

**Dr. Albert Mohler - February 2012**

The first one of these meetings I attended, uh, as editor of the Christian Index was at Lake Lanier, when it was new, the lake. It was, uh, it was a long time ago. I think looking around the room, maybe, Bob, you may be the only man who was there, uh, at that time. But, uh, that was almost 25 years ago. And I did serve four years as editor of the Christian Index and learned a very great deal in a very short time, **(INAUDIBLE)** an entire career in four years, and then was called to Louisville. But I know something of what you do and the trials and tribulations of it. And the joys of it. And I respect very much who you are and what you do, and it's a joy to be here with you. This is the first one of these meetings I think I've attended since I was an editor, and I'm glad to know it's still going. The first thing that kind of surprised me was there was a time when the editors met with the execs, and then there was a time that they didn't. Right? **(ONE YEAR)** One year, OK, it was just one year. Well evidently it was a short-lived experiment. I came here, the first thing I saw when I came into the lobby was executives. And I thought, "Wow, well the lion and the lamb back in, back in the same meeting again." But that is nonetheless a happy thing. Talking about current controversial and, uh, theological issues in the Southern Baptist Convention is the kind of title that could have been addressed at any time from 1845 to the present.

And the first thing I want to say is that I am thankful to be part of a denomination that can still have a theological controversy and a theological discussion. We are surrounded by many denominations that have long lost their glories, mainline protestantism measuring its losses by the thousands per year. And yet the greater loss is the fact that their conversation by and large is not about anything that is directly theological, because that is no longer what defines them, if you look at the controversies in so many other denominations. And, uh, it would be difficult to have a theological controversy because there is not enough shared theology that, uh, that would be controverted, that would actually be a matter of ongoing discussion. As a matter of fact I was talking to a seminary professor from mainline Protestantism who told me that all of their theological controversies now are imported from evangelicalism. And they have a hard time connecting to them because they don't share the same theological systems, but at least they found some people who can still have a theological debate. It's interesting when you go back to 1845, the beginnings of the Southern Baptist Convention were deeply theological in ways that today are often remembered. It is to our shame that the precipitating issue was slavery. But the actual issue was not just slavery, but it was the right of churches to send missionaries from slave-holding families. And the autonomy of the church was very much an issue

there. The autonomy of missions was very much an issue there. It is to our shame that the issue was framed as it was, but we often don't remember that what the Southerners did in 1845 was not to recreate the Triennial Convention. They created something entirely new. The Triennial Convention, well they met every three years. It did not have messengers, it had delegates. The delegates had to go back to churches and spend three years being advised how to vote on the issues that were three years past. By the time they arrived they could do nothing. The issue of slavery did not just demonstrate the sectionalism, it demonstrated the inability of the Triennial Convention to deal with any kind of issue. Southerners -- Southern Baptists, as they became known -- wanted to create a denominational polity that, that preserved congregationalism, but at the same time left a denomination unable to respond to issues, to make policy, and to actually do something beyond what the Triennial Convention could do. When the SBC was formed in 1845, forming of course two mission boards, the, uh, the SBC did not look for delegates from churches had to go back and, and be advised and instructed by churches rather than messengers. They were sent to a new thing. They represented the churches, but was not the legal representation of the churches. And so one of the first things that, that, uh, Southern Baptists did was to say, "We're going to establish our denominational structure according to our, our

beliefs." And, uh, those beliefs were first of all the primacy of congregationalism, but the urgency of missions. How do independent, autonomous congregations work together. The Triennial Convention they saw as a flawed model. The Southern Baptist Convention, though hardly perfect, was, uh, was a repudiation in many ways of the Triennial Convention. And uh every time we talk about this we have to say it again. It is to our shame that the issue was, the precipitating issue was what it was. It's part of our national history, part of our denominational history. But it did reveal deep theological issues that framed the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 to the present in ways that are unlike any other denomination. If you look at the 19th Century in terms of theological controversies, the first controversy was the convention. That is to say in a, in an age in which Baptists were trying to figure out to work together and to preserve congregationalism, the very presence of a denomination was a problem. And then the, the tension point became how much of a denomination can you have without forfeiting the sovereignty and the rights of congregations. Now the congregational principle in the, in the Baptist tradition had already been modified by the developed of associations. And as you know that came very early. So the associational principle was the very principle upon which the Southern Baptist Convention was established. It was an

association that would have, no geographic limitation, nor would require -- as one Baptist forebearer said -- the intimate knowledge of each congregation, but rather associated in common purposes represented by the two mission boards. The landmarkist controversy that arose in the 19th Century because, uh, under the teaching of the landmarkists, in particular J.R. Graves and J.M. Pendleton and others. Uh, the great danger was that the associational principle would violate the congregational principle and the sovereignty of the local church. So if you go back to the 19th Century virtually every theological controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention -- and that, that is very specifically said, "Within the Souther-." Not the only issues of Baptist concern, but the controversies within the Southern Baptist Convention, were all basically about the convention, uh, which is the subtext of everything that was involved in the Landmarkist controversies. Now the Landmarkist controversies included many other things, having to do with everything from alien immersion and alien baptism to pulpit exchanges. And, uh, we had our own form of kind of Baptist casuistry during those controversies. Uh, I was reminded of one of our founders who, uh, who had, uh. Well he had a creative way of thinking of pulpit exchange. On the basis of Baptist conviction he would preach in any pulpit, but he would allow no one who wasn't a Baptist to preach in his. That's, that's just symbolic of the

kind of, uh, of debate and, and concern that folks had at that time. I was just recently driving through Tennessee and across the Little Duck River. And as I was on my way actually to Union University, and the Little Duck River is the name of the association that, I'm basing on (?) Baptist history comes to you from highway signs. Uh, the Little Duck River Association as it was then formed in Tennessee was the source of many of these most heated debates. And it just struck me, you know, this is a long wagon ride from Louisville. But, uh, this little association was (the source of?) some of the most urgent concerns of Southern Seminary's administration for about 30 years. Some of these controversies still continue among us. It's amazing. Fast forward from say the 1870s to the 1880s, no one speaks up for Landmarkism. But Landmarkism continues to show its head in a good many discussion of people who actually don't know that there's a long genealogy to that. That works very intentional. Philosophers over the last, say, 50 or 60 years have begun to speak of issues in genealogical terms. That is to say, every intellectual, we would say theological or philosophical, question has a pedigree. And retracing that pedigree is one of the intellectual responsibilities to be able to speak about it in the present. And so a lot of the issues that arise today actually have a very deep pedigree in the Southern Baptist Convention -- and some of them of course with

roots far older than that. Modernity sets the stage for almost every contemporary theological debate. When I told some folks I was going to be here, just given some recent developments, they asked me what I was going to talk about. I said I'm going to talk about the Filioque Clause and the Monophysite controversy. Because somehow I think refuge in the fifth and 12th centuries might be a good place to hide if you're going to talk about theological controversies. But those controversies have a very long, long trajectory, but they're all pre-modern. And for instance the Filioque controversy of course explains the difference between, the split between orthodoxy and what we would call Catholicism in terms of the Great Schism. But, quite frankly, you know when you look back to all that you realize those are very different sets of issues. Before modernity and the rise of the modern age and the enlightenment, the issues were not is there truth or how do we determine the truth, but rather whom do we obey. The truth was a matter of obedience, it was a matter of authority. That's why those debates come down to such things as apostolic succession and all the rest. We're in a very different age. The enlightenment changed everything. And yet denomination by denomination, they didn't all change at once. Modernity arrived at the Southern Baptist Convention late. Well for that matter, modernity arrived in the South late. Or for that matter hasn't arrived everywhere in the South quite

yet, at least not in equal measure. But the fact is that for instance I recently taught a class in American theological liberalism, and students are shocked to know that it goes back to the Revolutionary period, that it goes back to the Colonial period, that it goes back to why there is a Yale in response to heterodoxy at Harvard. And yet that didn't really affect anything in the South in the same way. And so Southern Baptists were, as one historian says, largely untroubled in Zion during the 19th Century. Our 19th Century theological controversies had to do with, again, the Landmark controversy and all its attendant and related issues. Meanwhile, already in what we would call mainly Protestantism they're arguing as to whether we can actually call the Bible the word of God. They are dealing with all of the intellectual consequences of the enlightenment. The rise of theological liberalism, issues such as universalism, the denial of propositional revelation, the denial of the divinity of Christ. So you already have the quest for the historical Jesus, you already have the rise of what would come into full fruit in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. You already have the rise of what J. Gresham Machen would correctly say is a new religion, claiming Christianity, but in his book *Christianity and Liberalism* making a very clear point. We're not talking about two different versions of Christianity, as you can have a version of Christianity that believes that Christ is very



God and very man, and a version of Christianity that does not. This is a different religion masquerading as Christianity. The fundamentalist-modernist controversy of course erupted in the 1920s. And Southern Baptists were involved in this, but involved in it without any grave concern that it affected us directly. -- with a couple of very clear and glaring exceptions. One of those of course is Wake Forest University, which had its president an avid evolutionist and one who clearly sided with liberal Protestantism. But already by the 1920s Wake Forest University was considered to be an exception, and the North Carolina convention was already dealing with to what degree it would or would not be in control of the institution and its teaching. In terms of the Southern Baptist Convention as a whole there was the belief that there could be a problem here. And of course there were numerous efforts, from the McDaniel resolution and of course the culmination of this controversy in the SBC insofar as it affected the SBC was the adoption of our first confession of faith as a denomination, the Baptist Faith & Message of 1925. Now if you look at that action, you need to note that there was no controversy at that time over virtually any article of the Baptist Faith & Message other than the ones that were related to the chief topic of concern in the SBC at the time, which was the doctrine of creation and an effort to counter evolutionary theory. Which is to say that, as Dr. Mullins, who was the

president of the convention and the chairman of that committee said, that this is an accurate and almost comprehensive reflection of what Southern Baptists believe. Southern Baptists had not had a confession of faith, of course, because they believed, again, that tension between the congregation and the denomination, they felt that that was properly the province of the congregation -- and more specifically the association. So the associations were all confessional, at least in terms of the 19th Century, and they maintained the confessional responsibility. Southern Baptists modified that slightly in 1914, some people remember. I don't mean because you were there, it's our history. And had to modify it again in 1919 because controversies over chaplains in World War I. That was when Southern Baptists by the way were first mobilized on religious liberty issues as a denomination. It had to do with the fact that we were largely decertified because we didn't have the kind of denominational endorsing power that the Roman Catholics had, and so our forefathers in 1919 made a very clear statement. But it wasn't comprehensive, and thus in 1925 we had the Baptist Faith & Message. Now Herschel Hobbs, who was one of my dear friends, bless his heart, and a name I hope means something to you as well. He was chairman of course of the 1963 committee, and he said that the 1925 statement basically created a balm in Gilead for a generation. And it did, at least until about 1963,

when you had of course the second Baptist Faith & Message. Southern Baptists poured their energies into things other than theological controversy. And this was the day of the great programmatic consensus in the SBC. This was the day of the great energy, of course the period between the two world wars and then in the period of second world war. I spend a great deal of time in this history, and I think it's startling when you go back and look at it and realize the optimism of Southern Baptists at the end of the Second World War. Part of it was American optimism. America had been, had the 17th largest army in the world before World War I -- before World War II, excuse me -- and ended up the dominant world power. It was an age of incredible optimism. American factories were growing. American families were growing. Let me just put in a footnote here. You may have seen the statistic that Southern Baptists are baptizing half as many adolescents as we were in 1972. Now that should alarm us, but one of the things we need to recognize that we're having about half as many adolescents as we were in 1972. That is to say the birthrate has fallen precipitously. And, uh, but if you go back to the Southern Baptist Convention of the 1950s, especially, into the 60s and 70s, this massive momentum is growing. The South is coming alive economically. The nation is pulling together. The sectionalism of the Civil War was basically resolved by the two world wars in which America was involved.

