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## Looking Back and Looking Ahead: A New Era at NOBTS

**Rex D. Butler, PhD**

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It's a Dew Day! At NOBTS and Leavell College, we are well into the second year of Dr. Jamie Dew's presidency and a new era. The advent of our ninth president comes on the heels of a year-long centennial commemoration that concluded in October 2018. This extended moment of transition calls for looking back and looking ahead. Those of us connected to the seminary and college – faculty and students, administration and staff, current students and alumni, donors and friends – are mindful of our long history and grateful for God's providence.

Therefore, it is appropriate for this issue of the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* to celebrate our past while also dreaming of our future. All our authors are members of the NOBTS and Leavell College faculty, and each one brings his own expertise and viewpoint to the task at hand. I am gratified that Dr. Adam Harwood, editor of the journal, invited me to serve as guest editor of this issue. Also, I must express appreciation for the preliminary work done by Dr. Steve Lemke, who initially envisioned a centennial chronicle and commissioned the articles included in this journal.

In our opening chapter, Dr. Lloyd Harsch asks with local flair: "Who Dat Say Dey Gonna Teach Dem Saints?" Harsch explores Baptist beginnings in New Orleans during the years leading up to the founding of the Baptist Bible Institute in 1917.

In a tour de force of historical reminiscence, Dr. Chuck Kelley, President Emeritus, takes us on a "Walk through the Presidents." Kelley reenacts his introduction to the previous presidents, whose portraits line the walls of the Dement Room and whose stories he told to incoming faculty. Dr. Steve Lemke and I complete the gallery with our introduction to our newest president, Dr. Jamie Dew.

Two of our greatest presidents came from the same legendary family, and it falls to me to relate “The Leavell Legacy.” This story begins with the Leavell family and their nine sons, eight of whom distinguished themselves in Christian work. Roland Q. Leavell and his nephew, Landrum P. Leavell II, left their marks and their names throughout the history and the campus of NOBTS.

Throughout the history of NOBTS and Leavell College, our first-rate faculty have left their own legacy in scholarship and the establishment of research centers. Dr. Jim Parker and I present “A Legacy of Scholarship: Legendary Teachers and World-Class Research.”

In his chapter, “The School of Providence and Prayer: From the Great Depression through Hurricane Katrina and Beyond,” Dr. Steve Lemke traces the key moments of crisis throughout the history of our seminary: the Great Depression, the doctrinal crisis of the 1960s and the Conservative Resurgence of the 1980s, Hurricane Betsy and the even-greater destruction of Hurricane Katrina. These turning points in our history prove God’s providence and purpose for NOBTS.

Throughout its history, NOBTS has been a leader in making theological education accessible to every God-called man and woman. Dr. Norris Grubbs provides the history of “Theological Education Delivered to You.” In this chapter, he outlines some of the seminary’s innovations, which include: extension centers, closed interactive video (CIV), the Online Learning Center, and the Rubicon Project, which made almost every class offered by NOBTS available in a distance format.

The last chapter, also authored by Grubbs, imagines “The NOBTS of Tomorrow – The Future of Theological Education.” Our hundred years of history is a launching pad for the next era of theological education at the seminary. Our new president and his cabinet are making plans for our future, and this chapter gives us a glimpse into what that vision might look like.

Our new president, Dr. Jamie Dew, closes our Centennial journal with an afterword that summarizes our new mission statement and shares how its guiding principles will be applied to who we are and what we do at NOBTS and Leavell College. As we take up the “towel and basin,” we “prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.”

As I write this introduction, the world is laboring under the pall of a global pandemic. Our nation is wrestling again – or should I

say “still” – with the pain of racial strife. And tropical storms are stalking the Gulf. Our seminary continues to face challenges, but now NOBTS is not only the School of Providence and Prayer but also, in the words of our new president, the School of the Towel and the Basin!



## **Who Dat Say Dey Gonna Teach Dem Saints? Baptist Beginnings in New Orleans to the Found- ing of the Baptist Bible Institute**

**Lloyd Harsch, PhD**

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Mention New Orleans and images of good food, good music, and Mardi Gras will flood the mind. There may even be a thought or two regarding Bourbon Street or the Battle of New Orleans. But for more than a century, when Baptists thought of New Orleans, images of spiritual destitution and the need for churches came to mind.

In 1682, René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle was the first European to sail down the Mississippi River. Reaching the Gulf of Mexico, he claimed all the land drained by the river for France. He named the territory Louisiana in honor of Louis XIV. Because the mouth of the river was obscured by cedar logs and La Salle's poor documentation, it was not until Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville's identification of the mouth in 1699 that settlement of the area could begin in earnest. The city of New Orleans came into existence on May 7, 1718, and was named in honor the king's nephew, Philippe II, Duke of Orléans. May will prove to be an important month in the seminary's history.

Controlling commerce on the Mississippi River promised great wealth for France. It also blunted Spain's advance north from Mexico and encircled England's colonies. Conflict with England erupted into war in 1754, expanding to global proportions two years later. With England emerging victorious, France sought to prevent the loss of all New France by ceding its non-Canadian portion to Spain in 1763, as part of the treaty negotiations.

Spain struggled to govern its new territories. New Orleans became a center for trade, both legal and otherwise. Smuggled goods and financial backing for the American Revolution came through the city. As the French Revolution took hold in Europe, uprisings

for independence erupted in what is now Haiti. At the same time, Spain fearing British expansion, secretly ceded Louisiana back to France. When Napoleon took control of France, he tried to quell the rebellion in Haiti. Yellow fever decimated his troops, and Haiti gained its independence. This loss shattered his dreams of a Louisiana-based sugar empire and complicated his desire to conquer Europe.

President Thomas Jefferson recognized the strategic importance of New Orleans for trade and defense. He sent representatives to Paris with instructions to spend up to \$5 million to purchase the city. Napoleon, wanting to concentrate on his European expansion and fearful of losing New France, offered the entire territory in 1803 for just \$15 million, less than 3 cents an acre! Louisiana became America's eighteenth state on April 30, 1812.

A month later, America was again at war with Great Britain. Napoleon's Empire reached its zenith in 1812, with much of the European continent as either a client state, an ally, or under his direct control. While Britain controlled the oceans, France dominated trade on the continent. Each side blockaded the goods of the other. British vessels looted American merchant ships and impressed American sailors into their military. In June 1812, the same month that Napoleon launched his disastrous campaign into Russia, the United States declared war on Britain. When the war proved more difficult than either side imagined, the Treaty of Ghent (Belgium) was signed December 24, 1814, but not ratified until February 16, 1815.

British plans for capturing New Orleans had already been underway for some months when the treaty was signed. Because the British did not recognize Napoleon as a legitimate head of state, it considered his sale of Louisiana to America as fraudulent. Taking New Orleans, even after the treaty was signed, could be defended in their minds. The treaty could be renegotiated and the upstart republic surrounded. The British were confident they would succeed.

British forces from Jamaica had already landed in Louisiana as the treaty was being signed, but word of the signing would not arrive for some time. On January 8, 1815, battle-tested British troops faced a ragtag assortment of Americans, pirates, and Choctaw on a Chalmette battlefield. During the twenty minute battle, British forces reported staggering losses of some 2,000 killed or wounded. American casualties were only around 20. To a war-



weary nation, this unexpected victory brought a surge of national pride, secured control of trade along the Mississippi River, and retained the largest and wealthiest port in the South.

New Orleans was the Southern jewel in America's crown. By 1820, New Orleans was the fifth largest city in the United States, behind New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston. Exempting northerly-situated Baltimore and St. Louis, New Orleans was the largest Southern city for over a century. Not until 1950 did Dallas and Houston surpass it in population. The first steamboat came down the Mississippi River in 1812. The Port of New Orleans was the fourth busiest in the world in 1840.<sup>1</sup> Cotton was king, and by 1907 New Orleans was the largest importer of bananas. The Panama Canal, which facilitated trade between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, was completed in 1914. To Baptists, the Jewel of the South needed to be added to the crown of the King.

Roman Catholicism had been the official state religion in New Orleans until the Louisiana Purchase. Its cultural dominance continued long after that. St. Louis Cathedral is the oldest cathedral in the United States, narrowly edging out the Baltimore Basilica. French was the predominant language in the city, even when Louisiana was ruled by the Spanish. It would not be until the 1830s, almost three decades after the Louisiana Purchase, that English would surpass French.<sup>2</sup> This affected English-language church planting.

The first English-speaking church was formed on May 29, 1805, as Christ Church. The members then voted for the denomination to which it would belong. Of the 53 votes, 45 favored the Episcopalians. New Orleans is also home to the oldest Greek Orthodox Church in North America.

In addition to Louisiana becoming a state and hostilities with Britain beginning, the year 1812 was important to Louisiana Baptists. The first Baptist churches in the state were organized that year. The short-lived Half Moon congregation, near Bayou Chicot in Washington Parish, was organized on October 12, followed a month later by Calvary Baptist, organized November 13, in Bogue Chitto, St. Landry Parish.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Rightor, *A Standard History of New Orleans* (Chicago: Lewis, 1900), 67, 568, passim.

<sup>2</sup> Rightor, *A Standard History of New Orleans*, passim.

Also in 1812, the first recorded Baptists appear in New Orleans. Cornelius Paulding grew up in New York. He began his career in New York City in 1800 as a watchmaker. In 1802, he entered into a partnership with Isaac Marquand in Savannah, GA. Paulding moved to New Orleans in 1812 where he established his own business and invested successfully in real estate.<sup>3</sup> Over the years, Paulding would make a meeting room available to anyone wishing to hold worship services.

New Orleans is an international city founded by the French. It seems appropriate that the first Baptist to preach in the city was a Frenchman coming from Canada. Edmund J. Reis was born in Paris, France, where he lived until the age of 15.<sup>4</sup> He was brought to Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1807 as a prisoner on a privateer ship.<sup>5</sup> About 1810, Reis connected with a New Light revival sweeping the area and became the first pastor of Goat Island Baptist Church, North Clement, Nova Scotia.<sup>6</sup> He left two years later, as the war was beginning, to preach and distribute Bibles in New Orleans, supported in part by the New York Baptist Association.<sup>7</sup> Being able to preach in both English and French was an advantage in New Orleans. While Reis's preaching was well attended, he had little success and returned to Canada in 1813 after six months. Reis preached the 1815 Association sermon from Jonah 3:2, "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you,"<sup>8</sup> a fitting text from one who had done just that.

The year 1812 was a momentous one for all Baptists in America regarding foreign missions. Inspired by British Baptists sending William Carey to India as a missionary, American Congregational-

<sup>3</sup> "American Silversmiths: Cornelius Paulding," <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~silversmiths/makers/silversmiths/174100.htm>, accessed 23 September 2020.

<sup>4</sup> David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1813), 2:265.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict, *A General History*, 1:307; George Edward Levy, *The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, 1753–1946* (Saint John, New Brunswick: Barnes-Hopkins, 1946), 93.

<sup>6</sup> "Goat Island Baptist Church," <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=13458>, accessed 23 September 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Benedict, *A General History*, 2:441; Samuel S. Hill, *Religion in the Southern States: A Historical Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 132.

<sup>8</sup> M. Allen Gibson, *Along the King's Highway* (Lunenburg, Nova Scotia: Home Mission Board of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1964), 10.

ists (theological descendants of the Puritans) formed their own mission agency. Two of the five missionaries, knowing they would encounter Carey in India, studied their Bibles on the voyage over (on separate ships) and became convinced that believer's baptism by immersion was biblical. Adoniram Judson and his wife, Anne, remained on the field while Luther Rice returned to America in 1813 to inform Baptists they now had a missionary couple on the field.

Spurred into action, they gathered in Philadelphia to form the Baptist Convention for Missionary Purposes in May 1814. Because it met every three years, it was commonly referred to as the Triennial Convention. Only one person from Georgia, William B. Johnson, and one from North Carolina, James A. Ranaldson, participated in the formation of this missionary endeavor. Both were elected to the inaugural Board of Commissioners.<sup>9</sup>

Johnson came to New Orleans for his health in March 1817 after being invited by Paulding to preach in the city.<sup>10</sup> Johnson spoke in Paulding's "Long Room" and was even allowed to speak in St. Louis Cathedral on behalf of the Poydras Orphan Asylum.<sup>11</sup> He even assisted in forming a mission society as an auxiliary to the Triennial Convention.<sup>12</sup>

During this sojourn in New Orleans, Johnson met his fellow Board member, Ranaldson, who had moved to New Orleans in late 1816.<sup>13</sup> In May 1817, Johnson endorsed Ranaldson's request to the Triennial Convention to be appointed a missionary to New Orleans. The Convention agreed and instructed Ranaldson to preach in the city and its environs, and to preach to the First Nations in the region. The hope was that this work would open up missions to Texas and "facilitate its ingress into the countries of South America."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Proceedings of the Baptist Convention for Missionary Purposes*, 1814: 7–10.

<sup>10</sup> W. E. Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana from the Earliest Times to the Present* (St. Louis: C. R. Barnes, 1888), 119.

<sup>11</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 119.

<sup>12</sup> William B. Johnson, "Reminiscences," *Baptist Courier*, 13 February 1896.

<sup>13</sup> Hill, *Religion in the Southern States*, 133.

<sup>14</sup> *Baptist Convention for Missionary Purposes*, 1817: 141, 176–77.

Ranaldson organized a Sunday school, with almost one hundred scholars, and a church in 1817.<sup>15</sup> However, his tenure was short-lived in spite of a favorable response to his ministry. He received notice of his appointment on June 11 and moved on July 28 to St. Francisville, Louisiana, where he organized a church on November 2, 1817.<sup>16</sup> The reason for the move was two-fold. In addition to his own health concerns, his family was ailing, and the high cost of living in New Orleans prompted the move.<sup>17</sup>

Benjamin Davis of Natchez, Mississippi, followed Randaldson as pastor. Both men were at the 1817 Mississippi Baptist Association meeting. They were put on a committee regarding education. The committee reported, "Education . . . next to the gospel, . . . is of the highest importance to the world."<sup>18</sup> The following year, Davis represented the New Orleans congregation at the Mississippi Baptist Association when it was welcomed as a member.<sup>19</sup> Davis had the honor of performing the first baptism in New Orleans. He baptized the father-in-law of a prominent lawyer in the Mississippi River in front of the custom house.<sup>20</sup> Under Davis, the congregation grew to forty-eight members: sixteen white and thirty-two black.<sup>21</sup> Davis left in 1820, and the congregation became inactive.

The statistical tables also list a Friendship Baptist in New Orleans. It is possible that Friendship, led by Nehemiah Williams and received into the Mississippi Baptist Association along with Davis's New Orleans congregation, was the African American por-

<sup>15</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 118; Letter, September 2, 1817 from Ranaldson to Corresponding Secretary of Triennial Convention, in *The Latter Day Luminary* 1.1 (Feb 1818): 36.

<sup>16</sup> *The Latter Day Luminary* 1.1 (Feb 1818): 37; Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 118; D. Hoyle Haire, "A Brief Account of the Life of James A. Ranaldson" (ThM thesis, Baptist Bible Institute, 1941), 9.

<sup>17</sup> *The Latter Day Luminary* 1.1 (Feb 1818): 37.

<sup>18</sup> T. C. Schilling, *Abstract History of the Mississippi Baptist Association, From Its Preliminary Organization in 1806 to the Centennial Session in 1906* (New Orleans: J. G. Hauser, 1908), 32.

<sup>19</sup> Schilling, *Abstract History of the Mississippi Baptist Association*, 33.

<sup>20</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 119.

<sup>21</sup> William Hicks, *History of Louisiana Negro Baptists and Early American Beginnings from 1804 to 1914* (Nashville: National Baptist Publishing Board, 1914), 22.

tion of the New Orleans congregation.<sup>22</sup> An 1806 territorial law forbade slaves from assembling for any means, including worship. Laws preventing blacks from preaching without white permission were an attempt to prevent blacks from congregating in large numbers.<sup>23</sup> Enforcement of these laws was inconsistent, but increasingly stringent as the Civil War approached.

The work was revived in 1826 when William Rondeau came to New Orleans. Rondeau was a lawyer from Manchester, England, and member of St. George's Road Baptist Chapel.<sup>24</sup> He emigrated in 1819, established a homestead in Pope County, Illinois, in 1820, and lived with his family along the Ohio River on an island near Golconda, Illinois.<sup>25</sup> Leaving his wife in charge of the home, he would make trips of varying length down river to New Orleans. In the spring of 1826, he gathered a handful of people into a congregation and preached for about a year before returning to Illinois and the group disbanded.<sup>26</sup>

When Rondeau revived the work, it was primarily among the white community. Asa Cruger Goldsbury<sup>27</sup> organized First African Baptist on October 31, 1826.<sup>28</sup> Goldsbury was a free person of color. He had high commendations from pastors in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and he served on the Board of the African Union Meeting and School-House in Providence, Rhode Island.<sup>29</sup> Rondeau was on the committee that ordained Goldsbury to the ministry and organized the congregation. Laws against African Americans preaching made this work difficult. William Paxton notes in his history of Louisiana Baptists that Goldsbury was or-

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<sup>22</sup> *Mississippi Baptist Association Minutes*, 1819: 3; Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, *African American Religious Thought* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 214–19.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Ramsbottom, "A Chiliasm of Despair: The Community Worshiping at St. George's Road Baptist Chapel, Manchester," *Baptist Quarterly* 37/5 (Jan 1998): 229.

<sup>25</sup> Edward P. Brand, *Illinois Baptists: A History* (Bloomington, IL: Pantagraph, 1930), 135.

<sup>26</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 119–20.

<sup>27</sup> Also spelled Goldsberry.

<sup>28</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 120.

<sup>29</sup> *A Short History of the African Union Meeting and School-House, Erected in Providence (R. I.) in the Years 1819, '20, '21; With Rules for Its Future Government* (Providence: Brown & Danforth, 1821), 4–9.

dered by city authorities to be silent for six months or go to jail. He does not mention the outcome. The congregation grew to 87 members by the time of Goldsbury's death.<sup>30</sup>

First African regained its strength in 1833. Nelson D. Sanders was a Virginia Baptist pastor and a slave.<sup>31</sup> In 1833, he was sold to a new master in New Orleans. His new owner allowed him to earn extra income, and Sanders was able to purchase his freedom. A congregation of thirty-two slaves was soon meeting in a home on Gentilly Road. Meeting as a congregation was illegal. Worship was often disrupted by the police who would carry to jail as many of the congregation as suited their fancy, men and women. Eventually, the congregation was allowed to meet from 3-5 pm on Sundays, provided the congregation pay a policeman to secure the premises and ensure that the time limit was strictly observed. In 1842, the congregation relocated to a lot on the corner of Howard Avenue and Cypress Street. The location had to be sold to make way for a railroad expansion. The congregation relocated to 2216 Third Street, where it still exists and worships.

While the Triennial Convention focused on foreign missions, associations (and later state conventions) assisted with local church planting. In order to facilitate starting churches in newly-settled frontier communities or in areas destitute of a Baptist witness, the American Baptist Home Mission Society (HMS) organized in 1832 with the bold motto, "North America for Christ." At its inaugural meeting in New York, Cornelius Paulding was elected as vice president of the society, even though he did not attend the meeting.<sup>32</sup> William B. Johnson and Basil Manly were elected as directors.

