

The Exodus from Iraq and the end of Christian Nation-building

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Abstract

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After 70 years of battle against Communists, genocidal leaders, and Islamists, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has laid down the sword of righteous American interventionism in the name of liberty. The SBC's loss of faith in the United States' ability to nation-build resulted primarily from the persecution of Christians by Islamist terrorists. This persecution began in the first year of OIF and reached its apex during the Islamic State's campaign of genocide following the U.S. withdrawal. Due to the Baptists' own heritage of persecution, they viewed this outcome as devastatingly tragic, and a generation of Southern Baptists learned to distrust the ability of any government to avoid tragic failures in its efforts to impose its ideals abroad. In the end, the SBC incorporated this lesson into its Just War theology and then opposed interventions that would require a nation-building effort like the one that failed in Iraq.

Introduction

After 70 years of battle against Communists, genocidal leaders, and Islamists, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has laid down the sword of righteous American interventionism in the name of liberty. The aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) convinced the denomination's leaders that their country should no longer attempt to use its military to spread its ideals abroad. The war convinced Southern Baptist millennials, in particular, that regime change can lead to horrors rather than freedom for foreign peoples.

The SBC's loss of faith in the United States' ability to nation-build resulted primarily from the persecution of Christians by Islamist terrorists. This persecution began in the first year of OIF and reached its apex during the Islamic State's campaign of genocide following the U.S. withdrawal. Due to the Baptists' own heritage of persecution, they viewed this outcome as devastatingly tragic, and a generation of Southern Baptists learned to distrust the ability of any government to avoid tragic failures in its efforts to impose its ideals abroad. In the end, the SBC incorporated this lesson into its Just War theology and then opposed interventions that would require a nation-building effort like the one that failed in Iraq.

No other denomination had supported OIF; indeed, most opposed it as an overly-idealistic crusade. Others that, like the Southern Baptists, had championed the failed nation-building intervention in Vietnam issued particularly vociferous denunciations of the intervention. After the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, the SBC followed in their footsteps, opposing war for regime change in Libya and Syria. Christian faith in U.S. nation-building reached an ebb tide.

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This was not, however, the first time that zeal for nation-building had burned bright during a war for democracy abroad, then dimmed once the campaign produced a military victory and a political failure. Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Northern Baptists – the liberal denominations known as the Protestant Mainline – had a similar experience during the First World War. The Federal Council of Churches (FCC), the flagship of their ecumenical Christianity and representing two-thirds of U.S. Protestants, helped create and echo Woodrow Wilson’s image of a holy “war to end all wars.” When the failure of negotiations in Versailles and Washington, D.C., ended their dreams for a world of democracies settling their disputes through dialogue, the Mainline denominations adopted a pacifism that lasted well into World War II.¹

Like the Southern Baptists, the Mainline denominations rejected nation-building after decades of consistent support for military interventions in the name of democracy. Arguably, Mainline support for such interventions originated in the course of the Civil War, when Abraham Lincoln sanctified the conflict in his Second Inaugural and the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” became the most popular song in the Union. Reconstruction thus became the United States’ first attempt to build democracy through war.²

In two ways, however, the North’s triumph transformed subsequent wars for democracy so fundamentally that they must be considered as a different type of intervention. First, incorporating former slaves into the United States polity

¹ Thompson, S. R., and James K. Wellman Jr. “The Social Gospel Legacy in U.S. Foreign Policy.” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 7 (January 2011): 24-25.

² Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012, 166-7.

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required a drastic re-thinking of which races were capable of self-government, at least under the supervision of Europeans or their descendants in North America. Second, Reconstruction introduced a new template for expansion, based on the reformation of political and economic structures through temporary occupation.³

Both of these transformations, however, would only come to bear on U.S. expansion at the turn of the 20th century, following three decades of elaboration in the domestic sphere. Social Darwinism refined racial thinking, differentiating the “Anglo-Saxon” from the lesser breeds among Europeans as well as insisting that racial characteristics were, at least in part, cultural. This “soft racism” allowed for the possibility that people of any ancestry could eventually be Anglo-Saxonized culturally, politically, and religiously.⁴ The method for accomplishing this racial transformation emerged from the second lesson of the Civil War: that political, economic, and social structures could be remade through an occupation, resulting eventually in a polity capable of membership in the community of nations.

These two strands of thinking came together in the occupation of the Philippines, where for the first time the United States came into possession of lands it could not make into a settler colony. Faced with the existence of 20 million “Malay” Catholics inhabiting their new possessions, U.S. colonial administrators first turned to their Anglo-Saxon ancestors for advice. After a decade of formal imperialism self-consciously modeled on that of their British advisors, however, the U.S. promised the Filipinos independence following a period of tutelage, during

³ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 161-174.

⁴ Strong, Josiah, and Congregational Home Missionary Society. *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*. New York: The American Home Missionary Society, 1885.

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which their political and economic practices would be “reconstructed” under U.S. occupation. The imperial project could thus continue without threatening the Anglo-Saxon nature of the United States itself.⁵

This military intervention, followed by political and economic reform, received the full support of the Mainline denominations. Dominated by the liberal theology of the Social Gospel, they viewed democracy, Protestantism, and Christianized capitalism as essentially inseparable. This holy synthesis, embodied by the United States, would remake the world in its image. The Mainline denominations thus supported their prophet Wilson prior to World War I, as the president deployed troops once to Cuba and Hispaniola, twice to Panama and Mexico, and no fewer than five times to Honduras.⁶ With each intervention, Wilson and other adherents of the Social Gospel viewed regime change as a process of teaching the “South Americans to elect good men”.⁷

Mainline Protestants’ Interwar pacifism thus marked a major shift in their theology of warfare, provoked by the failure of U.S. military power to build the world they had hoped it would. While few (if any) Southern Baptists became pacifists after OIF, their change of heart followed a similar run of support for U.S. interventions. Indeed, before 2013’s proposed U.S. intervention into Syria, the SBC had last opposed a war of nation-building in the late 1930s.

⁵ Kramer, Paul A. *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, & the Philippines*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

⁶ Thompson, S. R., and James K. Wellman Jr. “The Social Gospel Legacy in U.S. Foreign Policy.” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 7 (January 2011): 19-21.

⁷ Anderson, Fred, and Andrew R. L. Cayton. *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500-2000*. New York: Viking, 2005, 344.

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During those years, at the denomination's Annual Meetings each June, delegates representing local congregations passed resolutions on war, peace, and international relations. One critiqued what the majority of the SBC delegates saw as a rush to war⁸; another commended efforts to settle international conflicts through negotiation.⁹ As late as 1939, the SBC accused American companies of profiting from Japan's invasion of China through arms sales. The denomination then called on the U.S. government "most speedily to take every possible measure to stop the supply of the instruments and materials of destruction from flowing from our country into Japan."¹⁰ Such positions had become standard within American Protestantism, dominated as it was by the Mainline denominations.¹¹ For a time, this "high tide of liberal internationalism...washed over the souls of Southern Baptists as well."¹²

However, the dominance of pacifism and isolationism among U.S. Protestants began to crumble early in the 1930s, with the German Evangelical theologian Reinhold Niebuhr's promotion of neo-orthodoxy in theology and Christian realism in politics. Niebuhr, a pacifist until Japan's 1931 invasion of Manchuria first convinced him that war was an evil lesser than fascism,¹³ promoted his theology and

⁸ "Resolution On Peace." Southern Baptist Convention, 1935.

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/810/resolution-on-peace>.

⁹ "Resoluton On Peace And War." Southern Baptist Convention, 1937.

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/812/resoluton-on-peace-and-war>.

¹⁰ "Resolution On America And Chinas Invasion." Southern Baptist Convention, 1939.

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/813/resolution-on-america-and-chinas-invasion>.

¹¹ Thompson, S. R., and James K. Wellman Jr. "The Social Gospel Legacy in U.S. Foreign Policy." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 7 (January 2011): 29-33.

¹² Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012, 302-3.

¹³ Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Must We Do Nothing?" *The Christian Century*, 1932. 42: 416-417.
http://www.ucc.org/beliefs_theology_must-we-do-nothing.

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politics through an ecumenical religious network united by support for the Allied cause that crossed denominational lines.¹⁴ From 1928 until his retirement in 1960, Niebuhr dominated Union Theological Seminary, an elite independent seminary in New York. As Union's president and most famous faculty member, he developed strong personal connections to politically influential laypeople that belonged to a Mainline denomination but supported the war. Niebuhr also towered in the public imagination, appearing on the cover of *Time* and publishing in *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Life*.¹⁵ Mainline believers working in defense began looking to him, including the Presbyterian lay minister George Kennan, who later called him "the father of all of us"¹⁶.

Once Niebuhr joined Kennan's Policy Planning Staff as an advisor,¹⁷ Niebuhr joined the ranks of "defense intellectuals": German-American foreign policy experts who after the war "allied with government and military officials to create a network of state and corporate institutions" to combat totalitarianism.¹⁸ Indeed, Niebuhr influenced thinkers such as Hans J. Morgenthau and E. H. Carr in their formative years, and the both acknowledged his importance quoting them more than any other thinker in their pivotal books (Morgenthau's *Scientific Man versus Power*

¹⁴ Inboden, William C. "The Prophetic Conflict: Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism, and World War II." *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 51.

¹⁵ Craig, Campbell. *Glimmer of a New Leviathan Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. 37.

¹⁶ Inboden, William C. "The Prophetic Conflict: Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism, and World War II." *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 49-53.

¹⁷ Inboden, William. *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 17.

¹⁸ Bessner, Daniel. *The Night Watchman: Hans Speier and the Making of the American National Security State*, 2013: 23. Niebuhr also shared the foundational experience that united the German-American defense intellectual network: "witnessing ordinary Germans vote enthusiastically for Adolf Hitler".

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Politics and Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis*.¹⁹ Morgenthau himself later called Niebuhr the "greatest living political philosopher of America."²⁰

By 1941, he had already led large swaths of American Christianity away from pacifism, preparing them for U.S. into the Second World War.²¹ Among them were the Southern Baptists, who declared at their Annual Meeting in May that "as for us we hold it were better to be dead than to live in a world dominated by the ideals of these modern dictators."²²

Non-denominational evangelicals, most of whose churches had little (if any) national affiliation, also followed Niebuhr's basic Christian realist argument – that war was sometimes necessary to arrest a greater evil – but articulated it in different theological terms. Drawing on their premillennial eschatology, they argued that Nazi and Japanese aggression demonstrated the impossibility of the Mainline's dream of peace through human institutions. Such evil would be a lasting presence, they preached, until the return of Christ and the start of His millennial reign. To voice this theology, alongside statements of patriotic fervor, evangelical leaders created their first national parachurch organizations. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), founded soon after the U.S. entered the war, emerged as the most powerful, giving evangelicals hope of someday matching the influence of the

¹⁹ Thompson Kenneth, "Niebuhr and the Foreign Policy Realists," in *Reinhold Niebuhr Revisited: Engagements with an American Original*, ed. Daniel Rice (Grand Rapids, MI, 2009), 139. Inboden (2014) notes further that Thompson, a disciple of Morgenthau's, identifies himself in this piece as source of Kennan's quote describing Niebuhr as 'the father of all of us.' "

²⁰ As quoted in Thompson, Michael G. "An Exception to Exceptionalism: A Reflection on Reinhold Niebuhr's Vision of 'Prophetic' Christianity and the Problem of Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy." *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (October 3, 2007): 836.

²¹ Dorrien, Gary J. *The Making of American Liberal Theology*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

²² "Resolution On Peace." Southern Baptist Convention, 1941.
<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/815/resolution-on-peace>.

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Mainline's Federal Council of Churches (FCC). All in all, such evangelical Protestants took advantage of the climate of war-time opinion to re-enter political debate, from which they had largely been excluded since the Scopes trial.²³

The U.S. Catholic bishops, too, endorsed the war through their national body, the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), founded during World War I. Catholics, alone among U.S. Christians of the day, continued to employ Just War theology, as developed within the Church since St. Thomas Aquinas. By its standards, Japanese and German aggression made for a clear example of *jus ad bellum* - just cause for war.²⁴

The NCWC's official statements, however, had little influence in comparison with those made by its most powerful members speaking as individuals. The conservative Francis Spellman, Archbishop of New York and the Apostolic Vicar to the U.S. Armed Forces, anointed the nation and its cause in unapologetically national terms, using little Just War reasoning. Spellman had yet to establish the unique public influence he would command a decade later, as several of his counterparts spoke with equal authority. Even liberal bishops, however, denied the possibility of conscientious objection in a war clearly being fought in self-defense.²⁵

Despite making a great impact on the laypeople within the Mainline denominations, Niebuhr's theology had a limited influence on their clergy. This became especially evident after Pearl Harbor, as many Mainline theologians and

²³ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012, 372.

²⁴ Brown, Davis. *The Sword, the Cross, and the Eagle: The American Christian Just War Tradition*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008, 39.

²⁵ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012, 370.

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pastors continued to preach pacifism well into the 1940s. Indeed, despite Niebuhr's substantial activism in favor of an intervention to defeat fascism and rebuild Europe, World War II was eventually "waged with less benefit of clergy than any major war in our history."²⁶

The lack of support for war among the powerful Mainline clergy had also opened the door for the U.S. president to articulate a religious case for intervention. As early as 1936, Franklin D. Roosevelt highlighted a line between "belief and unbelief" as more critical than the differences between Christian denominations, or even between faith traditions. Specifically, Roosevelt included Catholicism and Judaism as acceptable faiths, along with the traditional white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestantism exemplified most perfectly in his own Episcopalian Church.²⁷

American victory, combined with the revelation of the Nazi war crimes, confirmed that war had been the lesser of two evils. Niebuhr, along with the Catholics and evangelicals who had joined him in vocally supporting the war effort early on, cemented their status as authorities on matters of war and peace. Conversely, the White House had proven itself as a source of inspiration and faith, a religious role that would only increase under Roosevelt's immediate successors.²⁸

The Mainline denominations, under the influence of Niebuhr's Christian realism, finally accepted the Allied triumph as a second chance to establish the international architecture for peace that had failed after World War I. They rapidly

²⁶ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012, 374.

²⁷ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012, 317-322.

²⁸ Gunn, T. Jeremy. *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2009.

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built up their capacity to exert influence in Washington, to ensure that the Congressional disputes that had killed the League of Nations would not be repeated. During 1944-45, the Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians each established their own lobbying office in the capital, as did the Federal Council of Churches,²⁹ which in 1944 also hosted State Department officials at a summit on the post-war order.³⁰

The SBC, too, established a political lobby. In 1946, the three largest Baptist denominations in the U.S. – Southern, American, and National – co-founded the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (BJCPA). For the first time, Baptists had an organized voice in Washington, D.C., and they used it primarily to advocate for religious freedom, both in the U.S. and abroad.³¹

Southern Baptist participation in the BJCPA, however, marked the extent of the denomination's involvement with ecumenical bodies. The SBC did not, however, lack opportunities for integration with other denominations. During the 1940s, both the NAE and the FCC invited Southern Baptists to join their organizations. Southern Baptist leaders politely declined, citing irreconcilable theological differences that separated the SBC from both the rising evangelicals (whom the SBC outnumbered many times over) and the dominant Mainline denominations.³²

Southern Baptist reticence to sacrifice independence meant that the denomination remained politically peripheral during the early Cold War, when the

²⁹ Zubovich, Gene. "The Global Gospel: Protestant Internationalism and American Liberalism in the Twentieth Century". PhD Dissertation, University of California- Berkeley, 2015.

³⁰ Inboden, William C. "The Prophetic Conflict: Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism, and World War II." *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 31.

³¹ Baptist Joint Committee. "Building a Legal Legacy." *Report from the Capitol*, September 2011.

³² Mohler, Albert. "The Southern Baptist Convention and the Issue of Interdenominational Relationships." Great Commission Council of the Southern Baptist Convention, July 16, 2009.

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power of ecumenical Protestantism crested and doctrinal lines became blurriest. In 1950, the Mainline-dominated FCC merged with other ecumenical councils to form the National Council of Churches (NCC). While the member denominations of the NCC exercised considerable political influence, their beliefs became increasingly ambiguous. Nor were these processes independent: the coalition-building necessary to exercise influence in politics depended on the blurring of boundaries that had held the denominations apart.³³ The SBC's refusal to compromise theologically left the denomination outside the ecumenical movement, and thus without the political influence held by the Mainline Protestants who continued to lead it.

Ecumenism also blurred the lines between church and state, especially as the Soviet Union emerged as the United States' chief rival. Mainline leaders began to speak of the U.S. as a nation divinely called to resist the atheist Communists, through faith as well as arms. Among them was George Kennan, a Presbyterian lay minister, whose reports for the State Department from Moscow established the base line for U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War.³⁴ His foundational essay, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," closed by saying that the outcome of the contest between the two superpowers would be determined by whether the U.S. could "measure up to its own best traditions...The issue of Soviet-American relations is in essence a test of

³³ Kniss, Fred. "Culture Wars (?): Re-mapping the battleground". In *Culture Wars in American Politics: Critical Views of a Popular Myth.* ed. Rhys Williams. New York: Aldine DeGruyter.

³⁴ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012.

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the overall worth of the United States.” This test was prescribed by “Providence” which had chosen the U.S. for its special role in world history.³⁵

The theme of a special national calling also influenced John Foster Dulles, a Presbyterian leader of ecumenical Protestantism who gave guest sermons before the NCC.³⁶ Unlike most Mainline Protestants after World War I,³⁷ Dulles had never lost faith in the dream of a world government bringing peace to all peoples, which he had attempted to establish as part of Wilson’s delegation to Versailles.³⁸ Along with President Eisenhower, Dulles took Kennan’s idea of a national test of faith to its logical conclusion: the construction of a program to ensure the religiosity of the U.S. population. The nature of this religiosity was ecumenical and vague, as it had to be to garner the support of the various U.S. churches. Protestants outside the Mainline – especially those represented by the newly-born National Association of Evangelicals and the Rev. Billy Graham – had to be accommodated, as did the staunchly anti-communist Catholics, led by Francis Spellman, who many Protestants still considered politically suspect due to their ties to the Vatican. Even Jews were recruited to the cause of U.S. civil religion, forming the third leg of the “Protestant-Catholic-Jew” trinity first conceived of by Franklin D. Roosevelt,³⁹ but championed by Will Herberg with the support of Eisenhower and Dulles. Indeed, only those Protestants who refused to work with the Catholics and Jews were excluded from

³⁵ Kennan, George. “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”. *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947.

³⁶ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 386.

³⁷ Wellman, James K. *The Gold Coast Church and the Ghetto: Christ and Culture in Mainline Protestantism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

³⁸ Inboden, William. *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

³⁹ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 322

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government patronage, as demonstrated by the President's refusal to even meet with the head of the Fundamentalist American Council of Christian Churches.⁴⁰

To bring these previously disparate religious groups under one roof required establishing an organization capable of speaking for all of them: the Foundation for Religious Action in the Civil and Social Order (FRASCO), founded by the Rev. Edward Elson with the blessing and support of Eisenhower, whom he baptized at National Presbyterian and served as pastor throughout his presidency. FRASCO broadcast a "natural theology" of divine creation and natural rights, the epitome of which was the U.S. Constitution. Elson organized a series of national conferences, which brought Herberg's thesis to fame, followed by a series of T.V. panel discussions on faith and foreign policy, symposia at colleges, and articles in *Christianity Today*. All of these events generated material for the US Information Agency for use in its propaganda campaigns, both at home and abroad – as they were intended to by one of FRASCO's directors, Gordon Gray, the man who had led U.S. "psy-ops" during World War II.⁴¹

Other aspects of the Dulles-Eisenhower campaign to make the early Cold War United States more religious included opening Cabinet meetings with prayer,

⁴⁰ Inboden, William. *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 275.

⁴¹ Inboden, William. *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 281-287. See also Herzog, Jonathan P. *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011: 125-134, 162. Note that Herzog mentions the ecumenical connections between Elson, Graham, and Eisenhower. Herzog also mentions other heroes of their early Cold War religio-nationalist campaign: Henry Ford II, Henry Luce, Herbert Hoover, and D. Elton Trueblood, a Quaker who taught philosophy at Stanford and served as the U.S. Information Agency's chief of religious information – essentially the nation's senior official on propaganda, Latin for the "spreading of the faith." However, only Inboden has the archival documentation placing every one of these men on the board of FRASCO.

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adopting "in God we Trust" as the national motto, putting that motto on the paper currency, and adding "one nation, under God" to the pledge of Allegiance. This campaign was not a cynical attempt at public manipulation, as evidenced by the prayer in private meetings, nor a play for electoral support; nor was it out of step with religious opinion in the country, which generally saw Soviet and Chinese communism a threat. It was a serious attempt by Mainline political leaders to influence U.S. religious life through the creation of a universally ecumenical civic faith, which by 1960 had successfully incorporated evangelicals, Catholics, and Jews.⁴²

Southern Baptists, however, continued to remain largely independent from ecumenical organizations and insulated from any impulse to compromise doctrinally with outsiders. Theological disputes *within* the SBC did ease somewhat during the postwar period, as the denomination's focus turned to missionary activity and organizational growth in what became known as the "Grand Consensus." Yet the BJPCA, which it shared only with other Baptist denominations and which focused solely on religious freedom issues, remained the sole ecumenical organization to which the denomination belonged.⁴³

So, too, did the Southern Baptists remain independent from the non-denominational evangelical movement.⁴⁴ The NAE, for example, operated in the northeast, the Great Lakes region, and Southern California, but maintained no offices

⁴² Gunn, T. Jeremy. *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2009.

⁴³ Land, Richard D. "The Southern Baptist Convention, 1979-1993: What Happened and Why?" *Baptist History and Heritage* 28, no. 4 (October 1993): 4-5.

⁴⁴ Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002.
<http://muse.jhu.edu.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/book/6534>.

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in the South.⁴⁵ While individual Southern Baptists played central roles in the rise of evangelicalism – Billy Graham above all others – they did so within the denomination’s Grand Consensus to focus on evangelism. Regional isolation kept the SBC insulated from the “culture war” politics already being developed by northern evangelicals. Carl F.H. Henry, in particular, helped build the parachurch organizations and institutions through which non-denominational evangelicals sought to establish themselves: the National Association of Evangelicals, Fuller Theological Seminary, and *Christianity Today* magazine, which he was founded as editor-in-chief.⁴⁶

Southern Baptists remained largely insulated even from the White House-led effort to integrate Jews, Catholics, and Protestants into a spiritual line of defense in the battle against Communism. While acceptance of Jews became commonplace throughout U.S. Christianity during the war, Southern Baptists remained suspicious of Catholics. As it had since before World War I, the SBC continued to oppose every diplomatic contact between the U.S. and the Vatican, which the denomination viewed as a violation of the separation of church and state.⁴⁷ Indeed, the very idea of a “Judeo-Christian world view” entered the Southern Baptist lexicon only in the 1970s,⁴⁸ likely through young members of the denomination who traveled outside

⁴⁵ “History.” *National Association of Evangelicals Archives*. Accessed May 21, 2017. <https://www.nae.net/about-nae/history/>.