Especially by the time you come out of the second world war. For instance if you take the history of just one city, like Birmingham, Alabama, and look at how it was transformed just in the period of the 1950s. A city like Atlanta, Atlanta was just a sleepy Southern city in the 1950s, when leaders such as Eisenhower and others seized the opportunity to make it into a world city. Southern Baptists were very much a part of that. Southern Baptists just in terms of our demography in the 19th Century were not only overwhelmingly rural in terms of our church numbers, we were overwhelmingly rural and agrarian in terms of our church membership. By the time you come to the 1950s that has already shifted, and America is very much a part of, in the Southern Baptist Convention, of the suburban expansion. We had the rise of what would become mega churches and all the rest. And Southern Baptists were largely doctrinally unaware and unpreoccupied. And that's when theological controversy did erupt. It came to many Southern Baptists first as a nuisance, and then as something of a surprise. Southern Baptists were not well equipped to deal with this. And so you have the Elliott controversy that emerges very early in the 1960s. And one of the interesting things is that Southern Baptists basically had no idea what to do with this. And it's because in mainline Protestantism the issues had been framed in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, but Southern Baptists

assumed that was someone else's problem. And now you have a professor at one of our seminaries that is teaching not only against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch but is arguing, using the most radical in terms of that day, mechanisms of higher criticism and dehistoricizing the text. And then all of a sudden Southern Baptists said, you know, "Houston we have a problem." Quite literally they said Houston, elected at one point **(INAUDIBLE)** president of the SBC. But they were looking at this and they recognized, "We are a part of this even though we didn't mean to be. And the question is to what extent is this a problem in our midst?" Now Southern Seminary had some controversies back in the 1950s, had Nelst Ray (sp?) speaking in chapel and things like that. And I look back at the correspondence files, and you can tell who spoke in chapel when. And people would be sending letters of protest and all the rest. Southern had had a theological controversy in 1958 that led to the departure of 13 faculty members. Southeastern Seminary, many people forget, had a Bultmannian controversy in the late '50s and the early '60s that threatened the very existence of that institution. But all these things were largely localized. And Southern Baptists were certain they didn't have a Bultmannian controversy in the pews, and what they thought that, uh, they could probably be handled elsewhere. The 1963 Baptist Faith & Message was -- Dr. Hobbs has written this himself, was an effort

to do what the '25 statement had done, and that was to create a new consensus, to put a new statement out that would basically create a new platform -- and as Dr. Hobbs also said, to create a balm for this generation. "We'll stand on this confession and that will resolve the issues." But of course the 1963 confession of faith had embedded in it some problems that only came to full flower in the debate in the Southern Baptist Convention in terms of the inerrancy controversy and the Conservative Resurgence from the late 1960s until the early 1990s. Even in the midst of the 1970s -- and you can look at the bound volumes of your own back issues and you can see plenty of testimony to this. Even in the 1970s Southern Baptists were determined to do their very best not to engage full-force and full-face in a theological controversy. The denominational effort known as Bold Mission Thrust, especially associated with the year 1976. In Newsweek magazine the year of the evangelical and all the rest. But that was very much an effort to direct the denominations energies toward missions and towards a bold advance in terms of reaching the world. The fact is that by the time you get to the 1970s Southern Baptists were theologically divided to an extent that meant that Bold Mission Thrust was never going to be so bold as it was hoped to be. Also the framers of Bold Mission Thrust were honest, as in for instance you go back and look at the material. They wanted to create a new denominational consensus, a new

denominational platform, in which theological issues were sublimated to the missional issues. Of course the problem is that never works. You can't sublimate the theological issues in terms of denominational program. You can do that for some time, but eventually they will erupt -- and erupt they did. Now I face the challenge, as we all face the challenge, of a generation that was born long after these things. And so even if you look at how someone in a textbook would write about the inerrancy controversy, they're gonna go back to 1979. The inerrancy controversy did not erupt in 1979. It had erupted on the floor of the SBC with the election of a president with a determined program in 1979, but the roots, **(CLEARS THROAT)** excuse me, go all the way back to the 1920s, when unresolved issues about the nature and authority of Scripture in the 1920s. The fast-forward through all the rather isolated controversies of the '30s, '40s, '50s and '60s. And then the denomination's resistance to deal with these issues honestly with the Elliott controversy in '63 and then the Broadman Commentary became at the end of the '60s. And thus by the time I, uh, graduated from high school and arrived on the campus of Sanford University in 1978, the theological controversy was full-blown. I didn't know that in 1978. But I quickly discovered it in terms of the events that began to shape all the conversations that were going on even as I was a college student, and then in 1980 when I arrived as a

seminary student in Louisville. The inerrancy controversy in the SBC was by any historical measure of American denominations the most intensive theological battle from which any denomination emerged largely intact. In other words, from a historical perspective, if you look at the various controversies in American denominations it's hard to come up with any denomination that entered into such a sustained and systemic controversy and then emerged largely intact. If you look at Presbyterianism, I mean, we have a lot of Baptist denominations, we just don't have a lot of major Baptist denominations. Presbyterians have a lot of major Presbyterian denominations because every time they had a controversy they ended up with a new denomination. In mainline Protestantism operated in the, the opposite logic was we never met a controversy we're gonna hit head on like this. And so by the time you get to a lowest common denominator there's not much opportunity for schism left. Witness what's going on among Presbyterians right now. For instance in the PCUSA they state (?) conservatives insofar as they've stayed in the PCUSA this long, are having a very hard time imagining ever leaving. Now they lost two of their biggest churches in the last month. But they've created this new denomination. I think they did it in Denver by the way, and, uh, it's a denomination within a denomination, which is kind of like a Baptist, a Presbyterian CBF in reverse. This is on the right



rather than on the left. But you look at the SBC, and from the period 1979 to the period 1990, just in terms of the last contested presidential election in the Southern Baptist Convention, this denomination endured and sustained a controversy that literally would have blown apart just about any other denomination. Now why didn't it in the SBC? Couple of reasons. The deep conservatism of Southern Baptists, the deep doctrinal reflexes of Southern Baptists, that was very much a part of it. Deep commitment to the Southern Baptist Convention that is greater than, evidently, the denominational commitment to structures and organizations found in many other denominations. And, I want to go back to 1845, the fact that we had preserved the relationship, by our polity, between the congregation and the denomination such that the congregation was not itself torn apart by the controversy that tore apart the denomination. That would be very different. In other words, you didn't have the intrusion of all the dynamic of controversy into the life of a local congregation. And, uh, nor into the life of even many associations, nor, at least in a delayed fuse, in many state conventions. When you arrive at the present generation you realize that this conversation, again, is genealogical. We're having a conversation because things happened in a certain way; had they happened otherwise different people would be in the room having a very different conversation. The main issue for

the Southern Baptist Convention at the midpoint and for the second half of the 20th Century was whether or not we were a part of mainline Protestantism and would follow that trajectory, or if we were part of conservative Protestantism and we would follow that trajectory. That issue was decisively settled by 1990, and the Southern Baptist Convention associated itself with conservative Protestantism -- and that meant anti-liberal Protestantism. Now that's a very important point, because I've been in a tussle the last few days with Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times. Back in 2004 he wrote an article, because he was so shocked to find some Baptists who ha-, I mean some Christians who actually believed in the virgin birth. And he acted, he actually made a statement in an article he wrote back then as if Christians had just then decided to believe in the virgin birth to show how conservative they were -- which just demonstrates, again, Nicholas Kristof is a brilliant man, but his background is almost entirely secular. Just because he had a grandfather who was a pastor doesn't mean. His worldview is almost entirely secular. To him, orthodoxy is something that basically emerged out of theological controversy, and people just decided all of a sudden we're going to believe these things. He seems to be absolutely unaware of the fact that virtually every Christian you would ever meet throughout two millennia of Christian experience believed in the virgin birth. The exception is not

those who believe in the virgin birth, unless you were working at the New York Times probably, it's the one who would reject it. And so when you start looking at that you realize that for Southern Baptists to emerge from the inerrancy controversy demonstrated that there were very deep conservative convictions on the part of Southern Baptist people. But the Conservative Resurgence reshaped the Southern Baptist Convention, reset the entire equation, and set the stage for the theological controversies we know today. Had that controversy gone elsewhere, well had we followed the trajectory of mainline Protestantism all we have to do is look at the controversies that currently shape mainline Protestantism, those would be the SBCs controversies. And to speak bluntly, they would be matters of division over the normalization of sex-, of homosexuality, other kinds of sexual orientations and lifestyles, and of course a massive retreat in terms of conversion. Now time is short. I felt like had to give a little genealogical opening there, but I didn't come here to speak just on Baptist history. I don't normally alliterate, and I don't mean to artificially do so today. But I want to speak of the current controversies shaping the Southern Baptist Convention in terms of several words that just happen to begin with "C." And the first of these in contextualization. Most of the most irritating controversies to Southern Baptists right now have to do with deep debates over

the contextualization of the gospel. Virtually everything that you have in terms of controversies over who sings what when, what is a hymn and what is not, what worship is to look like, how you are to dress, whether you should have no facial hair or a very specific kind of facial hair, whether you wear a black turtleneck when you preach or a suite, whether you meet in a sanctuary or a movie theater. These are deep issues of contextualization. Contextualization is an ongoing debate, and has been ever since the rise of the Christian missionary movement. Missiologists were always on the front lines of the contextualism debate, because the contextualism debate as it emerged in evangelical and in Protestant circles did not emerge from how do we reach millennials. They, their grandparents hadn't been born yet. But how do we reach Muslims. And especially with the overwhelming investment in Protestant missions in China, how do we deal with persons whose worldviews, mores, dress, cultural habits and all the rest are so radically distinct from us. In other words the first debates over contextualization in terms of modern experience had to do with the extent to which Chinese Christians -- and they were very much Chinese, China Inland Mission, Southern Baptist missions, Hudson Taylor, all of these. These were the debates -- to what extent must they look like us. To what extent are we bringing America or Western or in the case of so many of the

missionaries, British values and traditions. And of course the problem is we're so deeply inculturated as human beings it's hard for us to know when we are actually speaking of a cultural paradigm or when we're speaking out of deep conviction. That requires ongoing deep discussion. This led to a lot of the earliest controversies on the mission field. You had people on the left such as Pearl Buck. Some of you remember that name, won the Nobel Prize for literature, who were appalled by the very idea that Christian missionaries, including her own family, would arrive in a place like China and say that their ancestors are going to hell because they never came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to impose a Western religion on them. Now that's one model of response to acculturation or contextualization. In other words she said, and a good many Protestant liberals at the time said, the gospel itself is an intrusion. And if we're going to be culturally sensitive we can't even take the gospel. Of course the missionary movement at that time did not embrace that, but it had to embrace some model of the extent to which some of the. And this is, let me remind us, out of the book of Acts, OK. This is actually the turn to the gentiles, "Must they be circumcised in order to be a part of the church?" It's the same debate. The contextualization issue is as old as the New Testament. But the current controversies we have are very much out of that same conversation, at least those

