secrets of the A.P.A. or any other secret order,” as “long as they are peaceable, and use only the tongue, pen and ballot to accomplish their purpose, I have for them no word of censure.”⁸¹ To those who considered it religious persecution to vote against a Roman Catholic for office, he responded that “this writer glories in being numbered among the persecutors... No Catholic in office by my vote, is a safe creed for every American voter.”⁸²

Progressive Alabama pastor and future seminary professor, George Eager disagreed. He cautioned against the American Protective Association, arguing that although he objected to the Catholic Church’s “intermeddling with the civil affairs of this nation” and to “her absurd dogmas and assumptions,” he considered the secretive campaign of the A.P.A. to be contradictory to “our [Baptists’] Christian principle of absolute freedom of conscience and choice in things religious.”⁸³ He opposed efforts to bar Catholics from public office, which he believed to be “un-Baptistic [sic] and unconstitutional, if not distinctly treasonable.” Eager believed that instead of engaging in a political battle or “fighting the devil with fire,” as the A.P.A. suggested, Baptists should limit their differences with Catholics to doctrine and “let the fight with Rome be open and above-board.”

As the denomination approached the new century, the editorial banter between denominational leaders revealed a dilemma for Southern Baptists. They were among the staunchest advocates of religious liberty but sometimes were willing to deny other Americans basic liberties to protect their own. Reflecting the tenets of Calvinism, E. B.

⁸¹ W.B. Crumpton, “The A.P.A.,” *Alabama Baptist*, 3 May 1894.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ George B. Eager, “The A.P.A. Again,” *Alabama Baptist*, 10 May 1894.

Teague asserted that Baptists had the doctrinal pedigree to resolve this American dilemma:

Protestants hold that the claims of the Church are only to be enforced by argument and persuasion, but even they often in the past, have clung to the supposed right of resorting to penal enactments. Baptists alone, in all their history, have eschewed the use of civil authority, and insisted on total disseverance of state and church.⁸⁴

Although other Protestants shared the concern for religious liberty, it had special meaning for Baptists, or so they contended. As the first advocates for separating religion from state control, they believed their history made them special. Additionally, they considered themselves the progenitors of republicanism—their denomination upheld the religious ideals of individualism and democratic autonomy.⁸⁵ Their adherence to republican Christianity marked them torchbearers for religious liberty. Few if any denominations held themselves closer to the nation's democratic ideals than did Baptists. However, that impulse was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, local churches offered members inclusiveness within the church family; but they also dealt harshly with those who operated outside Protestant communal norms. This helps explain the contentious nature of Baptist history. It also offers insight into their perceptions of Catholicism.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Eldridge B. Teague, "Let Us Avoid Extremes," *Alabama Baptist*, 7 June 1894.

⁸⁵ Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 25. Psychologist David Myers argues that when people create factions reflecting the values of their "ingroup," individualistic cultures are more likely to hold extreme "outgroup" biases than do people in communal cultures; David G. Myers, "Ingroup and Outgroup," in *Social Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 347-49.

⁸⁶ For more background on the paradox of democracy and exclusion, see, Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900*, Religion in America series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); See also, Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920*.

From the early years of the Republic, Protestants were consumed with fears of a Catholic plot to take over the United States.⁸⁷ Baptist writers cited public matters such as schools, politics, and the court system as evidence of a Catholic menace. They believed that their constitutional rights, such as the separation of church and state, were under attack. J. M. Pendleton explained,

Now, there are three principles in the constitution of our government which must ever be repugnant to the Church of Rome. These are, the entire separation of church and state, non-sectarian schools, and the right to solemnize marriage by the civil magistrate. To tolerate either of these is to overthrow the entire Catholic superstructure. This Catholics cannot be expected to permit, if within their power to prevent it. They will, therefore, necessarily continue to wage a bitter crusade against these things; and if ever they succeed in gaining control of the government, they will expunge them from the constitution, and so change its whole character.⁸⁸

Baptist concerns were not complete fabrications. Starting in the 1870s, Catholic immigrants poured into the United States, increasing the Church's influence on public matters. They filed lawsuits in support of parochial school funding and ran for public office. They pointed out that Protestants did not practice what they preached; they professed allegiance to religious liberty, but only because they controlled the public sphere and their beliefs were already interwoven into every aspect of American life. When Catholic newspapers exposed these contradictions, Baptist writers responded,

⁸⁷ Baldwin, "Pious Prejudice: Catholicism and the American Press Over Three Centuries," 61.

⁸⁸ J.M. Pendleton, "The Attitude of Roman Catholicism Toward Our Government," *Alabama Baptist*, 23 March 1882.

often oblivious to the privileges they enjoyed.⁸⁹ One critic challenged Catholics to explain

Where, in the history of Protestant churches, do you find them endeavoring to gain control of the government and teaching their members to disregard the laws of the United States, to ignore, and finally refuse, to pay their school taxes, to organize and overthrow this government, to 'persecute all who do not believe with them,' and to establish a government for the Baptists, or the Methodists, or the Presbyterians?⁹⁰

Southern Baptists recognized that their world was changing. In the fifty years following the Civil War, they saw dramatic evidence of this. Defining who they were and what they stood for (and against) constituted an important way to preserve their cultural authority. They also recognized that the pen was not always mightier than the sword. Increasingly, they advanced Baptist principles and countered Catholic campaigns through direct action.

The Southern Baptist Convention, often the last body to weigh in on controversy, made its position known in 1914 when members passed a resolution that denounced the political ambitions of the Catholic Church and cautioned government officials against becoming too cozy with such an organization:

Resolved, that we view with serious alarm and vigorous protest the efforts of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to gain control of our government, and thereby be in a position to fasten either its faith or fallacies upon the consciences of a free people. Resolved, that we deplore deeply the presence of a papal legate as the representative of the Vatican at our national capital for the purpose of influencing government affairs. Resolved, that we earnestly protest against the presence of a national representatives [sic] in their official capacity at ecclesiastical functions

⁸⁹ For how southern evangelicals legislated their religious agenda, see, Charles A. Israel, *Before Scopes: Evangelicalism, Education, and Evolution in Tennessee, 1870-1925* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

⁹⁰ "Roman Catholicism," *Alabama Baptist*, 24 April 1889.

and the manifest disposition on the part of some of our politicians to show deference to so-called church dignitaries.⁹¹

Although this resolution did not offer formal recommendations for action, it implied that each Southern Baptist should do his civic duty to protect religious liberty.

State conventions expressed concern about Catholic political ambitions even more forthrightly. In Alabama, a southern state with a fast-growing Catholic population, Baptists used every available method to protect their liberty. At the 1903 Alabama Baptist State Convention, messengers passed a resolution against the appropriation of public funds for any religious work, arguing that such action violated "... the important principle of religious liberty and trespasses upon the rights of the individual."⁹² The resolution foreshadowed decades of public disputes between Alabamians over the allocation of public funds to religious institutions.

Citing the spirit of religious liberty, the *Alabama Baptist* questioned public funding for Birmingham's St. Vincent Hospital and the Catholic Orphanage in East Lake. The editor argued that "... the principles of church and state, for which our Baptist fathers bled and died, must again be contended for in the twentieth century in a great Protestant state."⁹³ A few weeks later, John Tyson, Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, spoke at the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist Convention in Dothan, affirming the importance of Baptists and religious liberty. Galvanized by the speech, J. M. Shelburne presented a resolution proclaiming that, "... the principle of

⁹¹ *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1914*, (Nashville: Marshall and Brice Company, 1914), 93-94.

⁹² "Have We the Separation of Church and State in Alabama?," *Alabama Baptist* 10 July 1907.

⁹³ "Is the Age-Herald a Roman Catholic Organ, and Has it a Grudge Against Baptists?," *Alabama Baptist*, 10 July 1907.

separation of church and state, for which we as a people have always stood, is being violated in Alabama in the form of appropriations of public money to the support of sectarian institutions....”⁹⁴ Years earlier, a Catholic priest from Bessemer, Alabama, characterized such Baptist conventions as frequently devolving into nothing more than an “annual howl” against Catholicism.⁹⁵ When attendees passed the resolution unanimously, they also confirmed Catholic suspicions: the wolf was at the door.

The early twentieth-century was a transitional period for both Southern Baptists and the South’s Catholic population. Both experienced substantial increases in membership. For Catholics, this meant putting down roots—building churches, schools, and hospitals—in a region where Protestants heavily outnumbered them. Southern Baptists— who had become what religious historian Martin Marty ironically called the “Catholic Church of the South” because of their political and cultural dominance of the region— increasingly acted as majorities often do, willing to impose their own principles on society regardless of how others might be affected. They fought for truth and liberty, even if the truth was their truth and the liberty seldom considered Catholic interests.

⁹⁴ “Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama, Rings a Clear Baptist Note on Religious Liberty at Dothan,” *Alabama Baptist*, 31 July 1907.

⁹⁵ “A Ranting Catholic Priest,” *Alabama Baptist*, 21 May 1891.

Chapter Two

Identity Preserved: Anti-Catholicism in Southern Baptist Missions

In 1875 J. J. D. Renfroe took to task his fellow Baptists: “why is it that Alabama Baptists, who used to give so much to benevolent causes of this Convention, do now give so little?”¹ He was distraught over the lack of support for Southern Baptist institutions that he saw as instrumental to denominational success. Funds were low, mission support was waning, and the Southern Baptist Convention was teetering on the brink of extinction. Renfroe, while admitting that the problem affected the entire South, challenged Alabamians to reach out to the destitute and help their fellow neighbors; if they did not, someone else would.

Particularly during Reconstruction, Southern Baptists worried about Catholic mission work among the Freedmen. Renfroe saw this as a broader issue. “Some brethren are much afraid of the Roman Catholics among the negroes” he declared; “for my own part I am no more afraid of them among the negroes than among the white people.”² While Renfroe agreed that Catholics should not be ministering to the freedmen, he suggested that a Catholic presence in the South had wide-reaching consequences. White southerners believed they could control “their negroes,” as long as the southern social hierarchy remained in place. To Renfroe, missions represented more than simply the saving of souls or social outreach to the poor; missions reached all southerners in direct,

¹ *Alabama Baptist*, 15 June 1875.

² *Ibid.*

personal terms. It preserved order and re-affirmed social identity in the South.

Increasingly, Baptists like Renfroe saw Catholics as interlopers impeding the success of mission programs and threatening to upset the region's social balance.

Baptists encountered these differences as they reconstructed their institutions. Since the post-war South was in dire straits, Northern Baptists offered both support and guidance. They sent missionaries South, suggested to southerners how to reconcile with their sinful past, and provided support services such as religious literature to ill-equipped Southern Baptists. But the relationship between northern and southern Baptists was strained from the start. In February 1870, the North Carolina Baptist newspaper, the *Biblical Recorder*, carried a story entitled "Catholics on Color" that reported that "Catholics are laboring among the freedmen in Baltimore: in their schools and churches white and black sit together."³ It informed North Carolina Baptists that "there are now seventeen negroes being educated for priests in one institution in Naples." The article was actually written by the Secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Dr. William Simmons, as a warning that Southern Baptists, in order to compete for souls, must undergo an "ecclesiastical reconstruction that required studying, reciting, and eating side-by-side with the colored people."

The editorial was typical of the period; it represented attempts by northern religious institutions to reform southern religious beliefs. Like other aspects of Reconstruction, such meddling was met with sharp responses. The editor responded by asking among other things, "what could negro [sic] students trained in Rome, do in

³ *Biblical Recorder*, 20 February 1870.

America?”⁴ If Catholicism was such a menace to southern society, “how come it to pass that Roman Catholicism has never gained a decent foothold in Africa?” Illustrating the Southern point of view, he declared: “Let us aid their [Negro] churches, their schools, their enterprises; but never let us open the way for corrupt white men [Catholics] to prowl like wolves among them and lead flocks and families down to corruption and ruin.” The response was clear. Southern Baptists had no intention of negotiating the terms of a religious reconstruction that involved giving up their cultural authority over the freedmen, especially when the threat stemmed from corrupt Catholics. In fact, the language of the North Carolina editor implied the threat of physical force that smacked of Klan-like intentions.

If Southern Baptists were to preserve their institutions, it became necessary to stamp out threats to their way of life, no matter their origin. In the New South, the significance of missions was in more than saving souls; it represented a containment policy. Baptists understood that the center of Catholic power was Rome, Italy, and believed that the Pope was pursuing an aggressive campaign to infiltrate America and take over its government, control the educational system, and alter social relations. Understandably, he thus became object of the most vicious attacks from Baptists leaders as an icon representing the Catholic conspiracy.

⁴ Ibid.

Promoting Missionary Zeal

During the years when Southern Baptists reconstructed their identity, James Marion Frost was one of the most important leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁵ He was a prolific publisher of pamphlets, books, newspaper articles, and sermons on distinctive Baptist principles. From his early career as a minister to his long service as founder and Corresponding Secretary of the Sunday School Board, perhaps no other Baptist leader said more about who Baptists were, what they believed, and who were their adversaries. In 1881, Frost preached a sermon in Stanton, Virginia entitled “A Glorious Church.” In the sermon, he prescribed the ideals of Southern Baptists institutions. Not surprisingly, he drew parallels between the activities in a successful church with the tenants of “good-templarism” [sic] that included leadership, fellowship, and community outreach.⁶ “The mission of the church,” according to Frost, “is intensely radical in its nature— striking with might and effective blows at the very root of wrong.” The avenue for transformation was to be achieved through missions. Using education, Baptists might stamp out heresy; by being charitable, they might reach the dispossessed; and through reformatory measures, the South would be preserved. This action was crucial because it was “regenerative,” both individually and institutionally. An important component to Frost’s call to arms was dealing with the “very root of wrong,” the Catholic Church, the institution that “...needs itself to be revolutionized and christianized.” [sic] Whether the subject was the “monstrous abomination” of an infallible Pope, or warnings that The Church was smothering “the goodness of civil religious liberty” and impeding

⁵ For a biographical sketch, see John Milburn Price, *Baptist Leaders in Religious Education* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1943).

⁶ Sermons, 1871-1885, Boxes 35 and 36, James Marion Frost Papers, SBHLA.

“advancement and improvement” of society, Frost challenged Baptists to get involved by participating in and funding missions. Ultimately, he concluded, “The relations of the individual member to the Church—to this whole subject—Identity Preserved—retarding or helping— shows of the future glory.” This sermon typified the sentiments of early southern evangelical anti-Catholicism. Frost informed true believers that they needed to understand what their community represented and more importantly, what it opposed. In fact, the two concepts were inextricably linked. To become a truly glorious church, Baptists must recognize those institutions that threatened the church and resolve them through missions. The very act of combating heresy meant that at the same time Southern Baptists were preserving a distinctive religious identity they were strengthening their churches and doing the will of God.

Among the most colorful commentators on missions to Roman Catholics was J.R. Graves, leader of the Landmark faction of Baptists (so called because they believed certain Baptist beliefs and practices dated back to the times of Jesus), and editor of *The Tennessee Baptist* in Memphis, Tennessee.⁷ Graves used an assortment of epithets such as “the Beast in the Pit” and “Whore of Babylon” to refer to the Pope and quoted from Revelations to convey the fear of an apocalyptic end of time.⁸ This style of language utilized millennial theology and urged followers to adopt radical positions toward outsiders, particularly those who held religious beliefs foreign to southerners. As a leader in the Landmark movement, Graves was opposed to foreign missions. To Landmarkers,

⁷ Biographical accounts of Graves include Marty G. Bell, "James Robinson Graves and the Rhetoric of Demogogy: Primitivism and Democracy in Old Landmarkism" (doctorial dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1990); O. L. Hailey, *J. R. Graves, Life, Times and Teachings* (Nashville: n. p., 1929); Timothy George and David S. Dockery, *Baptist Theologians* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990).

⁸ *Tennessee Baptist*, 21 February 1885; 19 September 1885.

containment meant purifying both southern and American culture from the scourge of Catholicism.⁹ This was accomplished by reforming Baptist doctrine and remaining true to the “old landmarks” of the faith.¹⁰ As the Southern Baptist Convention tried to rebuild its institutions, Landmark Baptists debated the validity of mission programs, garnered strong support in Tennessee, Arkansas, Alabama, Kentucky, and Georgia, and forced mainliners to better formulate their positions on outreach.¹¹

However, the majority of Baptists strongly supported foreign missions. Leaders portrayed Roman Catholicism as dynamic and ever-changing, not to be conquered merely by saving a few souls in Rome. In 1877, E.T. Winkler, Chairman of the Committee on Italian Missions, reminded attendees at the annual Southern Baptist Convention that “The existence of the papacy [sic] is not dependent upon the duration of Rome. If the Pontifical city perished, the pope might, if he chose, establish a new Rome elsewhere, as was done five hundred years ago, when, for a nearly a century, Avignon, in the south of France, was the Papal seat.”¹² As evangelicals, Baptists believed they had a mandate to save souls; but the numerous warnings from mission leaders reveal an understanding that converting Catholics would be a difficult endeavor and containing them might offer a more realistic alternative.

⁹ See, for example, James E. Tull, *High-Church Baptists in the South: The Origin, Nature, and Influence of Landmarkism* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Early leaders adopted the term "Landmark Baptist" from Kentucky Baptist minister J.M. Pendleton through the publication of James Madison Pendleton, *An Old Landmark Re-set by J.M. Pendleton* (Nashville: South-Western Publishing House, 1859).

¹¹ For the best analysis of a post-war, statewide theological debate, see chapters "War and Reunion, 1860-1874" and "Building a New South, 1875-1890" in Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*.

¹² Edwin T. Winkler, *Rome, Past, Present and Future: An Address Delivered Before the Southern Baptist Convention, in New Orleans, on Saturday, May 12th, 1877* (Atlanta: J.P. Harrison, 1877), Pamphlet.

Southern Baptists' first mission in a predominantly Catholic country began in 1871, when Italy opened its doors to Protestant missions.¹³ Two years earlier, the Foreign Mission Board had issued a report to the Southern Baptist Convention that stated:

The desire has been expressed by some, that as Southern Baptists we might take some action looking to the establishment of missions in Europe. It is a mournful fact that the wide prevalence of anti-Christian doctrines and forms of worship, [sic] has rendered many portions of that continent as truly in need of Christian sympathy and missionary enterprise as any portion of the heathen world. Nor is it less true that with our views of the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, we, as Baptists, are peculiarly qualified to enter and occupy this great field. But especially is it important to note the wonderful openings for missionary labor which in that field are now presenting themselves... This subject has been brought before the Board, and has been referred to a judicious committee. But the want of funds has thus far prevented any definite action.¹⁴

Both due to lack of funding and interest, the Italian missions program initially faltered, but after two years the Foreign Mission Board established a permanent location where it could conduct mission activity. The first permanent Southern Baptist missionary in Italy was George Boardman Taylor, who served in that capacity from 1873-1907. Taylor served as a treasurer and superintendent of Italian Missions, all the while providing direction, distributing monies, building churches, and training missionaries. Other distinguished figures were John H. Eager and D. F. Whittinghill, both of whom were prominent leaders notable for their regular contribution to foreign mission

¹³ On the origins of the foreign missions program to Italy, see J. D. Hughey, "Europe and the Middle East" in "Advance: A History of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions," ed. Baker James Cauthen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970); Birdwhistell, "Southern Baptist Perceptions of and Responses to Roman Catholicism, 1917-1972."

¹⁴ Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual*, 1869, 55.

publications. All three reported to Southern Baptists the proceedings of the Vatican and the difficulties of mission work in Catholic Italy.

In 1872, Southern Baptists purchased property in Rome for the purpose of building a church. Although there was enthusiasm for the mission work, obtaining funding was a different story. Ultimately, the Foreign Missions Board needed to raise \$31,838 to complete the building project, which took until 1878 to complete.¹⁵ This was a monumental challenge that helped the Italian missions leaders understand how crucial funding was to the success of the program. Historian J.D. Hughey notes that during the building campaign, the FMB stimulated zeal for financial contributions. Baptist leaders described how inappropriately missionaries administered baptisms because many times washtubs were the only baptisms available and the candidates for baptism wore white see-through robes.¹⁶ These accounts appealed to the emotions of Southern Baptists who upon reading about the unsuitable conditions laced with sexual imagery might contribute to the program. Ultimately, sensational accounts of innocent women, lascivious priests, heroic and/or martyred missionaries, and papal conspiracies filled the pages of the *Foreign Missions Journal* and every state denominational newspaper.

Not all correspondence was so extreme. Personal letters often found their way into the public spotlight. In 1894, Taylor wrote a letter to Dr. E.C. Dargan, professor at the Southern Baptist Seminary, about the mission field. Evidently Taylor had traveled back to the United States to report on the status of the work and broker support for the cause. Upon hearing of Taylor's need, Dargan sent him a "request for missionary

¹⁵ Hughey, "Europe and the Middle East," in *Advance: A History of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions*, 189.

¹⁶ Ibid.

news.”¹⁷ The correspondence provided Taylor another opportunity to garner support. He described a recent dedication of a Baptist chapel at Miglionico attended by both Taylor and John Eager. The correspondence documented the success of the dedication:

The streets were full of people who eyed us curiously but without apparent hostility; in fact, many men took off their hats. The chapel was crowded with men, women and children, man standing during the entire service. The order was perfect, and the people listened with still, solemn attention during the dedicatory prayer which I offered, and to the address of perhaps twenty minutes each of brethren Eager, Piscinni, and myself. At night and for the week following, the meetings continued with undiminished interest.¹⁸

By the 1890s, mission leaders understood the importance of sending back both harrowing accounts of Catholic menace and positive messages of Baptist success. Taylor finished the letter with a request of Dargan, asking if “Perhaps you would kindly let the *Western Recorder* have the facts of the letter, as it is important to diffuse missionary intelligence and yet letters do take time and, at least from me, labor too.”

In 1894, Taylor was sixty-two years old and, according to personal letters, feeling the effects of aging. At the same time, his counterpart John Eager was assuming a more pronounced role in Italian missions. That year, Eager wrote the polemical book *Romanism in its Home*, which was heavily promoted in a variety of Southern Baptist literature. In fact, one of the most recognizable Baptist statesmen of the period, John A. Broadus, felt so strongly about the book that he wrote the introduction. According to Broadus, Eager focused on “the real nature and tendencies of the Roman Catholic system,” and presented his “careful examination... admirably free from all mere

¹⁷ George Taylor Letter, 1.4 in Correspondence, 1882-1895, T-Z, Edwin Dargan Papers AR 795-203, SBHLA.

¹⁸ Ibid.

sensation and from all exaggeration.”¹⁹ Chapter titles like “A Religion of Fear,” “Baptized Paganism,” “Women and Priestcraft,” and “Romanism and Superstition” might have led outsiders to question claims of sensation-free journalism, but Baptists embraced his book as an authoritative source on the dangers of Catholicism.²⁰ Eager became a highly sought after writer and public speaker, extolling the importance of the Italian mission program. Rome was, as he described it, the tap root of Catholicism for those “who do not want the trouble of thinking for themselves, but would rather be willing to accept a religion of traditions, of legalism, and of outward forms.”²¹ While in Louisville, Kentucky, speaking at the Southern Baptist Seminary (the premier SBC institution), Eager explained the impetus for writing his book. He purported that “the evils recounted in the book’s pages serve to put us on our guard against the ensnaring errors of Romanism, to stir our hearts with genuine practical sympathy for the many, both among priests and laity, who are so sadly deceived, and for the few who are so bravely seeking to undeceive them.”²²

Although Eager may have had spiritual reasons for writing the book, the timing of its release helps to explain its popularity. Five years earlier, Henry Bowers founded the American Protection Association (APA) in Clinton, Iowa.²³ Bowers had been a Mason

¹⁹ Eager, introduction to *Romanism in its Home*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² “Scrapbook-Undated Newspaper Clippings,” Lansing Burrows Papers, GBHLA.

²³ See, for example, Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: the American Protective Association*; ibid.; Bennett, *The Party of Fear : From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History*; Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason; Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970*; Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*.

and drew upon both fraternal ritual and historic antipathy toward Catholics. By the 1890s, the APA was a national organization whose representatives (many ex-priests) traveled around the U.S. giving speeches, holding anti-Catholic rallies, and recruiting new members. The APA also provided informational tracts to churches and civic organizations. During the height of its popularity from 1893 to 1894, the APA published over seventy newspapers.²⁴ Because they aligned with the Republican Party in the North, they had little organizational support in the South, but it is fair to say that the type of literature being produced by both the American Missionary Board and the Southern Baptist Convention drew heavily from secular critiques of the Catholic Church.

In 1901, Dexter Whittinghill arrived in Italy to serve as colleague to G. B. Taylor. Whittinghill had been a friend of the family and eventually married Dr. Taylor's daughter. Although Whittinghill spent his first few years in Italy building a seminary and teaching, he would eventually replace Taylor as treasurer and superintendent of Italian missions. During the early years of his tenure, Whittinghill learned from the successes of both Taylor and John Eager. In his Ph. D. dissertation entitled "Southern Baptist Perceptions of and Responses to Roman Catholicism, 1917-1972," Ira Birdwhistell concluded that "Whittinghill's writings, confined to articles for missionary periodicals and state Baptist papers, generally reflected a less polemical view of Catholicism than that of Eager."²⁵ However, upon further investigation, Whittinghill not only wrote

²⁴ Humphrey Desmond, "The American Protective Association," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Kevin Knight (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), 26 January 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cauthen/01426a.htm>>.

²⁵ Birdwhistell, "Southern Baptist Perceptions of and Responses to Roman Catholicism, 1917-1972," 3.

frequent anti-Catholic articles, his publications appear to be no less sensational. In an undated pamphlet written before 1907 titled “The Curse of Romanism in Italy,” he blasted the “papal system” in every paragraph.²⁶ Throughout the first topic, “An Ugly Brood of Evil,” Whittinghill attacked Catholic priests for a lack of “moral character;” in “Romanism and Popular Education,” he accused the Roman Church of encouraging superstition and controlling public education; in “A Religion Without Morality,” he argued that in America, Catholics were seven times more likely to commit a crime than other Americans; and in “Persecution,” he contended that “Romanism has the same spirit now as in the days of the Inquisition. The conditions have greatly changed, but forms of persecution, though less violent, are often successful.” This tract had great narrative force, hitting all of the right rhetorical notes and certainly places Whittinghill in the same category as others who used anti-Catholic language to promote missions.

Denominational newspapers like the *Alabama Baptist* promoted mission topics and made suggestions to pastors on how to implement them. For instance, mission leaders suggested reading reports from missionaries as part of the Sunday worship service. These letters coincided with other church activities to impose the maximum effect. In 1900, Baptists designated the month of April to emphasize Italian missions. Article titles included “Difficulties in Mission Work,” which illustrated obstacles Baptists encountered in a country where “the Vatican is secretly formenting [sic] distrust of the State;” “Progress in Mission,” a testimony of the thirty-two native Baptist preachers and more than seven hundred Church members in Italy; “Muscular Christianity in Rome,” a “report on joint Protestant mission efforts like those from the Young Men’s Christian

²⁶ “The Curse of Romanism in Italy,” Pamphlet 1329, Pamphlet Collection, SBHLA.

Association;” and “Contesting Italy with the Catholics,” a short historical piece on past attempts to evangelize Italy since the time of the apostles.²⁷ The combination of anecdotes, statistics, and historical narrative offered local pastors plenty of source material for their Sunday sermons. In addition, the newspaper provided a series of supplements called “Study Topics.” These were suggested topics to discuss during Sunday School included “Paul’s visit to Rome,” “Rome in the time of Nero,” “Rome in the days of Constantine,” “Rome under the Pope,” and “The hope of Italy— the pure gospel of Christ.”²⁸

Publicly, the voices of the Italian mission program all echoed the same message— success comes through a combination of financial support at home and evangelization abroad. But privately, some missionaries encountered difficulties that did not make the newspapers. North Carolina Baptist Charles James Fox served in Italy for just three years before retiring. His early letters in 1901 reflect the excitement and optimism of a man at the beginning stages of a journey. Accompanied by his wife, a woman who “speaks Italian equally as well as I do,” Fox beamed about how he had “learned things about his field that I never dreamed of, like, [sic] how badly Italy does need the gospel.”²⁹ He remarked how he often worked in conjunction with D.G. Whittinghill— traveling, teaching, and preaching. Fox appeared to have a strong support system that prevented him from loneliness and despair. But by December 1903, he was badly discouraged by his lack of success, remarking that “Preaching to Italians seems like throwing so much water on a duck’s back. If they are to be reached, it is to be not so

²⁷ *Alabama Baptist*, 12 April 2000.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ PC148, Charles James Fox Papers.

much through sermons, as through schools and hospitals.” He was very critical of the Italian missions programs, remarking that the policy of the Board was to “preach, preach, preach, and after thirty years of such methods, we American Baptists have precious little to show as results.” Giving sermons, supporting an Italian Baptist seminary, and authoring tracts/publications were part and parcel for the Board’s mission strategy. Fox became convinced that “other methods should be adopted’ because the Catholic Church was simply too ingrained in Italian culture and Baptists were wasting time trying to create a Protestant institution in Italy. Fox also had grown to love the Italian people and began to see them less as a symbol of Catholicism and more as simply good people. During his last weeks, he preached a sermon on “Personal Work” that he remarked was “requested for publication.” Instead of being proud of his work, Fox cursorily promised to send a copy of it back to North Carolina and mentioned nothing else of the notoriety. Perhaps he no longer had the stomach for it. For whatever reason, Fox retired in 1904 with the intention of going to medical school upon returning to the United States. Increasingly, missionaries like Fox reflected new ideas about serving in the field. These ideas were influenced by a reform mentality distinctive to the Progressive Era.³⁰ Ultimately, Fox’s goal was to go back to missionary service after becoming a physician. For Fox, missions

³⁰ For Southern Baptists and social Christianity, see Allen, *A Century to Celebrate: History of Woman's Missionary Union*; Eighmy and Hill, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists*; Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*; Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920*; Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*; Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900*.

had profoundly shaped him into a more accepting, socially-conscious Baptist who, after serving in Italy, sounded less anti-Catholic than in 1901.³¹ As Wayne Flynt explains:

Although southern evangelicals did not succumb to belief that Christianity was essentially about transforming society (nor, in fact, did most northern advocates of the social gospel believe that concept either), they did seek to apply Christian ethics to society's problems in a way unprecedented either before or after the two decades following 1900.³²

Not all Baptists accepted the growing emphasis on social Christianity. In the early twentieth-century, the Landmark movement held sway over pockets of Baptists in the Southeast, and quarreled with mainline Southern Baptists over centralization and modernity. They objected to social Christianity, preferring instead to emphasize doctrinal purity, and vehemently opposed foreign missions.