⁴⁶ Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002: 14-16.

⁴⁷ “Resolution Petitioning The Department Of State Of The United States.” Southern Baptist Convention, May 17, 1946. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/930/resolution-petitioning-the-department-of-state-of-the-united-states>.

⁴⁸ Land, Richard, “Is Democracy Doomed?,” *Light*, Jan.-Feb. 1996, 2.

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the South.⁴⁹ Southern Baptists' experience of the Vietnam War, in particular, demonstrated their relative isolation from the rest of American Christendom. The wars in Indochina, while hugely impactful on Catholics and other Protestants in the U.S., provoked little change within the SBC.⁵⁰ Southern Baptists, in general, approved of the United States' campaign in Vietnam even during its final days, earning a reputation as the campaign's "most ardent supporters."⁵¹ This support took tangible form: when Nixon withdrew in 1973, over half of the military chaplains in Vietnam were Southern Baptists.⁵² SBC leaders from the generation that fought the war continued to view it a defeat snatched from the jaws of victory by a lack of popular will to see the job through.⁵³

The denomination as a whole saw the war in Indochina through a broadly anti-Communist lens.⁵⁴ Even prior to World War II, Soviet assaults on religious freedom had been well reported in the U.S., setting most Southern Baptists against the USSR.⁵⁵ After the Cold War began, further Baptist missionary reports of persecution in the USSR and Vietnam helped these harden into an anti-Communism that was almost instinctual.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002. <http://muse.jhu.edu/offcampus.lib.washington.edu/book/6534>.

⁵⁰ Bogaski, George A. "Swords & Plowshares: American Protestants and the Vietnam War." Ph.D., Dissertation The University of Oklahoma, 2010. 179-180.

⁵¹ Hall, Mitchell K. *Because of Their Faith: CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War*. Contemporary American History Series. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. 17.

⁵² Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

⁵³ Mark Coppenger. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 26, 2016.

⁵⁴ Dowling, Maurice. "Soviet Baptists and the Cold War". In Heath, Gordon L., and Michael A.G. Haykin, eds. *Baptists and War: Essays on Baptists and Military Conflict, 1640s-1990s*. Lutterworth Press, 2015: 169.

⁵⁵ Froese, Paul. *The Plot to Kill God: Findings from the Soviet Experiment in Secularization*. First Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

⁵⁶ Finn, Nathan A. "Baptists and the War in Vietnam," Heath, Gordon L., and Michael A.G. Haykin, eds. *Baptists and War: Essays on Baptists and Military Conflict, 1640s-1990s*. Lutterworth Press, 2015: 203.

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Even Southern Baptists moderates, who expressed progressive views on other issues – especially race – were staunch in their disdain for Communism. The most potent SBC voice on ethics, Foy Valentine, headed the SBC’s Christian Life Commission (CLC). Foy radically integrated his denomination through interaction with the American Baptists who led the civil rights movement, above all Martin Luther King, Jr., but also giving Bayard Rustin stage time at a CLC conference to describe the Black Power movement. Yet Valentine described Communism as “a most serious threat” to Christianity, the “ultimate doom” of which would be its denial of individual rights – primary among them freedom of conscience.⁵⁷ The SBC as a whole maintained support for its members who chose to fight as well as those who professed opposition to any and all military service as a matter of freedom of conscience, in keeping with their theology of “soul freedom.”⁵⁸

In short, even during the campaign in Indochina’s most controversial years, “an overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists remained favorable to the war effort.”⁵⁹ No other denomination could say the same. The NCC housed and funded the most important religious anti-war organization, the Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam (CALCAV). This alienated deeply the laity of the Mainline

⁵⁷ Pennington, Kimberly Lynn. “Blueprint for Change: A History of Efforts by Southern Baptist Leaders to Reform Southern Baptist Culture on Race Relations.” Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016. pp. 178-185.

⁵⁸ Finn, Nathan A. “Baptists and the War in Vietnam,” Heath, Gordon L., and Michael A.G. Haykin, eds. *Baptists and War: Essays on Baptists and Military Conflict, 1640s-1990s*. Lutterworth Press, 2015: 220.

⁵⁹ Finn, Nathan A. “Baptists and the War in Vietnam,” Heath, Gordon L., and Michael A.G. Haykin, eds. *Baptists and War: Essays on Baptists and Military Conflict, 1640s-1990s*. Lutterworth Press, 2015: 206.

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denominations, who remained supportive of the war effort through the end of 1960s.⁶⁰

Ecumenical Christianity crumbled, as the war “imploded its weaknesses.”⁶¹ Even Niebuhr and his neo-orthodox colleagues at Union, such as John C. Bennett, moved quickly from supporting the initial intervention in 1965 to repudiating Vietnam as a “cumulative evil” by 1970.⁶² Niebuhr openly mocked Richard Nixon’s attempts to revive the vague White House ecumenism of FDR and Eisenhower by hosting weekly religious services in the East Room, featuring speakers of all faiths.⁶³ Such a “king’s chapel in the king’s court,” wrote Niebuhr, again becoming a prophet near the end of his life, “seems even more extravagantly appreciative of official policy than any historic establishment feared by our Founding Fathers.”⁶⁴ By 1975, even leaders of CALCAV, including William Sloane Coffin and Richard John Neuhaus, admitted that the “excesses and mistakes of the movement” had ignored the majority and alienated many parishioners.⁶⁵

The Mainline denominations rapidly declined thereafter: by 1985, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal clergy across the U.S. had watched their flocks shrink by

⁶⁰ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 529-535

⁶¹ Gill, Jill K. “Embattled Ecumenism: The National Council of Churches, the Vietnam War, and the Trials of the Protestant Left,” 2011. https://works.bepress.com/jill_gill/2/.

⁶² Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 525.

⁶³ “President Adds Church Services Sunday in White House’s East Room.” *Associated Press*. January 27, 1969.

⁶⁴ Niebuhr, Reinhold. “The King’s Chapel and the King’s Court,” *Christianity and Crisis*, August 4, 1969.

⁶⁵ Mitchell K. Hall. *Because of Their Faith: CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War*. Contemporary American History Series. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990: 170.

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an average of 15 percent since they had helped to stop the Vietnam War.⁶⁶ Divides over the crises of the 1960s solidified into schisms. Foreign policy became particularly divisive among Presbyterians, as the attitudes forged during Vietnam set co-religionists to fighting once again during the dirty wars of the 1980s in Central America. Those fights consistently ended in statements denouncing war, a position that eventually become orthodox within the denomination.⁶⁷ In general, Mainline denominations returned to their pacifism of the Interwar period, especially as developed during the Civil Rights movement.

Those Mainline Protestants who still believed that wars to spread democracy were necessary to defeat Communism looked to Paul Ramsey, a Methodist theologian at Princeton University. In a series of books published during the course of the Vietnam War, he re-introduced Catholic Just War theology into U.S. Protestantism. Ramsey also developed a new approach to the entire tradition: he argued that both sides in any actual war would have a degree of justice on their side. So, rather than focusing on the well-developed *jus ad bellum* criteria for initiating a conflict, he focused instead on *jus in bello* – or just conduct of war – a code for warriors and strategists on both sides.⁶⁸

Ramsey's analysis concluded with the introduction of two new criteria, both of which would prove influential throughout U.S. Christendom in future debates.

The first, discrimination, stated that military force could be used against no one but

⁶⁶ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 545.

⁶⁷ Koll, Karla Ann. "Presbyterians, the United States, and Central America: Background of the 1980s Debate." *The Journal of Presbyterian History* (1997-) 78, no. 1 (2000): 87–102.

⁶⁸ Brown, Davis. *The Sword, the Cross, and the Eagle: The American Christian Just War Tradition*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008: 39.

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enemy combatants and those who collaborate with them. Thus, the “counter-population” warfare of World War II could not be considered just. Attacks on a population housing a guerilla movement would be, though, if they met the second criteria: that the good procured through violence outweigh the inevitable suffering it would cause. This principle Ramsey termed proportionality.⁶⁹

Ramsay wrote his landmark books at Princeton, but did so while consulting at the Pentagon on the ethics of the war in Vietnam. From there, he would bring classified pictures to show the undergraduates in his ethics classes, such as one showing a Viet Cong tank farm that used civilians as human shields. He’d then assign them the task of using Just War theology to analyze a bombing run on that facility. Among his students was a young Texan named Richard Land, with whom he first connected over their shared Southern heritage. While Ramsey maintained his membership in the Methodist Church, Land was a Southern Baptist, who decades later applied his favorite professor’s criteria to the War in Iraq, after succeeding Foy Valentine as the SBC’s head ethicist.⁷⁰

Ramsey’s contributions to Just War theology eventually influenced even the U.S. Catholic bishops, especially in their position on nuclear weapons in their 1983 peace pastoral, entitled *The Challenge of Peace*. The conclusions presented in that landmark statement, however, emerged from twenty years of intense debate among the bishops. As with the Mainline clergy, the positions taken by individual bishops during the course of the War in Vietnam continued to frame their discussion of war

⁶⁹ Johnson, James Turner. “Paul Ramsey and the Recovery of the Just War Idea.” *Journal of Military Ethics* 1, no. 2 (2002): 136–144.

⁷⁰ Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

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for decades after the fall of Saigon. Unlike the Mainline denominations, however, U.S. Catholics emerged from this debate with stronger organizations and a renewed consensus on the use of force, which has guided them ever since.

When the United States inherited responsibility for Vietnam from the French after the latter's defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1955, U.S. Catholics supported the decision wholeheartedly. Their anti-Communism had never been more fervent, as they stood firmly behind Senator Joseph McCarthy's campaign of persecution. For all of its excesses, though, anti-communism bonded the Catholics to their Protestant brethren as part of the ecumenical faith propagated by the NCC, in concert with the White House. Combined with the rise of charismatic young Catholic Senator John F. Kennedy, the Church's patriotic nationalism earned it the acceptance of the Mainline denominations as a force in U.S. political debate. Indeed, "no group benefitted more from the Cold War than Roman Catholics."⁷¹

U.S. Catholics, both laity and clergy, also identified closely with the Roman Catholic whom the French had installed as prime minister of South Vietnam in 1954, Ngo Dinh Diem. The following year, Diem's New York publicist recruited Spellman to raise Catholic support for the Vietnamese leader in the U.S. Thomas Dooley, a lay Catholic, also promoted Diem's cause as essentially Christian through a speaking campaign arranged with the help of Diem's contact in the CIA, Edward Lansdale.⁷² At the 1962 national prayer breakfast, Kennedy declared that religion, while not an

⁷¹ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 470.

⁷² Fisher, James T. "The Second Catholic President: Ngo Dinh Diem, John F. Kennedy, and the Vietnam Lobby, 1954-1963." *U.S. Catholic Historian* 15, no. 3 (1997): 119-123.

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“instrument of the Cold War”, nevertheless provided the “basis of the issue which separates us from those who make themselves our adversary.”⁷³

Yet for all the support they gave Diem, U.S Catholics never understood the position he, or the Church, occupied in Vietnam’s religious landscape. Diem had retained Decree #10, a French-imposed law labeling Buddhism as an association rather than a religion, thus denying Buddhists the freedom of expression that he granted to his fellow Catholics. Buddhist anger boiled over in Hue on May 8, 1963, in marches protesting Diem's recent order that made display of any flag but the national colors illegal. Catholics had still been allowed to carry papal flags, however, while celebrating the Silver Anniversary of Ngo Dinh Thuc, Diem's brother and the local archbishop. Shortly thereafter, the government had refused to allow Buddhists to display symbols in celebration of the Buddha's birthday. Police opened fire on the peaceful demonstration, killing eight and wounding four.⁷⁴

Diem’s campaign of repression came to the attention of U.S. policymakers only after June of 1963, when Thich Quang Duc self-immolated in a Saigon intersection. While Diem’s sister-in-law referred to this act of protest as a “barbecue,”⁷⁵ the sudden political power of Buddhism took the Kennedy Administration completely off-guard. Upon learning of Quang Duc’s self-sacrifice, the President exclaimed: “How could this have happened? Who are these people?”

⁷³ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 511.

⁷⁴ Topmiller, Robert J. *The Lotus Unleashed: The Buddhist Peace Movement in South Vietnam, 1964-1966*. University Press of Kentucky, 2006: 2.

⁷⁵ Fisher, James T. “The Second Catholic President: Ngo Dinh Diem, John F. Kennedy, and the Vietnam Lobby, 1954-1963.” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 15, no. 3 (1997): 122.

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Why didn't we know about them before?"⁷⁶ The political power of Buddhists, who comprised almost ninety percent of South Vietnam's population, became quickly apparent. Thich Tri Quang and other monks sparked the uprisings that, with CIA approval, drove Diem from power in November 1963. The uprisings continued for the next three years in a series of increasingly violent protests, which at their height occupied whole cities.⁷⁷

Diem and his U.S.-backed successors, who proved equally unable to address the Buddhists' concerns, alienated many U.S. Catholics. Campaigns by the FBI and in the U.S. media to discredit the antiwar movement radicalized some among the clergy, including Daniel Berrigan, a Jesuit who in 1965 co-chaired CALCAV at its founding. Even a cardinal, Richard Cushing of Boston, briefly joined the anti-war organization.⁷⁸

Yet the anti-Communism of Spellman and Fulton Sheen continued to define the U.S. Catholic position, both internally and in the public eye. Berrigan's superiors ordered him to withdraw from CALCAV and end all association with anti-war groups, then re-assigned him to South America. When the U.S. bishops re-founded the NCWC as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) in 1966,⁷⁹ the NCCB's first statement on foreign policy, entitled *Peace in Vietnam*, stated that the

⁷⁶ William J. Rust. *Kennedy in Vietnam*. New York: Scribner, 1985: 102.

⁷⁷ McAllister, James. "'Only Religions Count in Vietnam': Thich Tri Quang and the Vietnam War." *Modern Asian Studies* 42, no. 04 (July 2008): 751-2.

⁷⁸ Mitchell K. Hall. *Because of Their Faith: CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War*. Contemporary American History Series. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990: 14-16.

⁷⁹ "The Bishops in Council." *First Things*. Accessed February 28, 2016. <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2005/04/the-bishops-in-council>.

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U.S. military's "presence in Vietnam is justified."⁸⁰ At the time, this presence consisted of over 200,000 U.S. troops.⁸¹

Spellman, as military vicar, continued his custom of visiting U.S. troops and officials in Saigon during Christmas, including the overall U.S. commander in Vietnam, William C. Westmoreland, and President Johnson. During the 1965 trip, Spellman issued the quote that crystallized his position on the war: "My country, may it always be right, but right or wrong, my country."⁸² Billy Graham, who in 1966 joined Spellman for many of his visits to the troops, as well as for the military and political debriefings, "was taken aback by Spellman's aggressively optimistic support for the war. That would be Spellman's last visit to Vietnam, as a massive stroke killed him in December of 1967."⁸³

Francis Cardinal Spellman's death left an irreparable hole in the architecture of Catholic support for the war. While some other bishops shared his belief that the battle with communism gave the U.S. a special role to play in world history, defending the faith from an enemy that sought to eradicate it, none could match his public profile. Nor did they inherit his connections to both the White House and the Vatican, which he had forged through youthful networking with FDR, JFK, and the

⁸⁰ Morgan, Joseph G. "A Change of Course: American Catholics, Anticommunism, and the Vietnam War." *U.S. Catholic Historian* 22, no. 4 (October 1, 2004): 117–30.

⁸¹ Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

⁸² Russell Shaw. "The Hard-Fought Rise of Cardinal Francis Spellman." *Our Sunday Visitor*, August 24, 2014. Spellman's adaptation of Stephen Decatur's toast, delivered after invading and winning trading rights from Tripoli, Algiers, and Tunis, lacked both the panache and the glorious context of the original: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations, may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong." See J.R. Dunn. "The Real Story of 'My Country, Right or Wrong.'" *American Thinker*, July 4, 2006.

http://www.americanthinker.com/2006/07/the_real_story_of_my_country_r.html

⁸³ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 538.

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future Pope Pius XII, whom Spellman had worked for at the Vatican Secretariat of State.⁸⁴ His close ties to the latter meant Spellman had wielded immense power to appoint Bishops nationwide.⁸⁵

With conservatives now on par with liberals, including the pacifist Thomas Gumbleton who would found PAX Christi USA in 1972, the U.S. bishops' initial support for the campaign in Vietnam deteriorated rapidly. Two factors hastened the change along over the next five years. First, the tendency of U.S.-backed leaders to re-create Diem's corrupt oligarchy proved particularly damaging to pro-war sentiment among Catholics, especially as Berrigan and his brother Philip continued to highlight the horrific violence of the war.

Second, the bishop who had become president of the NCCB in 1966, John Dearden of Detroit, had quietly undertaken a radical restructuring of the organization. Vatican II had required the formation of a national bishops council in each country to address national political issues, but had left the format of the council vague to allow for a variety of existing local practices and capacities. The U.S. bishop's conference – still called the NCWC at that time – clearly had the strongest voice and most resources, so it became the de facto model.⁸⁶

Despite the superiority of the existing U.S. conference, Dearden set out to restructure it, with the intention of creating a robust, consensus-based bureaucracy

⁸⁴ Russell Shaw. "The Hard-Fought Rise of Cardinal Francis Spellman." *Our Sunday Visitor*, August 24, 2014.

⁸⁵ Hehir, J. Bryan. Interview with Fr. J. Bryan Hehir. In person, November 20, 2016.

⁸⁶ "Report: Meeting on the Reorganization of NCWC," October 4, 1966. CDRD 26/24. John F Dearden Papers (DRD), University of Notre Dame Archives (UNDA), Notre Dame, IN 46556.

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that would prevent the rise of another Spellman by dispersing power.⁸⁷ Soon after taking office, Dearden empowered the NCCB's General Secretary by forcing the lay directors of each department within the organization to coordinate through his office. Prior to this, these directors had worked primarily with the bishops who chaired the committee that their department served and used the departmental staff as their own. Dearden thus altered the balance of power between the bishops and the bureaucracy, eliminating one way for individual bishops to amass influence.⁸⁸

Dearden also altered the procedure for issuing official statements as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, requiring full consensus and rigorous theological analysis, neither of which had been common during Spellman's time.⁸⁹ The pacifist bishops pushed for a full condemnation of the war, while conservatives would admit only that mistakes had been made in how the war had been fought. Finally, at their 1971 national meeting, the bishops approved a resolution calling for an end to U.S. military involvement as soon as practical, as a matter of resources as well as morality.⁹⁰ By the time U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam in 1973, the NCCB had ceased entirely to follow Spellman in presuming the justice of American foreign interventions.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Hehir, J. Bryan. Interview with Fr. J. Bryan Hehir. In person, November 20, 2016.

⁸⁸ "Report: Meeting on the Reorganization of NCWC," October 4, 1966. CDRD 26/24. John F Dearden Papers (DRD), University of Notre Dame Archives (UNDA), Notre Dame, IN 46556: 36.

⁸⁹ Hehir, J. Bryan. Interview with Fr. J. Bryan Hehir. In person, November 20, 2016.

⁹⁰ Catholic Church. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and United States Catholic Conference. *In the Name of Peace : Collective Statements of the United States Catholic Bishops on War and Peace, 1919-1980*. Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983.

⁹¹ William A. Au. *The Cross, the Flag, and the Bomb : American Catholics Debate War and Peace, 1960-1983*. Contributions to the Study of Religion ; No. 12. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1985.

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The bitter battles fought among the U.S. bishops over Vietnam threw a shadow over all the NCCB's proceedings going forward. Archbishop Robert Emmett Lucey of San Antonio until 1977, for example, remained a committed Cold Warrior. For the sake of coordination on basic business, especially the implementation of Vatican II, issues of war and peace were avoided.⁹² As late as 1979, enough conservative bishops sat on the NCCB to kill an initiative to recognize the sovereignty of Vietnam.⁹³

Unlike those within the Mainline, however, these tensions never led to schism, significant tension between laity and clergy, institutional breakdown, or a loss of political power. Rather, after a period of *détente* and reorganization, the U.S. Catholic Bishops set out to forge a new theology of war and peace. They envisioned a new pastoral, an open letter stating their opinion on an ethical matter as well as the reasoning behind it, created via Dearden's consensus-based approach. The bishops chose Joseph Bernardin, soon-to-be Archbishop of Chicago, to chair the committee charged with drafting the letter and building that consensus, a task he took fully to heart.⁹⁴

Bernardin first assembled a committee with a chance of finding common ground, recruiting a pacifist bishop, a conservative who had served in the military, and two who didn't have any strong public position but had demonstrated the capacity for a heavy workload in addition to their diocesan responsibilities.

⁹² Hehir, J. Bryan. Interview with Fr. J. Bryan Hehir. In person, November 20, 2016.

⁹³ United States Catholic Conference. "Confidential Minutes of the Administrative Board, 1979," February 14, 1979. 25/17. John F Dearden Papers (DRD), University of Notre Dame Archives (UNDA), Notre Dame, IN 46556.

⁹⁴ Hehir, J. Bryan. Interview with Fr. J. Bryan Hehir. In person, November 20, 2016.

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However, after being elected Archbishop, Bernardin could no longer oversee the committee's activities directly. After each day's discussion Bernardin's staff would update him via phone on each side's arguments, to ensure they'd been heard, then write something that reconciled those arguments for presentation the next day.⁹⁵

After two drafts of the letter had been submitted to every bishop in the country for feedback, the deadline for a final vote approached. At this point, two people proved extremely helpful to Bryan Hehir, director of the NCCB's Office of International Justice and Peace and the author of those nightly revisions. The first was McGeorge Bundy, who had retired from the National Security Agency and agreed with the positions the bishops had reached. His public encouragement, along with that of his friend George Kennan, carried the pastoral through hearings before Joseph Ratzinger, Cardinal and the Vatican's Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.⁹⁶ After consultation with the White House and the Department of Defense in 1983, a final draft of the pastoral passed a consensus vote and then went public under the title *The Challenge of Peace*.⁹⁷

Overall, the pastoral staked out a position clearly skeptical of violence as a path to justice, especially because of the mass human rights violations it entails. While partially a reflection of the 1963 Papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, the U.S. bishops' position also reflected their experience of the United States' support for embattled dictators in Central America. Their statements against U.S. policy in the region had grown more frequent and more pointed as these regimes, especially

⁹⁵ Hehir, J. Bryan. Interview with Fr. J. Bryan Hehir. In person, November 20, 2016.

⁹⁶ Hehir, J. Bryan. Interview with Fr. J. Bryan Hehir. In person, November 20, 2016.

⁹⁷ Hehir, J. Bryan. Interview with Fr. J. Bryan Hehir. In person, November 20, 2016.