The important commercial center of New Orleans was an early priority. Within a month of forming, the HMS, in May 1832, appointed among its first ten missionaries, Pharcellus Church, for New Orleans.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, he declined. Funds and missionary

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<sup>30</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 121.

<sup>31</sup> The information regarding Sanders comes from Hicks, 25–27.

<sup>32</sup> *Proceedings of the American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 1832: 5.

<sup>33</sup> American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Baptist Home Missions in North America: Including a Full Report of the Proceedings and Addresses of the Jubilee Meeting, and a Historical Sketch of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Historical Tables, etc., 1832–1883* (New York: Baptist Home Mission Rooms, 1883), 327; *American Baptist Home Mission Society Minutes*, 1833: 16. Church became a Life Director

availability would delay the fulfillment of the appointment for two years. In the meantime, James B. Smith was appointed in 1833 to survey the field and preach as he could, serving for over two years.<sup>34</sup> However, his ministry centered 100 miles west of New Orleans in Franklin, St. Mary Parish.<sup>35</sup>

It was not until October 1834 that Pharcellus Church, at the continued urging of HMS Secretary Jonathon Going, arrived with the specific task of working in New Orleans. In its report for that year, the society noted:

It is probable that Louisiana is more destitute of ministers than any state in the Union. . . . After long delay, and the failure of repeated attempts, the Committee have stationed a Missionary in New Orleans, a city of great importance as a Missionary station, from its location, its extent and rapid increase, as well as its present moral condition.<sup>36</sup>

Church was to meet with a “wealthy old bachelor” but he “got too crochety to do anything with him.”<sup>37</sup> The bachelor was undoubtedly Cornelius Paulding. The two men clearly did not get along and Church left New Orleans the following year to become pastor of First Baptist, Rochester, New York. That same year, Paulding’s name was dropped from the list of HMS vice presidents. Church’s son, Francis, later achieved some notoriety when he published an editorial in 1897, “Yes, Virginia. There Is a Santa Claus.”

Francis F. Seig served as a missionary for nine months in the same capacity as Smith. The 1836 HMS annual notes the two missionaries serving the state in general, but laments, “Our efforts in behalf of New Orleans have been nearly ineffectual.”<sup>38</sup>

The outlook began to brighten in 1840. The Society notes the presence of a missionary in New Orleans where “the Committee have many years felt great solicitude.”<sup>39</sup> This was Fredrick Clarke from Saco, Maine. First Baptist, Saco, was organized on February

that same year when the Providence, RI congregation contributed at least \$100 on his behalf. *American Baptist Home Mission Society Minutes*, 1833: 29.

<sup>34</sup> *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 583.

<sup>35</sup> *American Baptist Home Mission Society Minutes*, 1834: 19.

<sup>36</sup> *American Baptist Home Mission Society Minutes*, 1835: 20.

<sup>37</sup> *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 202.

<sup>38</sup> *American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 1836: 24.

<sup>39</sup> *American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 1840: 10.

8, 1827, with seven members.<sup>40</sup> Clarke became their first pastor. The congregation prospered under his ministry and made plans to build a chapel. After a lot was purchased and construction started, funds ran out before a roof could be put on the structure and problems with the land title resulted in the property being lost. The congregation divided on whether Clarke's handling of the funds was fraudulent. An appeal to the Association to mediate eventually resulted in a recommendation that the church withdraw fellowship from their pastor, which they did on July 2, 1833. Five years later, Clarke reconciled with the congregation, but he was not restored to the pastorate.

Two years after reconciling with his congregation in Maine, Clarke was in New Orleans, gathering the remnants of the previous congregations. The re-organized First Baptist Church (FBC), "being found orthodox," was welcomed into the Mississippi Baptist Association in 1841, reporting one baptism and six members.<sup>41</sup> The following year's State of Religion in the Association notes the congregation was growing and two infant-baptizing pastors had been baptized with an increase of nineteen members.<sup>42</sup> That same year, FBC joined other Louisiana congregations in forming the East Louisiana Baptist Association. Clarke preached the introductory sermon for the Association in 1843 and 1846 and was elected moderator in 1843.<sup>43</sup>

Home Mission Society reports note that congregants of FBC gave money to the Society from 1842–1844 in Clarke's name so that he could become a life member.<sup>44</sup> Construction began on a chapel, first in the warehouse district and later on Triton Walk (Howard Avenue).<sup>45</sup> In spite of this activity, a second congregation, also called First Baptist, was started in 1843. Paxton quotes a member of the rival congregation, J. L. Furman, who claims it was

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<sup>40</sup> The information regarding Clarke comes from Joshua Millet, *A History of the Baptists in Maine: Together with Brief Notices of Societies and Institutions, and a Dictionary of the Labors of Each Minister* (Portland, ME: Charles Day, 1844), 61–62, 440.

<sup>41</sup> *Mississippi Baptist Association Minutes*, 1841: 7.

<sup>42</sup> *Mississippi Baptist Association Minutes*, 1842: 7.

<sup>43</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 46–52.

<sup>44</sup> *American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 1842:66; 1844:77.

<sup>45</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 123.



Clarke's excluded status and "account of his personal standing" that led to the split, a view which Paxton questions.<sup>46</sup>

While it is possible that the financial impropriety that plagued Clarke in Maine resurfaced during the attempts to raise a chapel in New Orleans, there is no evidence of it. Significant issues would have been addressed through the East Louisiana Association, but no such problems are noted. In fact, Clarke continues active participation with leadership responsibilities with the Association through 1847.

Clarke could have been an adherent of William Miller's eschatological views which stated that Jesus would return about 1843 or 1844. When the predictions proved inaccurate, Clarke could have lost the trust of his people. A more likely explanation relates to slavery. The abolition movement had strong support in Maine. As sectional frictions on the issue emerged, such views would not find favor in New Orleans. They would also not be welcomed by the Home Mission Society, which was attempting to remain neutral on the subject. Whatever the reason, Clarke's congregation was not recognized beyond the association level and disbanded about 1848.

In 1842, Russell Holman left Kentucky for New Orleans "to see if anything could be done to revive the work," in spite of not having a stout constitution.<sup>47</sup> Holman was born in 1812, the year that Reis first came to New Orleans, and was educated at Brown University, which as a Baptist institution at that time. After graduation in 1838, Holman settled in Green County, Kentucky to serve as pastor.<sup>48</sup> The Trail of Tears (1838–1839), mandated by the same Andrew Jackson who had successfully defended New Orleans in 1815, passed nearby and it is likely that Holman had contact with either the Baptist Cherokees or Evan Jones, who traveled with

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<sup>46</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 122–24.

<sup>47</sup> "Rev. Russell Holman: Founder of the First Baptist Church, New Orleans, and First Secretary of the Home Mission Board." Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Rholman-AR631-box 9, folder 36; William Cathcart, ed., *The Baptist Encyclopaedia: A Dictionary of the Doctrines, Ordinances, Usages, Confessions of Faith, Sufferings, Labors, and Successes, and of the General History of the Baptist Denomination in All Lands. With Numerous Biographical Sketches of Distinguished American and Foreign Baptists, and a Supplement* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 536.

<sup>48</sup> "Russell Holman: A Biography." <http://famhist.histwrit.com/russell-holman/>, accessed 23 September 2020.

them. He may have ministered to the Creek who passed his way.<sup>49</sup> Holman was ordained in 1840, probably by Thomas J. Fisher.

Holman arrived in New Orleans in January 1842.<sup>50</sup> After so many unsuccessful attempts in the past to establish a congregation and with Clarke's group doing well, he found it difficult to persuade enough people to meet together for worship.<sup>51</sup> Aided by Fisher and William Minter of Grenada, Mississippi, Holman was eventually able to gather a congregation in the upper room of 66 Julia Street and organize a church of ten members on December 28, 1843, with Holman as pastor.<sup>52</sup> In 1844, the congregation joined the Mississippi River Association, a different association than the one with which Clarke's congregation participated.<sup>53</sup> Holman's preaching attracted growing crowds and he was able to raise enough funds to purchase land for a chapel.

The Home Mission Society, with William Johnson now as its president (1841–1844), began supporting Holman as a missionary in January 1844, and he sought for someone to take over the work in New Orleans.<sup>54</sup> The mantle of leadership would fall on Isaac Taylor Hinton. Hinton was born July 4, 1799, in Oxford, England, into the home of the town's Baptist pastor. He was converted and baptized at age 31.<sup>55</sup> A year later, he was licensed to preach and moved to Philadelphia to work in publishing, occasionally filling the pulpit. In June 1833, he became the pastor of the struggling First Baptist, Richmond, Virginia. He stabilized the congregation and in 1835, accepted the call to First Baptist, Chicago, Illinois. This frontier congregation had recently been organized, but its founding pastor had died of typhoid. In 1841, Hinton accepted a call to Second Baptist, St. Louis, Missouri, where he added more than 200 members to the congregation of 70 before bringing his family to New Orleans in December 1844.<sup>56</sup> He was appointed in

<sup>49</sup> "Russell Holman: A Biography."

<sup>50</sup> Vera Carter, "History of New Orleans Baptists to 1870" (DipRE thesis, Baptist Bible Institute, 1929), 22.

<sup>51</sup> "Russell Holman: A Biography."

<sup>52</sup> Rightor, *A Standard History of New Orleans*, 504.

<sup>53</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 73.

<sup>54</sup> *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 583. *American Baptist Home Mission Society Report*, 1844: 31.

<sup>55</sup> The following information comes from Hinton's obituary, *Mississippi Baptist Convention Annual*, 1847: 22–24.

<sup>56</sup> R. S. Duncan, *A History of the Baptists in Missouri, Embracing an Account of the Organization and Growth of Baptist Churches and Associations; Biographical Sketches of*

1843 to the inaugural Board of Trustees in establishing William Jewel College.<sup>57</sup> Hinton became known for his books on baptism (1841) and prophesy (1843). One of his deacons, William Page, relocated to the Crescent City, and through Page, the call came for Hinton to serve in New Orleans.<sup>58</sup>

Hinton arrived in the Big Easy on New Years Day, 1845.<sup>59</sup> May of that year found Holman and Hinton in Augusta, Georgia, as the only two representatives from Louisiana at the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).<sup>60</sup> Since only 20 of the 293 delegates to the Convention were from outside Georgia, South Carolina, or Virginia, their presence is significant.<sup>61</sup> William B. Johnson, who had endorsed Ranaldson's missionary appointment to New Orleans, was elected the first president of the SBC and Hinton as a vice president of the Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board).<sup>62</sup> At the inaugural meeting, only one resolution singled out a specific mission field. New Orleans was that field: "Resolved, That this Convention recommend to the Board of Domestic Missions, to direct its effective attention to aid the present effort, to establish the Baptist cause in the city of New Orleans."<sup>63</sup>

Holman became the first Corresponding Secretary of the Domestic Mission Board (now North American Mission Board). The Board wanted to act upon that resolution, but was unable due to a lack of funds. As its 1846 report notes, "Rev. I. T. Hinton, pastor of the First Baptist Church in New Orleans, has been appointed a missionary to that place by our Board. Application for his appointment was made early in the conventional year, but having no funds in the treasury, the Board postponed the application until the state of their finances should justify their action; consequently

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*ministers of the Gospel and Other Prominent Members of the Denomination; the Founding of Baptist Institutions, Periodicals, &c* (Saint Louis: Scammell & Company, 1882), 114.

<sup>57</sup> Duncan, *A History of the Baptists in Missouri*, 114.

<sup>58</sup> Duncan, *A History of the Baptists in Missouri*, 123.

<sup>59</sup> "Isaac Taylor Hinton," Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, ITHinton-AR631-box 9, folder 35.

<sup>60</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1845: 11.

<sup>61</sup> H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 388.

<sup>62</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1845: 6.

<sup>63</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1845: 15.

brother Hinton continued his connection with the A. B. H. M. S.”<sup>64</sup>

In January 1847, Hinton was joined by William Cecil Duncan of Mississippi. Duncan had recently come from New York where he had received some theological training and had married a wife.<sup>65</sup> The newlyweds came to the city where Duncan tried to establish a Baptist newspaper. The enterprise would struggle and eventually fail because subscribers would not follow through with payment.

Baptist work in New Orleans was finally in a growing and hopeful state. A building on St. Charles Avenue was completed in February 1846.<sup>66</sup> The congregation had grown to almost one hundred members when yellow fever swept through the city. Fortunately, the congregation suffered the loss of only two members. Unfortunately, they were Duncan’s young bride and Pastor Hinton. Just five days after contracting the disease, Hinton died on August 29, 1847. Hurricane Katrina would hit the city 158 years later on the same day.

The congregation struggled with short-term pastorates for the next few years. This uncertainty showed in the congregation’s finances, and the congregation had difficulty paying the note on the building. To complicate matters, Paulding died on March 9, 1851.<sup>67</sup> In his will, Paulding had instructed his executors to sell some property with the proceeds to be used by a yet-to-be-organized congregation to build a chapel. Unfortunately, FBC needed the money to pay the mortgage on its property, but could not do so under the terms of the will. As a result, FBC lost its property in June 1851. The sale of the property was not enough to cover the mortgage, so the congregation was left with no property and a mortgage. They met for a time in the Universalist Church building, then in the Carrollton train station. It would not be until July 1861, a decade after losing its building, that FBC would be able to secure a place of its own in which to worship.<sup>68</sup>

During this difficult time, Southern Baptists kept the city and its spiritual needs regularly before them. Beginning in 1853, a ref-

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<sup>64</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1846: 33.

<sup>65</sup> Ernest Murphy Daffin, “Biography of Rev. William Cecil Duncan, D. D.” (Master of Christian Training thesis, Baptist Bible Institute, 1921), 3.

<sup>66</sup> Carter, “History of New Orleans Baptists to 1870,” 25.

<sup>67</sup> Carter, “History of New Orleans Baptists to 1870,” 28.

<sup>68</sup> Carter, “History of New Orleans Baptists to 1870,” 29–30.

erence to the work in New Orleans or “the destitution of the field” was made every year at the Southern Baptist Convention. Giving the “Missions to New Orleans” committee report, J. R. Graves noted the city was crucial to winning the West:

New Orleans being its great commercial emporium with its estimated population of 150,000, should and must at once be occupied. . . . Our government, acting upon the advice of Jefferson, purchased Louisiana at a great price, in order to possess itself of New Orleans and the mouth of the Mississippi river [sic]. . . . As important as is New Orleans to the commercial interests of the west, so great is its importance to its religious ones, and it should be occupied at once, at whatever cost or sacrifice.<sup>69</sup>

In order to draw attention to the city and its needs, two unsuccessful attempts were made (1861, 1870) to move the Convention’s annual meeting to New Orleans. The Convention finally met in New Orleans for the first time in 1877, during the depth of an economic depression which brought about the end of Reconstruction.

In order to satisfy the requirements of Paulding’s will, nine members withdrew from FBC and organized Coliseum Place Baptist on July 3, 1854. The congregation promptly called Duncan, who had been serving as FBC’s pastor, to be their own. For several years, the two congregations worshiped together. Coliseum began to thrive. It launched a German mission and in November 1860 started a mission that met in the Masonic Hall on St. Charles Avenue with thirty members under the care of Dr. Ryerson.<sup>70</sup>

A second African American congregation soon joined the first. Second Colored Baptist Church joined the Mississippi River Association in 1850 with Duncan as its pastor.<sup>71</sup> Third African Baptist came a few years later. Fourth African Baptist, organized in 1857, joined the Association in 1859.<sup>72</sup> As racial tensions increased prior to the war, New Orleans made property ownership by black churches illegal. In order to preserve their places of worship, and to skirt regulations on blacks assembling, a white pastor would

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<sup>69</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1853: 22.

<sup>70</sup> Maynard Uriel Vick, “A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church” (Dip TH thesis, Baptist Bible Institute, 1934), 10.

<sup>71</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 84.

<sup>72</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 127.

serve as the official leader of a black church and Coliseum Place oversaw all the property of the various black congregations.<sup>73</sup>

The invention of the steamboat made travel up the Mississippi River possible. This allowed goods to be transported to the port in New Orleans more quickly and less expensively than if they went over land. Ships transporting goods from New Orleans to Europe often filled their hulls with immigrants for the return voyage. By pricing their transport to the city at rates below that for New York, New Orleans became a preferred port of entry for immigrants who wanted to quickly access farm land in the interior. From 1847–1857 some 350,000 immigrants, mostly Irish, German, and French, passed through the city.<sup>74</sup> Many chose to stay.

Just two weeks after Holman organized FBC, Charles Fusch, who had been ministering among the Germans, joined the congregation.<sup>75</sup> In 1855, two Germans joined Coliseum Place. One of the members came from the congregation of the founder of German Baptists in Europe, Johann Gerhard Oncken, and the other was Dr. Henry Nabring.<sup>76</sup> Nabring was appointed as colporteur and missionary to the Germans in January 1855, a mission of Coliseum Place Baptist.<sup>77</sup> The following year also found Second Colored Baptist thriving with Nabring as pastor.<sup>78</sup> As the German congregation grew, it erected a meeting place on Spain Street and dedicated it on the first Sunday in January, 1858, with its Sunday school organized on April 11, 1858.<sup>79</sup> First German organized July 20, 1860, with 23 members and Rev. W. Fasching as pastor.<sup>80</sup> It joined the Mississippi River Association in 1860.<sup>81</sup>

Swedish Baptists had their start in New Orleans. Gustavus Schroeder, a sailor, was converted in 1844 by the Methodists while

<sup>73</sup> Vick, "A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church," 7.

<sup>74</sup> "Major U. S. Immigration Ports," (unnumbered) page 8, <https://www.ancestrycdn.com/support/us/2016/11/majorusports.pdf>, accessed 23 September 2020.

<sup>75</sup> David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America*, rev. ed. (New York: Lewis Colby & Co., 1848), 781; Carter, "History of New Orleans Baptists to 1870," 23–24.

<sup>76</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1855:30. It may be that Fusch was one of them.

<sup>77</sup> Vick, "A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church," 5.

<sup>78</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 91.

<sup>79</sup> Vick, "A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church," 6.

<sup>80</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 127.

<sup>81</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 96.

on shore leave in New Orleans. Learning about Baptists through the Baptist Seaman's Bethel in New York, he was baptized in the East River later that year.<sup>82</sup> On a subsequent voyage, Schroeder convinced a fellow Swede, Fredrick Olaus Nilsson, about Baptist beliefs.

Nilsson was converted in New York in 1834 and began serving as a missionary in Sweden, first as a colporteur, then in 1842, as a representative of the Seamen's Friend Society. On August 1, 1847, Nilsson traveled to Hamburg, Germany, where he was baptized in the Elbe River by Oncken.<sup>83</sup> The first Swedish Baptist congregation emerged on September 21, 1848, at Landa Parish, Halland, Sweden. Exiled from Sweden in 1852, Nilsson came to America where he helped start the Swedish Baptist Conference (now Converge Worldwide).<sup>84</sup>

When war erupted between the States, the growing momentum of evangelism and congregational strength was shattered. The German congregation was scattered. Duncan, pastor of Coliseum Place, contracted pneumonia and went to San Antonio in 1859 to recover. He returned to become pastor of the reorganized FBC.<sup>85</sup> Duncan strongly opposed secession, which put him at odds with the congregation. Just six weeks after becoming the pastor, he resigned and moved to New York. When Union troops gained control of New Orleans, he returned to serve in a variety of civil positions. Duncan died May 1, 1864.