Although he was not a Landmarker, Populist leader and Georgia Baptist Tom Watson weighed in on foreign missions. Watson owned his own publishing company, and from his magazine, *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine* and in other special publications, he attacked Foreign Mission Board leaders for providing clothes, books, and medical care, claiming that they "give to the heathen what you deny to your own."³³ He indicted general secretary R. J. Willingham and associates as mismanagers of the denomination's financial resources, labeling them as "liberally-compensated Brethren."³⁴

At the same time, Watson was also among the most anti-Catholic figures in American

³¹ For a scholarly look at how missionaries both shaped and were shaped by foreign cultures, see Wayne Flynt and Gerald W. Berkley, *Taking Christianity to China: Alabama Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1850-1950* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

³² Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, 251-52.

³³ Thomas E. Watson, *Foreign Missions Exposed*, 2d ed. (Atlanta: Press of the Jeffersonians, 1910), 4.

³⁴ *Jeffersonian Magazine*, February 1909, 13.

history. He published countless diatribes on the Pope, the Catholic Church, and the clergy. Watson believed strongly in combating Catholicism abroad but was more interested in preventing it from gaining momentum in the South.

Watson's constant critiques damaged the Foreign Mission Board. Edgar Folk, editor of the *Baptist and Reflector* in Nashville, wrote to the Board, "I spoke to Dr. C. W. Pruitt about the matter at Louisville. He said he thought it would be well for me to reply, as the article by Mr. Watson is doing harm in Georgia, where his magazine principally circulates."³⁵ Southern Baptist leaders responded by launching an advertising campaign in support of Foreign Missions. They looked for ideas on how to make themselves and their work more visible. One pastor suggested emulating the Presbyterians, who included a "Men and Missions" theme in every paper.³⁶ The Southern Baptist Convention held conferences to combat Watson, such as the 1910 "Missions Under Fire" seminar in Atlanta. Mostly, speakers received their information from tracts provided by the Foreign Missions Board. Many were not as eloquently versed as Watson and therefore required the supportive literature. During the annual meeting of the Georgia Association, Watson took the railroad into Camak, Georgia, to give a speech outside the convention meeting.³⁷ He had attended the association meetings a year earlier, but by this time, he had worn out his welcome in most Baptist circles. In his speech, he referred to R. J. Willingham and other board members and how they had "consumed in Richmond more than thirty thousand dollars." But by this time, there were hecklers in the crowd, supported by the

³⁵ Edgar E. Folk to W. H. Smith, 27 May 1909, International Mission Board Executive Office Records AR 551-3, SBHLA.

³⁶ William T. Ellis to R. J. Willingham, 8 February 1910.

³⁷ D. W. Key to R. J. Willingham, 8 September 1911.

Foreign Missions Board. One of the challengers to Watson was D.W. Key. Key interrupted the speech and asked the crowd to consider the historic presence of Georgia Baptists, claiming that Watson had ties to Dr. Jesse Mercer, a champion of missions and founder of Mercer College. Watson had attended Mercer College in his youth, and from Key's account, the Populist leader appeared to have been taken aback by the argument. Key issued tracts to the crowd which were "gobbled up... before I had time to distribute it around... It was right in the centre [sic] of Watson's Kingdom, too, where the people had read his attack on me..." Eventually, Tom Watson moved on to other issues, attacking Jews, Blacks, Socialists, anarchists, and the United States Postal Service. Southern Baptists weathered his criticisms and remained committed to foreign missions.

Mission Work on the Home Front

By the 1880s and 90s, Southern Baptists agreed that there was a growing Catholic menace threatening the South. However, they were not in accord as how best to counter the surge. Although foreign missions had its detractors, the biggest debate was over how best to serve their homeland. Many Baptists could unify around providing money to the Foreign Mission Board but were sharply divided over whether to support state mission agencies, a Home Board, or a combination of both. In 1881, the Southern Baptist Convention debated de-funding the Home Mission Board. After a series of discussions, the Executive Board chose instead to relocate it from Marion, Alabama, to Atlanta, Georgia. This administrative move created a renewed focus on Home Missions and also

proved to be the catalyst for the creation of the Sunday School Board, the largest and most widespread effort to secure a distinctly sectional religious identity.³⁸

If Baptists were going to expand their denominational influence over the South, they would need money. The Civil War had left Southern Baptists in a precarious financial situation; limited funds meant that Home and Foreign Missions increasingly competed for support. In Kentucky, Lexington pastor and Recording Secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Lansing Burrows published “A Reproach, and some plain words about it” in the state’s Baptist newspaper, the *Western Recorder*. During 1882, Kentucky sent \$952.46 to the Home Mission Board. Burroughs saw this as cause for concern. Could any Kentucky pastor look at those figures without humiliation? Had they forgotten the foundations of Home Missions? Was that not a part of their duty and obligation? Burrows explained that in New Orleans, where \$526 of the year’s home mission budget had been allocated, there were but few Baptists.³⁹ Problem was, they preferred Baptism by sprinkling rather than full immersion, celebrated Carnival and other Catholic holidays, and established confessionals in their churches. “New Orleans today,” argued Burrows:

... demands an expenditure of missionary activity far in excess of Rome. The same influence in Rome are in New Orleans, but with a deadlier power, as poison is more deadly when wrapped in beautiful forms and fragrance. Romanism in America is more subtle than it is in Rome.⁴⁰

³⁸ For a brief description of the home missions controversy, see Rutledge and Tanner, *Mission to America: A Century and a Quarter of Southern Baptist Home Missions*: 37; Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953*: 77-78.

³⁹ “Lansing Burrows-Scrapbook,” Lansing Burrows Papers.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

For Burrows, the message was crystal clear. Send your money overseas and you may never see a penny of it benefit the South; but in Home Missions, the results were both tangible and personal. Burrows became such a successful advocate of Home Missions that he was often asked to speak at churches, conventions, and fundraisers. Dr. W. H. McIntosh, former President of the Home Mission Board and a pastor in Alabama at the time of one such fundraiser, observed that his

...eloquent appeal was listened to with breathless interest, the silence being broken by repeated exclamations of approval. Contributions were called for, payable before January next, and as Brother Burrows asked the query "Where will the first contribution come from," quickly W.H. Strickland of South Carolina responded, "The Greenville church will give \$100 in thirty days." Responses then were made in rapid succession...and under the skillful engineering of Bro. Burrows by 11 o'clock the amount asked, \$5000, was raised.⁴¹

Garnering support for home missions meant identifying areas of need. In 1885, Vice President of the Home Mission Board (HMB) for Georgia, Dr. J. G. Gibson, interviewed Corresponding Secretary Isaac Tichenor about the work. The interview was printed in the HMB's official publication, *The Home Field*. The purposes of the full page article appeared to be both educational and promotional. There were sections on missions programs catering to Indians, Negroes, the Frontier (Texas and Arkansas), Florida, Cuba, and Louisiana. Tichenor devoted extra emphasis on both Cuba and Louisiana. In Cuba, he predicted great success through the purchase of a theatre to be used as a house of worship.⁴² He remarked, "It is the wisest thing the Board has done for Cuba. It gives the people of Havana confidence in the permanency and stability of our work." When asked how he would pay for it, Tichenor replied he didn't anticipate trouble raising the money, but "...we need the liberal help of all, and that the money to be

⁴¹ "Lansing Burrows," Lansing Burrows Papers.

⁴² *Our Home Field*, October 1889.

raised in such manner as not to interfere with contributions for the general fund.” Not wanting to slight the Southland, he added,

By the way, Louisiana is one of our most needy fields, and one of the most promising. About half the State [sic] is without a white Baptist preacher. Last year our Missionaries baptized nearly six hundred in the State and the work is advancing rapidly.⁴³

Tichenor recognized that promoting the Board was an important aspect of being a missions advocate. His closing advice to ministers was to announce “facts and figures” from *Our Home Field* and also once a year, preach a sermon and issue a special offertory collection for home missions.

Despite increasingly sophisticated methods, fundraising was not always successful. In Georgia, some churches preferred to take care of their own and placed the needs of missions as secondary. For instance, in 1886, out of nearly 1400 churches belonging to the Georgia Baptist Convention, only 560 contributed to foreign missions, 450 to home missions, and 440 to statewide missions.⁴⁴ Rural churches were especially prone to neglect missions. As Southern Baptists moved closer to the millennium, the gulf between country and city churches widened, and Baptist leaders sought ways to unite the denomination.

Immediately following the Civil War, the prospect of becoming the largest Protestant denomination was a fantasy akin to landing on the moon; but by the beginning of the 20th century, Southern Baptists had undergone a significant transformation. They had established extensive mission programs, created their own publishing arm, and would soon overtake Methodists in membership. No longer were Southern Baptists merely a

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lester, *A History of the Georgia Baptist Convention, 1822-1972*, 237-38.

loose conglomerate of rural hayseeds; they became a powerful force shaping southern culture. They debated the idea of what makes a good society and applied their faith to issues they saw as social problems. As society changed, Baptists hardened their resolve to preserve their southern values. Mission programs tackled changes such as the rising tide of immigration in southern cities. Two major issues in the late 1800s transformed Baptist home missions— economic development and agricultural depression.

In order to fund missions, seminaries, associations, and other organizations, Southern Baptists recognized that as the South prospered or faltered, so did the society. Starting in the 1880s, many religious leaders supported the ideals of southern industrialization, an economic viewpoint espoused by southern boosters who promised prosperity, progress, and a new spirit of cooperation with the North.⁴⁵ Leaders like Richard Edmonds and D. A. Tompkins of the North Carolina-based *Manufacturers' Record* encouraged northern capitalists to invest in southern economic development— promising an abundance of resources ready to tap.⁴⁶ Henry Watterson of the *Louisville*

⁴⁵ For a history of the New South Creed, see C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951); see also Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Dwight B. Billings, *Planters and the Making of a "New South": Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); David L. Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Don Harrison Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910*, The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*, The Fred W. Morrison series in Southern studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Jonathan M. Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

⁴⁶ Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, 147.

Courier-Journal urged the South to forget the past and embrace the opportunities of a New South.⁴⁷

One of the problems southerners faced was that economic development and northern capital threatened to change southern cultural distinctiveness. New industry meant an increased demand for labor, but questions remained about how best to supply the work force. Increases in prosperity offered the South a better life but also had the potential to create a more secular society. The modernization of southern cities offered more choices, but also brought the threat of moral depravity. To add insult to injury, southerners were in the midst of an identity crisis brought on by the end of slavery and their so called “way of life.” Whites looked to the past to create a new identity, one steeped in mythmaking and legend. But within this new society materialism, manual labor, and other modern values seemed to have replaced decency, community, and gentility. In order to hold on to the verities that white southerners cherished, they pledged their allegiance to “the Lost Cause,” an idyllic reference to the good old days when life was simple and everything had a place.⁴⁸

Southern Baptists initially looked at industrialization with suspicion. They desperately needed their members to succeed financially and tithe accordingly, but many

⁴⁷ Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*, 20-21.

⁴⁸ For an explanation of how white Southerners created the myth of the Lost Cause, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); David R. Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002); Rollin G. Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1973); Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*.

pastors recognized that progress came with a price. Salvation came, not from God, Henry Grady, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, seemed to argue, but from the New South Creed.⁴⁹ The term originates from a speech that Grady delivered in 1886 to a group of northern philanthropists. He offered investors limitless financial gains brought about by promises to deliver a cheap, compliant labor force, diversification of agriculture, improvements in transportation, infrastructure, and quality of life, sectional reconciliation, and racial harmony. This was an agreement that promised economic prosperity and, at the same time, preserved the ideals of the Old South, especially its racial, economic, and social hierarchy. White Southerners embraced the potential for prosperity that industrialization promised. Led by Southern Baptists and other conservative groups, they advocated for the romance of the Lost Cause and enforced a strict moral code that shunned progressive theology, radical labor unions, demon rum, feminism, racial equality, and immigration.

The New South Creed allowed Baptists to reconstruct their institutions and, at the same time, construct a distinctively southern religious orthodoxy.⁵⁰ Historian James Cobb argues that, southerners constructed an identity that was “simultaneously both ‘one’s self *and not another*’.”⁵¹ Baptists typified a group that defined themselves in terms of contrasts. They became crusaders for the cause, promoting industry by stressing southern values such as thrift, hard-work, sobriety, and humility, while at the same time

⁴⁹ For a detailed explanation of the New South Creed, see Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking*, (New York: Knopf, 1970).

⁵⁰ Charles Reagan Wilson argues that Southerners reconstruct their society by using symbols of the Lost Cause in Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: the Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*.

⁵¹ Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*, 3.

criticizing Republicans and northerners as corrupt, immoral, liberal, foreign, and radical.⁵² It was a tacit agreement that meant Baptists believed their role was to identify society's needs, convert sinners, and purify the South. As long as southern social relations remained proper, southern religious culture could be synchronized like a locomotive on the Louisville and Nashville railroad.

One of the cornerstones of southern industry was the recruitment of a new labor force. In the Piedmont area of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Alabama, textile industrialists recruited a native, poor-white workforce and created an environment where the entire family worked as a single unit.⁵³ This system had several advantages. First, it utilized a segment of the southern population to which no one objected. Second, because of the workers' conservative values, they tended to eschew organized labor and instead preferred dealing with work in more direct, personal terms. And finally, most workers either were evangelicals or had been exposed to evangelical sects, making them more malleable to paternalistic religious practices and the gospel of southern industry.⁵⁴

As poor whites trickled out of Appalachia for secure textile jobs in the Piedmont, the timber industry created work camps that attracted blacks, poor whites, and immigrants. In Birmingham, Alabama, the coal and iron industry tapped into foreigners

⁵² Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*: 191-92.

⁵³ For an analysis of the southern textile industry and the workers' world, see Bilings, *Planters and the Making of a "New South: " Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900*; Wayne Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989); Jacquely Dowd Hall et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*, The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

⁵⁴ Liston Pope argues that religion functioned as a control mechanism that allowed textile mill owners to dictate the lives of their workers in Liston Pope, *Millhands & Preachers, A Study of Gastonia*, Yale Studies in Religious Education. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942).

immigrating into Alabama possessing both the trade skills and, more importantly, the will to work in this dangerous environment. Unlike the native workers in textile mills, many of the foreigners recruited into states like Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina were not Protestant. Italians and eastern European immigrants tended to be Roman Catholic and brought with them their customs and religious practices. Southern Baptists viewed the first wave of immigrants with both skepticism and resolve. Since Baptists shaped their identity by contrasting imagery, Catholics served as the perfect example of the unconverted. They were poor, ill-educated, idolaters who consumed alcohol, were controlled by a foreign Pope, and their dark complexions added an element of racial inferiority. By the 1880s, there was an increase in anti-Catholic stories printed in the state newspapers. Immigration was a new challenge for missions but one Baptists believed they could manage, much as they had combated northern ideas and institutions. In fact, Home Mission Board leader Isaac Tichenor was heavily involved in the recruitment of immigrants.⁵⁵ Tichenor—himself a self educated metallurgical engineer who had surveyed the Bibb and Shelby country coal fields—wrote a promotional manual entitled *Alabama As It Is: The Immigrants and Capitalists Guide Book to Alabama*.⁵⁶ The book, published in 1888, reflects the sentiments of a New South booster by offering information on the favorable climate, business atmosphere, available education, and transportation networks. Tichenor became one of the most influential figures in shaping

⁵⁵ For a detailed account of Issac Tichenor and his role in driving Southern Baptist prosperity in a New South economic climate, see Michael E. Williams, *Isaac Taylor Tichenor: The Creation of the Baptist New South*, Religion and American Culture (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

⁵⁶ B. F. Riley, *Alabama as It Is or, The Immigrant's and Capitalist's Guide Book to Alabama*, 2d ed. (Atlanta: Constitution Publishing Company, 1888); Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, 202.

Southern Baptist identity by promoting the value of southern industry to religious bodies and also recognizing that Baptists should play an important role in adapting their institutions to shape a New South.⁵⁷

In the early days of the New South movement, some Baptists believed that southern capitalists could be selective about the type of immigrants they recruited, choosing Protestant workers from Northern Europe over Catholics from Italy. The *Alabama Baptist* ran an article that commented favorably on a movement in which Welsh mining organizations were offered a \$35 incentive for each worker who migrated to America. The migration would relieve an overcrowded labor market in Europe, provide a new specialized labor force to Alabama, and maintain southern Protestant religious hegemony. Calling upon the state's industrial leaders, the editors wrote,

We call attention of the mine owners of Alabama to this movement, which through correspondence with Liverpool, could be turned in this direction. These experienced and hardy Welshmen are familiar with work upon the kind of coal which underlies our whole state. They would contribute an important element to our laboring population. Among them are Baptists and Methodists who would serve as a nucleus for churches in the mining districts. A field of good Alabama coal worked by Welsh miners would be an excellent investment and the site of a thriving community.⁵⁸

This preference for "Anglo-Saxon" workers went hand in hand with Southern Baptists' obsession with maintaining their distinctive character. It also indicates that southerners endorsed Social Darwinism to help bolster their identity. An editorial written by John Christian for distribution in Home Missions publications lauded the achievements of Anglo-Saxons in the United States, but warned that if the race were to continue its pre-ordained rule in America, it needed to "continue well grounded in the

⁵⁷ Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, 203.

⁵⁸ *Alabama Baptist*, February 20, 1879.

truth [Christianity].”⁵⁹ Ironically, the article even quoted Charles Darwin, who said, “There is apparently much truth in the belief that the wonderful progress of the United States, as well as the character of the people, are the result of natural selection.”⁶⁰ White southerners prided themselves on being of the purest Anglo-Saxon stock and were interested in preserving the racial makeup of the South.

Even when they were not able to selectively recruit immigrants, New South business owners often were concerned about the spiritual welfare of their employees. Many businessmen believed that Christian workers were more obedient, reliable, less apt to join unions and strike, and shared a Protestant work ethic. On the other hand, Catholic immigrants during the same period were often told to go elsewhere for work. One Alabama industrialist predicted that “A large number of the population of Ireland will certainly leave their native land during the coming spring and summer months,” but they need not look in Alabama. Instead, Irish Catholics should look to the “wide expanse of productive land in the West still awaiting cultivation.”⁶¹

In industrial Birmingham, where immigration had occurred in more significant numbers than in southern states with a more rural population, such as North Carolina, Baptists were less certain about the benefits of foreigners compared to the costs. “They [Alabamians] have seen a lot of beer-guzzling, Sabbath-breaking Germans,” the *Alabama Baptist* noted, “or some other tribe, in some places, and their hearts have sickened at the thought of the demoralizing effects of such a class [of immigrants] upon our Southern

⁵⁹ “What is Coming,” *Mission Journal*-1895, Box 21.7, Una Roberts Lawrence Collection.

⁶⁰ “Anglo-Saxon Race.”

⁶¹ *Alabama Baptist*, April 22, 1880.

society.”⁶² Baptists could “pray [for] God to forbid their coming” but ultimately, they had little choice but to accept the fact “that immigration is coming.” “Brethren and sisters,” the *Alabama Baptist* editors wrote,

we live in an important age, the work done by us in the South during the next ten years will largely shape the condition of society, church and State, for the next century, yea, possibly for ages to come. Shall we fail? We *cannot afford to falter* (sic). He who said to Israel, ‘Go forward,’ will open paths for us through all seas and level every mountain.⁶³

In 1888, a group of businessmen and legislative officials coordinated an immigration meeting in Hot Springs, NC. The purpose was to recruit a new labor force in the South, built partially on immigrant workers. Many secular newspapers supported the meeting, but, denominational leaders were outraged over the possibility of Roman Catholics migrating to the South. The *Alabama Baptist* wrote:

With eagle eye the Roman Catholics have watched every quarter of the world, and as the tide of development turned to a certain section, they were quick to plant their forces, to take charge of the spiritual affairs of the town or city. Now they see the south is coming to the front as it has never come, and they propose holding an immigration meeting at Hot Springs, NC...whose aim it is to plant colonies of their people in every Southern state.... We think if our public men and journals would study something of the perils to our free institutions by the immigration of Roman Catholic subjects they would understand more about the situation, and would give wiser care in aiding these immigrants.⁶⁴

Although the demand for immigrants as laborers at the time was high and the push was coming from business and government leaders, there were some Baptists who believed this to be the conspiratorial work of the Pope and his priests. North Carolina Baptist leaders accused a Roman Catholic Bishop in Virginia of forming immigration

⁶² “Immigration, and What the Church Has to Do With It,” *Alabama Baptist*, 17 February 1887.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Alabama Baptist*, 5 April 1888.

societies and “building meeting houses and organizing churches within his jurisdiction” for the purpose of attracting immigrants.⁶⁵ Other Baptists feared that the Pope, whom they believed was seizing upon opportunities granted through immigration, was exerting his influence in order to take over government and business. Eldred B. Teague, a popular Alabama Baptist minister, warned denominational members about the coming problems associated with the Hot Springs movement, where industrialist met in the resort town of Hot Springs, North Carolina and discussed strategies to attract immigrant labor into the South. Teague was concerned that Catholic priests had conned these industrialists into trusting immigrants and then “...seized the opportunity and bounced astride the governors and other men interested in this work, and formed everything into a huge immigration society.”⁶⁶ Teague exhorted Baptists to be wary and “watch every interest, or Catholic Rome will soon place its foot upon our necks.”⁶⁷

Despite the promises of New South boosters, not all Southerners benefited from the changes brought by industrialization. By the 1890s, industrial laborers also encountered the realities of a laissez-faire economy. C. Vann Woodward found that in North Carolina, textile mill workers’ wages did not keep pace with profits. This was partially due to the extent that women and children were used as a cheaper, more compliant source of labor.⁶⁸ Working conditions in the mills were monotonous and long, cities suffered from public health issues and poor sanitation, and the work could be dangerous. When workers complained about the working conditions or sub-standard pay,

⁶⁵ *Biblical Recorder*, 25 August 1880.

⁶⁶ *Alabama Baptist*, 23 May 1888.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, 224-26.

their requests were ignored or denied. Some attempted to organize, and in a few cases, strikes ensued. Instead of negotiating with laborers, industrialists hired strike-breakers to intimidate workers, brought in black workers to be used as scabs, and recruited immigrants to take factory jobs. Both Blacks and immigrants were also less likely to stir up trouble and negotiate for better wages. As a consequence, the white working-class began to question the ideals of a New South creed. If this was prosperity, why were they working harder for less money? What happened to their autonomy? How could their bosses give their jobs away to blacks and foreigners, two groups that were at the bottom of the southern social hierarchy?⁶⁹ Southern labor searched for answers and found it in an unsuspecting place.

Organizing Resistance

During the boom years of the 1880s, farmers found it increasingly difficult to survive. Furnishing merchants allowed farmers to buy on credit, but in return, demanded that farmers plant cash crops to repay loans.⁷⁰ This system led to an overproduction of

⁶⁹ For how White Southerners feared a loss of status in their society, see Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.*, (New York: Knopf, 1955).

⁷⁰ On the Southern Farmers' Alliance and Populist movement, see Lawrence Goodwin, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Sheldon Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism in Alabama* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Robert C. McMath, *Populist Vanguard: A History of the Southern Farmers' Alliance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Bruce Palmer, *"Man over Money": The Southern Populist Critique of American Capitalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Elizabeth Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917*, *American Politics and Political Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Barton C. Shaw, *The Wool-Hat Boys: Georgia's Populist Party* (Baton Rouge, LA:

cotton and drove prices into the ground. From the 1870s to 1900, white land ownership declined, crop prices declined, and debts increased.⁷¹ Farmers looked for answers in their own communities and for national leadership to combat the power and corruption of big business. They backed a graduated income tax, asked the federal government to free up soft money and supported the Greenback Party's efforts to reform the monetary system, and endorsed government oversight of the transportation industry in hopes of obtaining uniform rates for passenger and freight traffic. In 1880, James Weaver of Iowa ran for President of the United States as the representative of the Greenback Party and only received 3% of the national vote.⁷² Such a dramatic defeat provided evidence to some farmers that industry was in control of not only the economy, but also the government.

That same decade, many farmers joined the Southern Farmers' Alliance, a self-help organization aimed at educating its members through a combination of speechmaking leadership, distribution of printed media, and social networking. The organization utilized methods learned in their churches and communities. According to Robert McMath, "[The lecturer] was to the alliance what the circuit rider was to Methodism."⁷³ This was a political movement that disaffected Baptists could relate to, primarily because people saw the issue in moral terms. The South needed to be purified of corporate corruption, greed, and the social problems industrialization created in its wake. In Alabama, state Alliance president and Baptist minister Samuel Adams

Louisiana State University Press, 1984); Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*; Woodward, *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel*.

⁷¹ Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917*, 116-17.

⁷² Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, 244.

⁷³ McMath, *Populist Vanguard: a History of the Southern Farmers' Alliance*, 12.

denounced the national banks and proclaimed the Farmers' Alliance to mirror the tenets of Christianity.⁷⁴ Georgia Baptist firebrand Thomas Watson railed against immoral northern industrialists who profited “by our toils and allowed the legislation of this land to drift into the infamies of the tariff and the banking laws, and the chartered exemptions of special enterprises from the burden of the government which protects them.”⁷⁵ Since Baptists already had institutions in place to restore distinctive southern religious culture, they actively shaped the Farmers' Alliance and Populist platform to include morality issues such as the consumption of alcohol.⁷⁶

Temperance and prohibition dominated Southern Baptist dialogue in the 1880s and 1890s. They viewed alcohol as an assault on their communities, partially because they saw first hand the effect that abusing alcohol had on the breakdown of families. They also linked the use of alcohol with corruption, gambling, promiscuity, lynching, and Catholicism. Southern Baptists grew particularly hostile to immigrants who brought with them patterns of alcohol consumption that ran counter to Baptists' beliefs. “Immigrant” increasingly became a code word to Baptists, meaning Catholic. In Georgia, the editors of the *Christian Index* informed its readers that although they did not completely agree with the “...cause of the American League [American Protective Association] to the full extent of its purposes...,” Americans “were waking to a sense of their danger in allowing

⁷⁴ Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, 205.

⁷⁵ *Atlanta Constitution*, 14 September 1888, in Woodward, *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel*: 134.

⁷⁶ Joe Creech argues that the evangelicals that filled Populist member lists largely adhered to restorationist Christianity, a belief system that emphasizes a reform movement intent on restoring traditional Christian values in society; Joe Creech, *Righteous Indignation: Religion and the Populist Revolution* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

the foreign Catholic element especially to get control of the government.”⁷⁷ According to groups like the APA, Roman Catholicism threatened to undo the progress Americans had made on prohibition.

Other southern states were swept up in the xenophobia of the 1890s as well. In Alabama, the *Alabama Baptist* carried an editorial from John Christian suggesting that the answer to the swell of “Romanism” in America was to freeze immigration for twenty years so that mission programs could evangelize heathens already in the United States.⁷⁸ The same year, he also wrote to the *Mission Journal* detailing the responsibility of the American Anglo-Saxon race to the United States.⁷⁹ Christian challenged fellow believers to ask, “Shall not the necessity of self-preservation, as well as the high motive of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature, inspire every Baptist to more earnest and substantial support of our home mission interests?”⁸⁰

In spite of the calls for limiting immigration, foreigners migrated to southern cities such as Birmingham, Memphis, Atlanta, Louisville, and New Orleans. Still, most southerners did not personally encounter hordes of immigrants. Baptists were familiar with Catholicism based on what they read in the newspapers, the sermons their pastors preached, and the stereotypical images that parents handed down to their children. Many of these images of Catholicism came from past anecdotes gleaned from corruption charges in Tammany Hall, the anti-Catholic Know-nothing Party of the 1850s, and sensationalist portrayals of both the Pope and clergy. Although Southern Baptists were

⁷⁷ *Christian Index*, 30 November 1893.

⁷⁸ *Alabama Baptist*, 29 August 1895.

⁷⁹ “The Anglo-Saxon Race,” *Mission Journal* 1895, 21.7, Una Roberts Lawrence Papers AR631, SBHLA.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

divided over whether to promote temperance or fully support the prohibition of alcohol sales, they were united in trying to keep it out of the hands of the morally deficient.