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those in in Nicaragua and El Salvador, began targeting Catholic clergy. Most decisively, the assassination of Archbishop Romero in 1980 received enormous attention within the U.S. Catholic leadership, which strongly condemned U.S. support for regime that had killed him.⁹⁸

These dirty wars, which had cemented Mainline pacifism and sparked the Sanctuary movement, provided one challenge to which the bishops addressed themselves. Such interventions clearly wrought far more suffering than justice, with no hope for peace as they set part of a country's population to work terrorizing the rest. So did the use of death squads, news of which reached U.S. Catholics through their missions in the region. The atrocities wrought by U.S.-trained and armed counterinsurgency forces in Chile, Salvador, and Nicaragua re-radicalized the anti-war networks that had formed during Vietnam, but had begun to degrade during the 1970s.⁹⁹ The pastoral reflected the pressure these Catholic pacifists put on the NCCB, whose pastoral argued that such counter-insurgency tactics failed to fulfill the Just War criteria of discrimination. The bishops maintained, however, that a direct humanitarian intervention to stop atrocities could still be justified.¹⁰⁰

Nuclear weapons provided the bishops' other main challenge. Again adopting Ramsey's contributions to *jus en bello* criteria, the bishops argued that while the use of a nuclear weapon against a city could not be justified, the threat of a nuclear attack actually made violence less likely. *Possessing* nuclear weapons thus

⁹⁸ "The U.S. Catholic Press on Central America // Books // University of Notre Dame Press." Accessed September 23, 2014. <http://undpress.nd.edu/books/P00846#description>.

⁹⁹ Brett, Edward Tracy. *The U.S. Catholic Press on Central America : From Cold War Anticommunism to Social Justice*. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003: 2-3.

¹⁰⁰ The National Conference of Catholic Bishops. "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response," May 3, 1983.

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met the criteria of proportionality, while *using* one would violate that of discernment. The pastoral thus accepted a nuclear deterrent, in a concession to conservatives that Gumbleton approved, to the astonishment and dismay of the Berrigan brothers and other pacifists, Catholic or not.¹⁰¹

Overall, the landmark pastoral succeed in forging a consensus on war and peace, grounded in Just War theology but respected in secular circles as well.¹⁰² The pastoral's framework proved durable and flexible. Over the next twenty years, the NCCB opposed U.S. military interventions in Panama,¹⁰³ the Persian Gulf,¹⁰⁴ and Kosovo.¹⁰⁵ However, the bishops did offer support for the UN-sanctioned peacekeeping mission in Bosnia,¹⁰⁶ as well as the 1994 invasion-turned-peacekeeping mission that saw Aristide restored to power in Haiti.¹⁰⁷

Though conservatives outside the Church dismissed such a "peace-building" approach as functional pacifism, it differed significantly from true pacifism that led the Mainline denominations to oppose every use of military power. The U.S. bishops

¹⁰¹ Evelyn, Sister Mary. "Letter to Gordon Zahn," July 20, 1982. 4/15. Center on Conscience and War Records (CCW), University of Notre Dame Archives (UNDA), Notre Dame, IN 46556.

¹⁰² Gerard F. Powers. "The U.S. Bishops and War since the Peace Pastoral." *U.S. Catholic Historian* 27, no. 2 (2009): 73–96. doi:10.1353/cht.0.0006.

¹⁰³ "Letter to Secretary Baker on the Statements from Bishops of Panama." Accessed February 27, 2016. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/latin-america-caribbean/panama/letter-to-secretary-baker-on-panama-bishops-statements-1989-12-27.cfm>.

¹⁰⁴ "Statement on Iraq." Accessed February 29, 2016. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/middle-east/iraq/statement-on-iraq-by-bishop-pilla-president-nccb-uscc-1998-11-19.cfm>.

¹⁰⁵ "Statement on Crisis in Kosovo." Accessed February 27, 2016. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/europe/kosovo/statement-on-crisis-in-kosovo-by-bishop-fiorenza-1999-03-24.cfm>.

¹⁰⁶ "Bosnia: Letter to Secretary Powell on Possibly Ending Peacekeeping Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina." Accessed February 27, 2016. <http://www.migrate.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/europe/bosnia/bosnia-letter-to-secretary-powell-on-possibly-ending-peacekeeping-mission.cfm>.

¹⁰⁷ "Statement on the Situation in Haiti." Accessed February 29, 2016. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/latin-america-caribbean/haiti/statement-by-bishop-ricard-on-the-situation-in-haiti-2004-03-02.cfm>.

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acknowledged the necessity of the use of force, but argued that violence best served its purpose when enacted through via multi-lateral peacekeeping operations. This basic position held through another pastoral in 1993 and a re-structuring and re-naming in 2001, which turned the NCCB into the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).¹⁰⁸

Thus, by the time the fallout from Vietnam was over, most Christian denominations had established the theology on war and peace that would take them into the War on Terror. The Mainline denominations continued preaching peace, even during the fervor that followed September 11, 2001, and carried the U.S military into its first nation-building project since Vietnam.¹⁰⁹ The U.S. Catholic Bishops accepted the invasion of Afghanistan, acknowledging “the right and duty...to use military force if necessary to defend the common good by protecting the innocent against mass terrorism.”¹¹⁰ They rejected, however, the subsequent invasion of Iraq as a pre-emptive war, though they found merit to some of the Bush Administration’s humanitarian arguments for displacing Saddam Hussein.¹¹¹

The same was true of Southern Baptists, which emerged from Vietnam with its belief in the righteous potential of force un-scathed. After the Tet Offensive, which drove most in the U.S. to despair of victory, SBC members’ support for the

¹⁰⁸ Colecchi, Stephen. Director of USCCB Office of International Peace and Justice. Phone, February 25, 2016.

¹⁰⁹ NCC General Assembly. “Out of the Ashes and Tragedy of September 11, 2001,” November 15, 2001. <http://www.nccusa.org/news/01news100.html>.

¹¹⁰ U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Pastoral. “A Pastoral Message: Living With Faith and Hope After September 11.” Pastoral, November 14, 2001. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/september-11/a-pastoral-message-living-with-faith-and-hope-after-september-11.cfm>.

¹¹¹ Gerard F. Powers. “An Ethical Analysis of War Against Iraq.” Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, December 17, 2002. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/middle-east/iraq/paper-entitled-an-ethical-analysis-of-war-against-irac-by-gerard-powers-2002-12.cfm>.

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war actually increased to a high of 97 percent.¹¹² Near the war's end, a few SBC moderates came to view the U.S. presence in Indochina as a mistake. Yet even they continued to see their country's armed forces as a force that could build freedom, peace, and justice abroad and saw U.S. soldiers as deserving of total support.¹¹³ This belief was only strengthened through collaboration with conservative evangelicals from outside the South, which finally broke down the SBC's cultural isolation, and a subsequent purge of moderates from leadership. The resulting theology combined belief in military power to build democracy with culture war conservatism and would lead the SBC into support for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and intimate participation in OIF.

¹¹² Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 533.

¹¹³ Tomlin, Gregory Dale. "Hawks and Doves: Southern Baptist Responses to Military Intervention in Southeast Asia, 1965–1973." Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003.

Chapter 1:

**The Conservative Resurgence: Southern Baptist attitudes on war prior to
Operation Iraqi Freedom**

The leadership, beliefs, and institutions that led the Southern Baptists to war in 2003 emerged as part of an intra-denominational battle, fought from 1979 into the 1990s and known within the SBC as “the Controversy”. Pitting SBC moderates against conservatives, the struggle focused mainly on the issue of Biblical interpretation, especially as taught at the denomination’s seminaries. It ended with what moderates called a “takeover” and conservatives called the “Resurgence”, with the latter group’s beliefs firmly entrenched within the SBC’s governing bodies, seminaries, and political advocacy wing.

The conservative and moderate factions involved in the Controversy emerged out of a Southern Baptist denomination that had, by the 1970s, become

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quite diverse in terms of doctrine. The Grand Compromise to focus on evangelism allowed a variety of theological views became acceptable, so long as all involved agreed to collaborate on supporting the spread of the Gospel through home and foreign missions.¹¹⁴ Some SBC pastors drew on the post-millennial optimism of the Social Gospel, preaching messages of reform and social justice. Reformed Southern Baptists preached a fully predestinarian Calvinism, describing humanity as utterly corrupt and incapable of reform, unless chosen by God as one of the elect. Many within the denomination agreed with their Reformed brothers and sisters regarding Scripture, but hewed much more closely to the Arminianism of the Social Gossellers in preaching for universal atonement and against predestination.¹¹⁵ The Compromise proved effective in promoting missions, especially during the postwar years when all U.S. denominations grew,¹¹⁶ partially due to the impact of Dulles and Eisenhower's promotion of religiosity,¹¹⁷ making the 1950s "probably the most religious decade in American history."¹¹⁸ The SBC simultaneously elaborated its bureaucracy – consisting of "entities" funded and staffed by the denomination – to support its growing operations both at home and abroad.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Leonard, Bill. *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: WBErdmans, 1990. 31-36.

¹¹⁵ Pennington, Kimberly Lynn. "Blueprint for Change: A History of Efforts by Southern Baptist Leaders to Reform Southern Baptist Culture on Race Relations." Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016. 155-158.

¹¹⁶ Staff Editorial. "History." *International Mission Board*. Accessed December 10, 2016. <https://www.imb.org/history/>.

¹¹⁷ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012:

¹¹⁸ Robert Putnam. "American Grace." In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Princeton University, 2010: 143.

¹¹⁹ Land, Richard D. "The Southern Baptist Convention, 1979-1993: What Happened and Why?" *Baptist History and Heritage* 28, no. 4 (October 1993): 3-5.

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The Grand Compromise proved workable until the 1970s, when the South's time as "the nation's most insular and conservative region" came to an end,¹²⁰ and with it the SBC's position within southern culture as the unquestioned moral authority.¹²¹ Following the Civil War, the SBC had "become the primary organizational vehicle for sustaining a recalcitrant southern culture" within "an economically depressed internal colony".¹²² As the South's isolation broke down following World War II, Southern Baptists began to experience the "secular revolution" that northern Protestants had been struggling with since the late 1800s, especially at institutions of higher education.¹²³ Some within the SBC viewed these secular forces as a mortal threat to the denomination and began organizing as "conservatives" to protect it.¹²⁴

The conservatives' efforts provoked serious protest from others within their denomination who viewed such imposition of doctrine as a violation of the Baptist tradition.¹²⁵ Calling themselves "moderates", these other Southern Baptists argued that the "Baptist Movement has traditionally been non-creedal in the sense that it has not erected authoritative confessions of faith as official bases of organization

¹²⁰ Land, Richard D. "The Southern Baptist Convention, 1979-1993: What Happened and Why?" *Baptist History and Heritage* 28, no. 4 (October 1993): 8.

¹²¹ Spain, Rufus B. *At Ease in Zion; Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967.

¹²² Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. *The Churching of America, 1776-2005 Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005: 175.

¹²³ Smith, Christian. *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003: 10.

¹²⁴ Hankins, Barry. "Southern Baptists and Northern Evangelicals: Cultural Factors and the Nature of Religious Alliances." *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 7, no. 2 (1997): 272-8.

¹²⁵ Hastey, Stan. "The Southern Baptist Convention, 1979-1993: What Happened and Why?" *Baptist History and Heritage* 28, no. 4 (October 1993): 18.

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and tests of orthodoxy.”¹²⁶ Behind this principle lay the shared Baptist history of persecution at the hands of Congregationalists and Anglicans prior to the disestablishment of those churches in Massachusetts and Virginia, respectively. From this experience emerged the defining Baptist doctrine of “soul freedom” – that every person is free to choose their faith. Moderates argued that the conservative effort to purge from leadership all who did not adhere to an extreme version of Biblical inerrancy constituted a gross violation of their God-given liberty.¹²⁷

Conservatives, however, had come to view moderates as a threat to the very survival of the SBC. They worried, in particular, about the influence of liberal theology on moderate theologians. Their concern arose, at least in part, from having watched the rate of conversions at Mainline churches drop precipitously during the upheaval of the 1960s, just as their leadership took a strong liberal turn. In particular, Mainline churches had lost ground among the Baby Boomers. Less of half of that generation identified as Mainline by the time they came of age in the 1970s, making them the first generation in a century without a Mainline majority among U.S. Protestants.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Lumpkin, William L. *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1959. p. 16.

¹²⁷ Smith, Oran. *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism*. New York: NYU Press, 1997. 53-63.

¹²⁸ Hout, Michael, Andrew Greeley, and Melissa J. Wilde. “The Demographic Imperative in Religious Change in the United States.” *American Journal of Sociology* 107, no. 2 (2001): 480. Hout et. al. demonstrate that there is little evidence to support this conclusion. Rather, falling birth rates in Mainline denominations explain most of their decline relative to more conservative churches. However, they also point out that, after the Baby Boom, people born in those conservative churches essentially stopped converting to the Mainline, while those born in Mainline churches continued to convert into conservative ones. Thus, while Southern Baptist analysis of the Mainline’s decline was flawed, it pointed to a truth about the relative attractiveness of conservative Christianity at the time. Interestingly, *The Churching of America* (which celebrates the Southern Baptist Convention as an example of how to survive the decline that the Mainline denominations suffered) makes the same argument as the conservative leaders whose Resurgence had just begun in 1990, when Roger Finke and Rodney Stark first published their seminal work on religious economies.

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Like most other observers, conservative Southern Baptists attributed this relative decline to churchgoers rejecting the liberal theology of the Mainline leadership, presumably to join more conservative denominations.¹²⁹ Fearing that the SBC would suffer a similar fate now that the South's isolation had ended, conservatives began to see moderates as threats to the survival of the SBC, rather than partners in Baptist evangelism. Any theological or political liberalism became suspect.¹³⁰ When baptismal rates began to drop at some SBC churches led by moderate pastors, conservatives drew a line in the sand on the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy.¹³¹

In their focus on inerrancy, like in most other things, the Southern Baptists who led the Resurgence drew their inspiration from northern evangelicals. As young men in the 1960s, conservative leaders had traveled outside the culturally insular South for education or work. There, they encountered the liberalizing theology of the Mainline – in particular the use of historical-critical methods of Biblical exegesis. They also, however, discovered an evangelical campaign to craft a culturally engaged conservatism capable of standing up against the liberalizing winds blowing through the Mainline. Paul Ramsey did this as a practicing Methodist, as did the Presbyterian Francis Schaeffer, while Carl F.H. Henry spoke as a non-

Ironically, the drop in birth rates that Hout demonstrates among the Mainline occurred alongside a dramatic uptick in the acceptability of premarital sex, as shown by Robert Putnam and David Campbell in *American Grace* (Simon and Schuster, 2012), further horrifying Southern Baptists of all stripes. Both falling birth rates and increased premarital sex, however, could be symptoms of the introduction of widely available birth control.

¹²⁹ Hefley, James C. "A Conservative Responds." *Baptist History and Heritage* 28, no. 4 (October 1993): 29.

¹³⁰ Smith, Oran. *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism*. NYU Press, 1997. pp 64-5.

¹³¹ Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002. 34; Frank Lewis. Interview at First Baptist Nashville. In person, August 24, 2016. Inerrancy

denominational evangelical after leaving the liberalizing Northern Baptist Convention. All three, however, revolutionized the thinking of the young Southern Baptists like Richard Land, Paige Patterson, and Albert Mohler.¹³²

Henry and Schaeffer sought to resolve what they saw as the dynamic keeping conservative Christians from political action – a reluctance on the part of many to risk the purity of the Church through entanglement with politics.¹³³ Adopting from Immanuel Kant the idea of a “worldview” but dropping his relativism, they introduced the concept of Christianity as a worldview based on inerrant Biblical principles. Henry and Schaeffer charted an arc from Early Christianity into the corruption of Roman Catholicism, followed by the Reformation and the restoration of true faith grounded in the principles revealed in the inerrant, ahistorical Word. Only through this Biblical worldview could political events, including the rise of Communism, be properly interpreted.¹³⁴ According to Henry, this worldview achieved had dominance and full expression only in the United States. His theology thus entailed American exceptionalism – the belief that God had empowered the United States to play a special role in history as the champion of democracy.¹³⁵

¹³² Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002. 22-26. Henry, in particular, served as “a mentor for nearly the entire SBC conservative movement,” despite having almost no concrete professional ties to the denomination until the last years of his career. Indeed, that conservatives could find a thinker like Henry – or those he opposed – only *outside* their own institutions testifies to the isolation of the South even into the 1960s.

¹³³ Sutton, Matthew Avery. *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*. Harvard University Press, 2014: 293.

¹³⁴ Michelle Sanchez. “Periodization, Empire, and the Christian Worldview: Charting the Political Impact of Evangelical Apologetic Discourse, 1968-2001.” In *Religion and US Empire Seminar*. San Antonio Convention Center, 2016.

¹³⁵ Sutton, Matthew Avery. *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*. Harvard University Press, 2014: 295.

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Schaeffer and Henry looked to theologians like J.I. Packer for an intellectually sophisticated version of Biblical inerrancy upon which to base their conservative activism then publicized it as the antidote to liberalism. The young Southern Baptists adopted this belief wholeheartedly as the core of the “conservative resurgence” they hoped to lead within their own denomination, proofing it against the forces of secularism and liberal theology then entering the South. To save the SBC from the Mainline’s fate, they believed they would have to establish belief in the perfection of Scripture as the creed of the SBC’s leadership.¹³⁶

The strategy proved enormously effective. Drawing on doctrinal statements regarding inerrancy that had been relaxed in practice but never formally revised, conservative leaders united a broad coalition within the SBC. Southern Baptist fundamentalists had to agree with arguments based on inerrancy despite their qualms about engaging with, rather than withdrawing from, the culture. Reformed theologians followed suit, as did the more evangelistic Southern Baptists who rejected the Calvinist doctrines of limited atonement and predestination.¹³⁷

In short, the inerrantist stance that defined the conservative position in the Controversy attracted a massive majority of Southern Baptist laypeople. Their mobilization efforts succeeded by “tapping into basic conservative instincts that existed among rank-and-file Southern Baptists who did not identify with their

¹³⁶ Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002. 22-26. Henry, in particular, served as “a mentor for nearly the entire SBC conservative movement,” despite having almost no concrete professional ties to the denomination until the last years of his career. Indeed, that conservatives could find a thinker like Henry – or those he opposed – only *outside* their own institutions testifies to the isolation of the South even into the 1960s.

¹³⁷ Land, Richard D. “The Southern Baptist Convention, 1979-1993: What Happened and Why?” *Baptist History and Heritage* 28, no. 4 (October 1993): 3–13.

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moderate leaders.”¹³⁸ Surveys of Southern Baptist laypeople demonstrated decisively that conservative theology did best represent the beliefs of a majority of the denomination’s members.¹³⁹ As even a moderate authority on the Controversy later admitted, the SBC had long “ceased to be a convention of ordinary Baptists, a virtual invitation to the kind of populist upheaval that overtook it.”¹⁴⁰

As conservatives turned this mass support for inerrancy into electoral victories, they gradually assumed control of the SBC’s organizational architecture. Early in their campaign, they targeted the boards of the Southern Baptist Convention’s six seminaries, to ensure that these schools taught Biblical interpretation according to the principles of inerrancy. Such doctrinal purity meant purging the seminaries of “historical-critical methodology”,¹⁴¹ which considers the Bible in light of the context in which it was written.¹⁴² Southern Baptist conservatives considered such “higher criticism” an affront to the authority of Scripture, which they believed to be an inerrant source of truth, sufficient to save souls in and of itself.¹⁴³

Southern Evangelical Theological Seminary in Louisville emerged as the central battleground. In addition to being the oldest of the SBC’s six seminaries,

¹³⁸ Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002. 9.

¹³⁹ Ammerman, Nancy. *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.

¹⁴⁰ Hastey, Stan. “The Southern Baptist Convention, 1979-1993: What Happened and Why?” *Baptist History and Heritage* 28, no. 4 (October 1993): 27.

¹⁴¹ Smith, Oran. *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism*. NYU Press, 1997. 52.

¹⁴² Thompson, S. R., and James K. Wellman Jr. “The Social Gospel Legacy in U.S. Foreign Policy.” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 7 (January 2011): 1–41.

¹⁴³ Sutton, Jerry. *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention*. First Edition. Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000.

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Southern had also been the most moderate.¹⁴⁴ By 1990, conservatives controlled the school's board of trustees, then made belief in inerrancy a requirement for promotion, tenure, or joining Southern's staff; current employees, however, were not required to profess the same. In 1993, Albert Mohler's ascension to the presidency of Southern marked the end of moderate power within the SBC seminaries as a whole.¹⁴⁵

Another important battleground for conservatives was the Christian Life Commission (CLC). Founded as the Temperance Commission in 1908 and renamed in 1953 after accumulating responsibility for a broad portfolio of social and political issues, the CLC handled Southern Baptist advocacy on all topics but religious freedom. On that issue, the SBC had long collaborated with other Baptist denominations through the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (BJCPA).¹⁴⁶

Like Southern Seminary, the CLC had been a bastion of moderate power under the leadership of Foy Valentine, its president from 1960 until his retirement in 1986.¹⁴⁷ By that time the Controversy was well underway and conservatives controlled the CLC's board. In 1988, they chose Richard Land as Valentine's replacement by a 23-2 vote, in large part because he was an avowed inerrantist.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Finn, Nathan A. "Baptists and the War in Vietnam". In Heath, Gordon L., and Michael A.G. Haykin, eds. *Baptists and War: Essays on Baptists and Military Conflict, 1640s-1990s*. Lutterworth Press, 2015. pp. 210-12

¹⁴⁵ Smith, Oran. *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism*. NYU Press, 1997. 227-8. Moderates did, however, retain control of Baylor, the premier Baptist university.

¹⁴⁶ "Religious Liberty Commission (Proposed) SBC Executive Committee, CLC, Public Affairs Committee - Meeting Minutes, Dec. 1987," n.d. 34.7. Richard Land Papers.

¹⁴⁷ Pennington, Kimberly Lynn. "Blueprint for Change: A History of Efforts by Southern Baptist Leaders to Reform Southern Baptist Culture on Race Relations." Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016. 160.

¹⁴⁸ Pennington, Kimberly Lynn. "Blueprint for Change: A History of Efforts by Southern Baptist Leaders to Reform Southern Baptist Culture on Race Relations." Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016. 222.

At the service installing him as the CLC's president, Land gave a speech inspired by Francis Schaeffer and Carl Henry's culturally-engaged evangelicalism, which he had encountered while studying outside the South.¹⁴⁹ Decrying the forces of secular liberalism, Land painted a vision of a unified Southern Baptist voice on politics, providing a "comprehensive understanding of Biblical truth and its application to every area of life."¹⁵⁰ He envisioned, in short, an organization capable of entering the culture wars Schaeffer and Henry had been fighting since the 1950s.

Conservatives firmly believed, though, that the Southern Baptist route into cultural engagement did not run through the evangelical parachurch organizations that had begun the culture war during the 1970s and 80s. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, for example, had been far too comfortable using government to establish religion for Southern Baptists, who retained memories of persecution at the hands of established churches.¹⁵¹ Falwell's views on race also ran counter to those of most Southern Baptist conservatives, who carried on the push for equality begun by moderates.¹⁵²

Conservatives argued instead that Southern Baptists had to remain independent in their activity on social and ethical issues. Independence, furthermore, also meant re-thinking collaboration with other Baptist denominations. In particular, conservatives had grown suspicious of the BJPCA,

¹⁴⁹ Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002. 24.

