THE MISSIOLOGY OF T. G. JOHN SULLIVAN WITH IMPLICATIONS
ON CONTEMPORARY SOUTHERN BAPTIST STATE
CONVENTION WORK

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APPROVAL SHEET

THE MISSIOLOGY OF T. G. JOHN SULLIVAN WITH IMPLICATIONS ON CONTEMPORARY SOUTHERN BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION WORK

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To Judy,
the love of my life and my best friend
and to
Charlie and Megan,
our gifts from God
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ....................................................... vii
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................... viii
PREFACE ................................................................................. ix

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1
   Thesis ................................................................................. 2
   Background ......................................................................... 11
   Methodology ......................................................................... 16
   Limitations ........................................................................... 17
   Conclusion ............................................................................. 18

2. A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF T. G. JOHN SULLIVAN .................... 19
   Early Life and Family History ................................................. 19
   Conversion Experience and Call to Ministry ............................. 23
   Education and Pastoral Ministry ............................................. 27
   Denominational Work .......................................................... 40
   Florida Baptist State Convention Work ................................. 50
   Conclusion ............................................................................. 53

3. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
   OF T. G. JOHN SULLIVAN ................................................... 54
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theological Influences on Sullivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine on the Condition of Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine on the Work of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine on the Work of the Holy Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine on Salvation and the Christian Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine on the Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. THE MISSIOLOGY OF T. G. JOHN SULLIVAN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Planting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Growth and Church Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. IMPLICATIONS ON CONTEMPORARY SBC STATE CONVENTION WORK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Commission Resurgence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications on Evangelism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications on Church Planting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications on Church Growth and Church Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications on the Cultural Mandate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCF</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMBH</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSMO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOBTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UIC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table | Page
--- | ---
1. Structure and budget allocation for the evangelism division | 99
2. Funding sources for disaster relief | 106
3. Church planting organizational changes | 110
A1. Actual gain/loss in churches compared to reported new church starts | 185
A2. Cooperative Program budgeted distribution | 187
A3. Actual Cooperative Program receipts and allocations | 189
A4. Course requirements for theological education in Haiti | 191
A5. Baptisms and church-type missions in Haiti | 192
A6. CP distribution to BCF and ministerial scholarships | 193
A7. Percent of church CP gifts to undesignated income | 195
PREFACE

When the Lord led me out of the corporate world and into vocational ministry, I had no idea that the journey would lead me to this point in my theological education. I am thankful for professors who invested themselves in me and taught me to think critically and convey information accurately.

I did not know that a group of men meeting twice a year could grow as close as our cohort grew. I will be forever appreciative of the prayers and encouragement provided by Calvin Carr, Lloyd Grant, Lyle Larson, Terry Leap, Aaron Meraz, and Jeff Walters. The church should anticipate revival with these men advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am thankful for John Sullivan not only for agreeing to this project but more importantly, for his kingdom work in churches and in the denomination. Don Hepburn has been an extremely valuable asset to the completion of this work. Thank you for sharing your resources.

The members of the First Baptist Church of Cutler Ridge watched me grow from a member of the youth choir to being their pastor. This church family taught me what it means to be fully involved in the life and ministry of a church as a lay person and then allowed me to use that lay ministry experience for eight years as their pastor.

The members of Parkview Baptist Church have loved me and my family and greatly encouraged us for over seven years now. I am thankful for deacons and church
leaders who understand the value of partnering with the pastor to carry out the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

My in-laws, Charles and Linda Branan, have been a source of encouragement for me. They have believed in me, and I am grateful for their support. Thank you for loving me as a son.

I am eternally thankful for my parents, John and Ann Tatem, who raised me to know Jesus very early in life. I would not be who I am today had you not given yourselves to the Lord when I was a child. Thank you for always expressing your pride in me and for loving Judy as a daughter.

I have had the privilege of baptizing both of our children as they came to know Christ as Savior. Charlie deserves my gratitude and admiration for being willing to follow the Lord’s leading. Changing high schools is not an easy thing to do, but he handled the transition in my ministry with maturity and grace. I am proud of the young woman that Megan has become. My prayer is that God would guide her and use her for his glory whether as a counselor on a church staff or missionary working with orphans in Africa. The opportunities for both of you are endless. I love you both.

Words cannot express my gratitude to my wife, Judy. I became a better person on July 25, 1987. She has patiently endured my educational pursuits for fifteen of our twenty-six years of marriage. Thank you for your love and friendship. I know you did not marry a pastor, but you have been a model pastor’s wife. I love you.

Michael Allen Tatem

Lake City, Florida

May 2014
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention has experienced many significant events that have shaped the denomination and the way each of the entities at every level relate to one another. For instance, in 1925, the SBC adopted a theological framework intended to “repudiate every theory of religion which denies the supernatural elements in our faith.”¹ While confessionalism was nothing new to Southern Baptists, the Baptist Faith and Message provided a consensus of Baptist opinion for general instruction and guidance for Baptist people. This year marked a new era in denominational life and associations needed to be redefined in a manner that would continue to serve the needs of the churches as well as the needs of the denomination.²

With the formation of the Cooperative Program, also in 1925, state conventions became responsible for the collection of church dollars that were being given to support missionary endeavors within the state, the nation, and around the world.³ Maintaining a balance between autonomy and cooperation has been challenging.

³Chad Owen Brand and David E. Hankins, One Sacred Effort: The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2005), 112.
Churches voluntarily contribute a portion of their budgets to the CP through the state convention, and the state convention decides the amount of CP dollars that will be used to support its own budget requirements and the amount of CP dollars that will be passed on to the SBC. The level of giving by the church and by the state can fluctuate due to economic pressures and changing priorities in the church and in the convention.

In Florida, the person responsible for developing, receiving, and allocating CP dollars is the executive director-treasurer. In 1880, the Florida Baptist State Convention organized a State Board of Missions and elected its first corresponding secretary, a position equivalent today to the executive director-treasurer. Since that time, nine men have served in that position, and of the nine, none has served as long as the ninth, T. G. John Sullivan. Sullivan was unanimously elected to the position on January 20, 1989, by the State Board of Missions and subsequently assumed his duties as executive director-treasurer on February 7, 1989.

**Thesis**

Historically, Southern Baptists have always been driven by the work of the Great Commission. The SBC was formed primarily because southerners felt that the Home Mission Society was using slave-ownership as a litmus test for missionary efforts in North America, especially in the Western Frontier. For a history of the formation of the Society, see H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman), 368-371.

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5 *Annual*, Florida Baptist Convention, 1989, 81.

6 The American Baptist Home Mission Society was formed in 1832 by delegates from fourteen states and one territory in order to promote missionary efforts in North America, especially in the Western Frontier. For a history of the formation of the Society, see H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman), 368-371.
appointment eligibility. According to Baptist historian H. Leon McBeth, “Slavery was the main issue that led to the 1845 schism; that is a blunt historical fact.”7 Southerners wanted to be involved in Great Commission work and they took action to form an entity that would allow them to do so.

Students of the history of the Southern Baptist Convention will know the names of theologians such as John A. Broadus and James P. Boyce. They will know missionary names such as Charlotte Diggs “Lottie” Moon and powerful preachers and church leaders such as George W. Truett and W. A. Criswell whose combined successive positions as pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas totaled ninety-six years (Truett8 for forty-seven and Criswell9 for forty-nine). Rarely would the name of a state convention executive be mentioned among the heroes of the Southern Baptist Convention. Their record of accomplishments is usually limited to the historical documents maintained through the historical societies of the individual states they served.

Since the formation of the Cooperative Program in 1925, state convention executives have been charged with the task of leading the effort to raise money for the home and foreign mission endeavors of the Southern Baptist Convention. Logically, the leadership of the state convention is vital to the success of the Cooperative Program and ultimately to the success of the SBC.

7 Ibid., 382.
John Sullivan has served the Florida Baptist Convention as the executive director-treasurer for twenty-five years. He has led the convention through significant denominational and cultural changes and has demonstrated the leadership skill set necessary to navigate the convention through difficult and potentially explosive times. For instance, Sullivan helped Florida Baptists adjust to the denominational changes that came from the Conservative Resurgence. He helped them understand and implement church growth strategies as momentum in that movement began to make an impact in Southern Baptist Life.\(^\text{10}\)

In 1992, after Hurricane Andrew destroyed many of the South Miami-Dade County communities, Sullivan led the convention not only to respond with relief to that disaster, but to move forward in developing one of the most sought-after and efficient Disaster Relief operations in the nation. Cecil Seagle, the executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana and one of Sullivan’s contemporaries, said, “Disaster relief both in the state and in other nations will be among Sullivan’s legacies.”\(^\text{11}\)

After the turn of the century, Sullivan led Florida Baptists to the highest CP giving levels in the convention’s history. Even though the SBC statistics showed a

\(^{10}\)While the Church Growth Movement writings of Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner were published much earlier, the influence or at least widespread awareness of the Church Growth Movement in the SBC occurred in the 1990s with the publishing of Thom Rainer’s book, *The Book of Church Growth* and Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Church*. Both of these books were included in the resources distributed to participants of the Florida Baptist Convention’s Church Growth Conferences. See Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), and Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

denomination in decline,\textsuperscript{12} the Florida Baptist Convention, in partnership with the
Confraternité Missionnaire Baptiste d’Haïti continued to record increasing baptisms and
church plants within the convention.\textsuperscript{13} As the nation’s economy began to wane and
giving, membership, and baptism levels began to drop, church and denominational
leaders began calling for a Great Commission Resurgence. Ed Stetzer, a leading voice in
SBC missiology and current President of LifeWay Research said,

The promise of the Conservative Resurgence was to reestablish our unwavering
belief in the inerrancy of Scripture. Once we had our theology in order we were
supposed to reach the world—but that theological change has not birthed a
missional fruit. Now is the moment for us to hone our vision and take on a bigger
battle—we must battle to build upon our Conservative Resurgence and make it a
Great Commission Resurgence.\textsuperscript{14}

At the SBC Annual Meeting held in Louisville, Kentucky, in June 2009, the
convention overwhelmingly adopted a motion to allow the convention president to
appoint a Great Commission Task Force that would present to the convention in 2010, a
report and recommendations concerning how Southern Baptists could “work more

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Russ Rankin, “Southern Baptists decline in baptisms, membership,
attendance,” \textit{Lifeway Articles}, June 9, 2011, accessed November 13, 2013,
http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Southern-baptists-decline-in-baptisms-membership-
attendance.
\item A brief comparison of just two Southern Baptist Statistics by State reports
shows that in 2008, Florida Baptists recorded 41,790 baptisms and in 2010, 46,937. The
work that Florida Baptists are doing in Haiti is a direct result of Sullivan’s leadership in
the state and will also help explain the increased baptisms in an overall atmosphere of
decline at the national level.
\item Bob Allen, “Leader Says ‘Conservative Resurgence’ Failed to Produce More
http://www.ethicsdaily.com/leader-says-conservative-resurgence-failed-to-produce-more-
evangelism-in-sbccms-12582.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The GCTF acknowledged that they could not determine the level of impact that their recommendations would have at the state convention and local associational levels, but they recognized that some impact was imminent. At the end of the report, the GCTF challenged all Southern Baptists and all Southern Baptist entities to consider ways in which they could become more intentional with regard to the work of the Great Commission. Under a section titled, “Challenges for State Conventions,” the GCTF listed the following considerations:

1. Embrace with enthusiasm the missional vision and core values of the SBC allowing them to guide your work and set your priorities.
2. Adopt the *Baptist Faith and Message* [2000] as a confessional basis for cooperation and adopt shared core values and priorities that characterize cooperating churches.
3. Make church planting a priority and development church planting partnerships with North American urban centers and underserved regions outside of the Southeast and Southwest.
4. Determine to return to the historic ideal of a 50/50 Cooperative Program distribution between the state convention and the SBC.
5. Hold state convention colleges and universities accountable to Baptist convictions and an authentic Christian worldview education. Baptist colleges and universities must inculcate a Great Commission mindset in their students and deploy them worldwide in short-term missionary service.
6. Eliminate programs that do not directly assist local churches in fulfilling their biblical mandate to make disciples of all people.
7. Work with the SBC and local associations to set aside January of every year as a month of prayer for the conversion of unreached people groups around the globe.
8. Work with local associations and local churches to plan regional evangelism and discipleship training events on at least a semiannual basis.
9. Encourage state convention children’s homes to consider deep investment in Great Commission adoption/foster ministries that connect children with Baptist families within the state.

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10. Recognize the powerful witness of Disaster Relief programs as Southern Baptists have touched millions of lives in the aftermath of disaster and in a moment of acute need.

11. Develop and celebrate mercy ministries which can be used as avenues for churches to serve others and open the doors for evangelism.\textsuperscript{16}

Before the GCTF was created and before these challenges were ever issued, Sullivan was leading the FBC to do most of the items listed. A study of his character and philosophy of leadership will show that he is not averse to taking on new challenges, especially those challenges that would come specifically from the move toward a 50/50 distribution of CP dollars.

Even before the GCTF released its recommendations, Florida Baptists under the leadership of Sullivan began identifying and evaluating the changes that would need to take place in order for Florida Baptists to be more effective in their fulfillment of the Great Commission. In the state convention annual meeting the FBSC adopted a motion to allow the President of the state convention to appoint a task force similar to the one that was organized at the national level. The FBSC called this committee the Imagine If Great Commission Task Force, a group that was assembled to work with the state convention staff to answer the question, “What must we do as the Florida Baptist Convention and as local churches together to be living out the Great Commission?”\textsuperscript{17} An analysis of the six recommendations that came from this task force and subsequent actions taken by Sullivan and ultimately the State Board of Missions will demonstrate that Sullivan has taken

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

seriously his role in leading the FBC to fulfill the Great Commission mandate of Scripture.

Sullivan’s pastoral experience, heart for theological education, and denominational service prior to his appointment as executive director-treasurer of the FBC have played an important role in shaping his missiology and philosophy of leadership. In a thirty year span that began while he was in college, Sullivan served as a pastor to five different churches, the last being his longest tenure of fourteen years at Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana. During his tenure at Broadmoor the church averaged 110 baptisms per year, increased Sunday school attendance from 1,414 to 2,150 and experienced growth in Cooperative Program giving from $137,500 to a high of $752,283 in 1985.¹⁸

Sullivan’s denominational service includes membership on the executive boards of three other state conventions: the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and the Louisiana Baptist Convention. He also served as the president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. At the national level, Sullivan served on the SBC Executive Committee from 1980-1988, First Vice-President of the SBC in 1982 and 1983, and on the “Peace Committee” during the era of SBC life that has been called the Conservative Resurgence.¹⁹ He serves as Parliamentarian of the SBC on a regular basis. In June 2008, Sullivan received the Executive Denominational

¹⁸Unless otherwise noted, all information in this paragraph and the following paragraph was taken from “John Sullivan,” accessed November 1, 2013, https://www.flbaptist.org/assets/images/staff_pdfs/sullivan.pdf.

Leadership Award given annually by the Black Southern Baptist Denominational Servants Network.\(^{20}\)

As a missiologist, Sullivan has sought to structure the mission of the FBC around three priorities: evangelism without apology, aggressive church planting and effective church and leadership development. His missiology is heavily driven by pragmatism, activity, and education. In 1996, he wrote, “The Florida Baptist Convention is synonymous with mission activity. Florida is where world missions begin. . . . This is why we must wed effective missions activity with effective missions education. Every congregation needs to do and teach missions.”\(^{21}\) A more complete analysis of Sullivan’s missiology will be discussed in a later chapter. His strengths and weaknesses in his approach to missions will be evaluated against the missiological paradigms of David Bosch, David Hesselgrave, Paul Hiebert, Donald McGavran and others.

The priorities of missional activity have yielded significant results in Florida Baptist work.\(^{22}\) Florida Baptist churches have baptized more than 779,000 people and started more than 2,500 new churches (an average of 100 per year.) Sullivan has led the denomination to work beyond the borders of Florida, not just through consistent distribution of CP giving to the SBC, but through mission partnerships with state


\(^{22}\) The data given in this paragraph comes from a summary statement of Sullivan’s effectiveness contained in the following document. The data will be given more extensive treatment in a later chapter. “State Board of Missions Administrative/Personnel Committee Report,” November 11, 2013, 16.
conventions such as Nevada and Indiana and international work in Haiti and Cuba. Over $670 million has been contributed to the SBC by Florida Baptists and over $20 million raised through Florida’s mission offering, the Maguire State Mission Offering. Florida Baptist churches have benefitted from Sullivan’s heart for theological education as he has led the convention in the establishment and expansion of distance learning which today consists of nine learning centers serving over 1,500 students throughout the state. As already mentioned, and will be presented in further detail, Sullivan has championed compassion ministries such as disaster relief and has been on the frontline leading the response efforts of the nearly 40,000 disaster relief volunteers who have responded since 1992.

Sullivan’s tenure as executive director-treasurer has not been without controversy. For instance, in 2006, he became the center of a theological controversy in Florida when he sent to every pastor a copy of a set of messages by Jerry Vines entitled, “Baptist Battles” which included the sermon, “Calvinism, a Baptist and His Election.” The controversy is not simply a theological one, but a leadership or perhaps a missiological one. Tom Ascol on his Founders Ministries Blog wrote, “Not only has the denominational leadership of my own state convention given Dr. Vines a pass on this

23Jerry Vines is the former pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida. He retired in February 2006 and moved to Atlanta, Georgia. For more information, see Jerry Vines Ministries, http://www.jerryvines.com/about/pages/about-us/.

Whether or not the Calvinism controversy within the SBC and specifically within the FBC has affected CP giving is worth investigating. Perhaps Sullivan should have kept to a more centrist position with regard to this issue. Implications with regard to Sullivan’s actions in this matter will be discussed in chapter 5.

With the SBC in decline and the state conventions seeking to find their place in Southern Baptist work, state convention leaders, especially those leaders of states that are experiencing fruit in their spheres of influence should be studied. This dissertation will analyze the missiology of Sullivan and provide implications on state convention work for the twenty-first century. His response and shift in strategy in reaction to significant events such as natural disaster, a difficult economy, and changing priorities of SBC churches can provide a model of leadership and missional priority for future state executives. Furthermore, the use of church growth principles by Sullivan at the state level provides a secondary purpose.

**Background**

I have enjoyed the privilege of being raised in Southern Baptist churches. I was saved and baptized in a Southern Baptist Church. I participated in Royal Ambassadors and children’s choir. I met my future wife in the youth group of a Southern Baptist church and attended a Southern Baptist youth camp every summer. As an adult, I raised my family and served in the same Southern Baptist church of my youth. I taught Sunday

\[^{25}\text{Ibid.}\]
School, cooked men’s breakfasts, sang in the choir (with robes), and was ordained a deacon.

When the Lord moved me into vocational ministry as a youth pastor, the transition was easy. I began serving in that same church. Four years later, the church called me to be their pastor and I received the benefit of an education from a Southern Baptist seminary. Through partnership with the Florida Baptist Convention, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary provided an opportunity through distance learning for me to pursue a Master of Divinity degree while serving the church I was called to pastor. I knew of the Cooperative Program in name only and as a budget line in our church’s financial statements. I had little interaction with the Florida Baptist Convention and struggled to understand the role that the Miami Baptist Association was supposed to play. Our church’s role in denominational life became extremely confusing for me in 2002-2003, when the North American Mission Board launched its church planting initiative called “For You Miami.” My first interaction with John Sullivan came during that time when I questioned the organization of “For You Miami” and the way in which the funding was being controlled and allocated. His response to my letter was gracious and the tone was extremely patient. He was firm in his convictions with regard to the need to plant new churches and offered to help our church be more effective in reaching our community.

26“For You Miami” was the church planting initiative in Miami when the city was designated by the North American Mission Board as a “Strategic Focus City.” Ten years later, Miami became the focus of a new and differently structured initiative called “Send North America, Miami.”
Even though I disagreed with Sullivan with regard to his church planting strategy, our church still considered the Cooperative Program an effective and efficient way to fund missionary efforts. During my pastorate in Miami, the church increased CP giving from 8 percent to 10 percent. In 2006, I left Miami to assume my second pastorate with Parkview Baptist Church in Lake City, Florida, where I currently serve. This church has a rich heritage of involvement in denominational life. Three of its previous pastors left to serve as Directors of Missions in various associations. The church’s budget allocates 12 percent of undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program and 3.35 percent to the Beulah Baptist Association. I determined to no longer remain an isolationist with regard to denominational involvement. Instead, I chose to get involved and that involvement eventually led me to a working relationship with Sullivan.

The church encouraged participation in the Florida Baptist Convention. Not only did members like the fact that their pastor was involved and interested, they too, were interested enough to attend the annual meetings. In 2008-2009, I served as moderator of the Beulah Baptist Association. In 2011, I began serving on the State Board of Missions of the Florida Baptist Convention. Within the SBOM, I served on the loans committee, the budget allocations committee, the investment subcommittee, and the committee on committees, all of which brought me into a close proximity and working relationship with John Sullivan.

My move to Lake City in 2006 coincided with my beginning doctoral work in the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth. Since then the name of the school has been changed to the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry. My coursework gave me a new perspective on church planting
and helped me understand better the need for church multiplication through Church Planting Movements. During this time, the call for a Great Commission Resurgence became a prominent theme in the SBC and subsequently the FBSC. Being involved in seminary during the convention meetings where the GCR was being discussed and ultimately recommended served to heighten my sense of responsibility to my church and denomination. I wanted to be a part of the solution and see our denomination advance the Great Commission as effectively as it had in its past.

As I studied at Southern Seminary I discovered that much of what I learned in the areas of church growth and evangelism were principles that formed the basis of success in our denomination. For instance, the first chapter of Donald McGavran’s book, *Effective Evangelism*, speaks to the issue of church growth and evangelism being the second of two priorities in theological education. The first priority for theological education is the correct view of the Bible and the correct understanding of Bible doctrines. In our Church Planting colloquium, my cohort discussed concepts such as church planting movements and irreducible ecclesiological minimums—concepts that promote church planting and are evident in Sullivan’s philosophy of leadership. My studies in the doctoral program included reading and discussion about indigenous church leadership and contextualization. A closer examination of Florida Baptist work in Haiti and Cuba will show that Sullivan fully understands and advocates these principles.

As a result of my pastoral experience, denominational engagement, and doctoral work in evangelism and church growth, this work has sought to explore more fully several issues related to Sullivan’s missiology, leadership, and practice, namely:

1. What experiences and influences in Sullivan’s life caused him to leave the pastorate and pursue denominational work?

2. What church growth principles are suited well for implementation within denominational work and are they better suited for state convention work as opposed to local church work?

3. How does Sullivan reconcile his theological bent with his leadership style in order to maintain unity within a convention that has the potential to be somewhat diverse in certain areas of theology such as soteriology?

4. What are the distinctive items that mark Sullivan’s leadership as different from other state executives, specifically his belief in what he calls “unscripted partnerships.”

5. How does Sullivan see the state convention relating to local associations in the future and how in a declining economy should resources be allocated between the local association, state convention, and SBC?

Missiology is a theological discipline that incorporates the theology of the mission of God and the history of missions with the study of behavioral sciences such as anthropology and sociology. Based on an analysis of several definitions of missiology, Justice Anderson concluded,

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28 John Sullivan, interview by author, May 17, 2013, Jacksonville, FL. Sullivan used the term “unscripted partnerships” in referring to Florida Baptist involvement in places such as Haiti and Cuba and asserted that these partnerships are what differentiates the Florida Baptist Convention from other state conventions.

Missiology is the science of missions. It includes the formal study of the theology of mission, the history of missions, the concomitant philosophies of mission and their strategic implementation in given cultural settings.\textsuperscript{30}

This dissertation focuses on two of the categories listed in this definition. Sullivan’s theology of mission can be understood in light of his theology concerning God’s redemptive work in Christ towards man. Chapter 3 provides the theological framework for Sullivan’s missiology. Sullivan’s missiology discussed in chapter 4 is centered on the strategic implementation of missions.

This dissertation addresses these issues and topics within the context of the main thesis—analyzing Sullivan’s missiology and using it to create a model for future state convention executives. As state conventions seek to survive in a difficult economy, delicately balancing the needs of the state with the mandate to reach the nations, Sullivan’s ministry can provide helpful solutions to future denominational direction.

**Methodology**

A thorough analysis of Sullivan’s missiology was accomplished through the investigation of the primary resources available, specifically articles written by Sullivan in the *Florida Baptist Witness*. The application of his missiology was analyzed through a study of the Florida Baptist Convention annual reports from 1989 through 2012. Since I serve on the State Board of Missions, I had access to the most current prioritization of state convention resources.

I have secured three sets of transcripts of personal interviews with Sullivan conducted by Don Hepburn, Director of Public Relations for the FBC, Inc. Hepburn

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., 8.
interviewed Sullivan three different times: 2002, 2006, and 2009, with the goal of ascertaining specific biographical and ministry service information of Sullivan. I was able to interview Sullivan in order to affirm my conclusions that came from reading his articles and interview transcripts, especially with regard to his biographical material and theological convictions.

I live in close proximity to the Baptist building in Jacksonville, Florida and the Florida Baptist Historical Society in Graceville, Florida. Information that was not obtained from internet sources or books on hand was available at these sites. SBC annuals for the years being analyzed are available online. Secondary resources related to church growth, evangelism, and church planting were used as a basis for comparison and analysis of Sullivan’s missiology as demonstrated in his policies, directives, and budget allocation priorities stemming from his role as executive director-treasurer.

Limitations

Several limitations and delimitations to this research must be considered in light of the above methodology. First, since Sullivan has not published any books, the primary source material consists of his articles published in the Florida Baptist Witness. Sermon audio and transcripts were utilized as well but since Sullivan has preached in over 1,650 locations in Florida, the referencing of his sermons was not exhaustive. The dissertation includes a brief biography of Sullivan, but this biography is not comprehensive.

31 Don Hepburn, e-mail to author, May 20, 2013.

Second, while it may be necessary to make some comparisons to other state conventions or to the SBC as a whole in order to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of Sullivan’s missiology, space did not allow for a comprehensive comparison of state convention methodology. Statistical comparisons were made as needed.

Third, the secondary resources used to evaluate and analyze Sullivan’s missiology such as church growth and church planting literature consisted of the most popular sources in their respective fields. However, since the use of these materials were used to form a baseline for comparison to Sullivan’s methodologies, not all of the resources in these specific fields were utilized.

**Conclusion**

As a result of my initial research and conversations with John Sullivan, I believe that further research into the missiology of John Sullivan will produce results that demonstrate Sullivan’s use of church growth and church planting methodologies in his missiology and that his missiology will provide a model for future state executives in determining resource allocations in their budgets.
CHAPTER 2
A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF T. G. JOHN SULLIVAN

Understanding the circumstances in which T. G. John Sullivan was raised provides excellent insight into the person he would eventually become. Family often plays a role in the way in which a person views the world, and it can significantly influence his work ethic. Sullivan is no exception. This chapter will discuss Sullivan’s early life, conversion and call to ministry, education and pastoral experience, and denominational work.

Early Life and Family History

Travis Gene “John” Sullivan was born October 20, 1936, in Ansted, West Virginia. Sullivans’s legal name is Travis Gene, a name that was actually determined on the day of his birth. His mother was convinced that Sullivan was going to be a girl and had really only considered the name June Travis for her unborn child. About three days after Sullivan was born, his mother must have realized that she had named him hastily. She said to his father, “He looks like a little boy that ought to be called John.” Sullivan has been called John by everyone in his family ever since.

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1John Sullivan, “Interview by Don Hepburn,” December 18, 2006, interview tape 06 – 085 #1, transcript, Sullivan Oral History Collection, Florida Baptist Building, Jacksonville, FL. All the information in this paragraph is from this transcript.

2Ibid.
Sullivan was born in Ansted, West Virginia, to Frank and Louise Clendenin Sullivan. Frank was born May 18, 1912, in Catlitsburg, Kentucky, a small town near Ashland. Frank’s family moved from Kentucky to Ansted, West Virginia because his father (Sullivan’s paternal grandfather) was a coal miner. Ansted was a coal mining town founded by David T. Ansted, an English geologist who discovered a rich vein of coal. By the time Frank Sullivan’s family arrived the town was a coal mining camp owned by the Gauley Mountain Coal Company. The coal miners lived in company owned houses and bought their commodities at the company store. Everything they bought, including rent and fuel, came out of their paychecks at the end of the month. Anything left was paid in Gauley Mountain Company script, to be spent at the company store. If an employee wanted cash, the company would give him ninety cents on the dollar. The company virtually owned the miners and their families.

Frank quit school when he was eight or nine years old in order to work with his father in the coal mines. One of his first jobs was to help trim the hoofs of the mules that were used to pull the coal out of the mines. When Sullivan was asked about why his father did not get an education, Sullivan responded, “He knew how to write his name and that’s all he needed to sign his paycheck. He was a hard worker, a man of integrity, and would never think of not giving a full day’s work for a full day’s pay.” This work ethic

3Ibid.


5Ibid.

6Sullivan, “Interview,” tape 06 – 085 #1. All the information in this paragraph is from this transcript.
would pay off for Frank and his family because during the depression years, he was one of the few miners that kept a job. It would also be the type of work ethic instilled in and adopted by his son, T. G. John Sullivan.

The only two religious influences in Sullivan’s early years were his paternal grandfather and his maternal grandmother. His paternal grandfather was a meek man, very involved in Lover’s Leap Baptist Church just outside the Ansted city limits. His paternal grandmother was a strong matriarch. On his mother’s side, his grandfather was a union organizer and as such, Sullivan described him as a “man to be feared.” His grandmother was a “holy-roller type Pentecostal,” but one of the most godly people he knew. She constantly expressed confidence that her husband would come to know Christ and about a year and a half before he died, he did come to Christ. Both of his grandfathers were involved in the mining business, one in the mines, the other organizing the workers. They both died of tuberculosis.

Sullivan’s mother, Louise Clendenin was born on March 30, 1916. She was a sickly person her entire life. Sullivan has said on more than one occasion that the first day she was well was the day she died. On April 15, 1933, she married Frank Sullivan. Nine months later, on December, 1, 1933, she gave birth to Carl Franklin “Pete” Sullivan. Almost three years later she gave birth to her second (and last) child, Travis Gene “John” Sullivan. Sullivan remembers Louise being the disciplinarian for the family. He also

7Ibid.
8Ibid.
remembers her character and the fact that she was well respected in the community. She was a woman of integrity and principle. On one occasion, Sullivan’s father had been hurt in the mines and was resting at home after a brief hospital stay. His partner, a black man by the name of Vester Pepper, asked to be able to visit him in their home. Louise was ostracized by the community, but she allowed the visit nonetheless. She did not let community opinion sway her from acting on right principles. This particular influence would be seen in Sullivan’s character throughout his life and ministry.

Louise died on January 8, 1953, at the age of thirty-six. Frank died from a heart attack while working in the mines on June 23, 1960, at the age of 48. While Sullivan recognized his mother as the primary influence in his early life, he attributed the development of a strong character, personal security (an attribute that would eventually be tested in his ministerial and denominational careers), and cleanliness to both of his parents. He saw his parents move through adversity, and desired the same resolve for himself. He observed a discipline in his mother that compelled her to keep her house spotless on the inside, waxing linoleum floors every week, even though the house belonged to the company. He learned integrity and resourcefulness from his mother and

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12Sullivan, “Interview,” tape 06 – 085 #1. All the information in this paragraph is from this transcript.
industry and hard work from his father. These character traits would be more fully developed as Sullivan matured and would eventually serve him well as an adult.