that I'm talking about in terms of acculturation or contextualization. To what extent can we differ from one another in terms of the way we -- and I don't really like this expression, but it's almost unavoidable -- do church. You've got debates that people can't even frame theologically because they don't have the tools accessible to debate them theologically. So it comes out in terms of, "I don't like that," or "That can't be right." Well, it might not be right, but it's gonna take some theological and biblical tools to be able to deal with this. The issue for the Southern Baptist Convention, many of our most pressing issues, have to do with this. You know, the controversy when the president of the SBC says I'm not going to wear a tie. That is a very surface level contextualization question. Can you have a Southern Baptist church plant in a brewery? That is a far more urgent contextualization question. Must you do it this way? Must you do it that way? A lot of the tension points in the SBC right now are all over contextualization questions. And I'll just tell you that I think we have a generation that is radically contextualized, and contextualizing. And I fear over-contextualizing. Now missiologists have tried to come up with all kinds of rubrics for this. Some of your are familiar with the language C1, C2, C3, C4, C5 in terms of deeper models of contextualization. Most Southern Baptists aren't talking in such language like the missiologists and the theologians, but the

reality is that we've got some Southern Baptists who are basically CO -- which is to say no concern for contextualization at all. "We've got a steeple, we've got a pipe organ, this is who we are. Deal with it." That's not the growth edge of the SBC, but I grew up in that church, and I fully understand it. I still feel more at home there. Then we have some on the radical end of contextualization who are saying, "Look, there is nothing that we need to share in common other than the gospel and certain Baptist convictions, a very limited set of Baptist convictions. Other than that, it's gonna look radically different wherever you go. So between those two polarities are all kinds of different issues. And, you know, when I read your papers, and I do, and I listen to the chatter and read the blogs every once in a while, which I do only every once in a while. And I just kind of gather more from conversation with students and with pastors, this is the first thing that comes to mind. This is the first tension point in the SBC. How do we become all things to all men in order that by all means they might be won to Christ, and still win them to Christ and not just to some kind of cultural modification. This is going to be an ongoing tension point. I'm glad to talk about this as you would like, but a good many of the issues have to do with contextualization. The second is congregationalism. Going back again to 1845, the one thing that Southern Baptists knew was that Baptists were

congregationalists. Congregationalism requires certain responsibilities of the local church and prevents and prohibits certain intrusions from any outside body. The model of associationalism developed very early. I mean after all it wasn't an American innovation. The London Confession came out of the London Association of Churches. They associated themselves together. By the way they had to given the pressures of 17th Century Britain. But nonetheless you start looking at this and you realize that in terms of congregationalism we've still got many of the same issues. To what extent can congregations differ from one another and still associate together? What demands ought the association of churches to have on local congregations? And here's the biggest issue: What does a congregation look like? Baptists are very confused about this in terms of the officers of a church, in terms of the actual operations of a church, in terms of the structure and polity of a local church. We have churches that have business meetings that actually are, there's no business conducted. We've got churches that have bureaucratic structures that actually operate on behalf of the congregation. We've got churches that are affiliated with the SBC that are owned by a Board of Directors that have non-resident member-. This is bizarre. Our Baptist forefathers are pulling out their hair wondering where the Baptists are. And most of us are disarmed for this conversation



and for this debate, because very few people show up really thinking at congregationalists. And this is going to be an ongoing issue. It's going to be one of the deepest and I think most threatening issues to the SBC, because we had allowed our programmatic representation in the '50s to violate congregationalism. In other words, violations of congregationalism didn't emerge with the millennials. You go back and you realize we had allowed things such as the development of the so-called Board of Deacons to arise in ways, that functioned in ways, that weren't really congregational in polity. And then you have a generation that says, "That wasn't right so we're going to do something else," and what they're doing is also potentially if not actually threatening to the congregational experiment. So this is going to be an ongoing tension point as well. What is a church? That is one of the underlying controversies over current debates with church planting. What actually is a church? How do we know when we have a church? That better be a theological definition. It better be a biblical definition and not just a bureaucratic definition or we're going to be in trouble. And the controversies with the, well just all kinds of things right now in terms of how many church plants do we have? Well, define a church. And, you say no the Baptist Faith & Message is a pretty solid attempt to define a church. But that doesn't mean that we have commonality on what

a church is. I found that this out as a child. I came to know the Lord through the preaching. I grew up in a tall-steeple, establishment Southern Baptist church. Very tall steeple, very establishment. It defined my identity more than anything other than my own family. My father was a deacon, director of Training Union. My mother ran the nursery. We were there before the doors opened, because they were often the people that opened the doors. I was a Sunbeam. I was everything you could be. I was in pre-Cradle Roll, you know back when we enrolled fetuses back in the 1950s. And yet I came to know the Lord through the preaching of one of our daughter churches. Our church was in a construction project, we didn't have Vacation Bible School. So when I was in the fourth grade, went to Bible school, Vacation Bible School, as one of our daughter churches. We call that church planting now. And I was confused as to what this church was. This wasn't my church. My pastor had a Ph.D. from a Southern Seminary. This pastor was a phosphate miner who was what we would call bivocational. He came on Friday and preached the gospel, and the Lord used his preaching of the gospel to reach me about my need for Christ in a way that I had never heard before. And that was what began the process whereby I confessed Christ within a matter of days. And I was always confused, because that was kind of a part of our church but it wasn't our church. There's a lot of the same confusions you have

today -- in terms of what is a church, what isn't a church, when is a church self-sustaining. The rise of multi-site models, the rise of all kinds of things, have raised new tension points in congregationalism. To what extent can multi-site churches -- truth in advertising, I'm a member of one -- to what extent can they accommodate congregationalism. Or can congregationalism accommodate that reality. And when indeed do you have actually separate congregations, and when have we become effectively Episcopalians, in which we have numerous bishops over different sub-groups of churches. Maybe we have the diocese of Second Baptist Houston rather than the congregation of Second Baptist Houston. It's not an accusation, it's a question. Anyone with a background in Baptist history has to look at this and realize this is *terra incognita*. We have not done this. You used to have associations of congregations. Now you've got a congregation that is represented all over the place. To what extent must a church take and demonstrate all the New Testament fullness of the church, and to what extent can it franchise some of these things out? Fascinating questions. Our Baptist forebearers I think would be pulling their hair out again. But this is where we have all kinds of tension points all across, because with missiological imperatives when the desire and recognition to reach people with the gospel and to plant churches where we have horridly neglected regions not only of the world but of our own

country, you have a great deal of missiological energy going into these without a denomination having thought through the ecclesiological and theological issues that are involved. And so we end up with controversies all over the place with church planting. And by the way, those aren't simple controversies. They go all over the place. And they all come back to congregationalism. What does it mean to be a congregation? What does it mean for the SBC to be an association of autonomous congregations united for mission? What does it mean to recognize one another? By the way, a little footnote. In church history, many of the most urgent controversies are not only about (?) what you have to believe, what you have to recognize. And, for instance, if you're an Anglican right now, they're about the have women bishops -- but not all Anglicans will have to recognize women bishops for now. And obviously it won't last long, but for now. It's the same thing in many mainline Protestant denominations where you have women clergy, and you're not required to call a woman as pastor but you have to recognize a woman as pastor. That's been a very clear tension point in the history of the church. Well it's that way now. Many of the controversies right now in the SBC are over what congregations must we recognize as being congregations. And of course those come to the questions of like which ones do we find? Which ones get to send messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention? Which

ones get to be part of denominational leadership and denominational conversation. It's very much the same question. Another clear and very important word for us in terms of all this, again with the Cs, has to do with confessionalism. Again the Southern Baptist Convention did not adopt a confession of faith in 1845, but it had to by the time the pressures of modernity began to blow by the early 20th Century. By the time of the midpoint of the 20th Century with the controversies over the nature and authority of Scripture, the nature and the central character of the gospel, ecclesiology and all the rest, there had to be a modification of the Baptist Faith & Message, overwhelmingly adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963. And then of course the pressures that were represented by the Conservative Resurgence in the SBC, and issues that could not have been foreseen in either '63 or '25 emerged with the Baptist Faith & Message that was adopted in the year 2000. Now, many people don't recognize a basic principle of church history. Now follow me, if you don't hear this. OK, if you hear this one way it won't make any sense, but this is a basic principle of historical theology: Heresy precedes orthodoxy. Now it doesn't mean that the false precedes the true; of course not. It does mean that codified orthodoxy almost always follows some theological error that has to be corrected. Constantine didn't just decide to call the Council of Nicea because he wanted to

gather the bishops together. He did so because Arius said there once was a time when Christ was unto the son (?) was not. The son was of a similar *usia* or substance as the father. Athanasius responded, we ended up with the constant -- excuse me -- Constantine calling the Council of Nicea. You end up with the overwhelming affirmation that Christ is of the same substance as the Father. You will not find the church having said it definitively and declaratively until 325 because it took someone denying it in order for it to come. That same principle is very much present in the New Testament. By the time you get to the epistles, in particular such things as the epistles of John, he is clearly responding to problems that have required codification. Same thing in terms of the doctrinal clarifications offered by the apostle Paul. So, you know, Southern Baptists didn't decide that all of a sudden we're concerned as to whether gender is important in the year 2000. But the issue is no one was debating it in 1963. So the confession was modified to say gender is part of the goodness of God's creation because the modern gender theory, that gender is merely a social construct, didn't, that wasn't in conversation in '25. No one was showing up transgendered in the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention, nor in 1963. And so you can tell by a confession where issues have to be addressed. In the year 2000, pretty significant modification. A more extensive modification

in many ways than was done in 1963. Several issues were addressed, several issues were resolved. The goal of the framers of the Baptist Faith & Message in '26 and '63, by their own statement, was to try to create a denominational consensus and a statement on which Southern Baptists could stand and in which they could work together. Now, the explicit purpose of that was always twofold -- especially in the Baptist tradition of confessionalism. It is to say these issues must be commonly held among us. It's also simultaneously a statement that issues not addressed in this confession are not those that should divide us. James P. Boyce spoke of this in 1878, to the reflection of Baptist confessions. Dr. Mullins spoke to this, Dr. Hobbs spoke repeatedly to this. In fact Dr. Hobbs spoke repeatedly of this all throughout his life, even to the last weeks of his life when I was in a conversation with him about this. He woke up in the middle of the night when he was very old and not able to sleep and he had my phone number. And so every once in a while I would get a phone call from Dr. Hobbs in the middle of the night, and I was always glad to get it. I was always aware this could be my last conversation with him. He was still hammering this in the middle of the night, you know, that where something is addressed in the Baptist Faith & Message, that's what we should all embrace and believe. What is not addressed in the Baptist Faith & Message should not be a matter that would divide the