Other issues in the 1890s divided Baptists and complicated home missions. Women increasingly became involved in social reforms. They joined the farmers' revolt in the 1880s and 1890s, campaigned for both temperance and prohibition, and pushed for inclusion in Baptist programming. But the male leadership struggled to decide what role women should serve in Baptist life. They eventually agreed to the Women's Missionary Union as an auxiliary mission program to the Southern Baptist Convention, primarily because the organization submitted to the hierarchical demands that the denomination made of them.⁸¹ The WMU mirrored the mission programs of the Southern Baptist Convention, serving both home missions and abroad. Much like missionaries from the HMB and FMB, women addressed their social concerns by using anti-Catholicism when reaching out to its membership. They sought funding and competed for resources much like state, Home, and Foreign Mission Boards. An important component of WMU success was its print media. For instance, the Georgia WMU publication, *The Mission Messenger*, ran a set of articles on "women's work among the colored people."⁸² Included among population growth statistics of "Colored Catholics" in the major southern cities was a short headline that read "What a Romanist Thinks." In the article, American Catholic Archbishop John Ireland was quoted as proclaiming "We can have the

⁸¹ See Allen, *A Century to Celebrate: History of Woman's Missionary Union*; Catherine B. Allen, *Laborers Together with God: 22 Great Women in Baptist Life: Biographical Sketches of the Officers who Guided Woman's Missionary Union, Auxiliary to Southern Baptist Convention, for the First 100 Years* (Birmingham: The Union, 1987); Fannie E. S. Heck, *In Royal Service; the Mission Work of Southern Baptist Women* (Richmond: Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1913).

⁸² "What a Romanist Says," *The Mission Messenger*, January 1897. WMU of Georgia, Periodicals, Mission Messenger, 1895-1900, Box 5, GBHLA.

United States in ten years; and I wish to give you three points—the Indians, the negroes [sic] and the public schools.” Between the two articles, readers could infer that it was the duty of Southern Baptist women to turn back the tide of Catholicism through missions. Statistics proved that the North was no longer the only cause of the onslaught on southern religious life. In bold words, Baptist women read of a conspiracy to infiltrate missionary fields and contest the South for souls, propounded by one of the most public Catholic figures in the United States. In Southern cities such as Baltimore, Norfolk, and New Orleans, Catholics threatened to tear apart the South like Ulysses Grant’s march down the Mississippi Valley. This call to arms implored Baptist women to get involved with missions or suffer the consequences.

Another matter that divided Baptists in the 1890s was their involvement in the Populist Party, a fusion of the Farmers’ Alliance with organized labor. Populists became a national third party with intentions of defeating the corrupt major parties. Many pastors who promoted the New South creed represented the largest and most powerful Baptist churches in the South. They came from urban environments, had little in common with rural radicals or blue-collar workers, and although some sympathized with farmers who lost their livelihood, they criticized Populists for their economic demands, their affiliations with radical labor unions, and their willingness to include blacks and Republicans in their organization. Although the Populists had brief success in Alabama and North Carolina, the party suffered a series of backbreaking defeats, and by 1898, the Democratic Party regained its position as the single party of the South. There were still wounds susceptible to reopening, particularly the gulf between urban and rural churches, but as the century ended, white Southern Baptists regrouped and forged ahead. Although

the Populist revolt was short-lived, it left a lasting legacy. Historian Keith Harper argues that Baptist activism left the remnants of a “movement culture.”⁸³ Joe Creech contends that the righteous indignation of its supporters served as a superb model for Southern Baptists’ role in other early twentieth-century reforms.⁸⁴ Both see Baptists’ involvement in Populism as a springboard to the twentieth century.

The first two decades of the 1900s were fruitful years for Baptists, who immersed themselves in mission work reflecting a growing sense of societal responsibility. One of the ironies of the New South was that the progress that helped Baptists rebuild their institutions also brought immigration and with it, threats of alien theology, moral decay, and the loss of southern cultural distinctiveness. So they sought ways to apply their Christian ethics to social problems in broad terms. The period, known as the Progressive Era, represented an unparalleled attempt to reform southern society, and at the same time, to hold on to traditional customs that preserved their way of life.⁸⁵

During the early 1900s, an important component for Baptist success was centralization. Although many churches were skeptical of too much denominational control, Baptist leaders laid the groundwork for collective identity and bridged gaps in the ranks by finding common ground on theological issues, class conflict, and even

⁸³ Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920*: 12-13.

⁸⁴ Creech, *Righteous Indignation: Religion and the Populist Revolution*.

⁸⁵ See Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition*, Twentieth-Century America Series (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983).

geographical diversity.⁸⁶ Baptist historians Arthur Rutledge and William Tanner view this period as,

...an era of exhilarating growth and expansion. Receipts increased dramatically, permitting the undertaking of new types of work and the appointment of additional missionaries. Cooperation with the state conventions and associations continued, and soon hundreds of 'cooperative missionaries' were being reported.⁸⁷

New mission programs in Appalachia, the Southwest, and southern cities demonstrated the growing commitment Baptists had to evangelizing their neighbors. These new points of emphases were spearheaded by key leaders who pushed for Baptist growth.⁸⁸ They believed in a distinct southern religious culture and utilized the bully pulpit to garner support for missions. Leaders railed against the threat of immigration wherever they could. Although historian Paul Harvey notes that "the specter of rising foreign immigration to the South" was "largely a figment of overheated southern evangelical imagination," the fact that southerners believed that their world was under attack made the numbers of immigrants irrelevant.⁸⁹ Home mission leader M. M. Welch informed readers of *Our Home Field* that a considerable portion of the HMB budget went to "centers of population" because "The city has been recognized as the seat of danger," adding: "As cities dominate the country, politically and commercially, they influence the

⁸⁶ Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920*, 28.

⁸⁷ Rutledge and Tanner, *Mission to America: A Century and a Quarter of Southern Baptist Home Missions*, 45.

⁸⁸ For the role of denominational leadership in advancing social Christianity, see "Preachers and Prelates, Southern Baptist Leadership and the Emergence of a Social Ethic" in Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920*.

⁸⁹ Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*, 202-03.

religious destiny of the country. This is unacceptable. If we save the cities, we save the country.”⁹⁰ Welch was among many denominational leaders who used anti-immigrant language to unify Baptists.

Even though Baptists used anti-Catholicism as a tool to integrate Baptist mission efforts in the South, there were still cracks in the mold. Alabama pastor Richard Hall wrote an article in the *Alabama Baptist* entitled “The Country Church and the Home Mission Board,” where he reported on a conversation he had with state mission board director, W.B. Crumpton. Hall was concerned after learning that Alabama was \$4000 behind in its total contribution to home missions in 1904, and as a rural pastor himself, he felt compelled to call on his associates to support the cause. When it came to mission funding, rural churches were notoriously stingy. Their congregations were much poorer and less educated than in urban centers, their theological beliefs had anti-institutional tendencies, and many were so disconnected that they believed cities should solve their own problems. Hall asked rural Alabama pastors to recognize “the importance of the work of the Home Mission Board” in combating “nearly a million emigrants [who] landed on our shores last year, most of them from the least desired, that is, the least civilized sections of Europe.” Unlike in the 1870s and 1880s when practically all immigrants were settling in other parts of the county, Hall informed Alabamians that times had changed. He warned that more than 100,000 were coming through the southern port of Baltimore and many of those, “are coming [South] in increasing numbers every year....” With increased numbers came the threat of increased Catholic influence in New Orleans, St. Louis, and Memphis, where he accused immigrants of dominating

⁹⁰ “Home Field Excerpts 1909-1915,” Box 10.6, Una Roberts Lawrence Papers.

public life. City populations had exploded, and according to Hall, Baptists were “comparatively weak in numbers and social influence.” In order to restore social order, rural areas needed to invest in their denominational institutions. “The Home Board,” Hall contended, “offers the chief agency, in many cases the only agency by which the country churches can help their brethren in the cities in this life and death struggle.”⁹¹

Denominational leaders were well-aware that in order to amalgamate rural and urban churches, the Southern Baptist Convention needed a clear and concise message. Few of these leaders shaped Baptists’ role in preserving a distinctive southern religious culture more than Victor I. Masters. Masters served as Superintendent for Publicity in the Home Mission Board, a position that carried with it immense power to shape the direction of home missions. Under his direction, the Home Mission Board published books, tracts, newspapers, and educational literature. Masters was also a prolific writer, authoring books that addressed relevant topics of the day. *The Country Church in the South* addressed the responsibility that rural churches had in shaping southern culture. Masters criticized these churches for their underwhelming support of city missions, but praised them for being the truest reflection of an Anglo-Saxon South.⁹² His most popular book was *The Call of the South*, a jeremiad for all white Southern Baptists to preserve their institutions by assuming their role as cultural warriors intent on turning the tide of immigration and maintaining control over “the Negro.”⁹³ One of his last books,

⁹¹ *Alabama Baptist*, 13 April 1904.

⁹² Victor I. Masters, *Country Church in the South* (Atlanta: Publicity Department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1916).

⁹³ Victor I. Masters, *The Call of the South: A Presentation of the Home Principle in Missions, Especially as it Applies to the South* (Atlanta: Publicity Department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1918), 17.

Making America Christian, argues that home missions inextricably linked Baptists to the success of the United States.⁹⁴ An underlying theme that Masters promoted in all of his books was faithfulness—to missions, local communities, the South, and America. At the same time, he urged Baptists to think in terms of “solidarity,” arguing that by preserving and strengthening the South’s cultural distinctiveness, Baptists were performing a patriotic service to their country.⁹⁵

Although Southern Baptist mission board leaders like V. I. Masters competed for funds, there was an understanding between foreign and home missions. The fear of a growing Catholic menace in the United States, fueled by an exploding immigrant population, meant that Baptists would have to combine their efforts and cooperate. No Baptist figure illustrated this link better than Joseph Plainfield. Born Giuseppe Francesco Piani in the hills of Northern Italy, he grew up in a strict religious environment.⁹⁶ His oldest brother, William, became a Catholic priest and later archbishop of the Philippines, and it was assumed that Giuseppe would follow in his older brother’s footsteps. Piani did indeed commit to the clergy and eventually agreed to become a missionary and join the faculty of the College of Sacred Heart of Jesus in Brazil. In 1904 Piani befriended Solomon Ginsburg, a converted Jew and Southern Baptist missionary. Both became caught up in the ideological clash between Catholics and Protestants in the territory of Pernambuco, Brazil, and Piani eventually converted and became a Baptist.

⁹⁴ Masters, *Making American Christian*.

⁹⁵ Masters, *The Call of the South: a Presentation of the Home Principle in Missions, Especially as it Applies to the South*, 17-19.

⁹⁶ Joseph Frank Plainfield, “Memories in the Life of Dr. Joseph F. Plainfield,” unpublished autobiography, Joseph Frank Plainfield Papers AR 821, SBHLA, see also *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, Volume IV*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982).

Because of his background in the Catholic Church and his outspoken dedication to the cause of missionary work, Baptists made it possible for Piani to return to the United States and attend one year of English study at William Jewell College in Missouri. This led to a successful education that ended at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he graduated with the Th.D. degree in 1911. In seven years, Piani had been transformed from Catholic missionary to Baptist theologian. To complete his Americanization, Piani changed his name to Joseph Plainfield. After much convincing from leaders within the denomination, Plainfield wrote a book that addressed the importance of both Foreign and Home missions in reaching the immigrant, aptly entitled *The Stranger Within Our Gates*. Plainfield warned Baptists that while immigrants would indeed flood into the South and take jobs in the industrial economy, he urged them to keep in mind that “Europe is our old home and Americans are but transplanted Europeans.”⁹⁷ Plainfield embodied the patriotism of the Progressive Era when he wrote,

the only limit to the South’s full development and future influence for good in America came, not from the lack of material resources, but from lack of spiritual resources, and its concern should rather be what manner are men being developed to guide the homeland during the coming years....⁹⁸

Arguably, it was not Plainfield’s writings that interested Baptists; it was his symbolism as a transformational figure. Plainfield offered Baptists a shining example of the conversion potential of mission work and the hope that Southern Baptists would be able to hold on to the sacred and familiar.

⁹⁷ Joseph Frank Plainfield, *The Stranger Within our Gates* (Atlanta: Southern Baptist Convention, Home Mission Board, [n. d.], 40.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

As the second decade of the 20th century ended, Southern Baptists had grown into the largest and most powerful Protestant denomination in the United States. But this meteoric rise was not foreordained. It was a systematic effort that owed its success, in part, to the missionary movement. In foreign missions, Baptists adopted a policy of containment designed to educate foreigners with American values and religious beliefs, convert the infidels, and stop the influx of immigrants pouring into the country. On the homefront, Baptists promoted a policy of theological orthodoxy whereby they rigorously sought converts, enforced moral discipline, applied Christian ethics to social problems, and rooted out alien theology. Driven by dynamic leadership, organizational forethought, and the funds to act decisively, Baptist missions programs helped the denomination grow by defining who they were, and more importantly, who they were not.

Chapter Three

“The Call of the South:” Anti-Catholicism and the Southern Baptist Educational Crusade

In December 1905, Edwin M. Poteat traveled to Raleigh, North Carolina to address the State Baptist Convention. In his speech “Christian Education Essential to Civilization,” he challenged Baptists to envision a symbiotic relationship between religion and education.¹ Although he supported secular public education, claiming that the separation of Church and State was a “fundamental principle of the Republic,” he also asserted that education was “an interest of both government and religion.” Since education was fundamental to a strong civil community, and neither an entirely secular educational system such as ancient Greece nor a religiously-controlled arrangement as those under the control of the Roman Catholic Church had succeeded in building an ideal civilization, he urged the Convention to consider the relationship between religion and education. “State education,” he argued, “requires to be supplemented by education that is controlled and saturated by religion. In a word, the [Baptist] Church must enter the field of education in the interest of the State.”

As President of Baptist-affiliated Furman University, Poteat was responsible for promoting Christian education while at the same time reaffirming social institutions such as the South’s system of public education. His vision of separate but interdependent

¹ Edwin M. Poteat, “Christian Education Essential to Civilization: Address to the Baptist State Convention in Session at Raleigh, North Carolina, December 6-10, 1905,” in Box 3.366, PCMS 335, Bernard Washington Spilman Papers, NCHLA.

“spheres” of government and religion reflected those of many Southern Baptists leaders, who supported the separation of Church and State when the threat to liberty was Catholic or Jewish, but at the same time allowed for Protestant concessions for the sake of American civilization.

Alabama Minister John W. Dean went further when he advocated denominational education. Writing nine years after Poteat, Dean pointed his Baptist brethren to what he believed missionaries had long known: denominational schools were among the first establishments created when expanding into a new mission field.² “If we, as a church see that the denominational school is one of the first essentials in Christianizing the heathen in the foreign field...,” Dean argued, then why not support denominational schools to Christianize the millions of immigrants who arrived on American shores each year, a priority that was in his opinion a “hundred times more important.”³ He had originally intended his ideas to be summed up in a promotional tract that would garner support for the East Alabama Baptist Academy, but after J.M. Frost, the Corresponding Secretary of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, requested that Dean publish his thoughts to a larger audience, he felt encouraged to expand the scope of the project into a full-length book. His publication, *Christian Education*, argued for Baptists to take an active role by confronting society’s problems. The threat of immigration and the disintegration of southern religious culture could be curtailed through proper education. He predicted that if Baptists failed to take education seriously, the consequences could be dire. He warned that they were in jeopardy of relinquishing power to Roman Catholicism. He believed that unlike Baptists, Catholics had been much more successful in educating their own

² John William Dean, *Christian Education* (privately printed, 1914), 48.

³ Ibid.

while Baptists had become complacent or, as he characterized, "... 'at ease in Zion.'"⁴ For Dean, reform and xenophobia worked in concert. Especially during the Progressive Era, reform-minded Baptists saw education as potentially having transformative powers, but they sought to manage and manipulate it whenever and wherever it suited. Dean believed this transformation could best be administered by denominational schools. Other Southern Baptists had alternative views of how education could best serve them, but practically all believed it served an important role in southern society.

Although Edwin Poteat and John Dean might have quibbled over the condition of education in the South, there was consensus on the role Catholics played. Both regarded Roman Catholicism as counter to progress; Catholics threatened evangelical culture in both public and private spheres. Publicly, Baptists were concerned with what they viewed as an aggressive Roman Catholic campaign to gain a foothold in public education. Privately, they had anxieties about the possibility of losing souls. And so the two went hand in hand— if Catholics succeeded in controlling education, they might use it to convert Baptist children into Catholics, placing the very soul of the South in jeopardy. From 1870-1920 Baptists clashed with Catholics on a variety of educational issues, many of which addressed matters of control.⁵ Driven not only by civic concerns

⁴ Ibid., 49, 33.

⁵ For aspects of social control in educational reform, see Wilbur. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1941), 171-74, Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition*, J. Morgan Kousser, "Progressivism-- for Middle-Class Whites Only: North Carolina Education, 1880-1910," *Journal of Southern History* XLVI, May (1980); Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, 400-06; William Link counters that too often scholars have focused on paternalistic and social control models to explain educational reform in the South, arguing that emphasizing only class and racial dominance "is ultimately reductionist;" William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930*, The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 125.

and evangelical conviction but also by religious identification, Baptists viewed education as an avenue to build up its institutional foundations and exert influence over southern society.⁶

An Uneasy Alliance

From Reconstruction through the Progressive Era, the link between Catholics and southern education evolved into a significant concern among Southern Baptists. Ironically, northern religious writings provided the original impetus for southern evangelical anti-Catholicism, especially concerning the topic of education. As Baptists increasingly became “self-aware” of the need for their own institutional identity, they initially relied on northern problems to help shape their distinctive character.⁷ For southerners, problems such as Catholic/Protestant disputes over public school funding evolved into symbols of the very worst qualities of northern society— institutions compromised by immigrants, social deviants, and Republican radicalism. The “corrupted northern educational system” provided Baptists with a symbol that represented a negative reference point from which to frame their separate identity.⁸ In the 1870s and 1880s, the response was to emphasize denominational education instead of public education.

⁶ Charles Israel argues that Tennessee evangelicals saw education as more than reading and writing; it was a process by which culture was transmitted from one generation to the next: Israel, *Before Scopes: Evangelicalism, Education, and Evolution in Tennessee, 1870-1925*, 11.

⁷ Robert Andrew Baker, *The Southern Baptist Convention and Its People, 1607-1972* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974), 257; See also, Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920*, 15-16.

⁸ For analysis of the "negative reference point" in creating a distinctive southern identity, see Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3-4.

At the end of the Civil War, most Southern Baptists worried little about Catholics in the public schools. While immigrants arrived in northern port cities looking for a better life, most white Southerners faced a bleak future. They were more interested in survival than in social control. During this time, the American Baptist Missionary Society sent missionaries south to build schools and churches for both whites and Freedmen. Initially, southern religious bodies were open to assistance. Sally McMillen argued that when it came to religious education, sectional identity initially did not supersede necessity. She wrote that “For a while at least, southerners welcomed northern assistance, putting their children’s future far above sectional questions.”⁹

Although northern religious groups provided aid and offered opportunities for religious reconstruction, they often did so with a strong sense of paternalism, feeling contempt for those they deemed to be corrupt southern religious leaders and the hopelessly misguided institutions they led.¹⁰ Religion had played a key role in defending slavery and bolstering secession, so southern evangelical leaders had to answer for much. Northern church leaders who had supported the Union felt vindicated and often reminded their southern counterparts how God had rendered judgment.¹¹ Southerners needed northern support, but as the intent of Republican rule became clear, they became suspicious of and eventually hostile to Reconstruction. Likewise, Southern Baptists

⁹ Sally Gregory McMillen, introduction to *To Raise up the South: Sunday Schools in Black and White Churches, 1865-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877*, 56-57.

¹¹ For the role of northern churches in supporting the Union cause, see Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Phillip Shaw Paludan, *"A People's Contest: The Union and Civil War, 1861-1865* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

needed the publication and organizational resources of northern Baptist groups, but as the SBC retooled and began laying the foundations for a post-bellum existence, it had little interest in reunion.¹²

One of the main reasons for separate identity was that Southern Baptists intended to construct their own models of race relations based on concepts that were detached from the interests of outsiders. Slavery no longer defined the southern way of life, but white southerners had no intention of relinquishing power. As Paul Escott explains, “To whites within North Carolina... the evolving egalitarian views of the North only provoked bitter resentment and hardened the intense determination to resist change.”¹³ Northern missionary societies built schools and organized other social services for the South, while white southerners looked on with fear that with education, radical change would follow.¹⁴ They did everything in their power to block change and hold on to their cultural authority.

One educational issue in particular concerned southerners— the education of Freedmen.¹⁵ Although southerners were concerned about all northern missionary entities, they were particularly anxious about Catholics educating blacks. In 1870, *The Biblical*

¹² Wayne Flynt argues that in Alabama, "Baptists rejected reunion with northern Baptists for sectional, racial, and theological reasons" in Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, 168.

¹³ Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*, 131.

¹⁴ Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 54.

¹⁵ James Anderson offers an extensive assessment of the education of ex-slaves in, James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

Recorder informed its readers that Catholics were educating the Freedmen in Baltimore.¹⁶ The editors of the paper noted that during these mission projects, blacks and whites shared classrooms. Catholic priests explained these interracial encounters by noting that in Catholic doctrine, “God makes no distinction, and the church cannot.”

Black Baptists also employed anti-Catholicism in order to curry educational support from Southern Baptists. A group referring to themselves as the “Colored Baptists of Alabama” acknowledged that in tough times, Catholicism was an option blacks were willing to entertain if necessary.¹⁷ They appealed to *Alabama Baptist* readers for assistance “...in educating our ministers.” “The question,” the article stated, “is who will help us, the South or the North?” “Roman Catholicism feeds on ignorance,” the group claimed, and “Either our people must be educated, or they must become followers of the Pope. Which shall it be: ignorance and Popery, or intelligence and pure Christianity?”¹⁸ This tactic was somewhat successful in garnering financial support from white Baptists (though their own financial needs as well as their racism and paternalism limited their support of black schools) because it tapped into the imagery of a northern, Catholic presence willing to step up in the event that Baptists declined to assist. It was a sectional appeal that spoke to southerners who feared the loss of social control.

A survey of the South’s state Baptist newspapers confirms that in spite of pervasive sectional rhetoric during the late 1860s and 1870s, a collaboration of necessity prevailed. Southern Baptists simply lacked denominational infrastructure sufficient to educate parishioners in a separate sectional identity during the 1870s and 1880s. North

¹⁶ *Biblical Recorder*, 23 February 1870.

¹⁷ *Alabama Baptist*, 27 January 1876.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Carolina's *Biblical Recorder*, Georgia's *Christian Index*, and *The Alabama Baptist* all syndicated Sunday school lessons and educational stories of interest written by American Baptist newspapers.

Understandably, northern Baptist newspapers carried stories that their leaders were personally invested in. In September 1869, a move by city officials to merge Cincinnati's public and parochial schools led to claims by local newspapers of a Romish conspiracy to remove the Bible from public schools.¹⁹ Because Southern Baptists read northern publication materials, they learned about the "Cincinnati Bible War" in state denominational newspapers. During the 1870s, throughout northern urban centers such as Cincinnati, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, Republicans exploited old anti-Catholic prejudices to promote national unity. Religion and public school funding became the staging ground for this national spectacle.²⁰

One would assume that when it came to Catholic/Protestant issues, Southern Baptists sympathized entirely with northern Protestants, but when the decade of the 1870s began, Southern Baptists were ambivalent about the role of Catholics in public education. Commenting on the controversy in New York City, editors of the *Alabama Baptist* proclaimed that they were not concerned with Catholics in the state, but they were "well-convinced that it (Catholicism) ought to be watched."²¹ If there was "one point to guard at present," it was the public schools," but even so, there was no cause for alarm.

¹⁹ Ward McAfee, *Religion, Race, and Reconstruction: The Public School in the Politics of the 1870s*, State University of New York Series, Religion and American Public Life (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 27-28.

²⁰ McAfee details how northern Republicans used anti-Catholicism and the public school issue to preserve the nationalistic ideals of Reconstruction in, *Ibid.*

²¹ *Alabama Baptist*, 13 April 1875.

Although these Protestant/Catholic conflicts seemed foreign to their own culture, Southern Baptists followed events closely. In 1875, *The Christian Index* published an article on “Public vs. Sectarian Schools” that reported how Roman Catholic officials in New York City were applying for public funding to support their parochial schools.²² The author framed the issue as a debate in which “Extreme views are being advanced by both sides; both the religious and secular press are [sic] devoting considerable space to the discussion....” Catholic leaders detested the public school system because they believed it protected and promoted Protestant culture. *The Freeman*, a Catholic paper opined, “If our bishops do not forbid Catholics sending their children to godless schools, in fifty years from now the Catholic church in the United States will be a shriveled and ghastly skeleton, a dry waste— a scattered flock that false shepherds fed and fattened on, and left unsheltered from the wolves.”

Although some southern ministers saw the potential for uplift in public education, many elite southerners had historically opposed it. During Reconstruction, Republicans had raised taxes which they used to build schools for both white and black children. In North Carolina, this led to a backlash. Governor William Holden called in federal troops to quell widespread dissent, to curtail Ku Klux Klan activity, and to protect the fragile state government. But this move hardened the resolve of the state’s white population to cast out the occupying Republican government.²³ *The Biblical Recorder* drew a parallel when it informed readers that in other areas of the country, Catholics were “removing Bibles from public schools” and were demanding and receiving “a fair division of the

²² *The Christian Index*, 22 April 1875.

²³ See chapter 6, "Change and Repression" in Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*.

school funds....”²⁴ The author of the article had not been swayed by the fear of a Catholic menace. On the contrary, Catholics simply believed that “children belong to their parents,” not the “governors and superintendents of public works who crush the independence of teachers and dictate text-books [sic].” Accordingly, Catholics who opposed public schools were “hard to argue” against. These perceptions were a far cry from those later espoused by editors of *The Biblical Recorder*, but the sympathetic slant reveals a greater concern about an occupying federal menace than threats from Catholic schools.

For Southern Baptists, education was less controversial so long as the right groups had control. Charles Israel argues that Protestant/Catholic clashes like the Cincinnati conflict eventually made an impression on the southern psyche.²⁵ Although Catholics had a very small presence in Tennessee, the state’s Baptists and Methodists increasingly feared a secularized school system. They were acutely aware that Catholicism had the potential to threaten the local educational establishment just as it had in northern urban areas. Even as they fought to maintain symbolic control of public education, some of these evangelicals still sent their children to denominational schools. Since southern evangelicals viewed education as more than “learning the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic,” Israel explains that “Education was instead the whole process of transmitting culture from one generation to the next.”²⁶ Many Baptists questioned whether public education could serve this role. In Alabama, the “Reverend Dr. Cutting”

²⁴ *The Biblical Recorder*, 2 February 1870.

²⁵ Israel, *Before Scopes: Evangelicalism, Education, and Evolution in Tennessee, 1870-1925*, 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

urged Baptists to reject the “sectarian appropriations of money” for a state school system.²⁷ He stressed that Alabama citizens should not worry about their children receiving an education, for “The common religious sentiment will express itself in the moral elements of education, training children to truth, virtue and honor, and to the reverence of God and his laws.” Local control of the schools— or “local rule,” ensured southerners that their children not be exposed to alien ideas that would threaten the South’s cultural norms.

“A Call to Baptists in the South”

During the 1880s and 1890s, white southerners firmly regained control of their institutions, consolidated their power, and “redeemed” themselves from northern interference. Southern Baptists exemplified this culture of redemption. Immediately following the Civil War, they had welcomed both spiritual support and financial aid, but by the 1880s the spirit of cooperation waned. In hindsight, they never seriously considered reunion but instead worked together with northern groups as a means to an end. Historian Daniel Stowell argues that southern churches used these resources to expedite the reconstruction of southern religious identity through denominational education and the expansion of Sunday schools.²⁸ Both institutionalized white southern religious culture through teaching and training. This was important especially when the national identity was changing so dramatically.

²⁷ *Alabama Baptist*, 20 March 1876.

²⁸ See "Educating Confederate Christians: Sunday Schools and Denominational Colleges" in Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877*, 114-29.

Not only had the North failed to transform white southern society, but as more immigrants poured into northern cities, there were serious questions whether northerners could even preserve “traditional” American culture. Catholics had become more influential in northern urban politics and threatened to overturn the power structure of Protestant-dominated education. For instance, in 1878 *The Christian Index* carried an article from a northern paper, *The Christian Instructor*, that informed readers that “...there are now in the United States at least 35,000 girls of Protestant families who are being educated at Catholic schools, and that at least one-tenth become Catholics—the remainder being more or less prejudiced for life against Protestantism.”²⁹ A few months later, the *Alabama Baptist* carried the same story with an additional twist. Not only were Protestant school girls at risk, but the great Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman, a symbol of northern exceptionalism, had fallen prey to the mounting Catholic presence. He had enrolled his son in Georgetown College, in Washington, D.C. and upon graduation from the Jesuit college, Sherman’s son had decided to become a Catholic priest. According to the *Alabama Baptist*, the religious conversion had taken place “without his father’s approval, sanction, or consent.”³⁰ Articles such as these alarmed Baptists that Catholics were coming to the United States and endangering the old verities of Protestant America. Furthermore, these stories raised questions as to whether Southern Baptists should take seriously how changes in the North might affect the South. Sherman’s son provided the perfect example of just how effective Catholic colleges were in capturing souls.