¹⁵⁰ Richard D. Land. "The Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World," *Life in the Balance: 1989 Christian Life Commission Seminar Proceedings*, 26-32.

¹⁵¹ Richard Land. Phone Interview. Phone, November 7, 2016.

¹⁵² Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

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which took increasingly liberal positions on abortion and gender, in particular. Conservatives demanded a closer review of its spending, on the principle that anything funded by Southern Baptists had to be accountable to their trustees.

When the Joint Committee refused, Land led the charge to pull SBC funding and fold religious liberty advocacy into the already-broad portfolio of issues handled by the CLC, then renaming it the “Religious Liberty Commission”.¹⁵³ By 1990, the SBC had withdrawn completely from the BJCPA, leaving the CLC as the sole body tasked with speaking to and for Southern Baptists on social issues. The conservatives had realized their vision of a well-honed tool for engaging the culture on the social and political issues of the day, while retaining Southern Baptist independence from both other evangelicals and other Baptists.

Emphasizing inerrancy allowed conservatives to establish a large coalition, while also establishing clear lines of battle. Doing both is often difficult, as broad religious coalitions tend to be diffuse theologically in ways that eventually threaten their coherence.¹⁵⁴ That conservatives have not lost a SBC presidential election since 1979 testifies to their success in overcoming that difficulty.

The strategy was not without cost, as drawing such sharp theological lines wounded moderates deeply. A few dozen of the most progressive churches left the SBC to join the far more liberal American Baptist Convention.¹⁵⁵ The majority of

¹⁵³ “Religious Liberty Commission (Proposed) SBC Executive Committee, CLC, Public Affairs Committee - Meeting Minutes, Dec. 1987,” n.d. 34.7. Richard Land Papers.

¹⁵⁴ Wellman, James K. *Evangelical vs. Liberal: The Clash of Christian Cultures in the Pacific Northwest*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 26.

¹⁵⁵ Hastey, Stan. “The Southern Baptist Convention, 1979-1993: What Happened and Why?” *Baptist History and Heritage* 28, no. 4 (October 1993): 28.

moderates, however, remained Southern Baptists and even maintained their control of Baylor, the flagship Baptist university.¹⁵⁶

Conservatives overthrew the order of the day in the SBC because they adopted the idea of a “culture war” from theologians outside the South, especially Schaeffer and Henry. Through this lens, theological liberalization became an insidious threat to the soul and survival of any denomination that allowed it, as demonstrated by the demise of the Mainline. Conservatives organized “in hopes of stemming the tide of decay” that had long been rising elsewhere in the country, but had only come to the South in the aftermath of the 1960s.¹⁵⁷

In a sense, then, conservatives sought to make the Southern Baptist Convention theologically similar to evangelicals, but maintain the institutional independence established by moderates. Where non-denominational evangelicals relied on parachurch organizations to carry out missions work, advocate for political causes, and publish literature, the SBC had long maintained its own entity dedicated to each of these tasks and funded solely through offerings made in Southern Baptist churches. These denominational entities remained firmly independent as conservatives established control over their boards of trustees, but began professing the same beliefs as the smaller parachurch organizations serving non-denominational evangelicals. As one conservative put it, Southern Baptists became “denominational evangelicals”.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002. 13.

¹⁵⁷ Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002. 275.

¹⁵⁸ Garrett, James Leo, Jr., E. Glenn Hinson, and James E. Tull, *Are Southern Baptists Evangelicals?*

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The SBC's new leadership took up with fervor the right to life for the unborn, the core cause that had come to animate conservative Christians of all stripes. Previously, both moderate and conservative Southern Baptists had viewed abortion mainly in terms of its impact on the mother. Following the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision the SBC reaffirmed a resolution from 1971 advocating for "the possibility of abortion" under certain circumstances, including the "likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother."¹⁵⁹ W.A. Criswell, a former SBC president and one of the leading lights of the Resurgence a decade later, agreed with the decision, stating that he had "always felt that it was only after a child was born and had a life separate from its mother that it became an individual person [...] it has always, therefore, seemed to me that what is best for the mother and for the future should be allowed."¹⁶⁰

After Land's selection as president of the CLC, his office made it clear that sympathy for abortion to protect the health of the mother no longer held sway in the SBC, organizing a series of conferences on the topic. Demonstrating a strong pro-life stance became even more important when Bill Clinton, himself a Southern Baptist, moved to remove restrictions on abortions within a day of taking office in 1993.¹⁶¹ Like their enforcement of belief in inerrancy at Southern Baptist seminaries,

(Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983), 87. See also Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon*: "...neoevangelicalism became attractive to Southern Baptist conservatives at precisely the point where it differentiated itself from fundamentalism—that is, at the point of engagement with culture. This was made possible largely as a result of the influence of Francis Schaeffer and Carl Henry."

¹⁵⁹ Southern Baptist Convention, "Resolution on Abortion". St. Louis, MO, 1971. Online: <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/13/resolution-on-abortion>.

¹⁶⁰ Ballmer, Randall. "The Real Origins of the Religious Right". *Politico*, May 27, 2014.

¹⁶¹ "Richard Land and the American Presidency, 1988-2004." *Texas Baptist History* XXVI (2006): 105-6.

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conservatives' use of the CLC to oppose abortion aligned the denomination squarely with other evangelicals in their war for America's culture.

However, the SBC never marched in full lock-step with the rest of the Religious Right. On race, Southern Baptists sounded more like progressives than conservatives, repeatedly offering public penitence for their role in perpetuating systematic racism in the South.¹⁶² This set them apart from some evangelical activists who organized specifically to resist the integration of their schools in the 1970s.¹⁶³ SBC conservatives instead adopted fully the moderates' embrace of integration and equality.

Land's predecessor as president of the CLC, the moderate Valentine, had pushed hard to force his Southern Baptist brethren to re-examine their position on race. Prior to Valentine's reform campaign, Southern Baptists had argued that the church should remain focused on preaching and missions, leaving politics (aside from issues of religious freedom) to the politicians. Valentine attacked this position directly, employing principles from Social Gospel theology¹⁶⁴ to argue that true Christian charity must address the sources of poverty and oppression, up to and including the legal and economic embodiments of racism. In 1968-9, he invited Bayard Rustin and Jesse Jackson of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to

¹⁶² Pennington, Kimberly Lynn. "Blueprint for Change: A History of Efforts by Southern Baptist Leaders to Reform Southern Baptist Culture on Race Relations." Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016. 222.

¹⁶³ Randall Ballmer. "The Real Origins of the Religious Right." *POLITICO Magazine*, May 27, 2014. http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/05/religious-right-real-origins-107133_Page4.html#.VEOIf-eUSSV.

¹⁶⁴ Pennington, Kimberly Lynn. "Blueprint for Change: A History of Efforts by Southern Baptist Leaders to Reform Southern Baptist Culture on Race Relations." Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016. pp.155

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make the same case at CLC workshops on race.¹⁶⁵ Black Baptists in the South, especially the Rev. Dr. King, had since the 1950s sought to engage white Baptists open to dialogue on race. While Southern Baptists did not join the civil rights movement during the 1960s, “the significant thing, given that the church was probably as racist as the rest of the white South, is that it failed in any meaningful way to join the anti-civil rights movement.”¹⁶⁶

In Valentine’s estimation, his efforts on race engendered “more hostility and frustration and anger [...] than probably any other single person in so brief a period of time in the history of our Convention.”¹⁶⁷ He and his family received death threats.¹⁶⁸ Some SBC pastors claimed that their churches would leave the denomination if the CLC’s efforts were not “redirected” immediately.¹⁶⁹

Yet many others praised the CLC for leading the denomination toward integration. Despite the deadly gravity of the debates on race within the SBC during the 1960s, by the end of the decade a new consensus emerged in favor of racial

¹⁶⁵ Valentine, Foy. *Southern Baptists and the Contemporary Racial Crisis*. Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, 1966.

¹⁶⁶ Chappell, David L. *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*. Univ of North Carolina Press, 2004: 107.

¹⁶⁷ Pennington, Kimberly Lynn. “Blueprint for Change: A History of Efforts by Southern Baptist Leaders to Reform Southern Baptist Culture on Race Relations.” Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016. pp. 181.

¹⁶⁸ Green, Emma. “Southern Baptists and the Sin of Racism.” *The Atlantic*, April 7, 2015. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/southern-baptists-wrestle-with-the-sin-of-racism/389808/>.

¹⁶⁹ Pennington, Kimberly Lynn. “Blueprint for Change: A History of Efforts by Southern Baptist Leaders to Reform Southern Baptist Culture on Race Relations.” Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016. pp. 178.

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justice and reconciliation. In 1968, messengers to the denomination's annual meeting issued a statement endorsing many of Valentine's positions.¹⁷⁰

Following the Controversy, the SBC's newly conservative leadership continued to push strongly for racial reconciliation. In 1995, for example, the CLC's first major conference under Land's leadership addressed race relations. Foy Valentine, his moderate predecessor, gave the keynote address, symbolizing the SBC's continued commitment to repent of its racist past.¹⁷¹ Land also led the successful campaign to mark the 150th anniversary of the SBC's founding with an apology for both its significant role in defending slavery and "condoning and perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime."¹⁷² In short, conservatives acknowledge that "race is the one thing that moderates got right".¹⁷³

The SBC's unique past also pushed them apart from other evangelicals on church-state relations following the Controversy. Despite the Southern Baptists' break from the BJCPA, they continued to address religious freedom in the United States as Baptists always had: with an over-riding concern that no religion be established through governmental power.¹⁷⁴ While other organizations within the

¹⁷⁰ "Statement Concerning the Crisis in Our Nation." Resolution, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention Houston, 1968. <http://www.ethicsdaily.com/the-1968-statement-concerning-the-crisis-in-our-nation-cms-1183>.

¹⁷¹ Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

¹⁷² Southern Baptist Convention. "Resolution On Racial Reconciliation On The 150th Anniversary Of The Southern Baptist Convention." Accessed December 28, 2016. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/899/resolution-on-racial-reconciliation-on-the-150th-anniversary-of-the-southern-baptist-convention>.

¹⁷³ Richard Land. Phone Interview. Phone, November 7, 2016.

¹⁷⁴ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016. Duke and other SBC leaders proudly attribute their country's guarantee of the free exercise of religion to the influence of their Baptist forebears. In particular, they point to Baptist preachers in Virginia as leading the campaign to dis-establish the Episcopalian Church as the colony's official religion. These Virginia Baptists voted James Madison to the First U.S. Congress, where he advanced an amendment

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Religious Right sought to use law to promote Christianity in public spaces, Southern Baptists and the CLC held a deep suspicion of all such efforts. The G.W. Bush Administration, for example, assumed the SBC would support his faith-based initiatives program, as did other evangelical organizations. However, Land and the CLC sharply critiqued the program as opening the door to state sponsorship of religion, surprising the White House.¹⁷⁵ Given the memory of persecution at the hands of Episcopalians and Congregationalists shared by all Baptists, however, the CLC's position on the issue of religious freedom is unsurprising.

Overall, though, deviations from the evangelical norm had become exceptions rather than the rule with the SBC. By the end of the Controversy, conservatives had eliminated the moderates' increasingly liberal influence in the SBC, which they had feared would doom their denomination to the fate of the Mainline churches: stagnant membership with few conversions. In the course of their uprising against moderate leaders, conservatives had drawn inspiration from evangelicals who had fought liberalism elsewhere in the country and reshaped Southern Baptist institutions to join the culture war those evangelicals had begun during the preceding decades.¹⁷⁶

Conservatives and war in the post-Cold War world

protecting freedom of conscience, partially due to the prompting of the famous Baptist preacher, John Leland.

¹⁷⁵ Hogue, Andrew. "Richard Land and the American Presidency, 1988-2004." *Texas Baptist History* XXVI (2006): 113.

¹⁷⁶ Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002. 40.

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Despite the fact that the end of the Controversy coincided with the fall of the Soviet Union, none of the major works on the Controversy include foreign policy among the issues that divided the conservatives and the moderates. Indeed, most do not address foreign affairs at all.¹⁷⁷ The SBC's self-published history of cultural engagement consistently mentions foreign policy crises – especially wars – but only to orient its narrative relative to major events in U.S. history.¹⁷⁸ This consensus among scholars reflects the fact that most Southern Baptists during the Controversy remained in agreement about America's role in the world. Conservative or moderate, they viewed their country as the militant, righteous force needed to oppose atheist Communism.

Following their triumph in the Controversy, conservatives did little to alter the SBC's position on the role of the U.S. military. Nor did they alter the denomination's focus on promoting religious freedom abroad, an agenda that moderates had consistently pursued through Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.¹⁷⁹ Though conservative leaders withdrew the SBC from the Joint Committee, they continued advocacy on international religious freedom through Land's office in D.C., which in 1997 they renamed the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). Shortly thereafter, following ERLC testimony before the House of Representatives' Committee on International Relations, both houses of Congress

¹⁷⁷ See Ammerman (1990), Leonard (1990), Raymond (2001), Smith (1997), Hankins (2002).

¹⁷⁸ Sutton, Jerry. *A Matter of Conviction: A History of Southern Baptist Engagement with the Culture*. B&H Publishing Group, 2008.

¹⁷⁹ Baptist Joint Committee. "Building a Legal Legacy." *Report from the Capitol*, September 2011. Indeed, the BJCPA's first major impact was on religious freedom. In 1938, the Romanian government prohibited religious proselytization, curtailing all Baptist missionary work in the predominantly Orthodox country. The State Department reached out to the BJCPA for information on the Romanian law and began working with the Committee to craft its response.

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passed the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Act. The law established an ambassador-at-large and advisory commission on IRF within the State Department and mandated that they submit annual reports on religious persecution abroad.¹⁸⁰

Thus, the conservative-led SBC retained the two strong tendencies that had guided its foreign policy views under moderate leadership, both of which primed Southern Baptists to support military interventions. Southern Baptists' continued belief in the moral role of armed force made any intervention more palatable, while their long-standing sympathy for those subject to religious persecution made them receptive to cries for protection by minority groups abroad. In short, conservatives assumed control of a denomination that saw good reasons for their country to use its military might to defend religion from Communism by building democratic nation-states abroad.

Carl F.H. Henry's strong influence on conservative leaders reinforced the SBC's tendency toward interventionism. In *Has Democracy Had its Day?*, republished by the ERLC in 1996, Henry argued that the promotion of freedom abroad certainly fell within the duties of any good Christian – but especially those in the U.S., where the Biblical worldview had finally flourished.¹⁸¹ For Henry's conservative disciples within the SBC, promoting liberty abroad – especially religious freedom – became a natural part of the campaign against secular humanists, who were engulfing such rights in a flood of moral relativism.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Hogue, Andrew. "Richard Land and the American Presidency, 1988-2004." *Texas Baptist History* XXVI (2006): 109.

¹⁸¹ Henry, Carl Ferdinand Howard. *Has Democracy Had Its Day?* Acton Institute, 1996. 4.

¹⁸² Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002. pp. 26.

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Specifically, conservatives took from Henry the principle that democracy – especially in its dependence on freedom of conscience – embodied the “basic, fundamental values of a Judeo-Christian worldview”.¹⁸³ They accepted, in other words, Henry’s version of American exceptionalism: that the U.S. embodied the truths of Christianity, in a way that set it apart from other nation-states. This belief reinforced their vision of the country as the defender of freedom and faith, with a unique duty to use its military might abroad in the service of American ideals.¹⁸⁴

The timing of the Controversy’s end further pushed the SBC toward interventionism. Conservatives came to power just as the Soviet Union collapsed, presenting an apparent opportunity for the U.S. to use its military without fear of superpower opposition. Many in the U.S., convinced of their country’s role in world history as the champion of democracy, saw this massive military advantage as an opportunity for world order building unrivalled since the days of Woodrow Wilson.¹⁸⁵ During such a moment, Southern Baptists shared had a broad sympathy for religious liberty, a militant patriotism undimmed by Vietnam, and leaders convinced that the U.S. way of life embodied the essence of Western religion.

¹⁸³ Land, Richard, “Is Democracy Doomed?,” *Light*, Jan.-Feb. 1996, 2. Accepting Henry’s theology of the Judeo-Christian worldview entailed, however, repudiating traditional Protestant anti-Semitism, which not all evangelicals could do. The

¹⁸⁴ Inboden, William. *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 275. This also entailed repudiating traditional Protestant anti-Semitism, which not all evangelicals Protestants could bring themselves to do. The American Council of Christian Churches, for example, never received access to the White House during the early Cold War because its fundamentalist leaders refused to work with Catholics or Jews like the National Association of Evangelicals. Indeed, this willingness to engage the broader culture defined the border between “evangelical” and “fundamentalist” during this period.

¹⁸⁵ Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 914-916.

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Once under conservative leadership, the SBC consistently pushed for the use of force to protect the persecuted abroad. Regardless of which party held the White House, the denomination supported decisions to intervene for humanitarian purposes. When policymakers decided not to intervene, Southern Baptists assailed what they saw as a failure to save the innocent.

The 1991 Gulf War provided conservatives their first opportunity since assuming control of the SBC to speak out on a foreign intervention. The denomination voiced its opinion on the war via Richard Land and his newly independent advocacy office in Washington. In a December 1990 press release picked up by the national media, Land laid out the criteria that Christians, in his mind, should use to judge prospective military action in the Persian Gulf.¹⁸⁶

Couching his argument in terms of the widely accepted Just War tradition first developed by St. Augustine, Land made the case that the H.W. Bush Administration's proposed campaign deserved the support of Southern Baptists and other Christians. Most centrally, Land argued that Iraq's aggression meant U.S. military action would be *defensive*, which just war must be. Conquest, revenge, and economic aggrandizement – none of which are considered just motives – did not appear to drive the Administration's policy. Nor did it violate other Just War criteria, such as the use of force as a last resort; limited, rather than total, war; and a commitment to non-combatant immunity.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Beschel, Robert P., and Peter D. Feaver. "The Churches and the War." *The National Interest*, no. 23 (1991): 69.

¹⁸⁷ Richard Land. "The Crisis in the Persian Gulf and 'Just Wars.'" The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, December 21, 1990. Richard Land Papers, 185.4.

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What remained to be seen, argued Land, is whether the war would meet the final Just War two criteria of proportionality and legitimate authority. As to the first of these, Land surmised that the loss of life – “American, Iraqi, and Kuwaiti” – that the war entailed could be proportional *only* if the President sought to “neutralize [Saddam] Hussein’s military power”. Such a war would help build a “stable, just peace in the post-cold-war world” by demonstrating that aggression would be opposed by the U.S. and other nations. A “mere restoration of the status quo ante”, on the other hand, would make that loss of life too high a price to pay for little benefit.¹⁸⁸

Whether the proposed campaign would meet the final criteria, of legitimate authority, depended for Land on whether Congress would authorize it. On the premise that only a government may declare war justly, he argued that the United Nations – which had already approved “all necessary means” to drive Iraqi forces from Kuwait¹⁸⁹ – had no authority to do so. Nor, given the structure of the U.S. government, did President Bush. If Congress authorized the use of military force, however, a war to bring justice to the Kuwaitis and stabilize the region by disarming Hussein would indeed be just.¹⁹⁰

Three weeks after the ERLC published Land’s statement, Rep. Bill Dannemeyer of California read it before the House, which then voted to enforce the

¹⁸⁸ Richard Land. “The Crisis in the Persian Gulf and ‘Just Wars.’” The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, December 21, 1990. Richard Land Papers, 185.4.

¹⁸⁹ Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 908.

¹⁹⁰ Staff Report. “Southern Baptist Ethics Official Calls Gulf War ‘Just.’” Baptist Peacemaker, Spring 1991. Richard Land Papers, 185.5.

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UN resolution and go to war.¹⁹¹ The Senate followed suit, 52-47, and, on January 16th, 1991, Operation Desert Storm commenced. Within a hundred hours, the fighting in Kuwait was over. The Bush Administration considered pushing on to Baghdad to depose Hussein, but decided that doing so would raise “a very real specter of getting us involved in a quagmire figuring out who the hell is going to govern Iraq,” as Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney put it.¹⁹²

The containment-style policy that the U.S. finally adopted toward Iraq¹⁹³ met Land’s criteria perfectly. At its national meeting the following August, the SBC as a whole agreed resoundingly that the war had been just, passing a resolution thanking “Almighty God... for His guidance, His mercy, and His blessing on our nation in Operation Desert Storm.”¹⁹⁴ President Bush, speaking at the same national meeting, thanked the SBC for its war-time prayers and tearfully described his own prayers at Camp David before issuing the order to send troops into battle.¹⁹⁵ As for most interventionists, the United States military’s success in Persian Gulf War cemented the stance of the SBC.

Further, the Just War criteria that Land laid out prior to the operation set the pattern for Southern Baptist engagement on military affairs for the rest of the decade. The ERLC pushed the Clinton Administration to intervene in Bosnia as early as 1992, noting that the ethnic cleansing carried out by Serbians had a strong

¹⁹¹ “Congressional Record - House,” January 11, 1991. 185.5. Richard Land Papers.

¹⁹² Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 911.

¹⁹³ McDougall, Walter A. *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997. 171.

¹⁹⁴ Southern Baptist Convention, “Resolution On Operation Desert Storm.” June 6, 1991. Accessed August 24, 2016. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/433/resolution-on-operation-desert-storm>.

¹⁹⁵ “Bush Gets Loud Welcome, Thanks Baptists for Gulf War Prayers.” *The Tennessean*. June 7, 1991, sec. A. Richard Land Papers. 130.4.

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religious component.¹⁹⁶ At its national meeting the following year, the SBC as a whole called upon the President to stop the genocide and promote racial reconciliation, a hot topic given Land's push for an official apology for the denomination's racist past.¹⁹⁷

When NATO commenced airstrikes in 1995, Land pointed out that Europeans had proven unwilling to stop genocide on their continent, instead having waited for the U.S. to lead the operation. Only American leadership, in other words, could lead to action in the defense of religious liberty and other human rights.¹⁹⁸ The failure of the international community to "respond to the savagery and ethnic cleansing in the Sudan, Rwanda, and East Timor" only reinforced Land's point in the minds of his Southern Baptist brethren.¹⁹⁹

Like other advocates of intervention,²⁰⁰ the ERLC pushed its case even more intensely in response to Slobodan Milosevic's 1998 campaign to purge Kosovo of Albanian Muslims. Lamenting the 250,000 killed in the former Yugoslavia while the West imposed sanctions, embargoes, and a no-fly zone, Land argued for the justice of armed intervention. By the same criteria the ERLC had used in analyzing the justice of Operation Desert Storm, he concluded that force was a last resort; indeed,

¹⁹⁶ "What about Bosnia?" Christian Life Commission, 1993. 201.44. Richard Land Papers.

¹⁹⁷ "Southern Baptist Convention > Resolution On Racial And Ethnic Reconciliation." Accessed February 10, 2017. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/898/resolution-on-racial-and-ethnic-reconciliation>.

¹⁹⁸ Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

¹⁹⁹ "Land Underscores Yugoslav Atrocities in Reaction to Methodist Bishops." *Baptist Press*. Accessed February 10, 2017. <http://www.bpnews.net/1017/land-underscores-yugoslav-atrocities-in-reaction-to-methodist-bishops>.