denomination. Because had it been a matter that would have divided the denomination, it should have been, if of that importance, included in the confession. If not, by the adoption of the confession that's not going to divide us. Now that's crucial, very crucial, when you consider the vehemence of the Landmarkist issues going all the way into the 20th Century. In 1925, almost convention-wide. In 1963. The greatest threat in many ways to the adoption of the Baptist Faith & Message in 1963 came from a place like Arkansas, or Missouri, where there was enormous pressure to add Landmarkist elements to the Baptist Faith & Message. But that was not done, and there was a lot of opposition to the Baptist Faith & Message in 1963 coming from some of those quarters. I was on the committee in 2000, and to the best of my knowledge there was no geographic particularity to the response to the BF&M 2000. That was almost entirely a pattern that was consistent with the denominational controversy of the Conservative Resurgence. Those who were avidly for the Conservative Resurgence were very much pleased with the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, and those who were not were displeased with it -- because the modifications that did come in 2000 were largely intended to create a denominational consensus, doing the very same thing done in '25 and '63 on the other side of the Conservative Resurgence. Now, I'm about to begin my 20th year as president of Southern Seminary. I arrived there as a very young



man. I have aged quickly. I was asked by a reporter the night I was introduced to the press, saying, "You know you're 33, what do you intend to do about it." I said, "I intend to age." I have never kept a pledge quite so faithfully as I kept that one. But I will tell you this. I am still. I am thrilled to death Kevin Ezell was elected president of NAMB, because finally, almost 20 years into this job, there's one exec who's younger than I am -- by about 18 months, but nonetheless. I was the youngest executive in the SBC for almost two decades. Something strange there. But I've lived long enough that I now work with people and have as students people that don't have any idea of a denominational consensus in 2000. That's 12 years ago almost. I mean time passes so quickly. Generational shifts come so quickly. I'm humbled by it, I tell you. I'm amazed by it. I feel old at 52. And I realize that Baptist confessionalism is going to be tested in this generation in ways that are going to match the volume and intensity probably of any previous generation. But regrettably I think it's taking place in a context in which just about everyone has forgotten how we got here, and what these confessions are supposed to do, and how the Baptist Faith & Message is supposed to operate, and what adopting it says and doesn't say simultaneously. So we're in for some very interesting conversations there. And, uh, you look at where the modifications came in the year 2000. You can easily do that. I

think the SBC still has up a tri-column, you know, kind of harmony of the Baptist confession for you to look and see where exactly they differ, '25, '63 and 2000. But if a committee were to be operating today I think it's almost certain they would have to address issues that weren't foreseen in 2000. That's 12 years later. I'm not talking the 40 years between '25 and '63 roughly, and then again the 40 years, roughly, between '63 and 2000. I'm talking about 12 years, and already we're here. So confessionalism is going to be a major issue as well. Calvinism. Another "C." The Calvinist debate in the SBC would be inconceivable prior to the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention. It would be inconceivable because it requires a certain doctrinal attentiveness within a more limited theological terrain than was represented by the SBC prior to the Conservative Resurgence. The basic decision of the SBC in the Conservative Resurgence was "Do we identify with mainline Protestantism or with conservative Protestantism?" Now here again, if there's a Landmarker in the room, God bless you, you're probably pulling your hair out the fact I keep using the word Protestant. But there's no other word to use. I'm intentionally avoiding the word "evangelical," even though I am an evangelical. I think you guys are too. But that's not the easiest word for us to use in this context. But what we were doing very clearly was siding with conservative Protestantism.

We brought the people in. I mean if you look at the inerrancy debate, you look at the conference that was held at Ridgecrest, where did we get these people? Well, from conservative Protestantism. They were conservative Anglicans and conservative Presbyterians, and conservative others who came in. These debates have been framed in those circles long before they were framed in the SBC. You know, when we were passing out books in defense of biblical inerrancy, who wrote these books? Well, people like J.I. Packer. You can just go back and look at these defenses. People like Gleason Archer. People like, a very young scholar at the time, D.A. Carson. John Woodbridge. They were from conservative Protestantism. The only people who really cared about inerrancy were conservative Protestants, who, after all, tied themselves to the biblical principle and the scriptural authority precisely because that's all they had to stand on in the Reformation. And they were willing to die for it. You do not find defenses of biblical inerrancy that do not come from some kind of Reformation-based Protestantism. They just do not exist. And for good historical reasons. Catholics affirm what they, they would say the Bible is inerrant, but only when it is inerrantly interpreted. I'm not even gonna go there. The Orthodox cannot have a debate over this because they do not even have a theological vocabulary about propositional truth. It doesn't fit to the worldview of Orthodoxy post-Byzantine. And

certainly liberal Protestantism rejected biblical inerrancy. That's how it became liberal Protestantism. So if you're looking for where the SBC fits, there is no kind of all of a sudden just Baptist neutrality here. There is no neutral ground. We certainly have Baptists who were participants in this debate, but biblical inerrancy as an affirmation was tied to an understanding of biblical authority and the plenary verbal inspiration that were meted out in the debates of the Reformation and the post-Reformation period. Which is to say that Baptists were all of a sudden reconnecting with a lot of our roots. That the Baptists who came together in 1845 also saw themselves very much as a part of conservative Protestantism. But they had grave concerns about Protestantism, because of, again -- and I do mention these as an issue of at least my priority -- congregationalism. They felt that Protestantism was an unfinished project. That the Presbyterians held onto the gospel, but they also baptized babies. And they had an unwarranted understanding of the authority of the presbytery over the local church. You know, you have a Baptist who would come back and say just as clearly as possible, "We don't have to ask the presbytery for permission to call a pastor. The church has within its own authority and sphere of its own sovereignty the right to call a pastor. We don't have a presbytery." The close conservation partners of Baptists who were the leaders in

1845 included conservative Anglicans, or Episcopalians as they became known. The Revolutionary War explains that. But for crying out loud, every pastor is a bishop according to Baptist doctrine. The very idea that there is someone who sits on a chair and claims to be bishop was abhorrent. So Baptists saw themselves as those who were taking the Protestant principle to its biblical conclusion. Well, that was never in the Vatican. And it was never without theological rootage. Our confessions of faith were deeply rooted in the Protestant confessions of faith. The Philadelphia Confessions was a rescission of the Westminster Confession. The Charleston Confession or the Centennial Confession was a rescission of the London Confession, which was a rescission of the Westminster Confession. And so by the time you look at the confessions of faith held by the majority of associations in the SBC when it came together in 1845, they were basically historic Protestant Reformation-based confessions. Even the New Hampshire Confession of Faith was again a modification of these things that became the foundation, of course, for the Baptist Faith & Message. So in other words, there is no island of Baptist genealogy or of Baptist existence that isn't in constant conversation with these things. And in order to connect with a defense of the faith once for all delivered to the saints, Southern Baptists even in the midst of the inerrancy controversy had to go back and reconnect with

sources. Now here I'll speak of my own personal biography, just in terms that may or may not be interesting to you. My great faith crisis came when I was about 15 years old. I was thrown into a cultural maelstrom and a worldview maelstrom as an adolescent in South Florida, where we had moved, in Fort Lauderdale. And I was asking the deepest philosophical questions, and I didn't know what in the world to do. I loved my pastor, I loved my youth minister, they loved me. But they weren't any help. I was asking questions of epistemology and ontology, and I didn't even know that was the language. I was 15. Although I was groping for it. I mean how did I know that God had spoken? How did I know that God existed? How did I know that the Bible actually is the word of God? I mean here I am, I had grown up around Southern Baptists all my life, and now the kid sitting next to me, and my study partner that was assigned for biology, his father's a reformed rabbi. And I sat in his house and discovered that he doesn't even believe in God. And I thought the Jews were Old Testament people, that they believed in God but not in Christ. And then I'd go to his house (?), and I'm talking to a rabbi who thought I was the most interesting little 15-year-old **(INAUDIBLE)** he had ever met. And he had a lot of fun with me, I think, but he was very kind. He used to ask my questions, because he couldn't believe that people actually believed such things. And he was a rabbi. I couldn't believe

that rabbis didn't believe in God. That was my opening. I had Catholics sitting on the other so. And so this was when a lot of these social issues were emerging. I mean I was at in many ways the birth. Someone wrote years ago that I was at the birth of Calvinism in the SBC, the founding of the Founder's Movement. I think I would have been 11; I wasn't there. I also wasn't on the grassy knoll in Dallas in 1963. I wasn't there. I was in the Miami Beach Convention Center when Jerry Falwell spoke against the Miami-Dade Gay Rights Resolution, and that was in many ways the beginning of the new Christian right. He had not addressed a social issue until that night, and I was 17 and took a bunch of people down there. I didn't know, I had never heard the name before. I just knew this was a big thing for a big issue, and I wanted to hear what someone had to say. And I was looking for anything that would help me to understand these issues. And the help that came to me didn't come from Nashville. The help that came to me came from evangelical scholars who'd been working on these things for a very long time. From Francis Schaeffer, from J.I. Packer, from John Stott, from people like that who realized we're addressing these issues, had addressed these issues. We're part of a conversation on these issues that had been going on for centuries, that did have answers and had been thinking through these things. Now later I met Southern Baptists who also were doing this, but they weren't accessible to me when I was 15

or 16 years old. Francis Schaeffer was. And through the intervention of a pastor who actually wasn't Baptist but was Presbyterian, I came. But he didn't, he wasn't even talking Calvinism. He was talking, "How do you believe in God?" I mean, he didn't introduce me to John Calvin. He introduced me to Francis Schaeffer. But I found my way into a conversation in which I realized, "This is where it's been all along. This it he conversation. This is where people are thinking about these things, and they've been thinking about them for a long time." And then I discovered that where Baptists were also in that conversation, they were in conversation with these very same people, and were speaking on a very same worldview. I'm going to fast-forward simply because of time and say that Calvinism. And I'm glad this is on the record, but I just want you to know I'm glad to talk about anything. And I want you to know you can't hurt my feelings. The only thing that would offend me is if you don't want to talk about, if you do want to talk about something and you don't. So when we come to the latter period here I hope you'll ask anything that you want to ask, but in order to set the stage I need to say a few things. Calvinism is the shape of the future, because the options otherwise don't very much exist. Now if you just quote me on that and put that in the paper it's going to make people mad. And it's not tribal language. It is because when I say Calvinism here, I'm going back to 1845, I'm



going back to 1925, I'm going back to 1963, and I'm including all of you in that. Now if you're offended by that just realize that any outside observer looking at the SBC, looking at our confessions of faith, would put us on the Calvinist side of the ledger. Now I want to tell you I am a five-point Calvinist, all right? I never write about that, I don't speak about that. If you want to know that there you have it. But I am at home in the Southern Baptist Convention of the Baptist Faith & Message. I was not raised in a church that talked about Calvinism. I am not now a member of a church that talks about Calvinism. The whole SBC, the Baptist Faith & Message and the New Hampshire Confession is clearly out of the basically Calvinist direction. Now that's tribal. And one of the problems with this is people here that as tribal (?). And to hear that as five-point Calvinism, look, that is, that's not what I'm talking about here. There are amongst us those who are more Calvinist and those who are less. But the Baptist Faith & Message excludes Arminianism. The SBCs founders identified Arminianism as a heresy they sought to confront. My father was raised in a Methodist home, my background is from the radical reformation. The Mohler Church of the Brethren in Christ is an effort of Pennsylvania. My family came out of that, into the Southern Baptist Convention. My father was convinced by Scripture when he married a Baptist girl. I'm not sure if he had a heart

