

**Anchored against the Tide:  
Female Pastors in the SBC and Contemporary  
Drifts toward Compromise**

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## Anchored against the Tide: Female Pastors in the SBC and Contemporary Drifts toward Compromise

In 1964, the ordination of Addie Davis marked the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) initial venture into uncharted waters.<sup>1</sup> The SBC's first female pastor was a manifestation of what had become a slow drift away from a clear and faithful interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in 1979 and in the next two decades, the historically conservative denomination underwent a massive course correction, restoring its academies, agencies, and assemblies to the doctrinal integrity it once had. Yet, a generation after the SBC's Conservative Resurgence, the need for uncompromising vigilance and ideological solidarity still exists with regard to women's roles in the church. Despite the significant strides taken within the political and institutional arenas, the convention's theological continuity has yet to permeate the full scope of its reach, making this previous problem a contemporary concern.

### Sweeping Undercurrents

The 1970s witnessed a theological tow from SBC seminaries whose faculty gave vocal support for an equal opportunity pulpit. Among many of these scholars, the gender passages of Scripture were thought to be conditioned by culture and ultimately corrupted. The hermeneutical justification for female ordination was articulated and advanced by Southern Baptist faculty.

The Winter 1975 issue of *Review and Expositor*, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's quarterly publication, devoted its content to the explanation of the faculty's egalitarian leanings. William Hull, former dean of the school of theology, implied a cultural corruption of traditional biblical interpretation when he rhetorically asked,

Can *men*, who have been shaped both by the long history of male dominance in the church and by their masculine role in contemporary society, really plumb the depths of what God is trying to say through the Bible to *women*? . . . Would we now have the same traditional

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<sup>1</sup>Walter B. Shurden, *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1993), 130.

<sup>2</sup>John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006): 179–93. By “clear and faithful” this author assumes a culturally universal interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12; specifically, women are not to teach or have authority over men within the assembled body of believers.

understanding of what the Bible teaches on this subject if most of the interpreters throughout church history had been women rather than men?<sup>3</sup>

Professor E. Glenn Hinson proposed buckling to the pressures of historical revisionism when he claimed that throughout church history women have been given publicly acknowledged offices and that, on the subject of women's leadership, the SBC has been, "somewhat tardier than that of many other Protestant denominations."<sup>4</sup> The institution's president, Roy Honeycutt, also dealt the "culture card" in reference to 1 Timothy 2:9–15, saying that Paul, "apparently accepted the role of women as a first century *experience* but without making it normative by accepting it as a *condition of life* which existed in the first century" (emphasis added). Honeycutt also claimed that the passage was as culturally confined to the first century church as its restrictions on socially specific references to outer appearance (i.e. hair-braiding in 1 Tim 2:9).<sup>5</sup> However, as Dorothy K. Patterson notes, "The real issue at hand is not ordination itself but the authority of the Bible . . . One cannot accept the Bible as authoritative while rejecting its authority concerning home and church order."<sup>6</sup> The 1975 Southern Seminary publication articulated the paradigm of evangelical feminism shared among its sister seminaries.

Reviewing James Hurley's complementarian contribution, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*,<sup>7</sup> former professor of Christian Ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Guy Greenfield, claimed, "Antiquated role models take the place of principle, and the author is inconsistent in deculturalizing certain texts. Hurley needed to have learned . . . that the Bible does not always mean what it says; but it means what it means!"<sup>8</sup> Randall Lolley, former president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, declared that, "One of the saddest sights on the earth is a man forfeiting his own wholeness in the gospel by denying a woman the partnership which the gospel requires."<sup>9</sup> He also said, "It is God, not man, who gives gifts for ministry. Women are not answerable to men for what they do with their gifts. Women, like men, are answerable to God."<sup>10</sup> According to these institutions, gifting was synonymous with calling and scriptural limitations for women in the church were infected with male bias and cultural conditioning.

Those opposing such an egalitarian interpretation were consequently viewed as oppressive obstacles to overcome. Southern Seminary professor C. Anne Davis verbalized a perceived undercurrent of male oppression toward women in ministry,

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<sup>3</sup>William E. Hull, "Woman in Her Place: A Biblical Perspective," *Review and Expositor* 72.1 (Winter 1975): 7.