²⁰⁰ Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 933.

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it was “the only language a butcher like Milosevic” could understand.²⁰¹ When the United Methodist Church’s Council of Bishops and evangelical leader Charles Colson both rejected the ERLC’s just war analysis, Land responded that only removing Milosevic from power could stop the genocide his opponents thought could be solved by diplomacy.²⁰² The rest of the SBC agreed, calling for “an end to those regimes which are guilty of crimes against humanity.”²⁰³

Milosevic ceded Kosovo and was prosecuted for war crimes. As in the Persian Gulf, violence had wrought peace and a form of justice. In terms of Land’s just war criteria, both wars were thus proportional, though the impact of NATO bombing in Kosovo had killed several thousand civilians, “turning on their head just-war principles of sparing non-combatants.”²⁰⁴

Given that the wars of the 1990s succeeded in securing objectives that Southern Baptists deemed worthy, it is unsurprising that these campaigns had no adverse impact on Southern Baptists’ favorable view regarding military interventions. SBC members broadly endorsed the ERLC’s stated positions on Iraq and Kosovo by backing them with denomination-wide resolutions. Indeed, SBC members were more drawn to debate domestic issues than the morality of

²⁰¹ Richard Land. “Kosovo: Do We Pay Now or Later?” *Light Magazine*, June 1999. 199.12. Richard Land Papers.

²⁰² “Land Underscores Yugoslav Atrocities in Reaction to Methodist Bishops.” *Baptist Press*. Accessed February 10, 2017. <http://www.bpnews.net/1017/land-underscores-yugoslav-atrocities-in-reaction-to-methodist-bishops>.

²⁰³ “Southern Baptist Convention > Resolution On Halting Genocide And Ethnic Cleansing.” Accessed February 10, 2017. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/492/resolution-on-halting-genocide-and-ethnic-cleansing>.

²⁰⁴ Herring, George C., “Analogies at War: The United States, the Conflict in Kosovo, and the Uses of History,” in Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur, eds., *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention* (2000): 355.

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obviously worthy military operations.²⁰⁵ Like Carl Henry, they viewed these wars to defend freedom and bring justice to the world as part of the broader struggle to bring their country's policies in line with true Christian values. The SBC's foreign policy views evolved from the domestic agenda its conservative leaders inherited from other evangelicals. Henry's American exceptionalism, in particular, formed the heart of their political views on all topics. Through Richard Land and the ERLC, the SBC incorporated the Just War thinking of the conservative Methodist Paul Ramsey into this theology and established itself as an independent authority on the ethics and meaning of war.

²⁰⁵ Richard Land. "Letter to Mr. Karl Rove," April 9, 1999. 130.6. Richard Land Papers.

Chapter 2

Regime change: Conservatives and the 2nd Bush Administration go to war

Despite its increased advocacy during the 1990s, the Southern Baptist Convention played no uniquely important role in American politics during that decade. Though Land did much to raise the denomination's profile in Washington, the ERLC remained only one among several evangelical organizations that coordinated on the central fronts of the culture war. Evangelical parachurch organizations such as Focus on the Family remained equally, if not more, influential.²⁰⁶

Southern Baptist relations with the executive branch demonstrated the limits of the denomination's influence. Clinton and his Vice President Al Gore claimed membership in the denomination, but alienated its leadership after taking office. In the first days after their inauguration, Clinton signed one presidential order allowing the use of embryos for research and another allowing homosexuals into the military. The denomination's leaders responded by coordinating with Clinton's pastor in Little Rock to arrange a discussion with him, Clinton, and Gore covering abortion and homosexuality. While this meeting had no discernible impact on policy concerning either issue, it did make the alienation between the SBC and the White House mutual.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Hogue, Andrew. "Richard Land and the American Presidency, 1988-2004." *Texas Baptist History* XXVI (2006): 99.

²⁰⁷ Hogue, Andrew. "Richard Land and the American Presidency, 1988-2004." *Texas Baptist History* XXVI (2006): 105.

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Nor, despite confessing his night of faith before the SBC's annual meeting, did H.W. Bush listen carefully to the ERLC's public moralizing. Bush's distance from the Southern Baptists grew after October of 1991, when the ERLC organized a meeting with other Evangelical leaders to publicly call on the White House to stop funding "sacrilegious and obscene" work through the National Endowment for the Arts.²⁰⁸ Even Land, who declined an invitation to be considered for a Presidential appointment just prior to assuming control of the ERLC, found his relationship with the President to be inconsistent. "Very different," he recalls, "than my relationship with his son."²⁰⁹

Land first met George W. Bush in 1988, when he sought support for his father's presidential campaign. Land, then working in the office of Texas Governor William P. Clements, Jr., found the younger Bush's case convincing and the two men remained close after Land assumed leadership of the ERLC.²¹⁰

In Gov. Clements' office, Land worked alongside another friend, Karl Rove. The two had first crossed paths as pro-life activists in Texas during the early 1980s. After moving to Washington, D.C., for his work, Land made it a point to visit Rove whenever he returned to Austin; after Rove returned to the governor's mansion alongside the younger Bush, Land would visit both men.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Strode, Tom, "CLC executive director meets with President," *Light*, Jan/March 1991, 14.

²⁰⁹ Richard Land, interview. March 15, 2005. As quoted in Andrew Hogue. "Richard Land and the American Presidency, 1988-2004." *Texas Baptist History* XXVI (2006): 94.

²¹⁰ Richard Land, interview. March 15, 2005. As quoted in Andrew Hogue. "Richard Land and the American Presidency, 1988-2004." *Texas Baptist History* XXVI (2006): 110.

²¹¹ Richard Land, interview. March 15, 2005. As quoted in Andrew Hogue. "Richard Land and the American Presidency, 1988-2004." *Texas Baptist History* XXVI (2006): 111.

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Land and Rove also continued their correspondence. In 1999, the two men coordinated an appearance for Governor Bush at an ERLC seminar in Austin.²¹² Later than year, when Bush soft-pedaled in response to a question about whether he would appoint homosexuals to serve as ambassadors, Land quickly called Rove to explain how important this topic was to Southern Baptists, even relative to the ongoing war in Kosovo. Land went on to describe his faith in Bush as a world-historical leader in the making, explaining to Rove that, “As you know, I am increasingly convinced that the Governor is the man God is raising up to serve our nation in our time of tremendous need.”²¹³

When Bush ran for president in 2000, most Southern Baptist ministers joined Land in his enthusiasm for the Republican candidate.²¹⁴ The ERLC’s voter guide reflected the denomination’s solid support for pro-life candidates, such as Bush, who opposed human embryo research.²¹⁵ After Bush’s victory before the Supreme Court, his office – including Rove – contacted the ERLC on a weekly basis. In particular, the White House solicited Southern Baptist advice on embryonic stem cell research prior to issuing an order that closely followed the denomination’s recommendation.²¹⁶ By appointing Land to the Commission on International

²¹² Richard Land. “RE: Governor Bush’s Possible Appearance at the ERLC’s Austin Seminar,” February 15, 1999. 130.6. Richard Land Papers.

²¹³ Richard Land. “Letter to Mr. Karl Rove,” April 9, 1999. 130.6. Richard Land Papers.

²¹⁴ Guth, James, “Southern Baptist Convention,” in *Pulpit and Politics: Clergy in American Politics at the Advent of the Millennium*, ed. Corwin E. Smidt (2004):111.

²¹⁵ *Light*, Election 2000, 5-8.

²¹⁶ As quoted in Andrew Hogue. “Richard Land and the American Presidency, 1988-2004.” *Texas Baptist History* XXVI (2006): 112.

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Religious Freedom, Bush also gave Southern Baptists real influence on the foreign policy topic dearest to their hearts.²¹⁷

Overall, the Bush Administration gave the SBC the greatest access to the halls of power that the denomination had ever enjoyed. Most commentators attributed Bush's electoral success to the "values" voting like that which the ERLC had promoted. The Southern Baptist Convention's role in Bush's election and early administration had, in short, made the denomination the leading voice on the evangelical side of the culture war.²¹⁸

When, in the weeks after September 11th, 2001, the Bush Administration intervened in Afghanistan, the SBC quickly and forcefully endorsed the decision. Within days of the first military strikes against the Taliban government, Land described the White House's approach as "masterful" for making it crystal clear to "evildoers around the world that the full force of the U.S. military was on track to rout [*sic*] them out."²¹⁹ The ERLC followed up with an article describing the campaign as "just retribution".²²⁰

Indeed, given Southern Baptists' stated views on previous military interventions, their support for military strikes following a direct attack on U.S. soil was unsurprising. The mission to punish evildoers, in particular, resonated with what the ERLC had said about Bosnia as early as 1992. The Persian Gulf War, too, provided a precedent for the White House's stated goal of destroying the "military

²¹⁷ Richard Land. Phone Interview. January 6, 2017.

²¹⁸ Rosin, Hanna. "Beyond Belief." *The Atlantic*, February 2005.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/01/beyond-belief/303667/>.

²¹⁹ Richard Land. "Land's Comments on Bush's Press Conference." Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, October 12, 2001. 130.7. Richard Land Papers.

²²⁰ Richard Land. "Justice in the Midst of Terror." *Light Magazine*, n.d. 199.15. Richard Land Papers.

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capability” of the Taliban regime once it refused to cooperate with the U.S. strikes against Al Qaeda bases in Afghanistan. The Bush Administration’s expansion of the mission to the replacement of the Taliban government with one unwilling to harbor terrorists echoed the campaign that drove Milosevic from power.²²¹

By late 2001, the Bush Administration had also begun speaking of nation-building in Afghanistan. The President referred to the “stabilization of a future government” there, conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, as a necessary step to ensure that the country would not again become a haven for a terrorist organization.²²² Unlike the military interventions of the 1990s, this was to be a war intended to build an ally in a global war.

Southern Baptist leaders quickly endorsed the Administration’s expansion of its mission to include the establishment of democracy in Afghanistan. In a press release that November, Land argued that the U.S. must “attempt to rebuild the countries of the people victimized by these terrorist leaders and their ideologies of hatred as we did Germany and Japan after World War II.”²²³ Such nation-building would help the intervention in Afghanistan (as well as any others the U.S. might undertake) meet the Just War criteria of proportionality, by improving the lives of civilians suffering the consequences of the fighting itself.

In short, like most Americans following 9/11, Southern Baptists sought safety through strikes against their attackers. Unlike other Americans, they did not have to overcome “intellectual and emotional baggage left from Vietnam and the

²²¹ “Text: Bush on State of War.” *The Washington Post*, October 11, 2001.

²²² “Text: Bush on State of War.” *The Washington Post*, October 11, 2001.

²²³ Richard Land. “Should Christians Support America’s Armed Response to Terrorism?,” October 31, 2001. 199.16. Richard Land Papers.

complacency that marked the 1990s".²²⁴ Rather, in endorsing Operation Enduring Freedom, Southern Baptists were backing policies like those that they had advocated for in past decades.

The consensus surrounding an occupation of Afghanistan, however, began to break-up almost immediately. As early as October 11th, 2001, the Bush Administration had spoken of carrying the war on terror elsewhere, against governments known to "house and feed" terrorist cells or possess weapons of mass destruction, like the Hussein regime in Iraq. "The leader of Iraq is an evil man," the President argued that fall. "We know he's been developing weapons of mass destruction. And I think it's in his advantage [*sic*] to allow inspectors back in his country to make sure that he's conforming to the agreement he made after he was soundly trounced in the Gulf War."²²⁵

Opposition to the Administration's plan came quickly and from many angles, including from American Christians that had endorsed the military mission in Afghanistan. Denominational leaders, such as US Conference of Catholic Bishops²²⁶ and National Council of the Churches of Christ,²²⁷ balked at what they perceived as pre-emptive war. A hundred Christian ethicists, most from Mainline denominations,

²²⁴ Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 940.

²²⁵ "Text: Bush on State of War." *The Washington Post*, October 11, 2001.

²²⁶ U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. "A Pastoral Message: Living With Faith and Hope After September 11." November 14, 2001.

²²⁷ NCC General Assembly. "Out of the Ashes and Tragedy of September 11, 2001," November 15, 2001. <http://www.nccusa.org/news/01news100.html>.

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came to the same conclusion in a widely-circulated article.²²⁸ The National Association of Evangelicals, unable to come to a decisive position, merely endorsed a call by the World Evangelical Alliance for prayers that “all paths to peace should be explored and all possible means should be used for resolving any conflict.”²²⁹

The sole Christian denomination to publicly support Bush’s push for war in Iraq was the Southern Baptist Convention. At its June 2002 national meeting, the denomination passed a resolution applauding “the moral clarity of the President of the United States” and offering wholehearted support for the government, the intelligence, agencies, and the military.”²³⁰ Rove knew the denomination would publicly support a war in Iraq, passing along to his superiors that the invasion would “seal the Republican alliance with the Christian right”.²³¹ When, one year after 9/11, the President went before the UN seeking authorization for an intervention to disarm Iraq, the ERLC immediately issued a letter stating “the President was absolutely correct in stating to the UN that if the UN will not take care of this problem, we must.”²³²

The ERLC’s broad endorsement of the administration’s case for war – centered on the threat posed by WMDs – followed the reasoning of Southern Baptist ethicist Daniel Heimbach. Heimbach’s work echoed the White House’s case that the Hussein regime had refused to comply with the terms of peace following the Gulf

²²⁸ “100 Christian Ethicists Challenge Claim That Pre-Emptive War on Iraq Would Be Morally Justified.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 23, 2002.

²²⁹ “Religious Groups Issue Statements on War with Iraq.” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, March 19, 2003.

²³⁰ “Southern Baptist Convention > On The War On Terrorism.” Accessed February 28, 2017. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1115/on-the-war-on-terrorism>.

²³¹ Drew, Elizabeth. “The Enforcer,” *New York Review of Books*, May 1, 2003.

²³² Richard Land. “Richard Land on Bush 9-12-02 Speech to the United Nations Regarding Iraq.” Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, September 13, 2002. 199.14. Richard Land Papers.

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War. While a pre-emptive war would certainly violate the just war tradition, Heimbach argued, the Hussein regime's refusal to comply with the conditions laid down by the UN in 1991 justified the war on its own.²³³

From this starting point of *just cause*, Land built his case for war, published in early October as an open letter to the President and co-signed by eight other evangelical leaders from outside the SBC. Aside from non-compliance with the 1991 terms, Hussein's attacks against his neighbors and own citizens meant the war would be fought in defense of the innocent, as had the Persian Gulf War. If, as Bush and Land argued, Saddam also "harbored terrorists from the Al Qaeda terrorist network", the U.S. also had a right to defend itself.²³⁴

Second, the war would be one of *just intent*. The U.S. had no desire to annex or exploit Iraq. Rather, as President Bush had argued before the U.N. General Assembly, the U.S. sought only to provide the Iraqis liberty and security while denying terrorists a base of operations. To Land, this was "clearly a just and noble intent."²³⁵

The White House plan also met the just war criteria of *last resort*, given the failure of sanctions, and *legitimate authority*. On the latter point, Land disagreed with those who saw only the United Nations as capable of authorizing a strike. As he had consistently since the Persian Gulf War, the United States Congress was the only body that could authorize American military action, which it had just done. Finally,

²³³ Heimbach, Daniel. "Distinguishing Just War from Crusade: Is Regime Change a Just Cause for Just War?" in Hess, Richard S., and E. A. Martens, eds. *War in the Bible and Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*. Eisenbrauns, 2008. 79-92

²³⁴ Richard Land. "To the Honorable George W. Bush," October 3, 2002. 130.8. Richard Land Papers: 1.

²³⁵ Richard Land. "To the Honorable George W. Bush," October 3, 2002. 130.8. Richard Land Papers: 2.

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Land believed regime change in Iraq to be a *limited goal* with a *reasonable expectation of success*, which could be achieved without targeting non-combatants. Thus, it met the criteria of *proportionality*, insofar as its outcome would justify the suffering wrought by armed combat.²³⁶

As the leading Christian proponent of the proposed invasion, Land garnered far more national attention than he had during previous military interventions. Following his letter to Bush, he appeared on C-SPAN and on ABC's *Nightline*, alongside Sen. John McCain and former CIA director James Woolsey.²³⁷ When the *Wall Street Journal* wrote in early 2003 that there was "widening religious opposition" to the war, Land responded with a letter to the editor, in which he pointed out that a growing number of Americans supported the war – "Christians included".²³⁸ Land's efforts elicited a letter from the Oval Office expressing the administration's "deeply felt gratitude for you, and all you stand for."²³⁹

While most Americans did support the Bush Administration – and most of their Congressional representatives voted to give it broad authority to conduct the campaign as it saw fit – foreign opposition to the war continued to rapidly mount. French and German leaders, in particular, still believed that efforts short of war could bring the Hussein regime back into compliance, as it had been for 7 years

²³⁶ Richard Land. "To the Honorable George W. Bush," October 3, 2002. 130.8. Richard Land Papers: 3-4.

²³⁷ Hogue, Andrew. "Richard Land and the American Presidency, 1988-2004." *Texas Baptist History* XXVI (2006): 116.

²³⁸ Richard Land & Jay Alan Sekulow. "Letter to the Editor of the Wall Street Journal," February 20, 2003. 185.6. Richard Land Papers.

²³⁹ Tim Goeglein, Special Assistant to the President, "Letter to Dr. Richard Land," February 24, 2003. 185.6. Richard Land Papers.

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prior to 1998.²⁴⁰ As even British intelligence acknowledged, the Bush Administration backed its case with shoddy intelligence. The poorly forged “letters” showing that Iraq had acquired yellow cake uranium from Niger, referenced by Bush in his January 2003 State of the Union, were quickly demonstrated to be fakes once submitted to the International Atomic Energy Association that March.²⁴¹

During early 2003, as the U.S. attempted to diplomatically isolate France as the war’s sole opponent, the ERLC offered a solution. In a March 2003 letter sent to Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, and Powell, the Southern Baptists proposed a formal address, by the President and in Germany, setting forth a “Bush Doctrine”. Modeled on Reagan’s 1982 address to the British Parliament, in which he consigned Communism to the “ash heap of history”, such an address could make clear that the war in Iraq was one of noble intent, not imperial desire.²⁴² However, the collapse of negotiations between the U.S. and her erstwhile allies the following week made such an address impossible and, on March 19th, 2003, the Bush Administration initiated strikes against Iraq.²⁴³

After only three weeks of fighting and 109 U.S. casualties, Bush infamously declared the mission accomplished.²⁴⁴ At its annual meeting the next month, the SBC as a whole commended the President and armed forces for fulfilling their holy duty to “restrain evil and to punish evildoers through the power of the sword”. In

²⁴⁰ Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 951.

²⁴¹ “Bush and Iraq: Follow the Yellow Cake Road.” *Time*, July 9, 2003.
<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,463779,00.html>.

²⁴² Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. Memorandum. “AEI Speech Follow up.” Memorandum, March 4, 2003. 76.7. Richard Land Papers.

²⁴³ DeYoung, Karen. *Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell*. New York (2006): 451.

²⁴⁴ “Bush Makes Historic Speech Aboard Warship: Full Text.” *CNN.com*, May 1, 2003.
<http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/05/01/bush.transcript/>.

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closing, the Southern Baptists called on the international community to “ensure that the Iraqi people enjoy all the blessings of liberty, including economic, political, and religious freedom.”²⁴⁵ The war appeared to have sealed the alliance between Land and Bush, just as Rove had predicted.

The SBC linked itself intimately to Operation Iraqi Freedom, in the public eye and behind closed doors. Due in part to Richard Land’s personal connection to Rove, the conservative-led ERLC had become the most important evangelical voice on politics after backing Bush’s White House bid. The push into Iraq isolated the SBC as the sole Christian denomination speaking in favor of intervention. Indeed, by the time the final decision to intervene came, the denomination’s head ethicist had begun offering the Administration advice on how and where to make the case for war. While the denomination’s stance on the war did not differ substantially from those it had taken on previous interventions, it advocated those views from a position of dominance among its evangelical peers and with unprecedented access to the halls of power.

Preserving the work: SBC advocacy and missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom

Within six months of the Southern Baptists’ resolution applauding OIF, the rationale for the war had unraveled. The documentary evidence for a nuclear program proved to consist mainly of poorly done forgeries. One letter had been

²⁴⁵ Southern Baptist Convention. “Resolution on The Liberation Of Iraq.” June 18, 2003. Accessed September 23, 2014. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1126>.

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signed in the name of a Nigerian foreign minister who, when he supposedly sold uranium to Iraq, had been out of power for eleven years.²⁴⁶

Weapons inspectors found no evidence of programs to develop chemical or biological weapons.²⁴⁷ Proponents of the operation argued the weapons may still have been in Iraq prior to the invasion, but also pointed out that the U.S. failed to craft a strategy to capture any weapons that may have been in the country at the time. As SBC ethicist Barrett Duke, pointed out: “The first thing we should have done is seal the border with Syria. [Its] possible that Hussein smuggled whatever he had before the invasion was complete.”²⁴⁸

Duke, who endorsed the invasion on the condition that “there better be WMD”, believed firmly that a peaceful, democratic Middle East was Bush’s sincere goal – and a noble and just one, at that. However, he also admits “The Bush Administration didn’t have a plan to finish the job. They thought the Iraqi people would step up.”²⁴⁹

Duke attributed the Administration’s error to a misconception of “how long it takes to make a people ready to self-govern.” The SBC and the White House believed themselves to be offering Iraqis an incredible opportunity, only to have the country’s population turn against them and against each other. The intervention

²⁴⁶ “Who Lied to Whom?” *The New Yorker*. March 31, 2003. Accessed March 1, 2017. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/03/31/who-lied-to-whom>.

²⁴⁷ Powers, Thomas. “The Vanishing Case for War.” *The New York Review of Books*, December 4, 2003. Accessed March 1, 2017. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2003/12/04/the-vanishing-case-for-war/>.

²⁴⁸ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

²⁴⁹ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

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unleashed a spiral of sectarian terrorism because “Saddam Hussein was the only thing holding the [country] together.”²⁵⁰

Indeed, there were signs that the Shi’a and Sunni populations would turn against each other once Hussein’s oppressive oversight vanished. As early as 2002, when the Bush administration began speaking frequently of regime change in Iraq, Shi’a families began fleeing the country. While Hussein had targeted Shi’a communities during and after his war with Iran, his secular police state had also prevented Sunni terrorist organizations from even operating in the country, much less targeting the Shi’a they saw as apostates.

However, the conditions created under the occupation government, the Coalition Provisional Authority, fostered the development of the insurrection. Purging Hussein’s supporters from the police and military in the fall of 2003 – without disarming them or providing alternative work – alienated several hundred thousand men, many of whom turned their weapons against the Americans who had cost them their livelihoods.

Unforeseen ironies accelerated the spiraling violence. In the summer of 2003, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Bedouin from Jordan turned international Islamist revolutionary, entered the Sunni areas of Iraq after having spent months networking with local jihadis. Al-Zarqawi smuggled with him, weapon by weapon and man by man, the army he’d first assembled to fight the Americans in Afghanistan, where he’d allied with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

²⁵¹ Weaver, Mary Anne. “Inventing Al-Zarqawi.” *Atlantic* 297, no. 6 (August 7, 2006): 87–100.