Sullivan attended Ansted High School and graduated in 1954. Sullivan was very competitive in sports, lettering in all of them, but excelling in basketball. Looking back on his formative years and the lessons learned, Sullivan said, “One of the lessons I learned was the value of having folks you can depend on. . . . of good neighbors, good friends. I learned the value of family and what family meant to each other. I learned . . . if you want to be respected, you have to show respect, not isolate yourself and marginalize yourself. . . . I would say by the time I left in 1954, most of my character had been formed.” In 1954, Sullivan left the coal mining town of Ansted, West Virginia, and moved to Washington, D.C., to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

**Conversion Experience and Call to Ministry**

As a child, Sullivan did not have much exposure to religion. His parents were not anti-religion, but they were not pro-religion either. They did not encourage involvement in church. When Sullivan was about fifteen years old, however, his mother and father were both saved in a revival meeting that an old friend of theirs was preaching at Ansted Baptist Church. Sullivan remembered the change in his mother’s life as being much more dramatic than that of his father’s. She did not know that she was going to die just two years later, but Sullivan is confident, in hindsight, that there was evidence of regeneration in her life. She cultivated an interest in the Bible and in church. For the most

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13Ibid.

14Ibid.
part, however, Christianity never became a focal point for his family, and the Christian disciplines were seldom practiced as a family.\textsuperscript{15}

Even though his paternal grandfather was a Baptist deacon, he never shared the faith or felt compelled to discuss the tenets of Christianity with Sullivan. Sullivan noticed that his grandfather lived an exemplary life in many ways, but always thought him to be overly “henpecked.”\textsuperscript{16} His maternal grandmother was married to the meanest man Sullivan knew, yet she demonstrated a spirit of joy to the point that it caused Sullivan to seriously consider the merits of believing in Christ. In hindsight, even though he failed to pay attention to her in his formative years, he has come to realize that she had more influence on him than he originally supposed.

As a young man, Sullivan was not religious, but he was disciplined. He lived in the South Capitol Street Boarding House, rode the bus to work every day, and in addition to his regular week-day work schedule, he worked most weekends as well.\textsuperscript{17} He does not recall any apprehension with regard to the social and cultural differences between Ansted and Washington, D.C. He enjoyed his work as a fingerprint specialist for the FBI. Sullivan took pride in his work, always striving to do the best he could do, and moving up the pay scale at a faster rate than many of his peers. When asked about any particular lessons he learned from his work he replied, “Discipline. You had to be there, and you had to work, or you didn’t make it. It was as simple as that.”\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.
On one of his bus rides to work, Sullivan met Nancy Hinson.\textsuperscript{19} Nancy Hinson was born on August 21, 1936, in Jonesboro, Arkansas. She, like Sullivan, had moved to Washington, D.C., after graduating high school in order to work for the FBI. Unlike Sullivan, her early childhood life was centered in the church. Her father, Clifford, was a carpenter by trade and served as a deacon. Her mother, Lola, was a church pianist. Nancy grew up going to church, singing in the age-graded choirs, and attending the traditional Baptist girls’ mission group, Girls in Action.\textsuperscript{20} On June 24, 1955, at the Philadelphia Baptist Church in Jonesboro, Arkansas, Sullivan married the person he says who apart from the Lord Jesus “has been and is still the greatest influence” in his life.\textsuperscript{21} He was eighteen years old.

Nancy was a believer and on more than one occasion shared with Sullivan what it meant to have a relationship with Jesus Christ and specifically, what it meant for her to engage that relationship. She encouraged Sullivan to attend church with her. One Monday evening, he made a commitment to go with her the next Sunday. He recalled, “The closer we got to Sunday, the more I wondered why I’d made that commitment.”\textsuperscript{22} In August 1955, Sullivan went to church with Nancy and listened to a furloughing missionary whose name he did not remember, preach a sermon that he did not remember

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20}Girls in Action is a missions education group for girls grades one through six that teaches them to pray for, give to, and do missions work. For more information about this program, see Laura Wilson, “WMU Celebrates 100 Years of Girls’ Missions Discipleship,” accessed November 18, 2013, http://www.wmu.com/index.php?q=blog/wmu/feature/wmu-celebrates-100-years-girls%E2%80%99-missions-discipleship.

\textsuperscript{21}Sullivan, “Interview,” tape 06 – 085 #1.

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.
from a Bible text that he did not remember. He did remember, however, the invitation that was given, and when the preacher advised the congregation that Jesus Christ could provide direction for their lives, Sullivan, to Nancy’s absolute surprise, walked forward. He had never owned a Bible. He had never struggled with spiritual questions before—had never really considered them. He could not explain to the pastor what was happening, but the pastor was able to take the time to explain to Sullivan the concepts of conviction and repentance and Sullivan, three months after marrying Nancy, gave his life to Christ. He refers back to this day as one critical day, which he says would be the title of his book, if he ever decided to write one.

In order to learn what it meant to be a Christian, Sullivan did the only thing he knew to do—get as involved and committed as Nancy was. She was, after all, the leading influence in his decision to follow Christ. Sullivan began reading the Bible and had not yet finished the Gospel of John when he began to sense God’s calling in his life to ministry. In October of 1955, two months after his conversion experience, Sullivan heard his preacher, A. Lincoln Smith, pastor at Congress Heights Baptist Church, speak about vocational ministry and full-time service. Once again, he responded publicly to what God was doing in his life and submitted himself to be eligible for whatever God was calling him to do. At the time of this interview in 2006 at age seventy, Sullivan remarked that this response is exactly how he feels about his calling to this day. He considers himself eligible for whatever God wants him to do.23

As Sullivan made his commitment to vocational ministry public he received mixed responses from family members close to him. Nancy’s family was extremely

23Ibid.
happy for him, while his family was confused. Sullivan said he remembered his dad saying, “It seems to me like you’re giving up an awfully good job just to be a preacher.”

Sullivan’s brother was indifferent and until he was saved at age sixty-four in a revival where Sullivan was preaching, he had no interest in the spiritual things that captured Sullivan’s interest. Sullivan distinctly remembered that this new call and direction would require some change in his and Nancy’s priorities and even as he continued to work for the FBI, he began making plans to go to college.

**Education and Pastoral Ministry**

In 1957, Sullivan moved to Phoenix, Arizona, to attend Grand Canyon Baptist College. The summer before his first semester, he and Nancy had their first child, John. Nancy got a job with the FBI in Phoenix. In response to being asked about supporting his family, Sullivan replied, “I sold shoes. I got a job at Thom McAn Shoe Store. I was bi-vocational. I worked forty-eight hours per week, sometimes fifty-four hours a week, depending on their need, took a full load in college, pastored the church on the weekend, got about four hours of sleep a night, which is all I required at that time, and graduated in four years.”

Sullivan seems to have learned some lesson from every life situation. Whether he was serving as a pastor, earning a living as a shoe salesman, or studying for an exam, he always applied himself diligently and with the right attitude to the task at hand. He enjoyed the commission sales structure of the shoe store because it rewarded him

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24Ibid.

25Ibid. The church that Sullivan referred to was the Twenty-Seventh Avenue Baptist Church.
according to his effort. In hindsight, he reflected on the idea that selling shoes is where he learned public relations. He learned that different people had different opinions—likes and dislikes. He also recognized that what was important to women was different from what was important to men. He learned honesty with tact and these life lessons would serve him well in his future endeavors.

**College and Phoenix Pastorate**

Not only was Sullivan successful in his work, but he was very involved in campus life at school. He served on the student council all four years and in his senior year he served as president of the student body. Sullivan declared English literature as his major with a minor in religion. Sullivan decided early in his collegiate career that if he was going to pay money for a class, he was going to be disciplined enough to learn everything he could learn from it. He said, “Every class I took made some contribution to who I am as a pastor and who I’ve been as a preacher of the gospel.”

While in college Sullivan became the fourth pastor of Twenty-Seventh Avenue Baptist Church, a church that was only three years old. He served as pastor for that church from 1957-1962. During his pastorate in this church, Sullivan learned the value of a mentor. W. D. “Bill” Lawes was the Director of Evangelism for the Arizona Baptist Convention. He helped Sullivan learn the processes of church that extended beyond the preaching ministry. During the summertime, Sullivan involved himself with the Arizona

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26 John Sullivan, “Interview by Don Hepburn,” December 18, 2006, interview tape 06 – 085 #2, transcript, Sullivan Oral History Collection, Florida Baptist Building, Jacksonville, FL. All the information in this paragraph is from this transcript.
Southern Baptist Convention through work with Royal Ambassadors.²⁷ Twenty-Seventh Avenue Baptist Church had families with elementary aged boys. Sullivan saw the need for ministry among these boys and became the Royal Ambassador leader. He studied with his mentor, Bill Lawes who was also involved with Royal Ambassadors at the state convention level. Sullivan started the first Royal Ambassador chapter in Nevada through the work of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention.²⁸ Sullivan was attracted to the RA program because he valued the discipline that the program instilled in the boys as they worked their way through steps to achieve their respective rewards and promotions. His work with the Royal Ambassadors also served to convince Sullivan that the Cooperative Program was the best financial methodology for supporting mission endeavors.²⁹ As an RA leader, Sullivan was required to study the CP. In doing so he became convinced of its efficiency and led every church he would eventually pastor to increase their CP giving.

As a bi-vocational pastor in his first pastorate, Sullivan led the church in a building program. He demonstrated his resolve and level of commitment by staying with the church even after graduation from Grand Canyon Baptist College. He wanted to see the program through to its finish. The program was completed in 1962, and Sullivan

²⁷Royal Ambassadors is a Bible-centered, church-based missions education program designed for boys in grades one through six. For more information about this organization, see “Royal Ambassadors,” accessed November 18, 2013, http://www.wmu.com/index.php?q=children/about/royal-ambassadors.

²⁸During that time the churches in Nevada were in the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention.

moved to Fort Worth, Texas to continue his theological education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Seminary and Texas Pastorates

Sullivan did not enroll at Southwestern with only a Bachelor of Divinity in mind. Instead he began seminary thinking, “I’m going to get everything I need while I’m here.” Sullivan studied at Southwestern for eleven and one half years without missing a semester. During his time at Southwestern, he completed three degrees: Bachelor of Divinity in 1965, Master of Divinity in 1968, and Doctor of Ministry in 1973. His biggest regret, and possibly the only incomplete mission in Sullivan’s life, is that he did all of the coursework for a Master of Theology in Social Ethics, but he never wrote the thesis to finish that degree.

During his time at Southwestern, Sullivan served as pastor of three different churches: First Baptist Church, Aledo, Texas, 1962-67, Ridglea West Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, 1967-71, and First Baptist Church, Sulphur Springs, Texas, 1971-75. Being able to serve as a pastor in a local church while attending seminary had a profound impact on Sullivan’s view and subsequent passion for theological education. He wrote, “I soon recognized a problem that had been noticeable at every pastorate, illiteracy of factual biblical materials.” In addition to his regular preaching and pastoral

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31 Ibid.


33 John Sullivan, “Using Various Methods of Bible Study to Improve Biblical Knowledge” (D.Min. project, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), 1973, 3. The
responsibilities, Sullivan invested much of his time in teaching. He taught during the Training Union hour, Wednesday teacher’s meetings, at prayer meeting, as well as, daily fifteen minute segments of Bible study over the local television channel. The project reveals some theological reflection on Sullivan’s part that would eventually influence his views concerning discipleship and his philosophy of leadership. He wrote,

I take a very high view of scripture. The biblical revelation found in the written word is fundamental to all my theology and it is basic to all my ethical decisions. Because of this, I have a strong feeling that the incorporation of biblical knowledge into the lives of those to whom I minister will bring about needed change in their lives that otherwise would not happen. . . . I am convinced that people will not mature spiritually without accumulated factual knowledge of the Bible. Every effective method of teaching scripture must be utilized by the church to diminish biblical illiteracy.

Sullivan’s passion for theological education for the people of the church of First Baptist Church, Sulphur Springs was evident by the priorities he placed on his ministry. Within fourteen months of being called to pastor the church, First Baptist Church founded the Bible Institute of Sulphur Springs. Sullivan believes that there is always a group within a church that wants more Bible education than what they can get through a Sunday school lesson. He sought to develop courses that would satisfy those desires. The courses were designed for lay people, but the institute drew some bi-

project consisted of teaching through the book of Colossians to three different groups of people using three different methods: video, lecture, and dialogue.

34 Ibid., 4.


36 Ibid., 29.

vocational preachers who were inclined to take advantage of the preaching classes that were offered.\footnote{Ibid.}

If theological education was a passion of Sullivan’s, outreach and evangelism were priorities. In 1972, in addition to the Bible Institute, the church opened a Child Development Center for pre-kindergarten children.\footnote{Sull v , “Using Various Methods,” 29.} The vision for this ministry to children included the development of a ministry specifically for their parents. Likewise, Sulphur Springs initiated a bus ministry to provide transportation to the church for the children in the community. Again, the vision for the bus ministry went beyond transporting children. The church assigned a lay couple to connect with the parents of these children in order to minister to the needs of the family.\footnote{It should be noted that while it took leadership and an evangelistic spirit to begin a bus ministry, this type of outreach ministry was not innovative in the sense that it was original to Sullivan or the church. In 1970, Jack Hyles wrote a handbook on developing bus ministries for outreach into a church’s immediate community. In 1971, Walter Stuart Beebe, the man responsible for developing and implementing Hyles’ bus ministry, began publishing a magazine called \textit{The Church Bus News}. Beebe sponsored thirty-one bus conventions and through a help line, assisted pastors and churches who were starting their own bus ministries. See “History,” \textit{The Church Bus News}, accessed November 22, 2013, http://www.busministry.com/our-mission.html.}

Through his pastorate at First Baptist Church, Sulphur Springs, Sullivan developed his understanding of what a church should be. He saw the church as a large group that worshiped together made up of small groups that learned together.\footnote{Sullivan, “Interview,” tape 06 – 086 #2.} Anecdotally, he believes that most of the people that he baptized over the course of his ministry were already under the influence of Bible teaching through the Sunday school.
His priority on evangelism and passion for education remained with him through subsequent ministry contexts. When asked if in hindsight Sullivan felt that there were unfinished tasks or ministries that should have been started but for whatever reason were not, Sullivan responded, “I don’t know of one.”\textsuperscript{42} Sullivan felt that God had appointed him for a specific time to accomplish a certain number of things.

In 1975, Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana, was without a pastor. They invited Huber Drumwright, one of the area pastors that taught in the Bible Institute of First Baptist Church, Sulphur Springs, to preach. While there, a member of the pulpit committee asked Drumwright if he had any recommendations for them for pastor. Drumwright recommended John Sullivan.

**Pastorate at Broadmoor Baptist Church**

In February 1975, the pulpit committee from Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana, began speaking with Sullivan about the possibility of serving as their pastor.\textsuperscript{43} The possibility of becoming the pastor at Broadmoor presented a different set of challenges for Sullivan. His previous pastorates were of churches that had traditionally used seminary students. The congregations understood that they would serve as a training ground for young preachers and were used to the frequent changes in that office. The people of First Baptist Church of Sulphur Springs were not surprised when search committee members from another church began visiting their services.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
Broadmoor Baptist Church was founded in 1930. Sullivan knew that it had been one of the fastest growing churches in Louisiana, and that Scott Tatum had been the pastor there for over twenty-four years. He had heard Tatum preach at the SBC Convention Pastor’s Conference in San Francisco in 1962. Sullivan remembered being surprised that given his experience and the church’s heritage that he was being considered for the position.

In May 1975, the pastor search committee announced to the church that they unanimously believed that Sullivan was God’s man for Broadmoor Baptist Church and on May 25, Sullivan preached two morning worship services in view of a call. The day was described by Nettles in his historical account of Broadmoor as one of celebration. He wrote, “The day was indeed one of celebration. In the evening service the church voted and extended a unanimous and enthusiastic call to Dr. John Sullivan to become the sixth pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church.”

In his previous pastorates, the churches rallied around his leadership much more quickly than Broadmoor did. Broadmoor was used to a long-tenured pastor and his

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46 Scott Tatum also preached the convention message to the SBC in 1969 at New Orleans. Sullivan may have heard Tatum at this time instead of or as well as in San Francisco.


48 Tom Nettles, Growth for God’s Glory (Shreveport, LA: Broadmoor Baptist Church, 1980), 183.

49 Ibid., 185.
way of achieving ministry goals. The church had one of the highest attended Sunday schools in the state averaging in the 1200-1400s for a number of years.\textsuperscript{50} They had one of the largest budgets in the state and were consistently listed as one of the top contributors to the Cooperative Program. Their success made it difficult for them to see the reality that while they were very successful in comparison to other churches in the state, they had reached a plateau several years before.

In his first year, Sullivan selected and empowered a long range planning committee made up of well-respected and highly-involved church members to oversee a study of every facet of ministry available at Broadmoor. He enlisted the help of Reggie McDonough from the Sunday School Board to train the committee and assist them in long range planning. The committee was charged with assessing community growth patterns, church growth, population trends, church programs and staff, building and property needs, and mission involvement.\textsuperscript{51} From a leadership perspective, Sullivan was grateful for the committee process. Since the committee “owned” the report, the church was much more likely to follow the recommendations that it contained.

After twenty months, the planning committee introduced a forty-seven page report that covered every aspect of church life. Nettles wrote,

The labor of the people resulted in a 47-page report that contained: a description of the procedure of the committee; a brief history of the church; and the concerns, goals and action plans recommended by the committee. The plans related to 8 different areas: evangelism, membership, educational ministry, special

\textsuperscript{50}John Sullivan, “Interview by Don Hepburn,” December 19, 2006, interview tape 06 – 087 #1, transcript, Sullivan Oral History Collection, Florida Baptist Building, Jacksonville, FL. All information in this paragraph comes from this transcript.

\textsuperscript{51}Nettles, \textit{Growth for God’s Glory}, 190-91.
ministries, buildings and property, staff, procedures and schedules, and financial affairs.\textsuperscript{52}

The goals from these eight areas of analysis were established to reflect the ideas of the church related to its view of its mission.

The committee established three overall objectives that each of these individual goals would serve.

We, the people of Broadmoor Baptist Church, a body of baptized believers, having freely entered into this fellowship, relying upon the authority of the Inspired Word of God, seeking the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and following the example of our Savior, Jesus Christ, declare our dedication to the following objectives:

I. To be a fellowship which encounters and responds to the presence of God through regular worship experiences.

II. To be a fellowship which preaches and teaches the truths of the Bible, and which provides guidance for the appreciation of those truths.

III. To be a fellowship which witnesses to the redeeming power of Jesus Christ, and which seeks to win the lost in our community and throughout the world.\textsuperscript{53}

Sullivan admits that he was too aggressive with some of the changes he proposed at Broadmoor. He had led the church to set a goal to move their Cooperative Program budget to 30 percent.\textsuperscript{54} The most he remembers the church contributing is 23 percent. Sullivan has always been a strong advocate for the Cooperative Program, even before he became financially supported by it. His passion for the CP developed during his first pastorate at Twenty-Seventh Avenue Baptist Church when he served as a Royal Ambassador leader. As a leader, he studied the CP in order to teach the children about its

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., 191.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54}Sullivan, “Interview,” tape 06 – 087 #1.
function in missionary support. From that time, Sullivan claims to have led every church he served to increase CP giving every year.

Another difficult adjustment for Sullivan, but one that would later prove essential in his state convention work was the sizeable staff he had to learn to manage. At Sulphur Springs, he met with his two staff personnel every Monday and could accomplish most of the meeting agenda over lunch.\textsuperscript{55} At Broadmoor, the staff was larger and the calendar and workload more complex. Sullivan conducted staff meetings on Monday mornings. During these meetings, Sullivan would hold his staff accountable for reporting the number of people they had enrolled in Sunday school and the results of their individual prospect visits. Sullivan felt that if the church was going to grow through the implementation of the long range planning committee recommendations, then the staff would have to lead by example. This requirement created some staff turnover as some could not make the necessary adjustments to this new accountability. Sullivan, however, was not deterred and the requirements of staff concerning outreach and Sunday school were made clear in the interview process moving forward.

Sullivan continued to move the church forward in the areas of ministry for which he was passionate. His desire to see the local church as a type of seminary for lay people remained and within just a few months of becoming the pastor of Broadmoor, the church began its own Bible Institute.\textsuperscript{56} Sullivan taught more classes at Broadmoor than he had at Sulphur Springs, most likely because he did not have the added schedule of seminary work in his calendar. The program at Broadmoor eventually evolved into the

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary extension in Shreveport. Perhaps Sullivan’s passion for and commitment to theological education was best summarized in an interview in 2006:

> God has an affinity for a trained mind. Look at the apostle Paul. Who made more impact in the gospel than the apostle Paul? And I think it’s because he had a trained mind. That’s why when you read Paul you read it with a sense of logic as well as a sense of emotion. . . . The book of Romans is characteristic of that—his great thesis, his great theology. . . . And if you’re going to do the work of the ministry, why wouldn’t you give yourself in the same way you’d give yourself if you’re going to do an appendectomy? . . . No not everyone can do a doctor’s degree in theology or a doctor’s degree in ministry. I understand that. But I believe every person called by God has a responsibility to be a lifelong learner. . . . And I’ve never varied from that.  

Sullivan’s love for theological education and the relationship that he developed with NOBTS would continue with his work at the Florida Baptist Convention.

Sullivan also led the church to start a ministry called Joy House, a drug abuse center for boys. The ministry was designed to help teenage boys overcome difficult circumstances. The church would often pay these young men to do odd jobs around the campus. When asked about the most significant contribution that Sullivan felt he made to the church, he replied, “I think I helped them realize there was more ministry outside the walls of the church than there was inside the walls of the church.” He led them to start going on mission trips to Mexico. His focus on biblical stewardship helped increase the budget from $670,000 to $2.9 million by the time he left. He led them in building projects that gave them a chapel, increased educational space, and a renovated sanctuary.

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57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
Even with the outward focus and increased interest in missions, Sullivan believes that he did not lead the church to reach its evangelistic potential. During his tenure, the church baptized an average of 110 people per year. Sullivan believes that the church had the potential to baptize 200 people per year. He was pleased with the growth of the Sunday school which averaged just over 1,400 every Sunday in 1975 and reached a peak of 2,185 by the time he left.  

By 1980, when Broadmoor’s fiftieth anniversary history was written, Sullivan’s ministry had already taken on certain noticeable characteristics. Nettles wrote, “Perhaps the most obvious of these characteristics that could be noticed by any visitor to Broadmoor on a Sunday is that he is a strong, respected and powerful pulpiteer.” Sullivan had also established himself in the role of teacher and had communicated that role to the church as one that he felt was vital to his ministry. A third strength that Nettles noted was that Sullivan’s ministry was people-centered. In addition to Sullivan’s availability to staff, Nettles commented, “Though maintaining an extremely busy schedule of preaching and teaching opportunities, his seemingly interminable energy has allowed him to be present in the times of crisis of church members. . . . Sullivan never delegates his personal concern to others.”

For Sullivan, every ministry assignment eventually prepared him for the next. Just as each pastorate prepared him for the next, his time spent at Broadmoor contributed

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60 Ibid.


62 Ibid., 203.

63 Ibid.
some helpful insight into the challenges he would face as the executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention. Broadmoor prepared Sullivan for the challenges that come from dealing with a large staff and the multiple personalities that are represented by such as a staff. His tenure at Broadmoor also afforded him the opportunity to be involved in the denomination, and this involvement expanded his vision of the scope of kingdom work. His denominational work while at Broadmoor is where he cultivated a deep love for involvement in the denomination.64

**Denominational Work**

In 1958, Sullivan attended a Royal Ambassador training clinic at North Phoenix Baptist Church.65 At the end of the training sessions, Bill Lawes, director of evangelism and brotherhood, approached Sullivan about becoming the part-time director of Royal Ambassadors for the Baptist State Convention of Arizona.66 Sullivan accepted the challenge and began working with Bill to establish Royal Ambassador chapters in churches throughout their territory. Lawes became like a father in ministry to Sullivan, cultivating Sullivan’s passion and zeal for evangelism and his desire to see young men give their lives to Christ. Sullivan wrote, “Of the many things Bill Lawes taught me, I suppose the thing that attached itself to my life more than anything else was a desire to

64Ibid.

65John Sullivan, “I don’t mind telling you,” *Florida Baptist Witness*, August 2, 1990. All information in this paragraph comes from this article.

66Sullivan referred to the state convention in Arizona as the Baptist State Convention of Arizona and the Arizona Baptist Convention. The current name for the state convention is the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention. In 1958, the geographic boundary of the state convention extended from the Canadian border to the Mexico border and covered Arizona, Utah, Idaho, and Nevada.
see people born into the kingdom of God through outreach.”

This exposure to denominational work came very early in Sullivan’s ministry career and set the pattern for denominational involvement throughout his ministry assignments.

As Sullivan began his pastorate at Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana, tension grew within the Southern Baptist Convention over concerns that the convention was drifting towards liberalism. The issue that became the dividing line between conservatism and liberalism was the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture.


68 Controversy with regard to the doctrine of inerrancy stems from two prominent views of Scripture held by those claiming to be evangelicals. The first view holds that all of Scripture is inspired, true, and without error (inerrant), including its references to history, geography, and science. The second view is that the Bible is authoritative and infallible (making no false or misleading statements) only in matters of faith and practice, particularly in its teaching on salvific history and doctrine. In the early part of the twentieth century, the controversy was described in terms of the labels of fundamentalists and modernists. Within the SBC, the issue of inerrancy eventually separated the views by using the labels conservatives and moderates.

Conservatives view the term inerrant as an accurate and necessary word to describe the idea that the Bible is without error in any topic it chooses to address. Moderates prefer the term infallible, choosing to believe that this word provides a better opposite to the word errant than inerrant. Critics of the term inerrancy will often point the fact that use of such a term requires major qualifications by the one using it. They point out that the word inerrant is only appropriately applied to the original manuscripts of Scripture, and therefore, is unnecessary. They also believe that the term is one that is intentionally used to bring conflict and divisiveness to theological conversation. Advocates of the term simply see the avoidance of its use by moderates as a way of excusing their disbelief of the supernatural activity of God recorded in the pages of Scripture.

The discussion of the inerrancy and/or infallibility of the Bible is beyond the scope of this dissertation but should be understood in a basic sense as it relates to Sullivan’s denominational work during this period of time. For a better understanding of the definition of inerrancy and the history of fundamentalism embracing inerrancy in the face of the Enlightenment, form criticism and modernity, see Norman Geisler, ed., Inerrancy (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980). The disconnect between the seminaries and the churches that support them with regard to the doctrine of inerrancy is described well in Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976).
Sullivan understood the problem to be twofold: (1) a theological problem especially in the seminaries and (2) a methodological problem with regard to moving a modernist-leaning convention back to conservatism.\textsuperscript{69} He recalled, “I didn’t know how great this problem was until . . . [I] had one of the [seminary] presidents say to me, ‘There is no one on our faculty that teaches from the vantage point of inerrancy.’”\textsuperscript{70} The methodological problem was resolved through a thorough understanding of SBC policy and procedure. Proponents of the return to conservatism realized that in Southern Baptist life, the way to change an organization was through its trustees. The committee on committees names the committee on nominations and the committee on nominations names the trustees. What the conservative resurgence leaders realized was that the president of the SBC names the committees on committees so they concentrated their energy and resources on getting conservative presidents elected. The political rhetoric that came from the conservative camp was viewed by some as mean-spirited and distasteful.\textsuperscript{71} While proponents of conservatism labelled the movement Conservative Resurgence, moderates viewed it more as a hostile takeover by fundamentalists.

Sullivan believes that if the seminary presidents would have agreed to do a thorough investigation of their respective faculties and staff over a three year period, and had presented a plan to stifle creeping liberalism, the Convention would not have been

\textsuperscript{69}John Sullivan, “Interview by Don Hepburn,” December 19, 2006, interview tape 06 – 088 #2, transcript, Sullivan Oral History Collection, Florida Baptist Building, Jacksonville, FL.

\textsuperscript{70}Ibid.

inclined to resort to the political tactics that ultimately created the division. The problem as he saw it was that none of the seminary presidents were willing to admit that there was a problem. The leaders who were involved at that time knew that a problem with the doctrine of the Bible existed within the convention. Sullivan was one of those leaders.

Being the pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, one of the largest churches in Louisiana at that time, afforded Sullivan the opportunity to be involved in the leadership of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. He served for two consecutive years, 1980-1981, as the president of the convention. After nine years (four with Sulphur Springs and five with Broadmoor) of preaching in a large church environment, Sullivan was able to travel the state and preach in some of the smaller and more rural church contexts. The amount of travel and the exposure to various types and sizes of congregations would serve to prepare Sullivan for his calling to Florida as executive director-treasurer.

Sullivan’s involvement in the SBC coincided with the Conservative Resurgence. Prior to 1979, theologically conservative men held positions of leadership in the SBC. While Adrian Rogers was not the first conservative to be elected as president of the SBC, he was the first conservative to be elected for the purpose of changing the appointments to the committees that would eventually change the trustees of the SBC entities. Rogers was elected in 1979 and subsequently served as the convention president in 1980. That same year, Sullivan nominated Robert E. Naylor from Texas. Rogers

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73 Annual, Southern Baptist Convention, 1979, 43.

74 Ibid., 35.
won the election without a run-off by accumulating 51.36 percent of the votes. Naylor came in second with 23.39 percent.\textsuperscript{75}

In 1980, Sullivan was appointed to serve on the executive committee of the SBC.\textsuperscript{76} He served on that committee for eight consecutive years, ending his tenure with the executive committee in 1988. Also in 1980, during the Southern Baptist Convention, Sullivan nominated Richard Jackson from Arizona to the office of president. Jimmy Draper from Texas nominated Bailey Smith from Oklahoma.\textsuperscript{77} Bailey Smith won the election without a runoff by accumulating 51.67 percent of the votes. Sullivan’s nominee finished fourth with only 9.81 percent.\textsuperscript{78}

In 1982, Phil Lineberger from Kansas nominated Sullivan for president of the SBC.\textsuperscript{79} Morris Chapman from Texas nominated James Draper from Texas and Draper won the election in a runoff election against Duke McCall. Sullivan collected only 9.26 percent of the votes. However, once the runoff election had taken place and the floor was opened to nominations to first vice-president, Warren Hultgren from Oklahoma nominated Sullivan. Sullivan was elected as first vice-president of the SBC.\textsuperscript{80} The following year, Draper and Sullivan were reelected by acclamation.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., 43.

\textsuperscript{76}Annual, Southern Baptist Convention, 1981, 351.

\textsuperscript{77}Annual, Southern Baptist Convention, 1980, 31.

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., 40.

\textsuperscript{79}Annual, Southern Baptist Convention, 1982, 34.

\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., 47-49.

\textsuperscript{81}Annual, Southern Baptist Convention, 1983, 39.
During his vice-presidency, Sullivan accompanied Draper to a meeting of the moderates who were opposed to the efforts of the conservatives to move the convention toward a more fundamental view of the doctrine of inerrancy of the Scriptures.\footnote{Sullivan, “Interview,” tape 06 – 088 #2.} The original group met in September 1980 under the leadership of Cecil Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Asheville, North Carolina and at the urging of Duke McCall, then the president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Since the group met in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, they became known as the Gatlinburg Gang.\footnote{James, \textit{The Fundamentalist Takeover}, 79.} Sullivan claims that the primary proposal put forth by the moderates at this meeting was one that attempted to change the way the president of the convention was nominated.\footnote{Sullivan, “Interview,” tape 06 – 088 #2.} While Sullivan supported Draper’s dismissal of the moderate’s proposals for connectionalism,\footnote{Morris Chapman defines connectionalism as a term used to describe the relationship between local churches and other ecclesiastical bodies such as associations and conventions. Connectionalism was originally used by the founders of the SBC to describe the bond of union between separate and distinct entities in order to promote righteousness. The term was originally intended to describe non-controlling cooperation. Chapman states that connectionalism in its modern forms is a violation of local church autonomy and must be rejected as an acceptable polity for Southern Baptists. The form of connectionalism to which he refers is one that connects different entities of the convention together in such a way that control and accountability is removed from the churches these entities are intended to represent or support. Draper and Sullivan viewed the moderates’ proposals as this type of connectionalism. For more information on connectionalism versus cooperation, see Morris H. Chapman, “Axioms of a Cooperating Southern Baptist,” in \textit{Southern Baptist Identity: An Evangelical Denomination Faces the Future}, ed. David S. Dockery (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 159.} he was still viewed with suspicion by the conservatives. Because Sullivan served with and supported Draper, he was viewed with caution by the moderates, as well. This
perception of Sullivan was evident when Sullivan was once again placed on the ballot for president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In 1984, Sullivan was once again nominated for president of the SBC by James Pleitz of Texas. Jerry Vines from Florida nominated Charles Stanley from Georgia. Bo Baker from Texas nominated Grady Cothen from Mississippi. Charles Stanley was declared president without the need for a runoff election because he had received 52.18 percent of the votes. Sullivan finished third with 21.53 percent of the votes.