The Union recognized the strategic military and economic importance of New Orleans for the entire Mississippi River region. It became a high priority, and Union troops entered New Orleans in May 1862. On July 22, 1863, the new government seized control of the Baptists' church property. The HMS sent Jonathan W. Horton to the city.<sup>86</sup> Horton came to New Orleans from minister-

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<sup>82</sup> Gustavus Wilhelm Schroeder, *History of the Swedish Baptists in Sweden and America. Being an Account of the Origin, Progress and Results of That Missionary Work During the Last Half of the Nineteenth Century*. (Greater New York: The author, 1898), 91–92.

<sup>83</sup> J. O. Backlund, *Swedish Baptists in America* (Chicago: Conference, 1933), 23–24.

<sup>84</sup> R. A. Arlander, "Review of Baptist Development Among Scandinavians in America," *Chronicle* 2.3 (July 1939): 116–17.

<sup>85</sup> Daffin, "Biography of Rev. William Cecil Duncan, D. D.," 17–21.

<sup>86</sup> *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 583; Vick, "A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church," 10.

ing to African Americans on St. Helena Island, South Carolina.<sup>87</sup> The people of Coliseum refused to accept his ministry and refused to let him onto the property, but Horton gained access by means of a military order.<sup>88</sup> He may have tried to establish an integrated congregation or use the property to reach African Americans.

For the next three years, the congregation did not function. The people were scattered, and many of the men had left the city to join the Confederate forces or escape conscription by them. The congregation dropped from sixty-four members to five, four women and a German man.<sup>89</sup> He was all that was left of the German congregation. The mission no longer existed.

Both FBC and Coliseum struggled to survive during the war. Title to the property owned by the congregations was turned over to the SBC in July 1861 for safe keeping.<sup>90</sup> Russell Holman returned to New Orleans to supply Coliseum the remainder of the year until his diminishing eyesight forced him to resign his position with the Home Mission Board effective January 1, 1862.<sup>91</sup>

Coliseum, with the help of Holman, was able to regain control of its property in March 1866. They called William H. Bayless as pastor. This new beginning was cut short just a year later when Bayless died on June 13, 1867, a month after his sixty-first birthday.<sup>92</sup> Throughout these difficult days, the Home Mission Board took an active interest in New Orleans, supporting pastors, raising funds to pay down debt or construct a chapel.

With the dawning of a new decade, new life came with a revival, led by an evangelist from Massachusetts, A. B. Earl. A few months later, Dr. E. G. Taylor came from Chicago to serve as pastor of Coliseum. During his five year ministry, the congregation paid off its debt, remodeled its facilities, and proceeded to work on completing the sanctuary.

A member of Coliseum, J. C. Carpenter became pastor at FBC in 1863. Dozens of people were baptized and joined the church. In 1873, Samuel Hayden, later a leader among Texas Baptists, came as its pastor.

<sup>87</sup> *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 397.

<sup>88</sup> Vick, "A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church," 10.

<sup>89</sup> Vick, "A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church," 10.

<sup>90</sup> Vick, "A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church," 9.

<sup>91</sup> Vick, "A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church," 9; "Russell Holman: A Biography."

<sup>92</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 503.



African American congregations flourished after the war. First African and Fourth African baptized 3,000 new members and started several new congregations. When the Union Regular Baptist State Convention organized in 1866, there were 8 congregations from New Orleans with almost 1,100 members,<sup>93</sup> not counting First and Fourth which remained a part of the Mississippi River Association. Black Baptists in New Orleans sent financial support to the Louisiana Baptist Convention in 1869.<sup>94</sup>

After the war, the HMS took a keen interest in providing education for the newly-freed slaves. This interest included theological training for the growing number of newly-formed African American congregations. Recognizing the importance of New Orleans for the entire South, the HMS sent missionaries to provide it.

Holbrook Chamberlain, a New York shoe salesman, Baptist deacon, and philanthropist became a leading force in supplying this need. He came to New Orleans in December 1869 to help raise funds for the Free Mission Baptist Church on Common Street. The project expanded to include a school.<sup>95</sup> Chamberlain became the catalyst, bringing several organizations together to establish Leland University, personally providing \$65,000 to launch the school. The Freedman's Bureau added \$17,500 to the Home Mission Society's \$12,500 toward the project.<sup>96</sup>

The new school was called Leland University. It was named in honor the Chamberlain's wife's ancestor, John Leland.<sup>97</sup> Leland was the leading spokesman for religious liberty in the South during the Revolutionary War period. The university's charter proclaimed, "The purposes and objects of this corporation are declared to be the Education and training of young men and women for Preachers and Teachers irrespective of race, color or previous

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<sup>93</sup> *Union Regular Baptist State Convention Annual*, 1866: 7–8.

<sup>94</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Convention Annual*, 1869: 5.

<sup>95</sup> Janice Richard Johnson, "Leland University in New Orleans, 1870–1915" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Orleans, 1996), 51.

<sup>96</sup> James W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans, 1860–1880*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 124.

<sup>97</sup> Sherman Leland, *The Leland Magazine, or a Genealogical Record of Henry Leland, and His Descendants, Containing an Account of Nine Thousand Six Hundred and Twenty-Four Persons, in Ten Generations, and Embracing Nearly Every Person of the Name of Leland in America, from 1653 to 1850* (Boston: Wier and White, 1850), 233–34.

condition of servitude.”<sup>98</sup> The HMS declared, “We *must* educate a ministry for this people, or abandon the field!”<sup>99</sup> Theological education for God-called men and women had come to New Orleans.

Classes began in 1870 and soon moved to the summer home purchased from Judge William J. and Elizabeth Ogden.<sup>100</sup> The land with its buildings was located at the corner of St. Charles Avenue and Audubon Place. At the time, the location was well away from the city center. In time, more and more people moved into the area. Tulane University purchased property in 1891 and Loyola University moved there in 1911.<sup>101</sup> The Sophie Newcomb Memorial College purchased land on Leland’s northern border in 1908, completing its relocation in 1918.

While all races were welcome, there is no evidence that any white students ever attended. The faculty was integrated, with pastors of SBC congregations often serving as instructors, but all of the presidents were white. At its height, almost 2,000 students, kindergarten through college, attended the school.<sup>102</sup> The HMS supported Leland into the 1880s. Chamberlain died May 4, 1883, his estate leaving the school an endowment of \$95,000. This allowed the school to become self-supporting. Leland trained 80% of black teachers in the state and many ministers.<sup>103</sup>

The new arrivals to the neighborhood disliked the presence of the school. In addition, they wanted city comforts which were installed at the expense of the property owners. The cost of hooking up to city water and sewer, installing sidewalks, and paving St. Charles Ave. became increasingly difficult for the school to afford. As a result, the HMS started looking to sell Leland’s property and relocate the school. A hurricane hit New Orleans on September 29, 1915, and damaged the buildings. Louisiana Baptists met in December, after the hurricane hit New Orleans. They passed a resolution in support of Leland, encouraging their northern brethren, “that if possible, your society will not take this institution

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<sup>98</sup> “Leland University Charter,” cited in Johnson, “Leland University in New Orleans,” 227.

<sup>99</sup> *American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 1870: 21

<sup>100</sup> Johnson, “Leland University in New Orleans,” 93.

<sup>101</sup> Johnson, “Leland University in New Orleans,” 121.

<sup>102</sup> “Leland College, New Orleans and Baker, Louisiana, 1870–1960,” <https://www.lostcolleges.com/leland-college>, accessed 23 September 2020.

<sup>103</sup> Johnson, “Leland University in New Orleans,” 210.

from New Orleans.”<sup>104</sup> That same year, National Baptists split over who would control the convention’s Publishing Board, leaving them distracted and divided when unity was needed to keep the school in New Orleans. The property was sold to a local developer who built luxury homes on the site. The school eventually reopened in Baker, Louisiana, but closed in 1960.

In 1871, F. W. Schallike was appointed by the HMS to try and revive the German work.<sup>105</sup> He reconnected with the Mississippi Baptist Association that same year, but the work was unable to recover.<sup>106</sup> Schallike accepted a call from a congregation in Birmingham, Alabama, beginning in January 1873, and the church closed.<sup>107</sup>

Just as both white congregations were regaining their strength after the war, the economy collapsed. Hayden left FBC when it could no longer support him, leaving the church without a pastor for the next five years. Funds that were promised for Coliseum’s building project were not given. Dr. Taylor resigned as Coliseum’s pastor in 1875, leaving the congregation in a better financial situation than when he came, but the task ahead was daunting.<sup>108</sup>

Norvill W. Wilson accepted the challenge. He came to Coliseum in the fall of 1875. He led the congregation in 1877 to become a founding member of the Gulf Coast Association, affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention. The Association eventually stretched along the rail lines from Mobile, Alabama, to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This was a novel attempt at reaching the people of the unique culture along the coast. Wilson was active in the New Orleans community, and Coliseum was reviving. The next year, yellow fever again swept through New Orleans. Approximately 12,000 people died—including three pastors in the city—out of the 40,000 who contracted the disease.<sup>109</sup> Wilson stayed in the city to care for the sick and dying. He contracted the disease and died September 6, 1878, at age 44, leaving a wife and large

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<sup>104</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1915: 67.

<sup>105</sup> *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 583.

<sup>106</sup> Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana*, 113.

<sup>107</sup> *North American Baptist Conference Minutes*, 1871: 19; 1873: 12.

<sup>108</sup> Vick, “A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church,” 14.

<sup>109</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1879: 40; *Mississippi Baptist Convention Annual*, 1879: 27–28.

family. At his death, Coliseum was the only self-supporting congregation in the Gulf Coast Association.<sup>110</sup>

That same year, the Mississippi Baptist Convention appointed David Ingram Purser as State Evangelist, based in New Orleans. His wife died in 1879 of yellow fever less than a year after coming to the city, impacting his ministry. Things started looking up for Coliseum when Sylvanus Landrum became its pastor in 1881.<sup>111</sup> He had previously served as SBC secretary (1863) and vice president (1876). He raised large sums of money outside the city to pay off the church's debt. During his tenure, Coliseum began a Chinese Sunday school about 1885.<sup>112</sup>

Isaac T. Tichenor, who helped organize Coliseum in 1854,<sup>113</sup> became president of the Home Mission Board in 1882. New Orleans regularly continued to be the focus of convention interest. A report to the Mississippi Baptist Convention noting the need and importance of New Orleans was made "with a large outline map, showing the location and relations of New Orleans, both to the territory of the Southern Baptist Convention, and to the great mission fields lying South-west, and South of the country, in Mexico, Central and South America and the West Indies."<sup>114</sup> An SBC report notes, "Your Committee believe that our Home Mission Board has under its care no station more important than New Orleans."<sup>115</sup> The following year, "We cannot abandon New Orleans, the great metropolis of the South-West, that is to mould the moral and religious thought, as well as the commercial destiny of coming generations."<sup>116</sup>

With the opening of Leland, Northern Baptists committed themselves to educating women as well. For over a decade, beginning in 1871, the Home Mission Society supported almost a dozen

<sup>110</sup> *Mississippi Baptist Annual*, 1878: 31.

<sup>111</sup> George and Corra Leavell named their firstborn son "Landrum" for Dr. and Mrs. Sylvanus Landrum, who served as pastor of Central Baptist Church, Memphis, when they were members. Landrum Leavell's nephew and namesake, Landrum Leavell II, became the seventh president of NOBTS. See Rex D. Butler, "The Leavell Legacy," in this volume.

<sup>112</sup> Vick, "A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church," 15.

<sup>113</sup> *Highlights of History of First Baptist Church, New Orleans: A Saga of Baptist Beginnings, Growth and Labors for Christ in the Crescent City* (New Orleans: First Baptist Church, [1968]), [8].

<sup>114</sup> *Mississippi Baptist Annual*, 1881: 28.

<sup>115</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1882: 27.

<sup>116</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1883: Appendix B, IX.

women instructors at the school. In addition, Miss Joanna Patterson Moore arrived in 1873, followed by Carrie R. Vaughn, to serve among the African American congregations in the city.<sup>117</sup>

Moore was born the same year the HMS was formed, becoming a Baptist at age 20.<sup>118</sup> Called to missionary work, she attended Rockford Female Seminary in Illinois.<sup>119</sup> She began her ministry among African Americans at Island Number Ten in Tennessee during the war.<sup>120</sup> She was commissioned December 31, 1863, and was the first woman sent by the Society to work among the freedmen.<sup>121</sup> It was the impact of her work in New Orleans and the great need of workers that spurred women in the North to form the Women's Baptist Home Mission Society (WBHMS) in 1877.<sup>122</sup> Moore was the first missionary they supported.<sup>123</sup> In 1880, she comprised half of the Louisiana delegation which met on November 24, 1880, to form what is now the National Baptist Convention, USA.<sup>124</sup> Even though the HMS stopped funding work in New Orleans in 1883, Moore continued to serve into the 1890s, supported by the WBHMS.<sup>125</sup>

Women missionaries from the South also joined the mission to reach New Orleans. The first wave was sent by the Mississippi Baptist Convention. Mrs. Mattie V. Nelson of Oxford, Mississippi, offered to serve in New Orleans in late 1881. After prayer, the State Board appointed her. Before she could leave, Miss Emma Gardner, Liberty, Mississippi, and Miss Cora Montgomery volunteered as well. Gardner volunteered to go at her own expense, and Montgomery asked for only a small stipend.<sup>126</sup> Women's Home Mission Societies in Maryland and South Carolina soon joined in supporting women missionaries in New Orleans,<sup>127</sup> as did the Home Mission Board.

<sup>117</sup> *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 583.

<sup>118</sup> Mary C. Reynolds, *Baptist Missionary Pioneers among Negroes* (N.p., [1919?]), 9.

<sup>119</sup> Reynolds, *Baptist Missionary Pioneers among Negroes*, 9.

<sup>120</sup> Reynolds, *Baptist Missionary Pioneers among Negroes*, 400.

<sup>121</sup> Reynolds, *Baptist Missionary Pioneers among Negroes*, 517.

<sup>122</sup> Reynolds, *Baptist Missionary Pioneers among Negroes*, 519.

<sup>123</sup> Reynolds, *Baptist Missionary Pioneers among Negroes*, 9.

<sup>124</sup> Lewis G. Jordan, *Negro Baptist History, U. S. A., 1750–1930* (Nashville: Sunday School Publishing Board, N. B. C., 1930), 115–16.

<sup>125</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1890: 51.

<sup>126</sup> *Mississippi Baptist Annual*, 1882: 32–33.

<sup>127</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1886: viii; 1887, xlix.

Gardner arrived in New Orleans in November 1881. Because she knew some people who worked at the Lane Cotton Mill, she began working with the women who worked there. They began meeting in the home of a friend who lived on Valence Street. As a result, FBC began a Sunday School Mission there on January 1, 1882, meeting on Sunday afternoons. Gardner would sit on a nail keg to teach the children.<sup>128</sup> The work continued to grow. The Home Mission Board purchased land and erected a chapel. After its completion, Valence Street Baptist Church organized with eighteen members in February 1886, joining FBC and Coliseum as Southern Baptist congregations in the city.<sup>129</sup> Nearly seventy years of ministry had yielded just three Anglo congregations.

Working out of Coliseum, Mattie Nelson served in the Carrollton area.<sup>130</sup> She raised the funds to build a 25' x 40' home on a donated lot where she started a mission Sunday School.<sup>131</sup> A second mission on Locust Street would soon join it.<sup>132</sup>

The congregations and missions were thriving when tragedy struck. Landrum contracted an unknown disease in the summer of 1886. Granted a leave of absence, he traveled to Brunswick, Georgia, where he died of the disease on November 16, 1886.<sup>133</sup> He was the third pastor of Coliseum to die in a twenty-year span.

A recession in the early 1890s forced cutbacks in the missionary force. By 1892, none of the women missionaries were being supported. The Louisiana Baptist Convention met in New Orleans, at Valence, and the only pastor from New Orleans who attended was R. W. Merrill from Valence, and he was on mission support.<sup>134</sup> The work in New Orleans declined to such an extent that the Home Missions report called it a “shame”<sup>135</sup> and lamented that work in the city has always been “too quiet, unaggressive and weak.”<sup>136</sup> Making matters worse, on April 3, 1892, fire destroyed

<sup>128</sup> Slater A. Murphy, “History of the Valence Street Baptist Church” (ThM thesis, Baptist Bible Institute, 1934), 10–11.

<sup>129</sup> Murphy, “History of the Valence Street Baptist Church,” 17.

<sup>130</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1884: 44.

<sup>131</sup> G. Avery Lee, *Our Name is Baptist: 100 Years of Faith in Action, Saint Charles Avenue Baptist Church, 1898 to 1998* (New Orleans: n.p., [1998]), 38.

<sup>132</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1888: 25.

<sup>133</sup> Vick, “A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church,” 15; *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1887: Preface.

<sup>134</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1892: 8.

<sup>135</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1891: 43.

<sup>136</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1892: 12.

FBC's property. Southern Baptists rallied to purchase a theater where it could meet.<sup>137</sup>

At the Louisiana Baptist Convention in 1892, Merrill, pastor of Valence, made a motion to establish a training school in New Orleans.<sup>138</sup> Even though he resigned the following year, the Purser brothers, who had been evangelists with the Mississippi Convention, stepped into the ministry gap. David Purser became pastor of both Valence and FBC in 1892. The following year, his brother, John, took over the duties at FBC. Valence was soon self-supporting. During Purser's first year he baptized 43 people.<sup>139</sup> In addition, the state Woman's Missionary Union placed its central committee in New Orleans in 1895.<sup>140</sup>

The first training school was held during the winter of 1894–1895, meeting at FBC. The Purser brothers and Dr. George Whittinghill, the new pastor of Coliseum, were the instructors.<sup>141</sup> A second school was held the following year. However, due to a “lack of funds and an adequate place for meeting,” the school later referred to as “Baby B. B. I.” closed in 1896.<sup>142</sup> More than a decade later, the Sunday School Board, which was organized in 1891, held a Teacher Training school in New Orleans in 1908.<sup>143</sup>

The hopeful condition that the training school and renewed congregational strength brought was again interrupted by calamity. Yellow fever swept through New Orleans twice in 15 months. David Purser was on vacation in Alabama with his family when the outbreak occurred. Leaving his family safely behind, Purser returned to New Orleans to help the congregation entrusted to him. He contracted the disease, just as his first wife had done 18 years earlier, and died on October 22, 1897.<sup>144</sup> Overcome by the ordeal, his brother, John, resigned from FBC three months later. Death had claimed a New Orleans pastor about once a decade. FBC lost one, Valence lost one, and Coliseum lost three.

<sup>137</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1893: 26.

<sup>138</sup> Murphy, “History of the Valence Street Baptist Church,” 22.

<sup>139</sup> Murphy, “History of the Valence Street Baptist Church,” 24.

<sup>140</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1896: ix.

<sup>141</sup> Murphy, “History of the Valence Street Baptist Church,” 22.

<sup>142</sup> Murphy, “History of the Valence Street Baptist Church,” 26.

<sup>143</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1908: 249.

<sup>144</sup> Murphy, “History of the Valence Street Baptist Church,” 27; *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1898: xxiii; *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1898: 39 states Oct 21.