<sup>4</sup>E. Glenn Hinson, "The Church: Liberator or Oppressor of Women?" *Review and Expositor* 72.1 (Winter 1975): 26.

<sup>5</sup>Cited in Patrick J. Campbell, "A Critique and Evaluation of the Women Serving in the Role of Pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention with Particular Emphasis upon the New Testament Scriptures" (PhD diss., Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, 1986), 23.

<sup>6</sup>Dorothy Kelley Patterson, "Why I Believe Southern Baptist Churches Should Not Ordain Women," *Baptist History and Heritage* 23.3 (July 1988): 61–62.

<sup>7</sup>James Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981).

<sup>8</sup>Cited in Campbell, "A Critique and Evaluation of the Women Serving in the Role of Pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention," 25.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

claiming, “Men must begin to acknowledge that they have power but not all power.”<sup>11</sup> That same year the institution also offered a January class entitled, “The Women’s Liberation Movement and Women in the Church.” Southern Seminary professor Molly Marshall recommended a course of action for the propagation of evangelical feminism in her 1986 article, “When Keeping Silent No Longer Will Do: A Theological Agenda for the Contemporary Church.” Marshall, an ordained female pastor of Deer Park Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, suggested that churches reconsider their use of gender-specific language, acknowledge that a woman’s ministry calling is determined by her gifts rather than her gender, and implement study groups for the purpose of integrating a “feminist consciousness” with a biblical interpretation of women in ministry.<sup>12</sup> Marshall’s plan harkens back to feminist theologian Letty Russell’s gender-inclusive agenda for language in the church, a list closely linked to the alteration of the church’s language in reference to God.<sup>13</sup> With the acceptance of liberation theology, the perspective of women’s roles in the church among Southern Baptist professors had effectively veered away from the written Word of God.

### Tidal Waves

The vocal circulation of a egalitarianism among the seminaries emerged as an agenda to drown out biblical truth. Southern Baptist auxiliary organizations soon followed suit, some of which were formed in reaction to the gender debate. The Women in Ministry, SBC (WIM) was formed as a support base for female clergy within the Southern Baptist Convention and provided information and resources for women ministers. According to Betty McGary Pearce,

The organization was created through the increasing awareness . . . that Southern Baptist women in ministry needed to organize to provide support and encouragement which would enable women to minister in all the roles to which they believe God has called them.<sup>14</sup>

The group’s eventual goal was to promote women’s occupancy in positional church leadership, particularly in the pastorate.<sup>15</sup>

In March of 1983 the group held a pre-Convention meeting entitled, “Southern Baptist Women in Ministry: Vision, Goal, Strategy and Tactics.” Championing their cause as modern-day “Joans-of-Arc,” the undercurrents of liberationism came to the surface. At the 1983 WIM meeting, Nancy Hastings Sehested, eventual pastor of a Southern Baptist church, proclaimed, “We are to our Convention like Paul’s early Gentile converts.” One evangelical feminist escalated the liberation rhetoric when she stated,

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<sup>11</sup>C. Anne Davis, “Liberation, Not Separation,” *Review and Expositor* 72.1 (Winter 1975): 67.

<sup>12</sup>Molly Marshall-Green, “Toward Encompassing Theological Vision for Women in Light of Baptist Tradition,” *Folio* 4.2 (Autumn 1986): 1.

<sup>13</sup>Mary Kassian, *The Feminist Mistake* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 167.

<sup>14</sup>Betty McGary Pearce, “A History of Women in Ministry, SBC,” *Folio* 3.1 (Summer 1985): 9.

<sup>15</sup>Campbell, “A Critique and Evaluation of the Women Serving in the Role of Pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention,” 36.

“Although we women are in the numerical and financial majority in our churches, a great many, like some of the slaves, love chains and shackles too well to change. But liberation will come, amidst all the murmurings.”<sup>16</sup> Another egalitarian activist compared female ministers of the SBC to the liberated Israelites, saying they, “have ‘left Egypt’ to move toward the ‘promised land’ of equality of opportunity . . . The journey is not without peril, yet it continues in hope and in celebration of a God who continues to act in new ways.”<sup>17</sup> Beginning with three communication bases, WIM expanded to maintaining organizational representation in all six Southern Baptist seminaries by 1985. According to WIM, the number of ordained clergywomen increased from 175 to approximately 350 between 1982 and 1985.

The Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU), was marked by their inclusion of egalitarian ideologies. Included in their recommended round table curriculum in 1977 was a seminal work on biblical feminism, *All We’re Meant to Be*, by Nancy Hardesty and Letha Scanzoni.<sup>18</sup> In 1982, the WMU placed themselves at the center of the ideological tug-of-war when they sponsored an event for the WIM. By opting to include the financially suffering WIM in their annual budget, the WMU gave an open endorsement to an organization that actively promoted women in pastoral roles.<sup>19</sup>

The Christian Life Commission (later renamed the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission) served as a prominent platform for the feminist agenda within the SBC. The October 1984 edition of their publication, *Light*, claimed that a theology of liberation was the only answer to the question of female ordination.<sup>20</sup> The issue labeled the “fundamentalist” position on women in ministry as employing, “irresponsible literalism, interpreting the Bible outside a framework of grace.”<sup>21</sup> Further, in 1978 the commission hosted a seminar entitled, “Life-Style,” which featured former WMU president Carolyn Weatherford, an advocate of female ordination, and Fuller Seminary’s Paul Jewett, who criticized the gender hierarchy that he considered to be merely an Old Testament invention.<sup>22</sup>

Though relative minorities within the SBC, these organizations operated under the umbrella of the convention, embraced the rhetoric of SBC faculty and moved to organized activism.

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<sup>16</sup>Libby Bellinger, “Women Mourners into Women Messengers,” *Folio* 4.2 (Fall 1986): 3.

<sup>17</sup>Pearce, “A History of Women in Ministry, SBC,” 10.

<sup>18</sup>Susan Shaw, “Of Words and Women: Southern Baptist Publications and the Progress of Women in the 1970s,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 42.2 (Spring 2007): 72.

<sup>19</sup>Tammi Ledbetter, “Women in the SBC,” *Southern Baptist Advocate* 6.4 (April 1985): 14.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Cited in Campbell, “A Critique and Evaluation of the Women Serving in the Role of Pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention,” 28.

<sup>22</sup>Jerry Sutton, *A Matter of Conviction* (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 223.

## Turning the Tide

In June 1984, the direction of women pastors in the SBC took a sharp turn at the national convention in Kansas City, Missouri. Messengers approved the resolution “On Ordination and the Role of Women in Ministry” (Resolution 3) by which they agreed,

That we not decide concerns of Christian doctrine and practice by modern cultural, sociological, and ecclesiastical trends or by emotional factors; that we remind ourselves of the dearly bought Baptist principle of the final authority of Scripture in matters of faith and conduct; and that we encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, SBC female pastors expressed a litany of frustrated emotions that ranged from angry and hurt to complete violation.<sup>24</sup> Women were not the only vocal dissenters. The resolution’s ripple effects stirred the sitting seminary presidents to weigh in on the motion. Russell Dilday, then president of Southwestern Seminary, said that it was, “based on questionable hermeneutics in interpreting the biblical passage. . . . I regret, too, that the convention felt it could express itself on an issue that has nothing to do with convention life and deals only with local church decisions. That certainly contradicts the historical position our convention has taken through the years.”<sup>25</sup> Southeastern Seminary president Randall Lolley labeled Resolution 3 as, “bad exegesis, bad hermeneutics, bad theology, bad Christology, . . . bad soteriology, bad ecclesiology, bad missiology, bad anthropology, bad sociology, bad psychology, bad manners and worst of all, ‘bad Baptist.’” He added, “if we had a way to repeal it, I would be working on that now.”<sup>26</sup>

Those in opposition to Resolution 3 contended that the motion was an infringement upon the authority of the local church and the priesthood of the believer. Molly Marshall asserted that disagreement on the issue of women in the church is insufficient grounds for disassociation, claiming that one body of believers, “has no right to make this a test of fellowship with a sister church.”<sup>27</sup> Further, it is the prerogative of a Southern Baptist church to determine, “what is required to conduct its own policy and practice, as well as who shall be entrusted to carry them out.”<sup>28</sup> However, as David Allen

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<sup>23</sup>*Sbc.net*, June, 1984, “Resolution on Ordination and the Role of Women in Ministry,” <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1088> (Accessed 8 April 2010).