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Colin Powell had named al-Zarqawi as the link between the Hussein regime and Al-Qaeda in his address to the United Nations making the case for war – another part of that case proved totally false. However, al-Zarqawi's *actual* entry into the developing chaos in Iraq served as the starting point for a flow of jihadi militants similar to those that flocked to Afghanistan in the 1980s. The CPA proved unable to stem the tide of fighters, who quickly joined forces with the militias already developing in Iraq.²⁵²

During August of 2003, Al-Zarqawi attempted to take leadership of the insurgency through three crescendoing terrorist attacks. The first two, both in Baghdad, struck the Jordanian embassy and the U.N. headquarters. The third, in the Shi'a holy city of Najaf, occurred at the shrine of Imam Ali, the martyred founder of Shi'ism, alongside whose remains those of Adam and Noah are believed to rest. The attack targeted and killed Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, who had emerged as the most popular Shi'a religious figure in the months since Hussein's overthrow, along with 95 of his followers. The suicide bomber in that attack was al-Zarqawi's father-in-law.²⁵³ The killing of al-Hakim, who had been willing to work with the interim government, unleashed a wave of retribution by Shi'a militias, including that of Muqtada al-Sadr, a close ally of al-Hakim's.²⁵⁴ By the fall of 2003, when the rate of attacks reached 35 a day, the CPA faced a full-blown insurgency.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Weaver, Mary Anne. "Inventing Al-Zarqawi." *Atlantic* 297, no. 6 (August 7, 2006): 94.

²⁵³ Weaver, Mary Anne. "Inventing Al-Zarqawi." *Atlantic* 297, no. 6 (August 7, 2006): 96.

²⁵⁴ "Iraq's Death Squads: On the Brink of Civil War." *The Independent*, February 26, 2006. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraqs-death-squads-on-the-brink-of-civil-war-6108236.html>.

²⁵⁵ Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 954

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The SBC remained fully invested in the operation and the ERLC continued its advocacy for the war effort. In a pair of interviews with *Frontline* near the beginning of 2004, Land criticized those who equated the United States' actions in Iraq with those of the Hussein regime displaced by its intervention. He then made the case that liberating Iraq had, correctly, put the United States on the side of freedom and democracy in a struggle for civilization. To "hold up the flame of freedom, and whenever possible, to advance it," he argued was:

[the United States'] divinely given responsibility...Just exactly what John F. Kennedy was talking about, when he said "We're willing to go anywhere, bear any price, assume any burden, defend against any foe, support any friend, in defense of liberty." We needed to re-democratize the Middle East, and that was going to be very difficult to do with Saddam Hussein in power.

Following Heimbach's reasoning that "this was in reality a continuation of the first Gulf War", Land argued that the war still had just cause, even in the absence of weapons of mass destruction.²⁵⁶

Land's denomination continued to agree with him. In an address to the National Meeting in June of 2003, the SBC's President had called on Southern Baptists to be "a major part in the follow-up efforts of sending in food and relief supplies to the people of Iraq."²⁵⁷ One SBC relief worker described the missions

²⁵⁶ Richard Land. "Interview on GW Bush's faith". *Frontline*, April 29, 2004. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jesus/interviews/land.html>.

²⁵⁷ "2003 Southern Baptist Convention Annual," June 17, 2003.

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campaign in terms of the story of Jonah, who's adventure in the whale was punishment for fleeing from a call to proclaim the Lord's name in Ninevah. In the words of the president of the SBC's missions board, Jerry Rankin, God had used "the tragedy of war to open opportunities to minister to those in need... Will we be willing to give of our lives to go and join in the effort?"²⁵⁸

Indeed, even before OIF began, the Southern Baptists' International Missions Board (IMB) had initiated Operation Joshua, a campaign of evangelism through development projects.²⁵⁹ The operation's first phase involved scouting the humanitarian situation in Iraq created by the sanctions and found many towns without basic services and already depending on foreign aid to survive. Serving these urgent needs could help begin to "dispel false beliefs about Americans and Christianity."²⁶⁰

During the three weeks it had taken the U.S.-led coalition to capture Baghdad, the IMB had staged food, blankets, and other basic supplies along the Jordanian border. The Southern Baptists began distributing goods to the war-stricken Iraqis as soon as Baghdad fell and the security situation appeared stable.²⁶¹

Due to concerns that public evangelism would make OIF appear even more like the crusade that Bush had called it, the IMB adopted a strategy of avoiding the open proselytization it practiced elsewhere. Other Christian aid organizations – such

²⁵⁸ Mark Kelly. "God Challenging Southern Baptists to Reach Muslim World, Rankin Says," June 19, 2003. <http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc03/newsroom/newspage.asp?ID=62>.

²⁵⁹ "Iraq MAPP/SUP: Evangelism and Church Growth Development Projects: Joshua Project, 2003." International Missions Board, n.d. Joshua collection, Iraq Folder, pp. 1.

²⁶⁰ "Iraq Ministry Strategy Report." First Baptist Church Springdale, August 1, 2003. IMB Iraq #6, pp. 15.

²⁶¹ Mark O'Keefe. "Evangelicals Plan to Minister to Iraqis' Needs—Physical and Spiritual." *Christianity Today*, March 1, 2003.

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as Catholic Relief Services, the UK-based Barnabas Fund, and Samaritan's Purse run by Franklin Graham – did likewise.²⁶² World Vision followed a strict directive to avoid drawing attention to local Christians; in hiring local staff, for example, the relief agency made sure to hire a mix of Shi'a, Sunni, and several types of Christians. This made it difficult for extremists to use attacks, like those World Vision was to suffer at its offices in Pakistan in 2010, in sectarian propaganda.²⁶³

The relatively small IMB mission would not involve public preaching, as they did elsewhere, nor would they package aid with religious tracts, as they usually did. Yet the Southern Baptists' pride in spreading the Gospel still shone through. Though there weren't tracts or Bibles in the boxes of food aid the IMB missions distributed:

On the outside was this label that said, "A gift of love from Southern Baptist churches in America." And in Arabic, a quote from John's Gospel, from the first chapter, with says: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."

The IMB also decided, unlike other U.S. relief agencies both secular and religious, to coordinate their activities in Iraq by pairing specific Southern Baptist churches with partner churches in the country.²⁶⁴ The boxes of food aid, for example, "were delivered, for the most part, to Christian churches in Iraq, part of this historic pluralistic community, for those local Christians on the ground to then deliver and

²⁶² Gertz, Steven. "Missionary Tales from the Iraqi Front." *Christianity Today*, August 8, 2008.

²⁶³ Chawkat Moucarry. Phone interview. Jan 30, 2017.

²⁶⁴ "Iraq MAPP/SUP: Evangelism and Church Growth Development Projects: Joshua Project, 2003." International Missions Board, n.d. Joshua collection, Iraq Folder, pp. 3-4.

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distribute the food to the needy citizens without any regard for creed.”²⁶⁵

Partnerships with local Christians also formed the heart of Southern Baptist programs to assess community needs and repair schools, clinics, and sewer systems.²⁶⁶

By the end of 2003, Islamist militias had begun targeting Iraqis working with the CPA, as well as foreign aid workers. The United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross pulled their personnel from the country, citing security concerns, as did large numbers of military contractors. Many Christian aid groups, the IMB among them, chose to remain.²⁶⁷

Beginning in the spring of 2004, Islamists launched the first attacks of what became a wave of anti-Christian violence, and Southern Baptist missionaries began dying alongside their Iraqi Christian partners. The first strike came in February, when militants attacked four American pastors traveling in a taxi near Baghdad, killing one. The IMB was first attacked on March 15, 2004, when four Southern Baptists aid workers died in a drive-by shooting in front of a church. They had been collaborating with the local congregation on a water purification project. In a letter written before her departure a year earlier and to be opened only in the event of her

²⁶⁵ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. “Ministering to Those in Need: The Rights and Wrongs of Missions and Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq.” June 4, 2003.

²⁶⁶ Kelly, Mark. “God Challenging Southern Baptists to Reach Muslim World, Rankin Says.” *Baptist Press*, June 19, 2003. Accessed Oct 14, 2016: <http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc03/newsroom/newspage.asp?ID=62>

²⁶⁷ Cha Ariana Eunjung. “Christian Missionaries Battle For Hearts and Minds in Iraq.” *Washington Post*, May 16, 2004.

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death, one martyred missionary named Karen Watson pled with her fellow Southern Baptists to “preserve the work...Keep sending out missionaries.”²⁶⁸

Watson’s letter resonated throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, as individual churches took time aside to mourn their fallen sister and commit to fulfilling her call.²⁶⁹ SBC leaders invited Watson’s pastor to read the letter before thousands at the denomination’s national meeting that June. At the same meeting, Paige Patterson, the President of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a scion in the conservative movement, introduced the parents of another missionary slain in the attack. The IMB’s missions report that year also included testimony by Carrie McDonnell, who had lost her husband in the shooting, but survived after being evacuated to the U.S.²⁷⁰

Southern Baptists followed Watson’s call to remain in Iraq, even as attacks on churches escalated sharply in the summer of 2005. The worst attacks came on the morning of Sunday, August 1st, when Sunni militias coordinated bombings at five churches – Chaldean, Roman Catholic, and Assyrian Catholic – in Baghdad and Mosul.²⁷¹ The groups who claimed responsibility for the attacks said they were targeting Iraqi Christians as collaborators with the occupation regime.²⁷² Warning against further work with the CPA, the Islamists told “the people of the crosses:

²⁶⁸ Curry, Erin. “‘Keep Sending Missionaries,’ Karen Watson Wrote in Letter.” *Baptist Press*, March 24, 2004. <http://www.bpnews.net/17918/keep-sending-missionaries-karen-watson-wrote-in-letter>. Interestingly, the IMB’s public archive of its war-time operations stops on March 12, 2004.

²⁶⁹ Frank Lewis. Interview at First Baptist Nashville. In person, August 24, 2016.

²⁷⁰ “2004 Southern Baptist Convention Annual,” June 16, 2004.

²⁷¹ “Blasts Rock Iraqi Churches.” *Associated Press*, August 2, 2004.

²⁷² Altbritton, Christopher, and Samantha Appleton. “Iraq’s Persecuted Christians.” *Time International (South Pacific Edition)*, no. 38 (September 27, 2004): 28–29.

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return to your senses and be aware that God's soldiers are ready for you. You wanted a crusade and these are its results."²⁷³

Another church was bombed in September. Islamists began kidnapping and beheading Chaldo-Assyrian Christians. Women not wearing veils had acid thrown in their faces. Shootings of workers in liquor stores, usually owned by Christians due to the Islamic prohibition on alcohol, became commonplace.²⁷⁴ A decade before the rise of the Islamic State, Iraqi Christians suffered its predecessors' first attempts at the brutal enforcement of their version of Islamic law through gang violence.

The SBC's leading ethicists and theologians redoubled their vocal support for the effort to tame the insurgency and bring freedom to the Iraqis. In an interview with *Time*, the long-time President of the SBC's flagship seminary, Albert Mohler, pointed out proudly that Christians had been actively involved in relief efforts following every past U.S. military intervention, including Afghanistan. For Mohler, the "classic example" of nation-building, however, "was the rebuilding of Europe and Japan after WWII, situations analogous to Iraq in terms of regime change and a subsequent rebuilding effort."²⁷⁵

Mohler found the installation of religious freedom in Japan a particularly relevant precedent. Douglas MacArthur's apparent success in introducing a Western concept totally absent from the country's history provided hope that the same could be accomplished in Iraq. For Mohler, victory for the SBC in Iraq would

²⁷³ The Committee of Planning and Follow-Up in Iraq. "A Declaration from the Committee of Planning and Follow-up in Iraq." International Islamic Information Center, August 1, 2004.

²⁷⁴ Strode, Tom. "'Leaving in Doves': Persecution Driving Christians from Iraq as Election Nears." *Baptist Press*, January 18, 2005. <http://www.bpnews.net/19928/leaving-in-doves-persecution-driving-christians-from-iraq-as-election-nears>.

²⁷⁵ Liston, Broward. "Interview: Missionary Work in Iraq." *Time*, April 15, 2003. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,443800,00.html>.

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come not through conversion of individual Iraqis, but in the creation of a model for religious freedom in the Islamic world.²⁷⁶

An IMB spokesman said much the same in June, at the Pew Forum for Religion and Public Life. The SBC's hope in Iraq was not in a large number of conversions, but in creating a country that possessed true freedom of belief, like the Judeo-Christian U.S. For the historically persecuted Baptists, that liberty,

forms the only basis of a civil society. Along with that liberty came [...] freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, but at the root of these liberties was the primary liberty, to believe what you thought was true about God, about yourself and about your place in society.²⁷⁷

Richard Land used the position Bush had granted him to make the same case: that establishing freedom of religion in Iraq would help end the Islamist threat. In an address at Rice University given as a member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Land argued that religious liberty "ensures political freedom and makes our own system of government work." The U.S. mission in Iraq could dry up the font of jihadism by providing "moderate Muslim leaders the space and security to construct societies from their own tradition", undercutting the festering resentment against the U.S. for its alliances with "unsavory regimes".²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Liston, Broward. "Interview: Missionary Work in Iraq." *Time*, April 15, 2003.

²⁷⁷ Dr. Michael Lawrence, presentation at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. "Ministering to Those in Need: The Rights and Wrongs of Missions and Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq." June 4, 2003.

²⁷⁸ Dr. Richard Land. "Global Security and U.S. National Interests." Federal News Service, June 8, 2004. 121.8. Richard Land Papers.

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Along with the rest of the Commission, Land insisted that the U.S. ensure that new Iraqi constitution “guard against those whose interpretation of Islam seeks to deny individual rights or the freedom of religion or belief.”²⁷⁹ The Commission also consulted with the Iraqi constitutional council, whose members wanted to ensure a favorable review from the U.S. Office of International Religious Freedom in its annual report.²⁸⁰ With the Commission’s approval, the final draft of the 2005 Constitution included the right of all Iraqis to freedom “in their commitment to their personal status according to their religions, sects, beliefs, or choices.”²⁸¹

Putting these rights on paper did little, though, given the fact that the Iraqi leadership appeared unable or unwilling to enforce them. As noted by Barrett Duke, Vice President of the ERLC, Iraqi Christians continued to suffer intense persecution and would continue to do so until “freedom-loving people all over the world press their elected officials to bring the power of their governments to bear on this tragedy.” Southern Baptists should pray, said Duke, that “God will hear the cries of these persecuted people and bring them relief.”²⁸²

By the fall of 2005, however, those prayers had gone unanswered and the exodus of Christians from Iraq had begun. Tens of thousands of Chaldean and Assyrian Christians fled after the August bombings.²⁸³ The security situation

²⁷⁹ “Iraq: Rebuilding Civil Society.” United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, June 27, 2003. <http://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/press-releases/iraq-rebuilding-civil-society>.

²⁸⁰ Richard Land. Phone Interview. January 6, 2017.

²⁸¹ “Full Text of Iraqi Constitution.” *The Washington Post*, October 12, 2005.

²⁸² Strode, Tom. “‘Leaving in Doves’: Persecution Driving Christians from Iraq as Election Nears.” *Baptist Press*, January 18, 2005. <http://www.bpnews.net/19928/leaving-in-doves-persecution-driving-christians-from-iraq-as-election-nears>.

²⁸³ Strode, Tom. “‘Leaving in Doves’: Persecution Driving Christians from Iraq as Election Nears.” *Baptist Press*, January 18, 2005. <http://www.bpnews.net/19928/leaving-in-doves-persecution-driving-christians-from-iraq-as-election-nears>.

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continued to deteriorate over the winter, especially after the February 22nd bombing of another Shi'a holy site, the al-Askari mosque housing the remains of the 10th and 11th imams.²⁸⁴ Like the Christians, other minorities suffered especially harsh treatment as their small numbers made forming militias for self-protection impossible. Iraq's Turkomen minority, for example, eventually dwindled from around 800,000 at the time of OIF to about a quarter of that number.²⁸⁵

By the end 2006, over 4 million Iraqis had fled their homes, about half remaining in the country and the other 2 million seeking asylum in Syria and Jordan. Of the refugees entering Syria, 44 percent were recorded as Christians by the UNHCR. Prior to OIF, Christians had made up 6-8 percent of the Iraqi population.²⁸⁶ Duke's fear, that "freedom in Iraq may mean obliteration for Christians in that beleaguered land", appeared increasingly prophetic.²⁸⁷

Still, the ERLC argued, the benefits of OIF outweighed the suffering the war had caused. Appearing on PBS's *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly* in 2006, Land expressed his belief that the U.S. could still create "a government in Iraq and a society in Iraq that is far more conscious of human rights, far more conscious of human freedom. And in the end it's going to remake the Middle East."²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Fagen, Patricia Weiss. "Iraqi Refugees: Seeking Stability in Syria and Jordan." Institute for the Study of International Migration. Georgetown University, 2009.

²⁸⁵ Ferris, Elizabeth. "Minorities, Displacement and Iraq's Future." Brookings Institution, December 2008.

²⁸⁶ Taneja, Preti. "Assimilation, Exodus, Eradication: Iraq's Minority Communities Since 2003." *Minority Rights Group International*. Accessed December 6, 2016.

²⁸⁷ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

²⁸⁸ "Iraq: Just War Revisited." *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*. PBS, March 24, 2006. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2006/03/24/march-24-2006-iraq-just-war-revisited/12467/>.

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In his interview for PBS, Land explained further how the war could reshape the region. The Kurdish area in northern Iraq had already attained “far more freedom, far more respect for human rights, far more representative self-government” than ever before. If a similar degree of liberty could be established for Arabs, both Shi’a and Sunni, the presence of a “federal republic of Iraq” would lead to popular pressure for democracy on autocratic leaders, such as those of Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. At that point, the Bush Administration would have achieved its ultimate goal of operating in the Middle East “according to what we believe are universal values — not Western values, not American values.”²⁸⁹

Many Iraqis, too, had shown themselves willing to fight the insurgency opposing this goal. The ERLC thus backed the Iraqi government’s request for a continued U.S. troop presence to ensure peace in their country. When the Bush Administration committed 30,000 more soldiers in 2007, Land and Duke spoke out in support of the decision.²⁹⁰

This “surge” in troop levels, combined with a shift in the United States’ counterinsurgency strategy, stabilized much of the country, especially Baghdad. Some refugees returned, having found little succor in neighboring countries. Though only 23% of Americans continued to support the Administration’s strategy in Iraq,²⁹¹ the SBC’s leaders saw the tide turning decisively in favor of freedom.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ Kim Lawton. “Richard Land Extended Interview.” *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, March 24, 2006. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2006/03/24/march-24-2006-richard-land-extended-interview/12482/>.

²⁹⁰ Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

²⁹¹ Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 957.

²⁹² Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

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In the end, Southern Baptists remained committed to Operation Iraqi Freedom longer than the U.S. government. Commenting on the Obama administration's 2011 decision to withdraw U.S. forces, Duke said that the Iraqis "just needed more time....I thought pulling the troops out was insane."²⁹³ Military planners agreed with Duke's assessment, recommending a permanent troop presence on par with that the U.S. still maintains in South Korea.²⁹⁴ In short, argues Duke, "We won the war but forgot to win the peace."²⁹⁵ Like Duke, Land described the insurgency as essentially defeated in 2008 and attributed its revitalization to the U.S. withdrawal two years later. Both men argue that Obama's decision was driven mainly by a "narrative of defeat" propagated in the U.S. media, despite the stability that followed the surge. "In my lifetime," says Land, "we've won two wars and given them away."²⁹⁶

²⁹³ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

²⁹⁴ Karon, Tony. "Iraq's Government, Not Obama, Called Time on the U.S. Troop Presence." *Time*. Accessed March 4, 2017.

²⁹⁵ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

²⁹⁶ Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016. See also Froese, Paul, and F. Carson Mencken. "A U.S. Holy War? The Effects of Religion on Iraq War Policy Attitudes*." *Social Science Quarterly* 90, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 103. Using a 2005 survey conducted by Baylor, Froese and Mencken found "that the religious framing of U.S. foreign policy appeals to a certain religious type who is not fully Republican or conservative evangelical." My research highlights that SBC conservatives were just such a group, with deep sympathies for U.S. nation-building as an expression of their version of American exceptionalism, but with distance from both the Republican Party and non-denominational evangelicals, both conservative and liberal.

Chapter 3:

No reasonable opportunity to prevail: Southern Baptists' new theology of war

By June of 2012, Land had announced his retirement amidst a controversy over his public comments on the use of the Trayvon Martin case for political purposes. Land, whose track record on race had otherwise been consistently progressive, issued a lengthy and contrite apology, both for his words and the damage they had done to the denomination's witness for racial reconciliation.²⁹⁷ ERLC trustees asked Land to step aside the following summer, which would mark his 25th year as the president of the ERLC,²⁹⁸ a tenure matched only by that of Foy Valentine.²⁹⁹

Land delayed his retirement until the following June, giving the hiring committee established to choose his successor a year to consider their options and make a recommendation. Barry Creamer, then a professor and vice president at conservative Criswell Bible College, headed the committee, which also included five other Southern Baptist pastors and laypeople.³⁰⁰ The hiring committee sought a candidate well-versed in ethics, philosophy, and history and thus able to

²⁹⁷ Toalston, Art. "As Land Issues 5-Part Apology, NAAF Pres. Awaits Trustee Action." *Baptist Press*, May 9, 2012. <http://www.bpnews.net/37795/as-land-issues-5part-apology-naaf-pres-awaits-trustee-action>.

²⁹⁸ Staff Report. "Committee Named to Seek Land's Successor." *Baptist Press*, August 24, 2012. <http://www.bpnews.net/38580/committee-named-to-seek-lands-successor>.

²⁹⁹ Pennington, Kimberly Lynn. "Blueprint for Change: A History of Efforts by Southern Baptist Leaders to Reform Southern Baptist Culture on Race Relations." Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016: 214.

³⁰⁰ Staff Report. "Committee Named to Seek Land's Successor." *Baptist Press*, August 24, 2012. <http://www.bpnews.net/38580/committee-named-to-seek-lands-successor>.

“comprehend complex and significant ethical issues quickly and respond to them succinctly.”³⁰¹

Aside from these general qualifications, the committee consciously targeted candidates that could appeal to younger Southern Baptists. In particular, they sought someone who could connect with what they called the “millennial” generation. For Duke, who remained the ERLC’s vice president, the hiring criteria represented only part of a broader shift in his organization’s target audience, away from the Baby Boomers that had dominated its attention since the end of the Controversy.³⁰²

The committee believed that Southern Baptist millennials had little patience for the cultural Americanism that their parents, reared during the early Cold War, had absorbed during childhood. The idea of allying with politicians to promote Christian morals, in particular, found little purchase among those of this generation. Creamer, especially, sought an alternative to the “strident Republican tone” that alienated millennials.³⁰³ Like non-denominational evangelicals,³⁰⁴ Southern Baptists had realized that their fortunes depended on retaining their youth and remaining relevant within cultural changes without losing their core identity.