While FBC and Valence searched for new pastors, only Coliseum remained self-supporting. Coliseum soon launched its Carrollton mission as St. Charles Avenue Baptist on November 16, 1898. The new century found FBC, Valence, and St. Charles on mission support. It also saw the return of women missionaries to the city. In 1901, Georgia Barnett (at FBC) and Miss Carrie M. Gore (St. Charles) were supported by the Louisiana Convention.<sup>145</sup>

The North Side Mission began as an interdenominational work between Methodists, Episcopalians, and Baptists. Coliseum took over the work and it organized as Grace Baptist on November 27, 1904, with 25 members.<sup>146</sup> Coliseum began Canal Street Mission in January 1905, meeting at Cleveland and Hagan Ave. It organized on April 14, 1907 as Hagan Ave. Baptist (later Central) with Dr. Walter M. Lee as pastor.<sup>147</sup> All of these congregations received aid from the Home Mission Board to purchase property, build chapels, or pay their pastor. Momentum led these churches to organize the New Orleans Association in 1906. John B. Lawrence, who would later become president of the Home Mission Board (1929–1953), came to New Orleans in 1907. He first served as pastor at Coliseum, then in 1910 he moved to FBC where he served until 1913.<sup>148</sup>

In 1906, the Louisiana State Missions Committee requested that the Louisiana Convention establish “what might be called a Foreign Mission station” to work with the growing number of immigrants in New Orleans.<sup>149</sup> This request was in anticipation of the Panama Canal expanding shipping activity in New Orleans. Three years before its completion in 1914, the report on State Missions anticipated that the number of immigrants flowing through the city could increase 10 fold to 20 million annually.<sup>150</sup> The first Italian missionary in Louisiana, J. M. Barra, a former Catholic priest, fluent in Spanish and Italian, announced his intention of starting a Baptist mission in New Orleans in July 1914.<sup>151</sup>

<sup>145</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1902: 43–44.

<sup>146</sup> Kathleen E. Haynie, “The Work and Growth of New Orleans Baptists Since 1900” (DipRE thesis, Baptist Bible Institute, 1934), 2.

<sup>147</sup> Haynie, “The Work and Growth of New Orleans Baptists Since 1900,” 3.

<sup>148</sup> Vick, “A History of Coliseum Place Baptist Church,” 20; *History of First Baptist Church, New Orleans*, [11].

<sup>149</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1906: 31.

<sup>150</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1911: 49.

<sup>151</sup> *Baptist Chronicle* (July 9, 1914): 13.



Anniversaries bring forth powerful emotions. Forgetting a wedding anniversary will prove the point. The year 1912 began a series of celebrations of important events. The country remembered the start of the War of 1812. Louisiana celebrated a century of statehood and Baptists in Louisiana noted a century of work in the state. The city of New Orleans began looking forward to 1918 and the bicentennial of its founding. In anticipation of the centennial of Baptists' international missionary work, the Foreign Mission Board launched the Judson Centennial Fund. Baptists across the country were reminded of how Adoniram and Anne Judson answered God's call to fulfill the Great Commission. Southern Baptists were reminded of the great need in New Orleans.

New Orleans was the largest city in the South. It had a vibrant port. Rail lines connected the city to manufacturing and agricultural centers. By 1906, yellow fever was largely eradicated. Yet for all of the interest and activity that Baptists of all kinds had in establishing vibrant congregations in this import city, the results were meager. In 1906, the Home Mission Board report noted that Baptists are the leading evangelical denomination in the state, yet had only sixteen self-supporting churches in all of Louisiana. New Orleans had only one self-supporting church.<sup>152</sup> State Mission leaders lamented that "New Orleans is a synonym for Baptist lost opportunity."<sup>153</sup> With World War I breaking out in Europe, the Home Mission Board reported to the Southern Baptist Convention,

New Orleans. THE SITUATION here is both unique and tragic. There is not one self-supporting Baptist church in the greatest city of the South! One has been self-supporting, but the shifting of population and removals have so weakened it that the Board is now aiding it.<sup>154</sup>

That same year (1914) the New Orleans Baptist Association, unable to sustain an independent existence, merged with the St. Tammany Baptist Association.

The solution to this seemingly insurmountable challenge was education. A report to the Mississippi Convention noted, "Education and missions go hand in hand."<sup>155</sup> The first mention of estab-

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<sup>152</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1906: 199.

<sup>153</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1910: 56.

<sup>154</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1914: 296.

<sup>155</sup> *Mississippi Baptist Annual*, 1910: 57.

lishing a Baptist school in New Orleans for training pastors, teachers, and missionaries was a communication between Paulding and Ranaldson in 1817.<sup>156</sup> The subject emerged again in a letter dated January 15, 1849, from Basil Manly Sr., then president of the University of Alabama, to his son, Charles. It stated, “What do you think of a great Baptist College for the South-West? The idea seems to me very rational, feasible, eligible. That is, and is to be, the place of chief commercial importance through the whole region drained by the Mississippi, – extending from the Chattahoochee to the Rio Grande, and from Missouri to the Gulf.”<sup>157</sup> Once established, “We will then place by its side a *first rate* theological Institution.”<sup>158</sup> He answered concerns regarding the unhealthy climate (yellow fever) by proposing to schedule school breaks during the times of the year when outbreaks were most likely. Later that year at a meeting in Nashville, Manly, James Boyce, R. B. C. Howell, and J. R. Graves discussed and affirmed the need for a seminary in the South.<sup>159</sup> This was a full decade before the formation of Southern Baptist Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, where Manly’s namesake son and Boyce became founding faculty members.

It was twenty-one years later that Leland University was established to provide theological education in the city. By the mid-1890s, pastors of the three Southern Baptist congregations in the city established a theological training school. After two years, the funds ran out and yellow fever decimated the faculty. However, the Sunday School Board’s teacher training event proved quite successful. The Sunday School Board held Sunday school conventions in New Orleans in 1913 and 1914.<sup>160</sup>

Plautus Iberus Lipsey, editor of the *Baptist Record* (Mississippi) in his November 26, 1914 editorial reissued Basil Manly’s call for a theological school in New Orleans. Under the heading “The Sem-

<sup>156</sup> “Prospectus of the Baptist Bible Institute, New Orleans, Louisiana,” June 1918, 1.

<sup>157</sup> Basil Manly Sr., University of Alabama, to Basil Manly Jr., on 15 January 1849, Manly Collection of Manuscripts, Folder 37, MF# 3900, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.

<sup>158</sup> Basil Manly Sr., University of Alabama, to Basil Manly Jr., on 15 January 1849.

<sup>159</sup> Charles Manly, “The Rise of Seminary Sentiment among Southern Baptists.” *Review and Expositor* 12.2 (April 1915): 252.

<sup>160</sup> *Baptist Chronicle* (July 9, 1914): 1.

inaries and the Load,” he states: “Any seminary founded on right principles and permeated by the proper spirit, is and ought to be a great evangelizing or missionary power in the denomination and especially in the section where it is founded.” He argues that South Carolina and Kentucky have benefitted from Southern Seminary being in their midst. The same holds true for Texas with Southwestern.

Now what these have done and are doing up to the measure of their ability and within the radius of their influence can be done by an addition to their number. There was room for the seminary at Fort Worth and need of it. There is also room for and need of just what a seminary can do in the district surrounding the city of New Orleans. Baptists have attempted to assault that stronghold of Satan with paper balls. Hitherto we have not made much impression on it; and are not now working at it in any adequate way. A seminary there would plant the Baptist cause in this city in a way that would immediately command the attention and respect of all. It would be planting the siege guns at the enemies’ gates. It would rally the Baptists and put heart into them and equip them for their work as nothing else could do. This is missionary territory in every direction from the city. Louisiana is probably the most needy mission field in the Southern Baptist Convention and has never had the attention it deserves. New Orleans is destined to be the greatest city in the South. Why not do what we can to make it not only a Baptist city but a city of influence to radiate Baptist life in a needy and important field? There is no surer way to make it a great blessing than building here a great seminary.<sup>161</sup>

The following week, George Harver Crutcher, editor of Louisiana’s *Baptist Chronicle*, added his support for a seminary in New Orleans.<sup>162</sup> “If we had a great theological seminary in New Orleans, with a splendid training school in connection with it, we could have a regular beehive of denominational evangelists in all that surrounding country, and would do more for the securing and an-

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<sup>161</sup> *Baptist Record* (Mississippi), (November 26, 1914): 4.

<sup>162</sup> In recognition of the advocacy by P. I. Lipsey and G. H. Crutcher, the seminary named buildings and a street in their honor.

choring of our denominational interests there than almost anything else that could be done.”<sup>163</sup>

Momentum for the idea continued to grow. Over the next few months, letters to the editor of both papers voiced their approval for a school in New Orleans. Mississippi had a vested interest in advancing theological training. The 1915 Committee on Ministerial Education noted Mississippi students comprised 20% of all SBC ministerial students.<sup>164</sup>

Interested parties gathered informally in May 1915 at the Southern Baptist Convention to compare notes.<sup>165</sup> Messengers to the 1915 Mississippi Convention, meeting later in the year, approved the formation of a committee to explore the establishment of a missionary training school in New Orleans and they invited Louisiana Baptists to join them.<sup>166</sup> Louisiana Baptists answered the call and formed its own committee.<sup>167</sup>

A joint committee representing the Home Board, Mississippi Convention and Louisiana Council met in February 1916 and passed a resolution. It began, “1. That a Baptist Missionary Training School should be established in the city of New Orleans, which should have for its primary purpose the object of Missionary propaganda.”<sup>168</sup> It went on to “request the services of such French, Spanish and Italian missionaries, who are located in New Orleans, as would be necessary as teachers in their respective languages.”<sup>169</sup>

Meeting in New Orleans in May 1917, Southern Baptists approved the creation of Baptist Bible Institute. It was almost 100 years to the day from when the Triennial Convention had appointed Ranaldson as a missionary to the city. Of the seventy-eight Baptist churches in New Orleans at the time, only six of them were reaching white segments of the population.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>163</sup> *Baptist Chronicle* (December 3, 1914): 2.

<sup>164</sup> *Mississippi Baptist Annual*, 1915: 24.

<sup>165</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1917: 81.

<sup>166</sup> *Mississippi Baptist Annual*, 1915: 58–59.

<sup>167</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1915: 44–45.

<sup>168</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1917: 83–84.

<sup>169</sup> *Southern Baptist Convention Annual*, 1917: 83–84.

<sup>170</sup> William A. Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer: A History of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary* (New Orleans: New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1969), 15.

Moody Bible Institute in Chicago become the inspiration and model for Baptist Bible Institute. Moody held a certain fascination for Louisiana Baptists. One of its missionaries resigned in 1911 to attend Moody Bible Institute.<sup>171</sup> News of Moody reunions and reports of its annual meetings were carried regularly in the *Baptist Chronicle*, highlighting its emphasis on personal work in evangelism. Byron H. DeMent became the first president of the fledgling school. A week after he assumed the role, Baptist Bible Institute was chartered on October 8, 1917.

When Newcomb College relocated to Leland University's northern border, its former Garden District campus became available. DeMent was able to purchase it below the appraised value. It took longer to assemble the faculty than originally anticipated. This pushed the opening semester from January to October 1, 1918. In keeping with the history of a century of ministry in the city, classes had to be suspended just ten days into the inaugural semester due to an outbreak of influenza.<sup>172</sup> The city requested that all public gatherings be halted. Undaunted, the faculty mailed assignments to the students, foreshadowing the technological innovations of distance education in the twenty-first century.

A second blow came on November 1, when the government asked to use the campus as a hospital for soldiers wounded during the First World War. Believing it was their civic duty, the school agreed. When the war ended on November 11, there was no longer a need for a hospital. Classes resumed on November 19.

The visionaries who sought to establish a missionary training school in New Orleans to help Baptists gain a foothold in the city were correct. It is a credit to their vision and selflessness that they sought to establish the school in New Orleans, a place of great need, rather than in their own state of Mississippi, where it would be more convenient for them. Within five years of the school's opening, the number of congregations doubled. At the end of the first decade, there were seventeen congregations, almost triple the number of when the school was organized, with a combined membership of 4,698.<sup>173</sup> There were enough congregations for the New Orleans Association to resume an independent existence in 1925.

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<sup>171</sup> *Louisiana Baptist Annual*, 1911: 14.

<sup>172</sup> Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer*, 16.

<sup>173</sup> *New Orleans Baptist Association Minutes*, 1928: 28.

From its inception, the school would have a missionary focus of evangelism within the varied cultural communities of the city and beyond. Historian H. Leon McBeth noted that New Orleans was the “logical place not only for training missionaries but also for their embarkation.”<sup>174</sup> Succeeding generations continue to discover that New Orleans, the school of Providence and Prayer, is the logical choice for seminary education.

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<sup>174</sup> McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 671.

## Portraits of the NOBTS Presidents

**Chuck Kelley, PhD**

*Chuck Kelley is president emeritus and distinguished research professor of Evangelism at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.*

### Introduction

The first formal responsibility for a new faculty member at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is participation in the New Faculty Orientation. At that orientation, the president gives a greeting, and the Provost leads the new faculty members through all the procedures and processes—the “hows and whys” of life as a professor at the seminary. One August, our Provost Dr. Steve Lemke asked me, “Why don’t you take the new faculty through the portraits of the NOBTS presidents in the DeMent Room?” Lining the walls of that conference room are portraits of each of the men who have served as President of the Seminary. That spontaneous suggestion has become a tradition that faculty have come to enjoy. Imagine you are the newest faculty member at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Let me introduce you to our history by introducing you to the men who have led this School of Providence and Prayer through the years.

### **Byron Hoover DeMent (1917–1928)**

In 1917, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) did something it had never done before; the Convention voted to create a Seminary from scratch. Two other seminaries existed, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas. Both schools were started independently and adopted by the Convention. This time the SBC wanted to create a school in the city of New Orleans. That vote was taken, and so the task began. How in the world, and why in the world, and what in the world do you do to start a school from scratch? The first task of the men assigned these responsibilities was to find a President for this new school. God led them to a man who was well-known in Southern Baptist life named Byron Hoover DeMent. He was a pastor who served churches in several different states, and he was an educator who taught in a variety of

schools. DeMent was very well-educated by the standards of the day, in particular having a Th.D. from Southern Seminary. When the original trustees of the school shared their vision, he was quick to accept.

Two things stand out about Dr. DeMent: his deep love for the Bible and his passion for evangelism and missions. As a young man, DeMent had memorized the New Testament and was quite well-known for quoting lengthy passages of Scripture whenever he preached. An emphasis on evangelism was a priority in each place he served. After he was selected as the president of the seminary, he studied the models of other schools. One of his most interesting journeys was to Moody Bible Institute. In the nineteenth century, the great evangelist D.L. Moody started this school in Chicago to prepare Christian workers. He wanted to emphasize evangelism throughout the academic programs and required all the students to be involved in personal evangelism and Gospel preaching as a part of their preparation. Dr. DeMent spent two months at the Moody Bible Institute observing their practices, talking with faculty and staff about their procedures, and interacting with the students. He returned to New Orleans, convinced the Moody model was perfect for the new school. Thus the original name of the school was born: Baptist Bible Institute. It was to be a missionary training school, preparing workers for the church and the mission field. The twin focal points of the curriculum were to be the study of the Bible and the practice of evangelism. With those two purposes, the Baptist Bible Institute was launched in what remains to this day the most un-Baptist setting for any SBC entity.

Dr. DeMent did a wonderful job! He served as president from 1917 to 1927. In that time, he launched the school and found a campus. Sophie Newcomb College, a very prominent women's college in New Orleans, merged with Tulane University and moved away from their established campus, near Commander's Palace on Washington Avenue. By negotiating the purchase of this property, DeMent secured a beautiful campus for the Institute without having to build a single building. Watching God work in such amazing ways led Dr. DeMent to call the school "the child of providence and prayer." He made another great contribution by putting all of the emphasis on the work of God, rather than human effort.

This inaugural chapter of the school was very, very difficult, not surprising in light of other historical events during that time.



Trying to launch a Baptist school for ministers and missionaries in the unlikely city of New Orleans took its toll, and by 1927, DeMent's health began to fail. His body was worn out, and he had to step down from the responsibilities as president. He continued on the faculty from 1928 through 1933 and is remembered as a great man who launched this seminary with its emphasis on the Bible and evangelism, as well as his recognition that BBI was the School of Providence and Prayer. For Dr. DeMent, God and God alone was the driver behind this school.

### **W. W. Hamilton (1928–1942)**

Following the retirement of Dr. DeMent, the trustees turned to a man who was prominent in Southern Baptist life for a very particular reason. He was a pastor who led great churches in several different states. Most importantly for our school, he was the first Director of Evangelism for the Southern Baptist Convention. In 1906, he created the Office of Evangelism at the Home Mission Board, now called the North American Mission Board. The DNA of evangelism was woven even more tightly into the heart of NOBTS.

Dr. W. W. Hamilton was one of the three or four most important people in the history of Southern Baptist Evangelism, completely apart from his work at the seminary. He had unprecedented success in mobilizing Southern Baptist churches to reach their communities for Christ. He became pastor of the St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church. At the time, it was one of the strong, evangelistic churches in the city of New Orleans. When Dr. DeMent was required to step down and retire as president to lighten his workload, the trustees turned to Dr. W. W. Hamilton – a great witness and great soul-winner. He accepted this great responsibility at a very difficult time. His tenure began in 1928 as the Great Depression was sweeping the United States. Now, put yourself in that circumstance! The whole nation was suffering from the burden of a collapsing economy – it was hard everywhere – and imagine being the president of a Baptist seminary in a place like New Orleans. The Baptist work was still small and in its early stages. Everything was hard; the cultural and economic conditions then made it that much harder.

Dr. W.W. Hamilton faced some of the greatest challenges ever faced by a President of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

At one point, the Southern Baptist Convention appointed a committee to consider whether or not to simply close the school. They chose not to close it, but to continue only if the faculty was reduced to five people, including the president. How tough it must have been for Dr. Hamilton to deliver that news to the faculty. In fact, what we think was the first faculty fight in the history of the seminary began at that time—not a fight over this or that, but a fight over a most unusual decision: who would have the privilege of being laid-off? The older professors thought it would be best for the school if they resigned and turned the School over to the younger professors with a lifetime of teaching before them. The younger professors said, “Absolutely not. We need to leave this School in the hands of our experienced professors. And it would be much easier for us to get a new ministry responsibility. Our School needs the wisdom and experience of these older professors.” And the faculty had a fight over who would have the privilege of being laid-off.

What a generation of spiritual heroes! It was not just the faculty members who were heroic. The whole Seminary family worked together to control costs and keep the School alive. Late one night after a long and hard day, Dr. Hamilton went home and walked into his bedroom to dress for bed when he noticed a light left on in the classroom building. He was upset, disturbed, and tired, but he got dressed again, walked across to the classroom building, went to the second floor, and opened the door of the classroom where a light was still burning. When he opened the door, he saw a group of students on their faces on the floor, crying out to God to provide what was necessary for the School to be able to continue. Oh, my goodness! What a generation of professors and students!

When the Seminary family went out on the weekends to share the Gospel and do ministry, they were rarely paid with money in those days. Often times, they were given food. Some might receive vegetables, some chicken or ham or beef. Whatever was given was shared among faculty and students who gathered in the School cafeteria on Sunday nights. Everyone put everything on a table that they had received and divided it among the families so that every family – faculty and student – got approximately the same amount of food to help them survive for the week. I wonder if anyone in that room had any idea that the School struggling so

hard to survive would one day become one of the largest seminaries on the face of the earth.