inclination to see these things in Scripture too, I say tongue in cheek. She was in love with my mother and she was a Baptist. But he became convinced, and became one of the youngest deacons in the church because he was thoroughly convinced of the truth of these things by Scripture. My forebearers before were what you would consider to be Mennonites and Methodists. The Mohler name was associated with that. **(INAUDIBLE)** Mohler Day is a day dedicated to one of my ancestors about 15 generations back who was executed by the Lutherans during the peasant rebellion. We were on the losing side of that debate in warfare and on the winning side in history. So as much as I admire Luther, I realize Luther's not an unmixed (?) picture. I don't want us to become Lutherans for all kinds of reasons. I don't want us to become Presbyterian. I gave the order of the concerns that I mentioned here intentionally, because I do think that there is a creeping Presbyterianism amongst us. I do think there's a creeping Episcopalianism amongst us. I think there is a creeping you could name it amongst us as we're losing our polity in the midst of all kinds of missiological and other kinds of adaptations. In terms of Calvinism, the younger generation is increasingly Calvinist because they have to fight for everything. I didn't have to fight for anything until I was 15, brothers and sisters. I mean I was raised in Lakeland, Florida, in a sleepy little Southern town in which religious diversity

extended to the Methodists and Presbyterians on our street and the Pentecostal who moved in with a pretty girl that had a red bike. That's the first Pentecostal I met. And that was religious diversity in Polk County, Florida, in the 1960s. And then we moved to Fort Lauderdale, and I was thrown into a situation in which I was surrounded by people who didn't believe anything like what I believed. I was having to fight for everything. And I didn't have deep, deep questions. Of course part of it was just adolescence, but I didn't have deep, deep questions until I had to defend what it was I believed, and had to figure out how in the world we got here. I mean I can't just say, "I believe these things because my parents believe them." But I did hear my Jewish and Catholic friends say things like that. I knew I couldn't say that. I knew I had to defend them somehow. I had to look for resources. That's what this generation has to do every day of their lives. They're having to tie themselves to a far deeper and more substantial doctrinal conversation and theological conversation, and cultural Christianity having disappeared in their experience they have to fight for everything all the time. When they arrive on a college or university campus and they believe that you are supposed to remain sexually chaste until you are married, how are you gonna defend that? Is that just your personal opinion, or is that some deep moral conviction? If it's a deep moral conviction where in

the world did that come from? Is it merely arbitrary? No, it's part of a larger worldview. "You believe," says the boy, the young man who's roommate's a Christian and he's a Hindu. "Are you telling me that my grandparents are in hell simply because they lived in India and never confessed Jesus Christ?" And he's gonna have to say, "That isn't the first thing I want to say, but yes I have to believe that." He can't just believe that because he heard that in Sunday school. He's got to have a deep reason to believe that, a deep reason that explains the gospel is this and not that, that it operates in this way and not in some other way. That faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. And this is part of an ongoing conversation. If you're wondering where this is coming from, a part of it is also a generation that wants to belong, that wants to know I'm going to associate with all of this. I didn't have to fight sexual morality as a policy matter as an adolescent. They do. I didn't have to fight that I wasn't a racist because I believed in the exclusivity of the gospel, but they do. I didn't have to fight that there actually was a divine authority speaking in Scripture that says that homosexuality is wrong and that heterosexual marriage is normative, but they do. And they're going to do it only because they're standing in something, on something, around people, within the context of people who have believed these things and known these things and can tie it to a comprehensive

worldview. And that's what the Protestant Reformation was all about. And that's where they find their genealogy, and that's where Southern Baptists find their genealogy. But let's be honest: we don't find our genealogy there because we were there just as we are now. Baptists are a modification of that, but we're still a part of that. We can't be not a part of that, and they know that. And the question is then where do they find their home. It still remains that most of the people who are writing on these things come from some kind of Calvinist identification. It still remains that most of the scholars that they are most attracted to come from some. And even from those who don't identify that way, even some of those who resist that kind of designation, that's still who they are. Because any observer looking from outside would say, "If you believe in God's initiative in salvation, if you believe in God's perfections in terms of his attributes." For instance, in 2000 you remember one of the things the SBC did was to speak directly against, and then during the presidency of Paige Patterson, which was also at the same time but on a different issue, the SBC clearly rejected limited theism, limited omniscience. Because we firmly believe God knows all things perfectly in advance, including the free decisions of his creatures. We do not believe that his omniscience was, as people like Clark Pinnock were teaching back in the 1990s, limited to the things

that God could know, the other things being things that supposedly were in a category that could not be known. Southern Baptists, as far as I remember without a dissenting vote, affirmed that in terms of when it came on the floor of the SBC, back in, I think it was New Orleans. And of course it's extensively treated in the Baptist Faith & Message. Al Mohler didn't put that in the Baptist Faith & Message. That was put in by a unanimity of the committee, out of a concern that was something that had to be answered. There are people in the SBC who in the SBC are called anti-Calvinists, or non-Calvinists, who in many larger contexts would show up and be recognized as Calvinists. We've got Asbury Seminary down the street. It's president a few years ago came when there was no controversy over Calvinism or anything like that and said that he didn't often come and speak to Calvinist institutions. That was before there was any kind of conversation, and that was back when I first arrived at Southern. Trust me, if there was a Calvinist on campus I think I was the one. But to the president of Asbury Seminary, if you put Baptist in front of it that means Calvinist. But in our context we're talking about more and less Calvinist. We're talking about card-carrying five-star Calvinists, and those who don't want to be Calvinists of any stripe that still believe you can't lose your salvation, and that God keeps those whom he has redeemed to the end, and still

believe in what the Baptist Faith & Message describes as God's purposes of grace. There's going to be ongoing tension points. I'm glad to talk about any of it. I'll be glad for you to know what my hopes and dreams are for the SBC, and I think they're probably very similar to yours. If we talk about our concerns we're likely to find a lot of common concerns. On the other hand, we shouldn't expect to find unanimity. That's not what we should look for, and that's not what we should aim for. We should aim for consensus that enables us to work together, not just because we're willing to work together; because we're eager to work together. I think that's the greatest danger for the SBC. And at this I will end this part of my remarks, is whether we can not only recognize each other. I'll go back to that word I used earlier. But love each other and want eagerly to work with one another. And this is a family. The SBC's debates, and this is true of religious debates, it's true of debates in conservative Judaism. They're the most horrifying because they're like family reunions where things you know can go badly. And we don't want things to go badly. I don't think you want things to go badly. I don't want things to go badly. I've got the stewardship of several thousand young people. I do not want to go badly. I do not want them to think of the SBC as a place that simply is too problematic for their involvement. That's the future. And I want to be a part of a Southern Baptist

Convention. Well, I want to just be honest here. I know this is on the record, and I'm kind of speaking recklessly here. But let me tell you, I'm old enough that I understand how attractive it is to want to go back, because I feel more comfortable there too. I'll just be honest. I wish we could still call Memphis and have Dr. Rogers in his wonderful pastoral and incredibly authoritative way say, "I think this is where we need to go." I still want to go back in the sanctuary of First Baptist Dallas and have my heart wrenched when I saw him serve the Lord's Supper, and Dr. Criswell take that bread and break it and have it fall onto that silver platter, and think of the body of Christ broken in a way I never had thought of before. I want to go back to a Southern Baptist Convention when we arrived by the multiple thousands rather than the many hundreds, I really do. I don't think that's our future, not all of it for bad reasons. Some of it's just because it's the future. I don't know that I'm really going to like the future. I'm not sure the future cares. But I want to be a part of it, and I want you to be a part of it too. And I think the coming generation needs all of us to be a part of that as well. In terms of how to cover it, I'd prepared an entire session, but quite frankly I'm speaking to the converted here. I just want to say maybe three or four things. No. 1, cover it. One of the problems in the SBC is that we still have a reflex against dealing with theological issues directly.



Don't do that. It's too important. How in the world can we be a gospel people if we're afraid to talk in theological terms. Talk about it. Don't be afraid of it. Don't be afraid that you're going to make somebody angry, because, well you guys make enough people angry anyway. Make 'em angry for good reasons. I know what that's like, I've read your mail, 'cause I got it for four years, and still see some letters you print **(INAUDIBLE)**. So, you know, just cover it. Don't be timid in this. And some of you certainly you know will say, "Well I'm not a theologian." Well, quite frankly, you've been invested with an incredible stewardship. You're a theologian of some sort. You're kind of like the guy that got some of you conscripted, and next thing you know you're handed a gun. Well you've got to shoot, so shoot. Aim, thankfully, please, but shoot. And when you do so realize that you're a part of an ongoing conversation. We're not asking you to start a conversation. We're asking you to deal with what's right out there. You know, this is a rather controversial expression, **(INAUDIBLE)** the elephant in the room. Deal with it. Don't not name it. The second thing is, you know, deal with it honestly; you know that. But in a theological context to deal with it honestly means you don't just cover the most obvious things that someone says that might make the news. You try to figure out where did this come from? What does it belong to? How does this fit in the larger context? Obviously

you want to use the best authorities. You know, if. It would be dishonest if you wanted to cover the Democratic Party to go some Democrat who is a city councilman on Kauai in Hawaii who holds some nutty idea and say that represents the Democratic Party. The same thing holds true in theological debates. Go to the people who help to frame the issues, who have responsible voices, and who are going to represent the belief system or theological argument honestly and straightforwardly. Obviously be kind. Being kind doesn't mean not talking about things any more than being kind means not disappointing a child or having a conversation with someone that you know you have to have simply because you have to have it. But being kind means you hope for good out of this and not for ill. That means you hope for good for everyone that's involved in this. This is not a situation in which we have some kind of now full-body cage fighting on theological issues. We could gin that up. I mean there's not doubt that if we wanted to do that this denomination could arrange a real fistfight, but that wouldn't serve the cause of Christ. And quite frankly we would lose the theological issues in the midst of the bravado. That's not good. Keep the conversation going. One of the problems is that, and if this is a criticism it's not a criticism just of state paper editors but criticism of public conversation. Things tend to come in and then go out, come in and go out. And so, you know, you've got to

kind of keep on a conversation. I don't mean an infinite series on theological debates, but keep talking and dealing with theology. Keep writing and engaging with theology, so that when an issue emerges there's some context for the conversation other than some strange guy with facial hair who showed up saying something that scared people to death in association X. That's gonna happen, but let it be a part of an ongoing conversation. In terms of theological, or covering theological issues, I think the most important thing that you can do is to make very clear that many of your papers have been doing this for a very long time, and that this is what people are actually paying for when they subscribe to your newspaper. That in many ways the theological debates in the SBC were basically hammered out in the state papers throughout most of the existence of the Southern Baptist Convention. This is where there needs to be a meeting place of ideas. This is where there needs to be a thorough coverage, an analysis, an engagement of these issues. And we can handle it. If we can't handle it, then we're not going to be able to handle modernity, we're not going to be able to handle the 21st Century, we're not going to be able to handle the future, and we're not going to be able to handle the infinite array of issues that are being thrown at us. We're up to us. I don't say that with confidence because I look in the mirror in see what great people we are. I say we're up to this

because we have to be. There isn't any choice, we've got to be up to this. And I hope this conversation even today is kind of an example of that. And I am glad to talk about anything on your mind. Do not worry about offending anyone in the room, including myself. Ask anything you want to ask, and I promise you I'll speak as honestly and as clearly as I possibly can. Thank you.