²⁹ *Christian Index*, 16 May 1878.

³⁰ *Alabama Baptist*, 22 August 1878.

In 1892, the *Christian Index* re-published an article from the Boston, Massachusetts based *Watchman* in which the author was concerned about northern Christian colleges, which he called “one of the weakest points in our modern Protestantism.”³¹ He further commented that “Christian colleges should be as loyal to the ends for which they were founded as Roman Catholic schools are to their faith.” The editors of the *Christian Index* used this story as a moral lesson on education. The North had grown increasingly modern, secular, and multifarious; its people had lost their way. For Georgians, this was justification for denominational education, “... the kind of education needed to make up for the unchristian education given in the public schools. It can be best obtained in our denomination colleges.”

Although Southern Baptists became more concerned with sectional identity during this period, when it came to their initial concerns about Catholicism, they perceived it as a Northern issue that had the potential to creep into the South. An examination of Southern Baptist religious literature confirms that in the 1880s, anti-Catholic articles increased dramatically. Still, almost the entirety of these articles dealt with conflicts that occurred outside of the South.

A few collegial Southern Baptists reached out to address inter-denominational issues such as how churches dealt with social change. In 1881, Baptist scholars from all over the United States organized an annual conference called The Baptist Congress to address theological and social issues that were important to their constituents.³² From 1882-1912, this international organization exchanged ideas on everything from

³¹ *Christian Index*, 31 March 1892.

³² For a general overview of the Baptist Congress, see William H. Brackney, "The Frontier of Free Exchange of Ideas: The Baptist Congress as a Forum for Baptist Concerns, 1881-1913," *Baptist History and Heritage* 38 Summer/Fall (2003).

church/state relations to education, temperance, and gambling. In 1888, Philip Moxom, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Boston, spoke to the organization on “Common vs. Parochial Schools.” Public schools affected all Protestant-Americans because, as Moxom suggested, “...the process of social assimilation which goes on in the Common School is of immense importance in this country, where the population is annually increased by the arrival... (of) immigrants.”³³ On the other hand, he argued that “The purpose of the Parochial Schools is not the education, but to make loyal and obediently docile Roman Catholics.” Northern Baptists had been engaged in Protestant/Catholic conflict since the end of the Civil War, and here was a venue where public speeches could advance anti-Catholic sentiments beyond their community. Southern Baptists who participated in the Baptist Congress were exceptional individuals who were more likely to be receptive to the free exchange of ideas and willing to transmit their experiences into denominational life. Such Baptist luminaries as Lansing Burrows, Southern seminary professor William O. Carver, Southwest seminary professor and editor of the *Baptist Standard* James B. Gambrell, and editor of the *Western Recorder* Thomas T. Eaton all participated in the Congress. While these leaders held religious beliefs that did not always parallel those of the average layman, they were very influential in shaping Baptist identity. All four eventually made public statements acknowledging that Catholics threatened to upset the social fabric of the South.

Higher-education became increasingly important for Baptist identity as were the Sunday Schools that educated children and provided religious instruction to church

³³ Folder “1888,” Baptist Congress Proceedings Collection, AR40, SBHLA.

goers.³⁴ Georgia Baptist Samuel Boykin was a leader in this field. Boykin had been the editor of *The Christian Index* and became interested in the Sunday School movement during the 1860s. Starting in 1872, he published and edited *Kind Words*, a periodical written for the promotion of Sunday Schools. Long before Southern Baptists had any real publishing apparatus, this little publication had great success as an extension of the Sunday School movement.

Although Sunday Schools were not created for the sole purpose of stopping the spread of Catholicism, they were a primary reason for Baptists to seek more control over their religious literature. Control over publication materials was a controversial issue within the Convention that led Baptists to use Catholic imagery to either preserve or reclaim their identity. When the Sunday School Board was de-funded in 1873 due to insolvency and the inability to compete with northern presses, Baptist leader J.R. Graves warned his followers that “The strength of Roman Catholicism is increasing in this country,” and yet “...(the) only publication interest on this continent that could effectively resist the encroachments of this enemy...” was the American Baptist Publication Society.³⁵ According to Graves, unfortunately “That Society is under the management of men,” many of whom are “...destitute of moral courage.” This left the Southern Baptist Publication Society as the only “safe reliance” capable of meeting

³⁴ For the importance of the Sunday School movement in the South, see Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*, McMillen, *To Raise up the South: Sunday Schools in Black and White Churches, 1865-1915*, Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877*.

³⁵ *The Baptist (Memphis)*, 23 May 1874.

“Catholicism on this high ground” and combating “its boastful advances to supremacy and power.”

Although there were some peripheral leaders such as Graves who advocated a Southern Baptist publishing arm, most state denominational bodies were satisfied with the American Baptist Publication Society.³⁶ It had a few distinct advantages. The organization was fully mature and had the strength of financially-stable northern Baptists supporting it. Many states had established relationships with both field representatives and the publisher that they did not want to abandon. Finally, the society produced an abundance of quality materials that generally met the needs of its customers. American Baptists not only benefited from the business they did with the South, but by producing their own material, American Baptists influenced curriculum and in some cases, advanced their causes. This was the reason for the abundance of anti-Catholic books, pamphlets, and tracts that were advertised for sale in southern religious newspapers.

Although the Sunday School Board folded after the Civil War, the idea of a separate institution did not die. While most Southern Baptists were pleased with their publication choices, there were a few problems that continued to divide Baptists North and South.

The most important issue was race.³⁷ From the conception of the Southern Baptist Convention forward, Northern Baptists were highly critical of southern race

³⁶ For an analysis of the debate over Southern Baptist publication autonomy and the creation of the Baptist Sunday School Board, see Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*, 28-31.

³⁷ Notable works that demonstrate the importance of race as a dominant theme in southern religion include Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898*; Eighmy and Hill, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists*; Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern*

relations. Although the Society hired southern writers and both denominations cooperated on issues such as foreign missions or jointly promoted traditional Baptist ideals such as the separation of Church and State, each group was acutely aware of their differences. As Southern Baptists grew and asserted their independent identity, talk of a new Sunday School Board became more prevalent.

The movement was spearheaded by James Marion Frost, a pivotal figure in the denomination's history. Frost was a dynamic preacher and an accomplished writer, with an entrepreneurial mind. He was a native of Kentucky and spent several years as a minister in Alabama, Tennessee, and Virginia. Historian Paul Harvey noted that while in Virginia, Frost used the *Religious Herald*, the state denominational paper, as a business model and eventually "proposed the creation of a separate agency, owned and controlled by the denomination, to publish ephemeral religious literature for southern Baptist churches."³⁸ From 1885 to 1891, Frost tirelessly advanced the idea.

Meanwhile, the Society attempted to block any attempts by Southern Baptist institutions to publish autonomously. Baptist historian William W. Barnes argues that in addition to identity issues, there was also a significant amount of money at stake:

The storm that had been gathering over the years broke, at last. The American Baptist Publication Society— Southern in its origin in 1824 and early support, and a friend to the South since the war— was not ready to relinquish the territory which furnished receipts ranging from \$30,000 to

Baptists in the Heart of Dixie; Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*; Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1997); Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis*; Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900*; Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876*; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877*.

³⁸ Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*, 29.

\$50,000 a year. The Society strengthened its organization in the South and prepared to contest the new venture of the Convention, in the latter's territory.³⁹

The Society claimed that it had created the market for Baptist publications and therefore owned the exclusive rights to serve southern churches. As Frost described the controversy, Society officials "challenged the right of the Convention to publish Sunday school periodicals."⁴⁰ This issue created one of the most bitterly contested internal conflicts within the Southern Baptist Convention. Frost later referred to the juncture as a time of "growing pains" when Southern Baptists "were coming to their own in heritage and responsibility."⁴¹

In 1891, the Convention approved the resurrection of a new Sunday School Board, and Frost's publishing company competed head to head with the Society. Paul Harvey argues that one of the immediate consequences of the Board was that it reinforced conservative doctrine and traditional southern values, that the average Board publication was "devoid of intellectual depth and full of religious pabulum," and that the Board constructed the simplistic "kind of stories and homilies that *Reader's Digest* and other publications later so effectively employed."⁴²

However, it is worth noting that this was a continuance of the practices of the Society, not a sudden departure in curriculum. Baptists constructed the Sunday School Board much like other southern industries that rose out of the ashes of the Civil War.

³⁹ Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953*, 89.

⁴⁰ James Marion Frost, *The Sunday School Board: Its History and Work* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1914), 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴² Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*, 30.

Taking a page from Henry Grady's "New South Creed," Frost and his organization created a business model that rewarded thrift and efficiency, while at the same time it appealed to symbols and traditions of an idealized South. Their objective "to out Yankee the Yankees" was a smashing success.

Within a short time, the Board became a juggernaut within the South and was the ultimate symbol of a transformed denomination, one that overtook Methodism as the dominant Protestant religion in the South. Frost and his staff appealed to southern churches to support the Board instead of giving business to the Society, claiming that "The Source of Opposition" was undercutting its competition by slashing prices on literature and had even made claims "to be Southern in itself [sic], to be equal with the Sunday School Board in rank and relation to our organized work."⁴³ The Board responded by offering professional but unoriginal Sunday school materials, hymnals, books, and other materials that mirrored their northern rivals.

One of the initial complaints of the Society concerned intellectual property; they argued that if the institution were approved by the Convention, the Sunday School Board would simply inherit the Society's customer base and co-opt their publication materials. This turned out to be the case. With both the Society and the Board competing for the same customer base, both published practically identical children's Bible stories, promoted the work of the Foreign and Home Mission Boards, and advertised tracts that addressed social issues like temperance, education, and immigration.

Roman Catholicism was a popular topic, whether it appeared in doctrinal identity tracts such as "The Baptist Position: A Tract for the People," which defended adult

⁴³ Frost, *The Sunday School Board: Its History and Work*, 81.

baptism against Catholics who practiced the “unscriptural practice of sprinkling and pouring,” or in missionary tracts such as “Christianize the South,” a call for Baptists to stop “the internationalizing of the nation” by Catholic immigrants.”⁴⁴ Competition for readership fanned the flames of fear and paranoia. Spurred on by the national anti-Catholic climate primarily incited by the American Protective Association, the Sunday School Board fed the demand for educational literature. E. A. Burke, Superintendent of the Madison Avenue Baptist Sunday School in Covington, Kentucky, personally wrote to J. M. Frost expressing his difficulty in promoting Sunday school education “... in the midst of a strong Catholic part of the city.”⁴⁵ After explaining his problem, Burke asked for a donation of fifty New Testament Bibles, reminding Frost that they did in fact patronize the Sunday School Board whenever possible. Under Frost’s direction, the Board made dramatic inroads in the South by offering professional literature and more importantly, by appealing to sectionalist sentiments.

In 1910, the American Baptist Publication Society raised the white flag and withdrew from the South. In only nineteen years, James Madison Frost’s vision was realized. Sunday School Board assets grew from \$53,000 in 1900 to approximately \$760,000 by 1920.⁴⁶ Success was due in part to embracing conservative doctrine, but wedge issues such as Roman Catholicism also boosted the Board’s sales figures.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ J. F. Love, “The Baptist Position: A Tract for the People,” Pamphlet 3649, Pamphlet Collection, SBHLA; W.J. McGlothlin, “Christianize the South,” Pamphlet 729.

⁴⁵ Letter to Frost, Catholics 1.14, Correspondence (B) May 1893 – May 1895, James Marion Frost and T.P. Bell Papers, AR795-109, SBHLA.

⁴⁶ Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*, 30.

⁴⁷ While I agree with Paul Harvey that one of the Sunday School Board’s missions was to re-affirm social conservatism, I emphasize that orthodoxy was only part of the story.

Fueled not only by an increasing responsibility to preserve southern social institutions but also a competitive zeal to produce relevant, profitable educational publications, the Sunday School Board became the most powerful institution within the Southern Baptist Convention. Through its educational arm, it not only affirmed Southern Baptist identity, it engineered it.

Progressive Orthodoxy

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Southern Baptists encountered familiar issues, but they experienced these issues in more personal ways. Immigration that had previously bypassed the South was now dramatically changing southern cities. Baptists commented on the advanced guard of immigration in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1880, North Carolina's *Biblical Recorder* published an article entitled "Why North Carolina has Had No Immigration." The editors' explanation was that "... with our homogeneous and conservative population, we have been very choice [sic] as to the class or character of immigrants that was available."⁴⁸ They were clearly positioning the State for industrial development and proposed measures to recruit "men and women of character... who will identify themselves with our state and its prosperity...." In Birmingham, Alabama, Italian immigrants were increasingly attracted to industrial labor

Also important was the Board's solvency and in the early days of its existence, it adopted a very pragmatic approach to the publication of literature. One of the best ways to gain a readership was to appeal to the base through social identity. So the Board focused on wedge issues like temperance, social dislocation, and public education not only to promote conservative values, but also in the simplest terms—to sell educational materials. In fact, the returns from utilizing these tactics led to increasingly virulent rhetoric in the literature. One of the consequences was that Southern Baptists were swept up by their success—a feeding frenzy of anti-Catholicism.

⁴⁸ *Biblical Recorder*, 28 January 1880.

opportunities that the iron and coal industries offered. The increased population of Catholics in Birmingham created opportunities for conflict. The *Alabama Baptist* sensationalized the growing divergence when it described how “Physical force [was] still the Catholics argument when he can safely ply it. For instance, in Birmingham a Catholic and a Protestant had a dispute about religion, when Mr. Catholic, to defend his holy creed, took a chair and floored his opponent.”⁴⁹ A few weeks earlier, while commenting on parochial education, the newspaper had alerted readers that “Alabama will soon learn what Kentucky has thoroughly learned, that is, that Rome is planting herself in our borders to stay.”⁵⁰ Areas affected by industrialization experienced these changes in the decades leading up to the twentieth century. For the rest of the South, the early 1900s were the pivotal years of change. Unlike the remote conflicts between Protestants and Catholics that happened outside the South— conflicts that Southern Baptists merely read about— twentieth-century immigration offered a direct threat to their newly-realized power.

As the tide of immigration turned toward the South, Southern Baptists were in a state of transition. During the 1870s and 1880s, the denomination was at odds over the role of public education in southern society. Many Baptist leaders understood the benefits but were unwilling to properly fund them. Others took the more traditional southern view that public education was not a guaranteed right and should not be supported by the state. Neither side worried about losing control to immigrants; they were much more concerned about Northern interference and “home rule.”

⁴⁹ *Alabama Baptist*, 10 May 1888.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 26 April 1888.

By 1900, Baptists were comfortable with their institutional identity and enthusiastically embraced public education. North Carolina quickly gained a reputation among southern states as a standard-bearer for public schools. Its Baptist leaders promoted the cause and believed that it was the civic duty of all North Carolinians to provide sound financial support for better instruction. Wake Forest College President William L. Poteat encouraged Baptists to see education as more than a means for individual advancement; it was also an instrument to reform society's ills. Historian Randall Hall argues that Poteat (both a Baptist minister and a Ph.D. in Biology) sold the idea of Progressivism to wary Baptists who were uncertain of endorsing an overtly defined Christian social ethic.⁵¹

In a conservative environment like North Carolina, Poteat had difficulty creating consensus. This was due in part to the state's demographics. In 1900, North Carolina was among the most rural southern states and had a homogeneity not found elsewhere. Textiles and tobacco were transforming the state's citizenry into a compliant, blue-collar workforce. African-Americans made up a third of the population and were still stinging from the repercussions of the Wilmington race riot and disfranchisement. Furthermore, there were fewer Catholics than in any neighboring state.⁵² The editors of the *Biblical Recorder* stressed the continuity of North Carolina's society in an article titled "The Religious Paper and Public Affairs." The author defended the paper's involvement in the political arena by arguing that "to the Christian no work is secular, no duty is secular, no

⁵¹ Randal L. Hall, *William Louis Poteat: A Leader of the Progressive-Era South*, Religion in the South (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 77.

⁵² For an early history of Catholicism in North Carolina see, Jeremiah Joseph O'Connell, *Catholicity in the Carolinas and Georgia: Leaves of Its History, 1820-1878* (New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Company, 1879).

moment is secular...,” while countering that dividing life “into secular and sacred” was merely semantics created by the Roman Catholic Church.⁵³ North Carolina’s Baptists had no intentions of giving up their birthright— power and privilege in a closed society.

Progressivism reflected Baptists’ newly gained sense of confidence. They had abundant resources, charismatic leaders, and believed they were responsible for controlling the social order. Baptist leaders spoke of how educational training programs were promoting progress, efficiency, and conformity in southern society. The editors of the *Baptist World* argued that Baptists lived in an era when problems within society could best be addressed by education and rational leadership:

The efficient preacher is one of the needs of the time. The demand is for an all-round man who can preach, visit, raise a collection, take his share of public service in the community, inspire and educate the people. Too much cannot be said as to the call for the efficient preacher. He is the key to the progress of the church. God give us the efficient preacher.⁵⁴

Although Baptists often editorialized that the separation of Church and State were pillars of their institutional identity, in practically all southern states, evangelical leaders began “legislating religion into the schools.”⁵⁵ They encouraged reading the Bible in the classroom and appointing preachers as educators in public school systems. In Tennessee, Baptists accused the Catholic Bishop of Nashville of responding to the increased religiosity of public schools by forbidding “Catholic parents from sending their children to public schools on penalty of excommunication.”⁵⁶ The editors of the *Baptist and Reflector* wrote that had the bishop “... follow[ed] up this order with another

⁵³ *Biblical Recorder*, 4 April 1900.

⁵⁴ *Baptist World*, 2 May 1912.

⁵⁵ Israel, *Before Scopes: Evangelicalism, Education, and Evolution in Tennessee, 1870-1925*, 98.

⁵⁶ *Alabama Baptist*, 21 September 1904.

forbidding Catholics from teaching in the public schools he [would] at least be consistent.”⁵⁷ In Georgia, Baptist leader M. L. Duggan was appointed in 1911 as “one of three original State Supervisors of Schools” that had direct influence on setting public policy, hiring teachers, and modernizing the school system.⁵⁸

Baptist Rufus Weaver served in a variety of capacities— he preached, served as a member of the Sunday School Board, taught religion at Vanderbilt University, and eventually moved to Georgia and became a member of the Georgia State Board of Education. He believed in promoting the value of public education while at the same time educating Baptists about “the common purpose of saving the American cities” from “the Roman Church.”⁵⁹ “The parochial school,” Weaver wrote, “is a menace to American institutions, for the future American citizens are taught in these schools that the pope of Rome must be obeyed because his commands are more binding than the statutes of the states.”⁶⁰

Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry spearheaded Alabama’s public school movement and eventually became identified with a larger southern education movement when he became secretary of the Peabody Fund. On one hand, Curry had very democratic principles about public education, stressing that the state had an obligation to provide this universal right to all children.⁶¹ Yet, he viewed Catholics not as potential recipients of public education but as usurpers of liberty.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Lester, *A History of the Georgia Baptist Convention, 1822-1972*, 328-29.

⁵⁹ “How Many Cities Be Rescued,” AR99, Box 1.1, Rufus Washington Weaver Papers, SBHLA.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, 228-29.

Progressivism yielded contradictory consequences for Southern Baptists.

Historian Wayne Flynt argues that in Alabama, education served as means of advancing the New South economy, combating child labor, and augmenting Social Christianity.⁶²

Keith Harper argues that Southern Baptists reached out to the poor and dispossessed, demonstrating a genuine concern for the welfare of others.⁶³ Catholic immigrants certainly fit that category. In 1901, Manley J. Breaker of the *Christian Index* emphasized to readers that the foreigner “must be saved,” emphasizing that “God has sent him here for that purpose. He [God] kept him [the foreigner] away from our country until we had strengthened our religion and our morals, and then He sent him to us.”⁶⁴

On the other hand, Southern Baptists’ ascendancy coincided with the threat of significant cultural shifts in southern society. In 1912, Livingston Johnson wrote about this when he looked back on “Ten Years of Progress in North Carolina.”⁶⁵ Johnson noted that the State had experienced rapid industrial growth, shifting demographics, and “a great educational awakening.” But progress came with a price. From 1890-1906, North Carolina and six other southern states experienced increases in Roman Catholic Church membership that outpaced their Protestant counterparts. Although Johnson supported economic growth and cultural development, he measured the costs:

We are building new school-houses, employing a large number of teachers, and gathering the children into these places of learning. We have our journals telling the world of the wonderful development of our State and inviting people to come and take up their abodes within our borders.

⁶² J. Wayne Flynt, "Dissent in Zion: Alabama Baptists and Social Issues, 1900-1914," *Journal of Southern History* 35 (Winter 1969).

⁶³ Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996), 13-14.

⁶⁴ *Christian Index*, 05 September 1901.

⁶⁵ *Biblical Recorder*, 24 January 1912.

These things are all right, but are we Christian people going to sit still and say there is nothing more to be done religiously for North Carolina because it is an old State and therefore needs nothing more in the way of evangelization? There is nothing that our good old State needs so much as the religion of our Lord. Cotton mills, banks, railroads, and school-houses are important but they do not compare in importance with the Kingdom of Christ. We need to work and pray for the coming of the Kingdom in our State.⁶⁶

Livingston Johnson, like most other Progressive Era Baptists, saw education not only as a vehicle for reform but also as a symbol of Baptists' societal influence.⁶⁷ Much of their anti-Catholic rhetoric came from the fear that with an increased southern Catholic presence, Baptists might lose their grip on authority.

Mobile, Alabama experienced Catholic power when the state government passed prohibition laws. Alcohol had been one of the most dependable sources of school tax revenue, so the county proposed a tax increase to fund local education. When it failed to pass, W. J. E. Cox wrote that "Poor old Mobile" was "biting off her nose to spite her face," noting that "the county voted about two to one in favor of the tax and the city nearly four hundred against," mainly because of the Roman Catholic vote.⁶⁸

In Savannah, Georgia Baptists criticized the considerable Irish Catholic population for complaining "... about our public schools, first, because they have the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Numerous historians argue that southern evangelical reform in the Progressive Era may have improved aspects of southern society, but the intentions were to resist change: Kenneth Kyle Bailey, *Southern White Protestantism in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), Eighmy and Hill, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists*, Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis*, Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900*, James J. Thompson, *Tried as by Fire: Southern Baptists and the Religious Controversies of the 1920s* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1982).

⁶⁸ *Alabama Baptist*, 10 June 1908.

Bible; and then complain, if we yield that point, because religion is excluded.”⁶⁹ Since the 1870s, Catholics had sought public funding for Savannah’s parochial education system. This led to more dramatic conflicts than most southern cities experienced. Two Catholic schools in Savannah eventually did receive funds from the Chatham County Board of Education, leading many Georgia Baptists to protest that this was a violation of Separation of Church and State.⁷⁰ Eventually a coalition of Baptists and Methodists appealed to the State Superintendent of Schools for an investigation. Attorney General Clifford Walker determined that the Savannah schools were in violation “of the law that forbids the aid of the State to sectarian institutions” and filed a lawsuit against the county.⁷¹

Compared to the rest of the South, coastal cities such as Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans had considerably more Catholics. These groups originated from earlier Spanish, French, German, and Irish migration and were more likely to contest the local power structures and assert their autonomy. The continuous conflict prompted local Savannah Baptist F.H. Sills to publish his exposé, *Roman Catholicism Investigated and Exposed*. The book modeled other classic anti-Catholic publications from decades past.⁷² Sills attacked all aspects of Catholicism, including its doctrinal positions, the political aspirations of its members, and “Their Desire and Effort to Destroy Our Free Schools.”

⁶⁹ *Christian Index*, 05 August 1875.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 09 November 1916.

⁷¹ *Ibid*.

⁷² Important northern Anti-Catholic publications that addressed education include Daniel Dorchester, *Romanism Versus the Public School System* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1888), Prescott F. Hall, *Immigration and the Educational Test* (New York: North American Review, 1897), ———, *Immigration and Its Effects Upon the United States* (New York: H. Holt, 1906), Howard B. Grose, *Aliens or Americans?* (New York, Toronto: Young People's Missionary Movement Press, 1906).

These anti-Catholic books and pamphlets were published by a variety of sources; some came from the Sunday School Board while others were self-promoted.

While the Sunday School Board controlled mainstream Southern Baptist literature, the most radical educational publications were independently-published. Most came from northern authors, although there were also southerners who were every bit as fanatical. Denominational newspapers often advertised these in the back of their magazines along with various nerve tonics, ointments, and self-help publications. Southern Baptist leaders normally kept their distance from extreme figures, referring to their opinions as peripheral to mainstream Baptists.

Among the most radical of these peripheral figures was Georgia Baptist and United States Senator Thomas Watson, who published the anti-Catholic magazine *The Jeffersonian*. In addition, he printed a number of pamphlets that targeted Roman Catholicism, such as “The Italian Pope’s Campaign Against the Constitutional Rights of American Citizens.” Railing against the “human hordes” that did “not imbibe Americanism,” Watson asserted that Catholic “children are separated by the priests into the pope’s own parochial schools, where they learn hatred of ‘heresies,’ and servility to the foreign potentate whom they are being trained to serve.”⁷³

It is hard to measure the influence of this literature, but there is no question that it affected Southern Baptists. Based on the number of letters that denominational newspapers received and re-printed in their weekly publications, many subscribers read these books and tracts, and some of the anti-Catholic literature ended up in Sunday sermons. Baptist W.D. Siler of Uptonville, Tennessee wrote to the *Baptist and Reflector*,

⁷³ Thomas E. Watson, *The Italian Pope's Campaign against the Constitutional Rights of American Citizens*, (Thomson: The Tom Watson Book Company, 1915), 9.

testifying that he had “just finished reading ‘Thirty Years in Hell, or From Darkness to Light,’ a book exposing Catholicism, written by an ex-priest,” and encouraged all Tennessee Baptists to read it.⁷⁴ The *Christian Index* received numerous complaints from its readership when Tom Watson questioned why the Baptist newspaper had been advertising a Roman Catholic Encyclopedia in its “Book Notices” column. “We have not been accustomed to noticing any charges brought against us from the source whence emanated this one,” the editors responded, “but as a number of our friends seem to be disturbed in their minds, we take this means of giving them the facts.”⁷⁵ The editors claimed they advertised the Encyclopedia to educate its readership on the history, doctrine, and practice of Roman Catholicism; but instead, the issue had become personal and caused the editors to proclaim:

The Encyclopedia has received ten times as much notice through the attack made on us as it ever would have received from our little notice; and we may add that the suggestion implied or expressed that we are, or ever had been, in the least degree favorable to Roman Catholicism, is so absurd as to make it a matter of wonder that anybody would pay attention to a person making it.⁷⁶

The dust-up between Watson and Georgia’s Baptist leaders heightened anti-Catholic articles in the *Index* by stimulating orthodoxy. Part of being a good Southern Baptist meant standing against immigrants and Catholicism; any endorsement, conciliation, or neutral comment toward Catholicism compromised that identity. Historian Glenn Feldman argues that this was a time when “anxiety turned to paranoia,” which led to

⁷⁴ *Baptist and Reflector*, 12 January 1905.

⁷⁵ *Christian Index*, 18 July 1912.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

increasingly radical rhetoric aimed toward immigrants.⁷⁷ These hostilities eventually morphed into fraternal organizations that protected “American” institutions such as public schools and enforced a specific moral code. Baptists joined groups such as the Guardians of Liberty, the True Americans, and the Ku Klux Klan because they saw these organizations as protectors of their faith.

Although some joined external organizations to combat societal ills, most Southern Baptists continued to focus their efforts on missions and education. Since the 1870s, denominational education had played an important role in establishing foundations. Theological training had been a crucial element in the preservation of Baptist identity, not only because it trained and educated the newest generation of leaders, but because it established bases of Baptist power from the sheer physical presence of these schools, much like the Sunday School Board did for Nashville. One Baptist leader noted how the seminary “...made [Kentucky] much stronger from a Baptist point of view, and how the establishment of the Southwestern Seminary at Fort Worth had proven to be a wise investment for kingdom ideals...”⁷⁸ Out of this mindset, Baptists looked for other locations to spread its influence.

For many years, Baptist had identified New Orleans as an important mission field. In 1849, the first Baptist missionary to the city wrote to denominational patriarch Basil Manly, Sr., suggesting the creation of a Baptist college to be located in the city, but nothing resulted from the discussions.⁷⁹ During the late 1800s, Baptists made limited

⁷⁷ Glenn Feldman, *Politics and Religion in the White South*, Religion in the South (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 13.

⁷⁸ *Christian Index*, 21 January 1915.