Dr. Hamilton accomplished many great things, deeply pushing evangelism further into the heart of the seminary and seeing the school through a very, very difficult time in Southern Baptist life and American history. The tenure of Dr. Hamilton came to an end very abruptly. He made an unfortunate choice very unusual for Southern Baptists and the Seminary. Over the years, he and his wife had lost a young daughter to a death that came too soon. Later on, Mrs. Hamilton passed away. After his wife's death, Hamilton's cousin came down to New Orleans to help him manage the details of life at the seminary without a wife – handling social arrangements and managing the President's Home. During the summer and while everyone was away on school break, Dr. Hamilton and his cousin decided to get married. However, a marriage of cousins was not legal in Louisiana. When the Seminary family returned and realized what had happened, a great crisis developed at the Baptist Bible Institute. J. Wash Watts – a Hall of Fame faculty member and beloved professor of Hebrew and Old Testament – talked with Dr. Hamilton on behalf of the faculty and explained why his marriage was illegal and unacceptable in Louisiana. Dr. Hamilton, a man of great integrity, immediately said, "You are absolutely right." He did not argue or debate the case at all. He said, "We will have the marriage annulled immediately, and I will step down as President." He finished his years serving as a chaplain at the Baptist Hospital in New Orleans.

### **Duke McCall (1943–1946)**

The trustees of the seminary were then faced with the responsibility of finding a new president in the middle of World War II, when so many men of the nation were involved in the war effort in various capacities. The School was without a President for about a year. During that year, J. Wash Watts was appointed Acting President. He served very well in that capacity, and the School continued to train students. Finally, the trustees were led to a young man. How young? Not yet thirty years old, Dr. Duke McCall was the youngest president in the history of the seminary. He was well-educated and served as pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He knew the dynamics of local church life, but he was not very experienced as an educator. Dr.

McCall was raised in a strong Baptist family and had active Baptist connections. When he spoke with the trustees, he made the focal point of his discussion the text of William Carey's great missionary sermon: "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." The thread of evangelism and missions so important to this School of Providence and Prayer was once again prominent in the selection of a President.

The trustees were unanimous, and Dr. McCall became the third president of the seminary. He did not serve very long – only from 1943 through 1946 – but it was a very important time in NOBTS history. The School began as Baptist Bible Institute and offered training of all types for people with virtually no education to people with college degrees. The School grew in academic excellence and began offering more graduate-level education. The decision was finally made during Dr. McCall's tenure for the Baptist Bible Institute to become a true Seminary, and plans were made to ask the SBC to approve changing its name from Baptist Bible Institute to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. During that time, the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention came to New Orleans, met with the president of the seminary and asked him to take leadership of the Executive Committee of the SBC. Dr. McCall agreed to do so, but only if he was allowed to continue his work on the project he had set in motion – the name change of the seminary – and to make some financial provision for the seminary to acquire new property as space was limited in their present location.

Dr. McCall was a little concerned about the receptivity of the Convention to the name change. He feared that Southern Seminary and Southwestern Seminary might be a little jealous if a third school had the name "Seminary." So, he made these arrangements for the SBC business meeting: A representative of the school made the motion that the name should be changed from Baptist Bible Institute to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. McCall asked Dr. J. D. Grey – legendary pastor at First Baptist New Orleans – to offer the second to the motion. Dr. Grey was well-known across the whole Southern Baptist Convention. He was a great preacher, very active in denominational life, and had a strong, booming voice that could fill any room or hall in which he spoke. After the motion was made, Dr. Grey stood to his feet and, in his loudest voice, said, "I second that motion." The president of the Southern Baptist Convention heard that great, booming

second and said, “Well, that sounds like all of us. Motion passed. On to the next item of business.” The name was adopted without an actual formal vote of the Convention.

Dr. McCall ensured the new name for the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and clarified the identity for the future of the school. He had that mission concern – making William Carey’s sermon that launched the modern mission movement the substance of his conversation with the trustees – and he put the seminary in an excellent position for its future.

### **Roland Q. Leavell (1946–1958)**

The seminary was challenged again to find a president with World War II just drawing to a close. In 1946, their search led them to a man by the name of Roland Q. Leavell. Dr. Roland Q. Leavell was one of nine brothers born to a wonderful Christian family – very devout in their faith and very deeply committed to Baptist life and mission. Eight of those nine brothers, including Dr. Roland Q. Leavell, became Baptist preachers. All eight did significant work for the Kingdom. One of them created the discipleship training program of the SBC. One of them built the hospital in China where Bill Wallace – a famous missionary doctor – was serving when he was martyred. Another one created the collegiate ministry of the Southern Baptist Convention. They were a very influential and significant family in denominational life. Dr. Roland Q. Leavell, one of those nine brothers, was a terrific pastor whose churches were very strong in evangelism. In fact, the churches he pastored grew so strong that in 1936 the Home Mission Board turned to Roland Q. Leavell to become the leader of evangelism for the Southern Baptist Convention. Do you see it? There it is again – God was making His will very clear that He wanted evangelism to be at the heart and soul of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

That great evangelist and soul-winner came to the seminary, making sure evangelism remained a core part of the academic curriculum and the focal point of the mission of NOBTS. His great challenge was space for the school to meet. The seminary was completely out of room and could not grow if it did not relocate. The original location on Washington Avenue was a wonderful place to get started, but the campus was too small for the potential student body of the seminary. Dr. McCall had realized this during

his tenure and set aside some money at the Southern Baptist Convention to help the seminary. However, property was needed in order to relocate, and property of significant size in the city of New Orleans was very difficult to find.

In God's timing, a large piece of property, one of the largest pieces of property available in the city in many years, was listed on the market. A pecan orchard on the eastern edge of New Orleans seemed ideal. Dr. Leavell began negotiations to buy the property in order to move the seminary. The Catholic Church was also interested in the property for a monastery and a school. The property was listed by a very devout and active Catholic layman. Dr. Leavell knew that he was in a very tough battle to acquire that property, but he also knew it was the only piece of property that could possibly meet the needs of the seminary for the future. He decided to have one last meeting with the realtor before the final decision was made on who would get the property. At that meeting, he thanked the realtor for his time and reminded him the Baptists wanted to buy this property in order to move our School. He noted, "We absolutely have to find more space than we have right now. We will use it very well to create something New Orleans will be proud of – a new campus for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. I understand that the Catholic Church is also interested in acquiring the property for a monastery and a school. I also know that you are very active in the Church and very devout in your faith. That's fine. However, it occurred to me that I might not have made one thing clear in our conversations. I know if you sell this property to the Church, they will expect you to forgo your commission on the sale as a gift to the Church. I want to be sure you understand that if you sell the property to the Baptists, we will expect you to take your full and rightful commission on the sale of the property."

While I am not aware of what else happened in negotiations, I do know that NOBTS is located today at 3939 Gentilly Boulevard in that old pecan orchard. Would you call that being wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove? Dr. Roland Q. Leavell was a great leader. The seminary's relocation was a massive project. He selected a young architect who later became one of the most famous architects in the history of Louisiana. A. Hays Town designed beautiful, classic, and timeless buildings in French-Creole style with red brick and green shutters. The beautiful campus was well-laid out and well-designed. The pressure of having to raise all the

money, to build the buildings, to relocate the seminary, to operate on one campus while another was being built, to operate on two campuses during the transition was an incredible time. Roland Q. Leavell was a great president by any standard of measure. Yes, a relocation happened. Yes, the seminary grew significantly in enrollment. Yes, the seminary gathered its financial strength. By any standard of measure, Leavell was one of the greatest presidents ever in the history of NOBTS. With all that pressure and hard work, Dr. Leavell eventually had some serious health issues which forced him to retire very quickly as president. He died shortly after his retirement. Deep gratitude is owed to this great man who did so much for the Kingdom of God.

### **H. Leo Eddleman (1959–1970)**

As Dr. Roland Q. Leavell stepped down as NOBTS President, the trustees once again began the search for the next President for this School of Providence and Prayer. The search team was led to a former International Mission Board missionary. Do you see that common thread? Evangelism and missions—so deeply woven into the fabric of this School of Providence and Prayer—have been consistently an outstanding characteristic of this school.

Dr. H. Leo Eddleman was a former missionary to Palestine and Israel. He was a brilliant Hebrew scholar who had pastoral experience and had taught in other schools. He was called to serve the Seminary as President in 1959 and remained through 1970. The decade of the sixties was a tumultuous time in the United States! The country was experiencing disruption. Our culture went through many different challenges during this very, very turbulent time. The country and NOBTS struggled. The most notable event within the seminary during that decade was a civil war on the NOBTS faculty. This moment was not a proud one for NOBTS, but the moment had great significance. The civil war was about a theological dispute over the nature of Scripture, and conservative versus liberal theology. A disagreement among faculty members began and became more and more severe as time passed. The rift became so severe that faculty relationships, as well as students, were affected.

Years ago, I learned about this faculty fight during a revival for a church in our region. In a visit with the pastor prior to the service, I asked if I was correct in remembering that he was a gradu-

ate of our seminary. He started to cry. Now, usually, people cry after they hear me preach. I was stunned and immediately apologized to him: "Pastor, I am very sorry for whatever I said that so upset you." He replied, "No, no, no, it's not your fault. You just don't know what happened to me, do you?" He then related his story: "Yes, I graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with my master's degree, and then I entered the doctoral program. Unfortunately, I was flunked out of the program because I worked for the wrong professor. A professor who did not like the man for whom I graded, flunked me out of the program."

I was stunned. Later I began to piece together the details. During that decade of the sixties, there was indeed a virtual civil war on the faculty that became very hostile – professors attacking one another face-to-face, professors attacking one another in classrooms, and then, not only attacking other professors and speaking negatively about them in public settings but also attacking the students of professors with whom they disagreed. This scenario was unacceptable. When another student was about to be flunked out of the seminary in the midst of this conflict, a member of the faculty, beloved preaching professor Dr. V. L. Stanfield, finally decided enough was enough. He called a meeting of the whole faculty without the presence of any administrators. No one knows what was said. No one in that meeting ever spoke of it. All we know is what happened when they came out of that room. They agreed never to speak about what was said in the meeting. They agreed the civil war was over, never to happen again. From that point forward, the faculty of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary agreed to have collegial respect for everyone around them, that no faculty member would ever attack another faculty member in a classroom or in public, that differences and disagreements would be handled person-to-person. The faculty also agreed the student would be allowed to continue in the doctoral program and would not be flunked out as long as the grade of "F" remained on his transcript. In spite of the "F," full credit for the seminar was given. Does it sound a bit childish? But that compromise was apparently what put everything together, and the faculty all agreed. Here's the great irony: the seminar in question was "The Love of God." How often do disagreements seem severe at the moment yet rather childish in retrospect?

This civil war nearly destroyed the seminary, resulting in a spiraling decline in enrollment as well as significant financial chal-



lenges. Though the seminary was in peril, God redeemed the situation by creating a sense of collegial connection that remains to this day on the faculty of NOBTS. We thank the Lord for His redemption and remember that at NOBTS, we are very determined to love and support one another.

### **Grady Cothen (1970–1974)**

As the trustees searched for the next President, God led them to a wonderful Baptist leader by the name of Grady Cothen. Dr. Cothen was an experienced pastor, an experienced Baptist leader in educational circles, and an experienced denominational leader in Baptist life. He shared that Baptist passion for missions and evangelism. Dr. Cothen became president at a very important time in our seminary. Because of the faculty controversy, decreased enrollment, and great financial difficulties, the School was in a precarious position. Dr. Cothen did not serve very long, only about three years. He left New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to become president of the Sunday School Board, now called Life-Way Christian Resources. Though short in tenure, Cothen played a very important role. He stopped the free fall in enrollment and helped the seminary stand on solid ground again. He controlled the financial problems, the red ink, the very struggle to survive, and he helped the Seminary return to the black and a position of fiscal health. In other words, he put a foundation in place for the seminary to grow again into the future. We owe Cothen a great debt for serving in a tough time and strengthening NOBTS. He did not complain about the civil war; he simply did the necessary work to position the School for its future. What an outstanding job of leadership!

### **Landrum P. Leavell II (1975–1995)**

After Dr. Grady Cothen stepped down, the NOBTS trustees were led to the dynamic Baptist pastor by the name of Landrum P. Leavell II. While he was not one of those nine famous Leavell brothers, he was the child of one of them. In addition to being a nephew of Roland Q. Leavell, Dr. Landrum P. Leavell II was an NOBTS alumnus. Every church he served grew in baptisms, grew in attendance, and grew in budget. Dr. Leavell had been recognized as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Pastors Conference, served many roles in Southern Baptist life, and

was a well-known, well-respected Baptist leader. He came to the seminary ready to do a great work of God, and a great work was done through him.

By any standard of measure, Dr. Landrum P. Leavell II was one of the greatest presidents in the history of the seminary. He served for twenty years, from 1975 through December 1994. In that time, the seminary grew significantly in enrollment, and it grew significantly in endowment, from virtually no endowment to a twenty-five-million-dollar endowment. The campus was enlarged, acquiring the facility that is now our student center and acquiring the Providence Guest House across the street. A campus of about seventy-four acres was enlarged to a campus of eighty-five acres.

Of interest to many people is the response of our seminary during the greatest controversy of the Southern Baptist Convention, the “Conservative Resurgence.” This theologically-based conflict was an SBC-wide civil war like the one NOBTS experienced. Dr. Landrum Leavell did a magnificent job of steering the seminary through the conflict unscathed. How did he do that? One, he was a great leader. Two, everybody in the SBC knew that he was theologically conservative; he was absolutely certain the Bible was the Word of God, inspired and inerrant, and he was very evangelistic. People had confidence in Dr. Leavell, and because they had confidence in Dr. Leavell, they had confidence in our seminary. Of all the entities in the SBC, the entity least affected by all the battles during the Conservative Resurgence was NOBTS, thanks to the leadership of Dr. Leavell. Enrollment increase, financial strength, and denominational leadership were three evidences that Dr. Landrum P. Leavell II was a great president.

### **Charles S. (Chuck) Kelley Jr. (1996–2019)**

January 1995 marked the beginning of the next search for a new NOBTS President. The process took more than a year and resulted in the election of Charles S. (Chuck) Kelley Jr. He was serving as a Professor of Evangelism on the NOBTS faculty at the time and became the first member of the faculty selected by the trustees for the presidency, indicating further the stability of the seminary during the Conservative Resurgence. Evangelism and missions have always been and continue to be a part of the DNA of this School of Providence and Prayer.

Enrollment has doubled, the endowment has more than doubled, and a number of innovative programs have been implemented during Kelley's tenure, including online degrees in multiple languages, a mentoring program, multiple degrees for non-residential students, and ministry training for prison inmates.

A number of academic centers were created. The Center for the Textual Study of the New Testament engages students and faculty in the groundbreaking research on ancient manuscripts of the New Testament. The Center for Apologetics hosts the annual Greer-Heard Point/Counterpoint Lecture bringing a nationally-known evangelical scholar and a nationally-known skeptic of Christianity to campus to discuss some aspect of the Christian faith from opposing perspectives. The Magee Counseling Center both trains students and provides Christian counseling to the community. The Rogers Center for Expository Preaching is raising up the next generation of Baptist preachers. These centers and others are becoming points of excellence that make NOBTS a nationally-known and respected theological institution.

Hurricane Katrina hit the city of New Orleans in 2005. The greatest natural catastrophe in the history of the United States resulted in seventy percent of the city of New Orleans being underwater, including the NOBTS campus. The campus was closed for a year to repair the storm damage. Virtually every building and every form of housing were flooded except the front quadrangle, housing the academic buildings, the library, the classroom buildings, the chapel, the student center, and the president's house. The marvelous, wonderful mercy of God spared the heart of the seminary. Southern Baptists from all over the nation and every state convention sent volunteers to the city of New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast, which was also significantly affected by the storm. Baptists gave even more than usual to the Cooperative Program, and \$6 million above and beyond that amount was given to NOBTS that year. The faculty played a crucial role in saving the seminary. They reinvented the entire curriculum and found ways to keep teaching every single course without access to the campus. The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama, welcomed us for December graduation in 2005. We were truly the School of Providence and Prayer, and we saw God do great and mighty things to facilitate a remarkable recovery. Ten years after Katrina, NOBTS set a new student enrollment record. Dr. Kelley announced his retirement in October 2018 and was given the title of

Chancellor by the Trustees so that the search for a new president could begin.

### **James (Jamie) K. Dew (2019–present)<sup>1</sup>**

Dr. Jamie Dew was elected New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's ninth president on June 5, 2019, by a unanimous vote of the NOBTS board of trustees. Dew's academic credentials include two Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees—a Doctor of Philosophy in Theological Studies from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) and a Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy from the University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK. Dew's Master of Divinity in Pastoral Ministry is from SEBTS, and his Bachelor of Science in Biblical Studies is from Toccoa Falls College in Toccoa, Georgia. Prior to his coming to NOBTS, Dew served as Vice President of Undergraduate Studies and Distance Learning and Associate Professor of Philosophy and the History of Ideas, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dew also served as senior pastor of Stony Hill Baptist Church, Wake Forest, North Carolina, for eight years, and in a variety of church ministry positions including minister to adults, youth minister, and interim pastor.

As a young Christian attending a small college of about 500 students, his goal was to share his faith with each of his fellow students. But he was dismayed when he learned that others were not as eager to hear about Jesus as he was to talk about him. How could he interact faithfully and effectively with skeptics, agnostics, and atheists? He decided that in order to counteract their criticisms of his faith, he needed to prepare intellectually. So he pursued studies in Apologetics and Philosophy as ways to undergird his witnessing to the lost in our increasingly skeptical society. Therefore, in his own way, Jamie continues the legacy of evangelism borne by previous seminary presidents at NOBTS.

When he began his tenure as president, Dr. Dew announced four initiatives: grow Leavell College, improve enrollment management, enhance marketing and communications, and re-engage the NOBTS family throughout the SBC. His first year in office included facing financial challenges that have arisen throughout academia, particularly because of the COVID-19 pandemic remi-

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<sup>1</sup> The portrait of Dr. Jamie Dew was written by Steve Lemke and Rex Butler.

niscent of the 1918 epidemic that impacted the seminary's first year. With his academic credentials, Dr. Dew is well-positioned to lead NOBTS into its second century.

### **Conclusion**

The story of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary continues to live up to its name as the School of Providence and Prayer. A great faculty is doing terrific work, and amazing students are making great sacrifices in order to be in school to prepare for excellence in ministry. Students, faculty, and staff are still sharing their faith in Christ across the city of New Orleans, and NOBTS is still partnering with the New Orleans Baptist Association, the Louisiana Convention, and the North American Mission Board to start new Baptist churches in our area and beyond. God's providence is apparent throughout the seminary's history. God's provision helped the School survive. NOBTS is indeed a testimony, a witness to the fact that our amazing, awesome God delights in doing amazing, awesome things to care for His children and extend the work of His Kingdom.

May this walk through the NOBTS presidents help you realize that this School's story can be your story. The same God who walked every step through every year with NOBTS is walking with you. When you belong to Jesus, you can be confident that God's unshakable grip is on your life. God will do whatever is necessary to care for you. Our God is an amazing God!