**MAN:** OK. Do you have enough to chew on there? Let me just give some guidance here. We started 15 minutes late. We're scheduled to go to 12:15, and I'm willing to go to 12:30 since we started 15 minutes late. You have the afternoon off, so we're not impinging on anything that's scheduled other than perhaps your stomach growling a bit. So if Dr. Mohler is willing and we have enough questions. We won't go on if there's not the need, but I suspect after all that there may be the need. So with that Dr. Mohler I'll let you call on as you will.

**DR. MOHLER:** Glad to. **(INAUDIBLE)** Don.

**DON:** Don Hinkle, editor of The Pathway, Missouri. After having just completed your research in the name change that you made, I'd be interested to know from you what is the most important thing you think going forward, no matter how this turns out, that you learned in your research with the committee.

**DR. MOHLER:** Well that's somewhat of a loaded question, Don. I think you know how loaded that is. So, I'll be glad to answer

that, but I can't answer it on the record in order to keep, keep faith.

**DON:** It's not intended to be a loaded question.

**DR. MOHLER:** Well I was responsible largely for the program and structure committee in the early 1990s to deal with this, and then I got put on this committee. I'm trying to think of how I should do this.

**DON:** Well then don't, since it's on the record.

**DR. MOHLER:** Yeah. It's going to be happy. We are Southern, we are Baptist, we are a convention, and we are never less than that. We are more than that too, and it's going to be interesting to see how, how this is received. But I will tell you believe that the recommendation coming is a very clear consensus recommendation, unanimously adopted by a task force that has no standing whatsoever. It could've been the experiment of having a bunch of people in a room talking to themselves, and I'm perfectly happy with that. This is an issue that gives me all kinds of hives, simply because I did grow up in that church. And by the way I will tell you what I told the Associated Press and the New York Times. They had both gotten to me that night. I think for the cause of the Great Commission and the gospel we should be willing to change the name of the Southern Baptist Convention. As for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, not so much. I say that tongue in check **(LAUGHING)**, but there's

a great investment in this, and I think this could be a model for how to deal with things happily. I certainly hope so. But I have a massive body of research on that question which I will be putting out in printed form immediately after I don't have to maintain radio silence. Yes.

**BRIAN:** Hi. I'm Brian Hobbs from Oklahoma. You mentioned, uh, Dr. Hobbs. **(YEAH)** You talked about the Calvinism. Do you think even in the new shape (?) going forward there's room for those who are closer to maybe his view on, on the Calvinism question, or any **(INAUDIBLE)** thinkers like William Lane Craig. Do you see a third way emerging? Or is it ...

**DR. MOHLER:** Well let's put it this way. Dr. Hobbs was kind of the consensus Southern Baptist for the last half of the 20th Century in a lot of ways, I mean certainly until the Conservative Resurgence. I knew him as a boy, heard him as a boy. I think most Southern Baptists in the pew probably are pretty much where Dr. Hobbs was. They were training. I mean, certainly if you're a certain age you were trained by his stuff. I mean, I had the Baptist Faith & Message as a study program, 13-week. And so I mean, yeah, I mean I think that's where most Southern Baptists are. I don't think most Southern Baptists are where I am. And for historical reasons. They haven't had to deal with a lot of the same issues. So, but, I mean I. Not only do I think that's where most Southern Baptists are, I'm a member

of that church right now. I'm a member of a church where certainly that would be where most of the members are, and I'm very comfortable in an SBC that's like that. I wouldn't be comfortable in the United Methodist SBC. I wouldn't be comfortable in a Nazarene SBC. I couldn't be part of an SBC that embraced Arminianism. But for crying out loud, the SBC never has embraced Arminianism, and the Baptist Faith & Message is all I need. I'm very much at home there. And I served with Dr. Hobbs on the Theological Study Committee put together by Dr. Ed Young when he was president of the SBC, and we stayed up many late nights talking about these things. Dr. Hobbs was and is a hero to me from the time that I was president of the ministerial association at Samford University and invited him as a speaker for a banquet -- not knowing that that was an audacious act. Leslie Wright was president of Samford. I got a phone call from his secretary at 6 o'clock in the morning saying, "Dr. Wright wants to see you this morning." And I said, "Well I have a class at 8 o'clock." She said, "Not this morning you don't." I had never been in trouble like that in my life. I was scared to death. I only had one suit, put it on, went and sat in Dr. Wright's office. He sat down and he said, "Al, one day this is going to be very convenient for you to know. But you should never ambush the president of an institution by inviting someone like Herschel Hobbs without checking with me first." I felt like

I had been shot. And I realized with horror I really had done something wrong to the president with his coming. But Dr. Wright handled that so well, the first thing he said was, "How are you going to get him from the airport?" I said, "My car." And he said, "Where is it?" Said, "It's out there." **(INAUDIBLE)**, "No you're not." He gave me the keys to his Oldsmobile and said, "You go get Dr. Hobbs in this." I took Dr. Hobbs to his sister, who lived on top of the mountain, a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church. I took him there, and that's where he wanted to spend the evening. He didn't want to stay in the hotel, he wanted to stay with his sister. And he stayed up there, and I went back to get him. The banquet was at 7, I went there at 5, and his sister. And I don't, and this is on **(INAUDIBLE)** please. If this shows up, I'm coming for you. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. I'm sorry but it, I mean they were virtually identical. And anyway she walked me in the house, and she said, "Herschel's on the back porch." I went back there. He was in a strap T shirt and a pair of white boxer shorts with socks, with suspenders on, shooting squirrels with a pellet gun off of the bird feeders. And I thought, "OK." I had a vision of Herschel Hobbs sitting on his throne high and lifted up, and here he is in his boxer shorts shooting squirrels. But he befriended me from that moment. And you know he was a consensus maker. And I would say that with great tribute to him. He was



also a period piece, in the sense that he was emblematic of a generation that was still very much a part of the cultural Christianity -- whether you were in Oklahoma City or Dallas or in Shreveport -- where you weren't fighting for what this generation has to fight for. So, yeah he's another one I miss. He's one of my constant conversation partners. And I think he still represents, certainly generationally, if you're over 40, then Herschel Hobbs almost certainly represents who you are. And that's the incubus from which I came. Appreciate the question. Yes.

**JOE:** Joe Westbury with the Index. I'm open to the name change. I'm open to anything **(INAUDIBLE)**. But at this point in our history.

**DR. MOHLER:** Have you not kind of caught on there's not going to be a name change? I mean I don't want to imply anything. But, yeah, but anyway.

**JOE:** Right, **(INAUDIBLE)** executive committee next week. But Southern Baptists right at this point are very schizophrenic about who they are. They don't have a consensus of who they are, where they're going. What would it do, what good would it do to change, make a name change now if we're still going to be arguing and not gonna change anything? Why would somebody want to join a denomination that people are still fighting amongst themselves? Why this new **(INAUDIBLE)**?

**DR. MOHLER:** Well, I think you have two different questions. On the name change, good question. On the larger thing, why would you want to join a denomination that has debates, well find one that doesn't. I'd rather be a part of one that has worthy ones. I don't think that's the most important one. It's one of the reasons this better not become a conflagration. If it does it's a symptom of deep unhealth, either because the proposal would be so radical it wouldn't make any sense, or because people are just angry things are raised. Look, I'm irritated it's raised, OK. I know, that's just personally, I'm, not denominationally. But I mean just. I mean, I've been here long enough they come out and ask the same things over and over and over again, and when people show up at meetings. It's one of the problems with our trustee system. You know, it's still the best system there is. It's like saying "the problem with capitalism." I'm not a communist, but capitalism has some problems. It just has the right kind of problems rather than the wrong kind of problems. But when you look at the SBC our trustee system is invaluable, but people can't serve more than 10 years on these trustee boards. And so about every six years you've got a near majority of people who weren't there when you had the conversation last. They think nobody ever had the conversation before. And I've been here long enough where I've had people say, "well why don't we talk about this." And I'm thinking, "Well how do you think we

got there? You know. This is where it is." But we, we've got to get over being angry when someone asks the question, because we do want new people coming on. And they are coming on with new **(INAUDIBLE)**, and they are going to have some things. And so, I hope that makes some sense. But I mean, I think this is not going to be an issue that will divide. And it better not. If it does, we are in trouble. Bob.

**BOB:** Al, the Oct. 27 debate that you had with Jim Wallis **(YEAH)**, in setting that up, Trinity made the observation that social justice issues are changing the ecclesial ministry today. Do you see that observation to be accurate? And if so, how do you think that will impact us?

**DR. MOHLER:** Yeah, I think it's going to be huge. And, uh, and again that comes from kind of its own background. I'm surrounded by people who are now a generation younger than I am by far, and more. I had a student driver the other day. I said, "Your Dad's probably not much older than I am." He said, "No, I think he's younger. Thank you." I know how that works. But they come with a different set of concerns. And what they're looking for isn't entirely new. One of the problems is we think things are entirely new. Things are never entirely new. Carl Henry had the right to plead for evangelical demonstration back in the 1950s, because it was a cry to say (?) "If we really are these people then these kinds of things ought to be showing up in the name of

Christ. These kinds of things ought to be being done." A plea for evangelical demonstration, the uneasy conscience, the uneasy conscience of modern evangelicalism, or fundamentalism, as it was then called. This is just coming back again and again and again. And we are going to have to recognize that we have been preoccupied with a lot of issues that haven't shown to a coming generation that we're the Jesus people we're supposed to be. And, uh, social justice is always a concern of the church, and must always be a concern of Christians. How that gets translated into for instance what a denomination does, and how it gets translated into how **(INAUDIBLE)** its ministries a part of ongoing debate. I'm going back to Louisville the end of this week for a big debate on that, in which we have David Platt and Kevin DeYoung and several others, and I'll be speaking, for a conference on this -- particularly because this generation desperately wants to talk about it. We're not going to try to have a manifesto or resolve the issue, but we are going to talk about it as amongst friends who dearly love the gospel. The church's commission is to make disciples, but disciples have to make a difference in society. Here's my problem, Bob, and I'll get to it. But my concern is we have a generation that's gonna try to think that social ministry earns you the right to share the gospel, and there's just nowhere that that's true. The apostle Paul didn't set up a soup kitchen when he arrived at

Antioch. On the other hand, where the gospel takes root it produces people who bear the fruit of Christ and who obey Christ in all things. And that means that Christians feed people, clothe people, visit people in prison. And, and we have all kinds of social and government policy where if you. I mean my convocation address from last week was a plea not to overly politicize these things. Our political arguments have to be tentative. Our theological arguments need to be declarative. And we need to understand the difference between the two. But it is going to change. I mean you see this generation, you know where it's coming. And, and they're looking for demonstration. That's not a bad thing. **(PAUSE)** By the way, the only bad thing about the debate was the title -- Social Justice: Yes or No. It's not a yes or no question, but as they said, that was how the students framed it. So we accepted it on those terms, but then had to modify it. Yes, Gerald.