Creamer and the rest of the ERLC hiring committee also recognized that young Southern Baptists increasingly followed Reformed theology. Teaching the utter corruption of humanity apart from the elect few predestined by God for

³⁰¹ Dwayne Hastings. “ERLC Pres. Search Committee Goes Online.” *Baptist Press*, October 1, 2012. <http://www.bpnews.net/38825/erlc-pres-search-committee-goes-online>.

³⁰² Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

³⁰³ Barry Creamer. Interview with author. By phone, February 13, 2017.

³⁰⁴ Robert Putnam. “American Grace.” In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Princeton University, 2010: 150.

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salvation, Reformed SBC theologians like Albert Mohler had long argued for the full Five Points of Calvinism. They preached of a dark world in which most people had already been condemned to total depravity, untouched by the irresistible grace of God.³⁰⁵ As SBC millennials' belief in such a world grew, so too did their doubt that their culture could be brought into line with the demands of Christian morality.

Russell Moore, the hiring committee's final choice, embodied the theological and political tendencies it had identified as prevalent among young Southern Baptists. His higher education included degrees in history, political science, biblical studies, and systematic theology – the last of which was a Ph.D. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Run by Mohler since 1993, Southern had become the most Reformed of the SBC's six seminaries, as well as Moore's employer after he took a professorship upon his graduation.³⁰⁶

In addition to his very strong Reformed credentials, Moore expressed new a vision of the ERLC's role that reflected millennial preferences. Too long, he believed, had the denomination been “longing for Mayberry”. Rather than “pretending that they constitute a moral majority in this country,” Southern Baptists ought to recognize that they “are a prophetic minority.”³⁰⁷

In its search, the ERLC hiring committee had not focused on foreign affairs expertise.³⁰⁸ Nor, during an election year, had most of the United States.³⁰⁹ Iraq, in

³⁰⁵ Hansen, Collin. *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists*. Crossway, 2008.

³⁰⁶ Strode, Tom. “Russell Moore Elected ERLC President.” *Baptist Press*, March 26, 2013. <http://www.bpnews.net/39953/russell-moore-elected-erlc-president>.

³⁰⁷ Strode, Tom. “Russell Moore, at Inauguration, Roots ERLC Mission in Proclaiming the Gospel.” *Baptist Press*. September 11, 2013.

³⁰⁸ Barry Creamer. Interview with author. By phone, February 13, 2017.

³⁰⁹ “Did Foreign Policy Matter in the 2012 Election?” *Foreign Policy*. Accessed March 9, 2017.

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particular, had fallen out of the public eye since the U.S. withdrawal in 2011, as the levels of violence there had since remained relatively stable, with monthly death tolls of 300-400.³¹⁰

As Moore took office the fall of 2013, however, world events forced him to state his views on the United States' role in the world. That spring, Al Qaeda in Iraq's leader had declared himself the leader of an Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham – ISIS, for short. In July, the Islamic State's year-long "Breaking the Walls" campaign culminated in a massive attack on the Abu Ghraib prison, involving 12 car bombs, and multiple suicide bombers. The prison break freed over 500 convicts, most of them facing death sentences for terrorist activity during the U.S. campaign.³¹¹ As early as 2010, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, had declared his organization's goal to be the creation of a caliphate in Iraq.³¹² Al-Baghdadi added "al-Sham", an archaic Arabic name for the Levant, to his group's name to indicate his intention to carve out a zone of control in Syria, as well. The ongoing rebellion against Bashar al-Assad's regime in Damascus provided an obvious opportunity for the Islamic State to expand its territorial claims.³¹³

In August of 2013, Assad responded to the multiple threats he faced by launching a chemical weapons attack on rebel-held areas of the Syrian capital. Around 1,500 civilians, including 400 children, died in the assault, which clearly crossed the "bright red line" laid down as a trigger for armed intervention by

³¹⁰ "Iraq Body Count." Accessed March 9, 2017. <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>.

³¹¹ Lewis, Jessica D. "Al-Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent." Middle East Security Report. Institute for the Study of War, September 2013.

³¹² Odierno, Ray. "DOD News Briefing with Commander, U.S. Forces-Iraq." June 04, 2010. <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4632>.

³¹³ Lewis, Jessica D. "Al-Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent." Middle East Security Report. Institute for the Study of War, September 2013.

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President Obama earlier in the year. Rumors swirled of a war to remove Assad from power.³¹⁴

As other Christian leaders began to endorse or oppose regime change, the press solicited Moore's opinion, even before he was sworn in on September 10th. The new Southern Baptist voice on public affairs opened his statement by stating firmly that the Assad regime's use of WMD against its own citizenry easily constituted a just cause for intervention. Furthermore, Moore agreed "with the President on the moral urgency of Syria" and rejected "the crypto-isolationist voices that tell us, in every era, to tend to 'America First' and leave defenseless people around the world on their own." However, he did not see,

from President Obama, a reasonable opportunity to prevail, or even a definition of what prevailing would mean...we don't yet know who the good guys are. Replacing one set of terrorists with another does not bring about justice or peace.

Rather, Moore argued, displacing the Syrian dictator would likely create further opportunities for an "anarchic regime of al-Qaeda sympathizers [to] do to the church in Damascus what Jesus prevented Saul of Tarsus from doing...If I were in Congress, I would vote 'no' on this war."³¹⁵

³¹⁴ Chollet, Derek. "Obama's Red Line, Revisited." *POLITICO*, July 19, 2016.

³¹⁵ "On Syrian Conflict, Three Christian Perspectives." *On Faith & Culture*. Accessed October 18, 2014. <http://jonathanmerritt.religionnews.com/2013/09/03/on-syria-three-christian-perspectives/>.

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Moore's statement on the proposed intervention closed with a prophetic condemnation of those who wanted war simply to defend the United States' credibility. While important, national reputation was mere "symbol that will leave blood and fire in its wake."³¹⁶ A week later, during his inauguration as President of the ERLC, he continued his critique of Christians who concerned themselves the fate and national pride of the United States, rather than the Gospel mission. America is important, Moore preached,

But the end goal of the Gospel is not a Christian America. The end goal of the Gospel is redeemed from every tribe and tongue and nation and language....We will stand as good American citizens, and we will fight for justice, and we will fight for liberty, and we will fight with our forefathers... but we will also remember that we are not Americans first. We belong to another Kingdom.³¹⁷

The United States, in other words, did not stand at the center of world history; the church did. The United States had no holy way of life, nor a calling to spread its institutions abroad, as the Gospel alone placed a claim on Christian evangelism. Neither did the country have a unique calling to save civilians from their own

³¹⁶ "On Syrian Conflict, Three Christian Perspectives." *On Faith & Culture*. Accessed October 18, 2014. <http://jonathanmerritt.religionnews.com/2013/09/03/on-syria-three-christian-perspectives/>.

³¹⁷ Strode, Tom. "Russell Moore, at Inauguration, Roots ERLC Mission in Proclaiming the Gospel." *Baptist Press*. September 11, 2013.

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governments; all humanity shared that concern, but should do so only when intervening “wouldn't make the situation worse.”³¹⁸

After taking office, Moore retained the existing ERLC staff. Barrett Duke remained the Vice President. Moore also expanded the office, hiring mainly younger Southern Baptists that shared his view that the church must be a prophetic minority in the U.S., as in every nation.

Moore's staff also shared his views on military intervention. Andrew Walker, Moore's first hire in 2013 as Director of Policy Studies, described his position on war in terms of a “protective justice ethic” – i.e. any power with the ability to protect the innocent has a duty to do so. Intervention in defense of the innocent, he argued, should limit its goal to the stopping the threat, as Milosevic was stopped in Kosovo, then withdraw rather than engage in long-term nation-building. However, if no “rational actors with a desire for some sort of democracy” can be found to replace the oppressive regime, intervention is extremely risky. “This,” says Walker, “is where you get the problem of the War in Iraq.”³¹⁹

Walker also followed Moore in placing the U.S. alongside any other country in terms of its role in maintaining world order. While the U.S. currently had the power to intervene abroad and thus the responsibility to do so, the country had no inherently special role to play or holy responsibility to bear. In terms of the duty to protect, he said, “Remove America from the equation.”³²⁰

³¹⁸ Tomlin, Gregory. “SBC Ethicists: Criteria for ‘Just War’ Not Met.” *Baptist Press*, September 6, 2013. <http://www.bpnews.net/41038/sbc-ethicists-criteria-for-just-war-not-met>.

³¹⁹ Andrew Walker. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

³²⁰ Andrew Walker. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

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Travis Wussow, another early hire, eventually became the ERLC's first Director of International Justice and Religious Freedom. His position, created because of the threats to religious liberty in the Middle East, became the first in Southern Baptist history to focus primarily on foreign affairs. For Wussow, "There's no denying that the War in Iraq is the underlying fact of everything going on in the Middle East." He found the war's outcomes "supremely discouraging", particularly the rise of ISIS and the collapse of the moderate factions among Sunnis.³²¹

In Wussow's contacts with leaders in the region, OIF had become the main topic of conversation. These leaders, he finds, have a sense that what America does determines world history. As he tried to explain "It just doesn't." Like any other great power, there are limits to what it can accomplish, even if it does have a responsibility to protect religious liberties. "How much force would have to be applied to Syria, for example, to make religious liberty a reality there?" asked Wussow. "I honestly don't know. It's just a matter of accepting the limits of American force."³²² In his experience, such suspicion regarding intervention and nation-building were common among other Southern Baptists "whose formative years are in the post-9/11 era".³²³

Barrett Duke, who had supported OIF while working under Land, agreed with his younger colleagues that the campaign had induced war fatigue among the American people. When confronted with Assad, "they weren't ready for another

³²¹ Travis Wussow. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

³²² Travis Wussow. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

³²³ Andrew Walker, Bruce Ashford, Jennifer Marshall, Steven Harris, Travis Wussow. "2016 and Beyond: Reshaping Evangelical Political Engagement." Panel presented at the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission National Conference. Nashville: August 25, 2016.

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war, with no clear path afterwards....What was going to step into the void? Look at what happened in Iraq.” From that war, Duke had come to understand “how long it takes to make a people ready to self-govern.” The Middle East, “carved up by other powers” had no common vision of freedom. Rather than allowing Iraqis to collaborate in creating a democratic future in their country, the U.S. intervention had unleashed a battle for power. For Duke, the region’s fate demonstrated the consequences of a “failed understanding of human nature” in all its selfishness.³²⁴

Duke did “still believe that God has a plan for the world” and, like most Southern Baptists, would “like to think their country can be a part of it.” However, he saw little hope of this belief again becoming dominant anytime soon: “What is lacking is will. Many Americans are losing their vision of America as a force for good in the world.”³²⁵

One aspect of the ERLC’s Just War analysis of an intervention in Syria stood out from the office’s analysis of Operation Iraqi Freedom a decade earlier. The Syria statement employed a much stricter standard for a reasonable likelihood to prevail. In particular, the SBC ethicists doubted that a war for regime change could avoid creating a vacuum of power favorable to the rise of “Al Qaeda sympathizers” who would eradicate local Christianity. Given the lack of a plan for long-term stability, intervention would likely replace a bad regime with a worse one and incite civil war.

All of the ERLC ethicists, whether new or retained from Land’s staff, pointed to what happened in Iraq after its leader’s displacement by U.S. troops as an example of what they feared in Syria. The eruption of radical Islamism, which

³²⁴ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

³²⁵ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

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Hussein had kept largely in check through intense oppression, had already spread to Syria in the form of ISIS. Taking out Assad's government seemed likely to allow the Islamic State to expand its Caliphate – with dire consequences for local Christians, who had already fled Iraq in an exodus. Given these stakes, the Southern Baptists argued, they could not conscience risking another failed nation-building project.

Having witnessed missionary deaths, sectarian terror campaigns, and an attempted genocide against their fellow believers, the Southern Baptist's leading voices on international affairs drastically revised their beliefs regarding the possibility of creating peaceful, democratic societies. The nation-building work that they, like other supporters of OIF, had believed could be accomplished within two to three years, they now knew required a decades-long troop presence. Furthermore, even such a prolonged occupation could not ensure the containment of radical terrorists willing and able to attack the holiest sites of those they called infidels, murdering their holiest men on their holiest days. Such provocation could easily fracture countries "carved up by other powers," as Barrett Duke put it.³²⁶ The region's imperial past made nation-building there exceedingly risky and failure unbelievably awful.

None of these considerations had arisen in the ERLC's previous Just War analysis. When it addressed OIF, for example, the office had argued that regime change was a "limited goal" with a reasonable expectation of success. While Southern Baptists took great pains to ensure that Iraq's new constitution would

³²⁶ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

protect religious freedom, they did not doubt that the U.S would successfully install a democratic regime.

Including post-combat concerns in the analysis of the United States' opportunity to prevail in Syria constituted a substantial change in the Southern Baptist Convention's Just War theology. Furthermore, according to Moore and his staff, they made this change in response to the consequences of OIF. In short, the consequences of the War in Iraq led directly to a change in the denomination's theology of war.

Under Moore, the ERLC also dropped all mention of the American exceptionalism that had been central to the Southern Baptist positions on Vietnam, Desert Storm, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Indeed, most Southern Baptists had joined Land in seeing OIF as an exercise of the United States' "divinely given responsibility to hold up the flame of freedom, and whenever possible, to advance it."³²⁷

The ERLC spoke of intervention in Syria instead in terms of a universal duty to protect the innocent, shared by all great powers. The United States happened to have the necessary military power to intervene when Assad gassed his people – and thus the moral responsibility to stop his abuse if it could be done without causing greater suffering. So, too, though did Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the European Union. The U.S. had no special calling to protect and spread liberty.

This neutrality among governments meshed well with Moore's vision of the Church, separate from all earthly government and "redeemed from every tribe and

³²⁷ Richard Land. "Interview on GW Bush's faith" *Frontline*, April 29, 2004. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jesus/interviews/land.html>.

tongue and nation. We belong to another kingdom.”³²⁸ As implied by the Reformed theology of limited atonement, which Moore professes, only individuals are divinely elected, not nations.

Other SBC ethicists generally joined the ERLC’s staff in opposing an intervention for regime change as too risky and in rejecting American exceptionalism. Those who agreed with Moore regarding Reformed theology tended to reject the idea of a special national calling as well. Others assented to only some Reformed beliefs and found Moore’s complete separation of God from state too other-worldly, yet still opposed an intervention that would lead to another failed nation-building project.

Bruce Ashford, professor at Southeastern Evangelical Theological Seminary, was among the Reformed thinkers who joined the ERLC in both opposing an intervention to depose Assad and in rejecting American Exceptionalism. Ashford drew the distinction between Church and state even more explicitly than did Moore. Based on the work of the Dutch theologian Albert Kuyper, Ashford argued that the church and state have authority in totally separate spheres: absolute and eternal for the church; the temporal and relative for the state. Taking anything other than the church as absolute is heresy. “Every modern political ideology,” he argued, “has idols lurking underneath it – liberalism, progressivism, social conservatism, libertarianism, nationalism, socialism.”³²⁹ For Ashford, “every nation is one nation

³²⁸ Strode, Tom. “Russell Moore, at Inauguration, Roots ERLC Mission in Proclaiming the Gospel.” *Baptist Press*. September 11, 2013.

³²⁹ Andrew Walker, Bruce Ashford, Jennifer Marshall, Steven Harris, Travis Wussow. “2016 and Beyond: Reshaping Evangelical Political Engagement.” Panel presented at the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission National Conference Nashville: August 25, 2016.

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under God. [That is] a theological fact.” Any theology that identifies the U.S. form of government as holy contains a “temptation to intervene everywhere” in pursuit of universal adherence to American values.³³⁰

Like Ashford, whom he had taught at Southeastern Seminary, SBC theologian Daniel Heimbach also opposed Obama’s proposed intervention to depose Assad. Before becoming an academic, Heimbach had fought in Vietnam and helped establish the rationale for Desert Storm as part of H.W. Bush’s staff. He was also the first to argue that Hussein’s failure to comply with the 1991 terms of peace and allow inspections constituted just cause for an invasion of Iraq in 2003. Bush’s case for preventive war, however, Heimbach rejected:

I fear that anyone who changes just cause to allow preventive war aimed at regime change to ease fear of potential evil or to enlarge some notion of ideal social order, not only fails to understand the true meaning of just cause within just war tradition but is, in fact, destroying the whole just war approach by transforming it into a crusade.³³¹

As he put it more simply in a 2012 article, “I do not think Christians should go around starting wars.”³³²

³³⁰ Bruce Ashford. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 26, 2016.

³³¹ Heimbach, Daniel. “Distinguishing Just War from Crusade: Is regime change a just case for Just War?” in Hess, Richard S., and E. A. Martens. *War in the Bible and Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*. Eisenbrauns, 2008.

³³² Heimbach, Daniel R.. “For the Record: Why I Am Not a Pacifist.” May 2, 2012. *Between The Times*. Accessed October 16, 2014.

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Heimbach applied the same reasoning to the White House's proposed intervention to depose Assad. A campaign in Syria, he argued, would only "promote or enforce social ideals within the borders of another sovereign nation" that had made no move against the U.S. Such an operation would be a crusade, not a just war.³³³

Nor had Heimbach's Reformed theology ever held room for American exceptionalism. While acknowledging that his loyalties and interests lay with the United States, Heimbach argued that one's ethics relating to war ought not be "determined by these differences. When it comes to the ethics of war and peace between nations, all that matters to me, or that should matter to anyone else, is how a situation aligns with objective moral reality."³³⁴

Mark Coppenger, professor of ethics at Southern Theological Seminary, agreed that intervention against Assad could not be justified. The risk of creating another power vacuum was too great, as "You just don't know who's waiting in the wings." Like Stalin, Assad could contain a greater threat.³³⁵

In Coppenger's mind, Reformed theology explicitly entails pessimism regarding human history. Calvin's doctrine of absolute depravity – that all people are utterly corrupt until God chooses them for redemption – leads him to believe that all political institutions will reflect the evil of human nature. When analyzing a

³³³ Tomlin, Gregory. "SBC Ethicists: Criteria for 'Just War' Not Met." *Baptist Press*, September 6, 2013.

³³⁴ Heimbach, Daniel R.. "For the Record: Why I Am Not a Pacifist." May 2, 2012. *Between The Times*. Accessed October 16, 2014.

³³⁵ Mark Coppenger. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 26, 2016.

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proposed war, Coppenger "just assume[s] it will be terrible," making all ethical decisions a choice of the lesser of two evils.³³⁶

While the SBC ethicists had no known influence on Obama, his administration avoided a full-blown invasion. Even without an intervention to displace Assad, however, the Islamic State continued to expand. As its armies took territory, ISIS imposed a policy of conversion or death for some religious minorities in the areas it controlled. Other groups, including Shi'a and Christian communities, the Islamic State instead drove into the wilderness, fueling the refugee streams into Turkey, the Mediterranean, and southern Europe.

The Yazidi, an ancient sect whose beliefs descended from Zoroastrianism, received special condemnation by ISIS as polytheists who had heard the truth and ignored it. By early August 2014, the armies of the Caliphate had besieged more than half the Syrian Yazidi population, after killing or enslaving over 5,000 others in a series of pogroms in Sinjar province. The Obama Administration began air-dropping water and rations for the persecuted and conducting airstrikes against ISIS.³³⁷

The Southern Baptists rose up in defense of the persecuted, inspired by their own history and love of religious liberty. Russell Moore led the charge. Within days, he had denounced ISIS' attacks on Yazidis, Christians, and others as acts of genocide. Along with other theologians, as well as academics, Moore called upon the U.S. and

³³⁶ Mark Coppenger. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 26, 2016.

³³⁷ "Some of Iraq's Yazidis Are Rescued After Fleeing ISIS Militants." *NBC News*, August 7, 2014. <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/iraq-turmoil/some-iraqs-yazidis-are-rescued-after-fleeing-isis-militants-n175056>.

all nations to “act immediately and decisively to stop the ISIS/ISIL genocide and prevent the further victimization of religious minorities.”³³⁸

Furthermore, Moore stated unequivocally that this goal could not be achieved without the use of force. While any intervention posed risks of failure, the ongoing massacres left no other option. The lesser of two evils had become war.

The war Moore described, however, bore no strategic resemblance to previous U.S. operations in the region. While endorsing Obama’s airstrikes against a genocidal army Moore called “upon the United States and the international community to do everything necessary to empower local forces fighting ISIS/ISIL in Iraq to protect their people.” In particular, the Kurdish militia fighting ISIS needed expanded U.S. air support from the U.S. Moore made no mention of U.S. boots – or SBC missionary sandals – on the ground.³³⁹

Operation Iraqi Freedom, in particular, provided an example of what not to do, since it had created the conditions in which ISIS could thrive. Moore pointed out that “our own nation is not without responsibility....What is happening to these people now, and the further threats they face, would not be happening but for errors and failures of our nation’s own in Iraq.”³⁴⁰ As the ERLC had been arguing, inserting American soldiers into another uncontrollable situation could simply make it worse.

Thus, while agreeing with Iraq’s Chaldean Patriarch that only force could eliminate ISIS’ threat to religious minorities, Moore recommended empowering

³³⁸ George, Robert P. “A Plea on Behalf of Victims of ISIS/ISIL Barbarism in Iraq,” August 12, 2014. <http://iraqrescue.org/>.

³³⁹ George, Robert P. “A Plea on Behalf of Victims of ISIS/ISIL Barbarism in Iraq,” August 12, 2014. <http://iraqrescue.org/>.

³⁴⁰ George, Robert P. “A Plea on Behalf of Victims of ISIS/ISIL Barbarism in Iraq,” August 12, 2014. <http://iraqrescue.org/>.

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local militaries rather than use that of the United States. In the meantime, he pled for “Christians to pray for our brothers and sisters in Iraq,” as the Islamic State continued to escalate its persecution of all peoples other than Sunni Arabs.³⁴¹

Other Southern Baptists echoed Moore’s case for a proxy war to defend the persecuted, even if it meant defending Assad as well. Daniel Heimbach, the ethics professor at Southeastern Seminar, agreed that strikes against ISIS met Just War criteria. Indeed, he argued, “the just cause principle is most clearly met in defending the established governments of Iraq, Syria and other nations threatened by the ISIS onslaught.”³⁴² In comparison with the horrors committed by the Islamic State, Assad appeared stable and established, worthy of the international community’s support.

Heimbach also voiced concerns about doing more harm than good. He cautioned that any intervention would need to be carefully calibrated: “responding to ISIS with too little [force] will make matters a lot worse, and responding to ISIS too late will make success less likely and a lot more costly.”³⁴³ Any mistakes in scope or timing would lead to failure, as they had in Iraq.