## The Leavell Legacy

**Rex D. Butler, PhD**

*Rex D. Butler is professor of Church History and Patristics, occupying the John T. Westbrook Chair of Church History at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.*

A visitor to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is immediately uplifted by the sight of the steeple rising from Roland Q. Leavell Chapel, situated in the center of the campus. Driving around the perimeter, the visitor finds at the southwest corner the Landrum P. Leavell II Center for Evangelism and Church Health. Back at the other side of the campus is the building that houses Leavell College. Entering that building and going upstairs, the visitor finds a small museum appropriately labeled “The Leavell Legacy.” Inside the museum, among the memorabilia, is a seminary catalog, and browsing through it, one sees that there are two academic chairs – the Roland Q. Leavell Chair of Evangelism and the Landrum P. Leavell II Chair of New Testament and Greek. Even the President’s Home bears the name of Corra Berry Leavell.

“The Leavell Legacy” indeed! The Leavell family has impacted NOBTS in so many ways that their name is found everywhere on the campus. As the seminary enters its second hundred years, it is appropriate to examine the legacy of this family, who continues to play a significant role in our School of Providence and Prayer.

### **George and Corra Leavell**

The story of the Leavell Legacy at NOBTS must begin with the patriarch and matriarch of their family of nine boys, including Roland Quinche Leavell. George Washington Leavell (1844–1905) returned from the Civil War to a South that was decimated by the hostilities that had divided the nation. Nonetheless, he used his accounting skills to create a new life, first in Memphis, Tennessee, and then in Pontotoc County, Mississippi. On May 14, 1872, he married Corra Alice Berry (1851–1913), a music teacher at Chickasaw College. Complementing each other, he was sober and serious, while she was lively and vivacious. Together, they embarked upon a life focused on faith and family.

They specialized in raising boys. Less than two years into their marriage, their first of nine sons arrived on May 10, 1874. They named him Landrum Pinson for Dr. and Mrs. Sylvanus Landrum,<sup>1</sup> pastor of Central Baptist Church, Memphis, where they were members; and for Colonel and Mrs. Pinson, in whose home they boarded. Their eighth son, the one who later had a major impact on NOBTS, was named Roland Quinche, his first name for a paternal ancestor, John Roland Leavell, and his second, for a professor at the University of Mississippi, Dr. A. J. Quinche, who negotiated with the Union army not to destroy the campus.

Soon after Landrum's birth, George moved his growing family to Oxford, Mississippi, where he opened a mercantile store. He served First Baptist Church as a faithful church worker and Sunday school teacher and superintendent. Beyond the church building, George organized and maintained the Union Grove Sunday School in the countryside, where there were many people but no church. Every Sunday afternoon, George would travel two miles, usually by foot, to a one-room school building, where he conducted a mission to this rural community. He pressed his sons and other young people into service, to pass out hymnbooks, to sing while he played the organ, and later to teach classes. Every August, George would build a brush arbor and invite a preacher to conduct a week of evangelistic services. Over the years, hundreds were led to faith in Christ. The oldest son Landrum, who later played a significant role in the development of the Baptist Young People's Union, said of his father: "He was a trainer of young people. His delight was to have a prospective young preacher to preach at the mission. How many of his boys got their start in Christian work in that way, I cannot say, but I can testify for myself."<sup>2</sup>

Of his father, Roland recalled: "He referred to himself as 'Old Whitey,' the name of his father's favorite horse of all burdens. 'Old Whitey' would pull the biggest load up hill and stand the most whipping of all the horses – a very accurate description of George W. Leavell as a church worker."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Later, Sylvanus Landrum made a significant impact on Baptist life in New Orleans when he became pastor of Coliseum Baptist Church in 1881. See Lloyd Harsch, "Who Dat Say Dey Gonna Teach Dem Saints?" in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Q. Leavell, *Corra Berry Leavell: A Christian Mother* (n.p., 1952), 48.

<sup>3</sup> Leavell, *Corra Berry Leavell*, 47–48.



As much influence as George Leavell had on his sons, their mother Corra's influence was even greater. Early every morning, she knelt to pray for her sons as she leaned upon a well-worn, hump-backed trunk. Often she also bent them over the same trunk to whip them with a switch from a peach tree. The boys referred to these times as "peach tree tea!" After her prayer time, Corra held her Bible with one hand and churned the butter with the other. Her sons remembered her for both her laughter and her relationship with God.

Corra had a heart for missions and proved it through sacrificial giving. On her wedding day, George gave his bride a beautiful gold watch with a long gold chain, an especially exquisite gift considering the poverty of the times. Years later, when Dr. J. B. Gambrell spoke on missions at the Oxford church and took up an offering, Corra had no money to give but placed her treasured watch and chain in the offering plate. Gambrell was touched by her sacrifice and was able to find a donor to redeem the offering for \$50. After the watch and chain were returned to Corra, George made sure that she left it at home whenever there was to be a missions collection at the church!

Roland recounted another chapter in the history of Mama's watch. "Ullin, the youngest of the brothers, fell heir to the watch. It was while holding in one hand an unsigned contract from a business firm assuring him an income of several thousand dollars a year and holding Mama's watch in the other, that he made his decision to go to China as an educational missionary. He returned the contract to the business firm unsigned."<sup>4</sup>

Corra and George conspired to keep their sons busy, off the streets, and away from worldly temptations. Their oft-repeated proverb was: "work is the best tonic for boys." Corra set a weekly and daily schedule of chores around the house, garden, livestock, and, since there were no daughters, even in the kitchen. In later years, when the family could not afford a mule, George hitched the boys to the plow as he guided them up and down the rows of the garden. Roland commented that waiting on tables at home prepared him for jobs later to pay his board at the university.

Much of the work demanded of the boys resulted from the financial reverses that struck the household. George's war wounds never completely healed, and, in 1893, the pain and difficulty in

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<sup>4</sup> Leavell, *Corra Berry Leavell*, 13.

breathing forced him to convalesce at home. The eldest son Landrum assisted at the mercantile store, but its operation was entrusted to a dishonest employee, who ultimately bankrupted the business but secured wealth for himself. When George returned to his store after more than a year, he found depleted stock and mounting debts. In 1895, he was forced to close his store, but, refusing to hide behind bankruptcy laws, he worked laboriously to repay his creditors. His bookkeeping skills proved valuable once more as he found work as a cashier at the Bank of Oxford, but he struggled for the rest of his life to pay off his debts.

Roland told the rest of the story about the employee who had ruined his father's business. "After Mother's death my brother James told me the story of how the rich but ungodly man had defrauded our father during his illness. Then we recalled to each other how our mother had sent various ones of us time and again to this man's house during his last days, bearing trays of food and message of concern about his health. The spirit of Jesus who prayed for those who were crucifying him so possessed our mother's heart that I am almost convinced that she literally forgot that this man had robbed her of everything that financial prosperity could have offered her in her mature years. As I think back on the lawlessness in that man's family and the horrible type of death that he died, I can now understand what my mother and father meant when they would say, 'Our poverty is our greatest blessing.'"<sup>5</sup>

George's wounds and burdens bore him down to a relatively early death at age 61. According to Roland, "It seemed to his boys that they never knew him as a well man free from suffering." On his deathbed, he called his two youngest sons, Roland and Ullin, to his side and encouraged them: "Grow up into Christian manhood. I am grieved I cannot be there to guide you." Then the remaining seven sons were called in and charged: "Guide these younger boys just as you have been brought up. Teach them to be honest, hardworking, loyal, dependable, and mostly busy about God's business."<sup>6</sup> Also at his bedside was his brother, the boys' favorite uncle, the college professor, Richard, who assured George: "You have lived a great life." George replied: "I didn't know it."<sup>7</sup> What George did not know, however, was that the greatness of

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<sup>5</sup> Leavell, *Corra Berry Leavell*, 40–41.

<sup>6</sup> Dottie L. Hudson, *He Still Stands Tall* (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 2008), 21.

<sup>7</sup> Hudson, *He Still Stands Tall*, 21.

his life would not be measured by his own achievements, worthy though they were, but by the legacy that he left behind in his sons and future grandchildren and other descendants.

Seven years later, Corra's health was failing, but she lived to see her oldest four sons married and their careers begun. Her fourth son, George, was under appointment as a medical missionary by the Foreign Mission Board and newly married. He postponed his sailing date to China because, as a doctor, he knew that the end was near for his Mama. She insisted, however, that God was delaying her death until her son set foot on Chinese soil. When she bid him farewell, both knowing that they would never see each other again on this earth, all those present wept except Corra, who smiled a radiant smile. Soon thereafter, on January 30, 1913, she passed away. That same day, a telegram arrived from George, announcing his arrival in China. Calculating the difference in time, the Leavell family realized that Mama arrived in heaven at the same time that George landed in China.

In his biography of his mother, Roland wrote: "Every one of the sons of Corra Berry Leavell feels that the most fortunate thing we ever experienced in this world was to pick the mother and father that we did. In this story of our mother, we quote the Wise Man of the Proverbs and say, 'Her children arise and call her blessed.'"<sup>8</sup>

Just before her death, Corra wrote this letter to her sons and tucked it in her Bible,

My dear, dear boys,

The dear Lord may call me at any time. How sweet it will be to be with Jesus. He has sweetened the tomb so death is robbed of its terror. My heart's desire and prayer for each of you is that you may ever live for Jesus, that your chief aim and desire in every action may be to glorify God. O ever live for Jesus, that He may always use you for His glory in bringing lost men to the cross in the extension of His kingdom. At last may we all be gathered around His throne, an unbroken family, to praise His name forever.

Mama<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Leavell, *Corra Berry Leavell*, 57.

<sup>9</sup> Leavell, *Corra Berry Leavell*, 57.

Indeed, no greater tribute to George and Corra Leavell can be expressed than to recognize the accomplishments and ministries of their nine sons. Eight worked in full-time vocational ministry as pastors, evangelists, missionaries and denominational leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention; the ninth served his community as a dentist. One son and a grandson presided over New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during fruitful tenures that extend the impact of the Leavell Legacy into the twenty-first century.

In 2002, the trustees of NOBTS voted to change the name of the College of Undergraduate Studies to Leavell College in honor of George and Corra Leavell's nine sons. Their accomplishments were listed in the spring 2002 issue of *Vision*:

Among the brothers were Frank, who pioneered in Southern Baptist student work, serving as a longtime leader of the Baptist Student Union of the Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources); Landrum P., who was the first director of the Baptist Young Peoples Union and worked at the Sunday School Board; and Roland Q., who served as evangelism director for the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) and later as president of New Orleans Seminary. Other brothers included James Berry, an evangelist and pastor who served churches across the Southeast; and Leonard O., another pastor in the Southeast and father of NOBTS' seventh president, Landrum P. Leavell II; George Walne and Ullin Whitney, who served as missionaries in China; Clarence Stanley, who served on the Arkansas state mission board; and Arnaud Bruce, who served as a dentist in Hollywood, Calif.<sup>10</sup>

### **Roland Quinche Leavell**

On December 21, 1891, the day of Roland's birth, his mother, who was accustomed to having babies, went about her morning tasks of Bible reading, praying, churning butter, and preparing breakfast. Finally, when the birth pains could be ignored no longer, she broke off her daily routine to send George with the older boys to school and the younger ones to relatives. By the time George

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<sup>10</sup> "Undergraduate college renamed in Leavell's honor at NOBTS," *Vision* (Spring 2002): 17.

returned and the doctor arrived, Corra had delivered their eighth son, Roland.

The arrival of another Leavell boy generated no special news in town, not like a baby girl might have. In fact, the addition of another child was not especially good news to parents in their forties, to a family struggling financially, at Christmas time, when poverty is felt especially keenly. In later years, when Roland was too young to understand fully his place in the family, his Aunt Lizzie told him that he was not wanted. Not wanted! What a burden for a young boy to carry, and he carried it throughout his life. According to his daughter Dottie Hudson, “This sensitive little boy absorbed all the rejection that comes with being told he was an intrusion into his family. He told this incident over and over throughout his life, and perhaps this childhood pain was the driver that made it necessary for him to prove his worth in his family and in this world.”<sup>11</sup>

Roland told the story from his perspective. “They didn’t want me according to Aunt Lizzie’s report. She never knew how profound an impression that made on the little boy’s mind. ‘Twas just before Christmas, financial affairs and father’s health were both low – with seven boys already, I ... came to spite them before the Doctor got there. But Aunt Lizzie says in two months my mother said I had laughed my way into their hearts.”<sup>12</sup>

Concerning his spiritual birth, Roland told two stories. The first occurred about a year before his father’s death, upon the occasion of his father’s departure to Kerrville, Texas, to recuperate from ill health. Roland recalled, “He put his arms around me, a boy of twelve, and said, ‘My son, it is time you are giving your heart to the Saviour and joining the church. I shall be praying for you while I am gone.’”<sup>13</sup> Sometime later, when he was fourteen, Roland responded to the pastor’s invitation to accept Jesus’ pardoning offer and be saved. Roland described his conversion experience in this way: “I felt so badly when the minister had preached so long and hard and no one came to confess his sins. I walked down the aisle and told him that I wanted to be a Christian.” Despite the seeming lack of emotion, according to his daughter Mary

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<sup>11</sup> Hudson, *He Still Stands Tall*, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Mary D. Leavell Bowman, “Roland Q. Leavell: A Biography” (PhD Diss., Louisiana State University, 1984), 20.

<sup>13</sup> Leavell, *Corra Berry Leavell*, 52.

Bowman, he considered this event to be a “‘rebirth’ experience, one in which he felt transformed from a state of sin to a state of salvation.”<sup>14</sup>

The summer of 1913 was memorable for Roland, as he realized that God was calling him to be a preacher. For years, he had desired such a call, but he needed divine assurance of God’s will. One Saturday night, he prayed: “Lord, stop me if You are not calling me to preach.” Then he spread a fleece: he challenged God to enable him to win to Christ seven unsaved teenaged boys in his Sunday school class; in this way, God would reveal his call for Roland. Here is his account of that Sunday morning:

The Sunday school lesson was about the Israelites and their forty years of wandering in the wilderness, of all things! I drew a football field on the blackboard, with Egypt and the holy land as the two goal lines. Moses and Pharaoh were the opposing captains; Jesus and Satan were the opposing coaches. That game lasted forty years, and at last Israel made a touchdown. When I asked who wanted to play the game of life under Jesus, the Great Coach, seven boys rose and shook my hand. They joined the church for baptism that morning, all seven of them.<sup>15</sup>

In the entry of his diary, dated June 15, 1913, he wrote: “‘Oh! If I could only tell Mama,’ was my great thought.”<sup>16</sup>

That fall he entered his senior year at the University of Mississippi. On December 28, 1913, he was ordained by First Baptist Church, Oxford, and his brother Jim preached the ordination sermon based on Hebrews 12:1–2. Then at the conclusion of the spring semester 1914, he completed both his B.A. and M.A. As one of the outstanding students, he presented a speech on “The Contribution of Missions to Civilization,” a topic that reflected the direction of his life and ministry.

As well as home and church, education had a major impact on Roland’s life and ministry – not only on him but also on all his brothers. The brothers determined that each one would support everyone else, pooling their funds until all completed their college educations. Roland recalled: “There was at least one of the nine Leavell boys in the University [of Mississippi] every year from

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<sup>14</sup> Leavell, *Corra Berry Leavell*, 26–27.

<sup>15</sup> Roland Q. Leavell, *Sheer Joy of Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 41.

<sup>16</sup> Bowman, “Roland Q. Leavell,” 61.

1895 until Ullin dropped out for a time in 1916.”<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, all nine brothers received degrees, and many went on for master’s and doctor’s degrees.

After a summer of preaching at Holly Springs, Mississippi, Roland set out for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, on September 29, 1914. He had one hundred borrowed dollars in his pocket and clothes handed down from his brothers. Soon, several of his brothers joined him in Louisville, either to attend the seminary or to minister in the area. Roland settled into pastoring at a Baptist church in New Castle, Kentucky. Although Roland struggled, as many seminarians do, with the challenging theological curriculum, he concluded his time at Southern with the summation: “My seminary courses meant much to me.”<sup>18</sup>

Roland often repeated the story of his first honorarium for preaching. “I was ashamed to open the folded check when they gave it to me so I put it in the pocket of my coat. Curiosity about that check was eating me up. I thought my host and hostess would never go to bed so I could see my check .... When I finally got to my room and closed the door, I jerked out the check and saw it was for twenty-five whole, wonderful dollars, I jumped on the bed and stood on my head at the precise moment the host, Mr. Orem, stuck his head in the door to ask if I wanted a drink of water. There was I, the preacher of the evening, standing on his head on the bed.”<sup>19</sup>

In May 1917, the month that Roland graduated from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, a significant event in Baptist life transpired elsewhere, in New Orleans, Louisiana. There the Southern Baptist Convention gathered from May 16–21, and the messengers heard Dr. M. E. Dodd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana, present a proposal for a missionary training school in that city. Such an institution had been the dream of the founders of the SBC at its establishment in 1845, and the dream continued to be fostered by Baptists in Louisiana and Mississippi. One resolution stated: “There has been everywhere manifested among our brotherhood that the time has come when such an institution is an absolute necessity to 1,500 miles of Baptist Gulf Coast Country.” The messengers “unanimously and enthusiastical-

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<sup>17</sup> Leavell, *Corra Berry Leavell*, 52.

<sup>18</sup> Hudson, *He Still Stands Tall*, 51.

<sup>19</sup> Bowman, “Roland Q. Leavell,” 23.

ly” approved the proposal, and, by this action, the school, initially named the Baptist Bible Institute, officially was established by the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>20</sup>

At this time, national and world-wide events were taking place that would impact Roland more immediately. On April 6, 1917, President Woodrow W. Wilson declared war on Germany. In light of the war, Roland debated what direction he would take. If he left the pastorate to serve his country in the war effort, should he do so as a chaplain in the army or as a worker in the YMCA? Because of their ability to speak French, he and his brother Leonard, whom his family called “Greek,” were recruited to minister through the YMCA. During his two years in France, Roland spent most of his time in Paris serving soldiers who were on their way to the front or on leave. He regretted that he had few opportunities to preach or share the Gospel, but he passed out New Testaments when he could. Later, he volunteered to go into the war zone to carry the wounded to safety and medical treatment. He rejoiced with all his comrades when they heard the news: “GERMANY IS SEEKING AN ARMISTICE!” In January, 1919, he gratefully returned home, not only to the United States, but even to Oxford, Mississippi, where he assumed the pastorate of First Baptist Church.

Roland was something of a ladies man. In the spring and summer of 1911 alone, he wrote in his diary the names of twenty-eight girls, many of whom he described as “a peach of a girl.” The first love of his life was Annie Ball Cooper, but because she was his first cousin, a romantic relationship was forbidden. Finally, during his time as pastor at Oxford, he had occasion to conduct a training class at First Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where he met the pastor’s daughter, Lilian Yarborough. On that occasion, he wrote in his diary: “I ‘suttently’ do like Miss Lillian,” misspelling her name for the only time.<sup>21</sup>

Their courtship and engagement were extended until Lilian graduated from college. They married on June 24, 1923, and their honeymoon included Chattanooga, Atlanta, and scenic parts of Kentucky. By that fall, they were living in Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, where Roland pastored while pursuing a Doctor of Theolo-

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<sup>20</sup> Claude L. Howe, *Seventy-Five Years of Providence and Prayer* (New Orleans, LA: New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 16.

<sup>21</sup> Hudson, *He Still Stands Tall*, 81.



gy at Southern Seminary. After he graduated with magna cum laude honors, he and his growing family moved to a pastorate in Picayune, Mississippi, so that Lilian, now in her second pregnancy, could be closer to her mother. Eventually, Roland and Lilian's family included three daughters: Mary, Lilian, and Dorothea (Dottie).