**GERALD:** Gerald Harris, Christian Index. You indicated earlier that you feel like that our young people today have to fight for what they get more than ever. I agree with that, and certainly I am like you in wishing somehow we could go back to calling Memphis and going to Dallas and that sort of thing. But it appears to me, and I believe we certainly need to give our young people the ability to give reason for the hope that is within them. And they have challenges unlike, certainly unlike what I

had when I was growing up because of the skepticism and secularism and all the rest that we're having to deal with today. I think part of that it appears to me it's because we are in the Laodicean age. What do you do to combat all the opposition that surrounds us in the Laodicean age? Can we still build Philadelphian churches in a Laodicean age?

**DR. MOHLER:** OK. Let me, uh, let me tell you what I think. I didn't come here not to tell you this, and I may be entirely wrong. You may just discount it. I think the Southern Baptist Convention is going to experience not internally in this respect but communally, all of us, a time of testing like we've never had before. I know you had Alan Sears here earlier. I mean we're facing a series of issues that are going to force us to decide can we do this or can we not, and if not there's going to be a social price to be paid. Sociologists talk about cognitive costs, cultural costs, social costs. I mean all of these are costs that Southern Baptists haven't had to pay. A Southern Baptist deacon hasn't had to be embarrassed that he's a member of your church in the deep solid South. I mean, frankly a lot of them were members of our church because they wanted to be a part of a law firm, and they wanted to. I mean, let's face it, cultural Christianity, you don't get any debate. No one pays a cognitive price. What if he's a deacon in your church and you have to say I'm opposed to same-sex marriage, and he's working for a company

where that's gonna embarrass him. I mean that, that's what you call social cost. That's moral cost. It's leverage in all kinds of different ways. Well, we have never experienced as a denomination what it means to have to survive in a context where everything we represent comes with an attendant cost. If we were in New England we would have experience this for the last 100 years. New England, by the way, is now more secular than the Pacific Northwest, according to recent studies, which is even more haunting. And so we would be there. We're gonna be there. I think the shape of the Southern Baptist Convention that we've all considered familiar is gonna be a thing of the past. And I'm saying it, I know this is on the record, and I'm just telling you, I don't mean this as a prophet. And the problem is. Let me quote someone to you. Mikhail Gorbachev, a strange person to quote here at a Baptist editors meeting. But he said in his memoir, he said, "You know," he said, "The Soviet Union was finished when we couldn't tell the truth to each other, and we couldn't say what we thought because making an observation was tantamount to being subversive to the regime." And he gave as the ultimate illustration of that the fact that he knew everyone who reported to him was lying to him, and they were in a mutual pact not to acknowledge they were lying and being lied to. And the ultimate sign of this was that he didn't know what was going on in his country to the extent that he found out that a coup

was taking place against him when George H.W. Bush, the President of the United States called him and said, "the KGB's plotting a coup against you." The president of the United States had to tell the premier of the Soviet Union that he was under attack by his own people. Well, if you look at that, and one of the problems is you can understand how that can take place. We can decide that not saying things is just safe, and we can't say them. I don't think there're going to be many megachurches in the future. I don't think you're going to see massive suburban megachurches, because megachurches are a phenomenon of a society that is highly churched. You can't have megachurches without a highly churched society. You do not have a highly churched society where there's a high social cost to identifying with church. I'm not saying there aren't going to be large churches, but the idea of what I grew up with and was comfortable with, in which you had these massive manifestations of conservative Christianity, I just don't think that's going to be there. I think you're going to find more outposts of dedicated Christians in very deeply theological, deeply spiritual, deeply biblical Christian communities. And we're going to depend upon each other in more of a New Testament sense, or for that matter more of an origin of the Baptists sense. Those Baptist congregations in London associated themselves together because it was a hard fierce world out



there. And by the way, in my Thinking in Public program I did an interview with John Berry this week. He wrote, *Rising Tide*; if you haven't read that you've got to read it. He wrote a new book on Roger Williams which you will all enjoy reading. And he makes the point again that these weren't, these weren't dispassionate theological debates. The king was cutting off peoples' heads for offending the crown by being Baptist. That's a different world, and let's not exaggerate. We're not facing that world, thanks be to God. We are facing a world in which you're not going to get tenured at a university if you believe certain things, and you're not going to get. I mean, quite frankly, I had to meet with the CEO of one of America's largest firms, Fortune 500 firm, just recently, uh, in a context in which we were talking about their hiring policies. And he said, "Look," he said, "We are fully committed to the normalization of homosexuality within this company, and no one's really going to be promoted within this company that doesn't agree with that. It's just, it's incompatible with our corporate values." OK. Ivan Allen in Atlanta didn't have to worry about that in 1955. Your deacons, you know Gerald, when you were in Marietta didn't have to worry about that. My Dad was at Publix Supermarkets for 40 years, never had to worry about that. My children will have to worry about that, and so will yours. And I, you say how do we get through it? Well I don't think we're going to change the age.

God can do that, God's sovereign. But I do think the church is gonna have to be far more deeply church to make it through this. And, and I think we can do that. I think Baptists are the best-equipped to do that. We're congregationalists, for crying out loud. Which is why I made that concern so high on my list. Yes sir.

**CAMERON:** Cameron Crabtree, Northwest Witness. And just piggybacking on the social cost question, making the statement that we as a denomination have never had to face that. It may be that, well in some places we have.

**DR. MOHLER:** Fair.

**CAMERON:** But, those tend not to be the voices that we as a denomination look to or listen to. Is there a way to begin looking for and listening to some of those affected voices **(YES)** that **(INAUDIBLE)**. And how would we do that? And what would be necessary.

**DR. MOHLER:** Well you have an enormous capacity to do that. Let me just point out something, and that is this. What we have in the SBC is an inherited system that doesn't work anymore. Now, that again, you print that and it's going to sound like I just slammed the SBC. It's not what I mean. The SBC used to have a leader-making system. It used to have an influence-directing system. Those systems are all gone now. In the age of digital media, the blogosphere and all the rest that stuff was just

gone. I mean there are pastors of tiny little churches that have huge influence because of the blogosphere. There are people that have massive churches no one knows about because they don't communicate beyond basically the confines of their congregation. So one of the things we need to do is articulate. We need to train people. I'm writing a book right now on leadership. It's the burden and the joy of my nights, every night as I'm writing. And, you know, leadership is communication. Nothing happens until communication takes place, and we need to help people to learn how to communicate, and to make arguments, and to show up. One of the most important things you can do is tell people to show up at meetings. Woody Allen, an agnostic Jew, has Baptist polity down perfectly: 80 percent of success is showing up. I mean, you have these young pastors and older pastors in all kinds of places, they don't show up at meetings. That's where things happen. It's not the only place things happen, but that's where things happen. You show up right now and you're under 35 at an associational meeting, you're moderate. You know. And it's because they just aren't going to meetings. I was trained in a Southern Baptist context in which I went to meetings. Dr. Wright took me to Alabama Baptist state board meetings. I went to associational meetings. I went to every kind of meeting. I went to Executive Committee meetings of the SBC when I became editor, and for that matter when I worked for Dr. Honeycutt back in

Louisville before that. And you know all you have to do is attend two or three Executive Committee meetings and you all of a sudden discover, "Whoops, this is where the denomination actually makes its policy." When it gets to the floor of the SBC it's like the floor of the Republican National Convention. The platform's already written. And that means whoever shows up here is going to make a big difference. And by the way my greatest concern about these meetings in the SBC is the very thing I've talked about here, a reluctance to articulate. People need to speak, frame arguments, show up. And one of the greatest things about the current communications universe is that where articulation happens, people will swarm to it. We need a vigorous exchange. Yes.

**BRANDON:** Brandon Pickett from the SBCV in Virginia. **(YES)** We saw that happen in our convention, it started back in the formation over 15 years ago actually. What we're seeing now, and it's happened in our convention it's got to be happening all over, is exactly what you're saying. People are not coming like they used to. When there was a controversy, oh man, they came.

**(INAUDIBLE)**. And we didn't have that many churches. Now we're having to think of how to get them there to articulate. If you could frame this for us, for me, sitting in my seat, what's the best way that you could see to get people motivated to do what you're saying, to articulate and to come and be a part of it.

**MAN:** Door prizes.

**BRANDON:** Door prizes, yeah.

**DR. MOHLER:** What's that?

**BRANDON:** I'm sorry. **(LAUGHTER)**

**DR. MOHLER:** No, I mean first of all you need to articulate, and you need to create the culture of articulating these things. Let me go back to the numbers for a minute. I don't know what normal would be. I don't know what healthy would be for your convention or for the SBC in terms of numbers. I mean certainly it wouldn't be healthy for us to have to have another Dallas of 44,000 messengers convening in Dallas and shutting down the city. That better be a crisis. On the other hand, I certainly loved those conventions where you had 18 or 20,000 Southern Baptists in a room doing all kinds of good and exciting business. That was good. The world's change. You now have mom and dad working, you've got the kids going over here, you have mom homeschooling. You've got a complexity at the life of the local family, the local church, that is massive. Sociologists talk about what's called lived religion, where they actually figure how these kind of things work. There's some very interesting study's been done, and of course it shows up in our research in terms of money. How much of a family's money is a church getting? How does that measure commitment? Where does the church then send that money? How much of it keep? Those numbers are frightening. Those

numbers are absolutely frightening. But the overlay on that's even more interesting, because whereas you had the average evangelical family -- and I'm not, I don't have the stat in front of me but I'm pretty familiar with it, where the average Baptist evangelical family was giving something like 9 percent of annual income in 1975. It's like 1.9 percent now. And you look at that and you say, "Well boy, they've really, really cut down their commitment. Well, it's kind of like the baptism thing. That's a facile observation, and there's something to it -- but that's not the whole story. The other part of the story is that in 1972 they were living on 90 percent of their annual income, now they're living on 120 percent of their annual income. So a family living habitually on 120 percent of their annual income isn't in a position to give anything to anyone. Now there're all kinds of cultural changes that took place there. Some of them are economic, that no one just decided, it just happened. Some of them are also the fact that the average, when I was growing up I shared, I shared a bedroom with a brother. My parents home when I was born was 1100 square feet, and they moved into it just in time to bring a baby home. And we didn't move until there was a fourth child, moved to a slightly larger house. The house that I grew up in would fit inside other houses now, and several times over. I mean there're all kinds of things that just happened, and so you know I'm not sure what

health would like. I mean certainly health would look like us being fully biblical, fully deployed, fully committed. But how exactly to do that when we actually want our people raising their children and doing. How much time do we want them to give to the local church? That's a big church question. That's why you see churches are saying, "We're not having, we're not doing this, we're not doing that. We've got to give the family a break." On the other hand that means those kids aren't getting what I had. I was an RA, I was in Training Union, I was in Sunday school, I was in Vacation Bible School. One summer I did three Vacation Bible schools. I had three different, that's when I discovered that something came from Nashville because I had three different paper maché maps of the Holy Land. We did the same thing at every church. But you look at this and you realize there's a loss to that. So there's a loss to not having everybody in that room. Let's just say it this way. We don't want them in the room because they're mad at each other and there's a problem that we could have avoided. But we do want them in the room if we're saying, "Look, this is worthy of giving yourself to for this one day, for this two days. And you need to be fully engaged when you're there." You know I heard some Baptist leaders the other day say, "Well the problem is you get them in a meeting they're out in the hallway." Well that's good too. That's really good too. One of the things I miss with

this ridiculously short SBC is that I don't get to see the people I used to get to see. We don't have as many meal opportunities as we used to have. And you can't fight the future, I know that, but we ought to fight for as much of it as we can keep. Yes sir.