<sup>24</sup>Cecile Holmes White, “Baptist Women Ministers are Outraged by Expulsion,” *Houston Chronicle*, 24 October 1987, sec. 6.

<sup>25</sup>“Seminary Presidents Respond to Kansas City Resolution,” *Folio* 2.2 (Autumn 1984): 7.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>27</sup>Marshall-Green, “Toward Encompassing Theological Vision for Women in light of Baptist Tradition,” 1.

<sup>28</sup>Carl L. Kell and L. Raymond Camp, *In the Name of the Father: The Rhetoric of the New Southern Baptist Convention* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 89.

noted in a 2008 lecture on Baptist ecclesiology, a collective body of churches—including state and national conventions—is a volitional association. Neither state nor national conventions have any autocratic rule over a local Baptist church. They are, however, autonomous entities in themselves with the right to decide with whom they will associate. “Just as a local Baptist church is totally autonomous, so a grouping of local churches, voluntarily grouping themselves together . . . is likewise autonomous. And we have the right and the freedom to determine fellowship as we see fit.”<sup>29</sup>

Individual equality and responsibility before God were also magnified to the point of superseding objective biblical truth. According to Susan Shaw’s *God Speaks to Us, Too*, “The priesthood of believers means that individuals have the freedom to come to their own understanding of scripture.”<sup>30</sup> She also asserts that a local pastor has no particular authority—whether institutional or theological—over those within his (or, for Shaw, her) congregation.<sup>31</sup> Shaw’s interpretation permits a subjectivist nullification of scriptural commands. “It allows them to say in the face of those who oppose women in ministry that God has called them. Because God deals directly with the individual, only the individual can determine what God asks her or him to do.”<sup>32</sup> However, to interpret “the priesthood of the believers” as a carte blanche concession to a personal inclination or individual gifting is to abuse the scope of its meaning and intent. Malcolm Yarnell explains how this ecclesiological concept refers to the mediatorial and ruling functions of the church as Christ’s representative on earth. “The congregational nature of Christian priesthood eliminates the idea that individuals may appeal to their personal priesthood in order to oppose the congregation or its leadership.”<sup>33</sup> The egalitarian interpretation seems to have blurred the distinction between one’s individual capability and its consequent validity. Further, this egalitarian application of “the priesthood of the believers” more clearly reflects a postmodern mindset in which spiritual autonomy trumps the corporate understanding of God’s Word.

Since passing the 1984 Resolution “On the Ordination and the Role of Women in Ministry,” Southern Baptist institutions have undergone sweeping changes. With the systematic influx of conservative trustees, the six seminaries eventually reflected the convention’s theological convictions. In 1994, Molly Marshall resigned from Southern Seminary, recognizing that “she could not win this battle.”<sup>34</sup> Marshall’s exit signified that the tide of evangelical feminism in the SBC was finally turning. For Southeastern Seminary, the arrival of Paige and Dorothy Patterson marked the advent of theologically conservative women’s programs in Southern Baptist academia. The Pattersons pioneered

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<sup>29</sup>David Allen, “The Authority of the Local Church” (Paper presented at the fourth annual Baptist Distinctives Conference, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 25 September, 2008).

<sup>30</sup>Susan Shaw, *God Speaks to Us Too: Southern Baptist Women on Church, Home and Society* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 253.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>32</sup>Shaw, *God Speaks to Us Too*, 251.

<sup>33</sup>Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “The Priesthood of the Believers” in *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*, ed. Thomas White, Jason G. Duesing and Malcolm Yarnell III (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 242.

<sup>34</sup>Jason Duesing and Thomas White, “Neanderthal Chasing Bigfoot? The State of the Gender Debate in the Southern Baptist Convention,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 12.2 (Fall 2007): 11.

and nurtured Women's Studies programs at Southeastern from 1992–2003, then at Southwestern Seminary since 2003.<sup>35</sup> Southeastern<sup>36</sup> and Southwestern Seminaries<sup>37</sup> defined and declared their ideological alignments with the affirmation of the conservatively crafted *Danvers Statement*<sup>38</sup> in 2004 and 2009, respectively.