After two years at Picayune, Roland's brother Frank recommended him to First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Georgia. This church, located about sixty miles north of Atlanta and strong Southern Baptist activity, was Roland's favorite pastorate. During his ten years there, he also served as president of the Georgia Baptist Convention and as a trustee of the Foreign Mission Board. One tragic disaster of his tenure in Gainesville was a tornado that devastated the downtown area, including the church, on April 6, 1936. Roland and Lilian immediately went to work, freeing people from the wreckage. In days ahead, they offered their undamaged home as a hospital and as a funeral parlor. Optimistically, Roland predicted that the tornado was a "holocaust from which Gainesville would rise with triumph." But he would not remain long enough to see the rebuilding of the city or the church; a new challenge of rebuilding lay ahead.

In his autobiography, Roland said: "If the angels should come to take me to the celestial city, I would be tempted to say, 'Please take me by Gainesville one more time!' Ten happy years of abundant living were enjoyed in that beautiful 'Queen City of the Mountains,' among the most united and devoted church people that one could wish to find. The people in that cultured college center challenged me to my hardest study, to my best efforts to maintain a teaching ministry, to my most active endeavors to win souls, to my most energetic work at organization and promotion, to my most prayerful pulpiteering."<sup>22</sup>

In the early throes of the Great Depression, the Home Mission Board was forced to close the Department of Evangelism. By 1937, however, the great need for training in evangelism led to its reestablishment and the calling of Roland Leavell as its new director. His task was not only to know himself how to evangelize but especially to train laypeople in the churches to win souls. So he moved his family to Atlanta and served a five-year tenure with the HMB. During these years, he published numerous magazine arti-

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<sup>22</sup> Leavell, *Sheer Joy of Living*, 34.

cles on the subject of evangelism and several books: *Helping Others to Become Christians*, *Saving America to Save the World*, *Preaching the Doctrines of Grace*, *A Handbook for Southwide Baptist Revival of 1939*, *A Handbook for Southern Baptist Participation in the Nationwide Evangelistic Crusade for 1940*, and *The Romance of Evangelism*. He preached extensively in evangelistic crusades across the nation and also taught principles of revivalism to other mass evangelists. During the early years of this ministry, baptisms rose from 191,993 in 1936 to 269,155 in 1939. The outbreak of World War II, however, brought a decline in revivalism, and Roland resigned his position in May 1942 in order to return to the pastorate at First Baptist Church, Tampa, Florida.

This pastorate differed from Roland's previous ministries because Tampa was a big city with three military bases and a transient population. During much of his ministry there, he counseled soldiers about to leave for the war, tended to families left behind, administered hasty wedding vows to couples immediately before their separation, and later conducted memorial services. He turned down many invitations to conduct city-wide revivals, but he did accept one that brought him much pride and joy in Washington, D.C. Later Roland described his four-year ministry in Tampa as "a very sobering and disciplinary experience." Events were about to transpire that would lead him into his best known and perhaps most fruitful endeavor.

Roland described one hasty wedding ceremony: "Last week a soldier called me and said he wanted me to do his wedding ceremony that night. I asked him his name and then his girl's name. He said 'Her name is Mary Frances ... Oh, what is your name?' I hope the boy knows her last name now, since she has taken his."<sup>23</sup>

The year 1946 was important both to Roland Q. Leavell and NOBTS. On May 14, the trustees of the seminary unanimously elected Roland as the institution's fourth president. Three days later, the Southern Baptist Convention changed the name of the Baptist Bible Institute to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. In Roland's discussion with the trustees, he recommended the name change in order to gain the respect needed not only to accomplish its academic mission but also to achieve recognition among the predominantly Catholic population of New Orleans. Roland also mandated that the emphasis of the seminary would be

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<sup>23</sup> Bowman, "Roland Q. Leavell," 209.

the conviction of his heart – evangelism. It seemed to Roland that, after many years of ministry, his undertaking on behalf of ministerial education “was the phase of my life work for which all the rest has been made and planned.”<sup>24</sup>

At the time of his retirement, Roland recalled: “On my election in 1946 I told the trustees: ‘If you want me to go there to be a friend to those students and try to make that a better seminary, there is nothing I would rather try to do; if you want me to raise money, there is nothing I want less to do.’ Much of my twelve years there was absorbed with receiving and spending millions of dollars. It was the joy of my life to teach Evangelism classes during those years. Evangelism is part of the core curriculum of all Southern Baptist seminaries. It reaches into the Biblical realm for the record of methods that succeeded or failed; it reaches into Theology for the message of it; it reaches into the Practical Fields area for the application of it.”<sup>25</sup>

Roland faced two serious challenges early in his tenure at the seminary. The first task was to move the campus to a location with growing room, and yet he must do so with no apparent funding. When the seminary was founded in 1917, the Southern Baptist Convention purchased the Sophie Newcomb College in the prestigious Garden District. This site had beautiful grounds, lovely structures designed with New Orleans style, but no room for expansion. The student body had already outgrown this space, and Roland’s goal was to exceed one thousand students. It was at this time that God’s providential hand began to move.

Because New Orleans is situated below sea level and is bound by a river, a lake, and swampland, the city has limited usable land. In 1946, very little suitable land was available and certainly not at a price that the seminary could afford. Six weeks into Roland’s presidency, however, a 375-acre plot of land became available on the east side of New Orleans. In spite of numerous obstacles, Roland made this land the focus of concerted prayer. The story has been told many times, never better than in Roland’s own words,

Virtually all the real estate dealers wanted those 375 acres. The agent in charge said, “We will not subdivide; we will sell it all or none.” A wealthy New Orleans politician and real estate promoter had offered a million dollars for the acreage,

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<sup>24</sup> Bowman, “Roland Q. Leavell,” 219.

<sup>25</sup> Leavell, *Sheer Joy of Living*, 82.

and the holding company offered to sell it to him for a million and a half. The real estate agent said to us, “And besides, our archbishop wants the part you want, to build a boys school.” That was stiff competition indeed for Baptists in New Orleans, especially when they scarcely had the down payment for a portion of it. We negotiated for weeks. I persuaded the agent that the holding company would eventually compromise and sell it for a million and a quarter. If he would sell us seventy-five acres – one fifth of it – for a quarter of a million dollars, the rich politician-promoter would give his million for the remaining three hundred acres. I let him know I knew that if the owners sold it to the Baptists, he would get a fat commission; if they sold it to the archbishop, he would have to give his commission to the church. Early in November, 1946, we signed an agreement to buy, taking a three-months option on 75 acres at \$3,330.00 per acre, by faith counting on at least \$225,000.00 in capital funds to come in during November and December. I scraped the bottom of the barrel of the seminary’s assets to get up the necessary \$25,000 down payment. That afternoon the owners signed an agreement to sell. The very next morning that politician-promoter offered the real estate agent a million and a quarter for the entire acreage. He went into a rage when he found out that the Baptist “School of Providence and Prayer” had signed a ninety-day option the afternoon before for the most desirable seventy-five acres.<sup>26</sup>

The challenge of obtaining this choice piece of property, however, had only begun, and Roland’s fundraising skills were put to the test. Nonetheless, just days before the end of the ninety-day option, Roland was able to finalize the purchase on behalf of the SBC. Early in the history of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, its first president, B. H. DeMent, had christened the new institution as “The School of Providence and Prayer.” The appellation has proved true many times, but certainly so on the occasion of the acquisition of these choice acres fronting Gentilly Boulevard.

The second and equally significant task facing Roland immediately was to achieve accreditation for the seminary. In 1953, the American Association of Theological Schools granted the highest

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<sup>26</sup> Leavell, *Sheer Joy of Living*, 83–84.

level of accreditation for the Bachelor of Divinity, Master of Theology, and Doctor of Theology degree programs with curricula that covered four major fields of study: biblical, theological, historical, and practical. Two years later, the School of Religious Education received accreditation by their overseeing agency, the American Association of Schools of Religious Education. The seminary was taking its place as an outstanding theological institution among Southern Baptists and all denominations.

Beyond these two immediate tasks, the new president faced other ongoing challenges. His tenure is notable, among other achievements, for the construction of buildings on the new campus, the increase of faculty and student body, the never-ending need for fundraising, and his personal mandate to establish an emphasis on evangelism at the seminary.

Two years transpired before the first groundbreaking, but, as Roland reminisced later in his life, "Construction on the campus never ceased for one day from that time until a very brief period in 1957. The sound of saw and hammer was music to my ears, music as sweet as the 'Hallelujah Chorus.'"<sup>27</sup> The architecture of the campus was designed to reflect the French Colonial influence that was typical of New Orleans. The first buildings were student apartments, named for John T. Christian, James E. Gwatkin, George H. Crutcher, and W. H. Managan Sr.; and then the library; next the William Carey residence hall for women; the M. E. Dodd administration building; and the John Bunyan building for classrooms. Ongoing construction included the E. O. Sellers music building; faculty residences; a cafeteria; a children's building; three men's residence halls, named for Charles Spurgeon, P. I. Lipsey, and M. E. Dodd; and a bookstore. By the fall of 1953, enough construction had been completed to bring all classes to the new campus. Construction continued with the J. M. Frost building for the School of Religious Education; and J. H. Martin Chapel; plus many more student apartments. All in all, at least eighty-five buildings were completed during Roland's presidency.

One other building project accomplished by Roland was the President's Home, built for his wife Lilian and enjoyed by succeeding presidents and their wives. Lilian had dreamed of a red brick home, graced by white Corinthian columns, but such an edifice seemed beyond the frugal means of the seminary. Roland

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<sup>27</sup> Leavell, *Sheer Joy of Living*, 84.

reached out to his family and friends for the necessary funds, and, as a result, those entering the campus pass by this gracious house, named the Corra Berry Leavell Home, in honor of Roland's mother. Every year, hundreds of visitors to the seminary are hosted here, and at the conclusion of every semester, the graduates, their families, and guests are greeted by the president and his wife along with faculty during a reception held in the house in their honor.

The capstone of the construction guided by Roland is the chapel, which serves as the centerpiece of the campus. The architect, A. Hays Town, had envisioned the library as the center of learning on the academic campus. Roland, however, believed that the focus needed to be on the spiritual purpose of the seminary as symbolized by the chapel. He wrote: "What the temple was to Israel, a chapel will be to this Seminary ... What the sanctuary is to the church, a chapel in the center of our campus will speak ... Come this is a trysting place with God."<sup>28</sup> The chapel was completed, albeit without its steeple, months after Roland's retirement and was named the Roland Q. Leavell Chapel.

At the groundbreaking ceremony for the chapel, Owen Cooper, president of the trustees, made these remarks: "We come as Baptists to mark an historic day in the annals of Southern Baptist life. As this spire shall point above, and as speakers will come and as faculty members will occupy the pulpit in the chapel, their challenge and their message and their urge always will be onward, upward, and God-ward." Furthermore, Cooper described the chapel as the "lengthened shadow of a great man."<sup>29</sup>

Even more heartwarming to Roland than the buildings was the numerical growth in the student body and faculty. His goal was to increase the number of students to 1000, but in fact, enrollment grew from 331 students during his first year to almost 1200 in his last. The number of faculty grew almost fourfold – from ten to thirty-nine. In his inaugural address, Roland explained the necessity of a good faculty: "We must remember that a student will not cross the street just to sit in a comfortable, air-conditioned classroom. He will cross the United States to sit at the feet of a great

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<sup>28</sup> Bowman, "Roland Q. Leavell," 230.

<sup>29</sup> "Ground Breaking Ceremony," *Vision* (April 1958): 3.

teacher. While we construct buildings we must keep developing an outstanding faculty.”<sup>30</sup>

Even though Roland had told the trustees that he did not want to raise money, fundraising certainly was an area of his giftedness and one of his major contributions to the seminary. Roland was a builder – of a campus and of a faculty – and as such, he needed to be a fundraiser. To accomplish his goals, Roland assembled a circle of donors that included Baptists and non-Baptists, NOBTS trustees, old friends from his fraternity Sigma Chi, New Orleanians who believed in the seminary’s mission in the city, and many others. Roland declined only one major donation, which was offered by the owner of a large brewery, because he could not accept money tainted by alcohol. The results of Roland’s abilities are evident in the achievements already outlined: the purchase of the campus, the construction of the buildings, and the development of a world-class faculty.

Roland’s youngest daughter, Dottie Hudson, said of her father: “He claimed not to enjoy the job of fund-raising, but he was a natural at it and must have learned to enjoy it to some extent.... He loved people and knew how to warm their hearts and give them a sense of purpose.”<sup>31</sup> His appeals for funds were based upon his conviction that the seminary had an evangelical mission. Yet one pastor, who had observed from a distance the seminary’s struggles with financial needs, criticized the construction of the campus as a waste of resources that should be channeled into direct evangelism. Dottie observed:

How strange! This was the passion of Roland’s life – the winning of lost people into the kingdom of God. Had Roland gotten so drawn into bricks and mortar that he had lost his direction, forgotten the driving force of his life? New Orleans Seminary was developing into a beautiful place where a man or woman ... could learn how to be effective in evangelism, preaching, and just loving the people God created. Instead of one man holding revivals and approaching individuals concerning their faith, there was to be graduating class after graduating class of hundreds of men and women trained in leading others to a faith in Jesus.... Sometime later, the man who felt Roland’s priorities were out of

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<sup>30</sup> Bowman, “Roland Q. Leavell,” 235.

<sup>31</sup> Hudson, *He Still Stands Tall*, 121.

order was known to urge young men to attend this ‘outstanding New Orleans Baptist Seminary.’<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, Roland’s passion was what he described in his autobiography as “The Ineffable Joy of Soul-Winning and Evangelism.” This work was what Roland was about all his life, as a pastor, as director of evangelism for the Home Mission Board, and now as president of NOBTS. In New Orleans, he recognized the need for the faculty and students of the seminary to reach out to a community populated by those whose god was their appetite for pleasure and entertainment.

He established a program for his students, who not only learned methods of evangelism but also participated weekly in two mission projects, including street preaching, traveling to unchurched areas of the bayou, and pastoring small churches. He had written many books on evangelism, and now he composed the classic textbook, *Evangelism: Christ’s Imperative Commission*. Every year, in spite of his many responsibilities, he committed to teach evangelism classes. As he wrote later in his life: “The teacher of Evangelism has a captive audience of God-called and dedicated young people who want more than anything to lead others to be Christians. The Bible is the heart of the seminary curriculum; soul-winning is the reach and run of the hands and feet.”<sup>33</sup>

On January 19, 1958, Roland scribbled in his journal the dreaded message: “This is the day I suffered a stroke of paralysis.” He grieved his impairment and, longing to complete more of his dreams, he labored through therapy. Two months later, he was able attend the groundbreaking for the chapel and to turn one spade of dirt. In April, however, the doctor instructed him that he must retire. Lilian wrote in her own diary: “Roland is heartbroken over having to give up his position. Simply heartbroken.” The local newspaper, *The Times-Picayune* posted this tribute: “...the spiritual good which he has accomplished dwarfs physical achievement he has made. He deserves a hearty ‘well done.’”<sup>34</sup>

Even in retirement, however, he was able to continue to minister in many ways. He and Lilian settled in Jackson, Mississippi, and he continued his therapy. Eventually, he was able to preach and to serve as interim pastor in multiple churches, including his

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<sup>32</sup> Hudson, *He Still Stands Tall*, 127.

<sup>33</sup> Leavell, *Sheer Joy of Living*, 82.

<sup>34</sup> Hudson, *He Still Stands Tall*, 141–42.



beloved home church in Oxford. He wrote several books, one of which was his autobiographical *The Sheer Joy of Living*, as well as the annual January Bible Study on Matthew. In 1961 he was elected as vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention with a unanimous vote and a standing ovation.

In January 1963, Roland and Lilian were in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where they had spent part of their honeymoon, so that he could teach from his *Studies in Matthew: The King and the Kingdom*. After teaching on Monday night, early the next morning, he awoke with difficulty in breathing. He alerted Lilian and told her: "I am afraid this may be it. You know I am ready. We started out here together forty years ago, and perhaps it is a good place for us to depart for a while."<sup>35</sup> He died in Lilian's arms on January 15, 1963.

Roland's daughter Dottie recounts the memorial service at First Baptist Church, Jackson, Mississippi, where Dr. Douglas Hudgins, pastor and friend, preached the sermon titled "Moses, My Servant, Is Dead." After reading the text from Deuteronomy 34:1–12, Hudgins said: "Centuries have gone by and here we are this Sunday morning, the third of this space-age year of 1963, listening to God's message saying, 'Moses, my servant, is dead,' not in the least feeling it would be sacrilegious to join in with thousands of fellow Christians throughout the world ... to hear our Lord say, 'Roland, my servant, is dead!'"<sup>36</sup>

### Landrum Pinson Leavell II

Following Roland's retirement in 1958, the trustees elected Dr. Henry Leo Eddleman as president. Twelve years later, he resigned, and the next president, Dr. Grady Cothen, was an alumnus of the institution. Cothen stayed only three years before leaving to become president of the Baptist Sunday School Board. In the fifteen years since Roland's presidency, NOBTS had been enhanced by some building projects and expanded faculty but also had been challenged by financial difficulties. The next president would be one with close ties to the seminary and with unique strengths with which to lead it – Landrum Pinson Leavell II, a nephew of Roland and an alumnus of NOBTS.

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<sup>35</sup> Hudson, *He Still Stands Tall*, 147.

<sup>36</sup> Hudson, *He Still Stands Tall*, 149.

Landrum was born to Roland's older brother, Leonard, known by family and friends as "Greek," and Annie Elias. Leonard and Annie met during the summer of 1913, just after Annie's graduation from State Teachers College, Frostburg, Maryland. Leonard was secretary of Sunday School and B.Y.P.U. work in Baltimore, Maryland, and came to Annie's church to conduct a course on Sunday School work. The two spent a day together, accompanied by Annie's brother Tom and other friends, and Leonard was impressed by her spunk. They saw each other often that summer and fall, but then he returned to the University of Mississippi while she continued her work as a school teacher. Although they occasionally encountered each other at a Sunday School encampment or a Baptist convention, they spent most of the next several years apart, Leonard studying at Southern Seminary, serving in World War I, and pastoring First Baptist Church, Ripley, Tennessee; Annie directing religious education at Freemason Street Baptist Church, Norfolk, Virginia. Finally, Greek, as Annie knew him by then, proposed, and they were married on February 28, 1923.

Greek and Annie settled in Ripley, Tennessee, where their three children were born in short order. First came two daughters, Margaret and Anne; then their son was born on November 26, 1926. Landrum Pinson Leavell II was named in honor of his uncle, the oldest and most revered of the nine Leavell brothers. Only six weeks after Landrum's birth, his family left Ripley to move to a pastorate in Leland, Mississippi. Then, in September, 1928, the family uprooted again to Louisville, Kentucky, where Greek finished his doctoral degree and pastored Deer Park Baptist Church. Greek served two other pastorates at First Baptist Church, Gadsden, Alabama, and First Baptist Church, Newnan, Georgia. He died in Newnan on November 26, 1952, his son's twenty-sixth birthday. Annie died nearly twenty-six years later and was buried next to her husband in Newnan.