**ALLAN:** Allan Blume in North Carolina. I would like to ask about seminaries. You believe your theological perspective obviously best prepares a person for the kind of culture and environment that we live in today, and you're going to apply that in leadership in Southern Seminary. Concerning all of our seminaries they may not be on the same theological page. Do you believe our seminaries are theological and practically lining our students up to face the issues of the day?

**DR. MOHLER:** Well let's put it this way. I went to seminary because it was the thing to do. I was called to be a pastor, called to be a minister. And my boyhood pastor's name was T. Rupert Coleman. I may be R. Albert Mohler because he was T. Rupert Coleman. But Trupert, as they called him, was a Southern Seminary Ph.D. when I made known my call to ministry and received the affirmation of my church. He was retired. He called me and said, "Well of course you'll go to Southern Seminary." Of course I did. Knowing **(DID NOT UNDERSTAND SENTENCE)**. Southern Seminary is not the obvious answer to anything. If we're not demonstrably meeting that need we will not have students. Right



now, and this is a little institutional bravado here, right now if you take every Souther-, according to the ATS, if you take every Southern Baptist at any school 25 percent of them are at Southern Seminary. We've got a massive Master of Divinity class, the largest group of young men studying for the pastorate ever in the Christian church (?) at one time. Now that might not be true tomorrow, who knows. We might get shut down, who knows. You can't take the future for granted. But we have to prove that we're doing. That's why I do all that I do. I mean my heavens, I'm trying massive communications in order to make clear what it is we represent. That's why I hire faculty that writes and writes and writes and communicates and communicates and communicates, because without that this generation doesn't have a clue you even exist. We're working harder than we've ever had to work before, because, well you guys are too. I mean, nobody looks at North Carolina convention and says you're the obvious answer to somebody's problem. All right. Now you are, but they don't know it, because this is a generation that doesn't even remember how this came to be. Well I'm in the same predicament. And so, yes, we're out there. Now let me say about the seminaries of the SBC. There has always been theological diversity in the seminaries of the SBC. Southwestern Seminary was established largely because B.H. Carroll was ticked off at Southern Seminary when his own son came under the influence of

E.Y. Mullins. He actually preceded that a bit, but nonetheless it's all. It was a Southern Seminary trajectory, it was his own son, it was that which he. And it wasn't angry, but they **(INAUDIBLE)**. And to make that clear by the way, they named the campus, you know they put Boyce Avenue there just to make very clear. That was sweet. But, uh, but there's always been a distinction between Southern and Southwestern. And they've been kind of massive polarities in the SBC. Now at the same time there was an enormous commonality. There was a time when basically. You can probably argue that Duke McCall and Robert Naylor ran half the SBC, maybe more than that. The Star Chamber. I asked Dr. Naylor that before he died. I said, "Is that true?" And he says, "Not every day." **(LAUGHTER)** Which was one of the most amazing confessions I'd ever heard. Not every day. But, there was always a bit of difference there. Southeastern was always a bit different even than Southern. And Midwestern and Golden Gate. Obviously we've got some issues going on with this right now in New Orleans. But I'll tell you, when I was elected president of Southern Seminary in 1993, there was animosity, open animosity. Used to talk, like they talk about the Supreme Court, you know, put six seminary presidents, it's like the scorpions in a bottle, they say about the Supreme Court. It hasn't been that for 15 years. They're about the dearest friends I have. And not only that, I spend a lot of time on those other

campuses. I'm flying from here to preach in chapel at Southwestern. I was just earlier this year at Golden Gate. Obviously we're all concerned now for Midwestern, I'll do anything we can there. I've given every lectureship Southeastern Seminary has. I'm going back to give another one in just a few weeks. And I'll be there. And we need all six of these seminaries, I want you to know that. And we need them different. This is a huge denomination. We are The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Definite article. It's in our charter. But I can't serve the whole SBC. I hope you hear that in humility. We can't serve the whole SBC. We want to serve the whole SBC, but I mean there are people who actually need acculturation in ministry in the West Coast. They don't need to come to Louisville. They need to be in Mill Valley. There are more Baptists in Texas than there are people, and we need a massive Southwestern Seminary just because of the massive concentration of Baptists there. And for the sake of those Baptists we need a very strong seminary there that has thousands and thousands of students, simply because that's what's called for. The same thing's true in New Orleans, the same thing's true at Southeastern. And, I hope I'm making sense here, but I want to say, you don't want them all the same. And if there ever was an effort to make the seminaries all the same I think the seminaries, the students would just go somewhere else. Because

they're not looking for all the same. They're looking for where they connect, and where they see themselves going. We all are accountable to the SBC. And I would go back to confession. The big issue there is the Baptist Faith & Message. You should expect me to fire anyone who isn't entirely within the Baptist Faith & Message, and be ready to hire those who are called to teach and fully qualified who are within the Baptist Faith & Message. And, otherwise, we went through a huge battle for confessionalism that we forfeited. **(PAUSE)** Jim **(INAUDIBLE)**, or are you ending us?

**JIM:** No, I was going to ask a question if no one had one. You mentioned several issues of congregationalism.

**DR. MOHLER:** Does that make sense, by the way? Do you connect with what I was saying? Are you seeing that too? OK.

**JIM:** Which among the issues in congregationalism. Just pick one that you would say that you are most troubled by.

**DR. MOHLER:** Gosh. Now that really just put me on the spot. I would say in terms of polity I'm most troubled by the multi-site church. Again, I'm a member of one, all right. But I'm most troubled by it because I don't see where it goes in terms of polity. I understand why it happened, OK. It happened because we have such a horrible record at church planting, an abysmal record of church planting. We're of all people most to be despised when it comes to church planting, just like just about

everybody else. Church planting is hard. I'm speaking tongue in cheek, please recognize that. Church planting is really hard. Most church plants don't happen. And you've got to be willing to have all kinds of churches planted, understanding that sometimes they take off and sometimes they do not. And by the way that's the way it was when Southern Baptists expanded in the frontier when the frontier was Tuscaloosa. In other words there were a hu-. You've got to be willing to take a lot of risks. But you also have to have a greater investment. And see the problem is that we started a lot of churches without healthy churches really invested in them. When I was growing up we had a mother church and daughter churches. I mean those daughter churches were very much under the umbrella, but they were headed towards being independent congregations. The failure of church planting models is why the multi-site church emerged. Now I will say there is an unhappy side to that, which is that the megachurches sometimes trying to figure out how to stay megachurches got to be megachurches in more than one place. But that's lesser of an issue than the fact that they've had such a hard time. You start something and it fails. Nobody's happy with that. So let's. And a part of the reason they fail is they don't have infrastructure, there's not natural leadership, they don't have some of the financial resourcing that they need. But how many churches are willing to invest that without the kind of

accountability, the kind of management and oversight that comes by the multi-site model. But I just don't see where it goes from here. I mean I don't think you can permanently have these massive multi-site experiments. I just, I don't think you can do that and stay Baptist. I'll say that on the record. I don't think you can have permanent, multi-site ministries without severely straining congregationalism to the breaking point. And I say that as a member of one, trying with fellow members in our church to figure out how something that was necessarily started, where it goes from here. And the church may not, the church may decide something different than I would decide. And the SBC may decide something than I would decide. But I don't think we can be a Southern Baptist Convention made up of dioceses and presbyteries. That's the best I know to say it. Gulp. Bob, excuse me.

**BOB:** I'll save mine for afterward.

**DR. MOHLER:** OK. It has been a great honor to be here with you. I want to give you something, please. And I want to leave you the final word if you'll allow me. I want to give you something, because I don't want you ever to think you can't get ahold of me. I'm giving you my cell phone number. It's 502-█2-█. No secretary, just me. I'll sit on a plane not answering the phone. I'll get back to you. You know one of the things that frustrates me is that I want, I love Southern Baptists, I want to serve

Southern Baptists. And I get around Southern Baptists leaders all the time who say, "I just wish I could have the conversation." Well call me. Call me. Hopefully you're willing to talk late at night, because that's when I might be able to talk. But just know, you can get me any time, and I would love the opportunity to talk with you. The last thing I want to say is that I intentionally saved one thing for the last, because it's not going to be controversial I think amongst us. But it's one of the final things that I want to mention that I think is most at risk in this. It's another C. It's conversionism. We are living in an age in which conversionism is a very, very threatening, controversial, divisive reality. It is also the gospel of Jesus Christ. We're gonna be tested as to whether we really believe that persons are lost and headed for hell under the just and judgement of God unless they come to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, confess him as Savior and follow him as Lord. We're gonna find out if we really believe. I'm getting ready to give an address at the T4G thing on the power of the articulated gospel. It has to be articulated. People have to hear it, Paul says in in Romans Chapter 10. In order to hear it, that they might believe it, and believing it might be saved. I am a Calvinist who firmly believes that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And that requires the preaching of the gospel -- in terms of the fact that persons

must hear it and believe. We have Southern Baptists who have, who would never baptize their babies who believe that their babies are Christians because they've been in the local church ever since they were little. We have a generation being tested on conversionism by the fact that it's just very, very controversial. It comes with a high social cost when you have to tell your college roommate that you believe they're going to hell unless they believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. We have churches that are being tempted by forms of Reformed theology and forms of historic Protestant theology, and by forms of the seeker-sensitive movement, and by forms of the emerging church that are hostile to conversion. And you need to realize that in the history of the Christian church conversion has been held by those who believe that nothing less than eternity is at stake when you talk about the gospel. This isn't an exercise in academic theology. We need that. It's a matter as to whether or not the Southern Baptist Convention holds to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and produces churches that are determined to reach the nations -- not just with the name of Jesus, but in order that the nations would believe. It's not enough to send unless they go with conversion as their goal. And we need to keep that front and center. Please, I plead with you, keep conversionism front and center in all that you. 'Cause at the end of the day that's why Southern Baptists came together in



1845, was to see persons converted. And quite frankly, it's the only reason why some 20-something, trying his best to grow a little beard, trying his best to follow to follow Jesus, and wanting it all, would see the Southern Baptist Convention as where he wants to go. Because in spite of the fact that we kick up a little dust and are made up of a bunch of old people who sit around and eat fried chicken, we're people who want to see people come to the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. And he's going to throw his lot in with you. I am too. Thank you so much. God bless you. **(APPLAUSE)**

**MAN:** Thank you Dr. Mohler. Well you have the afternoon off. The next event is dinner tonight in this building. You have the information. I'll look forward to seeing you then. Thank you.

**END OF SESSION**