⁷⁹ Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953*, 209-10.

strides in sending evangelists, building churches, and collecting funds for a home missions drive. The efforts failed to gain any significant citywide membership. P.L. Lipsey, editor of Mississippi's *Baptist Record*, suggested that the establishment of a theological seminary in New Orleans might have a similar effect on Louisiana as had those in Kentucky and Texas. Louisiana Baptist G.H. Crutcher noted:

It has been a matter for cheap wit for many years that the Baptists of Louisiana were largely Negroes. May I not insist that at least in part the explanation of the large number of Negro Baptists in Louisiana is due to the splendid Negro Baptist school in New Orleans that has been training young Negroes, equipping Negro preachers who have gone out to teach and to preach all over Louisiana and have ground their people intelligently in the faith of our fathers?⁸⁰

White Baptists believed that indoctrinating southern Blacks with religious education led to a more stable society. Crutcher used the analogy to make a wider assertion that "...such an institution in New Orleans would give us a supreme advantage in our work among the foreigners throughout the whole Southland, as New Orleans is supremely the most important city in the South from the viewpoint of immigration."⁸¹ Garnering denominational support for the seminary worked identically to funding missions—in order to sell the idea, supporters of the seminary had to emphasize the need, often by evoking anxieties about immigration and Catholic power. Even though New Orleans had always had a strong Catholic presence, with the new tide of immigration reaching southern port cities, the idea of New Orleans becoming the right arm of the Vatican threatened more than the bayous of southern Louisiana; it threatened the entire South. In 1917, the Southern Baptist Convention met in New Orleans for its annual meeting. Joint committees approved resolutions regarding the establishment of the Baptist Bible

⁸⁰ *Christian Index*, 21 January 1915.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Institute, which opened a year later. In 1954, denominational historian W. W. Barnes looked back on the impact of the seminary:

Before the Baptist Bible Institute was opened, there were only six struggling Baptist churches in that city, and there was [sic] no Baptist churches West, on the Southern pacific [sic], for more than 125 miles. The spiritual destitution was tragic. All of this has been changed under the tremendous spiritual impact of the teachers and students of that mighty missionary force witnessing in one of the most challenging mission fields in the South. Today, through South Louisiana, Baptist churches and missions abound.⁸²

The seminary represented the culmination of over sixty-five years of mission work directed at Catholic New Orleans. This was Baptist Progressivism realized through denominational education. It erased the many failures of past missionary efforts and gave Baptists comfort that in the midst of a changing South, institutions not only persevered, they dominated.

From 1870-1920, Southern Baptists spent much of their time grappling with issues that linked education and religious identity. In many of these conflicts, Catholicism marked the intersection between the sacred and the secular. Baptists encountered Catholic reconstructionists who intended to educate the Freedmen; they read about Catholics in the North taking over the public schools, which in turn bolstered southern sectionalism; they mimicked the anti-Catholic rhetoric of northern religious publications as they competed for publishing business; they applied Progressive ideals to public education and used religious institutions such as the Sunday School Board to expand their influence in southern society; and they expanded denominational education to supplement the deficiencies of public schools. Baptists believed that education was a crucial element in their institutional identity because it supported churches, trained

⁸² Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953*, 211-12.

missionaries, converted unbelievers, and reaffirmed sacred values. Anti-Catholicism resulted from Baptists' understanding that because education had the potential to transform society, in the wrong hands that transformation could have devastating consequences.

Chapter Four

“The Great Unfinished Task:” Anti-Catholicism and the Southern Baptist Quest for Moral Reform

In 1891, the *Arkansas Baptist* alerted its readership to be watchful for “a Catholic priest who walked the streets of Little Rock, with a bottle of whiskey in his hand and stream of profanity and vulgarity pouring from his mouth.”¹ The vivid picture of a drunken priest stumbling out of control left little to readers’ imaginations. Here was a Catholic leader living in an urban setting, walking and intermingling with southern evangelicals, a man whom Baptists depicted as a threat to local customs.

Such stories augmented calls for evangelicals to go beyond converting souls and nurturing the personal spirituality of its members. Although many historians of southern religion have emphasized the importance of personal spirituality in southern evangelicalism, Southern Baptists increasingly became interested in issues that turned their focus outward to combat what they viewed as a morally-depraved society.² From the 1870s through the 1920s, Baptists emphasized institutional initiatives that reconstructed their denominational identity and preserved their cultural values. As their denomination grew and their identity matured, Baptists had both the power and the confidence to dictate social norms and shape southern culture as they imagined. During

¹ Published in the *Alabama Baptist*, 25 November 1891.

² Samuel Hill's thesis that southern evangelicals focused on personal salvation, often at the expense of religious reform and social justice, is still a useful interpretative model: Samuel S. Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis*, (New York: Holt, 1967), 4-5.

this period, a growing Catholic presence in the South, coupled with an increased public awareness of such presence, stimulated Baptists to take a more active role in purifying the region.

In some ways this purification was proscriptive and aimed at social control of the conduct of blacks, poor whites, and immigrants (prohibition, anti-prostitution). In other ways, it was progressive (child labor, convict-lease, and penal reform). For a variety of reasons, many Protestant “reformers” perceived Catholics as a barrier to moral reform, which intensified their anti-Catholicism. Many (though not all) of the same forces that created the reformist Southern Sociological Congress also produced virulent anti-Catholicism.³

Although Southern Baptists felt more at ease in Zion, they increasingly were anxious about cultural shifts they perceived to be the result of northern interference, southern industrialization, and changing patterns of immigration. They believed that they occupied an important role in protecting those social and cultural institutions that they deemed central to southern civilization. They resurrected a set of mythological Confederate ideals— symbols of a Lost Cause that glorified former Civil War generals, turned old battlefields into holy land, and promoted a distinct civil religion. While Baptists had one foot in the past, they also clearly embraced the promise of a New South by expanding their reach and emphasizing social reforms such as temperance and prohibition. As they expanded their influence on a changing South, they encountered roadblocks such as an increasingly visible Catholic presence, especially in southern cities

³ See, for example, James Joseph Boshears Jr., “‘The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man’: The Social Gospel Interracialism of the Southern Sociological Congress” (doctoral dissertation, Auburn University, 2012).

where immigrants found work. The foreign customs and culture of Roman Catholicism not only threatened to change the traditional folkways of the South, but also stood in the way of Baptists intent on remaking society.

Preserving the Old in the New South

The *Baptist*, a Memphis paper, published “A Letter from New Orleans” that described the city’s atmosphere during Mardi Gras. “The carnival of Mardi Gras has been succeeded by a dead silence,” a local New Orleans Baptist missionary reported. Reading much like a travel diary, the letter served as a window, allowing evangelical readers to peek inside the flamboyant, sinful world of Catholic culture. Among the festivities, the “Rex” parade was “a pageant of the most brilliant sort” with participants wearing “golden armor and helmets,” acting out a “poem of folly, fun, and pleasure.” In addition, “there were shameful exhibitions on the streets,” and one Baptist preacher described the event as an “apotheosis of vice.”⁴

Although New Orleans was the largest city in the South and southerners were vaguely familiar with the region’s Catholic culture, explicit stories detailing such strange customs, like the one printed by the *Baptist*, had an impact on its readership. In addition to the parades, the missionary described how Catholics paid homage to the Grotto of the Lady of Lourdes, where “more than 100,000 Catholics from France and England paid pilgrimage to this grotto last year.” According to the report, Catholics believed that the grotto’s public fountain had medicinal properties and claimed that there were “more than 1000 cases [of healing] under Catholic authority.” The Archbishop of New Orleans had

⁴ “Letter from New Orleans, *Baptist* (Memphis), 28 March 1874.

recently “consecrated a statue of the Lady of Lourdes in the cathedral of the city [New Orleans], and still another has been set up in the Dryades Street Catholic Church.”⁵ The report noted:

Any one paying their devotion at these shrines is granted an indulgence of sixty days. To cap the climax of this folly, the said Archbishop, together with the Catholic Archbishop of New York has undertaken to organize a pilgrimage to ‘our Lady of Lourdes and to Rome,’ from the United States, to start from New York not later than the middle of next May.⁶

To Catholic Louisiana, this statue meant that the same ritual enjoyed in Europe would be available to locals in New Orleans and surrounding areas. On the other hand, Baptists and other evangelicals believed this was an example of Catholic mysticism and superstition that could infiltrate popular culture; this was an encroachment on Baptists’ control of public spaces and evidence of growing Catholic power in the South.

New Orleans and the rest of the Coastal South had a history of Catholicism that southerners had long accepted.⁷ The region’s Irish, French, and Spanish Catholics had supported slavery during the antebellum period, and as long as their cultural anomalies remained peripheral to southern identity, southern Protestants tolerated them.⁸ The

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Much like their Protestant brethren detailed in both Christine Heyrman's and John Lee Eighmey's research, Randall Miller argues that Catholics were culturally captive to the social norms of the Old South: Miller and Wakelyn, *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture*; Eighmy and Hill, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists*; Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*.

⁸ There was a brief period in the 1850s when the Know-Nothing Party ran a national anti-Catholic campaign and made inroads into southern states such as Alabama. See, Jeff Frederick, "Unintended Consequences: The Rise and Fall of the Know-Nothing Party in Alabama," *Alabama Review* (January 2002): 3-33; J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power*

transformative point in Catholic/Protestant relations came post Civil-War, when a crisis of identity caused cultural fears and antipathy toward Catholics. Charles Reagan Wilson explains:

Southern Baptists, fearing their own loss of separate status, struggled throughout the late nineteenth century for a distinctive identity apart from the dead slavery issue, which had been the crystallizing factor in their emergence. This fear in fact existed in the other Southern churches, and it focused especially on the North— its churches, its religious movements, its immigrants, its power in the American nation—as the underminer of Southern religious hegemony.⁹

Without the unifying slavery issue, Catholics had little hope of participating in the construction of a New South. Indigenous Catholic populations such as those in New Orleans, Mobile, and Savannah found themselves on the wrong side of a number of southern causes. Baptist accounts such as “A Letter from New Orleans” helped shape Baptist perceptions of Catholics and fanned the flames of anti-Catholicism.

Ironically, while Baptists ridiculed the practice of Catholic iconoclasm, they (along with other southern evangelicals) constructed their own symbols and rituals that supported a southern civil religion.¹⁰ Faith in these symbols reflected their uneasiness with their status. Adherence to religious orthodoxy was the key to the preservation and

in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

⁹ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*, 9-10; See also, Eighmy and Hill, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists*, 74, 95.

¹⁰ Although Baptists helped shaped a distinctively southern civil religion, Wilson emphasizes the leading role of Episcopalian leaders as shapers of a Lost Cause religion: Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*; From 1865-1920, Baptists supported the myths of the Lost Cause but were less enthralled with other aspects of Old South culture. Baptists and other southern evangelicals transformed the South into a more homogenous society. See, for example, Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920*.

promotion of southern culture and provided protection from outside, alien traditions. Southern Baptists saw themselves as part of this distinct group of southern evangelicals, but they also believed that they held a special place in God's kingdom. Their identity was heavily influenced by how they viewed themselves in comparison both to the North and to other southern evangelicals. They fashioned a denominational character in complete opposition to an increasingly secular and Catholic North, while at the same time drawing distinctions between themselves and other southern evangelical denominations. Baptists believed that infant baptism and hierarchical structures within the church were evidence that other denominations had been influenced by Catholic traditions, while they had distinctive traditions that gave them license to preserve the southern way of life.

Although Gulf Coast Alabama had a fairly significant Catholic presence (in fact, the oldest Mardi Gras celebration in the United States occurred in Mobile), Catholics did not have the same power as they had in New Orleans. An Alabama state senator from Montgomery introduced a bill in 1880 that would have made Shrove Tuesday (now known as "Fat Tuesday"), a festival introducing the Lenten season, a public holiday in Montgomery and Mobile. Edwin T. Winkler, editor of the *Alabama Baptist*, called upon Baptists to defend their religious heritage, insisting that this was a separation of church and state issue: "We hope that our Legislature will pass no such bill, its members not elected for the purpose of imposing the festivals of any church upon the communities of Alabama."¹¹ Commenting on Lent, he continued:

In our country, there is not even this poor excuse for the holiday. And the history of the carnival in other countries does not encourage its transplantation to our country under the auspices of our public authorities. The working of such public holidays upon the character and the industries

¹¹ *Alabama Baptist*, 25 November 1880.

of a people is painfully manifested in all Roman Catholic countries. The fewer of them we have in America, the better.¹²

Although Winkler and other Baptists tried to contain public expressions of religion that did not coincide with Protestant beliefs, Catholic culture unquestionably endured in Alabama, as it did in other parts of the South. Indigenous southern Catholics quietly practiced their faith, and the region's new immigrant population employed traditional cultural values and manners in adjusting to a new country and a new industrial society. The 1880s had been a period of uncertainty for immigrants and Baptists alike; the former dealt with adapting to a new land, the latter with how these new immigrants would be accepted. Both groups discovered how increasingly difficult it was to find common ground.¹³

A Swell of Immigration

While the preservation of an orthodox southern culture was an important component to the Baptist message, so too was the gospel of progress. Henry Grady's vision of an industrialized New South carried favor with Baptists interested in economic prosperity and organizational viability. The denomination found ways to reconcile the past with the present. They modeled much of their institutional growth from a business model of efficiency and competition while honoring Confederate symbols and

¹² Ibid.

¹³ James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigrants and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *Journal of American History* 79 (December 1992): 997-98.

emphasizing the traditional verities of the Baptist faith. But it was a path filled with landmines.

Among the most difficult subjects Southern Baptists grappled with was immigration and its effects on the social and cultural climate of the South. North Carolina's Secretary of Agriculture, Leonidas Polk, wrote an article for the *Biblical Recorder* promoting the recruitment of immigrants for agricultural work, noting that North Carolina wanted its share of investors and capitalists, but also "the artisan, the mechanic, the farmer, and the dairyman, to evoke new industries, and to swell the volume of our productive interests."¹⁴ Eight months later, the editors of the denominational paper warned North Carolina's Baptists that in neighboring Virginia, real estate speculators caught up in the selling of the South were peddling unproductive land to immigrants, "mostly Romanists."¹⁵ According to the editorial, there was little concern that Roman Catholics would make inroads among Protestants (except for "a few exceedingly high churchmen who have depreciated mentally and financially"), but there was consternation that non-Catholic immigrants who had moved to the South were open to conversion.

By the 1890s, the impending consequences of immigration concerned Southern Baptists. In a letter to the *Alabama Baptist*, C. O. Booth, State Missionary in Jackson County, summarized the primary concern:

These people [immigrants] who have been flocking to our shores in such vast number have not yet turned their mighty currents toward the South; they are in the North, infusing into the soul of that section a form of mental life very different from that which possessed and controlled the pilgrim fathers. These strange people, with their strange views of God and

¹⁴ "Why North Carolina has had No Immigration," *Biblical Recorder*, 28 January 1880.

¹⁵ *Biblical Recorder*, 25 August 1880.

of government will, when once they turn upon the South, change the soul of the South also, yes, and also the material conditions.¹⁶

Since Catholics were a perceived threat to the southern establishment, they became the target of constant harassment, and at times, white evangelicals provoked violence against them. Angry mobs and vigilantes lynched Italians in Mississippi, the Carolinas, Arkansas, and Florida. In New Orleans, a mob lynched eleven Italian Catholics on March 14, 1891.¹⁷ Baptists blamed the pogrom on the local Catholic-influenced mafia, whose “nefarious deeds led to the riot.”¹⁸ “There is no place in America for such an organization,” the editors of *The Baptist and Reflector* opined, “and no where else, perhaps, except in the corrupt atmosphere of New Orleans, could it flourish. Such a growth, however, is not very extraneous to Roman Catholic soil such as New Orleans.”¹⁹

As a denomination, Southern Baptists criticized lynch mobs as an antiquated solution to social conflict that was left over from antebellum customs, one which did not reflect well on an enlightened New South. On the other hand, Baptist leaders recognized that individuals had traditional ideas about personal honor and adhered to a strict southern social code.²⁰ Southern values traditionally required retribution to bring the

¹⁶ C. O. Booth, “The Foreigner, the Negro, and the South,” *Alabama Baptist*, 18 March 1897.

¹⁷ Silvano M. Tomasi and Madeline H. Engel, *The Italian Experience in the United States* (Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies, 1970), 50.

¹⁸ *The Baptist and Reflector*, 7 February 1895.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ See, for example, Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920*; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

social order back into balance. Catholics had violated the sacred code of behavior, even if it had occurred in New Orleans.

Southern writer Wilbur Cash referred to the South's propensity to invoke violence as a form of social control as the "savage ideal."²¹ Other historians have written about numerous Baptists and Methodists who participated in local Ku Klux Klan groups, so violence was certainly a component of the way they sometimes maintained control over society.²² In addition to their own encounters, immigrants were aware of the violent reputation of southerners from the numerous lynchings targeting southern blacks. These accounts were often reported in northern newspapers and throughout Europe.

The Vatican was well aware of the circumstances Catholics faced, and the Catholic Church appealed to the United States government for protection. These requests met cursory responses, leaving few options for immigrants. The climate became so bad that the Italian government restricted passports to Italians who planned to emigrate to the South; nevertheless, by the early 1900s, they increasingly came to southern cities looking for work.²³

²¹ Cash, *The Mind of the South*.

²² For Klan violence targeting Catholics, see, for example, Hurley, *The Unholy Ghost: Anti-Catholicism in the American Experience*; Greeley, *An Ugly Little Secret: Anti-Catholicism in North*; Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*; Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association*; Lockwood, ed. *Anti-Catholicism in American*; Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); Shea, *The Lion and the Lamb: Evangelicals and Catholics in America*.

²³ Frank Joseph Fede, *Italians in the Deep South: Their Impact on Birmingham and the American Heritage* (Montgomery: Black Belt Press, 1994), 14.

Many of the new immigrants that came from Italy and Eastern Europe tended to congregate in cities that already had an immigrant presence. For instance, in 1900 Savannah had Georgia's largest Catholic population, which had been established by Irish immigrants much earlier. Because of the established Catholic presence, southern evangelicals had a much harder time imposing their will on the local immigrant populace. In 1895, the anti-Catholic American Protective Association sent an ex-priest and his wife (a former nun) to lecture in Savannah. According to one report, the members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians organized a Catholic protest against the lecture. Opponents petitioned the mayor to stop the speech, but he "declined to do so upon the advice of the city attorney that free speech was guaranteed by the constitution."²⁴ The night of the engagement, a mob estimated at between four and five thousand Catholics demonstrated around the assembly hall, throwing rocks, breaking the windows of the hall, and injuring people inside. The mayor sent in the police to escort the speaker, Mr. Slattery, to a safe location. The next night, Catholics sent a crowd inside the assembly hall to prevent the A.P.A. from meeting.

This incident revealed three things about southern society. First, local officials could protect victims from an angry mob. Unlike New Orleans, where Italian immigrants were lynched, Savannah's government was able to control a large, angry mob. Second, Catholic/Protestant tensions had much to do with contests for local control of public institutions. Coastal cities like Mobile, Savannah, and New Orleans were examples of what happened when immigration was able to take root in southern soil. In Savannah, evangelical backlash led to the establishment of a local chapter of the A.P.A. *The Baptist*

²⁴ *Baptist and Reflector*, 07 March 1895.

and Reflector argued, “If ever there was any doubt about the need of such an organization, this incident would show it.”²⁵ In the eyes of evangelicals, the disorder was evidence of a Roman conspiracy, and the “only reason why Mr. Slattery did not suffer the tortures of the inquisition was simply because he was in America and not in Italy or Spain....” Whether it concerned free speech, parochial school funding, or questions about religious liberty, religious conflict continued to be a theme in Savannah through the early 1900s. Third, where the critical mass of Catholics was sufficiently large and politically active (as in Savannah in 1895 or Birmingham in 1905 when they actually constituted the city’s largest religious group), they could protect themselves.

Religious conflicts carried connotations of power. Evangelicals became angry when people upset the delicate balance of power between classes, races, and cultures. One of the most famous instances of conflict occurred when in July 1900 a race riot broke out in New Orleans. North Carolina Baptist M.F. Vann told his eyewitness account to the *Biblical Recorder*.²⁶ According to reports, Robert Charles, a black laborer, shot and killed Captain Day of the New Orleans Police Department.²⁷ At the funeral procession, the presiding Catholic priest called “for a speedy revenge.”²⁸ The city put out a \$250 reward for Charles and rioting broke out in the streets. Blacks fled to their homes and a white mob that Reverend Vann described as consisting of mostly Catholics “killed

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Biblical Recorder*, 15 August 1900.

²⁷ For a full description of the 1900 New Orleans race riot: William Ivy Hair, *Carnival of Fury: Robert Charles and the New Orleans Race Riot of 1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976); see also, Bennett, *Religion and the Rise of Jim Crow in New Orleans*, 2005.

²⁸ *Biblical Recorder*, 15 August 1900.

almost as many whites as colored.” The mayor called for five hundred men to volunteer to put down the mob; one thousand eight hundred “of the best men in New Orleans reported for duty. These 1800 Anglo-Saxon men were Southerners and the best friends of our people.” What struck Reverend Vann was how white southerners had organized not only to preserve order, but to protect the city’s black population—a group that the white establishment was known more for terrorizing than protecting. “The real Southern white man had done some fighting,” Vann remarked, “but it was to protect our [white] people.” In this extraordinary case, Protestant whites had protected blacks from being lynched and attempted to maintain the peace; and it was Catholics who had upset the hierarchical order. Blacks had not resorted to violence or retaliation; those responsible for mob rule represented not only a rowdy Catholic presence, but also threatened to destroy the harmony of southern race relations.

Racial hierarchy was an important component of anti-Catholic sentiment. At times, Baptist missionary literature played heavily on themes of racism and xenophobia, stoking fears while asking for money and support for mission programs. In 1902, a missions pamphlet entitled “Louisiana Missions” alerted readers of “The Practices and Extravagances in Worship of our Negro Baptist Brethren.”²⁹ Author E.O. Ware wrote that in Louisiana, many Negro Baptist churches “forgot their Sabbaths,” instead clinging to social customs such as sprinkling instead of full-immersion baptisms, favoring infant baptism over adult baptism, and assigning god-parents to newly born children. The news that Catholic customs were taking root in black churches implied far-reaching

²⁹ “Louisiana Missions.” Pamphlet 1325, Pamphlet Collection.

consequences. White Baptists were alarmed because it threatened to upset the balance of social hierarchy.

Baptist leaders understood that rural churches, both white and black, were, according to historian Paul Harvey, “repositories of regional culture.”³⁰ At times, poor, un-educated congregations of both races shared similar worship customs. Southern Baptist leaders accepted the experiential nature of African-American churches in the South by characterizing blacks as emotional or child-like; they were less forgiving of white churches that shared this style. Denominational leaders tolerated it mainly because local churches had autonomy and, more importantly, because white rural churches were highly-regarded for their simple, respectable social mores, which included strict Jim Crow customs and anti-saloon sentiments.³¹ For Baptists, evidence that Catholicism had made inroads in black churches meant that African-Americans might be more apt to challenge social customs. It also meant that rural white churches might eventually be affected by Catholicism. This was particularly troubling because they were aware that Catholics did not share the same strict social codes that prohibited alcohol, gambling, and other “sinful” forms of recreation.

By the early 1900s, the Catholic Church reached out into the Protestant community by promoting social ministries. The success of this venture provoked W. B. Crumpton to publish an editorial in the *Alabama Baptist* warning about the growing influence of Catholicism in Alabama. He was concerned with their mission work, which

³⁰ Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*, The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 78.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

Crumpton dismissed as “nothing more than protracted meetings, in many of the smaller towns of the State; the object being professedly to explain their doctrines to the non-Catholics.”³² Additionally, Catholics had established charitable hospitals in Birmingham, Mobile, and Montgomery. Since most of their patients would be Protestants, Crumpton questioned their real purpose:

If their cases are hopeless, probably before they breath[e] their last, they will be baptized (!) into the Catholic church (sic). If they recover, during their convalescence, they will be asked to read tracts and books of Romish belief. If they are not converted, the most of them (sic) go out as apologists, if not defenders, of the Catholic Church because they were treated kindly....³³

Crumpton left little room for fence-riding sentimentalists. “Catholicism,” he claimed, “is a friend to nothing on this earth except to the Romish Church.” In addition to skewering the state’s Catholic institutions, he framed the issue as one that could only be seen in black and white. No *real* Baptist who believed in separation of the church and State should stand idly by while Catholicism marched on Alabama.

Historian Charles Reagan Wilson argued that Southern Baptist identity had largely been shaped by how they defined themselves against the North. However, during the first two decades of the twentieth-century, Southern Baptist leaders changed the way they addressed the growth of Catholic immigration in the South and, in turn, how they viewed themselves. No longer did they define the Catholic menace exclusively as a product of Northern society or something that could be contained in the North; they

³² *Alabama Baptist*, 22 April 1903.

³³ *Ibid.*

increasingly saw this as a global phenomenon. V. I. Masters, corresponding Secretary of the Home Mission Board for Southern Baptists, explained their position:

At the present rate of increase, about seventeen per cent of the population of the country may in ten years be expected to hail from the low class people of effete civilizations. If all these folks remained at the North, they would yet present a problem for Southern Christianity. We are one nation and the South must, in the future, suffer with the North in any problem that these immigrants may bring. But they will not remain in the North. Already they are coming into our own Southern country by the thousands and tens of thousands. In the end, either these people will be lifted to the level of American Christian people, or American Christian people will sink to their level.³⁴

This departure from the traditional sectional language Baptists so often employed did not mean that sectional identity was dead. In fact, Masters' 1918 book, *The Call of the South*, maintained that the South still had a "sectional consciousness" and was still a distinctive land because "of war experiences which shook our entire social order to its foundations, and of the preservation of this section from any significant influx of strange people."³⁵ Masters believed that the South was no longer the region identified with guilt and shame, but rather the one full of God's providence and blessings. To preserve the soul of the South, Southern Baptists were called by God "to serve the spiritual mission of America."³⁶

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Southern Baptists promoted their objective by joining fraternal and patriotic organizations, which strengthened their resolve and organized them with other like-minded Americans. *The Christian Index*, for instance, encouraged its members to consider joining "A Society to Preserve our

³⁴ *The Christian Index*, 22 April 1909.

³⁵ Masters, *The Call of the South: A Presentation of the Home Principle in Missions, Especially as It Applies to the South*, 17.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

Liberty.” This society, The Guardians of Liberty, was formed on June 9, 1912 “in response to the belief in Rome’s aggression... gathering to counsel as to the best action to counteract what they regard as a real danger.”³⁷ Originally, the GOL addressed the growing immigrant population in New York, but it gained national popularity by espousing moral reform, encouraging patriotic zeal, and stirring up xenophobia. It succeeded because the organization effectively convinced Americans that immigration was not simply a New York problem; it was spreading to the entire United States. Between 1910 and 1920, anti-Catholicism became a national phenomenon, spearheaded by the emergence of fraternal organizations that emphasized white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant values.

Earlier centers of conflict became more divided. Birmingham experienced increased immigration in greater numbers than practically any other southern city, so it was a hub for anti-Catholic sentiment. Building upon the ideals of the Guardians of Liberty, A. J. Dickinson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Birmingham, organized locally the True American Society to stop immigration and Catholicism from expanding in Alabama’s most industrial city.³⁸

The peak of the anti-Catholic movement came when the Ku Klux Klan was reborn. In 1915 at Stone Mountain, Georgia, William Simmons held a white supremacist meeting that brought back the Klan by playing on familiar themes of moral reform, racism, and fear of foreigners. Although Southern Baptist leaders publicly criticized mob violence often associated with the Klan, the emphasis on public morality struck a chord with evangelicals, who had been promoting moral reform for the past thirty years.

³⁷ *The Christian Index*, 8 August 1912.

³⁸ Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, 302.

Georgia was a prime location for the re-birth of this organization. Atlanta had experienced immigration, but more importantly, it was the headquarters of Georgia's Tom Watson, a former Populist leader turned anti-Catholic spokesman. Through his writings, Watson had famously incited the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jew accused of raping a Protestant white woman. Additionally, D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, a film romanticizing the role of the Klan as guarantors of moral order, had recently debuted in the city. The Klan was not distinctively Baptist, but since this was the largest Protestant denomination in the South by that time, it is safe to say that their membership numbers were significant.³⁹

From 1870 to 1920, the focus of conflict remained remarkably consistent: whether it was Mardi Gras, religious imagery, public schools, or alcohol, these were contests over control of public spaces. Baptists gained new power in shaping southern society, but then again, so did a growing immigrant population. Southern Baptists, who emerged from the Civil War intent on preserving the past, spent the first two decades of the twentieth century trying to perfect the present.

“The Two Pillars of Evil:” Rum and Romanism

Many historians have argued that no issue exemplified Baptists' quest for moral reform and social control more than alcohol.⁴⁰ Joe Coker contends that from 1880 to

³⁹ Nancy MacLean argued that in Athens, Georgia, Klan membership was comprised mostly of middle class Baptists, Methodists, and to a lesser extent, Presbyterians; MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*.

⁴⁰ For Southern Baptists and temperance/prohibition, see Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*; Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*; Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920*; Harvey, *Redeeming the South:*

1910, the southern anti-liquor campaign succeeded because “evangelicals successfully tied prohibition to these larger concerns with southern society....”⁴¹ Central to Coker’s thesis was that Baptists passed prohibition laws by linking alcohol to racial fears.⁴² While the effects of alcohol on African-Americans certainly were a crucial element in garnering support for prohibition, so too was the association that people made between alcohol and Catholicism, which Coker fails to point out.