Following the election Sullivan asked Draper why there was a feeling that somebody needed to run to his right (a more conservative view.) Sullivan presumed that the convention leadership knew that he was a conservative. Draper responded by indicating that Sullivan had too many friends that were considered moderates in high places within the denomination. When Sullivan then asked why the moderates chose to run someone on his left (a more moderate view), Draper indicated that the moderates did not trust Sullivan’s relationship with Draper who was a leader in the conservative resurgence. Even though Pressler characterized Sullivan as a parliamentarian for the liberals, Sullivan believed himself to be more of a centralist—by his own definition a theological conservative that was reluctant to divide the denomination using the political

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86 Annual, Southern Baptist Convention, 1984, 34.
87 Ibid., 44.
88 Sullivan, “Interview,” tape 06 – 088 #2.
89 Paul Pressler, A Hill on which to Die (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 179. In Pressler’s first mention of Sullivan on page 124, he acknowledges Sullivan was theologically conservative, but that Sullivan either did not recognize the problems in the institutions or he did not approve of the conservative’s methods for change.
tactics that were being used. Sullivan underestimated how much this position aligned him with moderates at least from an outside perspective. With regard to the election in 1984, James Hefley wrote,

One bright light had emerged from Pittsburg. John Sullivan, a widely-liked and successful Shreveport pastor, had been re-elected first vice-president. Sullivan bore no taint of neo-orthodoxy. He talked as conservatively on the Bible as Adrian Rogers. His church gave 26 percent of its budget to the Cooperative Program. He put his money where his mouth was. He was a good evangelist. Most important, he was believed to be a “company man” all the way, who didn’t believe that the moderate interpretation of the Baptist Faith and Message phrase, “truth without any mixture of error,” was grounds for disqualification in denominational service.

Sullivan’s loyalty to the denomination closely resembled the moderates’ position of “unity within diversity.” Interestingly, Jerry Vines, the conservative who nominated Charles Stanley to run against John Sullivan eventually became Sullivan’s pastor when he moved to Jacksonville to fill the role as Florida’s executive director-treasurer.

In 1985, the SBC authorized a special committee to investigate the controversy over inerrancy and present possible courses of action that would resolve the conflict.

(2) This committee shall seek to determine the sources of the controversies in our Convention, and make findings and recommendations regarding these controversies, so that Southern Baptists might effect reconciliation and effectively discharge their responsibilities to God by cooperating together to accomplish evangelism, missions, Christian education and other causes authorized by our Constitution, all to the glory of God.

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92 Annual, Southern Baptist Convention, 1985, 64.
The motion to authorize this committee included an appeal for all Southern Baptists “to exercise restraint from divisive action and comments, and to reflect Christian love while this committee is doing its work.” The final section of the motion listed the names of twenty-two people being appointed to this committee—a list that included names like Adrian Rogers, Jerry Vines, Herschel Hobbs, Edwin Young and John Sullivan.

The special committee on which Sullivan served came to be known as the Peace Committee. The committee arranged its study under two general headings: theological concerns and political activities. The committee published in its findings what many people in the convention already knew—that there was significant theological diversity with regard to the doctrine of inerrancy and biblical interpretation. Since many leaders in the convention believed that these theological differences were at the center of the entire controversy, the Peace Committee acknowledged that the task of reconciliation would require setting limits of legitimate diversity. Southern Baptists had already adopted the *Baptist Faith and Message* for the purpose of setting limits of legitimate diversity. The problem in the controversy was that both sides felt that they were operating within the parameters of the *Baptist Faith and Message*.

The Peace Committee also addressed the political activities of both sides of the controversy. The level of political activity within the convention at this time created distrust and diminished the convention’s potential effectiveness in evangelism and

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93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., 65.
96 Ibid., 254.
missions. The committee was careful to point out abrasive language being used by both sides and concluded that a continuation of political activity at the current level would not serve the process of peace or reconciliation. Ultimately, the committee asked to be able to continue its work for one more year, as authorized by the 1985 motion and that during the additional year, Southern Baptists maintain an ongoing attitude of intercessory prayer.

The final findings and recommendations of this committee were presented at the SBC in 1987. The committee upheld a high view of Scripture but acknowledged that not everyone on the committee agreed on how to interpret “without mixture of error” in the Baptist Faith and Message. The committee hoped, however, that since they were able to work amicably together under these divergent views that the convention as a whole could as well. They also outlined political strategies that they thought were not productive and simply out of place within the life of the convention.

Sullivan’s evaluation of the Peace Committee process is that given the circumstances and atmosphere of distrust, the committee did not nor could not solve the problem. The problem stemmed from deep theological convictions on both sides that simply could not be reconciled. Sullivan believes that history will vindicate the committee’s recommendations from an historical perspective. He never worried about how he was perceived among the warring factions. He was comfortable with being a

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97 Ibid.
98 Ibid., 255.
100 Sullivan, “Interview,” tape 06 – 088 #2.
centrist and was not bothered by those on either side who tried to label him. When asked about his involvement in the Peace Committee process, Sullivan responded,

My mission in life is to serve God with integrity, and I did that all through the controversy. I have no qualms. I have gotten to do more in Southern Baptist life than I ever dreamed. I have preached in every state convention . . . I have served on the executive committee . . . I have preached all over the nation on behalf of stewardship and missions and evangelism. I have gotten to do more than I ever dreamed a coal miner’s kid from West Virginia would ever get to do.¹⁰¹

Sullivan continued to serve as pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church for two more years. He stayed involved at the national level by becoming a certified parliamentarian, something that became like a hobby to him. Then in 1989, he would take his pastoral and denominational experiences with him to Florida to become the executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, Inc.

**Florida Baptist State Convention Work**

In 1988, Dan Stringer, executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, retired. Sullivan remembered making a comment to his wife, Nancy, about praying for the new executive director-treasurer.¹⁰² The thought never crossed Sullivan’s mind that the search committee for a new executive director-treasurer would approach him. The committee was drawn to Sullivan because of his experience as an officer in a state convention, his experience in managing a large staff in a large-church setting, and his demonstrated commitment to the Cooperative Program.¹⁰³


¹⁰³Ibid.
Sullivan was wary of the day-to-day administrative responsibilities of a state executive. His wariness was not the result of a lack of confidence in his administrative skills as much as it was a lack of passion for a job that would take him away from preaching and pastoring.\(^\text{104}\) Sullivan did not want to be an administrator who occasionally preached. He wanted to be a preacher that could do administration. The committee assured him that he could be in as many pulpits and with as many congregations as he could possibly work into his schedule.

Before making his commitment to the convention, Sullivan briefly toured Florida, surveying the scope of the convention’s mission field. He saw the diversity of Florida and the challenges that working in such a mission would bring. Sullivan was ready to accept the challenge and on February 7, 1989, he assumed the role of executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention.\(^\text{105}\) In his closing address at the 1989 annual meeting, Sullivan provided Florida Baptists some insight into his missiology and his vision for the work that they would do together. He said, “I come to declare tonight, with fervency of soul and no arrogance of heart, that if we are not interested in winning this state and starting new churches, then God has made his first mismatch.”\(^\text{106}\) From the beginning, Sullivan’s strategies reflected the priority of evangelism that would be the driving force behind his missiology.

Sullivan began preaching in churches right away in order to be with pastors and share his vision among the congregations. Sullivan estimates that he travels roughly

\(^\text{104}\)Ibid.

\(^\text{105}\)Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1989, 81.

\(^\text{106}\)Ibid., 60.
forty-five thousand miles each year, preaching in churches around the state. When he is not travelling, he and Nancy enjoy their time of worship together at First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida, where they maintain their membership.

Sullivan began to hire the staff needed to implement his priorities of evangelism, church starting, and strengthening the base of existing churches, but he soon discovered that long range planning for a state convention is very different from the long range planning of a local church. Just like the church, there were people with their own agendas on the inside of the organization that were reluctant to embrace the priorities that would eventually define Sullivan’s ministry. In addition to staff having to make changes in the way things were done, many of the churches were led by pastors who had very strong convictions about what a convention, and particularly a state executive, should or should not be doing.

More significantly, much of the direction of the convention and the demands placed on someone in Sullivan’s position is dictated by circumstances outside of the organization. The political climate of the state and the nation, natural disasters, denominational conflicts, and ministry opportunities all serve to shape a philosophy of ministry, leadership, and missional strategy. Sullivan has worked to advance the Great Commission in the midst of an ever-changing state and convention. How these various

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and significant events have impacted Sullivan’s missiology will be discussed in a later chapter.

**Conclusion**

Sullivan’s life has been characterized by honesty, integrity, and a strong work ethic. He has been passionate about the Great Commission allowing his love for the gospel to motivate him to do the work of the kingdom. He has endeavored for peace without compromising his convictions and prefers unity for the good of the gospel. He has not always made the right or most popular decisions, but he has always tried to act in a way that would reflect well on the Jesus he chose so long ago to serve.
CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF T. G. JOHN SULLIVAN

By the time Sullivan entered Southern Baptist life, the Southern Baptist Convention had adopted the *Baptist Faith and Message, 1925*. This document served to describe consensus among Baptists concerning various doctrines of the Christian faith. As mentioned in chapter 2, Sullivan served on the Peace Committee during the dispute over inerrancy. The first recommendation from that committee to Southern Baptists was to “reaffirm the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message Statement as the guideline by which all of the agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention are to conduct their work.”¹ Even though Sullivan did not write a book that contained an exhaustive treatment of his systematic theology, his biblical and theological convictions can be found in his views on confessionalism, his articles and sermons. This chapter will examine the biblical and theological foundations held by Sullivan.

**Theological Influences on Sullivan**

Prior to 1925, the Southern Baptist Convention did not subscribe to a particular confession of faith. Individual Baptist churches often looked towards some consensus of Baptist doctrines in order to resolve disputes within their memberships. For churches in

the South, the Philadelphia Confession of 1742 served to provide this consensus until the New Hampshire Confession of 1833 gained prominence among the churches through the printing and distribution efforts of the Northern Baptist Publication Society. In 1925, the SBC adopted the *Baptist Faith and Message*, a confession of faith based on the doctrinal articles found in the New Hampshire Confession of 1833.

The various confessions of faith have often been formed in the midst of doctrinal disputes. McBeth wrote, “One clue to Baptists’ theology is found in their various confessions of faith. These have usually been hammered out on the anvil of some doctrinal dispute.” The SBC adopted the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message* in the midst of accusations against the seminaries for teaching biological evolution and tolerating modernistic views of the Scriptures. The preamble to the 1925 confession states its purpose, “The present occasion for a reaffirmation of Christian fundamentals is the prevalence of naturalism in the modern teaching and preaching of religion. Christianity is supernatural in its origin and history. We repudiate every theory of religion which denies the supernatural elements in our faith.”

In response to a controversy surrounding Ralph Elliott and his book *The Message of Genesis* published in 1962, Southern Baptists adopted a 1963 version of the *Baptist Faith and Message*. This version responded to the

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6For an overview of the controversy, see McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, 498-503.
perceived attacks upon the authority and truthfulness of the Bible.7 With the cultural climate changes of the 1990s, the SBC adopted an additional article that provided a Baptist consensus view of the family. Sensing the need to address from a theological and biblical perspective the issues of the church and culture at the turn of the century, the SBC appointed another committee to once again submit recommendations to revise the Baptist Faith and Message. The preamble to the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000 identified its purpose as one “to address the ‘certain needs’ of our own generation,” and its challenge in light of an age that was becoming increasingly more hostile to Christian truth was “to express the truth as revealed in Scripture, and to bear witness to Jesus Christ, who is ‘the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’”8

While the preambles have stated very plainly that the authors considered the Baptist Faith and Message a consensus of opinion to be used as a guideline for interpreting the Scriptures (the real and sole authority for Baptists with regard to faith and practice), some Baptists feared that a confession of faith would be the first step to creedalism, the imposition of a man-made interpretation of Scripture on others.9 Historians such as H. Leon McBeth believe that developments in Baptist life in the twentieth century showed that these leaders were right to be concerned.10 He wrote,

The introductory statement, spelling out the functions and limitations of a Baptist confession was attached both in 1925 and again in 1963 and specifically adopted as part of the confession. At one time the Convention directed that the


8Ibid., emphasis original.

9McBeth, The Baptist Heritage, 678.

10Ibid., 679.
confession not be circulated apart from the introduction, a caution that has not been faithfully observed. Despite efforts to preserve its confessional nature, the 1963 statement has in recent years become more creedal in its usage.\(^\text{11}\)

Throughout his ministry, Sullivan has embraced confessionalism while trying to avoid the creedalism feared by some. The Peace Committee affirmed the Baptist Faith and Message of 1963 as a statement of basic belief, not a creed.\(^\text{12}\) Sullivan has affirmed this same position with regard to the *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000*. Sullivan’s opinion is that most Florida Baptists agree with what most of the *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000* says.\(^\text{13}\) For Sullivan, a confession of faith does not qualify a church. It serves to qualify a nominee for service as a trustee of a Southern Baptist entity and in his role as executive director-treasurer, a Florida Baptist entity. A confession is a consensus opinion. Therefore, while he does not believe that it is inspired in the same way Scripture is inspired, he certainly agrees with the overall message and basic tenets and is comfortable with holding trustees of Florida Baptist entities accountable to it. Sullivan’s views of a confession being used as a tool to qualify a church for cooperation will be discussed in chapter 4.

While the *Baptist Faith and Message* provides a framework for organizing Sullivan’s theological convictions, the greatest influence on those convictions is the theology of Carl F. H. Henry.\(^\text{14}\) While at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary,

\(^\text{11}\)McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, 503.

\(^\text{12}\)Ibid., 535.

\(^\text{13}\)John Sullivan, “BF&M guards our ‘theological absolutes,’” *Florida Baptist Witness*, January 3, 2002. Unless otherwise noted, the information in this paragraph is a summary of this article.

Sullivan began, but never completed, a Master of Theology. Had he continued his studies in that degree, his thesis would have focused on the ethical approach of Carl F. H. Henry.\(^{15}\) Henry’s theological vision sought to merge theological competence with cultural engagement.\(^{16}\) Sullivan equated theological competence with biblical literacy which led him to believe three things: (1) permanent change in the cultural environment would only happen through individuals being changed by Christ through personal regeneration, (2) principles of social justice contained in the Scriptures and practical application of those principles must be preached from the pulpit, and (3) pastors must be concerned with biblical illiteracy and theological incompetence within their congregations.\(^{17}\)

Sullivan believes that personal faith must be built on sound doctrine.\(^{18}\) The purpose of doctrine is twofold: to help man live in harmony with himself and to help man comprehend the life to come. A review of the sermons that Sullivan has preached and the articles that he has written will demonstrate a priority on the Christian life and on evangelism, both reflected in his understanding of the purposes of doctrine.

**View of the Bible**

While the interpretation of the phrase “high view of Scripture” may be subjective, these words are used to describe Sullivan’s esteem for the Bible. In his

\(^{15}\text{Ibid., 4.}\)


\(^{18}\)John Sullivan, “Build personal faith on doctrine,” *Florida Baptist Witness*, April 24, 1997. The information in this paragraph is a summary of this article.
theological reflection for his D.Min. project, he wrote, “I take a very high view of scripture. The biblical revelation found in the written word is fundamental to all my theology and it is basic to all my ethical decisions.” In describing his view of Scripture, Sullivan quotes from pastors and theologians, such as C. H. Spurgeon, Carl F. H. Henry, and W. A. Criswell who would be considered conservative in their views of Scripture.

Quoting Spurgeon’s comments on Psalm 119:60, Sullivan wrote, “There is not one single mistake either in the Word of God or in the providential dealings of God. . . . The Lord has nothing to regret or to retract, nothing to amend or to reverse.” Sullivan stated his affirmation of Spurgeon’s commentary when he wrote, “In its original form the prophetic and apostolic witness had the special quality of inerrancy. . . . Not only was their communication of the Word of God effective in teaching the truth of revelation, in addition their transmission of that Word was error free.”

More important than the issue of inerrancy is the issue of authority. Sullivan believes that at the root of the inerrancy debate and any discussion about the Bible is its claim to authority. He wrote, “Biblical authority in this day must be established because individuals are looking for authority and many unreliable and heretical sources of

19 Sullivan, “Using Various Methods,” 10-11. Unfortunately, Sullivan used language in his description of a high view of Scripture that fits well with a moderate view of inerrancy, language that would have been acceptable at Southwestern in the 1970s. Revelation is not simply found within the written word as his statement implies, but the entirety of Scripture is the revelation of God.


21 Ibid.

authority are being suggested and incorporated into life.”

These alternative sources of authority for this generation include church tradition, personal experience, reason, and creedalism. By elevating the authority of Scripture above these sources of authority, Sullivan’s position is in keeping with that of the *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000* in that the Bible is “the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.”

Sullivan’s articles describe a view of Scripture that conforms in every way to the *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000*. He wrote, “The Bible is a miraculous book about God in all of His power and glory. It is also a book from God to all who believe in His plan of redemption in Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches a person how to be saved and how saved individuals are to live.” For Sullivan, the chief purpose and function of the Bible is to lead people to salvation in Jesus Christ. He believes that while the Bible is sufficient to accomplish this task, the responsibility for helping people understand salvation is in preaching. In writing about the relevancy of the Bible to contemporary life Sullivan wrote, “The Bible will never be relevant until the reader and the teacher know Jesus Christ.”

Sullivan believes that the Bible is the source and standard for Christian faith. He wrote, “The heart of our faith is this story through which we know God and make our

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23 Ibid.


response to Him.”27 The Bible is the medium by which God has chosen to speak to His creation. Therefore, readers should approach the Scriptures as learners and listeners. When readers approach the Scriptures in this mindset they will be introduced to two key concepts: (1) the reality of God, and (2) the redemption of man.28 While Sullivan admits that the Bible is absolutely authoritative in more than just these two truths, he believes that the divine revelation of these two truths, in particular, should serve to compel a person towards submission to the authority of Scripture in every aspect of life.

Sullivan believes that Bible study must become a way of life for the believer if the Bible is to speak with relevance to the issues of life.29 While the Bible is not a history book, it is an historical book. As such, it is truthful in its historical accounts even as it fulfills its greater purpose—the revelation of God’s love and redemptive plan for His creation.30 The Bible was not written as a textbook for science, but it is not incompatible with science. Sullivan believes that the Bible is more capable than science of answering man’s deepest questions such as “Why am I here?” or “What is my purpose?”31 He wrote, “Without . . . of Scripture, man cannot find the purpose of life. Jesus Christ makes the Bible relevant to all our needs.”32 For Sullivan, the result of reading the Bible and

28 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
embracing its truth is eternal life and studying the Bible and applying its truth is Christian discipleship.

Sullivan believes that the Holy Spirit is indispensable with regard to understanding the Scriptures. He wrote, “The Holy Spirit is the communicator of the revealed truth of God. This role includes both the inspiration of the writers of Scripture and the illumination of the readers hearing that Scripture.”\(^{33}\) In that same article he conveyed his view of Scripture as authoritative by summarizing some of Carl F. H. Henry’s conclusions about revelation.\(^{34}\)

1. Revelation is a divinely initiated activity. God’s free communication by which he alone turns his personal privacy into a deliberate disclosure.\(^{35}\)

2. Divine revelation is given for human benefit, offering us privileged communion with our Creator in the kingdom of God.\(^{36}\)

3. God’s revelation is uniquely personal both in content and form.\(^{37}\)

4. God reveals Himself in the history of the cosmos and of the nations, but also redemptively in unique saving acts.\(^{38}\)

5. The climax of God’s special revelation is Jesus of Nazareth, the personal incarnation of God in the flesh.\(^{39}\)


\(^{34}\)Ibid.


\(^{36}\)Ibid., 30.

\(^{37}\)Ibid., 150.

\(^{38}\)Ibid., 247.

6. God’s revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible ideas and meaningful words.⁴⁰

7. The Bible is the reservoir and conduit of divine truth.⁴¹

Sullivan’s writings indicate that he holds a high view of Scripture based on the principles contained within the *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000* and expressed in the writings of conservative theologians and preachers. He wrote, “God’s purpose in revelation is that we may know Him personally and avail ourselves of His gracious forgiveness and escape catastrophic judgment for our sins.”⁴² His view of Scripture and authority is central to the rest of his theology, a theology that ultimately reveals itself in the priorities of his missiology.

**Doctrine of God**

The *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000* describes God as an intelligent, spiritual, and personal being who is the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe.⁴³ The confession further recognizes God as infinitely holy, all powerful, and perfect in all knowledge, a being that has revealed Himself to humanity as a triune God, eternally manifested as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Sullivan’s articles and lecture notes reflect a belief in God that mirrors the *Baptist Faith and Message.*

⁴⁰Ibid., 248.


⁴³*The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000*, 7. The information in this paragraph is a summary of Article II of this document.
The Personhood of God

Sullivan believes that the personhood of God emerges as He is described in terms of human life and experience. He wrote, “We believe in God as a person because of the necessity to account for our own personality and the religious life of man.”  

However, God is not limited by the limitations of man’s personhood. For instance, God is a spirit and must be understood on a spiritual plane. He is absolute and self-existent. He depends upon nothing. While He is present in the world order and is constantly aware of every detail taking place in this world, He is not limited by the world’s time or space.

In his lecture notes, Sullivan describes the inner nature of God in terms of holiness, righteousness, love and wrath. Any holiness or righteousness evidenced by men is derived from association with God. For Sullivan, the love of God is central to God’s nature. He wrote, “The love of God is that quality of His nature which eternally moves Him to self-communication and self-giving for the redemption of all mankind.”

Sullivan describes the wrath of God as a judgment that man brings upon himself as the inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe. However, Sullivan believes that the wrath of God is that part of His nature that provides an “immediate continuing resistance to evil.” Sullivan believes that when the wrath of God

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46 Ibid., 5.


48 Ibid.
is revealed in Scripture, it is almost always revealed in the context of grace with the
redemptive way clearly demonstrated.\(^{49}\)

Sullivan defines the Trinitarian formula for the personhood of God within the
parameters of the *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000*. His definition is contained in his
lecture notes.

God is one being in three persons. Each of these persons express the entire fullness
of the Godhead. Each person possesses all the deity of the divine essence, but each
person also has a characteristic individuality which is peculiar to that one person
and is not exchanged. (For example: The Father is the Father and is not the son, etc.)
There is no priority of time or origin and superiority of rank. For the three persons
exist eternally and are co-eternal and co-equal.\(^{50}\)

Sullivan acknowledges that the oneness of God is not a simple mathematical formula and
that there is no good human analogy for the doctrine of the Trinity. However, he believes
that Baptists must embrace the doctrine because the essential nature in the Christian
witness is that God is greater in reality than in thought or word.\(^{51}\) Moreover, Sullivan
believes that the fullness of God’s love and the sufficiency of God’s nature are best
revealed in the doctrine of the Trinity.

**The Attributes of God**

Sullivan sees the omnipotence or almighty power of God as closely aligned to
the doctrine of God as Creator.\(^{52}\) While Sullivan’s view may not come directly from Carl
Henry, it is in alignment with Henry’s writings. Henry wrote, “God’s power is revealed

\(^{49}\)John Sullivan, “Wrath of God revealed in context of grace,” *Florida Baptist

\(^{50}\)Sullivan, “Baptist Doctrine,” 7.

\(^{51}\)Ibid., 8.

\(^{52}\)Ibid., 2.
to man by his divine creation and preservation of the cosmos.”\textsuperscript{53} God’s power to create comes from revelation. Sullivan wrote, “It is not spun from men’s minds. God created the heaven and earth . . . out of nothing. This is not a conclusion of man’s reason, but of God’s revelation.”\textsuperscript{54} Sullivan points to Hebrews 11:3 to remind readers that faith in biblical revelation must be added to human reason in order to embrace God’s creative power.\textsuperscript{55} When understood within the context of faith, creation guides humanity to a Creator that can do anything within the context of His holy will and purposes.\textsuperscript{56}

Sullivan does not believe that God’s power is sheer force raised to the highest degree. He sees no virtue in that type of power.\textsuperscript{57} Instead, God’s power must be interpreted in its religious and redemptive context.\textsuperscript{58} In this context, God reveals His nature and His goodness through His creative power. Henry wrote, “Many references to God’s great power are connected, moreover, with His redemptive work. He displays His sovereignty in the miraculous redemption of humanity as well as its creation. There is no doubt that the inspired Hebrew writers affirmed God’s omnipotence.”\textsuperscript{59}


\textsuperscript{54}John Sullivan, “We have power to show world redemption,” \textit{Florida Baptist Witness}, May 8, 1997.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56}Sullivan, “Baptist Doctrine,” 3.

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., 2.

\textsuperscript{58}John Sullivan, “We have power to show world redemption,” \textit{Florida Baptist Witness}, May 8, 1997.

\textsuperscript{59}Henry, \textit{God, Revelation and Authority}, 5:308.
With regard to the omnipresence of God, Sullivan wrote, “Knowing we never really leave God’s presence is both frightening and comforting. We may come into His presence in a more meaningful way at particular times, but we are never without God’s presence.” For Sullivan, the omnipresence of God is not spatial, but relational. He wrote, “The doctrine of God’s omnipresence should not be interpreted mechanically. You will not find God on the end of a telescope or antenna. The doctrine of God’s omnipresence is a biblical, religious relationship.”

With regard to God’s omniscience, Sullivan affirms with the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000 that God is all-knowing and that this omniscience is related “in a special and particular way to man and his need for redemption.” Sullivan teaches that God’s knowledge is comprehensive and immediate. God does not learn by experience or develop his thoughts from logical deduction. Sullivan cautions against making human experience and logical deduction concrete realities for God. He wrote, “We must not allow the knowledge of God to blur personal decision. God’s knowledge is not to be viewed as a causative factor in men’s destiny. It would be wrong also to assume that God’s electing love stems from what he knows men will or will not do.” In making this


61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.


statement, Sullivan shows that his view of God’s knowledge, specifically His foreknowledge, influences his view of salvation.

The personhood and attributes of God are most fully expressed toward humanity in the person of Jesus. Sullivan wrote, “Christ imparted to man a ‘new’ consciousness of God because of His abiding consciousness of the Father.” For Sullivan, the life of Jesus validates the message He proclaims about God, a message that is fully validated in Scripture.

**Doctrine on the Condition of Man**

The *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000* states that man was originally created by God innocent of sin and with freedom of choice. The confession further says that man fell from his original innocence when in exercising that choice, he sinned against God. In doing so, the human race inherits a nature and an environment that is inclined toward sin, acts on that sinful nature, and is under condemnation for that sin. With regard to man’s condition, Sullivan wrote, “The doctrine of man may be the most crucial theological precept of our time. Before anyone can have a sense of evangelism and even a measure of self-discipline, he must formulate his own beliefs related to the doctrine of man.”

Sullivan sees man’s condition as paradoxical. Man has value and worth and is the crown of God’s creative work, yet he is a fallen sinner capable of the most monstrous

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acts. He wrote, “At the cross we see man at his most desperate time. He clenches his fist, waves it in God’s face in rebellion then crucifies God’s Son. He seeks to destroy God’s work. But the very fact that God allowed His Son to die on the cross shows man’s worth.” The coexisting worthlessness and value of the nature of man drives Sullivan’s view of the doctrine of man—one that acknowledges the fall as man’s nature and redemption as man’s opportunity.

Sullivan believes in man’s sinful nature but he chooses to let man’s potential in God’s love drive his overall view of humanity. For instance he believes that all men are in a relationship with God and are sustained by Him. Some are in a saving relationship and some are not, but all of humanity is sustained by God. Man is given the capacity to reach his potential when he becomes aware of his nature in light of God’s nature. Without this conscious awareness of himself, the gospel can have little impact on a man’s life. Sullivan also places value in the idea that man is a personal being as he is engaged in personal relationship with others. He wrote, “We look into a crowd and there is Bill, Joe and Jim. They are persons. We call them by name. We agree. We disagree. But we do not ignore them. They too are persons.”

Sin causes man to struggle in all three qualities of personhood—constant relationship with God, conscious relationship with himself, and personal relationship with

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70 Ibid.


72 Ibid.
others. Sullivan makes the distinction between sin and sins and cautions against forming an imbalanced view where one is given more attention over the other.\textsuperscript{73} For instance, he believes that to deal solely with sin as sinful nature risks thinking of sin only in terms of an idea or an abstract concept. He also believes that to become preoccupied with sins risks either legalism that leads to self-righteousness or hopelessness that stems from frustration over never being good enough.\textsuperscript{74} Man’s depraved condition is a direct result of a sinful nature that will sin.

Sullivan describes the nature of sin and sinful actions from eight different perspectives.\textsuperscript{75} In its simplest form, sin is the failure to meet God’s standard of righteousness, the inability to attain the nature of God’s holiness or perfection. Sin is rebellion against God, an intentional and aggressive choice to move away from Him, His will, and His nature. Sin is self-injury and abuse. Sullivan likens this type of internal maladjustment to the biblical word iniquity.

Sin is also self-centeredness that attempts to usurp the authority of God in one’s life. Self-centeredness is a reflection of man’s dissatisfaction with his status as a created being. Sin is sensuality in thought and in action. Sullivan describes this aspect of sin as being controlled by the desires of the flesh and succumbing to those actions that violate God’s pure nature. Sin is disobedience to God. While disobedience and rebellion are similar, Sullivan draws a distinction between the two. Rebellion is much more

\textsuperscript{73}Ibid., 34.


\textsuperscript{75}Sullivan, “Baptist Doctrine,” 36-37.
aggressive and does not necessarily seek to rationalize behavior against the standards set by God as much as it tends to define acceptable behavior according to the standards of the individual. Finally, Sullivan views sin as unbelief. Unbelief is not just an intellectual refusal to accept certain facts. For Sullivan, unbelief is the refusal to commit to what is known. For instance, the Pharisees did not debate that Lazarus had been raised from the dead. They believed the event, intellectually, but they sought to kill Jesus because of their unbelief, their refusal to commit themselves to the claims of Jesus.

This condition of man and the sinful nature in to which he is born has devastating consequences. Sullivan identified three of these consequences in particular. Guilt is one consequence of sin. Sullivan equated Isaiah’s realization of being undone (Isaiah 6) with the awareness of guilt. He wrote, “There is an unraveled, unmanageable, loosened thread in his life that he cannot pick up.”76 The second consequence of sin is self-defeat, despair and anxiety. The third consequence to sin is suffering and death. Sullivan wrote, “Whenever there is sin you will find suffering. This is the normative pattern.”77

The sinful nature and condition of man is what drives Sullivan to do the work that he was called to do. He believes that the redemptive work of Christ on the cross is the only hope for man who is born with an inclination toward sin that is strong enough to virtually guarantee that he will sin. Since sin is universal, the Great Commission is necessary in order for the gospel to be effectual in its restoration of man.

76 Ibid., 38.
77 Ibid.
Doctrine on the Work of Christ

Sullivan’s view of Christ and His work fits well within the confession contained in the *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000*. He is not surprised by the difficulty of belief in the virgin birth of Jesus given that even Joseph and Mary required angelic revelation in order to believe. But Sullivan expressed the importance of this belief when he wrote, “To work through any misgivings or doubts concerning the birth of the Son of God is essential if we are ever to see the glory involved in the Christmas event.”\(^7^8\) The virgin birth is an important doctrine for Sullivan because he sees it as making possible the “wonderful union of the human divine.”\(^7^9\) Not only does the virgin birth make it possible for Jesus to be all God and all man at the same time, it is also indispensable to the integrity of Scripture. Sullivan summed up the necessity of belief well when he wrote:

That night when the Word became flesh, a divine significance began anew for mankind. This was no ordinary birth. This would be no ordinary man. Once the world decides who he is, the how he got here will become easy. . . . Mankind will never behold the beauty of God’s Son until absolute awe characterizes this incomprehensible miracle.\(^8^0\)

The atonement for man’s sin made by Christ at the cross is central to Sullivan’s understanding of the work of Christ. The *Baptist Faith and Message* identifies the sinless life of Christ as prerequisite for His substitutionary death on the cross.\(^8^1\) Sullivan did the same when he wrote, “We must always seek to interpret the atonement of Christ in close relation to the life He lived among men. Because we see His works, we

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\(^7^9\) Ibid.