Today, Southern Baptist seminaries offer theological education for women, including terminal degrees, along with ministry equipping programs for pastor's wives. Particularly those begun by Dorothy Patterson, Southern Baptist women's programs have substituted rigorous academic preparation for what could have become an educational vacuum out of an overreaction to the 1984 Resolution's potential implications. Offsetting their detractor's accusations of stifling women's gifts and intellect, these programs fill a void in theological training while maintaining a conservative biblical paradigm of women's roles in the church and home.

In 2000, the *Baptist Faith and Message* was revised to reflect more accurately the SBC's stance on women in ministry. Article VI, "The Church," states, "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."<sup>39</sup> The document's sole reference to women in church order has been referred to as a, "defeat for women and victory for fundamentalists and other male chauvinists in the SBC."<sup>40</sup>

### Staying Afloat and Treading through Compromise

Despite its clear stance on women not occupying the role of the pastorate, the *Baptist Faith and Message* 2000 leaves interpretation and application of 1 Timothy 2:12 open to misunderstanding since it limits one's function within the church to a specific office. Female pastors are simply the manifested symptom of rejecting the prohibition of women teaching or having authority in the church. Such specificity, to the exclusion of the general principle behind it, is perhaps why discrepancies still exist with regard to women teaching mixed Bible studies, occupying chaplaincies, and preaching under the authority of their pastor, without holding the pastoral office itself. The SBC recently witnessed this in the nomination of Troy Gramling for the 2011 SBC Pastor's Conference. Gramling is an egalitarian pastor in Florida, who distinguishes between female ordination (to which, in his own words, he is opposed)<sup>41</sup> and a woman preaching

<sup>35</sup>Duesing and White, "Neanderthal Chasing Bigfoot?" 10–14.

<sup>36</sup>Jason Hall, "SEBTS Trustees Affirm Statements On Inerrancy, Gender Roles," *Baptist Press*, 26 April 2004, <http://www.scbaptistpress.org/bpnews.asp?id=18156> (Accessed 21 April 2010).

<sup>37</sup>Keith Collier, "TRUSTEES: Ground Broken On SWBTS Chapel; Inerrancy Statements Embraced;," *Baptist Press*, 26 October 2009, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=31550> (Accessed 21 April 2010).

<sup>38</sup>*The Council On Biblical Manhood And Womanhood*, "Core Beliefs: The Danvers Statement On Biblical Manhood And Womanhood," <http://www.cbmw.org/Danvers> (Accessed 21 April 2010).

<sup>39</sup>*Sbc.net*, 2000, "Baptist Faith and Message," <http://sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp> (Accessed 8 April 2010).

<sup>40</sup>David T. Morgan, *Southern Baptist Sisters: In Search of Status, 1845–2000* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 161.

<sup>41</sup>Troy Gramling, "A Message From Pastor Troy Gramling," 2010, <http://pastortg.publishpath.com> (Accessed 8 April 2010)

and holding a pastoral title in his church (to which, through his ministry personnel, he is amenable).<sup>42</sup> Another example of the erosion of 1 Timothy 2:12 is when women teach and have authority over mixed gender Bible study groups. While the situation itself remains faithful to the semantics of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, it demonstrates the subtle shifts that can occur in the absence of parameters that wholly reflect the biblical text. To neglect applying and articulating the principle of 1 Timothy 2:12 in its entirety exposes highly gifted Bible teachers to compromise the integrity and consistency of their teaching. Additionally, the wording of the *Baptist Faith and Message* may lead to the implicit endorsement of individuals whose ministries, and theology, are not in alignment with the SBC. This is most visibly evidenced in LifeWay Christian Resources' decision to publish women actively holding a pastoral office.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps if the *Baptist Faith and Message* were revised to reflect the scriptural mandate of a woman's role in the church more comprehensively, rather than solely a specific outworking of its subversion, the defining lines of biblical faithfulness would not be so easily blurred.

For SBC-affiliated women's organizations, "Resolution 3" and the *Baptist Faith and Message* magnified the existing trajectories. WIM, later renamed Southern Baptist Women in Ministry (SBWIM), continued to champion the cause of a gender-blind pastorate. For the WMU, the SBC's stance on women in ministry only made their continued relationship with WIM all the more out of step with the theological beliefs of the convention. The WMU eventually associated itself with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the moderate organization formed in 1990 for the propagation of an egalitarian ideology in the church and home.<sup>44</sup> The WMU also voted to incorporate the WIM in their annual budget, giving them financial assistance and maintaining an ex officio place on the WIM steering committee.<sup>45</sup> In the interest of theological continuity, future Southern Baptists may find it more expedient to discontinue its association with the WMU than to navigate a tenuous relationship with its national administrators. Should the organization continue catering to both sides of the ideological aisle at the national level, such a disassociation, though unfortunate, would signify the convention's solidarity on the issue of women's roles.