The incoming SBC President, Ronnie Floyd, also followed the ERLC’s call to protect minorities in Syria and Iraq, by other means than a U.S. troop presence on the ground. In his first address to the SBC’s Executive Committee after being elected, Floyd called ISIS a demonic evil aiming at a Christian Holocaust. Rather

³⁴¹ Bristow, Elizabeth. “ERLC’s Russell Moore Urges Immediate Action to Stop ISIS/ISIL Barbarism in Iraq,” August 12, 2014. <http://erlc.com/article/erlc-russell-moore-urges-immediate-action-to-stop-isis-isil-barbarism-in-i>.

³⁴² Roach, David. “ISIS Terror Threat Gives Impetus to ‘Just War,’ Strategists Say.” *Baptist Press*, September 3, 2014. <http://www.bpnews.net/43278/isis-terror-threat-gives-impetus-to-just-war-strategists-say>.

³⁴³ Roach, David. “ISIS Terror Threat Gives Impetus to ‘Just War,’ Strategists Say.” *Baptist Press*, September 3, 2014.

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than a holy war, however, he urged prayer for the martyrs in Syria and Iraq facing “a once-in-a-thousand-year destruction of the Christian church.”³⁴⁴

U.S. airstrikes against ISIS continued into 2015, though with questionable legal standing. While Congress had in 2001 given the White House broad authority to make war on “al-Qaida, the Taliban, and their associated forces”, it had never authorized the use of military force against the Islamic State, specifically.³⁴⁵ When the Obama Administration requested such an authorization in February, the bill provoked much comment but never came to a vote before Congress.³⁴⁶

Floyd, still closely following events in Iraq and Syria, responded to Obama’s request with an open letter, co-signed by every SBC president from the past 35 years. The SBC presidents called on Obama to “take the necessary actions now in this urgent hour to bring an end to these human atrocities,” but made no recommendation as to what those actions ought to be.³⁴⁷ As Floyd explained in an interview on CNN, “Our decision is not the how. That’s the role of the president and the leaders of our country. He can use diplomacy; he can use economic sanctions;

³⁴⁴ Chandler, Diana. “Prayer Plea for Syrian, Iraqi Christians Voiced by Floyd.” *Baptist Press*, September 23, 2014. <http://www.bpnews.net/43408/prayer-plea-for-syrian-iraqi-christians-voiced-by-floyd>.

³⁴⁵ Kelly, Mary Louise. “When The U.S. Military Strikes, White House Points To A 2001 Measure.” *All Things Considered*, September 16, 2016.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/09/06/492857888/when-the-u-s-military-strikes-white-house-points-to-a-2001-measure>.

³⁴⁶ Baker, Peter, and Ashley Parker. “Congress Shows a Lack of Enthusiasm for Giving Obama War Powers to Fight ISIS.” *The New York Times*, February 12, 2015.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/13/us/congress-shows-a-lack-of-enthusiasm-for-giving-obama-war-powers-to-fight-isis.html>.

³⁴⁷ Floyd, Ronnie. “An Open Letter to President Barack Obama from Ronnie Floyd and Former Presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention,” March 2, 2015. <http://www.ronniefloyd.com/blog/8715/southern-baptist-convention/an-open-letter-to-president-barack-obama-from-ronnie-floyd-and-former-presidents-of-the-southern-baptist-convention/>.

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and if need be, he can use war.”³⁴⁸ Like the ERLC, the SBC presidents acknowledged the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention, but made no case for going beyond the air campaign Obama had already launched.

Floyd again sounded the alarm at the Southern Baptist national meeting in June. His keynote address described “the savagery of ISIS’ advance”, which had meant death, crucifixion, or sex slavery for thousands. Millions others, he pointed out, had been displaced from their homes.³⁴⁹ The gathered Southern Baptists responded with a resolution on “the Persecuted Church Worldwide”, naming Iraq and Syria as dozen countries where “Faithful followers of Christ...are facing extreme and severe persecution”. The SBC then called on his government officials to pursue non-military action, such as the imposition of sanctions “against those nations which advocate or tolerate persecution of those with differing religious beliefs.”³⁵⁰

Near the end of 2015, Southern Baptist advocacy for religious liberty in the face of ISIS crystalized around a campaign to push the Obama Administration to declare the Islamic State guilty of genocide against religious minorities. The idea first arose at the Texas Baptist General Convention in early November. At that gathering, religious freedom activists from the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative presented the case that ISIS’ actions fit the definition of genocide enshrined in

³⁴⁸ Chandler, Diana. “Floyd on CNN: We Can’t Be Silent amid ISIS,” March 6, 2015.

<http://www.brnow.org/News/March-2015/Floyd-on-CNN-We-can-t-be-silent-amid-ISIS>.

³⁴⁹ “Annual of the 2015 Southern Baptist Convention.” Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 16, 2015. <http://www.sbcec.org/bor/2015/2015sbcannual.pdf>.

³⁵⁰ Southern Baptist Convention. “Resolution on The Persecuted Church Worldwide,” June 16, 2015. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2258/on-the-persecuted-church-worldwide>.

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international law: violence intended to destroy, in whole or in part, an entire national, ethnical, racial or religious group.³⁵¹

ISIS, the religious liberty activists argued, had committed genocide against Christians, along with Yazidis. Iraq's Christian population, which had numbered 1.5 million prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, had been reduced to one-sixth that number. Those that remained lived mainly in camps for internally displaced people. As the Wilberforce activists pointed out, "Last Christmas was the first time that bells did not ring out in the city of Mosul in 2,000 years."³⁵²

Soon thereafter, reports surfaced that the State Department would indeed declare ISIS guilty of genocide – but only against the Yazidi. Attacks on Christians and other minority groups would instead be labeled "crimes against humanity". While still a weighty charge that could trigger prosecution for war crimes, the lesser designation would make it more difficult for those groups to reclaim property or seek asylum abroad as refugees.³⁵³

The ERLC led the Southern Baptist response. In an open letter addressed to Secretary of State John Kerry, Moore urged the White House "to recognize every victim of every community standing in the path of [ISIS]. Let us not be distracted by a quibbling over terminology that falsely distinguishes between victims of equally

³⁵¹ Lippman, Matthew. "The Drafting of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide." *BU Int'l LJ* 3 (1985): 1.

³⁵² Camp, Ken. "ISIS Committing Genocide in Iraq, Religious Liberty Activists Assert." *The Baptist Standard*, November 11, 2015. <https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/texas/18486-isis-committing-genocide-in-iraq-religious-liberty-activists-assert>.

³⁵³ Iskioff, Michael. "U.S. Weighs 'genocide' Label for IS in Iraq — and More than a Word May Be at Stake," November 12, 2015. <http://news.yahoo.com/u-s-weighs-genocide-label-1298023405674550.html>.

horrific atrocities.”³⁵⁴ Another letter to Kerry followed in December, which Moore co-signed along with his mentor and Southern Seminary president Albert Mohler.³⁵⁵

Pressure on the Obama administration built further the following February, when the European Parliament labeled ISIS’ treatment of Christians as genocide – the first time that legislative body ever used the designation. The U.S. Congress demanded that Kerry’s office take an official stance, setting March 18th as the deadline for a statement by the Secretary of State.³⁵⁶

The ERLC joined over 100 other organizations in asking Kerry to include as victims of genocide Christians and Yazidis, and Shia Muslims, as well as the ethnic Turkmen and Shabak minorities. Anything less, they argued, and the Obama Administration would have “abdicated its duty and vow to confront the most heinous of human rights violations.”³⁵⁷ A day before the March 18th deadline set by Congress, Kerry declared the Islamic State to be committing genocide against Christians, Yazidis, and the Shi’a, though not against the ethnic minorities.³⁵⁸

The declaration of genocide, however, did little to change U.S. policy. The U.S. bombings continued, striking the Islamic State’s personnel, its oil-smuggling operations, even its cash storehouses. The Administration also continued

³⁵⁴ Strode, Tom. “Moore: U.S. Should Not Exclude Christians in Genocide Label.” *Baptist Press*, November 18, 2015. <http://www.brnow.org/News/November-2015/Moore-U-S-should-not-exclude-Christians-in-genoc>

³⁵⁵ Strode, Tom. “SBC Leaders Appeal to Kerry on Genocide.” *Baptist Press*, December 8, 2015. <http://www.brnow.org/News/December-2015/SBC-leaders-appeal-to-Kerry-on-genocide>.

³⁵⁶ Camp, Ken. “European Parliament Calls ISIS Killing ‘Genocide.’” *Baptist Standard*, February 4, 2016. <https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/world/18779-european-parliament-identifies-isis-killing-as-genocide>.

³⁵⁷ Strode, Tom. “Call It ‘Genocide,’ Coalition Urges Obama on ISIS.” *Baptist Press*, February 19, 2016. <http://www.bpnews.net/46355/call-it-genocide-coalition-urges-obama-on-isis>.

³⁵⁸ Rosenberg, Matthew. “Citing Atrocities, John Kerry Calls ISIS Actions Genocide.” *The New York Times*, March 17, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/18/world/middleeast/citing-atrocities-john-kerry-calls-isis-actions-genocide.html>.

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attempting to put together a coalition of local forces capable of reversing the Caliphate's expansion. No U.S. troops, however, took the battlefield to respond to the ongoing genocide.³⁵⁹

Nor did Southern Baptists want them to. Moore continued to pray for a military end to ISIS' threat, but focused his efforts on the mounting refugee crisis the Islamic State's genocide had provoked.³⁶⁰ The rest of the SBC followed with a resolution "On Refugee Ministry", which affirmed "that refugees are people loved by God, made in His image, and that Christian love should be extended to them as special objects of God's mercy in a world that has displaced them from their homelands."³⁶¹

The Islamic State expanded until met by well-organized locals armed by foreign powers. These armies included those of the Kurds, as recommended by Moore, but also the Syrian army backed by Russia and Iran. The force that ended up stopping ISIS took orders from the dictator who had gassed his own people, but whose oppression still paled in comparison with the chaos of the Caliphate at war.

In addressing both crises in Syria, the Southern Baptists' Just War analysis focused on the likelihood that a direct U.S. intervention would make the situation worse, rather than better. Following their adherents, especially those of the millennial generation, SBC leadership remained interventionist, driven by a

³⁵⁹ Rosenberg, Matthew. "Citing Atrocities, John Kerry Calls ISIS Actions Genocide." *The New York Times*, March 17, 2016.

³⁶⁰ Moore, Russell. "Stop Pitting Security and Compassion against Each Other in the Syrian Refugee Crisis." *The Washington Post*, November 19, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/11/19/stop-pitting-security-and-compassion-against-each-other-in-the-syrian-refugee-crisis/?utm_term=.d1a3fc744d50.

³⁶¹ Southern Baptist Convention. "Resolution on Refugee Ministry." June 14, 2016. <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2273/on-refugee-ministry>.

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centuries-old commitment to universal rights – especially the right to freedom of conscience – that transcended all nations. However, they had lost their faith that the United States could successfully install its form of government elsewhere through force. This doubt about the prospects for democracy-promotion led Southern Baptists to see any U.S. occupation as doomed to unleash chaos rather than build a nation. Interventions for regime change could no longer be rationalized under their new Just War theology incorporating this principle.

Conclusion

Near the headquarters of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, there stands a memorial to the Tennessean soldiers who fell in World War I. A quote over the memorial's doric columns reads: "America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and the happiness and peace she has treasured." The words are Woodrow Wilson's, spoken while asking Congress to declare war in 1917.

"I believe that with the core of my being," agreed Richard Land in the fall of 2016, three years after his retirement. Yet even he has "had to accept that the U.S. doesn't have the will to carry out nation-building."³⁶² This lack of will, Land argued, makes it impossible to sustain the troop levels necessary to maintain stability long enough to build democratic institutions and habits.

Like Land, other Southern Baptists have lost faith in the United States' ability to successfully replace evil autocrats with stable, democratic regimes through war. Rather, they came to believe, such nation-building projects will most likely create chaos, in which terrorist war-lords thrive. They revised their Just War theology to reject such operations as lacking a reasonable expectation of success, pointing to the aftermath of the War in Iraq as justification for their fears.

³⁶² Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

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Why did Operation Iraqi Freedom impact Southern Baptists so deeply? It unleashed obscene violence while failing to establish a stable democracy, but so too did Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Yet no SBC leader has referenced the latter as a reason for their change of theology.

Southern Baptists' beliefs about the risks of building democracies through force changed primarily because of the genocide that accompanied the Caliphate's 2013 campaign of expansion. The denomination's leaders consistently argued that the Islamic State arose as a consequence of OIF. For them, the U.S. intervention to free Iraqis had instead placed millions at the mercy of an even more repressive regime. Recognizing their country's "moral debt", the SBC as a whole urged the *acceptance* of refugees from Syria and Iraq in 2016, even as many in the U.S. called for their exclusion

ISIS' genocide of religious minorities clashed sharply with the SBC's opposition to all persecution, inherent in its Baptist heritage. Their forefathers had survived persecution; thus, in Barrett Duke's words, Southern Baptists know "what it looks like when the state has the power of the sword over the church."³⁶³ If wars of regime change risked such extreme violations of their core principle of "soul freedom", Southern Baptists could no longer support it. Thus, Duke and other leaders appealed directly to the importance of protecting religious minorities as a reason to *oppose* intervention against Assad.

The decimation of ancient Christian communities pierced Southern Baptists hearts most deeply. The denomination's missions work had run through local

³⁶³ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

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Assyrian and Chaldean churches, alongside whom SBC missionaries became some of the first Christians martyred following the invasion. The survivors remained in the country through 2005's campaign of church bombings, long after most NGOs had fled the spiraling violence. The SBC's close relationship with these Christian communities made their destruction especially tragic for many Southern Baptists. The ERLC's campaign for recognition of Iraqi and Syrian Christians as victims of genocide demonstrated the importance they placed on the plight of their fellow believers, caused in part by their own country's failures. As Duke said, "It is devastating that freedom in Iraq may mean obliteration for Christians in that beleaguered land."³⁶⁴

In short, the SBC's loss of faith in the U.S.' ability to spread democracy through war resulted primarily from the persecution of millions of Christians by Islamist terrorists following OIF. However, the denomination would not have rejected democratic nation-building so forcefully without a surge in devotion to Reformed theology among its members, especially its younger ones. As they came into power during the 2010s, Reformed Millennials brought with them a belief system antithetical to American (or any other national) exceptionalism.

Reformed theology teaches that, at creation, God predestined all of history, including the Fall of humankind into total depravity. No person changes this sin nature, nor can they in any way aid in their own salvation. In this as in all else, God is sovereign, having unconditionally chosen those He would save at the beginning of time. These are His Elect, drawn by irresistible grace to form His true Church, called

³⁶⁴ Barrett Duke. Interview at ERLC National Conference 2016. In person, August 25, 2016.

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from among the nations. The rest of humanity remains utterly damned, as the atonement wrought by Christ is limited to the Elect, who remain holy once saved.

The doctrine of the Elect – God’s sole end in human history – entails that no national group be identified as exceptional or destined by God for anything but damnation. At its logical extreme, Reformed theology rejects all national and ideological fervor as idolatry. God calls only individuals, not nations.

Young Southern Baptists had already begun turning to Reformed theology by the time the U.S. invaded Iraq.³⁶⁵ Over the next decade, their generation watched democracy sputter and die in Iraq and Syria, choked off by chaos despite massive U.S. efforts to establish stability through force. Already primed to see the U.S. as just one more hegemon, they saw OIF and its aftermath as further evidence that America had no special power to overcome human wickedness.

As Baby Boomers began to retire in the 2010s, the theology of Reformed millennials began to influence the positions taken by the Southern Baptist Convention as a whole. Russell Moore’s hiring as president of the ERLC provides the clearest example of this. The committee that selected him had set out to find someone who viewed the Church as separate from any political party or nation-state, providing a new voice in place of the “strident, pro-Republican tone” that Reformed millennials rejected.³⁶⁶ Moore’s stances on the Church and its relation to the state have matched the expectations of the search committee. “American

³⁶⁵ Hansen, Collin. *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist’s Journey with the New Calvinists*. Crossway, 2008.

³⁶⁶ Barry Creamer. Phone Interview. January 30, 2017.

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cultural Christianity,” he preached at the ERLC’s 2016 national conference, “is sick and dead behind the eyes.”³⁶⁷

On regime change, as well, Moore’s hiring reflected the beliefs of a generation of Southern Baptists who viewed Operation Iraqi Freedom as a mistake.³⁶⁸ As Moore said during the Syrian crisis, toppling dictators in the name of freedom had become, for him, nothing more than an empty “symbol that will leave blood and fire in its wake.”³⁶⁹ While still aware that force must be employed sometimes to stop the worst crimes against humanity, Reformed Southern Baptists doubt that their country can accomplish this goal by building democracies via war. Their doubt arises, in part, from believing that America has no exceptional calling to do so.

After OIF, however, even Southern Baptists who were less Reformed and more sympathetic to American Exceptionalism came to doubt their country’s capacity for nation-building. Richard Land, for instance, remained convinced that when the U.S. fights on the side of freedom, “an angel rides in the storm, as it did in the beginning”.³⁷⁰ Yet when “Iraq descended into chaos and as a result of that chaos one or more of the three major regions of Iraq ended up with a dictator as brutal and repressive and evil as Saddam Hussein,” even Land had to declare OIF not worth the cost.³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ Moore, Russell. “Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel.” Speech presented at the ERLC National Conference 2016, Opryland Hotel - Nashville, Tennessee, September 26, 2016. <https://vimeo.com/182491113>.

³⁶⁸ Barry Creamer. Phone Interview. Phone, January 30, 2017.

³⁶⁹ Merritt, Jonathan. “On Syrian Conflict, Three Christian Perspectives.” *Religion News Service*, September 3, 2013, sec. On Faith & Culture. <http://jonathanmerritt.religionnews.com/2013/09/03/on-syria-three-christian-perspectives/>.

³⁷⁰ Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

³⁷¹ Lawton, Kim. “Richard Land Extended Interview.” *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, March 24, 2006.

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What Land and Southern Baptists like him have “had to accept [is] that the U.S. doesn’t have the will to carry out nation-building.”³⁷² This lack of will makes it impossible to sustain the troop levels necessary to maintain stability for long enough to build democratic institutions and habits, which they presume would take decades. Thus, while they still believe that the U.S. has a “divinely given responsibility to hold up the flame of freedom, and whenever possible, to advance it”,³⁷³ they no longer believe the country capable of fulfilling that duty.

Given America’s lack of will, operations like the War in Iraq simply recreate the mistakes of Vietnam, leaving U.S. soldiers “at the uncertain end of a long tether without sufficient support and resolve at home to give them all necessary means to do the job.”³⁷⁴ This left the U.S. with no choice but to withdraw, leaving horrors behind it In Iraq, where intervention and premature withdrawal had led to persecution intense enough to drive whole communities out of homes they had occupied since the 1st century.³⁷⁵

In short, Reformed theology augmented a broadly shared doubt among Southern Baptists that any great power could realistically replace dictators with just, democratic regimes. This doubt grew from witnessing the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom – especially the flight of Christians from one of the faith’s oldest homes. This exodus happened to coincide with a theological movement within the SBC, one which no longer preached of an angel that rode in the storm of

³⁷² Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

³⁷³ Richard Land. “Interview on GW Bush’s faith.” *Frontline*, April 29, 2004. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jesus/interviews/land.html>.

³⁷⁴ Richard Land. Interview at SBC Headquarters. In person, August 24, 2016.

³⁷⁵ “Candidates Urged to Speak out for Persecuted.” *Baptist Press*. Accessed August 24, 2016. <http://www.bpnews.net/38189/candidates-urged-to-speak-out-for-persecuted>.

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battle on the side of the U.S. and freedom, ensuring the nation's success in building democracy abroad. As Iraq collapsed into sectarian warfare, the SBC's Reformed leaders reinforced a change in the denomination's views on the potential for war to create democratic peace and stability. But whether or not they believed in American Exceptionalism, Southern Baptists agreed that Operation Iraqi Freedom failed to produce more good than it did harm.

From this failure, the SBC learned a vital lesson about the limits of American military power as a force for good in the world and drastically revised their Just War doctrine, eliminating long-term nation-building as too risky a strategy. Following their revised doctrine, the denomination recommended not intervening at all in Sudan, Libya, or against Assad. Even in the face of genocide, the SBC pushed only for the remote support of local forces battling the Islamic State.

The Southern Baptists' change of doctrine left U.S. nation-building without a Christian champion. No other American denomination supported Bush's attempt to spread democracy through U.S. military power; many, including the U.S. Catholics and Mainline Protestants, loudly opposed OIF. The War in Iraq's outcomes have turned other Christians further against wars of regime change, as they joined the SBC in opposing the campaigns to displace Assad and Qaddafi.

For the first time since World War II, no Christian denomination believed that the United States should, in Richard Land's words, "intervene as a friend of freedom". Aside from the evangelical Family Research Council, he noted, even cross-denominational organizations have lost faith in that duty. American churches no

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longer believed it wise or virtuous to answer JFK's call to bear any burden, pay any price in the defense of democracy.³⁷⁶

Of course, as demonstrated by the 2016 presidential race, Christian leaders were hardly the only Americans to call for a withdrawal of American power abroad. A broader isolationism swept much of the country, going far beyond the relatively moderate positions taken by the SBC and other denominations. On the issue of refugees, in particular, Southern Baptists remained committed to a global role for America where more radical voices called for total non-engagement.

The lack of altar calls for intervention, however, removed one source of pressure on the U.S. to prevent the collapse of the global order its might had maintained. When governments in the Middle East and North Africa openly defied international norms, U.S. churches opposed military action to replace them. The subsequent descent of the Fertile Crescent, especially, into chaos led to refugee flows that threatened to break apart the European Union, another key piece of the post-war world order wrought in part by American power. Again, American Christians saw no way to stop this disintegration and called only for the absorption of the sojourners as the duty of a Christian people who had helped cause their dislocation.

In other words, American Christians have helped usher in a new period of isolationism, not unlike the one that followed World War I. As in the 1920s, the United States' current withdrawal followed the failure of an American military effort to remake vast swaths of the world as democratic nation-states. In both instances,

³⁷⁶ Richard Land. Phone Interview. November 7, 2016.

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the U.S. won military victories, but proved unable to secure the political dream that provided its main justification for war in the first place, especially for the deeply religious presidents that led the nation into battle.

The last period of Christian opposition to war ended in the late 1930s, following the rise of conquest empires in Europe and the Far East. As Reinhold Niebuhr and other German-American theologians witnessed the fascist turn in Europe, they began to argue for the necessity of a U.S intervention. Their arguments, backed by the neo-orthodox theology radiating from Union Theological Seminary and Yale Divinity School, began to gain traction within the Mainline denominations. Even so, it was not until Pearl Harbor that most Christians became convinced that a major war to displace evil dictators and rebuild their countries was preferable to doing nothing.³⁷⁷

Thus, a theological movement of similar power may be required to convince Southern Baptists or other American Christians of the justice of a war for regime change. Even then, the churches would likely preach the case for war en masse only following a precipitating attack, as they did after Pearl Harbor and September 11th. As the probability of another surprise attack is unknowable and the emergence of another Niebuhr seems unlikely, Christian opposition to American wars of nation-building has – for the time being – become the new status quo.

³⁷⁷ Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012: 310.