\(^8^0\) Ibid.

\(^8^1\) *The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000*, 8.
know who He is.” Sullivan gave his view of the doctrine of atonement when he wrote, “The doctrine of atonement concerns the means and conditions of the reconciliation by which man returns in complete communion with God. The basic assumptions of atonement are that through man’s fault, the natural relationship between God and man has been broken; and that this communion can be restored by the removal of sin.”

Sullivan interprets the atoning work of Christ in the New Testament within the framework of the Old Testament. The substitutionary nature of the atonement to which Sullivan subscribes is seen within his view of restoration references in the Old Testament. He wrote, “The means for restoration in the Old Testament references are considered to be payments or compensation for wrong; in sacrifices or offerings; by acceptance of suffering; by intercessory prayer; and, occasionally, in the prophetic writing, by repentance. The New Testament writings refer to atonement through the suffering and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross.” Christ’s atonement fulfilled the Old Testament sacrificial system in its entirety and established once and for all the opportunity for man’s sins to be forgiven.

Sullivan identified three truths that necessitated the work of Christ on the cross—the extreme cost of sin, the willingness for God to extend grace, and man’s need to respond with commitment to and belief in God. Sullivan wrote, “The cross is an

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84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.
absolute divine necessity in the plan of God for redeeming man. The cross . . . is not just an appropriate way, not just a helpful way, not a most revealing way. It is the only way God could have provided our salvation.\(^8^6\) Sullivan believes that the atoning work of Christ was necessary because of the difference between the nature of God and the nature of man. He also believes it to be necessary because of biblical revelation.\(^8^7\) Sullivan’s orthodoxy and adherence to the *Baptist Faith and Message* is readily seen in the closing paragraphs of one article:

> Modern man may not like to hear us speak of the vicarious and atoning death of Christ. He has been so saturated in humanism he may think that we who depend on Christ are weaklings. Faith is not weak when it comes to redemption. . . . Christ dies in our place, in our stead—not just on our behalf. He took our penalty, our curse and our stripes “that He might taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9).\(^8^8\)

In his lecture notes, Sullivan advanced the penal substitutionary model for the atonement by advocating the use of the term propitiation, pointing out that it is used four times in the New Testament (Rom 3:25, Heb 2:17, 1 John 2:1-2, 1 John 4:10).\(^8^9\)

> With regard to the resurrection of Christ, the *Baptist Faith and Message* says, “He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion.”\(^9^0\) Sullivan wrote, “Belief in Christ’s

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\(^8^7\) Ibid

\(^8^8\) Ibid.


\(^9^0\) *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 2000, 8.
resurrection is the chief test for the Christian faith."\textsuperscript{91} From a post-resurrection perspective, Sullivan believes that the cross must always be viewed and preached in light of the resurrection. He would not consider “leaving Christ on the cross” in his preaching. \textsuperscript{92} Instead, Sullivan wrote, “The glory of the death of Christ on the cross is the emptiness of the tomb on the dawn of Easter morning!”\textsuperscript{93} For Sullivan, the historical truth of the bodily resurrection of Jesus is the foundation upon which all of Christianity stands.

If the cross is the key to reconciliation, the High Priestly work of Christ is the key to ongoing advocacy. Sullivan believes that Jesus’ absence from His followers required explanation for “Christianity to remain a viable option for men’s loyalties.”\textsuperscript{94} He believes that the High Priestly office described in Hebrews satisfies the required explanation. The \textit{Baptist Faith and Message} uses the title Mediator for the exalted Christ, a term that is functionally the same as that of High Priest.\textsuperscript{95} Referring to the Old Testament office of High Priest, Sullivan wrote, “Though the people couldn’t see the high priest behind the veil, they could see and benefit from the evidence of his work.”\textsuperscript{96} Likewise, even though believers cannot physically see Jesus, they can see and benefit from the evidence of His work. The function of Jesus as High Priest is to restore

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{92}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95}\textit{The Baptist Faith and Message}, 2000, 8.
\end{flushright}
fellowship to believers who are disobedient and in violation of the covenant established
when they embrace the atoning work of Christ.

Ultimately for Sullivan, the work of Christ serves as God’s final word to
man. Sullivan views the atonement and high priestly responsibilities as the keys to
man’s initial and ongoing fellowship with God. Apart from Christ there is no fellowship.

**Doctrine on the Work of the Holy Spirit**

Sullivan believes that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit does not receive the same
level of treatment as other theological disciplines. He may reach this conclusion
because he ties much of the Spirit’s work to the illumination of the mysteries of God. He
wrote, “In all cases, ‘mystery’ means to reveal to the extent that human investigation and
intellect cannot understand. However, the Spirit of God can make it known to those who
live by faith.” Sullivan strongly believes, however, that the church must invest ample
time in understanding the relationship that the Spirit desires, corporately and individually,
because he believes that power for witnessing is the major work of the Holy Spirit
towards the church.

The *Baptist Faith and Message* makes several statements about the Holy
Spirit. It states, “Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts

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97 John Sullivan, “Jesus asks disciples: ‘What’s my line?’” *Florida Baptist


Christ.” Sullivan concurred when he wrote, “God transcends the mind of the natural man but He allows believers to embrace the full activity of God.” Furthermore he wrote, “The Holy Spirit is inseparably related to Christ. He never works apart from Jesus Christ.” In keeping with the *Baptist Faith and Message*, Sullivan believes that conversion and subsequently, church membership are dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit binds the church together in a common life, love and unity and gives spiritual gifts that empower the church to serve God and accomplish His will.

Sullivan sees the Spirit as vital to church unity, but he also sees the Spirit as central to Christian character. He wrote, “The divine Spirit is very prominent in the Bible, an indispensable element of the Christian life.” Holy living in the personal lives of converted people is the Spirit’s primary role among believers. The *Baptist Faith and Message* states, “He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church.” Sullivan believes that the spiritual gifts are given to believers in order to advance the kingdom.

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106 Ibid.

Sullivan believes that the Spirit convicts men of sin and illumines them concerning the truth of Christ. The Spirit is the active agent in a person’s repentance and faith, and it is by the Spirit that believers experience adoption as children of God.¹⁰⁸ Sullivan believes that every aspect of salvation and the Christian life is related to the work of the Holy Spirit and if He was not actively involved in the lives of men, then neither salvation nor the Christian life would exist.

**Doctrine on Salvation and the Christian Life**

The *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000* defines salvation as the redemption of the whole man that can only come from personal faith in Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁹ The Baptist concept of salvation transcends a moment in time and is understood as an ongoing process that is realized ultimately in terms of the believer’s abiding presence with Christ, now and in the future. Therefore, the essence of salvation is captured in not just one word but in four—regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification.¹¹⁰

Sullivan believes that man is a free being whose sinful nature keeps him from fellowship with God. Salvation is God’s remedy for that broken fellowship. Sullivan wrote, “Salvation is all that God has done in Christ for man.”¹¹¹ He further wrote, “The Christian life is a life of salvation; of union with Christ and justification.”¹¹² With regard

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¹¹⁰Ibid.


¹¹²Sullivan, “Baptist Doctrine,” 42.
to salvation from a New Testament perspective Sullivan wrote, “Salvation is spoken of as a fact accomplished, a continual relationship and completed consummation.”

Sullivan seems to place the strength of salvation in the atonement of Christ at the cross. With regard to the cross, Sullivan wrote, “We must preach that this is God’s elected way to save us as well as his only way to save us.” The atonement makes forgiveness possible. Humanity is not made up of innocent weaklings but guilty sinners. Sullivan wrote, “We are cleansed and restored through the blood of Christ.” This cleansing is the removal of the moral barrier to fellowship that creates a condition for fellowship to be established. Forgiveness makes reconciliation possible. Sullivan sees reconciliation as a reconnection with God’s eternal purposes for people. Ultimately, forgiveness and reconciliation make possible adoption—a status granted by God to those who have been saved that reflects a legal claim to the eternal riches of God.

Sullivan describes justification and sanctification in simple terms that reflect the description given by the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000. Sullivan wrote,

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113Ibid.


116Ibid.

117Sullivan, “Baptist Doctrine,” 44.


119Ibid.
“Sanctification” and “justification” are two strong redemptive words. . . . here are some conclusions: justification is God turning man to God; sanctification is, once turned, we are God’s people; justification is the righteousness of God reflected toward us; sanctification is the holiness of God reflected through us.120

Sullivan believes that a redeemed person, one that has been justified and sanctified should also be recognizable. The outward appearance of salvation is not just a theoretical possibility.121 He wrote, “It is a sad error to say a person can come under the atonement of Jesus Christ and continue in the same sinful patterns of life.”122 For Sullivan, salvation and the Christian life are inseparable. He does believe that the New Testament separates salvation and obedience, but that the obedience is a demonstration of love toward Christ who saves.

Sullivan believes that salvation results in a life that is free to live in obedience to Christ.123 Salvation and the Christian life begin with repentance. He believes that repentance is the change of mind, heart, and life that is brought about by Christ and is first in conversion.124 Sullivan believes that repentance is signified by a change of mind, conduct, and feeling. He wrote, “There is no such thing as instant Christianity. For it is for naught if there is no conviction of sin, no change, or no repentance.”125 True conversion results in real change.

120Ibid.


122Ibid.

123Sullivan, “Baptist Doctrine,” 42.


125Ibid.
For Sullivan, the beginning of the Christian life is marked by the baptism of the Spirit expressed symbolically in the baptism by water. He wrote, “The baptism of the Holy Spirit begins with conviction and culminates in salvation that positions us into the body of Christ. Spiritual baptism is an experience that brings the new believer into the family of God.” The water baptism symbolizes a new direction for the believer. Sullivan views the water baptism as the initiation into the Christian life, a testimony to a person’s willingness to follow Christ and obey Him.

To illustrate the Christian life of obedience, Sullivan pointed to the Christian life as pictured in the Scriptures. The Christian life is a pilgrimage and the believer can trust that God will lead the way. The Christian life is a voyage and God is the compass providing direction. The Christian life is a battle and a struggle but God is an ever-present help. The Christian life is a race and God provides encouragement along the way. All of these pictures of the Christian life are made possible because of the strength of the name by which men are saved—the name of Jesus.

Sullivan believes that the normal life for the believer is the abundant life. He wrote, “The problem is so many people live subnormal Christian lives that when it does become normal, it may look abnormal. Anything less than abundance and fullness is abnormal for any Christian.” Sullivan believes that Christ produces abundance in the

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127 Ibid.

128 Ibid. All the information in the paragraph is taken from this text.

life of a believer and that the Christian is able to live that life in the present. In describing the abundant life, Sullivan drew from the influence of Francis W. Dixon. He described the Christian life as one that pleases God, establishes a dependency on the Father, celebrates victory and experiences peace and joy.\textsuperscript{130} Sullivan admits though that while these characteristics of the Christian life are easily spoken, they are not necessarily easily lived.

For Sullivan, Bible study is essential to the abundant Christian experience. Naturally, studying the Bible must be accompanied by practical application of its precepts if it is going to make a difference, but Sullivan has written that Bible study must be a way of life for a believer.\textsuperscript{131} Sullivan insists that the Bible gives the believer an objective standard by which he can examine his life. The Christian life is one of self-examination that leads to self-knowledge.\textsuperscript{132} Sullivan referenced A. W. Tozer when he wrote about the significant objects of self-evaluation such as priorities in achievements, thoughts, finances, time and relationships. He wrote, “When we take time to inventory our lives there will be an inevitable need for decisions to be made. God expects more from all of us than He is receiving.”\textsuperscript{133} In response to what he feels is an intense opposition to committed Christianity, Sullivan wrote,

\begin{quote}
I have never observed much growth in the Christian life when a person was content with the shallows of life rather than seeking some of the depth and zeal of
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\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
Christian reality. Personal growth begins with private devotion. We must care for the little things in our life. If we neglect those little things, we will fall little by little. “Lite” religion is not sufficient for the heavy duty of the battle. The Christian life is not a playground. It is a battleground.\(^\text{134}\)

Ultimately, Sullivan sees the Christian life as a life of discipline that seeks to imitate Christ. He admits that believers will be confronted with their limitations very quickly as they try to imitate the character of Jesus, but they must recognize the potential of imitation and the impact it can have on society.\(^\text{135}\) The disciplined life creates values that enable believers to effectively imitate Christ in four distinct areas. The Christian life will give consideration to others feelings and rights. It will respect property, love justice and insist on mercy. It will value human life, a man’s dignity and the value of his work. It will grant a generous love for people, an appreciation for common decency and a capacity for loyalty. Sullivan wrote, “Having the audacity to imitate the character of Christ will mean a disciplined life that binds us to service and devotion.”\(^\text{136}\) In order for this type of imitation to occur, Christ must become the consuming thought of the believer’s mind, the passion of the believer’s spirit, and the love of the believer’s life.\(^\text{137}\)

**Doctrine on the Church**

While Southern Baptist churches take on different personalities and emphasize different aspects of corporate life, there are some themes that are held in common by

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\(^{135}\)John Sullivan, “Effective Christians imitate Jesus’ life,” *Florida Baptist Witness*, November 15, 2001. All the information in this paragraph is taken from this text.

\(^{136}\)Ibid.

many, if not most, Southern Baptist churches and these themes are captured in the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000. Article VI of the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000 states,

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. . . . Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.  

The principles of the doctrine of the church highlighted in the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000 are also reflected in Sullivan’s articles about the church. While Sullivan believes that the doctrine of redemption, not the doctrine of the church, is the most important doctrine, he still speaks passionately about the church and its mission. He would agree with Roger Olson who wrote, “When it comes to evangelical identity, I believe that ecclesiology and especially polity are secondary to the gospel itself. However, I do suspect that free church ecclesiology is more conducive to life centered around the gospel—that is, evangelical spirituality—than alternative visions of the church and churchly practices.”

Sullivan believes that the church is a visible congregation made up of people who have been converted. He wrote, “Christ came to establish the church comprised of converted people. There can be no true church without the new birth.” He believes that


the church is a physical presence on earth. He wrote, “There is an actual, visible, earthly company which is addressed as ‘the Body of Christ.’”

The *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000* extends the “Body of Christ” concept beyond the local congregation to include “all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.” Sullivan agrees, stating, “There has always been a people of God comprised of those who have entered into a covenant with God through faith in Jesus Christ.”

Sullivan emphasized the people aspect over the institutional aspect of the church. He wrote, “The church is comprised of people, not things. The church is wherever the people gather for worship, education, evangelism and praise. Buildings only house the church. They do not constitute it. . . . The church is the gathered and the scattered.” For Sullivan the church does not just carry out the mission of Christ. The church is the mission of Christ. In a reference to Lesslie Newbiggin, Sullivan pointed out that what Christ left behind after His ascension was not a book, nor a creed, nor a system of thought or rule of life, but a visible community of people. Sullivan stated, “The church must become her message.” This statement reflects Sullivan’s desire to see credibility in the church’s witness stem from holiness in its character.

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142 Ibid.


145 Ibid.


In his analysis of the ecclesiology of free churches, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen describes the church as the fellowship of believers and identifies it with the label, “Believers’ church.”\(^{148}\) He described this ecclesiology when he wrote, “First, the Believers’ church, although outwardly constituted by volunteers, is Christ’s church and not theirs. . . . Second, membership in the Believers’ church is in fact voluntary and witting.”\(^{149}\) Similarly, Sullivan wrote, “Jesus Christ is the head of the church. We are part of the body. We need to find our place . . . of service under His leadership.”\(^{150}\)

Another aspect of the church as a fellowship of believers is the concept of the priesthood of all believers which Kärkkäinen views in two ways, both of which are affirmed by the *Baptist Faith and Message* when it states in addition to exercising the gifts, “In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord.”\(^{151}\) Kärkkäinen rightly stated that the ecclesiological principles regarding the priesthood of all believers are seen in the Baptist insistence on the right and gifting of each believer to do ministry and the immediate access to God without a human professional mediator.\(^{152}\) This view describes Sullivan’s understanding of the priesthood of believers as well. He wrote, “Of course, the church has been designed for everybody to be somebody. Ministry and education must be implemented by the laity—ministers of the


\(^{149}\)Ibid.


\(^{151}\)The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000, 13.

\(^{152}\)Kärkkäinen, 65.
manifold grace of God.” Sullivan believes that the Holy Spirit empowers believers to do the work of ministry and that they have direct access to Christ for direction.

Sullivan believes strongly in the identification of the church as a fellowship of believers. For Sullivan, true fellowship happens when Christians share in a common life. The one ingredient that makes this shared life possible is love. This love that is shared for Christ and for each other becomes a unifying force in church membership so that the objectives and plans of the church become those of each member.

Perhaps the most passionate expression of Sullivan’s view of the church came in a message delivered while he was the president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. He stated,

The church is not just another institution. The church is the body of our Lord Jesus that He called into existence to do His work when He ascended back to the Father. It is not just another institution – it is God’s very best for mankind. The thing that holds this world together is the New Testament church. Take the church out of the world and the world disintegrates. Take the church out of the world and we find the rampant disease of sin abounding even more. It is that integrating force of all humanity. You and I must take seriously the charge and challenge of our Lord. . . . All of these things come together for one solid reason, and that’s God strategy for world evangelization.

Likewise, in his articles about the church, Sullivan consistently refers back to the nature of the church being the body of Christ and, therefore, the modern expression of His presence on earth. He is also extremely passionate about the mission of the church ultimately being world evangelization. He wrote, “The church must penetrate every part


155 John Sullivan, “President’s Address,” in Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1981.
of the globe by every possible means with the message that Jesus is Lord. Our understanding cannot be restricted to a concept of ‘foreign missions.’ It is the church’s total mission to go unto all the world.”

Sullivan believes that the church should do all that Christ says must be done. He groups all of the work of the church under four distinct functions that are interdependent and interrelated: to worship, to proclaim, to educate, and to minister. Sullivan’s functions line up with Rick Warren’s purposes of the church: worship, evangelism (to proclaim), discipleship (to educate), service (to minister), and fellowship. Chuck Lawless adds a sixth function of the church—to encounter God in prayer. Sullivan would agree that fellowship and prayer should be integral ingredients in the life of a church. They are foundational to the other functions and those functions are most effectively fulfilled when they are done in the context of prayer and fellowship.

Sullivan loves the church. He sees it as Christ’s mission and the instrument of Christ’s ongoing mission to save the world. His missional priorities give evidence to the central role of the church in fulfilling the Great Commission. He believes that evangelism without apology will result in new believers being gathered into new church starts and existing churches, strengthening those churches to do the work of the kingdom. These priorities have defined Sullivan’s ministry as executive-director treasurer.

\[156\] Sullivan, “Baptist Doctrine,” 52.

\[157\] Ibid., 53.

\[158\] Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 107.

\[159\] Chuck Lawless, Discipled Warriors (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 25.
Conclusion

The biblical and theological foundations held by Sullivan are affirmed in the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000. He holds to a high view of Scripture that reveals the nature and character of a loving, sovereign, Triune God. He believes in the natural, sinful state of man who is lost and destined to hell apart from the saving knowledge of the gospel. He believes that the primary descriptor for the work of Christ toward salvation is atonement. The atoning work of Christ makes possible every aspect of salvation: regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. He believes that when man by faith and repentance embraces God’s provision of salvation in the cross, he will be saved and eternally secured in that salvation. He believes that man cannot experience salvation and continue to live without a changed life. This changed life is to be a testimony to the power of God and that when combined with the testimonies of other believers gathered together in the church, the kingdom will become attractive to the world. He believes that the church is the mission of Christ and the church does the mission of Christ. These beliefs have given Sullivan a sense of urgency for evangelism and continue to energize his love for missions and influence his missiology.
CHAPTER 4

THE MISSIOLOGY OF T. G. JOHN SULLIVAN

The last decade of the twentieth century saw much change in the landscape of Southern Baptist life. The Southern Baptist Convention was in the waning years of the controversy known as Conservative Resurgence and with the appointment of Albert Mohler as president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1993, and Ken Hemphill as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1994, most if not all of the Southern Baptist agencies and seminaries were being led by theological and biblical conservatives.¹

The Church Growth Movement, which began in 1955 with Donald McGavran’s book *The Bridges of God*, was gaining momentum in Southern Baptist churches with the publishing of Thom Rainer’s book *The Book of Church Growth*.² In 1995, Rick Warren, the founding pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church wrote *The Purpose-Driven Church*. This book challenged church leaders to look beyond the

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²Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 21. Rainer wrote this book when he was the senior pastor of Green Valley Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1994, he was appointed by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to become the founding Dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism. This book became a landmark book for Southern Baptists looking to apply the church growth principles of Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner. In the preface, Wagner calls this book the “first true textbook of the Church Growth Movement.”
principles of church growth and focus on church health. Warren wrote, “The key issue for churches in the twenty-first century will be church health, not church growth.”

As Sullivan made the transition from being the pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church to executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist State Convention his missiology had to transition as well—not necessarily his understanding of mission but his role in planning and implementing strategy to accomplish missions. He began by focusing his priorities on evangelism, new church starts and developing existing churches. His missiology would be further developed as he responded to humanitarian needs through disaster relief efforts and expanded Florida’s area of responsibility to include Haiti and Cuba. This chapter will examine the missiology of John Sullivan.

**Great Commission**

Sullivan’s missiology of the Great Commission stems from his theological convictions concerning the nature of God and the mission of the church. In his sermon to the Florida Baptist Convention in 2000, he said, “If we believe in God, we must believe in missions. It is in the very nature and character of God that the deepest foundation of

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3Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 17, emphasis original. This book told the story of the planting and subsequent growth of Saddleback Valley Community Church. It very quickly became a model for established churches to recapture their mission and vision, as well as, a model for new church starts.


the missionary enterprise is to be discovered.” Sullivan tied the missionary enterprise to the life of every believer. Echoing the concerns of Phillips Brooks, Sullivan declared that the Christian faith is only complete when believers make every effort to make Christ known to the world. A faith that does not include making Christ known is both “unreal” and “insignificant.” Sullivan believes that every Christian is responsible for being obedient to the Great Commission.

Missiologist David Bosch concurs. He wrote that the mission is a “fundamental reality” of the Christian life. Expressed in a similar way to Sullivan’s message, Bosch wrote, “The Christian faith, I submit, is intrinsically missionary. . . . The entire Christian existence is to be characterized as missionary existence . . . [and] the church on earth is by its very nature missionary.” Sullivan holds to a similar view concerning the centrality of the missionary nature of the church. He said, “There were no missionary organizations in the early church. No effort was made to promote a missionary program, but the religion spread at once and everywhere. The genius of

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7Ibid.


universal extension was in the church.”¹⁰ The inherent nature of missionary activity in the church was described well by Robert Speer when he wrote, “The new Christians were drawn together spontaneously by the uniting power of a common life, and they felt as spontaneously the outward pressure of a world mission.”¹¹

For Sullivan, the key to the Great Commission is the health and evangelistic zeal of the local church. Sullivan views the church as God’s mission. Christ came to justify and sanctify people who by faith and repentance would trust Him as Savior and become a part of His church. In this sense people are the mission of God and when they belong to His church, God’s mission is accomplished in them. In turn, the church is invited to participate in God’s mission, becoming instruments of the Great Commission through missions.¹² Sullivan believes that the more a church realizes that God’s mission is accomplished in them, the more likely that church will actively participate in the ongoing mission of God.

Bosch also distinguishes mission (singular) from missions (plural). He wrote,

The first refers primarily to the missio Dei (God’s mission), that is, God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. Missio Dei enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people. Missions (the missiones ecclesiae: the missionary ventures of the church), refer to particular forms, related to specific times, places, or needs, of participation in the missio Dei.¹³


¹³Bosch, Transforming Mission, 9.
Ron Rogers agrees. In writing about God’s purpose in the world, he stated, “Mission is the broader term, the all-encompassing concept, and may be defined as ‘the total redemptive purpose of God to establish His kingdom.’”

Reiterating these themes and confirming the centrality of the church in the advancement of the Great Commission, Sullivan said, “The normal behavior for a Christian is missionary behavior.” To give primacy to the church as the basic entity for fulfilling the Great Commission, he added, “There is no way to reach or change our world except through our churches. We can be encouragers and equippers at the institutional level, but the church is the basic unit God ordained for the reaching of mankind.”

The primacy of concern for churches is evident in the published mission statement of the Florida Baptist Convention, “The Mission of the Florida Baptist Convention is to inspire and to equip—through word and deed—Florida Baptist Churches and associations to accomplish the Great Commission.”

Sullivan’s missiology is clearly rooted in a desire to fulfill the Great Commission personally and through the local church, but there is a difference in leading a church to engage the Great Commission and leading an organization that supports the

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15 John Sullivan, “Missions” (sermon preached at the Florida Baptist State Convention in Orlando, Florida on November 13, 2012), photocopy.

16 Ibid.

17 Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1999, 65. The SBOM adopted this mission statement on September 10, 1999, as the basis for program development, calendar commitments and budget priorities for the Florida Baptist Convention 2001-2003. As of 2013, the mission statement had not changed.
work of those churches. The priorities of the mission are the same, but the missionary activity must be different, or else the state convention may tend to function more like a parachurch organization than an organization of cooperating churches.  

In his sermon to the Florida Baptist Convention in 2007, he said,  

“It could well be that we have become so infatuated with what is going on in the world that we have forgotten about going into the world. The world has taken advantage of our negligence regarding taking the gospel to all mankind. The Great Commission is the only plan Jesus gave to establish His Kingdom. It was His last and most burning concept to leave with the redeemed.”

Sullivan believes that the churches have been given the power and authority to reach the world by being obedient to the Great Commission.

**Supporting the Evangelistic Mandate**

Sullivan believes that the churches of the state convention must be evangelistic. In a 1996 article, Sullivan wrote, “Someone has said, ‘The church that does not evangelize will die.’ Not so! The church that does not evangelize is already dead.”

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18 Jerry Rankin, “The Present Situation in Missions,” in Missiology, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 46-47. Rankin identifies parachurch groups as organizations that are independent of local church authority and form to meet a specialized need or engage a specific area of the world. There are certain missionary activities that the state convention supports that resemble parachurch ministries such as disaster relief, mobile dental units and health clinics, and college campus ministries. However, these ministries are performed under the authority of the churches of the Florida Baptist Convention with the intention that beneficiaries of these ministries will be connected to and discipled by a Florida Baptist Church. The state convention performs these types of ministries when the resources that are required exceed that which a single church could provide.

19 John Sullivan, “Cooperation—The Mysterious Miracle of SBC” (sermon preached at the Florida Baptist State Convention in Daytona Beach, Florida on November 13, 2007), photocopy.

When Sullivan uses the term evangelism, he is not just speaking of exposure to the gospel. He believes that the central theme of evangelism is the good news of Christ and the cross.\(^{21}\) He would agree with Chuck Lawless who wrote, “Biblical evangelism is about telling that good news. Anything less than the telling of this good news is not evangelism.”\(^{22}\) He also believes that evangelism should seek a response. He wrote, “We do not need to go through every door simply to expose our state to the gospel. We need to go through every door to confront them with new life in Christ. Evangelism is most effective when it asks for life changes.”\(^{23}\)

Sullivan believed that evangelism of this nature would result in church growth. Two definitions of evangelism explain Sullivan’s view of evangelism well. In acknowledging that evangelism is one of the essential elements of mission, Bosch wrote the following:

> Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin, and inviting them to become living members of Christ’s earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.\(^{24}\)

Each of the elements of this definition is evident in Sullivan’s theology as described in chapter three. A second and very similar definition is offered by Rogers as he placed the emphasis of evangelism in the center of the missionary purposes of the church. He wrote,


\(^{22}\)Chuck Lawless, *Discipled Warriors* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 95, emphasis original.


\(^{24}\)Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 10.
Evangelism is the communication of the Good News of salvation in the power of the Holy Spirit so that people have a valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and become responsible members of one of His churches.  

When Sullivan became the executive director-treasurer, an evangelism division had already been formed within the Florida Baptist State Convention. Since evangelism had always been a priority for him as a pastor, this division became a priority for him. He realized, however, that as a pastor he could mobilize the people of his church for evangelism, but ultimately, the success of the state convention with regard to evangelizing the people of Florida rested with the churches and their willingness to evangelize. He believes that any work of evangelism not anchored to the church will become shallow. He began to look for ways to strengthen and encourage the evangelistic efforts of the churches.

In 1989, Sullivan responded to the question, “What are you going to do to give greater visibility to evangelism?” He had just appointed a new Evangelism Division director and needed to convey his views and expectations of the Evangelism Division. Sullivan responded with the following suggestions:

1. Develop regional and contract workers to train local congregations in personal evangelism.
2. Work with associational leaders in key areas to develop more effective evangelism strategies.

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26John Sullivan, “Interview by Don Hepburn,” December 20, 2006, interview tape 06 – 087 #1, transcript, Sullivan Oral History Collection, Florida Baptist Building, Jacksonville, FL. All the information in this paragraph is from this transcript.


3. Promote evangelistic needs of individual cities through the Maguire State Mission Offering.
4. Provide financial support and encouragement for associational and/or regional evangelism conferences.
5. Develop strategies to give stronger emphasis to evangelistic aspects of backyard Bible clubs and vacation Bible schools.
6. Help local churches follow up on decisions made through convention-sponsored summer mission programs.²⁹

Sullivan began immediately allocating additional resources to the division.

Table 1 shows how the budget for the evangelism division increased from 1990 to 2005 and how the structure changed over that same period of time.³⁰

Within five years Sullivan had begun identifying types of evangelism and assigning departmental tasks to meet the needs of churches in specific evangelistic areas such as personal evangelism and mass evangelism. The addition of the Prayer and Spiritual Awakening Department reflected a growing opinion that not only did the health of churches rely on prayer, but that prayer could be used as an evangelistic method.³¹

²⁹Ibid. Sullivan listed a total of thirteen items for discussion. Items not listed deal with the publicity of the items mentioned or are specific to the hiring of Jerry Passmore as the evangelism division director.

³⁰The information in Table 1 was compiled from each Annual of the Florida Baptist Convention, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005. The budget allocation proposed reflects the next year’s allocation. The newly created Prayer and Spiritual Awakening Department was added to the Evangelism Division in the budget for 1998. The creation of this department increased the budget by $117,951. Without this new department, the Evangelism Division budget would have shown a decrease to $392,110. The already existing Collegiate Ministries Department was added to the Evangelism Division in the budget for 1999 and increased the overall division budget by $777,961. Beginning with the 2001 budget, the budgets began listing the personnel costs under the division and the program costs only under the departments. Because of this 2001 change, one can no longer ascertain the specific personnel costs associated with each department.

³¹For further discussion of the use of prayer as an evangelistic method see Ed Silvoso, That None Should Perish: How to Reach Entire Cities for Christ through Prayer Evangelism (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1994).
Table 1. Structure and budget allocation for the Evangelism Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>One division – Evangelism</td>
<td>$374,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Two Departments – Personal Evangelism, Mass Evangelism</td>
<td>$416,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Four Departments – Personal Evangelism, Mass Evangelism, Prayer and Spiritual Awakening, Collegiate</td>
<td>$1,660,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Four Departments – Personal/Student Evangelism, Evangelism Strategy, Prayer and Spiritual Awakening, Collegiate</td>
<td>$1,734,699</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The budget allocation for the Evangelism Division actually peaked in the 2009 budget at $1,822,846.\(^{32}\) The 2010 budget was the first decrease in the Evangelism Division budget ($1,746,131) in Sullivan’s tenure with the FBSC.\(^{33}\) This decrease was not intended to reflect a de-prioritizing of evangelism but was the result of an overall decrease in CP giving. Beginning in 2010 all of the divisions began experiencing significant decreases in budget allocations. The causes and implications of reduced CP giving will be explored in chapter 5.