Antipathy toward alcohol evolved much like Baptist views of Catholicism. During Reconstruction, other issues trumped sobriety. However, starting in the 1880s, Baptists increasingly saw alcohol as not only a threat to the sacred space of the home, but as a corruptor of society. As Baptists became more concerned about limiting the consumption of alcohol in their communities, their opposition increasingly contained anti-Catholic rhetoric. For many Southern Baptists, alcohol and Catholicism were inextricably linked—“Rum and Romanism” were two pillars of evil that had to be stamped out.

Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925; Israel, *Before Scopes: Evangelicalism, Education, and Evolution in Tennessee, 1870-1925*; James D. Ivy, *No Saloon in the Valley: The Southern Strategy of Texas Prohibitionists in the 1880s* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003); Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920*; Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900*.

⁴¹ Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*, 2-3.

⁴² Although *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause* is among the latest scholarship on the relationship between southern evangelicals and prohibition, Coker overemphasizes the significance of race as the determinant for passing prohibition, while at the same time he fails to mention the role anti-Catholicism played. Race may have been the primary motive within the Anti-Saloon League, where Baptists shared power with other southern evangelicals; but for Southern Baptists, other social concerns including immigration and the spread of Catholicism were also important variables.

For Americans, the popular link between Catholic immigrants and alcohol went back to the 1830s and 1840s when Irish immigrants began pouring into the Northeastern United States. Anti-immigrant groups sprouted up almost overnight and with them, stereotypical literature that purported to expose Catholic “nefarious behavior.” “Lecherous priests, secret tunnels between seminaries and convents, and the babies who resulted from these unholy unions slaughtered and buried in basements” were, as historian Robert Lockwood describes, “typical publication topics” in anti-Catholic publications.⁴³ Other stories depicted the Irish as drunks and the Catholic Church as enablers of the problem.

During the antebellum period, literature linking Irish Catholics and alcohol stemmed almost entirely from northern sources. Southerners did not experience the same influx of immigration that their counterparts did, but they were aware of anti-Catholic literature. Publications did little to sway southern sentiments about drinking, which were the most liberal in the nation. On the one hand, most Southern Baptists believed that consumption was a personal matter. On the other, they opposed drinking because they associated it with public drunkenness, which they deemed as both sinful and dishonorable behavior. One issue that did not help southern temperance was that early movements to curb the sale and consumption stemmed from groups outside the South that were often linked to abolitionism and women’s suffrage.⁴⁴ These associations killed any chances that Southern Baptists might identify with such an organized movement.

⁴³ Robert P. Lockwood, "The Evolution of Anti-Catholicism in the United States," Lockwood, ed. *Anti-Catholicism in American Culture*, 30.

⁴⁴ Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900*, 175.

During the 1870s and 1880s, Southern Baptists became increasingly concerned about the effects of alcohol on the general welfare. Because of their congregational nature and uneasiness with the outright prohibition of alcohol, they focused first on temperance—the idea that by winning souls and teaching people about the evils of alcohol, Baptists could morally persuade imbibers and eliminate the desire. To set good examples, congregations enacted strict rules on their members that made alcohol sinful and enforced the moral code through peer networks.⁴⁵

Because of their evangelical spirit, Baptists believed that both their ideas and values should be shared beyond the local congregation. These evangelical activities led to encounters with Catholics both at home and abroad. They believed the message of Jesus Christ could transform entire societies; more importantly, they believed they were representatives of God bringing universal good news. Put in these terms, it is easy to understand why those who opposed missionary efforts were labeled “infidels” and mission fields were often describe as “battlegrounds.” Due in part to naïveté and in part to arrogance, Baptists found their missionary efforts in Catholic countries to be surprisingly difficult. Missionaries chronicled their frustrations in letters home and more importantly, in detailed reports that were printed in Baptist publications.

Missionary reports describing exotic cultures that were published in denominational newspapers often painted Catholics (and other religions) in less than flattering terms. Frequently, the articles linked alcohol with the idea of a Catholic Church that was either so out of touch with civilization that the clergy simply did not care about its effects, or too corrupted by secular values to bring about change. Missionary

⁴⁵ Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920*, 11.

Curtis Lee Law described Mexico in 1866 as a land where "...the people know absolutely nothing of the spiritual religion of our Lord."⁴⁶ This was a culture of vices that he described as being dominated by Catholicism:

Drunkenness and prostitution are the accompaniments of so-called religious services. The Bible and its teachings have no place in the lives of the people. The religious teachers, who are priests of the Romish Church, have, by their example and teaching, led these people to the most ignorant, degraded and immoral state.⁴⁷

A corrupted state was the subject for the tract, "The Curse of Romanism in Italy," which allowed Southern Baptists to see Italy through missionary D. G. Whittinghill's eyes. Whittinghill described Italy as completely overrun by Catholicism. "The very teachers of religion themselves," he remarked, "for the most part have a reputation of living unchaste lives.... Within the past few days here in Rome the civil authorities have arrested and put in prison two priests, one for drunkenness and the other for 'bad conduct in a disorderly house.'"⁴⁸ As Baptists concentrated on spiritual piety, personal salvation, and righteous living, they viewed Catholicism as counter to these values. "How can there be a high moral standard," Whittinghill wondered, "when the example set for the people is so bad?"⁴⁹

While such accounts in foreign lands may have given Southern Baptists some of the first accounts of the relationship between Catholicism and alcohol, the most disconcerting accounts came from the United States. Home mission journals and general

⁴⁶ Curtis Lee Laws, "Mexico" (Baltimore: Maryland Baptist Mission Room) Pamphlet 1866, Pamphlet Collection.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ D. G. Whittinghill, "The Curse of Romanism in Italy" (Baltimore: Mission Literature Department of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1902, Pamphlet 1329.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

articles printed in denominational newspapers shaped public perceptions of Catholics. The *Alabama Baptist* reported that "... 65 per cent of the manufacturers of alcoholic liquors for beverages in the city of Philadelphia are Roman Catholics, and of the brewers 75 per cent are Roman Catholic communicants and pay revenue to the Roman Catholic [Church]."⁵⁰

Many Baptists adopted the idea that control of public spaces offered the best opportunity to enforce their authority on southern society. Evangelical conversion brought not only the winning of another soul for Christ, but an advocate for moral reform. Seen in this light, Home Missions was one solution for curbing alcohol consumption. Baptist leader A. C. Dixon argued that Baptists needed to plant their seeds before the onslaught of immigration enveloped the South. "Let us of the South take for Christ our growing cities, while they are young," he wrote, "before the evil days shall come, when the devil, infidelity, liquor, and Romanism have taken possession."⁵¹ Dixon was particularly concerned about increasing funding for home missions in New Orleans and Baltimore, two of the largest immigration areas in the South.

Louisiana Baptist leader E. O. Ware agreed that his state was an important Baptist mission field. In 1902, he argued that Catholics' long history in the state had made them the dominant adversary in converting immigrants and controlling alcohol. He wrote, "Here we have French, Italian, Spanish missions—foreign fields at our doors."⁵² Among the most difficult things for Baptist missionaries to overturn, Ware contended, were the

⁵⁰ *Alabama Baptist*, 24 January 1895.

⁵¹ *Christian Index*, 05 October 1893.

⁵² E. O. Ware, "Louisiana as a Mission Field" (Alexandria, LA: Chronicle Publishing Company), 1902, Pamphlet 1325.

saloons and the cultural authority of Catholicism, although “more and more the saloon is being outlawed.”⁵³

J. F. Love, Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, SBC, wrote of his concern with the rapid growth of immigration in the Southwest and the challenge Baptists faced there. According to Love, growth:

... has seemingly taken all but the Roman Catholics and the saloon-keeper by surprise. Take St. Louis, for example, the first city we ever undertook to evangelize. While we have some strong churches and truly great and faithful preachers in it, there are in St. Louis 140 saloons to every Baptist church, and, if conditions prevail there which prevail where this writer has made observations, each saloon handles more men during any day in the week, Sunday excepted, than enter any church building in St. Louis during the whole week.⁵⁴

Love touched on a harsh reality. Although Baptists realized that while reaching out and converting the masses might curb consumption, new immigrants would constantly strain any attempts to control consumption through moral suasion. St. Louis was an example of what could happen without due diligence: here once was a prime candidate for moral regeneration; however, by the 1880s it was dominated by the saloon and a growing beer industry.

The Catholic Church was acutely aware that intense immigration was creating anti-Catholic sentiments, so leaders made attempts to improve their image. Some Catholics had actually joined the temperance movement. While promoting a temperance campaign, Beverley Carter wrote in the *Alabama Baptist* about their successes, noting that even Masons, Muslims, Colored Baptists, and Catholics were participating,

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ James F. Love, “A Great Unfinished Task” (Atlanta: Publicity Department of the Baptist Home Mission Board) Pamphlet 3175 C.2.

remarking that she had heard of a “Roman Catholic Archbishop [who had] forbidden Catholic Churches in his diocese to retain in their membership any saloon keeper.”⁵⁵

Optimistic anecdotes involving temperance and Catholicism, however, were rare, and Baptists were skeptical of the legitimacy of these claims. They did not coincide with other familiar accounts of Catholicism they had read. In 1895 at a Catholic temperance meeting in New York City, leaders pushed for a resolution condemning the monks at St. Vincent’s Abbey in Beattey, Pennsylvania, for brewing and selling beer. The resolution failed, but the publicity convinced the monks to discontinue beer production. Catholics explained that there was “no harm in itself in brewing beer, but for a religious community to do so shocks public opinion in this country, and to avoid scandalizing fifty millions of people the Benedictines will probably abandon the business.”⁵⁶ Unconvinced, E. E. Folk, editor of the *Baptist and Reflector*, responded to the story, pointing out that “Catholics do not regard brewing beer or selling it as anything wrong in itself, but simply out of deference for public opinion *in this country* [sic]...” abandoned the trade. According to Folk, to Baptists, alcohol was a sin; to Catholics, alcohol was a publicity campaign. If Catholics could sway public perceptions, they could resume their brewing practices.

By 1885, many Southern Baptists had come to the conclusion that temperance had too many limitations and threw their support behind prohibition. However, much like the debates over control of public schools, prohibition divided them over the proper extent of political activism. Denominational leaders debated amongst themselves issues such as religious liberty, personal duties to the community, and the responsibility of government

⁵⁵ *Alabama Baptist*, 01 December 1887.

⁵⁶ *Baptist and Reflector*, 26 September 1895.

to shape morality. Ultimately, the debate boiled down to whether prohibiting alcohol should be administered at the local level, the state level, or by federal mandate.

Initially, most Baptists supported local option because they believed they could be much more effective in influencing local politicians and civic leaders than at state or national levels. In order to manipulate lawmaking, Baptists understood that they needed control of the public space. From the 1890s through the 1920s, denominational newspapers were filled with public statements either endorsing local candidates for their stance on alcohol or denouncing them as a part of the “Rum and Rome” conspiracy. “I will never knowingly cast a vote for a constitution of either Rum or Rome,” wrote Ms. R.M. Hunter.⁵⁷ As a strong advocate for prohibition, Hunter’s editorial played on readers’ anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic sentiments:

There is a full-blood Roman Catholic running for one of the highest offices in one of Alabama’s richest counties. He boasts that every Catholic—and there are many in the city—and every Jew—and there are legions—will vote for him; and many a Baptist, doubtless.⁵⁸

Many local and state laws that prohibited alcohol passed during the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1907, prohibitionists were surprised that Birmingham citizens had voted to support statewide prohibition. The main reason for such skepticism was that Birmingham experienced a tremendous increase in Italian and German immigrants who were flocking to the area’s coal and steel industries. One observer of local politics commented, incorrectly in so far as the origins of its population:

For Birmingham was not a city naturally expected to go for prohibition. It is a city of mills and furnaces, a city of work and industry. Its population

⁵⁷ *Alabama Baptist*, 16 April 1896.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

was largely born and largely recruited from the foreign elements of our own American population.⁵⁹

Although state prohibition laws eventually gained support in areas like Birmingham, once in place, they had a limited effect on curbing consumption. One problem that Alabama's evangelicals did not expect to encounter in their local and statewide alcohol bans was a lack of enforcement. Especially in southern states where taxes were low and enforcement resources scarce, local officials often chose either to selectively target "problem areas" such as saloons, to use prohibition primarily as a social control mechanism applied to Blacks and immigrants, or to refuse to enforce prohibition at all. Birmingham pastor Alfred J. Dickinson argued inner cities were a landscape "where the commerce in crime and vice is granted protection from the law and is 'regulated' by the police."⁶⁰ These accounts of police corruption called into question the effectiveness of state and local mandates.

A year after statewide prohibition passed in Alabama, evangelical leaders were concerned that Mobile would simply choose not to comply with the new law. There was good reason for anxiety. For one, Mobile had a large, established Catholic population that strongly objected to prohibition. More importantly, local newspapers in Mobile had printed a series of editorials suggesting that Mobile secede from Alabama because it disliked the recently passed state prohibition law. These editorials ignited a firestorm of controversy between the city and the state's evangelical leaders. The argument developed into a rivalry that had populist overtones. Editors of the *Alabama Baptist* informed its readership that "Some of our good (?) [sic] citizens of Mobile have used all

⁵⁹ *Alabama Baptist*, 13 November 1907.

⁶⁰ Alfred J. Dickinson, "Baptist Problems in Large Cities," *Our Home Field*, January 1914.

sorts of epithets in speaking of the up-country people. Such terms as ‘red necks,’ [Governor] ‘Comer’s piratical crew,’ ‘county Jakes,’ ‘japs,’ etc. have been used.”⁶¹ Baptist leaders responded by calling into question Mobile’s commitment to law and order, arguing that city leaders were entrenched and corrupt.

Combative politics was not exclusive to Alabama. In Tennessee, prohibitionists waged a war with “wets” from the late 1800s through 1909. One prominent casualty of this feud was *Nashville American* editor and state prohibitionist leader Edward W. Carmack.⁶² He was an outspoken critic of Governor Malcolm Patterson and his corrupt political machine, which had fought statewide prohibition. Although the conflict in Tennessee was not specifically between Catholics and Protestants, the fight resembled other contests over public space. To evangelicals, Patterson’s organization more closely resembled the Democratic Party of Tammany Hall than that of the Lost Cause. In November 1908, Carmack was assassinated on the streets of Nashville by an associate of Patterson. The murder shocked the entire state, bolstered the state prohibition campaign, and spawned the reformist Southern Sociological Congress.

For prohibition forces, this created a martyr and encouraged calls for retribution. Two months after the assassination, O. L. Hailey, pastor of the Corsicana Baptist Church in Corsicana, Texas, wrote a letter to E. E. Folk, editor of the Tennessee *Baptist and Reflector*, encouraging him to continue fighting for prohibition: “I am keeping up with

⁶¹ *Alabama Baptist*, 22 April 1908.

⁶² For a more complete account of the prohibition campaign in Tennessee and the Carmack assassination, see Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*, 72-75; Israel, *Before Scopes: Evangelicalism, Education, and Evolution in Tennessee, 1870-1925*, 90-91.

Tennessee, and am greatly delighted with much that is being done.”⁶³ He went further, implying that prohibitionists might have to use violence in order to succeed, much like the vigilante farmers in Western Tennessee were doing. “The Night-Riders are getting justice, I think. Now if the assassins of Carmack can be brought to justice, I shall feel that my old state is coming into her inheritance.”⁶⁴

To make matters worse, Patterson both pardoned Carmack’s assassin and vetoed the 1909 state prohibition law within six months. Baptists viewed the governor’s actions as part of a larger power struggle between the powerful, outside liquor interests and the honest, decent citizens of Tennessee who were intent on reforming society. Patterson created a backlash that split the Tennessee Democratic Party and emboldened the state legislature to override the veto, allowing for statewide prohibition. Texas Baptist J. B. Gambrell wrote to E. E. Folk commenting on the recent adoption of statewide prohibition:

Dear Brother: I rejoice with you and heartily congratulate you on the passage of the Prohibition bill by the Tenn. Legislature. It is glorious. I do not doubt that the killing of Carmack helped to clear the atmosphere. Splendid man he was. Texas is coming, Fraternally, J. B. Gambrell.⁶⁵

By 1915, nine southern states had passed statewide prohibition laws, but for many Baptists, these laws were not sufficient. Nevertheless, they recognized that any attempts at national prohibition required the support of the Democratic Party, and southerners were well-aware of the influence Catholics exerted, particularly in the power centers of Northeastern cities like Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City. In addition to Irish

⁶³ O. L. Hailey Folder 1.77, Edgar. E. Folk Papers AT663, SBHLA.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ J. B. Gambrell Folder 1.74, E. E. Folk Papers.

Catholics connected with the Party, missionary B. C. Henning warned Baptists of the growing influence of Italian immigrants: “A more potent reason for apprehension unless we evangelize these peoples, is their growing influence in the Economic, Political, Social, and Religious life of our Country.”⁶⁶

Particularly during the Progressive Era, Southern Baptists increasingly believed that they were in a unique position to remake society and preserve the American character. In this context, prohibition preserved American values against foreign invasion. “Politically, socially, and religiously, our cities are to define the making and future character of the nation,” wrote C. J. Thompson of Atlanta.⁶⁷ Commenting on the important victories gained during the prohibition campaign in Atlanta, he continued: “It is very evident that the success in evangelizing our country with the millions that are coming to us will depend on what we can make of our great cities religiously. City evangelization is our task to save the nation and the world.”

Progressive Era conceptions of citizenship revolved around ideas of public morality, which made anti-alcohol campaigns a natural extension of progressive reform. “Prohibition is but the combined effort of patriotism and Christianity to get rid of a traffic that is doing more to pauperize and degrade our people than all things else,” wrote P. S. Montgomery of Ashville, Alabama.⁶⁸ He added, “I want Christianity and patriotism to

⁶⁶ B. C. Henning, “The Threefold Field: Foreigners, Indians, and Negroes” (Atlanta: Publicity Department of the Baptist Home Mission Board) Pamphlet 520.

⁶⁷ C. J. Thompson, “Home Board Evangelization Solving the City Problem,” *Our Home Field*, February 1909.

⁶⁸ *Alabama Baptist*, 22 July 1886.

pervade every part of politics, entering the campaign and legislative hall, giving us true and competent men to legislate.”⁶⁹

Stories of corruption and indifference that weakened local regulations were part of a progressive platform to nationalize prohibition. World War I provided a different problem that illustrated the limitations of state laws. In 1917, as young men went into training camps for World War I, Professor W.J. McGlothlin of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary spoke before the Southern Baptist Convention at New Orleans about his concerns that the evangelical Christian values of southern soldiers might be negatively influenced by the effects of immigration:

They [the soldiers] will be subject to temptations as never before—temptations to low living, to irreligion, to profanity and blasphemy, to drinking.... Again we in the melting pot [sic]... Now, the question before us is, Shall [sic] the gospel of Jesus Christ be one of the main ingredients of this new social order? The Southern Baptists must, in predominant measure, answer this question for the South.⁷⁰

Accordingly, national prohibition symbolized evidence of Protestant Christianity’s power over society. Ratifying a constitutional amendment banning the sale and manufacture of alcohol at a time when Catholic immigrants were arriving in the United States in record numbers was intended to be a public profession of civic Christianity and national identity. Dr. Charles Ball, Professor at Southwestern Theological Seminary, encouraged Southern Baptists to “make real a Christian civilization in America.”⁷¹ In order for this charge to succeed, Bell believed that the

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ W. J. McGlothlin, “Christianize the South” (Atlanta: Publicity Department of the Baptist Home Mission Board) 1917, Pamphlet 729.

⁷¹ Charles T. Ball, “Home Missions Must Meet Unprecedented Needs,” Home Field-Excerpts 1909-1915 Folder 10.6, Una Roberts Lawrence Papers.

Home Missions program must focus on “Christianizing patriotism,” writing that “Christianity can conquer North America and the forces here that are re-making civilization and political ideas....”

The prohibition campaign ultimately succeeded in passing a national law banning the sale of alcohol. This campaign vindicated southern evangelicals intent on redeeming the South’s rightful place as the nation’s moral compass. In doing so, Baptists set their sights on Catholics as the public face of the opposition. Key to the movement’s success was a carefully constructed anti-Catholic rhetoric that motivated Southern Baptist churches to suppress their apprehension against endorsing political campaigns and rally against an organized, highly political Catholic Church. It succeeded because Baptists and other evangelicals capitalized on fears of a foreign element taking control of America.

Although some historians argue that prohibition was “the central element of the evangelical vision of a truly redeemed South,” when viewed as a corollary of anti-Catholicism, prohibition was an integral part of a larger reform movement intent on creating a distinctive southern evangelical identity.⁷² Threats to southern religious hegemony, whether they came from Carnival celebrations, challenges to the entrenched racial hierarchy, immigration from southern and eastern Europe, or the consumption of alcohol, had a compounding effect in undermining the social order. As a singular cause, Catholic resistance to prohibition might have warranted a harsh response from evangelicals. The fact that Baptists and Catholics fought over so much more— control of public schools; control over public spaces; immigration—all worked together to amplify anti-Catholic sentiments.

⁷² Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*, 256-57.

Chapter Five

The Paradox of Womanhood: Southern Baptists, Anti-Catholicism, and Gender

Although anti-Catholicism was motivated by a number of issues, gender played a pivotal role. Anti-Catholic sentiments were inextricably linked to the evolving roles of women in both the secular world and the sacred community. Baptists often portrayed white women as innocent victims of an insidious Catholic power that lured women to the faith, gained mental, spiritual, and physical power over them, and then used/abused them as the Church saw fit. Mostly men interested in elevating and protecting white womanhood in southern society perpetrated this form of anti-Catholicism.

Even though patriarchy was the primary motivation in gender-based anti-Catholicism, it was not the only justification. White southern women shared the antipathy for Catholics and increasingly served on the front lines, fighting against the influence of Catholicism. They shaped anti-Catholic sentiment by advancing their reformist agenda—they served in church missions, promoted temperance and prohibition, and advanced Baptist doctrine—all of which put them in direct conflict with Catholics. Catholic women had their own agenda to reform the South. According to legendary Baptist missionary Annie Armstrong, Catholic women were so successful with their mission work that they “rivalled Jesuits” in their influence on the region.¹

¹ Annie Armstrong, “A Need for Female Missionaries,” Pamphlet Collection, GBHLA.

While white southern evangelicals fought hard to protect their sacred images of womanhood, the same could not be said about their respect for Catholic imagery. More specifically, Baptist writings referred to the Roman Catholic Church as the “Whore of Babylon,” accused Catholics of “Mariolatry” (the deification and worship of the Virgin Mary), and referred to convents as “dens of inequity.” Simply stated, Baptists assaulted gendered forms of Catholic imagery with surprising irreverence because they believed Catholics held perverted views of women.

Herein lies the paradox of womanhood. Baptists elevated white southern women on a pedestal, protecting them as sacred symbols of southern culture. For one to qualify for this honor, the woman had to be white, middle- or upper-class, chaste, and Protestant. Baptists treated other white, southern, middle and upper-class women with irreverence, and in some cases, hostility, simply because they were Catholic. Although underemphasized by historians, religious identity was a powerful force that forged a connection between gender and anti-Catholicism.

Catholic brain-washing

In March, 1875, D. B. Jutten wrote to the editor of New York’s state Baptist newspaper, the *Examiner and Chronicle*, informing readers that the Roman Catholic Church had abducted a teenage girl. Southern Baptist newspapers reprinted the story. Teresa (the name of the allegedly abducted) had recently renounced her Catholic faith and joined the Sixteenth Baptist Church when her parents both unexpectedly died. Her extended family (who were Catholic) sought custodial care of Teresa and, according to Jutten, “made constant efforts to induce her to leave the [Baptist] family with whom she

was employed, and making her home with them, to return to Mother Church.”²

Furthermore, the Catholic relatives were willing to lie in order to restore Teresa’s Catholic faith.

According to Jutten, her aunt informed Teresa that her uncle had died. The next day, Teresa traveled to his home in Fordham, New York, “to find that not only was her uncle not dead, but that she was to be held a close prisoner until she should renounce her faith and return to the Catholic Church.”³ He reported that when a group of Teresa’s Protestant friends (probably members of the Sixteenth Baptist Church) learned of Teresa’s whereabouts, they petitioned the local courts to issue a writ of habeas corpus to search the family’s home and return the captive girl. With the support of local public officials, Baptists rescued her “from the living death of a convent life,” and according to Jutten, “a happier girl never trod the pavements of this city than she on her return.”

The *Alabama Baptist* reported a similar forcible “conversion” twenty years later in 1895. This incident involved a woman in New York City who had recently left the Catholic Church and who the article claimed to have suffered “outrageous persecution from those who have sought, but failed [sic] to win her back.”⁴ The woman complained that she received “daily letters and cards from unknown people full of vulgarity and threats,” having encountered those wielding “stones and knives.” Catholics responded that the woman had exaggerated her claims, but editors of the *Alabama Baptist* came to the defense of the New York woman, remarking that “the persecution by Catholics of

² *Alabama Baptist*, 13 April 1875.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Alabama Baptist*, 20 June 1895.

those who leave their church is so common that we had not thought it would be denied, at least with the expectation that the denial would be accepted by intelligent people.”

These anti-Catholic anecdotes reflect Protestants anxiety over losing control of gender and family relations. Accounts such as Jutton’s were exceptional in that they insinuated that Catholic power threatened to invade the private, sacred sphere of family. These accounts envisioned Protestant women as the primary victims of Catholic deception; but other accounts involved entire families. Teresa testified that she had asked her family why they had lied, and her aunt replied that “the priest told me it was no harm to tell a lie to save your soul.”⁵ Both Teresa and her aunt, according to Jutten, were victims of a religion that had the power to influence and, at times, even brainwash them. Once under the power of the Church, women served an important role in spreading “the Catholic menace.”

The Corruption of the Priesthood

Foremost to gender-driven anti-Catholicism was the threat that priests posed to women. Southern Baptists believed that Catholic priests held positions that afforded them tremendous control over their congregations. This power led to a multitude of concerns that practically all Protestants held against Catholic clergy. Because of their historic doctrines favoring local congregational control and their opposition to hierarchical church authority, Baptists were particularly bothered by what they saw as the overreaching power of the priesthood. These beliefs made Baptists receptive to testimonies about clerical abuses ranging from the spiritual to the sexual.

⁵ Ibid.

For instance, the Catholic Church required that priests remain unmarried and that they take vows of chastity. Southern Baptists publicly questioned both the doctrinal soundness of this arrangement and its practicality. They argued that the Bible offered no clear directive on celibacy and alluded to the fact that this system of living ignored the inherent weakness of man. “Celibacy,” the *Christian Index* opined, was among the first historically distinctive attributes of Catholicism.⁶ The problem was that it imposed “such an unscriptural, unnatural, and morally dangerous restriction” on the priesthood. Put plainly, priests had no mechanism to relieve their biologically-motivated drive for sex/procreation.

Baptists also believed that Catholic priests had problems controlling their use of alcohol and that Catholicism tolerated, perhaps even promoted excessive consumption of liquor. Baptists concluded that drinking led to social deviancy and crime.

Catholics, particularly those who were recent immigrants, were puzzled at southern sensitivities about alcohol. In their cultural tradition, both men and women imbibed; generally, they did not regard alcohol as a threat to decency.⁷ To them, alcohol embodied an important representation of the faith. Wine symbolized the blood of Jesus Christ during Holy Communion, and it was often consumed at social functions. In Europe, Catholic monasteries had a history of brewing their own beers that dated back to the Middle Ages. Beer historian Randy Mosher explains that this tradition has persisted to the present where in Belgium, “Monks of the Cistercian order, founded in the twelfth

⁶ *Christian Index*, 2 January 1893.

⁷ There were Catholic women who joined temperance organizations such as the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America; they tended to be assimilated Irish-American Catholics. Still, this represented a small portion of the American Catholic population. See, for example, Joan Bland, *Hibernian Crusade: The Story of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America*, (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1951).

century, place special emphasis on vocation as part of their religious observance, and the production of beer and other foods such as cheese has a central role.”⁸ During periods of fasting, beer was the “liquid bread” that provided nourishment when regular food was not allowed. Although the American Catholic Church did not have the same tradition of brewing as Europeans, by the nineteenth century some monasteries within the United States practiced this ancient tradition.

Because the Catholic Church permitted drinking, Baptists believed that the Church turned a blind eye to the indecent behavior alcohol caused. Concerned about lax morals, the editor of Tennessee’s *Baptist and Reflector* wrote, “Rum invades our homes and Rome stands by and sanctions.”⁹ This troubled many Southerners, especially men whose own experiences with alcohol were more often linked to hunting, gambling, fighting, and other forms of masculine behavior.¹⁰ To them, alcohol was a conduit for wildness; often, men consumed alcohol to lower inhibitions and arouse feral behavior. Grain alcohol, primarily whiskey made from corn, was a southern man’s drink of choice, best enjoyed during male-centered activities, not inside the sacred space of the home.

Unlike beer and wine, grain alcohol was easy to make yet difficult to drink in large quantities. It burned while going down, and if consumed too quickly, would come up just as quickly. Men admired those who could both consume large quantities and

⁸ Randy Mosher, *Radical Brewing: Recipes, Tales, and World-Altering Meditations in a Glass* (Boulder: Brewers Publications, 2004), 122.

⁹ “Roman Catholicism,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 12 September 1895.