Despite the sweeping changes in Southern Baptist seminaries and entities from the Conservative Resurgence, statistics suggest the dispute over female pastors in the SBC is far from over. In 1993, the Christian Life Commission reported as many as 900 ordained women in the SBC, a 291 percent increase over a six-year span. The organization also said that female chaplains comprised the largest segment of ordained ministry and that women in positional SBC church leadership are increasing without

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<sup>42</sup>"Essence Week 2" <http://vimeo.com/5156158> (Accessed 14 January 2011).

<sup>43</sup>*Threads*, "Sacred Roads," <http://threadsmedia.com/store/studoes/sacred-roads> (Accessed 8 April, 2010). Note: The author, Heather Zempel is listed as leading the discipleship efforts at National Community Church in Washington D.C. The church's website however, lists Zempel as "Discipleship Pastor" ([theaterchurch.com/about/staff](http://theaterchurch.com/about/staff)). Shortly before the publication's release, LifeWay's printed and promotional material reflected Zempel's pastoral position.

<sup>44</sup>Shurden, *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, 133.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 135.

necessarily being ordained.<sup>46</sup> Despite agenda-driven discrepancies in the numbers,<sup>47</sup> as early as two years ago, one source found over 100 remaining female pastors.<sup>48</sup>

### Anchoring Near the Shoreline

Regarding the issue of women's roles in the church, the Conservative Resurgence may well be spoken of in the present tense. Inconsistency and varying applications of church order are far from being a thing of the past. Today's younger Southern Baptists, many of whom are products of the Conservative Resurgence, have inherited a doctrinal integrity that, without constant vigilance, will be quickly sullied, if not abandoned in the name of cultural relevance.

Yet in the midst of the evangelical gender debate, it is the gospel that keeps complementarians from sinking. Biblically prescribed gender roles within individual families (Eph 5:22–33) and corporate gatherings (1 Tim 2:11–15) were intended to mirror the relationship of Christ and His church. Thus, the scriptural principle of male leadership within these God-ordained institutions is rooted in the greater reality that they signify. “If we lose the gender specificity, then we lose a divinely intended Gospel application.”<sup>49</sup> Perhaps within the nuances of the gender debate and their practical outworking in contemporary concerns, complementarians should not only ask, “How does the biblical text speak to this situation?” but also, “What best manifests the gospel for which these principles are intended to represent?” Only by anchoring in a gospel-defined<sup>50</sup> understanding of women's roles in the church can future Southern Baptists effectively keep from drifting out to sea.

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<sup>46</sup>Mark Winfield and Marv Knox, *SBC Women in Ministry Almost Triple in 6 Years* (Christian Life Commission), 1993.

<sup>47</sup>Tammi Reed Ledbetter, “SBC Women Pastors: Comprehensive Report Does Not Sustain Inflated Statistics,” *SBC Life*, October, 2000, 8.

<sup>48</sup>Robert Marus, “Pennington-Russell Set to Make History as Pastor of Large Decatur Church,” *Abpnews.com/associated Baptist Press*, 29 May 2007, <http://www.abpnews.com/2264.article.print>.

<sup>49</sup>John Starke, “The Gospel and Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,” *The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 8 October 2009, <http://www.cbmw.org/Blog/Posts/The-Gospel-and-Biblical-Manhood-and-Womanhood/> (Accessed 8 April 2010).

<sup>50</sup>The purpose for gender differentiation within marriage is to mirror Christ's relationship to the church (Eph 5:22–33). The fact that Paul supports his prohibition to women's teaching and exercising authority in the church on the created order in Genesis evidences the fact that male-female roles in the church and the home are founded on the same God-ordained pattern of male leadership for the purpose of an incarnational gospel proclamation. “God created man male and female and ordained marriage so that the eternal covenant relationship between Christ and His church would be imaged forth in the marriage union.” John Piper, *Desiring God*, (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2003), 213.

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