**Supporting the Cultural Mandate**

Sullivan sees the cultural mandate in Scripture as an opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ. He wrote, “Our gospel must meet the needs of our

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community. . . . There must be a mark in our ministry that says, ‘We really do care.’”\textsuperscript{34} He maintains a priority of proclamation in his view of evangelism, but he recognizes that much of the conversation about missions now involves the cultural mandate. Sullivan believes that one of the built-in strengths of cooperation is the ability to mobilize churches to work together to meet needs in ways that a single church could not.

For instance, following the devastation in Haiti caused by Hurricane Georges in 1998, Sullivan remarked, “We, as Florida Baptists, have made a commitment to help the downtrodden and the hurting in the aftermath of natural disasters.”\textsuperscript{35} Sullivan maintained his priority on evangelism even as food and water were being distributed in Haiti. He emphasized the truth that only the gospel had the true power to change Haiti. In tying the two mandates together, Sullivan quoted Fritz Albert, director of missions for the Artibonite Association in Haiti who, after the first shipment of rice had been delivered, said, “Now people will be ready for the Lord.”\textsuperscript{36} Both Sullivan and Albert believed that meeting the felt needs of the Haitian people through Christian service would give them the opportunity to share the gospel through Christian proclamation.

This view captures in practice what Paul Hiebert described in principle. In writing about a global perspective of missions, Hiebert wrote,

Colonial missions focused on the ultimate human need for salvation; anticolonial missions looked to the felt needs of food, material well-being, and self-esteem. Today we realize that we may need to start with felt needs, but we must move on


\textsuperscript{36}Ibid.
from them to the ultimate needs of salvation, reconciliation, justice and peace which only the gospel addresses.\(^{37}\)

C. Peter Wagner traces the cultural mandate back to the Garden of Eden as he interprets God’s delegation of authority over the earth to Adam and Eve as treating creation the way God would treat it.\(^{38}\) Wagner further wrote, “No one can be a kingdom person without loving one’s neighbor. No Christian can please God without fulfilling the cultural mandate.”\(^{39}\) Bosch used different terms but said the same thing. He wrote,

Therefore, neither a secularized church (that is, a church which concerns itself only with this-worldly activities and interests) nor a separatist church (that is, a church which involves itself only in soul-saving and preparation of converts for the hereafter) can faithfully articulate the *missio Dei*.\(^{40}\)

The cultural mandate has become an integral part of the discussion of mission and the missionary purposes of the church. Ron Rogers wrote, “Discussions of the nature of the church’s missionary purpose over the last fifty years has centered on the two biblical mandates. Generally, missiologists have spoken of these as the cultural mandate and the evangelistic mandate.”\(^{41}\) If the church must be involved in both, then the state convention must be involved in strengthening and encouraging the churches in both.


\(^{39}\)Ibid., 12-13.

\(^{40}\)Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 11.

\(^{41}\)Rogers, “The Missionary Purpose of the Church,” 121.
Wagner drew lines of distinction within the cultural mandate. He identified two spheres of the cultural mandate—social action and social service.\textsuperscript{42} Under Sullivan’s leadership, the FBSC has participated in both spheres of the cultural mandate. Two examples of such involvement will serve to identify Sullivan’s missiology with regard to the cultural mandate.

**Involvement in social action.** In Sullivan’s first year as executive-director, the Florida Baptist State Convention convened a special session. The meeting took place in Orlando, Florida on September 8-9, 1989.\textsuperscript{43} The purpose of this meeting was for Florida Baptists to consider three things and to pass a resolution that would summarize Florida Baptist consensus on these matters. Florida Baptists were being asked to consider 1) the sanctity of human life that has been created in the image of God, 2) that government has the responsibility of protecting human life, and 3) that Florida Baptists recognize the need and accept the responsibility of meeting the needs that are created by the abortion circumstance.\textsuperscript{44}

The meeting included an appearance by Bob Martinez who at that time was the governor of Florida.\textsuperscript{45} He was introducing legislation that would prohibit the use of

\textsuperscript{42}Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, 36. Wagner defined social service as relief and development. Relief comes after the fact and treats the symptoms of human need. For example, Southern Baptists engage in relief efforts following a natural disaster. Development seeks to address the causes of human problems. Development would include establishing a medical clinic. Both of these ministries are classified as social services. He defined social action as the kind of ministry that attempts to change social structures. Wagner relates social action to socio-political change.

\textsuperscript{43}Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1989, 61.

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 62.

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., 64-65.
public funds to promote or perform abortions and would restrict late-term abortions.

Convention President Bill Billingsley and Bobby Welch, pastor of First Baptist Church, Daytona Beach, Florida were the original influencers for this special session. Welch called for churches to participate in an anti-abortion rally in Tallahassee.

The convention formed and adopted a resolution during that special session. Sullivan closed the meeting with his address. He affirmed the work that Florida Baptists had accomplished but said, “We’re not here just to pass another resolution. You cannot resolve the moral problems of the world. . . . If you and I do not come to the place that we are ready and willing to take our stand on the moral and ethical issues that confront this nation, I can guarantee you it’s going to be bad.”

While one cannot presume to know Sullivan’s thoughts about the special session, it is worth noting that with all of the opportunities to address specific moral issues with this type of activity, Sullivan has never orchestrated a special session for the purpose of advancing a social action.

Sullivan did demonstrate very early in his tenure as executive director-treasurer that he would lead at the discretion and pleasure of the churches and that leadership required a voice. Concerning social action, Sullivan consistently used his column in the Florida Baptist Witness to convey a gospel perspective of various social and moral issues, but in doing so, he was being faithful to his calling as a preacher, not a lobbyist. While acknowledging the emotional, intellectual, and physiological factors of abortion, he wrote, “As a minister of the gospel, I maintain that the balance in the issue

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46 Ibid., 66.
must rest with basic theological principles as revealed in Scripture. Abortion for me is contrary to biblical principles.’”

**Involvement in social service.** Florida Baptists have been faithful to respond to the needs of the people of Florida in many different circumstances and contexts. On August 24, 1992, Hurricane Andrew made landfall near Homestead, Florida destroying entire neighborhoods. The storm destroyed 25,524 homes and damaged another 101,241 creating over $25 billion in damages. A report from the Dade County Grand Jury summarized the condition of South Dade well:

> The lack of adequate preparation by our community and our state was obvious. Even more obvious was the total lack of coordination that existed between the various disaster relief agencies after the hurricane had passed. No one was in charge. No one knew what to do. There was no plan. As a result, a large segment of our community that had been reduced to a 'third world' existence remained that way.

The hurricane damaged thirty-five Florida Baptist Convention churches and displaced many of those churches members. Sullivan responded by mobilizing disaster relief equipment and Florida Baptist State Convention staff for service in South Florida. He personally joined in the effort as he worked in a warehouse sorting commodities, eating

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49Ibid.

from the feeding units that were in place, and visiting as many pastors as he could to assess their needs and provide encouragement.

Sullivan realized that the convention lacked the resources it needed to respond adequately to a disaster of this magnitude. Denman wrote, “In the succeeding years, disaster relief became a priority for the Convention and was fully staffed and funded, carrying out more than 100 relief efforts since that time. With the passing of years, Florida Baptists are recognized as a leader in Southern Baptist disaster relief.” ⁵¹ In his column in the Florida Baptist Witness, Sullivan recognized the staff’s outstanding efforts, and seized the chance to celebrate cooperation as the spirit of Southern Baptists. He wrote, “For me, it has been one of the most affirming events of my ministry to see that not only are we ‘people of the Word,’ we are also ‘people of our word.’” ⁵²

In 1990, disaster relief efforts were orchestrated and funded by the Brotherhood Department of the Missions Division. That department was also responsible for Royal Ambassador training and volunteer construction mission trip coordination and those program costs are included until 2007. Table 2 shows the initial growth and subsequent decline in funding of Florida Baptist Disaster Relief under Sullivan. ⁵³

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⁵¹Ibid.


⁵³The information in Table 2 was compiled from each Annual of the Florida Baptist Convention, 1989-2012. Only the years with significant change are shown. Allocations from budget overages are not included. Prior to hurricane Andrew, disaster relief was almost non-existent. The responsibility for disaster relief came under the Brotherhood Department (Brotherhood became Men’s Department in 1996.) The budget restructuring of 2001 placed all personnel salaries and expenses under one item at the division level so that there was no way to ascertain the number of employees designated for disaster relief after 2000. The increased budget of the late nineties allowed for the
Table 2. Funding sources for disaster relief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Department Mission Action Budget</th>
<th>MSMO Budget</th>
<th>MSMO Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Brotherhood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$6,600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Brotherhood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$120,800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Men’s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$123,800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Men’s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$111,000</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$12,451.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Men’s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$177,529</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$8,309.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Men’s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$144,725</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>$33,612.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Men’s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$229,800</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$31,162.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Men’s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$233,150</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$30,207.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Men’s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$107,853</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$42,404.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Men’s</td>
<td></td>
<td>$118,608</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$39,592.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Men’s</td>
<td></td>
<td>$68,135</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$36,313.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Disaster Relief</td>
<td></td>
<td>$47,900</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$36,182.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Disaster Relief</td>
<td></td>
<td>$28,700</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$28,119.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Disaster Relief</td>
<td></td>
<td>$28,700</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

purchase of additional disaster relief mass feeding units. The table reveals that with competing priorities for CP receipts, the program aspect of disaster relief is currently funded largely by the Maguire State Mission Offering. Salaries and personnel expenses are not included in Table 2.
While many other events have shaped the way Sullivan responds to the cultural mandate, the special session on abortion and hurricane Andrew are given as examples because they occurred very early in Sullivan’s tenure as executive director-treasurer. In the years that would follow, Florida Baptists would address moral concerns by passing resolutions during the normal FBSC meetings. FBC churches and associations would be mobilized every year in disaster relief efforts in Florida and around the nation.

Sullivan’s missiology on the Great Commission is driven by a passion for evangelism, whether it is accomplished through proclamation or service. Reflecting on his thoughts from reading George Barna’s book, *The Frog in the Kettle*, Sullivan wrote, “If we do not take flexible and creative approaches to winning people to faith in Jesus Christ without the compromise of gospel principles we will find ourselves being numbed by the changes of the ‘90s.” Sullivan’s missiology has not changed with regard to the Great Commission in the twenty-first century.

**Church Planting**

Sullivan believes that starting new churches is a strategy for fulfilling the Great Commission. He also believes that new church starts are an indication of success in the Great Commission endeavor and will result from churches being strengthened and challenged in evangelism. In this sense, church planting is both a tool for evangelism and the result of evangelism. He has used the terms “church starting,” “starting new missions,” and “planting churches” to refer to church planting efforts. Until 1997, the

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term “church extension” was used to denote church planting departments.\textsuperscript{55} The Church Extension Department reported on their work using terms such as “new congregations” and “churches constituted.” The statistical summaries for the annuals report total number of churches and total number of church-type missions without reference to new work.

In 1998, the department name changed to Church Planting Department.\textsuperscript{56} The report in the 1998 Florida Baptist Annual reflected the importance of church planting within the convention stating, “The only way to obey the Great Commission is to plant churches! Only churches can carry out the specific functions outlined in the commission. For this reason, church planting is a top priority for the Florida Baptist Convention.”\textsuperscript{57}

Sullivan believes that church planting in Florida is the responsibility of the churches in Florida. He wrote, “I am sympathetic to the mission needs around the world. But if we are going to win Florida to Christ . . . we must get in the church starting business in an aggressive way.”\textsuperscript{58}

He reported that between 1991 and 1995, the Language

\textsuperscript{58} John Sullivan, “I don’t mind telling you,” \textit{Florida Baptist Witness}, May 19, 1990. All of the statistical information in this paragraph was taken from this article. Unfortunately, this article seems to be the only article that Sullivan wrote that specifically emphasized church planting. In other articles, he would mention church starting in the context of his three priorities, but most of his articles focused on either evangelism or cooperation, or they were doctrinal articles. His convention addresses were focused the same way. Therefore, the only way to determine Sullivan’s missiology on church planting is to look at the structures, budgets, and results of the church planting efforts of the convention. Donald McGavran suggested that denominational minutes (in this case annual reports) and budget distributions reveal true long range goals and provide an indication of the philosophy and main drives of the organization and subsequently its leadership. See Donald McGavran, \textit{Understanding Church Growth Fully Revised} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 156-57.
Missions Division projected a need to start 237 new missions in order to keep pace with projected population increases. This number was a significant increase over the 145 language churches started in the previous five years and would almost double the 255 total language churches in existence in 1990. He also reported the need to start twenty-five more African-American churches and 175 more Anglo churches.

Sullivan saw the need to plant new churches to keep pace with the projected population increase. The next twenty-five years of Sullivan’s tenure with the Florida Baptist Convention would be spent developing strategy and structure to implement that vision. Table 3 shows the ongoing organizational changes that Sullivan implemented in an effort to accommodate a changing church planting priority. Table 3 also demonstrates how difficult it was for Sullivan to structure the convention staff to accommodate church planting in a state as diverse as Florida.

The various organizational structures for church planting evolved as budget resources increased. As CP giving rose, Sullivan expanded the church planting structures to try to overcome the difficulties of church planting in Florida. Florida’s diverse ethnic population, multiple languages, geographical size and shape, and continuous growth were just some of the challenges.


60 An examination of the individual reports from the division directors and the department directors reveals how difficult accurate reporting can be. For instance in 1995, The Church Extension Department reported twenty-four new African American congregations while the African American Ministries Office reported thirty-four new congregations. This example is not meant to insinuate any misrepresentation, but to show that reporting can be difficult if terms, such as “new congregation” and reporting periods are not well-defined.
Table 3. Church planting organizational changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description of Church Planting Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-1992</td>
<td>Missions Division with Church Extension Department and Language Missions Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Missions Division: Church Extension Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Missions Division: Haitian Church Extension Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic Church Extension Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>Missions Division: Church Extension Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Missions Division: Haitian Church Extension Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic Church Extension Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic Church Extension Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American Ministries Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>Missions Division: Church Extension Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Missions Division: Haitian Church Extension Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic Church Extension Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American Ministries Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Missions Division: Church Planting Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Missions Division: Haitian Church Planting Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic and International Church Planting Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American Ministries Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2001</td>
<td>Missions Division: Church Planting Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Missions Division: Haitian Church Planting Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic and International Church Planting Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American Ministries Division: African American Church Planting Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2011</td>
<td>Missions Division: Church Planting Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Division: Language Church Planting Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American Ministries Division: African American Church Planting Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(no separate department 2002-2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Church Planting Group: African American Church Planting Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anglo Church Planting Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Church Planting Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban Impact Ministries Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-</td>
<td>Church Planting Group: English Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban Impact Ministries Team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The addition of the African American Ministries Office in 1995 reveals Sullivan’s willingness to continue to apply the principle of homogeneous units to church planting efforts in Florida. The homogeneous unit principle is based on the church growth
principle that Donald McGavran articulated very clearly when he wrote, “Men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers.” McGavran believed that ethnicity and language were significant factors in momentum for the spread of the gospel. He wrote, “…peoples become Christians fastest when least change of race or clan is involved.” Wagner applied the principle in a broader sense when he wrote, “The rationale upon which a homogeneous unit is determined is a group in which people can ‘feel at home.’”

As indicated by the organizational changes over time, Sullivan has seemingly embraced these principles and applied them to his missiology of church planting. Wagner recognized the success of the SBC when he wrote, “The current Southern Baptist philosophy is to reach all groups of American people on their own terms and assist them to develop their own kind of churches.” Florida’s diversity demands a church planting strategy that will provide the least amount of barriers to the faith. In embracing ethnic work in church planting, Sullivan has continued the church planting philosophy that has been a part of the heritage of the SBC.

As far back as the 1890s, Home Mission Board Corresponding Secretary (the equivalent of the present day president of North American Mission Board) I. T. Tichenor recognized that contextualized missions were needed for various homogeneous units and


63 Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 75.

64 Ibid., 12.
that these groups, varying from state to state, needed their own kind of church.\textsuperscript{65} Not only has the Florida Baptist Convention been involved in language and ethnic work, but within those categories, other work has been started. As of 2011, there were seven “cowboy churches” in the Florida Baptist Convention.\textsuperscript{66}

Even with the organizational changes, additions of field personnel and contract workers around the state, and focus on homogeneous units, Table A1 (see Appendix 1) reveals the difficulties of growth at the convention level. The data suggests that on average 120 new congregations must form in order to create a net increase of forty churches. Added to this suggestion is the assumption that the newly formed churches will require some time for development before they are able to give significant percentages of their income back to the Cooperative Program.

The financial demands of church planting include the salaries and program expenses of the church planting group, financial assistance to church planting pastors, and acquiring space for newly formed congregations to meet. Currently, the Church Planting Group employs twelve people whose salaries and expenses are funded through CP giving and NAMB contributions.\textsuperscript{67} Church site loans and grants are funded through the annual Maguiire State Mission Offering. To meet the financial needs of the church

\textsuperscript{65}Aaron Meraz, “The Missiology of I. T. Tichenor with Implications on Contemporary Southern Baptist North American Missions” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 146.


planting pastors, Sullivan has led the State Board of Missions to adopt a budget that prioritizes church planting assistance. Sullivan’s concept of priority funding will be discussed further in the section that presents his missiology of cooperation.

In 2007, the SBOM began authorizing 4.25 percent of total CP receipts to be allocated to church planting assistance.68 Currently there are 183 church planting pastors listed on the church planting group’s website.69

While Florida’s demographics continue to undergo change, Sullivan’s commitment to church planting has not changed. In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Florida Baptist Convention, he wrote,

Starting new churches has long been a priority of the state convention. This can be seen in its earliest days when Chaudoin traveled the state to encourage new church growth. And in modern times, when Harold Bennett . . . guided Florida Baptists through significant growth and remarkable expansion, as the convention started 400 new churches and missions within ten years.

Today, we believe the Holy Spirit will energize us to initiate and sustain the Great Commission until our God-given intentions become reality.

As you can see, the priorities have changed very little since the beginning: evangelism without apology; intentional church starting; and the continuing development of mission-minded churches.70

Even though Sullivan has not written extensively about church planting, he believes that it is necessary for obedience to the Great Commission.


69 “Church Planting Communication System,” accessed January 17, 2014, available from http://www.floridachurchplanting.org/MainListHome.asp?Partner=Home&Association=All. Included in this list are satellite church campuses of out-of-state metropolitan churches such as the Journey Church in New York, as well as, church plants that are being led by the field missionaries of the convention staff. These churches may or may not be receiving financial support from the convention.

Church Growth and Church Health

Sullivan’s third priority in his missiology is to strengthen existing churches. He also uses the term “develop” in his reference to the role of the convention with regard to existing churches. Even in healthy churches he wants to develop a missional and cooperative mindset. He wrote, “The local church is at the heart of everything we do in the Christian community. It is God’s expression of himself. That’s why we have a priority of developing congregations, helping them become healthy.”

As Sullivan was getting established in his role as executive director-treasurer, the Church Growth Movement was gaining popularity among Southern Baptists. In 1993, Rainer wrote, “It is amazing to see how rapidly the concepts of church growth have spread in the last several years. . . . The movement has become so eagerly accepted at the local church level that church growth conferences and conventions are well attended.” Sullivan seized the opportunity to create momentum in Florida Baptist churches by incorporating the movement into the work of the Florida Baptist Convention.

In May 1991, Sullivan established the Church Growth Department. Within two years, the Church Growth Department began assisting church leaders with the task of discovering and fulfilling their church’s potential growth. In addition to leading


73 Rainer, The Book of Church Growth, 24-25.

conferences, the department offered growth consultation to individual churches in order to help pastors develop a customized church growth plan.

Sullivan realized that many of the new church starts were either failing or struggling. In 1994, the Church Growth Department began focusing its efforts on individual consultations using trained contract workers—locally trained pastors—to provide strategic insight and assistance. These efforts continued until 1997 when the department was transferred to the Pastoral Ministries Department.

The principles for healthy churches found in the Church Growth Movement are conducive to Sullivan’s missiology because they complement his missiology of evangelism. Sullivan believes that the ultimate goal of evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel that results in conversion that leads to fellowship in a church. This chapter has already discussed the church growth principle of homogeneous units in Sullivan’s missiology of church planting. Other church growth principles that seem to be in alignment with Sullivan’s missiology of church growth and church health are fields of receptivity, and leadership development.

**Fields of Receptivity**

Sullivan believes that while the entire state needs to be evangelized, the resources for evangelization will not be evenly distributed throughout the state. He believes that the resources need to be utilized in places where the population is most dense. The idea is that where there are dense and growing populations, there will be more people groups that are likely to receive the gospel. Smaller, more stagnant populations

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75 *Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1994, 169.*
should be reached but will not require as many resources. This belief reflects the church growth principle of receptivity.

Donald McGavran observed in Scripture that Jesus took into account the varying abilities of people to hear and obey the gospel.76 Based on this observation, McGavran suggested that with regard to allocation of mission resources that fields of low receptivity should be occupied lightly while those populations that are more receptive should get more attention.77 Receptivity is not necessarily measured by geographical boundaries. McGavran uses the term “populations” to describe the various fields, recognizing that there may be more than one type of population within certain geographical boundaries. This observation is especially true in states such as Florida and in its urban centers.

Sullivan believes that the closer the convention’s mission resources are to some of these populations, the more effective those resources will be in identifying and reaching the various populations in Florida that are receptive to the gospel. When he first came to Florida he took steps to move financial and human resources into South Florida. In commenting on the now existing Urban Impact Center, he said, “I wanted to do that within the first five years I was here. The timing was not right. . . . We probably would have seen greater value coming out of our energies in Southeast Florida.”78

76 McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, 245.

77 Ibid., 262.

Sullivan’s vision began to take shape in 2005. In September of that year the SBOM authorized Sullivan to establish an office in South Florida that would support an initiative called “Urban Impact Ministries Strategy.” The location serves the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties and is now called the Urban Impact Ministries Center and falls under the authority of the Church Planting Group. As of this writing, the Lead Strategist for the Church Planting Group, Al Fernandez is also the Team Leader for the UIC. The UIC has one field missionary assigned to it, as well.

Even though the UIC is organizationally structured within the Church Planting Group, Sullivan believes that its presence will help the convention accomplish a stronger emphasis of evangelism and church strengthening as well. With land becoming a valuable commodity in Southeast Florida, Sullivan sees the need to strengthen and revitalize those churches that are declining. He said, “We need to preserve those places and we need to get our folks closer to where those places are. That’s one of the thrusts of the Urban Impact [Center].”

The development of the UIC under Sullivan’s leadership places convention resources closer to the population groups of the urban areas of Southeast Florida. The mission of the UIC fits well within McGavran’s emphasis on receptivity and effective evangelism. McGavran insisted that missionaries must constantly be aware of changes in


receptivity among homogeneous units within general populations.\textsuperscript{82} Sullivan’s vision to place missionaries within the general population of Southeast Florida is a reflection of his willingness to “adjust methods, institutions, and personnel until the receptive are becoming Christians and reaching out to win their fellows to eternal life.”\textsuperscript{83} Furthermore, he wrote, “[Evangelism] finds the lost, folds those found, feeds them on the Word of God, and incorporates them in multitudes of new and old congregations.”\textsuperscript{84} The Urban Impact Ministries Center is developing into a mission that seeks to do exactly what McGavran described over forty years ago.

**Leadership Development**

Leadership development for pastors is another focus of Sullivan’s missiology on church growth and church health. When asked his opinion about the key attribute to a successful congregation apart from the movement of God, Sullivan responded, “Pastoral leadership. There is no question in my mind that pastoral leadership is the key to a growing church.”\textsuperscript{85} Evidence of this statement is found in the actions that Sullivan has taken as executive director-treasurer to strengthen churches by strengthening its leaders.

In his discussion of leadership and church growth, Thom Rainer wrote, “There is little doubt that leadership in general and pastoral leadership in particular is a major factor in the church growth process.”\textsuperscript{86} C. Peter Wagner, quoted by Rainer, was even

\textsuperscript{82}McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 265.

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{86}Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 185.
more adamant when he wrote, “In America, the primary catalytic factor for growth in a local church is the pastor.”87 Healthy, growing churches will have pastoral leadership that is focused on obedience to the Great Commission.88 Sullivan sought to prioritize leadership development through convention structures and theological education.

Until 2001, the convention served the development needs of pastors through the Pastoral Ministries Department in the Church Development Division.89 In 2004, the Office of Leadership Development was added to the organizational structure of the FBC.90 The goal of this office was to help pastors “lead out of a sure sense of call, in a lifestyle [of] unquestioned character and with increasing ministry competence.”91

Sullivan repeatedly identified Calvin Miller as one author that has had an influence on his views of leadership. In 1995, he encouraged anyone in a leadership role to read Miller’s, *The Empowered Leader*.92 In 2001, he listed twenty-four notes that he had recorded as he read through Miller’s writings.93 Recently, when asked to describe his philosophy of leadership, Sullivan indicated that the principles found in Albert Mohler’s


89 *Annual*, Florida Baptist Convention, 2001, 90.

90 *Annual*, Florida Baptist Convention, 2004, 89.

91 Ibid.


book, *The Conviction to Lead* have profoundly defined his view of leadership and affirmed many of the principles he embraced long ago.\(^{94}\)

Sullivan believes that the Florida Baptist Convention can help pastors develop leadership skills and reach their leadership potential. Currently the Leadership Ministry Team is in the Church Health Group and is tasked with promoting and coaching servant leadership in pastors and spiritual transformation in their churches.\(^{95}\)

Sullivan also believes that theological education is a significant factor in leadership development. Sullivan’s missiology of church health has led him to make theological education more accessible to church leaders desiring to enhance their call. He wrote, “My opinion is that missions and education are inseparable for kingdom growth. We must send missionaries; we must train the God-called.”\(^{96}\)

Within two years of becoming executive director-treasurer, Sullivan began looking for ways to expand the availability of theological education in Florida. Realizing that the state had many pastors who were called to preach later in life or were already serving a church and did not want to leave the congregation they were serving, Sullivan initiated conversation with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to enlarge the center in Orlando and begin a center on the campus of Florida Baptist Theological


College (now The Baptist College of Florida.)\textsuperscript{97} Sullivan believed that if theological education was more accessible, then more people would take advantage of it.

In 1991, Sullivan proposed a plan to the SBOM to provide theological education in Florida. The purpose of the plan was “to provide theological education for training in ministry that is readily accessible to all Florida Baptists.”\textsuperscript{98} The plan established an advisory committee and defined its responsibilities. The proposal also included budgetary commitments to cover operating costs not covered by student fees.

Sullivan’s opinion about theological education never changed and his commitment never wavered. While calling for a change in theological education curriculum to include a higher concentration of evangelism classes, Donald McGavran wrote, “Theological seminaries, divinity schools, and Bible colleges can unquestionably play a significant part in the evangelization of the United States and all other nations.”\textsuperscript{99} More than twenty years later, Sullivan continued to emphasize the same evangelistic potential. He wrote,

To have an aggressive church planting ministry (which we do) without aggressive theological education to undergird the theology of the new church planter is a mistake. With the need to start more churches to reach the burgeoning ethnic population, providing theological training is even more demanding and critical.\textsuperscript{100}


\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Annual}, Florida Baptist Convention, 1991, 91. The information in this paragraph was taken from this report.


Sullivan’s goals for increased opportunities for theological education in Florida began to take shape in 1999. The Baptist College of Florida and NOBTS had already been working throughout the state to provide degrees and certificates through various centers. The Miami center was named The Baptist Theological Center of the Americas and Alfredo Quezada was named associate director of Theological Education and Distance Learning.101

Beginning with the 2001 budget, Sullivan began allocating CP receipts to assist in the funding of theological education throughout the state. The expansion of the campuses throughout the state increased availability for theological education and in 2001, Charles Harvey, Director for the new Theological Education and Distance Learning Department reported that 350 students were involved in some aspect of theological education.102 By 2010, several of the centers were offering Doctor of Ministry and Doctor of Educational Ministry degrees. The department reported that nearly 1,400 students were engaged in theological education at some level through these centers.103

101 Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 2000, 89. This center offered certificate training to language pastors as well as A.A. degrees through NOBTS (Leavell College), and B.A. degrees through BCF. In the fall of 1999, this center, as well as centers in Orlando and on site at BCF, began offering M.Div. degrees through NOBTS. To maintain accreditation, thirty hours of the eighty-nine hour degree were required to be taken on campus in New Orleans. The other hours were earned through Compressed Interactive Video (CIV) and local adjunct professors. CIV courses were structured so that the professor taught four classrooms of students, live and at once, through technology that allowed for interaction between the classes and the professor. Sullivan’s vision for students to earn advanced degrees without leaving their ministry assignments became a reality in 1999 through this type of innovation.


103 Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 2010, 91.
Sullivan believes that the Great Commission is best advanced through evangelism, church planting, and church health. His missiology also includes a firm belief in the Cooperative Program and that the missionary efforts of the Florida Baptist Convention identified as Partnership Missions are as important and well-done as those missionary endeavors of other agencies, including the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board.

**Cooperation**

Sullivan has demonstrated a sincere and deep loyalty to the Cooperative Program as the primary means for funding Southern Baptist mission endeavors. Some might think that his job as executive director-treasurer has motivated him to be such a proponent of the CP. But Sullivan displayed his commitment to the CP long before he became the executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention.

As a pastor, Sullivan encouraged every church he led to increase CP giving. At Broadmoor, Sullivan led the church to increase overall mission giving from $177,061 in 1974 to $461,572 in 1979, an approximate 160 percent increase.\(^{104}\) By the time he left Broadmoor, CP gifts had increased to $752,000 representing 17 percent of its total budget.\(^{105}\)

\(^{104}\) Tom Nettles, *Growth for God’s Glory* (Shreveport, LA: Broadmoor Baptist Church, 1980), 205.

In 1981, he made a statement to the SBC Executive Committee about the Cooperative Program saying that the CP is not a “sacred cow, but it is a sacred how.”

Sullivan believes that Southern Baptist churches should give to the CP, not because they are Southern Baptist, but because he believes it has proven to be a God-ordained method to fulfill the Great Commission. He does not believe that there is a better funding system for mission work in the world.

Sullivan realizes that not all mission work of the local church will be channeled through the CP. He believes that the needs of the world are too great, but he insists that because of the effectiveness and simplicity of the CP, it should be the basic commitment of the church to world missions. For that reason he wrote, “The Cooperative Program should be a way of life.”

Sullivan describes the CP as the “Southern Baptists’ unified budgeting process designed to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth, beginning at home.” Sullivan believes that because of the diverse nature of the Florida population that world missions actually begins in Florida. He often mentions that concept when promoting the Maguire State Mission Offering. Sullivan’s priority on the work being done by Florida Baptists


is not just seen in his appeals to support the MSMO. The responsibility that he feels towards mission in Florida is also evident in the way he has led the convention to allocate CP receipts.

In 1925, the Commission on the Co-Operative Program of Southern Baptists made various recommendations concerning the newly proposed Co-Operative Program of Southern Baptists. The report recommended that the states “divide their offerings for denominational purposes upon a basis of 50% for Southwide [SBC] purposes and 50% for State purposes.” The recommendation also made provision for state treasurers to deduct expenses for promoting the CP and recruiting churches for participation in it before calculating the amounts to be distributed and retained. For instance, if a state treasurer discovered that the cost of promoting the CP was 1 percent of the amount given to the state by the churches, then the treasurer could deduct that 1 percent and split the remaining 99 percent. The state would only be giving 49.5 percent but the spirit of the 50 percent gift would be maintained.

Unfortunately, many states began including other expenses besides CP promotion expenses in their deductions. These deductions came to be known as shared ministry expenses and the list of shared ministry expenses grew over time. Other states

111 *Annual, Southern Baptist Convention*, 1925, 31. The proposed names of the commission and program were given in item thirteen of the report. All of the recommendations from this commission are listed beginning on page thirty-four.