¹⁰ While the relationship between masculinity and alcohol consumption was not exclusively southern, Ted Ownby argues that southern notions of gender made it distinctive: Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920*.

weather the consequences of overdrinking. By consuming distilled spirits strong enough to “put hair on a man’s chest,” men garnered honor and respect among their peers.¹¹

Not surprisingly, southern women who tolerated or even encouraged male intoxication were considered to be poor, the result of “improper breeding,” or morally degenerate.¹² Reputable women did not put themselves in a compromising position by associating with drinking men. Men whose wives reflected the values of the Southern lady rarely brought alcohol into the home. Alcohol consumption was compatible with neither the purity of womanhood nor the sanctity of home life.

In southern cities with large Catholic communities, temperance and prohibition debates made Baptists more aware of how this component of Catholic culture threatened families. In rural areas and cities without a Catholic presence, most southerners became familiar with these social customs by reading the print media and hearing mission reports in their local churches. For Southern Baptists, the idea of Catholic priests mixing alcohol with flawed religious practices must have appeared like a recipe for moral disaster. Some complained publicly that the Catholic clergy drank while on the job and knew full well the implications of their behavior. One Alabamian pointed out that the potential for family abuse was obvious: “drinking is one of the habits of these ‘unmarried fathers,’ and parents who send their girls to Catholic convents may as well confront the fact, that

¹¹ Although the origins of this phrase are unknown, it was a popular masculine colloquialism in American folk culture. For additional examples, see Newbell Niles Puckett et al., *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions: a Compendium of American Folklore: From the Ohio Collection of Newbell Niles Puckett*, 3 vols. (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981).

¹² While the relationship between masculinity and alcohol consumption was not exclusively southern, Ted Ownby argues that Southern customs made it distinctive. See, Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920*, 88.

these are the spiritual(?) [sic] guides of their girls!”¹³ Much like the stereotypes against African-American men, alcohol could transform priests into seducers of young women or worst of all, into rapists.

In addition to fears of priestly sexual abuses attributable to their use of alcohol, many Baptists also believed the priests utilized Confession (known by Catholics as the Sacrament of Penance, Confession, or Reconciliation) to seduce women. Reverend A. C. Dixon argued that the confessional represented a repressive element in Catholicism, referring to it as “a little inquisition in our midst.”¹⁴ Confessing one’s sins privately to a priest was an idea that originated as a Catholic response to the Protestant Reformation. During the Council of Trent, the Church sought the means to make the Catholic experience more spiritually-satisfying, transforming confessions of sin from a public ritual to a private, anonymous activity. This proved to be a popular reform for the Church. While Protestants also believed that repentance was a necessary component in assuring salvation, they believed that confessing to a priest created a gulf between the believer and God. Since priests were human and therefore fallible, placing the forgiveness of an individual’s sins in the hands of an imperfect religious leader seemed to jeopardize one’s salvation.

Southern Baptists discussed a variety of possibilities by which the confessional compromised the modesty and sanctity of womanhood. Noted Baptist missionary Annie Armstrong wrote that “in the confessional everything must be told, no family secrets, no confidences of any kind withheld. Under such conditions, ruined homes as well as

¹³ *Alabama Baptist*, 26 November 1888.

¹⁴ A. C. Dixon, *The True and the False* (Baltimore: Wharton, Barron, 1890), 162.

bondage of souls are also part of the great cost.”¹⁵ A letter written to the Catholic Bishop of Montreal, signed by forty-six women who converted to Protestantism and left the Church, summed up the concerns that Armstrong and other Baptists held:

... we [former Catholic women] believe it to be our duty to say a word to you on the abominations of the confessional. The abominations are such, however, as you know, as it is impossible for women to think or speak of without shame. How is it that among men who call themselves civilized and Christians all the rules of chastity are completely forgotten in the attempt to force, under penalty of eternal damnation, women and girls to go and reveal in the ear of an unmarried man all their most secret thoughts, their most guilty desires and most hidden action? Must not your priest carry brazen faces to appear in public after hearing the revelations of misery which it is impossible for a man to hear without becoming himself corrupted? It is impossible for a woman to recount them without forgetting all laws of modesty and chastity.¹⁶

Once priests possessed the deepest secrets of young women gleaned from confession, they then might persuade these women to committ immoral acts. Anti-Catholic writer F. H. Sills of Savannah wrote that the confessional took “... the reins off from the priests, and they have all kinds of opportunities to engage in the most gross and greivous [sic] fornication, vice and crime.”¹⁷ Continuing with this line of attack, he added, “Just think of a father and mother allowing their daughter to go to private confession with a young, passionate priest, and there have him compel her to pour out before him all her life and secret thoughts! Is it not just as dangerous as it looks?”¹⁸

¹⁵ Armstrong, “A Need for Female Missionaries,” Pamphlet Collection, GBHLA.

¹⁶ “Painful Disclosures,” *Alabama Baptist*, 3 August 1875.

¹⁷ Sills, *Roman Catholicism Investigated and Exposed*, 32.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Marriage and Family Life

Priests also undermined family life. Part of the problem was that the clergy was controlled by a foreign element that did not represent southern values. According to the *Alabama Baptist*, the policies of the Roman Catholic Church facilitated Italy's rampant bigamy. The newspaper explained that the Church would not "recognize civil marriage; the state does not regard a church marriage as binding.... The result is that large numbers of unscrupulous men take two wives, one in the eyes of the church and one in the eyes of the state."¹⁹ In 1898, A.W. Briscoe, an Alabama Baptist pastor and champion of Prohibition, informed readers that in Italy, the Pope had advocated a new law "for the regulation of the institution of marriage."²⁰ Starting on Easter Sunday 1909, the new marriage law held that "no marriage, in the estimation of the Catholic church [sic], will be valid as between a Catholic and a Protestant unless it is performed by a Catholic priest in the presence of two witnesses." Americans should beware, Briscoe warned, because as more Italian immigrants came to the United States, the Pope's dominion over religious custom, civil law, and marriage could spell trouble.

Briscoe expressed several concerns with the Italian marriage law. It left the definition of matrimony in the hands of the Church and gave priests dominion over all Italian families. But foremost, he feared that it would inspire American Catholics to seek a similar law in the United States even though the idea was blatantly "un-American."²¹ He argued that it ignored,

¹⁹ "Bigamy in Italy," *Alabama Baptist*, 24 March 1898.

²⁰ A. W. Briscoe, "A New Law for America: By What Authority Doest Thou These Things?," *Alabama Baptist*, 30 October 1907.

²¹ *Ibid.*

...the right of civil government to say what shall constitute a valid marriage and who shall have the authority to perform the ceremony. It further snubs every Protestant pastor and virtually lodges against every couple not married by a Catholic priest the charge of unlawful cohabitation and brands their offspring as spurious.²²

Southern Baptists had reason to be concerned. Immigrants were flowing into the United States in increasing numbers, thereby increasing Catholic influence. American Baptist I. M. Halderman wrote a tract entitled “The Scarlet Woman or the Revival of Romanism,” arguing that liberal theology had fractured distinctly Protestant American values.²³ In their place, the Catholic Church had replaced Protestants as the defender of Holy Scripture, conservative values, and was “rapidly rising as the bulwark of the family, the champion of the home.”²⁴

An example of this advantage was the Catholic policy against divorce, which stated that a “... priest will not marry, baptize or receive into communion those who are living in open defiance of the law and testimony of God.”²⁵ Halderman believed that increasing divorce rates resulted from the ambiguity that had crept into twentieth-century Protestantism, an “excuseless” trend made worse by the fact that Catholics, not Protestants, were leading the fight against divorce. By offering Catholicism as a

²² Ibid.

²³ In the late nineteenth century, Protestants dealt with modernist conflicts, but the American Catholic Church was less divided. Jay Dolan argues that the Church was more successful in resisting modernist ideas because of the Catholic tradition that Church teachings were “definitive, indeed infallible.” See, Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 77.

²⁴ I. M. Haldeman, “The Scarlet Woman or the Revival of Romanism,” Pamphlet 5099, SBHLA.

²⁵ Ibid.

comparative example, Halderman used a combination of sexism, xenophobia, and anti-modernism to rally Protestants to take back America.

There was no top-down set of guidelines about divorce that the Southern Baptist Convention circulated to its churches. Baptist leaders preferred the traditional patriarchal family model but also understood that men (and women) did not always engage in honorable behavior. Pastors had enough experience with spousal abuse, alcoholism, gambling, and adultery to understand that some marriages could not withstand the strain. Congregations struggled to answer questions such as whether or not divorced church members could remarry, retain church membership, and serve in church offices.²⁶ As Baptist women took more active roles as missionaries, reformers, and leaders, the availability of divorce reminded men that their dominion over house and home was being challenged.

On several occasions, Catholics publicly blamed Protestants for the divorce epidemic. A Catholic newspaper in San Francisco declared that divorce was a consequence of the Protestant Reformation. Taking a page from the anti-Catholic, sensationalist literature of the period, the newspaper argued that “it was the corrupt heart of the monk [Martin Luther] who had broken his vows and married a nun who had broken hers that first legitimized divorce.”²⁷ The editor of the North Carolina’s *Biblical Recorder* bristled in response: “We suppose most of the sins of the modern world are placed by Catholic hands upon Protestant heads.”²⁸

²⁶ Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie*, 183.

²⁷ *Biblical Recorder*, 20 March 1912.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Baptists countered that the Catholic Church was hypocritical. While in Rome, missionary D. H. Whittinghill reported that clergy led contradictory lives; they preached about how the Catholic laity should honor family life but priests did not uphold these values. Instead, some ignored their vows and took wives, while others employed concubines to satisfy the demands of their “unchaste lives.”²⁹

Although some Protestants had gone on record that the Catholic Church’s stance on divorce was pro-family, Southern Baptists attacked it as another mechanism by which the Church maintained control over the family, especially women. The *Louisiana Baptist* reported about “an outrage perpetrated by a Roman Catholic priest at Mobile [Alabama], upon a Methodist lady.”³⁰ The woman had been married to a Catholic man for several years, but “could not be persuaded to adopt the faith of her husband.” When the woman became ill, her husband employed the local Catholic priest to solicit her permission to be baptized in the Church, but she refused. Eventually, the woman became ill enough that she lost consciousness, and in her “state of half sensibility, the priest came behind where she lay in bed, made the sign of the cross over her and sprinkled her with holy water, mumbling the Latin ceremony.”

Rumors, Distortions, and Half-Truths

In their enthusiasm to contain Catholicism, Baptists seldom scrutinized their sources. For instance, in 1919 an article circulated entitled “Catholicism and Politics” accused President Woodrow Wilson of colluding with the Pope. Baptist newspapers across the country reprinted the story, evidently without verifying its validity. Although

²⁹ Whittinghill, “The Curse of Romanism in Italy.”

³⁰ “Unwilling Baptism,” *Christian Index*, 20 May 1869.

its origins are unknown, Protestant newspapers attributed the article to “The National Catholic Register,” a tabloid reportedly located in Toronto, Canada. When a group of concerned Catholics began fact checking the story, they uncovered the hoax:

The editor of the *Banner-Herald* said he got it from the *Christian Index*, Atlanta, and promised to investigate it, later on admitting that there was some mistake, but saying he still believed the article represented the sentiments of Catholics. The editor of the *Index* said that the article had appeared in the Baptist paper *Word and Way*, published in Kansas City, one of whose editors, a Mr. Maiden, had gotten it from Mr. Stickland, editor of the Railway Mail Clerks’ Association...A complete tracing proved that there was no such paper as “The National Catholic Register” in the United States....³¹

Many times, stories like this were set in foreign countries where the details were difficult to corroborate. Missionary accounts of Catholic misdeeds in particular were often printed verbatim and without verification. For instance, Hugh McCormick wrote from Zacatecas, Mexico, about an incident between a local Presbyterian congregation and the area’s Catholic population. The author claimed that one of the local Catholic priests,

... excited the faithful to a frenzy of Catholic fury, then with his brother led them, armed with pistols, knives, and stones, to the Presbyterian church... where the mob ransacked the church and reportedly killed a man.... It is said that little Protestant child was literally torn in pieces by these ‘Catholic’ women in their latest ‘crusade.’³²

Mission stories focused on innocent women and children because missionaries understood that such stories generated emotional reactions and financial support. In the 1890s, Alberto Jose Diaz, a Cuban and missionary for the Southern Baptist Convention’s Home Mission Board, reported to the Convention that he was building a great Baptist

³¹ Bishop Benjamin Keily Papers, Catholic Laymen’s Association Folder, “Meeting 1919,” Savannah Diocese Archives (hereafter cited as SDA), Savannah, GA.

³² “Another Bloody Page in the History of Roman ‘Catholicism,’” *Alabama Baptist*, 29 May 1890.

church in Cuba, one that would serve as a mission control for Cuban outreach. By 1901, the Baptist Church of Havana, Diaz claimed, was host to “over 2782 members, with 8000 candidates awaiting baptism.”³³ In addition, Diaz allegedly ran a Baptist school for Cuban children, professing that he was winning Cuban children to Christ. For years, the HMB supported Diaz, printed his reports in mission journals, and published his story of Cuban missions in a tract titled “Cuba for Christ.”

Eventually, other Cuban missionaries suspected that Diaz exaggerated his work. When HMB executives visited Diaz in Havana, students he recruited from the local Catholic school pretended to be Baptist school children. Because Baptist officials did not speak Spanish, his fraud went unnoticed. Critics also discovered that the Baptist hospital in Cuba was equally fraudulent; Diaz had taken photos of children lying in cots and printed with captions claiming they were patients of the hospital.

In an incredibly frank assessment of the scandal, missionary E. Cordova reflected on the irony of the Diaz scandal:

Diaz thought that all his readers were low herd ignoramuses [sic], on whose prejudices he could play... I have heard him in the most withering manner, picture the Romish Priest, following the human soul from birth to the grave, in its hellish greed for money... in his harsh arraignment of the Romish Priesthood he has drawn a faithful picture of himself, except that he does not charge for baptism, confirmation, and to get out of purgatory.³⁴

Frustrated and embarrassed, Cordova concluded that Baptists had been blinded by their ambitions and too trusting of this Catholic turned Baptist missionary. He told an unidentified Southern Baptist official that “you may feel like kicking the Home Mission

³³ “Diaz Problems,” Diaz, AJ-Correspondence 1898-1934- 6.21, Una Roberts Lawrence Papers.

³⁴ Ibid.

Board” for employing Diaz for so many years, but “before you do any kicking take yourself out and give yourself a good kicking, for Diaz has deceived you and he has deceived me and he has deceived us all....”

The narrative of missionaries fighting Catholicism abroad in benighted landscapes appealed to readers partially because it connected to a genre of popular literature of the period related to gender and changing sexual roles. In England, authors of the late Victorian period wrote about the romance of exploration within the British Empire. These stories became quite popular not only among English but also American readers. Because of technological advances, travel became more accessible and people became more interested in the exotic world around them. Missionaries occupied the front lines of exploration, spreading their gospel. Both Empire and missionary stories explored the darkness of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, introducing readers to the primitive and the savage.

Fiction writers skillfully capitalized on readers’ fascination with the “other.” While many stories told of overseas exploration, others focused on the domestic Empire. If placed abroad, the “primitive foreigner” was a quaint curiosity; but how would the British experience the forces of the dark and unenlightened at home as a new foreign element settled in their own land? For sensationalist writers, this meant exploiting the fear of outsiders. Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* is the classic example. First published in 1897, it is the story of a foreigner who invades the sacred space of the home and preys on virtuous women.³⁵ The novel underscored familiar themes of gender, modernity, and religious paranoia that were also present in the anti-Catholic literature of the period.

³⁵ Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: W. R. Caldwell, 1897).

The Horror of the Convents

Convent horror stories were the most prominent and the most scurrilous in anti-Catholic literature. In the United States, convent horror stories go back to at least the 1830s. The most famous convent story in American history is the “Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal,” or, as it is more popularly referred to: “The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk.”³⁶ First published in 1836, the fictitious story was based upon the testimony of Maria Monk, who had become a nun while attending a Catholic school in Canada. In the most scandalous versions of the publication, the foremost responsibility of nuns was to sexually serve Catholic priests. The offspring of sin—the illegitimate children birthed in this environment—were murdered by priests and buried in a secret grave in the convent’s cellar. Monk testified that she had been impregnated by a “Father Phelan” and fled the convent to protect her unborn child. As one might imagine, images of young women being sexually molested and children being murdered sent shockwaves throughout the United States. Historian Robert Lockwood argued that the publication “... created an immediate storm. It was enormously successful, received rave reviews in the contemporary Protestant press, and was cited as an accurate picture of convent life.”³⁷

³⁶ Maria Monk, *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk: or, The Hidden Secrets of a Nun's Life in a Convent Exposed* (Manchester: Milner, 1836).

³⁷ Robert Lockwood, “Maria Monk,” *Catholic Heritage* (November/December 1996), 19-21.

Today, scholars often refer to “Awful Disclosures” as the *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* of American anti-Catholicism.³⁸ Although the story was proven to be a hoax, it has had incredible longevity. Lockwood estimates that millions of copies have been sold, and it presently remains in print. It was extremely popular during the 1850s when the Know-Nothing Party advanced its anti-Catholic agenda, selling an estimated 300,000 copies.³⁹ Georgia Baptist and noted anti-Catholic Thomas Watson printed a version in 1917 to stimulate Catholic antipathy in the South.⁴⁰ The foreword, written by Watson himself, described “Awful Disclosures” not only as heart-rending history, but also as an accurate characterization of the early twentieth-century South.⁴¹ Maria Monk provided a harrowing testament as to why southern men must protect their women from the seedy grasp of Catholic priests.

Such stories have their roots in sensationalist fiction stemming from both the Gothic and Victorian periods in England.⁴² Baptist newspapers reprinted many of these

³⁸ Charles R. Morris, *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America's Most Powerful Church* (New York: Times Books, 1997), 57; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (London: Piper Brothers and Company, 1852).

³⁹ Morris, *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America's Most Powerful Church*.

⁴⁰ Thomas E. Watson, *Maria Monk and Her Revelations of Convent Crimes*, (Thomson: Jeffersonian Publishing Company, 1917). In 1927, Watson’s granddaughter, Georgia Lee Brown Watson released a 2nd edition of *Maria Monk*. She and her husband, Walter Johnson Brown reprinted many of Thomas Watson’s original publications and sold these via mail-order.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 12.

⁴² Susan Griffin’s work is the most recent attempt to analyze anti-Catholic fiction written between the 1830s and the turn of the century in both Britain and America. She focuses on how anti-Catholicism provided both Americans and English Victorians with a narrative through which they defined themselves as Protestant. Drawing upon a litany of notable writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry James, and Charlotte Bronte, Griffin highlights the various attempts by these authors to construct a Catholic Church

tales either verbatim, or in some cases, updated the stories slightly. In 1891, the *Alabama Baptist* carried a story first printed by the *London Times*. On the surface, the purpose of the story was to offer assistance to those who had family members in convents and were trying to contact them. According to the article, there were reports that convents were refusing outside visitors, and those who had appealed to the authorities had gotten nowhere. The real purpose of the story was to stoke fears of convent life. Convents, the paper claimed, were holding women against their will and doing unspeakable things to the hostages. The police had been unsuccessful in locating the women. According to the article, a group of London solicitors sent "... a representative to remove a woman whose family had attempted to remove her from the convent unsuccessfully, and were now writing 'the firm' asking for their help in freeing the young woman."⁴³ After visiting the convent and being asked to leave, the representative forced his way in and "found four nuns surrounding Miss ____ [sic], trying to stop her screams. They had pulled off her cap, torn her dress, wrenched off the cross of the order, and were apparently trying to wrestle her down to the ground." The man rushed to the aid of the young woman and rescued her from the grasp of the nuns. The genre of literature depicted convent life as a variant of the peonage system then current in the South, where vulnerable people were held against their will.

with which Protestantism might be compared: Susan M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture 141 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); See also, Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1938); Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter With Catholicism*, *The New Historicism* 28 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁴³ "The Rescue of a Nun," *Alabama Baptist*, 15 October 1891.

Because they could not marry, the *Alabama Baptist* warned that those who considered sending “their girls to Catholic convents [must] confront the fact” that these institutions were led by unmarried priests.⁴⁴ Southern families who considered entrusting the Catholic Church with their daughters’ religious and moral instruction would be wise to consider that lecherous priests were the “spiritual guides of their girls.” Implicit in these warnings was the threat that once priests gained spiritual control, they would exert physical/sexual control over their subjects.

In 1880, a northern Presbyterian writer publicly criticized a Baltimore Catholic convent for its treatment of women. Local priests condemned the attack and spoke in favor of the nuns who operated the facility. *Alabama Baptist* editor E. T. Winkler defended the attack, arguing that the Catholic Church had no reason to protest. Holding true to the convent horror story, he wrote, “What we say to the priestly ‘fathers’ is: You treat your ‘angelic daughters’ outrageously; and every convent’s high walls and grates and bars and black veils and wan faces substantiate the assertion.”⁴⁵ “The Priests,” Winkler argued, “...ensnare credulous young women into nunneries, where they are subjected to a life-long imprisonment and an arbitrary and degrading despotism...” Families wishing to visit “these religious penitentiaries, unlike the secular, are closed against the inspection of any persons save those who are interested in concealing or, it may be, perpetuating their abuses...” He added that the Catholic Church consigned its “angelic daughters” to a fate “more sad than that to which the laws of a land condemn its felons who are esteemed unworthy to live in the society of men.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid, 26 November 1891.

⁴⁵ “The Priest and the Nun,” *Alabama Baptist*, 9 December 1880.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Utilizing language laced with sexual imagery and innuendo, Tom Watson condemned the Catholic clergy, claiming that “these modern male Virgins of Rome [who] are almost invariably corpulent, sensual, gross; with thick, red lips, with dew-lap necks, with bulging eyes, and with swelling abdomens...” were not only a spiritual threat, but presented a physical threat to the purity of womanhood.⁴⁷ This type of language left little to the imagination. Watson had gained a reputation for melodramatic speeches when campaigning as a populist, but his anti-Catholic rhetoric went farther. In fact, on June 3, 1912, he was arrested for violating federal obscenity laws while engaged in an anti-clerical diatribe. Editors of the *Baptist and Reflector* condemned the actions of the government, claiming that “...it is not Mr. Watson who is really on trial. It is Roman Catholicism. In bringing this suit against Mr. Watson the Roman Catholics have only advertised to the world their own shame.”⁴⁸ Even though many publications printed by his Jeffersonian Publishing Company were regarded as either obscene or un-American and banned by the United States Postmaster General, public demand for the anti-Catholic literature remained high.⁴⁹

Another Atlanta business, the Index Printing Company, was less controversial and had the capacity to influence the region’s readership. As one of the largest printing companies in the southeast, the company printed history books, political memoirs, and

⁴⁷ Ibid, 14-15.

⁴⁸ “Watson on Trial,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 2 December 1915.

⁴⁹ Watson's isolationist views led to his frequent criticisms of President Woodrow Wilson and the United States’ entry into World War One. This criticism violated the Espionage Act of 1917 and was the primary reason that the United States Postmaster General banned the *Jeffersonian* newspaper from circulating through the mail: C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938). 461.

public records. Arguably, the business served as little more than a vehicle of power for Atlanta's well-connected. In 1916, a competitor accused the company of insider bidding and filed a lawsuit "on the ground that at the time of the bids for the contract were applied for, submitted, and opened, the Attorney General, the state school commissioner, and the solicitor general for the Toombs judicial circuit were all stockholders in the Index Printing Company."⁵⁰ Index won the lawsuit by re-purchasing the stocks from politically-compromised stockholder and eventually won the Georgia public printing contract.

The company also printed Baptist religious publications, including the *Christian Index*, and published anti-Catholic books and pamphlets.⁵¹ Even though most of these publications were written by religious figures, they blended political ideology with fervent religious convictions. One example was T.W. Callaway's *Romanism vs Americanism: The Roman Catholic System*, which mirrored the sensationalist literature of the early 1800s.⁵² In fact, the author noted in the preface that his book was "a compilation of historical facts, and little originality is claimed."⁵³ In his book, Callaway portrayed Catholicism as the foreign element intent on conquering the United States through deception. The book was based on a number of Callaway's anti-Catholic sermons preached in Chattanooga, Tennessee, during the early 1920s and described in meticulous details why Catholics were not one hundred percent Americans.

⁵⁰ *The Southeastern Reporter*, vol. 92, West Publishing Company, 1917, p 61.

⁵¹ Mrs. William H. Felton, *My Memoirs of Georgia Politics* (Atlanta: Index Printing Company, 1911), 16.

⁵² Timothy Walton Callaway, *Romanism vs. Americanism: The Roman Catholic System* (Atlanta: Index Printing Co., 1923).

⁵³ *Ibid*, 5.

During the second decade of the 20th century, Southerners continued to be exposed to a toxic mixture of yellow journalism, sensationalist fiction, and religious demagoguery. Catholics fought back but struggled to overcome the onslaught of bad publicity. They published pamphlets that questioned the veracity of sensationalist literature. To anti-Catholic writers who published anonymous accusations, the Church claimed that “a man who is afraid to put his name to a libel is a coward, unworthy of notice.”⁵⁴ More disconcerting were the newspapers and publishing companies that specialized in anti-Catholicism such as *Watson’s Jeffersonian* and *The Menace*.

Catholics especially targeted William Lloyd Clark, publisher of the Railsplitter Press, as a criminal who “on October 20, 1911, was convicted in Peoria, Ill., for sending obscene literature through the mail.”⁵⁵ They skewered Maria Monk, “the ‘escaped Nun,’ who when near her death admitted she had never been a Nun. She was a thief and a prostitute who died in jail.” They debunked the story of Evangelist L. J. King, who claimed to be a reformed ex-priest of the Roman Church. According to the Catholic expose:

He was arrested in Huntington, Va., August, 1909, as a ‘public disseminator of verbal filth,’ and expelled from the town. A few months ago, the Methodist mayor of Phoenix, Arizona, ordered him out of town because of his indecent diatribe against Protestant as well as Catholic women. In Los Angeles, California, on April 20, 1912, he was forced to admit that he never was a priest....⁵⁶

They also publicized the arrest of Thomas E. Watson, whose sensationalized and salacious anti-Catholic exposés were banned from the mail as “immoral literature.” They

⁵⁴ “The Slime of the Serpent: The ‘Menace’—A Journalistic Reptile,” Pamphlet 3820, Pamphlet Collection, SBHLA.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

noted that, “The Jury said that his writings were so immoral that, contrary to the custom of the Court, they should not be spread in full in the indictment.”⁵⁷

Although the assertive responses by Catholic writers may have reassured other Catholics, it did little to dissuade Watson and his audience. Eventually, he was acquitted of the charges against him and redoubled his attacks on Catholicism. In fact, his sway over public perceptions remained so strong that Benjamin Keiley, Bishop of the Savannah Diocese, created the Catholic Laymen’s Association, an information bureau specifically designed to counter the accusations and lies that Watson spread through the media.

Public outrage about Georgia convents was the first issue that the CLA addressed. Following a year-long campaign by Watson, the Georgia legislature in 1916 voted 138 to 22 in favor of a convent inspection law. The Veazey Bill (named after its sponsor, Georgia senator Prior Gardner Veazey) allowed for “state inspection of all such institutions as sanitariums, convents, monasteries, and so called ‘Houses of the Good Shepherd.’”⁵⁸ The purported reasoning behind the suspension of Habeas Corpus was to protect Protestant children (especially young girls) from being “hidden away in convents and Papal nurseries.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Watson’s Magazine (also known as Watson’s Jeffersonian and The Jeffersonian)*, vol. 23, No. 5 (September 1916), 292. In addition to serving in the Georgia state senate, Prior Gardner Veazey was a Southern Baptist preacher who pastored Powelton Baptist Church in Powelton, Georgia. He was active in the Georgia Baptist Convention and was a close friend of Tom Watson. See, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, “Tom Watson Revisited,” *Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 1 (2002), 3-30.

⁵⁹ *Watson’s Magazine*.

The law sparked immediate controversy. Two Georgia newspapers, the *Augusta Chronicle* and the *Tifton Gazette*, immediately condemned the new law. When Bishop Keiley wrote an editorial that defended the southern womanhood of the Sisters of Charity, the *Atlanta Constitution* refused to print it. After the first convent inspections began, a number of New South newspaper editors from Greenville, South Carolina to New Orleans, panned the law. Some believed it was bad for economic development. Others worried that it confirmed the worst stereotypes of the South. One writer remarked that “Georgia was wallowing in the mire of ignorance and illiteracy.”⁶⁰

Although the newspapers vigorously debated the merits of the law, Georgia Baptists were almost entirely of one mind. The *Christian Index* offered its full support for the Veazey law:

It seems to us a bad sign when an institution of any sort does not welcome the closest inspection by the officers of the law. If everything in any kind of a school, convent, orphanage or home is as it ought to be, the closest scrutiny would be welcomed.... There must be a skeleton in the closet of some of these Catholic institutions, and Bishop Keiley must know that it is there and is afraid it will be discovered.⁶¹

M. Ashby Jones, progressive pastor of First Baptist Church of Augusta, was the only prominent Baptist minister to go on record against the measure. In a sermon preached on August 6, 1916, he blasted the law as a violation of the separation of Church and State and concluded that it was “shamefully” directed “at the Roman Catholics.” “If there had been the slightest suggestion made that the Baptist orphanage Hopeville” he

⁶⁰ Veazey Bill Scrapbook, Bishop Benjamin Keiley Papers.