112 Ibid., 34.

designated “preferred items” that would be deducted before the calculations were made. By 1931, SBC entities were pleading with the states to no longer include preferred items in their calculations and to minimize their Cooperative Program promotional expenses so that the most money possible could be sent to the SBC. The 50 percent allocation without deductions is still the ideal from the SBC perspective.

In Sullivan’s first budget year, 1990, the Florida Baptist Convention budget set the allocation for 49.25 percent to the SBC and 50.75 percent to the FBC. In 1991, an allocation to the Southern Baptist Annuity Board was set at 3.25 percent. Keeping the FBC allocation at 50.75 percent meant a reduction in the allocation to the SBC down to 46 percent. In 1992 a second preferred item, Church Pastoral Aid of 5 percent was added reducing the allocation to the SBC even further—down to just over 42 percent. By 1996, the allocation to the SBC had been reduced to 40 percent where it remained until 2012, the first year of a seven year gradual increase to get the convention back to a 50 percent allocation (see Table A2, Appendix 2). Table A2 shows the budget allocations for the period 1990-2012 and the impact that priority funding has on contributions to the SBC. Table A3 (see Appendix 2) shows the budget compared to actual receipts, as well as, the actual amounts forwarded to the SBC and the actual percentage against the budgeted percentage.

Appendix 2 reveals that Sullivan’s missiology leads him to make Florida a priority, believing that the priority of the work in Florida ultimately makes the contributions to the SBC possible. The actual percentages match the budgeted percentages when the CP giving does not reach budget. In the case of an overage, the SBOM takes action to allocate surplus dollars to the SBC. For instance, in 1996 through
2000, CP giving exceeded budget expectations. At the end of the year, the SBOM allocated the extra receipts, but did not allocate enough to the SBC to keep the SBC contributions at the 40 percent level, choosing instead to keep more of those dollars for doing state convention work.

Sullivan’s missiology on cooperation is one that sees the Great Commission need within the state and emphasizes it as much or more than the needs elsewhere. The implications of his missiology in the area of cooperation, specifically with regard to the distribution of CP receipts, will be explored in chapter 5.

**Partnership Missions**

Sullivan’s missiology on the Great Commission, evangelism, church planting, church health, and cooperation can be witnessed outside of the borders of Florida. The concept of partnership missions is one that seems to excite Sullivan the most about his position as executive director–treasurer. Throughout his tenure in the Florida Baptist Convention, Sullivan has engaged missions in other places through these partnerships, some of which have been short and limited in their purpose and others which have been long-term and extremely unscripted in the overall direction of the relationship.\(^1\)

The function of the partnership is not just to assist another state convention financially, but to provide various avenues for Florida Baptist churches to be involved in

\(^{1}\)John Sullivan, interview by author, May 17, 2013, Jacksonville, Florida. The term “unscripted” is Sullivan’s favorite term to use in describing the type of relationship the Florida Baptist Convention has with Haiti. He hopes that the partnership in Cuba will develop the same way. He uses this term because the partnership has been more relational driven than program driven. The relationship between Florida Baptists and Haitian Baptists evolves as various needs arise and as circumstances dictate.
missions. The stateside partnerships have traditionally had coordinators that network potential mission teams with the needs of the churches in the partnering state conventions. During Sullivan’s tenure, the convention has partnered with the Dakota Southern Baptist Fellowship and the Montana Southern Baptist Fellowship by providing funds for church buildings and pastoral assistance. In 2002, a twenty-three year partnership ended with the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey. Also in that year, the Partnership Department reported that 102 Florida churches sent over 6,200 volunteers and invested approximately $339,000 in new buildings for some of these partnership states. Currently, the Florida Baptist Convention supports evangelism, church planting and leadership development through stateside partnerships with Indiana, West Virginia, and Nevada.

Overseas partnerships have been a major part of Sullivan’s missiology as well. In 1993, the Florida Baptist Convention was involved in a partnership with the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) in Tanzania for the purpose of evangelism, church starting, and leadership development. Church site funds were used to make repairs on church buildings in that country. In 1994, civil unrest in Rwanda exploded into the genocide of an estimated 1,000,000 Rwandan Tutsis. Refugees from


Rwanda began pouring across the Tanzania border. Florida Baptists were already present in Tanzania when the crisis occurred and were able to respond and assist in the relief efforts that ensued. In addition to financial assistance provided by the FBC, twenty-two volunteers supported the Baptist Mission of Tanzania in the relief effort in Tanzania.  

Sullivan has led the FBC to partner internationally with the France-Benelux Baptist Mission and the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship. In the Caribbean, mission teams from Florida Baptist churches participated in construction, evangelism, leadership training, and medical missions. By 1995, over 680 Florida Baptists had been involved in ninety-two projects on eighteen different island nations. Florida Baptist involvement in the Caribbean, coupled with the language work that was already being done among Hispanic and Haitian people groups in Florida led to two partnerships that have been the highlights of Sullivan’s ministry as executive director-treasurer.

In 1996, the SBOM authorized Sullivan to enter into partnership discussions with both the Western Cuba Baptist Convention and the FMB (now IMB). In 1997 that vision became a reality and the FBC began partnering with the Western Cuba Baptist Convention to accept and respond to ministry priorities as identified by the leaders in Western Cuba and were aligned with the three priorities that already defined the focus of the FBC—evangelism, church starting and church leadership development.

120 Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1995, 124.

121 Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1994, 117.


The partnership with Western Cuba has now expanded to Eastern Cuba as of 2013. Florida Baptists have earned the trust of the Cuban government and as a result, the number of projects and the amount of allowed travel to the island has increased greatly.

Perhaps the most celebrated of all of the partnerships of the Florida Baptist Convention is the Haitian partnership. During the proceedings of the 1994 Florida Baptist State Convention, discussion concerning the motion to change Article 2 of the Constitution of the Florida Baptist State Convention provided insight into the need for the FBC to partner with Baptists in Haiti. The actual motion sought to remove the words “in the State of Florida” from the qualifications to membership in the FBSC.  

In response to various questions, Sullivan made this statement:

We were approached by the Haitian pastors of South Florida asking us if there were some way the Florida Baptist Convention could help them with their work on the island of Haiti. They have already started 70 new churches on the island. The Haitian Baptist Convention that exists there is primarily an American Baptist Convention and church starting is not one of their priorities. We have no intention of commissioning missionaries from the state of Florida. We want to give structure to our Haitian brothers in helping them win their country to Christ. This will give us an opportunity to help them in cooperation with the Foreign Mission Board.

In May 1995, the SBOM approved a partnership agreement between the FBC, FMB, and the Baptist Missionary Fellowship of Haiti (later the Confraternité Missionnaire Baptiste d’Haïti) with the intention of developing and implementing a strategy to provide the “resources of evangelism, church starting and church leadership development” and “to enlist and deploy convention staff and volunteers to facilitate the

\[\textit{Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1994, 149.}\]

\[\textit{Ibid., 76.}\]
Immediately, Sullivan began mobilizing the staff to respond to the needs in Haiti.

A 1996 article in the Florida Baptist Witness described Sullivan’s first trip to Haiti. By the time he arrived the confederation of Haitian churches included a national coordinator, four directors of missions and 125 churches, and the FBC had committed $160,000 per year to underwrite the strategy in Haiti. During that trip Sullivan visited a church that had been planted just five weeks earlier. The church was constituted the day Sullivan attended and the newly constituted church baptized eight people as a part of the celebration. After Sullivan preached, two more adults were baptized and at the time of the article, twenty more were awaiting baptism. In commenting on the thrill of literally experiencing a church being birthed, Sullivan said, “The joy in seeing a new church birthed in a five-week period simply cannot be painted with words. You have to see it to have the deep abiding love and appreciation for what our Haitian brothers in South Florida are seeking to do on behalf of their own nation.”

Some of the places Sullivan visited had no public school system. He envisioned the possibility of impacting the entire nation through education. Since many of the churches had established schools to meet the educational needs of their communities Sullivan began thinking of ways such as faith based learning materials to

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128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
help the pastors of those churches develop their schools as well.\textsuperscript{130} The partnership with the CMBH seemed to make an immediate impact on the church planting movement being experienced in Haiti. By 1999, the CMBH had grown to 393 churches with 38,000 members and 164 schools.\textsuperscript{131}

In addition to the church planting movement the convention was in a position to respond quickly to the needs of the Haitian people in the aftermath of Hurricane Georges in 1998. Sullivan noted,

> By utilizing a network we originally established to help start new churches, we were able to distribute beans and rice to hungry Haitians. Our efforts and accomplishments have mystified other relief agencies because we have cut through the red tape and bureaucracy to distribute beans and rice directly to the Haitian families.\textsuperscript{132}

Sullivan’s passion for theological education was extended to the CMBH. In partnership with NOBTS and the distance learning network already established in Florida, certificate level theological training became available in 2004 (see Appendix 3 for a list of the classes needed for certification).\textsuperscript{133} The Haitian Seminary, centrally located in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, graduated its first class of fifty-two students in 2006.

The seminary very quickly expanded to meet the needs of the pastors located in other areas of the country. Seminary education is now available in the north at Port-au-Paix and the south in Cayes, as well. These three locations graduated 107 students in 2009. The third class graduated 145 students in 2012. The seminary has added a second

\textsuperscript{130}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{131}Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1999, 92.


\textsuperscript{133}Craig E. Culbreth, e-mail to author, January 14, 2014.
level to the certificate program. They anticipate a graduating class of 189 students (Levels I and II) in September 2015 bringing the total number of graduates to 493.

On January 12, 2010, disaster struck the nation once again. A massive earthquake hit just outside of Port-au-Prince killing over 200,000 people and injuring or rendering homeless over 600,000 others.\(^{134}\) The presence of the FBC in Haiti allowed for Florida Baptist relief teams to begin making a difference within twenty-four hours after the earthquake struck.\(^{135}\) A video report given to the 2010 FBSC reported that a movement of God had swept the nation. CMBH churches had experienced over 165,000 professions of faith and started 272 new churches in the months during the relief efforts. Dennis Wilbanks, associate director, Florida Baptists’ Partnership Missions Department said, “We’ve been there since 1995 and we will be there as long as Florida Baptists are needed because they are our brothers, they are our partners, and we’ll be there long after everyone else is gone.”\(^{136}\)

Table A5 (see Appendix 3) shows the reported baptisms and number of churches since the partnership began. One would not suggest that this movement could not have happened without the partnership of the Florida Baptist Convention. However, because Sullivan was willing to be involved in the work that Florida Baptist Haitian churches were already doing, the Florida Baptist Convention has had the opportunity to do more than just read about movements of God in places. Florida Baptist churches have


\(^{135}\)Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 2010, 47.

\(^{136}\)Ibid.
gotten to experience it first-hand. According to the Florida Baptist Statistical Summary 2011-2012 Church Year, the CMBH has 1,525 churches with 108,134 members.\textsuperscript{137}

Sullivan’s missiology is evident in every aspect of the Haiti partnership. His priority of evangelism, church planting, and leadership development are evident in everything from the crusades he preached to the theological education centers he started to the compassionate ministries he funded in response to disasters. These unscripted partnerships convey the essence of Sullivan’s missiology.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Sullivan’s missiology is rooted in his understanding of the Great Commission. His missiology is applied through structures of cooperation and partnership and his priorities of evangelism, church starting, and church health are evident in the way he allocates human and financial resources to these endeavors.

Sullivan champions the Cooperative Program as the best missions funding system in the world. He also believes that the mission endeavors of the FBC are as important and as well done as the missionary efforts of the IMB and NAMB. He prioritizes the work in Florida because he sees the great need for the gospel in the state.

Sullivan employs principles of church growth to denominational activity. He believes in the application of the homogeneous unit principle in language church starting. His vision for a center to reach the greatest fields of receptivity was realized with the building of the Urban Impact Center. His emphasis on theological education reveals a commitment to developing the pastors and leaders of Florida churches.

\textsuperscript{137} Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 2012, 393.
The population in the state of Florida was approximately 19,552,860 in 2013, representing an increase of about four percent over a three year period.\(^1\) Only 39.13 percent claim an affiliation with some type of religion with 8.62 percent claiming a connection to the Baptist faith.\(^2\) According to these statistics, there are 11,901,825 people in Florida that do not claim any religious affiliation and most of the remaining 7,651,035 claim membership in something other than a Baptist church. This chapter will present the implications of Sullivan’s missiology on contemporary SBC state convention work and how state conventions will support Great Commission work in the future.

**Great Commission Resurgence**

On April 16, 2009, Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, preached a message entitled “Axioms for a Great Commission Resurgence,” a message containing twelve self-identifying truths (see Appendix 6) that he believes would move Christians, churches, associations, and conventions toward a renewed effort


to fulfill the Great Commission.”\textsuperscript{3} He believes that the application of these axioms would produce a Great Commission Resurgence for Southern Baptists.\textsuperscript{4}

Perhaps the most controversial and unsettling axiom that Akin presented called for Southern Baptists to rethink convention structures. Pointing to 1 Cor 10:31, Akin said, “We must recognize the need to rethink our convention structures and identity so that we maximize our energy and resources for the fulfilling of the Great Commission.”\textsuperscript{5}

Interestingly, Morris Chapman, who was then serving as the president of the Executive Committee of the SBC agreed. In presenting his axioms for cooperation, Chapman wrote,

The SBC needs fine-tuning. In fact, the Convention may require an overhaul, not in its polity, but in its programming and the processes by which it functions daily. A major overhaul by the national Convention and the state conventions appears to be an absolute necessity, letting the facts speak for themselves lest the conventions discover too late they were blind and deaf to a delivery system that better serves the churches.\textsuperscript{6}

Chapman was responding to declining percentages of gifts given by the local church through the Cooperative Program. He stated that CP gifts slipped from 10.5 percent in the mid-1980s to 7.39 percent in 2001-2002.\textsuperscript{7} Akin was responding to denominational structures that he felt had become “bloated and bureaucratic.”\textsuperscript{8} Both of

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{4}] Ibid., 346.
\item[\textsuperscript{5}] Ibid., 356.
\item[\textsuperscript{7}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{8}] Akin, “Axioms for a Great Commission Resurgence,” 356.
\end{itemize}
these concerns sought to address organizational issues that each man thought were contributing factors to the declining numbers being reported among SBC churches. Of all the axioms presented by Akin, the one calling for denominational structural change seemingly has received the most attention.

In that same year, 2009, the Florida Baptist State Convention (FBSC) met in Pensacola, Florida. During that meeting David Uth, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida, made a motion to allow the president of the FBSC, John Cross, to appoint a task force to bring a report and recommendations to the 2010 FBSC concerning “how Florida Baptists can work more effectively and more efficiently together in following Christ in fulfilling the Great Commission.” Since the theme for the state convention that year was “Imagine If . . . ,” the task force was named “Imagine If . . . Great Commission Taskforce” (Florida Great Commission Resurgence Taskforce). The FGCRT made six recommendations to the FBSC in 2010 (see Appendix 5). The taskforce identified three areas of priority for the Florida Baptist Convention and called for a restructuring to accommodate those priorities. The three priorities, planting churches, developing leaders, and providing compassionate ministries were not entirely

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9 Southern Baptist missiologist Ed Stetzer has written extensively on the decline of the SBC in membership and in baptisms. For detailed information regarding his research and conclusions, see Ed Stetzer, “SBC Decline and Demographic Change,” in Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2010), 3-28.


11 Ibid., 40.

12 Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 2010, 47.

13 Ibid., 48-49.
different from the three priorities that Sullivan developed when he first became executive
director-treasurer, evangelism without apology, aggressive church starting, and
strengthening existing churches. Functionally, the recommendations were asking the
FBSC to support priorities that they were already supporting. Operationally, Sullivan was
going to have to make some changes to the way the work was divided and eventually
reported.

The most debated recommendation was the recommendation to join together to
fund global missions. The motion required the FBC to begin forwarding fifty percent of
total CP receipts to the SBC.\footnote{Ibid., 48. While the motion was made to move to the 50/50 split within four
years, the SBOM approved a seven-year plan that was approved by the FBSC in 2011.} This recommendation would prove to be the most
challenging to fulfill. CP receipts from churches were in decline and the motion was
seeking to divert even more money away from state convention work. Naturally, some of
the messengers shared their concerns over the solvency of the FBC moving forward with
a 50/50 split of CP funds. To these concerns, Sullivan responded, “I make this
commitment to you: we will not allow the Florida Baptist Convention to lose its integrity
or its effectiveness. This is absolutely essential. I do not have a problem with going to
50/50. I do have a problem going to 50/50 and destroying the integrity and effectiveness
of this wonderful State Convention.”\footnote{Ibid., 50.}

One might argue that Sullivan was forced into making these changes
reluctantly. Soon after Daniel Akin delivered his message on the “Axioms of a Great
Commission Resurgence,” SBC President Johnny Hunt, in consultation with Akin

\footnote{Ibid., 48. While the motion was made to move to the 50/50 split within four
years, the SBOM approved a seven-year plan that was approved by the FBSC in 2011.}
\footnote{Ibid., 50.}
announced a ten-point “Great Commission Resurgence” declaration which he planned to present to the SBC in the June 2009 meeting. Sullivan did not readily endorse this declaration. In a statement to the SBOM during the May 29, 2009 meeting, Sullivan justified his reluctance because he felt he first needed to address his concerns with Hunt and others.

While Sullivan may not have understood the need for or the motivation behind such a declaration, his reluctance to endorse it does not disqualify his missiology concerning the Great Commission work of state conventions. In fact, much of what the SBC and Florida taskforces promoted already fit within Sullivan’s missiology and his priorities for the state convention. Therefore, Sullivan’s missiological priorities still provide a model for contemporary state convention work.

Concerning the mandates that required changes in the convention priorities and structures, Sullivan has shown a willingness to change. Systemic models are developed from past successes and failures. Therefore, Sullivan’s leadership and experience as executive director-treasurer is still a model for contemporary state convention work, especially if one is willing to learn from successes and adulations, as well as, failures and criticisms.

In his statement to the SBOM, Sullivan said,


It is in my heart to be the very best, most efficient, deliberately dynamic and missional state convention affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. We must be good stewards of all resources entrusted to us. This is a daily part of my life.\textsuperscript{18}

With those thoughts in mind, Sullivan determined to work through the changes with the churches of the FBC. He could have left the work to others, but he chose to remain believing that the Florida Baptist churches will experience growth from a Great Commission Resurgence.

**Implications on Evangelism**

The FGCRT did not recommend a specific priority on evangelism opting instead to use the term “evangelistic” to describe the types of churches that should be planted and the types of pastors who should be leading Southern Baptist churches. After describing what he calls a clear plateau in the trend of total baptisms in the SBC, Thom Rainer wrote, “An honest evaluation of the data leads us to but one conclusion: the Conservative Resurgence has not resulted in a greater zeal for evangelism in our churches.”\textsuperscript{19} Rainer gave six possible reasons for this seeming lack of evangelistic fervor, all of which were directed to the local church with two providing insight into the state of evangelism at the denominational level.

The first hypothesis suggested the possibility that “evangelistic fields in the United States are much less receptive than they were in past years.”\textsuperscript{20} Rainer does not

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19}Thom Rainer, “A Resurgence Not Yet Fulfilled,” in *Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2010), 38, emphasis original.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid.
know of any research that has measured changes in receptivity to the gospel in the United States over fifty years. He pointed to research that he conducted in one year that revealed that thirty-eight percent of respondents were either receptive or highly receptive to the gospel, thirty-six percent were neutral, and thirty-two percent were resistant or antagonistic. Other research indicates that the millennial generation, people born between 1980 and 2000, are not necessarily non-receptive, but indifferent to spiritual matters in general. Regardless of the suspected levels of receptivity in Florida, Sullivan has led the convention to decentralize some of its assets and move them closer to the more dense populations.

The second hypothesis suggested that socioeconomic gains reduce evangelistic zeal. While there is no data to prove this hypothesis, the idea has merit at the church and convention level. The concept has been labeled redemption and lift and McGavran argued that evangelistic efforts can be halted as a result of it. The way people become believers is through interaction with believers. Redemption and lift suggests that as people become redeemed by faith in Christ, they are lifted out of their old lifestyles and begin engaging a new lifestyle with new circles of friends of like-mind. Over time, the

21Ibid., 38-39. For detailed treatment of Rainer’s research, see Thom S. Rainer, The Unchurched Next Door (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).


separation from former associates reduces the awareness that they, too, must be evangelized. McGavran wrote, “Lift must not separate and isolate Christians—that is, must not lead to social dislocation. Whenever this occurs, the individual may be won, but at a fearful cost, for the social unit from which he came will be lost.”

Sullivan has kept evangelism as a priority in the convention, but the blessed conditions of the convention in the late 1990s and early 2000s may have led to a type of redemption and lift. Churches and the convention alike received the monetary benefit of a strong economy. In 1995, CP receipts to the convention were $24,958,433. In 2007, CP receipts peaked at $39,611,551, an increase of 58.7 percent (see Appendix 2, Table A3). Strong budgets may have caused a lack of evangelistic zeal, especially if those budgets inadvertently turned attention inward and created an organization that relied on those stronger budgets for survival in the future. Instead of focusing on the mission, the focus turns to sustaining the organization. Perhaps when things are going well, believers lose their sense of urgency for the gospel because the circles of people they engage are experiencing those blessings, too.

McGavran suggested that efforts toward growth (evangelism) and lift (compassionate ministries) must be proportioned in view of how much growth and lift are actually taking place. Granted, McGavran was applying these principles to the church in a missionary context, but they can be applied to Florida’s missionary context as well. The implication is that if evangelism is lacking in Florida Baptist churches, then evangelism must be a priority in the convention. Sullivan’s missiology has always placed an

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25 Ibid., 306.
26 Ibid., 307.
emphasis on evangelism, but the convention cannot make churches evangelistic. Rainer made this point when he wrote, “Denominations are neither evangelistic nor nonevangelistic; the churches and their members are the true indicators of evangelistic health.” Denominations can only allocate resources to help motivate and train churches to reach their evangelistic potential.

When Sullivan became the executive director-treasurer of the FBC, he hired Jerry Passmore, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, as the new director for the evangelism division. The first priority for providing visibility to evangelism was to “develop regional and contract workers to train local congregations in personal evangelism.” The Bold Mission Thrust Priorities and Goals for the Florida Baptist Convention included five year (1991-95) evangelism goals such as, “to baptize one person for each 17 resident members,” and “to provide training for 2000 pastors/staff/leaders in growing evangelistic congregations.”

While these efforts must be contextualized for the twenty-first century, the essence of the Great Commission Resurgence is a call to return to these basic principles of evangelism. Perhaps budget constraints will move Sullivan back to the original plan to use regional and contract workers to promote evangelism in the local church. Evangelism efforts outside the local church include port ministry evangelism and student evangelism. Much of the current evangelism budget is committed to student ministry on the campuses

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of the universities in Florida. Consideration must be given to how these ministries are connecting students to the local churches and how the local churches can be better resourced and encouraged to be evangelistic in these various fields of receptivity.

Rainer made two proposals for application at the denominational level that he believes may reverse the trend in evangelistic decline among the churches. The first proposal is to “Focus Evangelistic Training resources on Pastors.”

William Henard wrote, “If we are going to engage in a Great Commission Resurgence, it has to start with the pastor committing himself to personal evangelism.” This proposal has been a part of Sullivan’s missiology and plan since 1989. Within the first year as executive director-treasurer, Sullivan created the Personal Evangelism Department to promote resources that would encourage pastors to lead by example and to train others in personal evangelism.

The second proposal is to “Encourage Pastors and Other Local Church Leaders to Lead Their Churches to a Time of Corporate Confession and Repentance for Their Lack of Evangelistic Zeal.” Again, the concept of prayer and spiritual awakening has driven Sullivan’s missiology of evangelism throughout his tenure as executive director-treasurer. In 1996, Sullivan added the Prayer and Spiritual Awakening Department to the Evangelism Division for the purpose of adding the spiritual element of evangelistic zeal

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32 Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1990, 8.

33 Rainer, “A Resurgence Not Yet Fulfilled,” 47.
to the methodological training that was already in place.\textsuperscript{34} In 2011-2012, the Prayer and Spiritual Awakening Team held prayer conferences in thirty-one associations calling those churches to renew their vision for evangelism in their communities.\textsuperscript{35}

Evangelism has always been a priority for Sullivan. No matter what the churches of various state conventions decide their denominational priorities will be, the evangelistic mandate will have to be incorporated at multiple levels for them to be faithful to fulfilling the Great Commission. Sullivan’s missiology provides a good working model for conventions seeking to increase awareness of evangelism among their churches.

**Implications on Church Planting**

The third recommendation of the FGCRT for cultivating a Great Commission Resurgence established as the first priority the need to plant evangelistic, reproducing churches.\textsuperscript{36} The taskforce promoted the belief that church planting is about people coming to know Christ and reaching people who are not connected to church. In other words, church planting is about evangelism. C. Peter Wagner has written that church planting is the “single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven.”\textsuperscript{37} Wagner celebrated the church planting priorities of the SBC in 1990 when he wrote,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{34} \textit{Annual}, Florida Baptist Convention, 1996, 62.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} \textit{Annual}, Florida Baptist Convention, 2012, 95.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} \textit{Annual}, Florida Baptist Convention, 2010, 48.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} C. Peter Wagner, \textit{Church Planting for a Greater Harvest} (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990), 11. See also, Thom S. Rainer, \textit{The Book of Church Growth} (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 205.
\end{itemize}
It is not by accident that the Southern Baptists have become the largest Protestant denomination in America. One of their secrets is that they constantly invest substantial resources of personnel and finances in church planting on all levels from local congregations to associations to state conventions to their Home Mission Board in Atlanta. Although they will be the first to admit they don’t do it enough, every year they strive to start more churches or church-type missions than the previous year. Much of what I have learned about church planting I have learned from Southern Baptists.38

Church planting was a part of Sullivan’s missiological strategy from the beginning. Sullivan admitted that church starting was not grown out of his pastoral background and mindset.39 The church was growing so fast that church starting was not a part of his vision for the church. In coming to terms with his new role as executive director-treasurer, he said, “As I looked at what we were doing and what we needed to do with this sprawling population, it seemed that starting new churches was a New Testament strategy for winning the world.”40

Sullivn’s goal has always been for one hundred and fifty to two hundred congregations to emerge each year as a result of Florida Baptist church planting efforts. Sullivan bases his church planting priority on several factors.41 First, he believes that new churches are the only way to keep pace with a growing population. Second, he believes that new churches evangelize faster and with greater results than established churches. Third, Sullivan believes that new church starts are necessary to reach unreached

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38Ibid., 15. See also, Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 205.


40Ibid.

41John Sullivan, “Interview by Don Hepburn,” 2002, interview Tape 02 – 020, transcript, Sullivan Oral History Collection, Florida Baptist Building, Jacksonville, FL. All information in this paragraph is taken from this transcript.
homogeneous groups. He points to the language work and African American church starting strategies that the convention employs. Fourth, Sullivan believes that new churches must start to offset the number of churches that close, merge, or withdraw from participation in the denomination. He hopes that his goals would result in a net gain of at least seventy-five churches per year. Table A1 (see Appendix 1) shows the average number of church starts compared to the average net gain in churches.

While Sullivan’s church planting goals have yet to be reached his missiology of church planting as a New Testament evangelism strategy aligns with what others are saying about church planting. In a list of eight practical reasons for starting new churches, Daniel Sanchez includes the reasons Sullivan gives.\textsuperscript{42} The challenge for Sullivan and for future denominational leaders will be to assist in planting healthy, reproducing churches as the FGCRT mandates. J. D. Greear added a helpful characteristic when he wrote, “God’s strategy for a Great Commission Resurgence is this: planting in every city vibrant, healthy local churches that are committed to blessing their communities.”\textsuperscript{43} Greear also argues convincingly that preaching the gospel effectively is best done when it is accompanied by a “robust and radically generous community ministry.”\textsuperscript{44}


\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 326. Greear makes the statement in the context of unchurched or dechurched communities but the principle works well in any context, not just for new churches but for established churches, too.
Sullivan’s priority of church planting can be seen in his budget allocations. His designations for Maguire State Mission Offerings seem to reflect his understanding of the need to accompany gospel preaching with community ministry. Unfortunately, the way Sullivan decided to fund church planting efforts, specifically pastoral aid, created a different problem addressed by the FGCRT through a mandate to move to 50/50 allocation of CP receipts. This mandate will be discussed further in a separate section. Sullivan believed that since the Florida Baptist Convention was sharing in the work of NAMB with regard to church planting, that a percentage of CP receipts should be withheld from the SBC to help underwrite church planting efforts. The net result was that forty percent of CP receipts were forwarded to the SBC (see Table A2, Appendix 2). The plan was not without some merit.

Many of the architects of the Great Commission Resurgence in the SBC and in Florida rightly complained that not enough money was being used to fund missions to reach the nations. At the same time, Ed Stetzer, in evaluating the decline of the SBC said, “Southern Baptists must awaken a passion for the nations that live in our country’s borders like the passion the early church had for those living in the Roman Empire.” One should not presume to think that Stetzer was advocating for more money to be spent within the nation’s borders, but it does point out that some of the money that stays within a state can and is being used to reach the nations, especially when those resources are used to plant ethnic and multi-ethnic churches.

Sullivan’s church planting missiology includes planting missional churches in the urban context. Even though many of the Great Commission Resurgence voices have

45Stetzer, “SBC Decline,” 25.
written in the context of world missions, much of what they say applies to state
convention work as well. In writing about the Great Commission in the urban context,
Troy Bush wrote, “A Great Commission Resurgence must embrace the cities of the
world. Southern Baptists will need to become comfortable in the city, and urban missions
will need to be one of our highest priorities in the US and around the world.”46 In perhaps
the most exhaustive treatment of missions in the urban context in one volume, Harvey
Conn and Manuel Ortiz affirm that the traditional paradigms of church starting and
leadership training will have to be redefined in order to effectively reach people in the
cities.47 McGavran reminded readers that the goal for urban ministry is not to just reach
the cities, but to bring urban multitudes to faith and obedience.48 He suggests, along with
Roger Greenway, that a multiplication of churches in the cities will happen when leaders
of revitalized existing churches keep the right goals in mind. He wrote,

The goal to be constantly held in mind is so to preach and live the Gospel that
baptized believers in increasing numbers flow into existing congregations which
ramify and branch out through the suburbs, new towns, wards, barrios, colonias,
mohullas and other sections of urbania, soon to be occupied by 2,500,000,000
human beings.49

Perhaps the most significant contribution to church planting methodology
made by Sullivan has been the formation of the Urban Impact Center in Miami, Florida.
Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties are the three most populous counties in

Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate for Our Time, ed. Chuck Lawless
and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2010), 299-300.

47Harvey M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, Urban Ministry (Downers Grove, IL:
InterVarsity, 2001), 23-29.

48McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, 318.

49Ibid.
the state and account for 29.7 percent, over 5.6 million, of Florida’s total population.\textsuperscript{50} While this number does not compare to the mega-cities of the world, it does represent Florida’s largest and most diverse metropolitan area.

Roger Greenway refers to the cities as missions’ new frontier. He compared the call to urban missions to the call of Jonah to Nineveh and portrayed Antioch as the basis of a biblical model of urban church development.\textsuperscript{51} For the Urban Impact Center to make a difference, it will have to help the neighborhoods and people groups it serves to find biblical solutions to urban needs. Echoing Greear’s concern that church plants should be committed to serving their communities, Greenway wrote,

> The fulfillment of the missionary mandate requires the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the planting and growth of the church, the extension of Christ’s lordship over all areas of community life, and the reclaiming of the whole cosmos from the control of Satan and his servants.\textsuperscript{52}

The implication is that the Urban Impact Center must be more than a church planting office. The center must engage the people groups of the counties it serves with an holistic approach to the Great Commission. Sullivan envisioned that type of ministry in the early 1990s because he recognized that the needs of the urban context of Miami were much different from the rest of Florida. Sullivan believes there are really three


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{51}Roger S. Greenway and Timothy M. Monsma, Cities: Missions’ New Frontier, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 32, 54.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., 74.}
distinctly different regions in Florida—South Florida, North/Central Florida, and the Panhandle.  

Sullivan recognized the limitations of trying to serve a city like Miami from Jacksonville. He put this center in place to advance the Great Commission in Florida. Other state convention leaders would do well to allocate resources in this way to reach their cities.

The FGCRT has mandated that the convention prioritize church planting, something Sullivan has always done. He will have to show that in conjunction with the 50/50 distribution mandate, church planting will remain a methodological priority and a budget priority. His persistence in ethnic church planting and his innovation with the Urban Impact Center are noteworthy.

**Implications on Church Growth and Church Health**

The second priority for the convention was given in the taskforce’s fourth recommendation. This recommendation stated that the convention should place a priority on “developing evangelistic pastoral leaders.” The recommendation included two primary means for developing pastoral leadership—theological education and the continuing work of the Florida Baptist Convention to coach, mentor, and equip pastors and church planters.

Sullivan’s priority on leadership development had already been established by the time the FGCRT made their recommendation. The Office of Leadership Development

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53 Sullivan, “Interview,” Tape 06 – 087 #1.

was added to the organizational structure of the FBC in 2004.\textsuperscript{55} The goal of this office was to help pastors “lead out of a sure sense of call, in a lifestyle [of] unquestioned character and with increasing ministry competence.”\textsuperscript{56} The Leadership Ministries Team is now a part of the Church Health Group. It sees its mission as developing servant leaders in Florida Baptist churches. The official description reads,

This team strategist is responsible for initiating and coordinating a comprehensive program of Servant Leadership promotion for Florida Baptist churches by assisting association and church leaders in encouraging, creating, conducting and improving the process of Servant Leadership and Spiritual Transformation. Additionally, consultation and coaching is provided to churches in their organizational development needs.\textsuperscript{57}

Currently the Leadership Ministries Team is collaborating with kingdom partners such as “Lead Like Jesus” and “Replenish” to promote a Healthy Leader Initiative. The Healthy Leader Initiative “encourages church leaders to restore, revitalize, replenish and renew so that we become healthier kingdom leaders who practice missional servant leadership.”\textsuperscript{58} The team is looking for innovative ways to promote the need for and participation in the leadership development coaching offered to pastors and church planters in the convention. For almost ten years, Sullivan has promoted leadership development and training in the convention and with the advocacy of the FGCRT recommendation, Sullivan’s priority on leadership development will continue well into the future.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Annual}, Florida Baptist Convention, 2004, 89.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
Sullivan’s commitment to theological education was demonstrated in 1991 within two years of becoming the executive director-treasurer as he began promoting increased budget allocations to expand opportunities for education within Florida. The ultimate goal for Sullivan was “to provide theological education for training in ministry that is readily accessible to all Florida Baptists.” Sullivan believes that along with coaching and conferences, theological education is necessary for leaders to develop their full potential. He would likely agree with author Gary Bredfeldt.

Bredfeldt suggested that the most fundamental aspect of biblical leadership is the teaching of the Scriptures. Readers are reminded of the importance of theological education at some level when Bredfeldt writes,

> At the most basic core of biblical leadership is one indispensable, unchanging function of the Christian leader—the task of teaching God’s Word with clarity, in its original context, and in a way that is relevant to those whose hearts are open to hear. . . . The biblical leader is first and foremost a Bible teacher, and the people of God are a distinctive teaching-learning community where the principles of business leadership may not always apply.

Theological education has always been a priority for Sullivan and will continue to be in the future, not because of the FGCRT, but because of his missiological principles. From 1989-2011, CP receipts ranging from $901,127 to $2,178,635 (4.0 – 5.5 percent of budget) have been invested in theological education through the Baptist College of Florida. Additionally, $135,169 to $277,281 per year (an average of $207,604) has been invested in ministerial scholarships (see Table A6, Appendix 4). The total amounts

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59 Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1991, 91. The information in this paragraph was taken from this report.

60 Gary Bredfeldt, Great Leader Great Teacher (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 15.

61 Ibid.
invested for the period 1989-2011 are $35,197,270 to BCF and $4,774,893 to ministerial scholarships.

The difficulty for Sullivan in the future will stem from prioritizing these two primary methodologies for training church leaders in light of reduced CP receipts. He may have to make some difficult decisions in the future with regard to the six other areas of ministry support currently assigned to the Church Health Group. The other teams are three church development teams (African American, Haitian, and Hispanic), a congregational support ministries team, music and worship ministries team, and a Sunday school, groups, and discipleship ministries team. During the discussion of the FGCRT recommendations, Jimmy Scroggins responded to a question about the potential impact of a 50/50 split on current ministry effectiveness. Scroggins replied, “The recommendation on the 50/50 is about setting priorities, about the amount of money that stays in the state verses [sic] what goes outside the state. And so, we are leaving it to the State Board of Missions and the Convention office to figure out what that means.”

The implications for the Church Health Group is that if Cooperative Program receipts do not increase, then Sullivan will have to make some decisions concerning how these ministries will continue to function or even if they will continue to function. More than likely some of these ministry teams will be consolidated while others may be reduced or eliminated completely. Sullivan’s original third priority of strengthening existing churches may have to be adjusted so that it is accomplished through the leadership development of pastors.

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Implications on the Cultural Mandate

The fifth recommendation of the FGCRT identified the convention’s third priority as “meeting needs by providing missional, compassionate ministries.” If the Great Commission drives the Baptist zeal for the evangelistic mandate, then the Great Commandment, love for God and others, drives the cultural or social mandate. The missional, compassionate ministries of the Florida Baptist Convention are those ministries that demonstrate a responsibility to help correct injustice in society. The need for these ministries is not questioned as much as the priority for these ministries.

Throughout the ages Christendom has struggled to understand the nature and priority of the two mandates. In his treatment of the evangelistic mandate versus the cultural mandate, Ron Rogers outlines three common positions: the wide view, the narrow view and the prioritized view. The wide view holds that the two mandates are equally important in the missionary enterprise. David Bosch pointed to the example of Jonathan Edwards when he wrote,

According to Edwards, God’s work for redemption has two facets. One consists in the converting, sanctifying, and glorifying of individuals; the other pertains to God’s grand design in creation, history, and providence. Still, for Edwards, these two mandates were inseparable.

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63 Ibid.
64 The Great Commandment refers to Deut 6:5, where the nation of Israel is commanded first and foremost to love God. In the New Testament, the command is restated by Jesus in Matt 22:37-40 with the addition of a second that is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39 NKJV).
Bosch recognized that as eschatological beliefs shifted from post-millennialism to pre-millennialism the cultural mandate diminished in importance to those churches holding to an orthodox, traditional view of missions and evangelism.\footnote{Ibid. An oversimplification of the two positions would say that the post-millennial view believes that the church is responsible for ushering the kingdom into the world. Therefore, church is responsible for correcting the injustices that are present in fallen society. The pre-millennial view believes that Christ will usher in the kingdom at His Second Coming, and all of the injustices of the world will be corrected at that time. Therefore the church’s responsibility is the proclamation of the gospel, the evangelistic mandate, not the social order of the material world.} By the beginning of the twentieth century, the cultural mandate was seen as promoting the “this-worldliness of the Social Gospel.”\footnote{Ibid. The Social Gospel is a reference to the idea that the sole purpose of the church and its missionary endeavors is to display through social reform a loving and benevolent God who exists for the betterment of mankind (Bosch, 321-22). Through the Social Gospel movement the cultural mandate became associated with liberalism, while the evangelistic mandate became the priority of fundamentalism.} This Social Gospel is one of two streams of thought in the narrow view. In this view the struggle for justice is not only the primary method for missions, but ultimately the essence of missions.\footnote{Rogers, “The Missionary Purpose of the Church,” 123.}

The second stream of thought in the narrow view is one that would focus solely on evangelism as the primary method and essence of missions. At one point in his church growth pilgrimage, Peter Wagner argued that one would search the Scriptures in vain to find a commandment that would have Christians move into the world for the purpose of creating peace, order, justice, liberty, dignity, and community.\footnote{C. Peter Wagner, \textit{Church Growth and the Whole Gospel} (1981; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1988), xi.} Perhaps he felt that mission stations had already failed at evangelizing through these purposes.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. An oversimplification of the two positions would say that the post-millennial view believes that the church is responsible for ushering the kingdom into the world. Therefore, church is responsible for correcting the injustices that are present in fallen society. The pre-millennial view believes that Christ will usher in the kingdom at His Second Coming, and all of the injustices of the world will be corrected at that time. Therefore the church’s responsibility is the proclamation of the gospel, the evangelistic mandate, not the social order of the material world.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. The Social Gospel is a reference to the idea that the sole purpose of the church and its missionary endeavors is to display through social reform a loving and benevolent God who exists for the betterment of mankind (Bosch, 321-22). Through the Social Gospel movement the cultural mandate became associated with liberalism, while the evangelistic mandate became the priority of fundamentalism.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{69} Rogers, “The Missionary Purpose of the Church,” 123.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{70} C. Peter Wagner, \textit{Church Growth and the Whole Gospel} (1981; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1988), xi.}
While both streams of the narrow view still exist among varying denominations today, the framers of the Great Commission Resurgence seem to support a third stream—the view that the church must fulfill both mandates with the understanding that the evangelistic mandate should be prioritized. This prioritized position seems to be the view advocated by Sullivan.

Ultimately, the prioritized view affirms that both mandates are essential aspects of a biblical understanding of missions, but that the priority of the missionary purpose is the evangelistic mandate. Rogers said it well when he wrote,

> While the people of God must not ignore their responsibility to minister in Jesus’ name in all situations, our priority must remain evangelism—winning the lost to Jesus Christ and establishing New Testament churches among all peoples. . . . We must seek to minister to the hurting, the hungry, the disenfranchised and the poor. . . . But if our burden is not to bring all people into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we become little more than humanitarian caregivers, improving human life only on the horizontal level, but ignoring the deepest and most debilitating of all human needs.

One might argue that evangelism as a motivation for the cultural mandate is manipulative. Pointing to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), Troy Bush argued that the message of the Great Commandment is greater than simply teaching Christians to do good things for their neighbors in need. He wrote, “Acts of kindness and

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71 Rogers, “The Missionary Purpose of the Church,” 123.

72 Ibid. This position is the position advocated in the writings of Wagner and McGavran in light of the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974. While the Lausanne Covenant prioritizes evangelism it also recognizes the Christian responsibility in the social order. Article 5 states, “When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.” See, Lausanne Covenant, accessed January 26, 2014, http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html.
service fulfill the Great Commandment when they extend from and display an intense love of God. The commands to love God and love our neighbors are inseparably joined, but they are not equal. The first is just that, the first.”

Bush, using William Carey as an example further argued that involvement in movements for social reform should never take precedence over the clear proclamation of salvation through faith in Christ.

Florida Baptists have been committed to compassionate ministries. The FGCRT stated its desires to continue funding the ministries such as Florida Baptist Children’s Homes, disaster relief, and the mission partnerships in Haiti and Cuba. The recommendation included the priority of evangelism within these compassionate ministries. Sub-committee Chairman J. Thomas Green noted that these types of compassionate ministries are designed to help “people who find themselves in need, where we can share the gospel of Jesus Christ, meeting both their spiritual needs of salvation in Christ and the physical needs of the hurts that they are experiencing within their life.” The idea is that compassionate ministries provide opportunities to share the gospel of Christ by meeting a physical need.

Another way that compassionate ministries provides opportunities to advance the gospel is less mentioned but just as important for the Florida Baptist Convention with regard to winning the younger generation. As Thom and Jess Rainer conducted their research on the millennial generation, they discovered that seventy-seven percent of this


75 Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 2010, 49.

76 Ibid.
generation affirmed the statement, “I am motivated to serve others in society.” The convention should partner with its churches to be, as J. D. Greear said, “local churches that are committed to blessing their communities.” The implication is that if the church is viewed by non-believers as an organization that is interested in meeting the needs of the community, then evangelism may take place not just among the people who are being helped, but among those who attach themselves to a church in order to help.

The Missional Support Group has a Church and Community Ministries Team designed to assist churches in providing a Christian witness through the discovery of community and human needs. The social ministries that the team seeks to help churches implement include migrant ministries and chaplaincy ministries and literacy missions such as teaching English as a second language. The team maintains a mobile dental clinic that is scheduled by the associations to serve their respective communities. The team description includes the idea that the ultimate purpose for these missions and ministries is to reach the lost.

Sullivan’s missiology may not have included compassionate ministries in his priorities from the beginning, but within two years Hurricane Andrew forced the convention to mobilize to meet the needs of its churches. In doing so, it actually mobilized to meet the needs of the communities those churches served. As indicated in


78 Greear, “Great Commission Multiplication: Church Planting and Community Ministry,” 325.

chapter four, disaster relief preparedness has been funded consistently through the
convention program budget and the Maguire State Mission Offering. Actual relief
funding comes from the generosity of Southern Baptists everywhere as they contribute
designated funds to assist relief efforts in the aftermath of disasters. Additionally, the
state convention works through the associations to mobilize volunteers and equipment
owned by associations to respond to disaster relief efforts. The convention serves areas
affected within the state, and it partners with NAMB to contribute to the relief efforts in
places outside of Florida.

If CP giving continues to trend downward, Sullivan will have to prioritize the
work of the Missional Support Group. The decisions will not be easy but the direction of
the FGCRT is clear. The cultural mandate must be prioritized at some level within the
work of the convention. C. Peter Wagner stated it very plainly when he wrote, “Godly
people must obey the cultural mandate. It is not optional. Just because we can’t do
everything does not excuse us from doing something.”

The cultural mandate has the tendency to follow two avenues of ministry.
Wagner identified these two avenues as social service and social action. Social service
seeks to minister to the needs of individuals and groups of people in an immediate way.
Social action seeks to change social structures in order to correct societal problems of
injustice. As Sullivan considers the level of involvement of the convention, he should
bear in mind the church growth principle concerning the cultural mandate. Wagner wrote,

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81 Ibid., 35. (See chap. 4, n. 42).
“When churches are involved in social ministries, the churches which specialize in social service tend to attract more new members than the ones specializing in social action.”82

The convention has allocated resources for social action since 1991.83 The responsibility for social action has been assigned to Sullivan’s office and has been funded by a budget line within the Office of the Executive Director-Treasurer. For the years 2013 and 2014, $25,000 has been allocated for each year. In prior years the amount has been much higher. Since the mid-1990s, a contract worker and a firm specializing in monitoring legislation have partnered with the FBC to keep the churches aware of legislation that would be of interest to Florida Baptists and perhaps even mobilize them into action such as publicly supporting or speaking against certain legislation. The convention now supports the work of the Florida Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission that was formed in 2012.

Since social action functions in the socio-political realm of society, it can be more divisive than social service. Most people will rally together to provide a meal for a hungry person. They will not necessarily unite to push a political agenda. Care has already been taken to define Southern Baptist positions concerning marriage and family and the sanctity of life through additional articles in the *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000*. If the church growth principle concerning social action and social service is true for churches, it may be true for denominations. Some of the resources used for social action may be better utilized for social service in the future.

82 Ibid., 37.
83 Steve Baumgardner, e-mail to author, January 16, 2014.
Implications on Partnership Missions

In May, 1995, the Florida Baptist Convention entered into an “Agreement of Cooperation” with the Baptist Missionary Fellowship of Haiti and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.\textsuperscript{84} This agreement was the result of Sullivan’s willingness to listen to the Haitian pastors in South Florida who were already impacting their homeland with the gospel of Christ. The Haitian pastors were looking to the convention to assist them with a structure that would help the churches in Haiti grow into “full-fledged indigenous churches.”\textsuperscript{85}

One need not presume whether Sullivan realized the potential of the convention’s impact in Haiti. Eighteen years of history has shown that this agreement has allowed Florida Baptists to be involved with a movement that many other conventions only read about. State convention leaders in the future would be wise to follow Sullivan’s example and become sensitive to the work that their state’s ethnic groups are doing in their home countries.

The agreement, initiated in 1995, outlined a plan to provide resources for evangelism, church starting, and church development to the churches in Haiti.\textsuperscript{86} Basically, the agreement called for the Florida Baptist Convention to take its current stateside missional priorities and implement those priorities in Haiti. The agreement also called for the enlistment and deployment of staff and volunteers to facilitate the strategy.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{84} Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1996, 359.

\textsuperscript{85} Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1994, 75.

\textsuperscript{86} Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1995, 125. All information in this paragraph is taken from this text.
\end{footnotesize}
The SBOM authorized $160,000 from unexpended pastoral assistance funds to underwrite the operational expenses incurred in the startup.

Sullivan understood the need to contextualize his priorities and methodologies to the Haitian setting. The South Florida Haitian pastors were already involved in planting churches. This partnership would continue to make evangelism and church planting a priority, as opposed to intentionally creating a mission station that would focus on social services with the hopes of being able to share the gospel.

Donald McGavran wrote, “To Christianize a whole people, the first thing not to do is to snatch individuals out of it into a different society. Peoples become Christians where a Christward movement occurs within that society.” McGavran realized that the typical missionary method of his day was to create a mission station that would reflect the sending agencies culture and attempt to meet the social needs of the people they were trying to reach. He called this method the “Exploratory Mission-Station Approach.” At one time, this approach was necessary in order to establish a Christian presence in nations that knew nothing of Christianity.

These mission endeavors served noble causes and advanced the physical well-being of indigenous people through various ministries such as providing health and education services. McGavran noticed that where there was meager response to the gospel, the mission stations simply “accommodated themselves to carrying on mission

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88 Ibid., 45.

89 Ibid.
work among populations which would not obey the call of God.”\(^{90}\) Support would continue because of the amount of good, measurable work the mission produced, and the mission would eventually lose its original purpose to evangelize the lost.

McGavran believed that for Christianity to keep pace with changing cultures and increasing populations it would require chain reactions of people making decisions for Christ that would result in entire people groups becoming Christians. He called this process a people movement.\(^{91}\) McGavran believed that in order for the mission station to evangelize the population that it needed to function like a church headquarters so that every activity of the station resulted in chain reactions of people coming to Christ. He wrote, “The most obvious result of Christian missions which have been fathering and furthering Christward movement is a tremendous host of Christian churches.”\(^{92}\)

Sullivan describes the partnership in Haiti as an unscripted partnership, meaning that the convention did not necessarily set out with some scripted church planting or mission station program for Haiti. He simply wanted to partner in the church evangelism and church planting endeavors of the Haitian pastors by providing structural and financial support. Structurally, the Baptist Missionary Fellowship of Haiti became the Confraternité Missionnaire Baptiste d'Haiti with a national director and directors of missions. Financially, pastoral assistance and evangelism projects were funded by the Maguire State Mission Offering. Eventually, Sullivan found a way to support the pastors

\(^{90}\) Ibid., 49.

\(^{91}\) Ibid., 12-13.

\(^{92}\) Ibid., 76.
even further by providing theological education. The network of churches began to grow in chain reaction toward what may be called a church planting movement.\textsuperscript{93}

As mentioned in chapter four, the results of the church planting movement in Haiti have been extra-ordinary. Table A5 in Appendix 3 illustrates the multiplication of Haitian churches from 1990-2012. Because the networks were in place to meet the needs following the earthquake in 2010, the churches were ready to share the hope of the gospel during a time when much of Haiti felt hopeless. From 2010-2012, record numbers of Haitians came to know Christ through churches planted under the partnership of the Florida Baptist Convention.

Some might argue that state conventions should focus their resources on strengthening the churches and encouraging church planting movements only within their state. The Florida partnership with Haiti may be a unique opportunity for Florida based on Florida’s diversity and its close proximity to some of the island nations of many of its citizens. The international partnership may not be ideal for other states, but the approach that Florida has taken in Haiti provides a model for reaching the diverse ethnic populations residing in the United States. The plan seeks to train and equip indigenous church pastors and planters, investing in their theological education without them having to leave their homeland. The plan provides a structure so that help in the wake of disaster can come quickly. The unscripted partnership with Haiti will be a legacy of Sullivan long-remembered.

Not all partnerships have produced the same results. As described in chapter four, many of the stateside partnerships consist of financial support for pastoral aid and a coordination of volunteer efforts between the churches in the partnering states. Since the FGCRT has mandated that the convention begin forwarding fifty percent of CP receipts to the SBC, Sullivan may have to carefully consider whether or not NAMB will be in a better position to financially support the partnership states. The convention may still partner in volunteer efforts by coordinating mission trips between the churches, but this coordination should have little or no impact on the CP budget. Instead, the money being used for these partnerships could be channeled to another international partnership that has the potential to yield similar results to that of Haiti.

Florida has been involved in Haiti because there were pastors within the Florida Baptist Convention who were desperately trying to reach their homeland for Christ. The same is true for Cuba. In 1997, the Florida Baptist Convention began partnering with the churches of the Western Cuba Baptist Convention. In 2012, under Sullivan’s direction, FBC staff met with leaders from the SBC International Mission Board and Western Cuba Baptist Convention to discuss the possibility of providing assistance to the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention.

In January 2013, after meeting with the FBC Missional Support Group leadership, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention requested the partnership with the FBC. Beginning January 1, 2014, the Florida Baptist Convention agreed to work with the

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95 State Board of Missions Program Committee Report, September 20, 2013. All information in this paragraph is taken from this report.
Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention in such a way as to continue the “development and expansion of evangelism, church starting, and church leadership development.” 96 Again, Sullivan’s missiology will be implemented in another international partnership.

Because there are different governmental restrictions in this partnership than there are with Haiti, and because the Cuban conventions are more firmly and perhaps traditionally established, the convention may not see the same type of church planting movement as it did Haiti. Because of the nature of the governmental differences, Cuban pastors in South Florida may not have the same types of relationships with the pastors in their homeland as the Haitian pastors have. If circumstances in Cuba change, the network of leadership and partnership of churches will be in place to take advantage of a possible openness to the gospel.

**Implications on Cooperation**

Sullivan’s beliefs about cooperation are reflected in the description of cooperation in bylaw two of the Bylaws of the Florida Baptist State Convention. The bylaw describes cooperation as “the cornerstone to the very foundation of Southern Baptist life.” 97 Because autonomy is stressed at every level of Baptist life—church, association, state conventions and their agencies, SBC and its agencies and mission boards—the various entities interact and partner together through voluntary cooperation.

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97 *Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 2012, 75.* The 2012 *Annual* is referenced because it contains the most recent update to Bylaw 2: Baptist Cooperation. All information defining cooperation is taken from this report.
Ideally, when churches partner together through the state convention, they agree to cooperate according to four different criteria. Cooperating churches in the state convention agree to declare in writing their intention to cooperate. They agree to cooperate theologically by subscribing to a common theological framework, such as the *Baptist Faith and Message*. Cooperating churches agree to provide statistical data. Cooperating churches agree to cooperate financially to more effectively fulfill the Great Commission. The emphasis of church autonomy makes bylaw two very difficult to fully enforce.

While statistical cooperation is a source of frustration for both the church and convention (Southern Baptists are notoriously inept at accurate record keeping), financial and theological cooperation create the most potential for division. Concerning these two criteria for cooperation, Dockery wrote,

> At the 1925 annual convention in Memphis, the messengers not only received the report to approve the Cooperative Program, but they also approved the recommendation to adopt the *Baptist Faith and Message* as the confessional statement for the SBC. While it had been the case since the founding of the SBC eight decades earlier in 1845, the convention now in a formal way, declared that both conviction and cooperation mattered.\(^{98}\)

Southern Baptist theological conviction and level of cooperation have not always been what was originally intended in 1925. These two areas of cooperation have been sources of conflict in SBC life. They have created conflicts during Sullivan’s tenure as executive director-treasurer and the implications of these conflicts may never be known completely.

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The FGCRT called for the churches of the Florida Baptist Convention to join together to fund global missions.\textsuperscript{99} The FGCRT recommendation requested the SBOM to “develop and implement a strategic plan that will move the Cooperative Program income distribution to a 50/50 division between state and national entities within four (4) years.”\textsuperscript{100} The FGCRT made a provision that, if needed, the change in distribution could take up to seven years, but the taskforce was adamant that a 50/50 distribution be reached as quickly as possible.

Included in their recommendation was the plea for churches to increase their CP giving so that all missionary endeavors could be fully funded. The plan speculated that if the churches would increase their CP giving by one percent over four years that the FBC budget would increase to $37,000,000 leaving the FBC with a budget of $18,500,000 and adding $2,900,000 to the IMB.\textsuperscript{101}

This recommendation has proven to be the most difficult. As already indicated, the convention was already doing much of what the FGCRT had mandated. This particular mandate provided the motivation to keep doing well those tasks that were identified as priorities and to stop doing those tasks that were not identified as priorities. The FGCRT never recommended ministry areas to cut, opting to leave that task to the SBOM and convention staff. The implications of this recommendation are that Sullivan needed to lead the convention to possibly redefine itself in light of the new priorities.

\textsuperscript{99} Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 2010, 48.

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 77.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 78.
Unfortunately, in 2011 and 2012, CP receipts declined. Sullivan has been faced with the pressures of reduced income from churches and from the increased allocation to the SBC. In addition to the financial pressure, he faces division among the churches with regard to the feasibility and even the necessity to abide by such a recommendation. While an overwhelming majority of messengers approved the FGCRT recommendations, some church leaders are still resistant to this particular one because they, like Sullivan, believe that the convention has acted in good faith and as good stewards of CP receipts. They believe that the missionary endeavors of Florida Baptists are just as important and efficiently pursued as those of the SBC. Furthermore, they believe that reaching people groups in Florida is the same as reaching the nations.

While some people might agree with Akin’s comments about bloated bureaucracies, the 50/50 distribution mandated by the FGCRT is a desire to return to the original design of the Cooperative Program. Personal feelings toward Sullivan or the performance or efficiency of the convention staff aside, the design of the CP has always been a 50/50 distribution. Failure to move to the 50/50 will more than likely further alienate a generation of Southern Baptists whose missiology sees the need to evenly distribute financial resources between work at home and work abroad. They carry the conviction that the SBC was started primarily to take the gospel to the nations.

Whether Sullivan believes the FBC is efficient in its missionary tasks or not makes no difference. If the convention is perceived as inefficient, CP giving will continue to decline. In 1925, the committee on cooperation reported several large donations from individuals that supplemented the contributions of the churches. In their report, they stated,
Your commission confidently believes that the successful working of the Co-Operative Program and the development and maintenance of a stabilized financial system will itself attract and secure large gifts from our men and women of wealth as nothing else will do. This statement is borne out by the fact that during the period in which our contributions have been more generous and regular to the Co-Operative Program our institutions and activities have received larger gifts than ever before in the history of our Convention. We cannot expect these gifts from the rich unless *we can show that our denomination is fully co-operant and efficient*.102

The commission that presented that report understood that there were individuals in Baptist churches who had money to give to missions, but also had choices in which agency those gifts would be trusted. They understood that if the SBC was not financially stable through the regular CP gifts of its churches and fiscally responsible with the money entrusted to them that those donors would invest their missions dollars elsewhere. Likewise, at the corporate level, churches feel as if they have a choice in their missions investment. Michael Day recognized the frustration for state conventions and associations in a “post-denominational age” where SBC churches are “choosing nontraditional methods of supporting the work of the convention” partially because “we have been *shaped by bureaucratic Baptists* who have worked long and hard to guide and administer what have become large and often bulky organizations.”103

Whether Sullivan believes, understands or is offended by the perception of bureaucracy does not matter. The implications of the 50/50 distribution convey a perception that the way the convention operates must change if it expects to get the missions investment from its churches. The perception of inefficiency must be removed

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102 *Annual, Southern Baptist Convention, 1925*, 30, emphasis added.

and it cannot be removed by staying the same. Sullivan’s missiological priorities will fit within the context of these changes. The priorities simply need to be streamlined.

Cooperation is also determined along theological lines. For most of the twentieth century the core theological identity of Baptists came from one of two traditions. R. Stanton Norman identified the first of these two traditions as the “Reformation Baptist distinctive” which posited that Baptists and their distinctive theology were the logical outcome of the Reformation’s preeminence of biblical authority conveyed in the Reformer’s cry, “Sola scriptura.” Norman called the second tradition to lay claim to Baptist theological identity the “Enlightenment Baptist distinctive,” which affirmed individual, religious experience as the key to understanding biblical authority and expresses itself in terms of individual freedom, rights, and even morality.

The differences between the two traditions were clearly evident in the controversy that led to the Conservative Resurgence. The “conservatives” represented the Reformation tradition of emphasis on biblical authority and used inerrancy as the key term to distinguish themselves from the “moderates” who, in essence, were comfortable with some form of religious experience shaping their view of the Scriptures. According to Dockery the theological course correction that was needed in the SBC was completed


105 Ibid.

106 Ibid., 59.
in the Conservative Resurgence. However, theological controversy continues to be an issue in Southern Baptist life. Unfortunately, the issue of Calvinism has created theological divisions that may be hurting cooperative efforts among Southern Baptists.

Nathan Finn described the nature of the controversy well when he wrote,

Calvinists argue that their views are biblical and have deep roots in Baptist history in general and Southern Baptist history in particular. Non-Calvinists argue that at least some aspects of Calvinist theology are unbiblical and that Calvinists overestimate the role the doctrines of grace have played in Southern Baptist history. Non-Calvinists seem especially concerned with the influence of Founders Ministries, an informal Calvinist network within the SBC. Calvinists seem to be particularly concerned with the influence of revivalism and Keswick theology, both of which are popular in many SBC churches.

In May 2013, an advisory committee made up of Calvinists and Non-Calvinists released a statement that affirmed the differences and similarities of the two sides while celebrating the opportunity to cooperate and championing the need to cooperate to advance the gospel. The report affirmed that both sides have potential extremes that should be avoided. It further stated,

No entity should be promoting Calvinism or non-Calvinism to the exclusion of the other. Our entities should be places where any Southern Baptist who stands within the boundaries of The Baptist Faith and Message should be welcomed and affirmed as they have opportunities to benefit from, participate in, and provide leadership for those entities.

110Ibid.
Every denominational leader must be careful to balance his theological convictions with the ongoing cooperative efforts of the Great Commission among Southern Baptists. This statement does not suggest that theological convictions should be compromised in order to maintain cooperating partnerships, but only serves to emphasize that in some of the theological division, both sides fit well within a conservative view of the Scriptures and the *Baptist Faith and Message*.

While Sullivan has his own theological convictions, he must be careful not to take action that might be construed as “taking sides” when both sides operate within the theological framework of the *Baptist Faith and Message*. By sending the anti-Calvinism tape to the churches of the Florida Baptist Convention, Sullivan may have affected cooperation on the part of some Calvinistic churches. Sullivan was so careful to not take sides during the inerrancy conflict, that he was labelled a centrist. He worked on the Peace Committee to try to amicably resolve the theological differences between moderates and conservatives. His actions concerning Calvinism seem to contradict his previous neutrality. Perhaps he should have taken sides concerning inerrancy and supported the various efforts over the last decade to bring peace to the FBC with regard to the Calvinism issue.

The impact of theology on cooperation will always be at the forefront of convictional people. The current theological tension in the SBC is not the same as the twentieth century tension over inerrancy. A difference in soteriological views that are both biblically driven and supported in the *Baptist Faith and Message* should not be a cause for breaking fellowship. The soteriological differences do not automatically
indicate missiological differences. Cooperation is possible when the theology is gospel-driven. Both sides seem willing to be driven in their missiology by the gospel.

David Dockery has called for a theologically informed consensus that will help Southern Baptists understand their past, their identity, and their beliefs so that together the gospel can move forward. Cooperation and conviction must be upheld equally and applied in balance. Dockery wrote, “Sometimes when the emphasis is placed primarily on matters of conviction, people can appear to be cantankerous. On the other hand, when the emphasis is placed solely on cooperation, people tend to compromise.” Finn wrote, “The time has come for a missional renewal that flows from our doctrinal convictions.” A renewed and balanced approach to conviction and cooperation will help Southern Baptists develop a new gospel-centered consensus for the future.

**Conclusion**

In 2010, the FGCRT presented Sullivan and the SBOM with recommendations for change that they believed would eventually bring about a Great Commission Resurgence among Florida Baptists. In 2011, Sullivan and the SBOM presented a plan to the churches that would bring the convention in line with those recommendations. In 2012, Sullivan reported to the state convention that the staff and the SBOM were on target with being in compliance with every mandate of the FGCRT.