⁶¹ *Christian Index*, 9 November 1916.

said, “or the Methodist school at Macon, should be searched for possible crime, no Legislature would have dared pass such a Bill.”⁶²

Bishop Keiley mobilized an interesting strategy to oppose the new law. He wrote newspaper articles attributing the law to the “notorious Tom Watson” and calling it “an insult to the intelligence and decency of Georgia”⁶³ In a letter to the *Augusta Chronicle*, Keiley even turned the argument for the protection of white womanhood upside down, writing that he “must confess, a strange and unexpected experience to find myself living in a State where the elected representatives of the people vote for a measure attacking the character of *southern women*.”⁶⁴ The nuns in Georgia performed similar acts of community service (temperance, education, poverty relief) to their Baptist counterparts, held themselves to the highest standards of moral purity, and were white, middle-class women; so how could they be considered anything less than the ideal example of the southern lady?

The preliminary convent inspections uncovered no violations. Aided by United States’ entry into World War I, the Veazey Law fell out of favor with most secular newspapers in the state. By 1918, the CLA claimed to have curbed the “frequent flings at Catholics,” if only for the moment.⁶⁵ Success came via a publicity campaign that became known nationally as “The Georgia Plan.” This consisted of a three-part propaganda program that included obtaining newspaper space speaking against anti-Catholicism (advertisements, newsletters, and editorials), circulating educational pamphlets, and by

⁶² “Veazey Bill Scrapbook.”

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ *Augusta Chronicle*, 19 August 1916.

⁶⁵ “Meeting 1918,” Catholic Laymen’s Association, Bishop Benjamin Keiley Papers.

directly writing letters to editors demanding corrections to misstatements. In its executive report, the CLA claimed that the result was “not a paper in the State” that still “frequently contains editorials or new matter designed to misrepresent Catholics and their beliefs.”

The initial success of the CLA was short-lived. Within a few years, both Alabama and Florida elected governors who ran on overtly anti-Catholic tickets. The Ku Klux Klan established a beachhead at Stone Mountain, Georgia, and grew rapidly during the 1920s, focusing on racism, xenophobia, and the protection of white womanhood. In addition to Georgia, Arkansas, Alabama, and Florida all passed similar convent inspection laws. By the 1920s, the print media wielded enormous power over southern society and had successfully used gender to amplify anti-Catholic sentiments.

The popularity of convent inspection laws demonstrated two important points about southern religious culture. First, white southerners were willing to implement extreme measures to protect *their* women, even if it meant encroaching on religious liberty and people’s personal rights. Second, southern womanhood was not based entirely on moral purity; it was also shaped by religious identity.⁶⁶ Catholic women did not qualify for the respect and reverence afforded Protestant women.

Southern Baptists invested much effort into the preservation of white womanhood but perceived that being Catholic was much like being African-American in the South—it automatically excluded their women from inclusion in “southern womanhood.” To Baptists, nuns were first and foremost Catholics; their identity as middle-class women

⁶⁶ In a chapter entitled “Cleaning Up’ Morality: The Politics of Sex and Age,” Nancy Maclean argues that, in Athens, Georgia, the Klan emphasized moral purity as a means to establish a distinctive identity: MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 99.

was secondary. They were adversaries in the fight for control of southern society; therefore, they were not to be treated as ladies. It is no accident that some Protestants had long denounced Catholicism using a phrase from the book of Revelation: “Whore of Babylon.” The difference between the images of the southern lady and the gendered symbols of Catholicism constituted a striking feature of Southern Baptists’ anti-Catholicism.

This symbolic language was at the same time apocalyptic, obscene, and gendered. In the introduction of his xenophobic publication, “The Scarlet Woman or The Revival of Romanism,” I. M. Halderman explained that the Bible forewarned Christians about “a scarlet-clad woman” who was “drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” This image, he added triumphantly, was “... the picture of a universal, a catholic [sic], church.”⁶⁷ Other Baptist leaders made the same connection. After his close analysis of the *Bible*, *Liberator* magazine editor J. A. Scarboro concluded that the symbolic Biblical language “Incarnation of Satan” and “Mother of Harlots” referenced the Roman Catholic Church.⁶⁸

T. W. Callaway of Chattanooga, like Haldermann, used the term “The Scarlet Woman,” to refer to the Catholic Church; missionary John Eager called it “the siren;” and F. H. Sills referred to it as “The Romish Lady.”⁶⁹ These demeaning descriptive terms, all feminine, represented a nuanced way of contrasting positive concepts of Protestant southern womanhood with corrupt images of a church polluted, soiled, and ruined.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ J. Lewis Smith Smith, notes to *Romanism Routed, or the False Claims of Romanism Refuted* (Magnolia, AR: Liberator Press, 1913).

⁶⁹ Callaway, introduction to *Romanism vs. Americanism: The Roman Catholic System*: 120; Eager, *Romanism in its Home*; Sills, *Roman Catholicism Investigated and Exposed*.

Southern Baptists believed that Catholicism was a dishonorable religion. When measured against the standards of southern womanhood, it did not matter that Catholic women could be charitable, family-centered, and chaste because the offspring of a “Whore” could never become acceptable in southern society.

Class, Gender, and Catholicism

Class perceptions contributed to gendered representations of anti-Catholicism. A small number of Catholic women came from the South’s gentry. Ironically, they enjoyed the respect of belonging to families enshrined in Lost Cause mythology. Southern Baptist missionary John Eager wrote many articles about the evils of Catholicism in Italy, but he cautiously characterized elite women, particularly Italian royalty. In describing Queen Margherita of Savoy, Eager noted, “like most Italians, [she] is a Catholic, but unlike most of them, is pious and devout.”⁷⁰ He also emphasized how her feminine qualities complemented her position, writing that “amidst her many duties and pleasures she does not neglect the claims of her church, and it is to be hoped that she is truly a Christian.”

When Baptists displayed anti-Catholic sentiments toward lower-class Catholic women, they based it more on cultural superiority than personal antipathy. Much of the missionary zeal of the period reflected what Rudyard Kipling called “The White Man’s Burden.”⁷¹ These immigrants and natives of foreign lands were poor, uneducated, uncivilized; if they had any experience with Christianity, generally this had come from

⁷⁰ “From Kind Words, The Queen of Italy,” *Alabama Baptist*, 17 April 1884.

⁷¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” *McClure’s Magazine*, 12 February 1899).

exposure to the Catholic Church. Rarely were they targets of Baptist hostility; instead, they were the recipients of aid and were considered candidates for conversion.

Missionary Marie Buhlmaier was stationed in Baltimore, where many Catholic immigrants arrived from overseas. Working at the port of entry, she focused her efforts on poor women and children, whom she believed were ignorant but receptive. In a mission tract titled “After Many Days,” she described a successful missionary encounter she had with a sick immigrant:

Feeling great sympathy for her, we tried to bring her cheer and comfort by visiting her at the hospital at least once a week... She was connected with the Roman church [sic], and it was hard for her to find her way out. But we felt sure there was a work of grace going on in her heart and faithfully we continued to minister to her needs both physically and spiritually, constantly sowing the gospel seed.⁷²

Because of this mission work, the immigrant woman would later become a Baptist. The key to successful conversions was immediate contact; immigrants were more malleable upon arrival. Buhlmaier wrote, “The immigrant needs our Christian ministries at the port of entry... To wait till he is able to understand our language would be fatal, in many instances.”⁷³

Most female Baptist missionaries were like Marie Buhlmaier, part of the educated middle class. They were an important component of the Progressive Era reform impulse, believing that their work uplifted the poor and uneducated. A female Baptist missionary identified only as Ms. Edwards taught the tools of domesticity to Cuban women. According to the mission report, “she had [sic] fed them, clothed them, given them

⁷² Marie Buhlmaier, “After Many Days,” Pamphlet 765, Pamphlet Collection.

⁷³ Ibid.

comfortable quarters and good moral and literary training... She has [sic] taught them to be neat and tidy; to be splendid housekeepers; to sew, to wash, iron, bake and cook.”⁷⁴

The language training and the domestic skills that the Cuban women acquired made quite an impact in the community, enough that it caught the attention of the local Catholic priest, who found it “a pity” that a Baptist missionary, “not a good Catholic,” was giving young girls English lessons. Whether or not this account in a contemporary Baptist newspaper is an accurate reflection of the Catholic priest, it certainly is a reflection of the evangelical impulse to utilize social ministries to convert Catholic women.

Much like their Baptist counterparts, Catholic women in the South participated in mission programs that were shaped by a domestic ideology and reformist spirit. For these mostly middle-class, Irish Catholics, the family was the center of life, blessed by God, and equipped to negotiate the modern world. The Catholic Church supported this demographic because by the twentieth-century, these Catholics were more likely to understand southern evangelical religious culture and thus succeed in planting the seeds of Catholicism.

In 1894, the *Alabama Baptist* simply reprinted an excerpt from Catholic newspapers *Church Progress* and *Catholic World*, but the intent was to mock the content. The article was a devotional that emphasized the importance of St. Joseph.⁷⁵ As patron of the universal church, St. Joseph had special powers over “the entire Holy Family,” that provided “graces for domestic life.” Although Baptist considered such beliefs to be “idolatry,” Catholics emphasized similar domestic qualities to those of southern

⁷⁴ “A Noble Work by a Woman in Cuba,” *Christian Index*, 28 February 1901.

⁷⁵ “Roman Catholic Idolatry,” *Alabama Baptist*, 1 March 1894.

evangelicals. According to Church teachings, women's function was domestic and home bound—purity, efficiency, and piety—each of which helped to establish a solid foundation for the home.⁷⁶

Charity was also an important aspect of domestic virtue. Catholics joined confraternities (organizations with specifically religious purpose), which were devoted to a particular saint, especially honoring Mary, mother of Jesus. Participation in these groups resulted from a mixture of religious ritual and social activism. For women, activism offered a chance to serve the less fortunate through programs that benefitted education, healthcare, immigrant needs, and child welfare. These programs also gave the Church the opportunity to expand its influence in the United States. Such efforts paralleled work by contemporary Protestant women.

Contested Public Spaces and Gender

Some of the most heated anti-Catholic rhetoric directed at women resulted from contested public spaces. Protestants operated from a disadvantage over public space. Deeply divided about whether churches should engage in social ministries, they encountered Catholic nuns with no such reservations. Reform-minded Protestant women clashed with reform-minded Catholic women for control over southern society. Baptists were suspicious of any charity work performed by Catholics. They criticized the Church for having a veneer of charity, but with little substance. Missionary Sarah Hale testified that while in Mexico, she witnessed a Catholic woman (who was ill) return home with her two young children to seek charity from her community. She enrolled her daughter in

⁷⁶ Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension*, 87-88.

the local Catholic convent school and her son in a Jesuit school. The missionary claimed that the Church, aware of the woman's circumstances, took advantage of her misfortune by charging so much for tuition that she had to remove her children from school. Hale and other Protestant missionaries eventually cared for the woman's health and her children's care, while the woman "talked to us about the charities of the Catholics."⁷⁷ Frustrated by the power the local Church had over the woman, Hale lamented that Catholicism was so entrenched in the woman's psyche that their efforts to minister were "all for nothing."⁷⁸

Noted Baptist missionary Annie Armstrong was passionate about foreign missions and, at times, could also be assertively anti-Catholic. In a pamphlet produced by the Foreign Mission Board, she presented her case that the Catholic Church in Mexico enslaved the poor by exploiting their superstitions and stealing their money. According to Armstrong, financial exploitation was "by no means the greatest price which [was] paid..." but rather the "loss of spiritual blessings which come through enlightenment of the Bible, and a true conception of Jesus Christ as Savior..."⁷⁹ Curiously, such arguments were later utilized by secular socialists and communists against the Catholic Church in Latin America.

In "Field Notes," the *Alabama Baptist* mirrored Armstrong although the setting was a national scandal in New York. The newspaper reported that Heiress Caroline Merrill bequeathed "some \$390,000 to Cardinal McCloskey and other Catholics."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ "The Charities of Catholics," *Baptists and Reflector*, 2 November 1905.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Armstrong, "The Cost of Being Catholic in Mexico," Pamphlet Collection, GBHD.

⁸⁰ *Alabama Baptist*, 29 November 1877.

Merrill was Protestant but lived under the care and “influence by a Catholic nurse and priest during her last days of imbecility.”⁸¹ Relatives contested the will on the grounds that Merrill was not of sound mind when she signed her will; instead, the Catholics manipulated her while she was sick and secured their place in her will. Although this event did not occur in the South, it implied that purportedly nurturing Catholic women had a hidden agenda.

Editors of the *Baptist and Reflector* showed contempt for Catholic ministries to the poor and the sick. “Nothing delights Catholics more than to furnish nurses for the young children in our homes,” the *Reflector* warned. The newspaper contended that Catholic nurses had ulterior motives in their charity:

We all know the effect and influence of a kind nurse upon the child’s mind. They try to talk and act like their nurse in everything. What better chance could they wish to make impressions upon the childrens’ minds, when they often see no one for a whole day at a time, except the nurse. Instead of being taught by mother upon retiring at night to lisp [sic] the prayer, ‘Now I lay me down to sleep,’ they are taught by nurse the ‘Hail Marys,’ and the counting of beads, and that almost before the mother is aware of it.⁸²

The Sisters of Charity was the dominant Catholic organization that focused on service to the lower classes, especially to the sick. Devoted to Mary and inspired by St. Vincent de Paul, the patron saint of charity, this vast organization had representatives in all southern states. Annie Armstrong, in an appeal for female missionaries, noted that the Catholic Church owed much of its success in retaining its hold upon the lower classes “due to the power of the ‘Sisters,’ who constantly visit from house to house. If women’s influence is thus attracted to error, surely it may be made a greater power in drawing

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² “Roman Catholicism,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 12 September 1895.

hearts to the Truth of the gospel.”⁸³ This summons to Baptist social services for the poor as a way of countering Catholic social ministries had only mixed success.

Alarmed at the growing power of the Sisters of Charity in Tennessee, the *Baptist and Reflector* warned its readers: “They open schools everywhere that they may control the education of their sex. They establish orphanages and hospitals. They take the hand of the friendless that they may win their confidence, and stand by the sick and dying that they may gain their ear....”⁸⁴ “The Sisters,” the *Reflector* stated, had two driving principles behind their actions: “devotion to Rome and hatred to Protestants.” The only way to counter this Catholic encroachment on southern public space was by recruiting “Protestant sisters” who would “win a way for the gospel where like influences have won a way for error.”

In Birmingham, controversy swelled over allowing Sisters of Charity to manage a charity hospital. Many evangelicals were concerned that if allowed to operate the facility, Catholics would use it as a mechanism for conversion. A concerned Baptist layman warned that the Sisters brought with them the full power of the Catholic Church:

We [Baptists] do not intend to in any way underestimate the benevolent and often times Christian spirit of these self-sacrificing Sisters of Charity, but they are under the control and direction of Jesuitical priesthood, and that means anything else than even tolerance of other Christians. That means that the Birmingham hospital will shut out all other pastors, and all other Christian workers, from visiting the patients. That every effort will be made to proselyte Protestants to Catholicism. [sic]⁸⁵

On the other hand, Baptist women did not volunteer to create and operate a charitable Baptist hospital for the community’s poor.

⁸³ Armstrong, “A Need for Female Missionaries,” Pamphlet Collection.

⁸⁴ “The Armies of Rome,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 4 July 1895.

⁸⁵ *Alabama Baptist*, 24 March 1887.

Feminizing Catholicism

Although Baptists had many public squabbles with confraternal groups, they considered nuns the most adversarial of Catholic women.⁸⁶ While nuns operated in a highly patriarchal environment, they were formidable opponents. They were educated, committed to the Catholic Church, and effective at converting Protestants. More importantly, they operated in a protected world outside the realm of evangelical hegemony and influence. From numerous anti-Catholic stories, Baptists learned of convents and the women who dwelled in these “Catholic prisons” and who did the evil bidding of the Church. As convent horror stories demonstrate, nuns were emblematic of the fear of the unknown—the stranger that operated outside the normative.

Nuns had a mystical quality about them that Baptists simply did not comprehend. There was no measure of comparison within Protestantism. For instance, in southern society, tremendous importance was given to marriage. The idea of dedicating one’s life, both spiritually and physically, to the Church was perplexing. Many Baptist missionary women were independent and cared little about marriage, but they also understood that their service to the denomination was peripheral to marriage.⁸⁷ Southern womanhood demanded this of them.

On the other hand, southern Protestant definitions of womanhood excluded nuns. To Protestants, they represented an enigma. One could not help but admire their dedication; but the sexual mythology of convent life left many Protestants skeptical about

⁸⁶ MacLean argues that anti-Catholics considered nuns to be "passive victims of priests, who exploited their social power to gain sexual access." See, MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 119-20.

⁸⁷ Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900*, The Fred W. Morrison series in Southern studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 32-33.

how devout these women really were. By detailing the particulars of alleged sexual servitude behind convent walls, the stories implied that these women were anything but chaste and devoted. To Catholics, they were an important symbol in the Church, representing chastity and motherhood. They were distinctive figures who served a sacred calling. To Protestants, they were at best ambivalent models of true southern womanhood.

Most importantly, nuns served as a symbol of Mary and the miracle of the Virgin Birth. They lived lives of chastity and acted as matriarchs of the Church. Catholics paid reverence to Mary through religious iconoclasm, communal celebrations, and special devotions. The sheer quantity of symbols and rituals that Catholics established to honor the Virgin Mary baffled Protestants. Southern Baptists often criticized Catholicism for misguided doctrine (they believed Mary had a routine sex life after the birth of Jesus and that his siblings were in no way divine in origin) and were particularly disturbed by Catholic obsession with Mary. The *Alabama Baptist* published an article titled “Mariolatry” to explain this phenomenon to its readership:

Rome has not only placed Mary as a mediator along with Christ, thus making her church a church of Mary, instead of a Christian church, but she places Mary above Christ as a savior, and this placing of Mary above Christ is not for the ignorant and unlearned, it is for the wise and learned.⁸⁸

Although Baptists believed that Mariolatry was bad doctrine and people who “worshipped Mary” were misguided, they did not dare belittle the image of the mother of Jesus. Instead, they focused their disapproval on those who essentially transformed her into an idol, arguing that the Catholic Church had perverted the significance of Mary.

⁸⁸ *Alabama Baptist*, 24 April 1890.

Baptist I. M. Halderman claimed that in Rome, the practice of Mariolatry could be found in the most notable churches such as St. Peter's Cathedral:

There are churches specially [sic] devoted to the worship of the virgin, her images are covered with gold and silver tributes. In one church the image is piled about with crutches and almost hidden under the offerings of those who believe themselves to have been healed or blessed by her interposition and intercession. Before that stony figure, men and women and little children kneel in rapt adoration. It is idolatry—pure and simple.⁸⁹

Baptists pointed to Catholic icons of the Virgin Mary as evidence of idolatry. The Lady of Lourdes devotion was one example. This ceremony, originating in France, allegedly offered devotees supernatural powers. Many Catholics believed that the water from this French shrine had healing properties, and they had it shipped to the United States, where it became wildly popular. To American Catholics, this devotional symbolized the life-giving qualities of the mother of Christ and linked their lives to one of the important centers of Catholic culture. To Baptists, it smacked of superstition more apt to come from medieval Europe than modern religion. As Catholic historian Jay Dolan explained, “It clearly marked Catholicism in the United States with a foreign stamp.”⁹⁰

Southern Baptists considered Catholicism's gendered symbols biblically unsound and alien to their culture. For critics, these easily ridiculed symbols demonstrated another manner whereby Baptists could contrast their beliefs against Roman Catholicism. To protect their idealized images of “southern ladies,” Southern Baptist men abandoned their code of chivalry to level attacks against feminized symbols of the Catholic Church,

⁸⁹ Halderman, “The Scarlet Woman.”

⁹⁰ Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension*, 87.

including accusations of idolatry and sexual deviancy. Baptist women did their part, countering the Catholic institutions, beliefs, and practices that they believed threatened their southern cultural status. Both Baptist men and women invoked anti-Catholicism whenever they needed to protect their gendered notions of white southern evangelicalism.

Conclusion

In 1914, J. M. Frost looked back on the short history of the Southern Baptist Convention's Sunday School Board. He compared its growth to a vine he had watched climb the magnolia tree that stood outside his Church Street office window. Although he never saw the vine grow, day by day it crept higher, "climbing by the inherent forces it carried within itself, clinging to the tree for its support...."⁹¹ Like the vine growing on the tree, in order for the Board to succeed, it needed to establish roots and find opportunities for growth. Frost believed that the answer was found in embracing the power of the periodical. Modeled after the American Baptist Publication Society—the gold standard of Protestant publishing in the United States—the focus on periodicals had given "life and power" to distinctive Southern Baptist principles.⁹² The denomination had come a long way, he explained, from "the severe struggle of our fathers in those far-away years" to the leading southern religious institution.⁹³ During his nearly two decades of service, he transformed the Board into a powerful shaper of Baptist identity.

By the 1920s, one of those identity markers, anti-Catholicism, had swelled into a national concern. Because of its association with the Ku Klux Klan, the tendency has been to view anti-Catholicism as having burst upon the fragile psyche of the American public in that decade, only to dissipate by the end of the decade. According to Nancy

⁹¹ Frost, *The Sunday School Board: Its History and Work*, 85-86.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 87.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

MacLean, one of the primary motives of her book, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, was not only to understand this “far right” organization, but also to explain how it convinced others to join in their crusade. The fact was, Baptists needed little convincing about Catholics. Due to the comprehensive coverage of Catholicism in previous religious periodicals, anti-Catholicism was already a familiar topic of contempt.

From 1870 to 1920, Southern Baptists spent a great deal of time contemplating Roman Catholicism. Baptist writers attacked Catholic doctrine because they believed it contradicted the Bible. Periodicals printed numerous articles that analyzed the biblical soundness of papal authority, the sacraments, and the symbolic elements of the Church. In their criticism, some writers claimed that although all Protestant doctrine differed from Catholicism, Baptists’ doctrine positioned their denomination most differently from Catholicism. One Baptist leader described it as an “antipodal” relationship, with Baptists at one end, Catholics at the other, and all other Protestants fitting somewhere in the middle.⁹⁴ Anti-Catholicism was a mechanism that allowed Baptists to refine their own beliefs, emphasize their republican religious virtues, and promote themselves as the most loyal adherents to biblically-sound principles and as protectors of religious liberty.

Historian Ira Birdwhistel argues that Southern Baptists shaped “their perceptions primarily in isolation from Roman Catholics.”⁹⁵ This was particularly the case during the 1870s and 1880s, when immigrants eschewed the South and Catholic encounters occurred either in the North or in a foreign country. During this time, most anti-

⁹⁴ Forrester, *The Baptist Position*, 29.

⁹⁵ Birdwhistel argues that through the 1960s, Baptists continually shaped their perceptions in isolation from Catholicism. See, Birdwhistell, "Southern Baptist Perceptions of and Responses to Roman Catholicism, 1917-1972," 221.

Catholicism contained in southern religious periodicals addressed doctrinal differences and northern anecdotes. The other two areas of prominence were education and missions. Stories abounded about clashes outside the South, from debates over reading the Bible in public schools to the competition for winning souls in Italy. There was an esoteric quality to this anti-Catholic literature whereby Southern Baptists could point to the outside world as evidence that the South was still the moral center of the United States. At a time when Southerners were re-imagining their peculiar nature, anti-Catholicism provided another means to reconstruct religious identity.⁹⁶

During the 1890s, much anti-Catholic literature continued to originate from the North, driven by individuals such as Josiah Strong and by anti-Catholic groups such as the American Protective Association. For Southern Baptists, this was a transitional decade. The Sunday School Board gave the denomination more control to shape their distinctive message. There were other indicators of a growing independence. They debated the relevance that national anti-Catholic organizations, such as the American Protective Association, had in the South, preferring to engage with Catholicism on their own terms (the A.P.A. made few inroads in the South). While census data reveals that compared to other regions Catholics were comparatively underrepresented in the South, Baptists increasingly gave credence to a threatening new cultural presence with which they engaged. Whether real or imagined, the literature reveals that Baptists believed immigration was creating a southern Catholic culture. Baptist writers focused on peripheral battlegrounds such as Savannah and New Orleans. They also wrote about mission encounters in Catholic countries closer to home, such as Mexico and Cuba. On

⁹⁶ Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920*, 112.

the surface, these accounts described efforts to win souls; but they also revealed a denomination increasingly consumed with containing Catholicism and preventing its penetration into the South.

In the early twentieth century, Southern Baptists wrote extensively about Catholicism. Primarily, these writings focused on authority and control. In cities like Birmingham, Atlanta, and Nashville, Catholics expanded their presence and challenged cultural norms. Critics of Catholicism launched a full-scale attack. They portrayed the Catholic Church as an insidious organization hell-bent on political and cultural domination. As champions of the separation of Church and State, they argued that Catholicism and democracy were incompatible, citing calls for public funding of parochial schools and Catholics working in government or holding public office as examples of religious liberty violations. They characterized the Catholic clergy as the foot soldiers of the Pope, asserting that priests held enormous power over their congregations. Those who sent their children to parochial schools stood the chance of having their children brainwashed into Catholicism. Some writers ascribed deviant gendered notions to Catholicism, implying that they threatened the sanctity of southern womanhood. A few ventured into wild sensationalism, accusing nuns with luring young women into convents and priests with sexual abuse.

Not all notions of anti-Catholicism were advocated with such melodrama; some emphasized social uplift. Historian Keith Harper argued that during the Progressive Era, many Baptists became more concerned with solving societal problems through their faith,

transforming ideas into actions.⁹⁷ Baptist women like Marie Buhlmeir ministered to Catholic immigrants as they descended from passenger vessels in Baltimore harbor, teaching them assimilation skills and converting them into Baptists. This was the paternalistic side of anti-Catholicism, Baptist reformers emphasizing enlightenment through salvation. Roman Catholicism, they claimed, preferred that its adherents remain ignorant, relying on superstitious rituals, symbols, and customs rather than biblical teachings. Through education and evangelization, Southern Baptists could maintain their cultural hegemony. F. H. Sills wrote that he held no ill will toward Catholics who assimilated into the South and lived “an honorable, upright, moral and Christian life,” but argued that “agents of the Roman Catholic Church” stood in the way of progress, obstructing such Progressive reforms as Prohibition.⁹⁸ In concluding his history of the Sunday School Board, Frost challenged fellow Baptists to go forward as instruments of change, recognizing that,

The possibilities are immense and capable of indefinite expansion. The past is full of promise for the future. The Baptists of the South should lead all other people for the coronation of the King and the bringing of the kingdom. We conquer for him, when loyal and making conquest in the things that are his [sic].⁹⁹

By 1920, the SBC was the largest and most powerful denomination in the South.

Historians have attributed many factors to its success, including, among others, a

⁹⁷ Although Charles Reagan Wilson argues that in constructing symbols of the Lost Cause, Southern Catholics were a part of the South's civil religion. To the contrary, my study suggests that Southern Baptists disregarded the Confederate credentials of Catholics, much like they disregarded Catholic commitments to temperance and the preservation of white southern womanhood: Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*, 34.

⁹⁸ Sills, *Roman Catholicism Investigated and Exposed*, 7.

⁹⁹ Frost, *The Call of the South*, 96.

distinctive doctrine, the organizing power of effective Baptist leadership, a commitment to evangelism, and an impulse for reform. Few scholars have considered the importance of social identity in shaping southern religious identity.¹⁰⁰ Yet, without an understanding of how they perceived Catholics and Roman Catholicism, studies about how Southern Baptists shaped their doctrine, established mission and educational programs, and asserted their cultural authority on the South are incomplete.

Although this study offers new perspectives on anti-Catholicism in the South, more detailed studies are needed, particularly those that expand the scope of inquiry. While all southern evangelicals held anti-Catholic beliefs, more denominational studies would shed more light on how religious identities shaped antipathy. A sampling of Baptist sentiments from four similar southern states offers ample evidence of shared anti-Catholic sentiments but may not adequately account for regional variations. Maryland and Florida had large, multi-ethnic Catholic populations that were politically and socially engaged. Baptist seminaries in Texas and Kentucky contributed to denominational identity, as did the Foreign Mission Board in Virginia. Curiously, all three states had cities with prominent Catholic concentrations. Louisiana not only had a large Catholic immigrant population but also a large African-American Catholic presence that might more fully illuminate how Southern Baptists reconciled racial identity with their anti-Catholic sentiments. Local studies offer the most abundant paths of inquiry.

Birmingham was a hotbed of anti-Catholicism during the early twentieth-century that

¹⁰⁰ Those who have looked at identity have focused on race as the major influencer of religious culture. See, for example, Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925*.

deserves a monograph-length investigation into the deadly mixture of politics, religion, ethnicity, civic engagement, and class conflict that fueled the antipathy and violence. Other cities such as Louisville, Savannah, New Orleans, Tampa, Galveston, and Baltimore share similar prospects. Finally, did southern Catholics share responsibility for religious hostility? Were their identities also contingent upon defining a measurable other? Although these questions fall outside the scope of this study, southern Catholicism deserves further scrutiny. Diocesan archives offer abundant, underutilized resources for state and local studies that should yield deeper, more complex representations that go beyond the “culturally captive” paradigm. Southern religious historians have only begun to uncover this story.

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