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112 Ibid.

113 Finn, “Southern Baptist History,” 76.


president of the SBOM at that time affirmed that the SBOM was committed to moving toward a 50/50 distribution of CP receipts, but that there was a reasonable expectation that the churches not giving to the CP would begin partnering with Florida Baptists for the advancement of the Great Commission.

Sullivan’s missiology fits well within the context of the future of the SBC and specifically state convention work. The advancement of the Great Commission requires evangelism efforts that gather people into local congregations and strengthens those congregations so that they will reproduce themselves in church planting efforts. Sullivan’s priorities have always been evangelism, church starting, and church health. The mechanics and structures have changed over time but the mission has remained the same—to advance the Great Commission in Florida and around the world.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has presented the missiology of T. G. John Sullivan and the implications of his missiology on contemporary SBC state convention work. Sullivan believes in a sovereign God who acts providentially in the lives of men. He believes that God sent Christ into the world to provide atonement for a humanity that cannot possibly make atonement for its self. He believes that as the gospel is proclaimed the Holy Spirit provides conviction of men’s sins so that they will repent of their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus. He believes that same Holy Spirit provides the power to live the Christian life and the giftedness to share with others how that life can be attained by them. He believes that the goal for every believer and every church should be to share the gospel with every person in Florida and that by evangelizing Florida the churches would be strengthened to support global missions and the advancement of the Great Commission.

Sullivan led the convention to record levels of CP giving while keeping the convention focused on evangelism, church planting and church health. In his response to Hurricane Andrew, he led the convention to develop a comprehensive disaster relief program which he funded through the budget and Maguire State Mission Offering. One might argue that in some ways the convention has become a parachurch organization, especially with regard to social ministries. While Sullivan may be willing to fund disaster relief efforts, disaster relief is still a cooperative effort. The convention underwrites much
of the cost, but it does not staff the effort. The churches staff disaster relief with their volunteers who are willing to be trained and to respond to disasters. Additionally, the convention uses the associations as network hubs to mobilize volunteers and associational-owned disaster relief equipment.

One might argue that since Cooperative Program receipts have been trending downward for the last several years that Sullivan’s missiology has been judged ineffective. One must realize that there are several factors that affect the overall giving levels of churches. The volatility of the American economy in the past five years may be a contributing factor. Table A7 (see Appendix 5) shows that CP giving consistently increased as church income increased. In 2006-2007, as the economy began to decline, church income began to decline and CP receipts followed. While some of the decline in CP giving may be related to a dissatisfaction with Sullivan’s missiology, determining how much of the decline was induced by the economy and how much was induced by dissatisfaction would be very difficult.

Even as the CP receipts from the churches increased, Table A7 shows that they did not keep pace with reported revenue. Since 1990, the percentage of CP receipts given by the churches has steadily declined from 9.13 percent to 5.55 percent. While this decline is disturbing, the decrease in overall percentage can hardly be blamed on Sullivan’s missiology. The trend is the same for the SBC. A five-year period in the 1980s revealed that CP receipts equaled 10.5 percent of the total undesignated receipts of the churches.¹ By 2001-2002, CP receipts had dropped to 7.39 percent and by 2003-2004, to

6.68 percent.² Florida’s decline tracked with the SBC’s decline and actually fared better for a longer period of time. Florida’s percentage rate did not drop below 7.0 percent until 2006. For the three years, 2010-2012, Florida’s percentage was steady, averaging just over 5.6 percent per year. Perhaps as the economy rebounds, giving to the CP will rebound as well.

One might argue that since Sullivan opted to allocate only forty percent of CP receipts for distribution to the SBC that his missiology is ineffective for reaching the nations. While it is true that within seven years Sullivan lowered the CP allocation to the SBC to forty percent, this action does not automatically indict him for a lack of global concern. Sullivan was concerned about the way the Home Mission Board (North American Mission Board) was handling assistance for church planters. He decided that the state convention would be better suited to take care of the church planters in Florida. To fund this effort, Sullivan reduced the allocation of CP receipts to the SBC.

In hindsight, Sullivan wishes he had developed a better relationship with the HMB. Sullivan admitted, “I would like to tell you that all of the problem was on their side. Part of it was on my side. I believe in the work of the Florida Baptist Convention more than I believe in the work of any other place in the world. And I’m going to do everything I can to protect that work and see that it flourishes.”³

While a 40 percent allocation to the SBC was not what was originally intended in the CP proposal of 1925, a 40 percent allocation does not mean that a state is not

²Ibid.

willing to fund global missions. Sullivan was using some of that priority money for church planting within the state. As mentioned in chapter 5, Stetzer addressed the fact that Southern Baptists needed to “awaken a passion for the nations that live in our country’s borders.”⁴ He would further write, “I believe one place for us to start reaching North America is through the avenue of the rich diversity He has placed within our culture.”⁵ Sullivan has attempted to reach the diverse Florida population through language work, applying the church growth principle of homogenous units.

In 1997, when the HMB became the North American Mission Board, Sullivan probably should have made the effort to move the convention back to a 50/50 split. In hindsight, he would probably admit that he waited too long. The convention is now on target to return to a 50/50 distribution. Unfortunately, the move on Sullivan’s part looks coerced by the churches and the Imagine If . . . Great Commission Resurgence Task Force. Even though Sullivan’s words over the past several years have given every indication that he is pleased to return to a 50/50 SBC allocation, his actions continue to demonstrate a desire to keep higher percentages of CP receipts under state convention control.

Sullivan will face more challenges in the future as our culture continues to change and the prevailing worldview of that culture continues to shift. Sullivan is to be commended for staying with the change. As the culture changes, it becomes a new

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⁵ Ibid., 26.
mission field that requires re-contextualization. The difficulty for Sullivan is that with every generation comes the need to think differently about how the culture is changing and how that change affects the missionary enterprises of the convention. Paul Hiebert described the difficulty when he wrote,

As missionaries, we take with us not only our cultural beliefs and practices but also the fundamental assumptions on which these are built. The self-evident truths about the nature of things comprise our worldview. . . .It is hard for us to see our own worldview, because, like glasses, it is what we look with, not what we look at. We often see best after we live deeply in another culture.

The turn of the century has brought a “new culture” to Florida. The millennial generation thinks and acts differently from the culture of the twentieth century. Sullivan must constantly refocus his vision for the convention to contextualize the gospel and to a lesser degree the viability of state convention work and Cooperative Program giving.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. has touched on the ever-changing dynamic of denominational work. Southern Baptists are rethinking the way they relate to each other and the way they form associations and they are discovering that they do not need permission from a denominational agency to do so. The tribal mindset that assumed and expected loyalty to the denomination is foreign to this new generation. Mohler wrote, “In

6Stetzer defines contextualization as becoming a part of the culture so that the unchanging gospel can be presented in an ever-changing world. The difficulty with contextualization in this sense is that it often feels like cultural compromise. The church must engage the culture in its context if it is going to follow the model of Jesus. For an overview treatment of contextualization, see Ed Stetzer, “Toward a Missional Convention,” in Southern Baptist Identity: An Evangelical Denomination Faces the Future (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 192-94.

the 1900s, the primary issue was efficiency. In the twenty-first century, the primary issues are credibility and accountability.8

Rainer highlighted this same trend as he identified seven paradigm shifts in American churches. He noted that churches are shifting from denominational to quasi-denominational, meaning that they no longer look to denominations for their resources but to large churches.9 The state convention can no longer assume or expect a church’s loyalty based on the programmatic identity it once enjoyed. Southern Baptist identity is no longer determined by the program rules of the 1950s.10

The inference is that state executives will continue to have to champion and celebrate the CP, but they will have to do so out of a missional mindset, not a tribal mindset. The survival of the state convention will be determined by how well state convention leaders lead their respective conventions to become perceived as missionary sending agencies that are worthy of a church’s mission investment. Churches are no longer giving out of loyalty to the programs in which many of their leaders were raised. Instead, churches are looking to invest their mission dollars in an agency that is going to accomplish missions.


Sullivan has said on more than one occasion that the Cooperative Program is the best missions delivery system in the world. That may be the case, but that fact does not satisfy the missions investing church. They want to know that they are getting more than just a delivery system. They want to know that they are supporting missionaries who share their vision for ministry, evangelism, and church planting. Hiebert wrote, “We need to focus on building people, rather than programs. . . . We must avoid the temptation to come with our programs and keep control. We must empower young leaders and permit them the greatest privilege we allow ourselves—the right to make mistakes and learn from them.” ¹¹

Mohler provided some excellent insight into understanding the future identity of a denomination that will survive. He listed ten pairs of words with the idea that there was one word in each of the ten dichotomies that would define a successful future for the SBC. ¹² The principles will apply to the FBC as well. This identity will ultimately be decided by the churches, but there are some insights for state convention leaders.

One might argue that the Florida Baptist Convention is bureaucratic. Sullivan has addressed the accusation of bureaucracy with structural changes that he believes positions the state convention to better serve the mission. The convention website demonstrates that the convention has put some thought into the web design but more importantly it shows the missiology of the convention through its structures. Sullivan


changed the titles for the convention staff to more accurately reflect a missional approach to the Great Commission rather than an institutional approach.

Sullivan has demonstrated missional approaches to ministry through the innovations of the Urban Impact Center in Miami, Florida, and the unscripted partnership with the churches in Haiti. The Urban Impact Center gets the mission dollars closest to the largest population in Florida. The UIC will provide a future model for state conventions as they seek to establish a presence in their urban areas.

The work being done in Haiti provides a picture of what drives the entirety of Sullivan’s missiology. In Haiti, Sullivan has provided evangelism, church planting, and church health resources. He has taken his passion for theological education and pastoral leadership development and established a seminary in three different locations. He has used the church planting networks to get assistance to the people of Haiti during times of disaster, specifically Hurricane Georges and the 2010 earthquake.

Historically, Florida Baptists have been driven by the Great Commission. The Imagine If . . . Great Commission Resurgence Task Force helped to put Florida Baptists at a crossroads to really begin the process of forming a missional identity that will carry the Great Commission into the future. Sullivan has answered the challenge and made the structural changes and budget changes to get the process started. What Florida Baptists must realize is that from this point forward, denominational structures and budgets will have to become increasingly more fluid to be able to respond to the ever-changing needs of a world that desperately needs the Gospel. T. G. John Sullivan’s missiology can provide a firm foundation in the midst of all that changes.
APPENDIX 1
REPORTED CHURCHES AND CHURCH-TYPE MISSIONS

Table A1. Actual gain/loss in churches compared to reported new church starts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Ending</th>
<th>Churches</th>
<th>Church-type Missions</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gain/Loss from previous year</th>
<th>New church starts reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,784</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>2,094</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1,819</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>2,106</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>105</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1,886</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>2,159</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1,887</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1,909</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>2,298</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1,918</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>2,345</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1,947</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>2,399</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,994</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>2,399</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1,996</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>2,442</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2,031</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>2,521</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>2,043</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>2,609</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>174</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2,073</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>2,699</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>140</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2,078</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>2,707</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>159</td>
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</table>
Table A1—Continued. Actual gain/loss in churches compared to reported new church starts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Ending</th>
<th>Churches</th>
<th>Church-type Missions</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gain/Loss from previous year</th>
<th>New church starts reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2,095</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>2,756</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>147</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2,121</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>2,796</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>143</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>2,099</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>2,744</td>
<td>-52</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2,098</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>2,759</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>2,203</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>2,811</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>140</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,343</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>2,907</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>137</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2,360</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>2,899</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>118</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2,390</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>2,931</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>112</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>2,419</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>2,922</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2,485</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>2,968</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>117</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Averages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>125.4</td>
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Note: The statistics for churches and church-type missions are taken directly from the statistical summaries of the annual reports of the Florida Baptist Convention, 1990-2012. The new church starts reported from 1990-1995 are taken from the ministry reports of the Church Extension Department. The new church starts from 1996-2012 were supplied by the current church planting group lead strategist, Al Fernandez, whose records did not include information prior to 1995. The author calculated the total churches and church type missions, the increase or decrease from the prior year and the averages. See, Al Fernandez, e-mail to author, January, 16, 2014.
APPENDIX 2

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BUDGETS AND RECEIPTS

Table A2. Cooperative Program budgeted distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Florida</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>SBC</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>$23,024,670</td>
<td>$11,685,020</td>
<td>50.75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$11,339,650</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>$24,020,080</td>
<td>$12,190,357</td>
<td>50.75</td>
<td>$780,000</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>$11,050,051</td>
<td>46.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>$23,932,434</td>
<td>$12,162,463</td>
<td>52.82</td>
<td>$760,000</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>$11,009,971</td>
<td>46.00</td>
</tr>
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<td>$12,140,030</td>
<td>49.59</td>
<td>$2,004,291</td>
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<td>$12,017,810</td>
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<td>$1,982,587</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>$10,237,728</td>
<td>42.23</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>$24,064,477</td>
<td>$12,212,722</td>
<td>50.75</td>
<td>$1,985,319</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>$9,866,436</td>
<td>41.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
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<td>$12,874,726</td>
<td>51.75</td>
<td>$2,052,493</td>
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<td>$9,951,479</td>
<td>40.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
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<td>$13,463,224</td>
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<td>$10,406,357</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>$27,069,494</td>
<td>$14,008,463</td>
<td>51.75</td>
<td>$2,233,233</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>$10,827,798</td>
<td>40.00</td>
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<td>$14,460,182</td>
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<td>$11,176,952</td>
<td>40.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>51.75</td>
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<td>$16,770,676</td>
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<td>$2,673,586</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$32,902,233</td>
<td>$17,026,905</td>
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<td>$2,714,435</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>$13,160,893</td>
<td>40.00</td>
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</table>
Table A2—Continued. Cooperative Program budgeted distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Florida</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>SBC</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$35,236,888</td>
<td>$18,235,090</td>
<td>51.75</td>
<td>$2,907,043</td>
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<td>$14,094,755</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$35,320,365</td>
<td>$18,278,289</td>
<td>51.75</td>
<td>$2,913,930</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>$14,128,146</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$37,000,000</td>
<td>$19,147,500</td>
<td>51.75</td>
<td>$3,052,500</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>$14,800,000</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$38,462,531</td>
<td>$19,808,204</td>
<td>51.50</td>
<td>$3,269,315</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>$15,385,012</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$41,035,016</td>
<td>$21,133,033</td>
<td>51.50</td>
<td>$3,487,877</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>$16,414,006</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$41,023,007</td>
<td>$21,639,636</td>
<td>52.75</td>
<td>$2,974,168</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>$16,409,203</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$39,154,265</td>
<td>$20,751,760</td>
<td>53.00</td>
<td>$2,740,799</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>$15,661,706</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$35,443,008</td>
<td>$19,050,617</td>
<td>53.75</td>
<td>$2,215,188</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>$14,177,203</td>
<td>40.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$31,700,000</td>
<td>$17,308,200</td>
<td>54.60</td>
<td>$1,711,800</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>$12,680,000</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$31,600,000</td>
<td>$16,373,540</td>
<td>51.81</td>
<td>$2,812,400</td>
<td>8.90</td>
<td>$12,414,060</td>
<td>39.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$31,600,000</td>
<td>$17,253,000</td>
<td>54.60</td>
<td>$1,232,400</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>$13,114,000</td>
<td>41.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1989-2012. The priority items represent church annuity and pastoral assistance (later church planting assistance) allocations that were deducted from CP gifts. In 2010 priority items were reduced and “shared ministries” was included in those deductions. In 2011 in anticipation of lower CP income, the SBOM reduced the budget to $31,000,000 from $31,700,000 as indicated in the Annual.
Table A3. Actual Cooperative Program receipts and allocations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget Receipts</th>
<th>Actual Receipts</th>
<th>Actual to SBC</th>
<th>Actual Percent</th>
<th>Budgeted Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>$23,024,670</td>
<td>$24,187,671</td>
<td>$11,919,987</td>
<td>49.28</td>
<td>49.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>$24,020,408</td>
<td>$23,933,271</td>
<td>$11,009,923</td>
<td>46.00</td>
<td>46.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>$23,932,434</td>
<td>$24,047,906</td>
<td>$11,009,971</td>
<td>45.78</td>
<td>46.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>$24,485,828</td>
<td>$24,241,420</td>
<td>$10,224,292</td>
<td>42.18</td>
<td>42.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>$24,236,675</td>
<td>$24,517,025</td>
<td>$10,236,263</td>
<td>41.75</td>
<td>42.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>$24,064,477</td>
<td>$24,958,433</td>
<td>$10,030,760 + $155,000</td>
<td>40.81</td>
<td>41.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>$24,878,698</td>
<td>$26,414,155</td>
<td>$9,951,479 + $150,000</td>
<td>38.24</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>$26,015,892</td>
<td>$28,086,502</td>
<td>$10,406,357 + $180,000</td>
<td>37.69</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>$27,069,494</td>
<td>$28,950,966</td>
<td>$10,827,798 + $151,000</td>
<td>37.92</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>$27,942,380</td>
<td>$31,241,879</td>
<td>$11,176,952 + $120,000</td>
<td>36.16</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$29,949,544</td>
<td>$32,582,365</td>
<td>$11,979,818 + $578,172</td>
<td>38.54</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$32,407,103</td>
<td>$33,658,657</td>
<td>$12,962,839 + $499,493</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$32,902,233</td>
<td>$34,373,133</td>
<td>$13,160,893 + $376,995</td>
<td>39.39</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$35,236,888</td>
<td>$35,448,273</td>
<td>$14,094,755 + $84,554</td>
<td>40.24</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$35,320,365</td>
<td>$36,691,754</td>
<td>$14,128,146 + $200,000</td>
<td>39.05</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$37,000,000</td>
<td>$39,267,377</td>
<td>$14,800,000 + $1,016,140</td>
<td>40.28</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$38,462,531</td>
<td>$39,443,789</td>
<td>$15,385,012 + $392,503</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$41,035,016</td>
<td>$39,611,551</td>
<td>$15,844,620</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A3—Continued. Actual Cooperative Program receipts and allocations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget Receipts</th>
<th>Actual Receipts</th>
<th>Actual to SBC</th>
<th>Actual Percent</th>
<th>Budgeted Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$41,023,007</td>
<td>$37,404,527</td>
<td>$14,978,355</td>
<td>40.04</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$39,154,265</td>
<td>$34,527,629</td>
<td>$13,811,860</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$35,443,008</td>
<td>$32,665,095</td>
<td>$13,066,038</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$31,000,000</td>
<td>$31,746,323</td>
<td>$12,400,000 + $373,162</td>
<td>40.24</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1989-2012. The numbers following the plus (+) signs in the “Actual to SBC” column represent allocations of budget overages to the SBC in the following year. The author calculated the actual percentages of CP dollars forwarded to the SBC.*
Table A4. Course requirements for theological education in Haiti

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offered in three locations</td>
<td>Offered in one location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port-au-Prince, Port-de-Paix and Cayes</td>
<td>Port-au-Prince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homiletics</td>
<td>Church History – The Early Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist Doctrine</td>
<td>Church Leadership and Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to New Testament Study</td>
<td>Principles of Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Old Testament Study</td>
<td>Biblical Interpretation/Hermeneutics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Christian Education</td>
<td>Introduction to Old Testament – Historical Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelism</td>
<td>Introduction to New Testament – Life and Letters of Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Leaders in the Church</td>
<td>Discipling Church Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Religions</td>
<td>Missions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* This information was provided by Craig Culbreth, Lead Strategist for the Missional Support Group. See Craig Culbreth, e-mail to author, January 16, 2014.
Table A5. Baptisms and church-type missions in Haiti

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Church-type Missions</th>
<th>Baptisms</th>
<th>Total Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>1,489</td>
<td>8,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>1,673</td>
<td>13,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>2,869</td>
<td>15,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>6,034</td>
<td>21,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>4,556</td>
<td>24,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>6,384</td>
<td>33,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>5,103</td>
<td>26,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>4,979</td>
<td>29,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>5,077</td>
<td>30,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>3,237</td>
<td>42,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>5,687</td>
<td>38,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>5,375</td>
<td>59,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>7,376</td>
<td>68,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>9,244</td>
<td>59,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,229</td>
<td>13,090</td>
<td>71,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td>17,361</td>
<td>114,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,525</td>
<td>18,372</td>
<td>108,134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Compiled from each *Annual*, Florida Baptist Convention, 1996-2012, Statistical Summary page. Churches and baptisms are included in the FBC reporting to the SBC.
## APPENDIX 4

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS A PRIORITY

Table A6. CP distribution to BCF and ministerial scholarships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Given to BCF</th>
<th>Ministerial Scholarships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>$901,127</td>
<td>$135,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>$920,987</td>
<td>$138,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>$960,816</td>
<td>$144,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>$957,297</td>
<td>$143,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
<td>$1,049,020</td>
<td>$180,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>4.60%</td>
<td>$1,129,429</td>
<td>$171,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>$1,203,224</td>
<td>$178,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>$1,243,935</td>
<td>$199,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>$1,300,792</td>
<td>$208,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>$1,353,475</td>
<td>$189,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
<td>$1,425,062</td>
<td>$195,597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5.20%</td>
<td>$1,557,377</td>
<td>$209,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5.30%</td>
<td>$1,717,576</td>
<td>$226,850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A6—Continued. CP distribution to BCF and ministerial scholarships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Given to BCF</th>
<th>Ministerial Scholarships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>$1,809,622</td>
<td>$230,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>$1,938,029</td>
<td>$246,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>$1,942,619</td>
<td>$247,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>$2,035,000</td>
<td>$259,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>$2,115,439</td>
<td>$269,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>$2,178,635</td>
<td>$277,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>$2,057,241</td>
<td>$239,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>$1,899,021</td>
<td>$241,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>$1,796,547</td>
<td>$225,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
<td>$1,705,000</td>
<td>$217,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>$35,197,270</td>
<td>$4,774,893</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Compiled from each Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1990-2012. The percentage represents only the percentage of the budget allocated to the college. The ministerial scholarships were determined by a separate percentage, not shown. The Baptist College of Florida was named the Florida Baptist Theological College until 2000. In 2001, the name changed to Baptist College of Florida.
## APPENDIX 5

### STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF CHURCH CP GIVING

Table A7. Percent of church CP gifts to undesignated income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Church Income</th>
<th>CP Giving Amount</th>
<th>CP Giving Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>$265,890,585</td>
<td>$24,272,511</td>
<td>9.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>$272,313,045</td>
<td>$24,120,360</td>
<td>8.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>$283,178,535</td>
<td>$24,138,914</td>
<td>8.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>$288,634,248</td>
<td>$23,987,349</td>
<td>8.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>$296,613,581</td>
<td>$24,284,781</td>
<td>8.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>$320,033,159</td>
<td>$25,495,570</td>
<td>7.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>$347,440,871</td>
<td>$26,324,731</td>
<td>7.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>$357,836,167</td>
<td>$27,972,260</td>
<td>7.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>$381,126,397</td>
<td>$28,828,228</td>
<td>7.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>$417,974,683</td>
<td>$31,053,687</td>
<td>7.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$452,387,796</td>
<td>$33,086,523</td>
<td>7.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$456,709,297</td>
<td>$33,131,238</td>
<td>7.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$475,193,380</td>
<td>$34,890,889</td>
<td>7.34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A7—Continued. Percent of church CP gifts to undesignated income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Church Income</th>
<th>CP Giving Amount</th>
<th>CP Giving Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$497,777,035</td>
<td>$35,373,749</td>
<td>7.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$504,830,639</td>
<td>$36,127,901</td>
<td>7.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$541,140,308</td>
<td>$38,667,122</td>
<td>7.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$586,739,941</td>
<td>$40,038,902</td>
<td>6.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$596,759,634</td>
<td>$39,537,216</td>
<td>6.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$583,806,232</td>
<td>$38,654,690</td>
<td>6.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$573,544,117</td>
<td>$34,986,502</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$584,998,930</td>
<td>$33,055,111</td>
<td>5.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$565,044,961</td>
<td>$32,199,166</td>
<td>5.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$550,426,501</td>
<td>$30,556,823</td>
<td>5.55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These numbers were compiled from the Statistical Summary page of each Annual, Florida Baptist Convention, 1990-2012. The reported income by the churches and the amount given to the CP are based on a fiscal year that begins on October 1, and ends on September 30. Not all churches report their statistics to the convention.
APPENDIX 6

THE GREAT COMMISSION RESURGENCE

The following is a summary of the “Axioms for a Great Commission Resurgence” originally preached by Daniel Akin in Binkley Chapel, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, April 16, 2009.¹

AXIOM #1: We must commit ourselves to the total and absolute lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of our lives (Col 3:16-17, 23-24)

AXIOM #2: We must be gospel-centered in all our endeavors for the glory of God (Rom 1:16)

AXIOM #3: We must take our stand on the firm foundation of the inerrant and infallible Word of God, affirming its sufficiency in all matters (Matt 5:17-18; John 10:35; 17:17; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21)

AXIOM #4: We must devote ourselves to a radical pursuit of the Great Commission in the context of obeying the Great Commandments (Matt 28:16-20; 22:37-40)

AXIOM #5: We must affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message as a healthy and sufficient guide for building a theological consensus for partnership in the gospel, refusing to be sidetracked by theological agendas that distract us from our Lord’s commission (1 Tim 6:3-4)

AXIOM #6: We must dedicate ourselves to a passionate pursuit of the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus across our nation and to all nations, answering the call to go, disciple, baptize, and teach all that the Lord commanded (Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; Rom 1:5; 15:20)

AXIOM #7: We must covenant to build gospel-saturated homes that see children as a gift from God and as our first and primary mission field (Deut 6:1-9; Pss 127, 128; Eph 6:4)

AXIOM #8: We must recognize the need to rethink our convention structure and identity so that we maximize our energy and resources for the fulfilling of the Great Commission (1 Cor 10:31)

AXIOM #9: We must see the necessity for pastors to be faithful Bible preachers who teach us both the content of the Scriptures and the theology embedded in the Scriptures (2 Tim 4:1-5)

AXIOM #10: We must encourage pastors to see themselves as the head of a gospel missions agency who will lead the way in calling out the called for international assignments but also equip and train all their people to see themselves as missionaries for Jesus regardless of where they live (Eph 4:11-16)

AXIOM #11: We must pledge ourselves to a renewed cooperation that is gospel-centered and built around a biblical and theological core and not methodological consensus or agreement (Phil 2:1-5; 4:2-9)

AXIOM #12: We must accept our constant need to humble ourselves and repent of pride, arrogance, jealousy, hatred, contentions, lying, selfish ambitions, laziness, complacency, idolatries and other sins of the flesh, pleading with our Lord to do what only He can do in us and through us and all for His glory (Gal 5:22-26; Jas 4:1-10)

The following is the Declaration of a Great Commission Resurgence announced by 2009 SBC president Johnny Hunt.²

1. A Commitment to Christ’s Lordship
2. A Commitment to Gospel-Centeredness
3. A Commitment to the Great Commandments
4. A Commitment to Biblical Inerrancy and Sufficiency
5. A Commitment to a Healthy Confessional Center
6. A Commitment to Biblically Healthy Churches

7. A Commitment to Sound Biblical Preaching

8. A Commitment to a Methodological Diversity that is Biblically Informed

9. A Commitment to a More Effective Convention Structure

10. A Commitment to Distinctively Christian Families.

The following is a summary of the report of the Imagine If . . . Great Commission Resurgence Task Force.

Recommendation 1 – Call to Repentance and Spiritual Renewal

The task force recommends and calls upon every Florida Baptist, every Florida Baptist congregation, every Florida Baptist pastoral leader, and particularly every messenger to the Florida Baptist State Convention, meeting in Brandon, Florida, November 8-9, 2010, to stand up in the Lord’s power and meet the following challenges: (1) Repentance of all sin and of any failures in these leadership areas in the past is a necessity and the only starting place (2 Chronicles 7:14). (2) Leadership in the areas of passionate proclamation of the Word, urgent evangelizing, diligent discipling and mentoring, strategic casting of the vision, wise leadership, and burdened prayer work.

Recommendation 2 – Joining Together to Fund Global Missions

The task force recommends that the messengers to the Florida Baptist State Convention, meeting in Brandon, Florida, November 8-9, 2010, request the State Board of Missions to develop and implement a strategic plan that will move the Cooperative Program income distribution to a 50/50 division between state and national entities within four (4) years. The task force further requests that the initial plan be presented to the Florida Baptist Convention at the 2011 meeting in Miami, Florida, November 14-15, 2011, and that implementation of the plan be reflected in the 2012 Florida Baptist Convention budget.

The task force acknowledges that accomplishing this reallocation within four years could create organizational and financial stress on the Florida Baptist Convention, and these stresses should not eliminate the necessity for reaching the desired goal within the four (4) year window. However, as a safety net, the task force further recommends that a contingency plan be developed by the State Board of Missions which will ensure implementation of the 50/50 division of funds in no longer than seven years, even in the event of such stresses.

Also, the task force calls upon every church to increase Cooperative Program giving each year in reasonable increments until a sacrificial level is reached.

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Recommendation 3 – Planting Evangelistic, Reproducing Churches in Florida
The task force recommends that the messengers to the Florida Baptist State Convention, meeting in Brandon, Florida, November 8-9, 2010, request the State Board of Missions to develop and implement a Church Planting Division to reflect the priority of Florida Baptists and that the current priority item of Florida Baptist Convention Church Planting Assistance be increased to four (4) percent of all Cooperative Program receipts beginning with the 2012 Florida Baptist Convention budget.

Recommendation 4 – Developing Evangelistic Pastoral Leaders
The task force recommends that the messengers to the Florida Baptist State Convention, meeting in Brandon, Florida, November 8-9, 2010, request the State Board of Missions to prioritize, through budgeting and strategic planning, the training of pastoral leaders who will live daily as intentional, missional evangelists and who will lead local churches to fulfill the Great Commission.

Recommendation 5 – Meeting Needs by Providing Missional, Compassionate Ministries
The task force recommends that the messengers to the Florida Baptist State Convention, meeting in Brandon, Florida, November 8-9, 2010, request the State Board of Missions to lead Florida Baptists to continue meeting the needs of the poor and hurting through its evangelistic, missional, and compassionate ministries.

Recommendation 6 – Reorganize and Restructure Along Our Stated Priorities
The task force recommends that the messengers to the Florida Baptist State Convention, meeting in Brandon, Florida, November 8-9, 2010, request the State Board of Missions to present a plan to reorganize and restructure our convention along the stated priorities and to adjust to the changing financial landscape over the next four to seven years.
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203

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ABSTRACT

THE MISSIOLOGY OF T. G. JOHN SULLIVAN WITH IMPLICATIONS ON CONTEMPORARY SOUTHERN BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION WORK

Michael Allen Tatem, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014
Chair: Dr. Adam W. Greenway

This dissertation analyzes the missiology of T. G. John Sullivan, executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist State Convention since 1989, and provides implications of his missiology on contemporary Southern Baptist State Convention work. Chapter 1 introduces the need for this dissertation and provides the thesis, background, methodology, and limitations of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 provides a brief biography of the life of T. G. John Sullivan. Sullivan was born on October 20, 1936, in Ansted, West Virginia. His early life, conversion and call to ministry, education, pastorates, and denominational work at the state and national levels are highlighted.

Chapter 3 provides the biblical and theological foundations of T. G. John Sullivan. Sullivan’s views of the Bible and his beliefs about God, the condition of man, and the atoning work of Christ are examined. Also presented are his beliefs about salvation, the Christian life, and doctrine of the church.

Chapter 4 presents the missiology of T. G. John Sullivan and the practical application of that missiology in Sullivan’s understanding of the Great Commission. The
Chapter 5 gives the implications of Sullivan’s missiology on contemporary Southern Baptist state convention work. Special attention is given to the implications of the future of state convention work in light of the Great Commission Resurgence and the Imagine If . . . Great Commission Resurgence Task Force.

Chapter 6 draws conclusions from the previous chapters. The conclusion provides a model of emphases of state convention work that will accomplish a Great Commission Resurgence among Southern Baptist churches.
VITA

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