In an interview for *The Baptist Program*, Landrum recalled his father's graduation with his PhD from Southern Seminary: "I remember the day he graduated. I was six years old, sitting in the audience. During the processional down the aisle, Dad reached out and touched me. I knew something deeply important was about to happen."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Robert J. Hastings, "He Thought He'd Always Be a Pastor," *Baptist Program* (December 1986): 8.

Birthdays were important occasions in the Leavell family, especially in 1934. Greek's birthday was November 24, and Landrum's, on November 26. On Sunday, November 25, Landrum and his sister Anne came forward at their father's invitation to accept Jesus as their savior. Landrum's mother tells the story: "Landrum and Anne came down the aisle to their daddy. He put his arms around them. Landrum reached up to tell his daddy that he wanted to give his heart to Jesus for his birthday present. When Greek was able to look out on the congregation and tell them what Landrum had told him, many eyes were filled with happy tears. For our family it was a day we would never forget."<sup>38</sup>

When the Leavell family moved to Newnan, Landrum was a freshman in high school, so he came of age in Georgia. In 1948, he graduated from Mercer University, Macon, Georgia, with a B.A. in English. While he was a student at Mercer, he pastored Corinth Baptist Church and supply preached at a number of country churches. After graduation, he committed to study for the ministry and was ordained by his father and a council on July 25, 1948.

For an article in *The Baptist Program*, Landrum spoke about his time at Corinth Baptist Church: "They'd take up an offering, which they gave me in a #1 paper sack. It was mostly loose change and a few dollar bills. Usually \$8 to \$14 in all. When I said I wanted to put a tithe back in the church, they told me they had no budget and no treasury. I was their only expense! . . . I'm glad to say that today Corinth is a much stronger church with a full program – and no longer pays its pastor in a paper sack!"<sup>39</sup>

During the summer of 1948, Landrum's Uncle Roland recruited his nephew to the seminary where he presided. Landrum came to New Orleans and was treated to deep sea fishing with his uncle and Dr. J. Wash Watts, Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew. During that visit, Landrum attended the groundbreaking for the first building on the new campus. In September, he enrolled in the newly named New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. During the three years that he spent earning his Bachelor of Divinity degree, he pastored Union Baptist Church, Magnolia, Mississippi. After completing his first degree at NOBTS, he continued his academic work on a Doctor of Theology degree in New Testament

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<sup>38</sup> Annie Glenn Elias Leavell, "A Family to Remember" (Unpublished manuscript, 1977), 120.

<sup>39</sup> Hastings, "He Thought He'd Always Be a Pastor," 9.

and Greek while he pastored Crosby Baptist Church in Crosby, Mississippi.

During this time in his life, he met Jo Ann Paris, a graduate of Sophie Newcomb College, the institution whose former campus was purchased for the original site of the seminary. According to family members, they met each other at St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in Training Union. They married on July 28, 1953, with Uncle Roland officiating the wedding. That year, Landrum began pastoring First Baptist Church, Charleston, Mississippi, where he remained until 1956.

His next pastorate took him, his wife, and their young son, Landrum III (Lan) to First Baptist Church, Gulfport, Mississippi. There, two more children were added to the family, Ann Paris and Roland Quinche II. Once Roland quipped that the Leavell family did not name their children, they assigned them numbers! While in Gulfport, Landrum served his community as a member of the Mayor's Bi-Racial Committee. After seven years in this scenic, gulf-coast city, Landrum left Mississippi to assume his next, longest pastorate at First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, in the flatlands of midwestern Texas.

Landrum's youngest son, David Earl, was born within a year after the family's advent to Wichita Falls. According to Landrum's oldest son, Lan, the church in Wichita Falls under his father's leadership became a megachurch before megachurches were cool. Although the population of the city was only about 100,000, in 1973, the membership topped 2,000 and was ranked the seventh largest in the Southern Baptist Convention. One of his methods was the use of fifty buses for a bus ministry headed by a retired mechanic. Landrum also utilized innovative, creative worship forms such as drama; for example, an actor would dress as an apostle to present a monologue to introduce a sermon. Furthermore, Landrum shared his uncle's passion for evangelism, and the church grew through baptisms.

Landrum's youngest son, David Leavell, recalls that his mom and dad practiced behind their doors what they preached before their public. Every morning at the breakfast table, the family gathered to share Scriptures and devotionals from *Open Windows*, read through the list of missionaries on their birthdays, and pray together. After their family altar, his mom served a hot breakfast. Then every night in bed, his parents would pray aloud. Often, Da-

vid heard them praying for him. Landrum and Jo Ann demonstrated consistency between their private and public lives.

During his twelve years at Wichita Falls, Landrum served as a denominational leader in many ways. He was elected first vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1968 and president of the SBC Pastor's Conference in 1971. Then, from 1971–1973, he served as president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. His civic work included service on the boards of the United Fund and Child Welfare. And he continued to serve his alma mater as president of the alumni association in Texas, as he had in Mississippi, as well as the national association. Furthermore, he promoted financial campaigns, recruited students, and publicized activities of the seminary. He proved himself an indefatigable worker on behalf of his church, his denomination, his seminary, and the kingdom of God.

Perhaps his biggest work, however, was ahead of him. During November, 1974, a search committee seeking a successor to Grady Cothen at NOBTS reported to the trustee board their nomination of Landrum as president of the seminary. Landrum became the second Leavell and the second alumnus, after Cothen, to serve in this capacity. Later, Landrum would say that he never dreamed of being anything but a pastor: "I thought I'd be a pastor for the rest of my life. I enjoyed being a pastor, and never wanted to leave any of my churches. Fortunately, I worked in places where growth was possible, and I was able to lead every church I served to set new records in baptisms and record giving."<sup>40</sup>

Landrum's eldest son, Lan Leavell, recalls that his Great Aunt Lilian, Roland's widow, who was still living in a campus apartment at the time of Landrum's nomination, was quite concerned about the future of the seminary. After the announcement that Landrum was coming as president, she seemed relieved, and within two weeks, she was willing to let go of life and died – in her beauty parlor. Landrum preached her memorial service in Leavell Chapel.

Landrum assumed his duties on January 1, 1975, and for him and his wife Jo Ann, this move was a return to the place where they met and married. She carried on her own ministries as a leader of women's conferences and Bible studies and inaugurated a certificate program for student wives. Out of this program came a book, *Don't Miss the Blessing*, based on her lessons from her most

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<sup>40</sup> Hastings, "He Thought He'd Always Be a Pastor," 10.

popular class, "The Minister's Wife." A second book, *Joy in the Journey*, followed in 1994. The consummate minister's wife herself, in 1990, she received the Mrs. J. M. Dawson Award for distinguished ministers' wives, an annual award given by the SBC Ministers' Wives.

Dr. Rhonda Kelley, wife of the seminary's eighth president, Dr. Chuck Kelley, was a 23-year old newlywed and one of the first student wives to attend Jo Ann's classes. She said to the SBC Digest: "I knew that my husband was called to the ministry when we married, but I had no idea how to be a minister's wife. What a blessing to learn from our president's wife how to serve the Lord alongside my husband. She had a dynamic personality and many spiritual gifts, but she taught us to be ourselves, who God created us to be. Mrs. Leavell became a treasured mentor, encouraging me in marriage and ministry."<sup>41</sup>

In the second month of Landrum's presidency, the steeple was elevated to its place on top of the Roland Q. Leavell Chapel, heralding the end of one Leavell's era and the beginning of another's. Although these two men certainly were different and served in different contexts, they were alike in many ways. Both came to their presidencies with vast pastoral experience, each having served decades in multiple churches. They emphasized evangelism in their personal and corporate ministries, and each taught at least one evangelism class every year. The second Leavell also was a builder, and his presidency would be highlighted by expansions of the campus, extensions centers, the faculty, and student enrollment. And not least of their accomplishments were their successes in fundraising, which fueled the growth and stability of the seminary through their years of leadership.

The Gatekeeper quoted Landrum on the importance of his teaching an evangelism course every year: "One of the greatest blessings I derive from teaching the class is the contact with students, [seeing their] attitudes, needs, strengths, and weaknesses, and not being totally detached from the student body as an administrator."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> "Jo Ann Leavell, wife of former NOBTS president, dies," *Baptist Press* (March 9, 2015), <http://www.bpnews.net/44346/sbc-digest-jo-ann-leavell-dies-sullivan-donates-papers-to-baptist-college>, accessed 1 October 2020.

<sup>42</sup> "Dr. Leavell: Committed to Evangelism," *Gatekeeper* (November 7, 1989), 1.

Having come from a strong background in pastoral and denominational ministry, Landrum emphasized the connection between the seminary and the local church. He expected that his faculty members would come to the seminary with church experience. In January 1992, the seminary opened the Center for Evangelism and Church Growth, later named in honor of Landrum P. Leavell II in recognition of his work both with evangelism and churches. The first such facility in the Southern Baptist Convention, the Center connects the resources of the seminary with the needs of local churches.

Under Landrum's leadership, the seminary revived its undergraduate program, begun under Roland but later discontinued and merged with the regular graduate program. NOBTS set a trend as the first SBC seminary to establish an undergraduate theological college. Launched as the School of Christian Training, the school was targeted toward older, non-traditional students whom God had called later in life but who had never attended college. The school began in 1976 with only thirty students, but enrollment quickly grew to 266 students in the 1977–1978 academic year and increased to over 600 by the time of Landrum's retirement. In 2002, the name of the school was changed to Leavell College to honor the legacy of George and Corra Leavell and their nine sons and their families. Today, over 1,000 students attend Leavell College.

Dr. Thomas Strong, current Dean of Leavell College, said to *The Gatekeeper*: "We are thrilled about the name change ... to Leavell College. The Leavell legacy is one of effectiveness in ministry and the indwelling desire of men of God to be used to change the world. Our prayer and our goal is for that same legacy to continue through our students – a desire for them to be effective in their ministries and to be world changers as God uses them"<sup>43</sup>

In 1982, the seminary greatly expanded its outreach through the establishment of extension centers throughout the southeastern United States. The rationale for the extension centers derived from the reality that many Southern Baptist pastors were not seminary trained but were unable to leave their ministries or uproot their families in order to move to the main campus in New Orle-

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<sup>43</sup> Shannon Baker, "New Orleans Seminary trustees rename college, designate Leavell endowment funds," *Gatekeeper* (October 22, 2001), 2.

ans. Recognizing the insufficiency of the traditional, on-campus approach, Landrum led his administration and faculty to make theological education available to pastors and ministers as near as possible to the fields where they served. The first six seminary extension centers were located in Atlanta, Georgia; Birmingham, Alabama; Shreveport, Louisiana; Clinton, Mississippi; Orlando and Graceville, Florida. Leavell College also expanded through extension centers in this five-state area plus Puerto Rico.

Also under Landrum's leadership, the seminary utilized new technology, such as Compressed Interactive Video (CIV), which connects classrooms in different cities for real-time audio and video interaction. Innovations introduced during Landrum's years continue to make theological education accessible to God-called men and women in distant locations.

Not to neglect the campus itself, however, Landrum led the seminary to expand its acreage and to enhance its buildings. First, the seminary purchased the Gaylords Building, which previously had housed the Maison Blanche Department Store. This building was renovated thoroughly and is now known as the Hardin Student Center (HSC), named for the Mary G. Hardin family of Gadsden, Alabama. Currently, the HSC is the location of a number of key facilities, including offices, Café New Orleans, Leavell College, and numerous classrooms. In partnership with the North American Mission Board, NOBTS plans to locate in the HSC a church planting center, which will enhance ministry initiatives in New Orleans, a NAMB Send City. Above all, the HSC is a place where students and faculty gather for community, which is a hallmark of NOBTS and Leavell College.

Second, the seminary acquired a small hotel across the street on the south side of Gentilly Boulevard. The renovated hotel, named the Providence Guest House, provides housing for visitors, especially students who come to campus for workshops and conferences. Third, additional housing for on-campus students was provided by the purchase of two nearby apartment complexes.

Finally, the legacy of Landrum's building acumen include a number of renovations and enhancements to the campus. Although too numerous for a complete listing, these building projects include: the conversion of the DeMent Administration Building to the Dodd Building for faculty offices; the conversion of the Frost Building to house administrative offices; the renovation of Martin Chapel; the expansion of the library and addition of the covered



walkway to the chapel, which was Landrum's idea; the enlarged and renovated gymnasium and the added swimming pool; on-campus playgrounds, picnic areas, tennis courts, and a softball area.

Landrum was a sportsman and athlete. He was a quail hunter and owned a number of bird dogs. He also was a jogger, who ran the circuit around the campus during the early mornings. His son Lan tells the story about one particular morning, when Landrum was jogging with his wife Jo Ann. As they were heading back home on Seminary Place, Landrum shifted to the left to avoid a panel truck parked at the curb in front of the Frost Building. He expected Jo Ann to do the same, but in his peripheral vision, he could see her run smack into the back of the truck! When he asked her why she didn't move, she said that she hated running so much that she did it with her eyes closed. Lan also reported that, while jogging on a foggy day, his father was struck by a student wearing Coke-bottle glasses. That unfortunate fellow thought that he would never graduate!

Landrum increased not only the physical resources of the seminary but also the human resources in terms of faculty and student body. In 1975, thirty-five faculty and three administrators served the seminary; by Landrum's retirement in 1994, there were more than fifty faculty and staff. Furthermore, student enrollment increased over 500%, from 954 to 5,468, during Landrum's tenure.

Like his Uncle Roland, Landrum was a gifted fundraiser. Through his fundraising efforts, the seminary's endowment rose from approximately \$1.5 million in 1975 to over \$26 million upon his retirement. In 1992, he expressed his motivation for fundraising during the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration: "It is patently clear to me that a seminary with inadequate funds will fight for its life when it should be occupied with matters of far greater significance in terms of eternity." He went on to say that fundraising is in the interest not only of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary but also of the Kingdom of God.

Landrum's leadership and reputation proved extremely important during the Conservative Resurgence, a movement within the Southern Baptist Convention from the late 70s through the early 90s, concurrent with his presidency. During these years, when factions in the convention divided over conflicting views about doctrinal integrity and Baptist identity, other SBC seminaries were disrupted by such tensions. Under Landrum's guidance,

however, NOBTS remained stable and continued its mission to provide biblical, theological education.

On December 13, 1994, Landrum announced to the trustees his intention to retire at the end of that year, although he actually remained for another year past that deadline. In his statement, he said:

Twenty years ago today I made the most strategic decision of my ministerial calling. I decided on the best evidence I had that it was God's will for me to leave the finest and friendliest Baptist church on earth and the ministry of being pastor of the local church to become president of my alma mater, the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. It was a decision that God has confirmed every day of these 20 years. I have been privileged to work with some of the godliest and most generous Christians on earth.<sup>44</sup>

Landrum and Jo Ann returned to Wichita Falls, Texas, the city where he spent his longest pastorate. After several more fruitful years, Landrum died on September 26, 2008. After a funeral service in Wichita Falls, interment in Newnan, Georgia, a memorial service was held, very appropriately, at Leavell Chapel. Jo Ann followed her husband in death on March 6, 2015.

Upon the occasion of Landrum's passing, the next president, Chuck Kelley, had much to say about his predecessor: "Greatness is the ability to fulfill your calling effectively and efficiently, whatever the circumstances, while nurturing and building up the people around you in the process. This is the essence of the life and ministry of Dr. Landrum P. Leavell II."<sup>45</sup>

Landrum lives on through his writings. He wrote or contributed to fourteen books, including *Angels, Angels, Angels* and *Twelve Who Followed Jesus*. The legacy of Landrum and Jo Ann continues in their four children, Landrum P. "Lan" Leavell III, Ann Leavell Beauchamp, Roland Q. Leavell II, and David E. Leavell. Lan ministers at The Village Church, Denton, Texas, as the Groups Pastor. And David pastored multiple churches, most recently for ten years at Millington, Tennessee, and served a ten-year term as a trustee at NOBTS.

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<sup>44</sup> Debbie Moore, "Landrum Leavell to retire Dec. 31 from New Orleans," *Baptist Press* (December 14, 1994), <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/7894,14-Dec-1994.PDF>, accessed 1 October 2020.

<sup>45</sup> Charles S. Kelley Jr., "A Celebration of Greatness," *Vision* (Fall 2008): 1.

### **The Leavell Legacy**

By the time a student graduates from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, he or she is well familiar with the landmarks named for the Leavell family. One more time, however, the Leavell name appears for every graduate who walks the stage of the chapel, for Roland Q. Leavell's name appears in the program as the author of the "Alma Mater Hymn." Each verse opens with a variation on the theme that the graduates' Alma Mater is the "School of Providence and Prayer." The hymn emphasizes the many characteristics and qualities evidenced by the seminary – its location in New Orleans, the friendships formed on campus, evangelistic preaching, scholarship, faithfulness to the Scripture and the Great Commission, God's love, and our longing for Christ's second return. These descriptors apply not only to the seminary but also to two men – Roland Q. Leavell and Landrum P. Leavell II – whose legacy continues to have an impact upon this School of Providence and Prayer.



## **A Legacy of Scholarship: Legendary Teachers and World-Class Research**

### **James Parker, PhD**

*James Parker is professor of Biblical Interpretation and executive director of the Michael and Sara Moskau Institute of Archaeology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.*

### **Rex D. Butler, PhD**

*Rex D. Butler is professor of Church History and Patristics, occupying the John T. Westbrook Chair of Church History at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.*

### **Introduction**

As Park H. Anderson describes in his *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary: A Brief History*,<sup>1</sup> only those who were involved in the founding of the Baptist Bible Institute (BBI) and what is today called the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), could really understand that they were creating an institution with world-class faculty who would be as scholarly as any institution of higher education in the world. Anderson reflects that there was no intention on the part of Southern Baptists to create another seminary in the South. Apparently there was a strong feeling that Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, should be the “seminary” where all Southern Baptist ministers received their academic training. B.H. Carroll named the school he founded in Fort Worth, Texas Southwestern Seminary; however, it was not, as was also the case of Southern Seminary, founded by the Southern Baptist Convention, but by Texas Baptists, so Carroll could call it whatever he liked. The school in New Orleans, however, would be a denominational creation and because of that, the founders were very sensitive to the issue. Anderson notes that you can see this in the naming of the school, Baptist Bible Institute instead of “seminary” and acknowledges the wisdom in this move.

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<sup>1</sup> Park H. Anderson, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary: A Brief History* (New Orleans, LA: New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1949).

One can see the scholarly intent of the founders by looking at the professors and teachers that were employed and the curriculum that they taught. There were eight original professors and teachers, including Byron Dement, who taught twenty-one courses for the forty students that showed up on October 1, 1918. While there was a practical side to the curriculum with classes, in missionary training, personal work, pastoral training, gospel music, and Sunday School work,<sup>2</sup> the more classical “seminary” curriculum was present such as New Testament Exposition, Bible Synthesis, Old Testament Exposition, Christian History, and Christian Doctrine. E.O. Sellers, who was professor of Music, Personal Work, and Student Activities, wrote the Alma Mater for BBI, and as William Mueller mentions in his *The School of Providence and Prayer: A History of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary*,<sup>3</sup> he had used his vast musical talents with the likes of R.A. Torrey, Gipsey Smith, and J. Wilbur Chapman. There was an abundance of highly qualified scholars from the outset of BBI.

In April 1920, the Trustees opened a Department of Modern Languages under the leadership of R. P. Mahon. L. O. F. Cotey was professor of French, L. Zarrilli was professor of Italian, and Mahon was professor of Spanish. While any institution of higher learning would have been glad for such a department, this particular development in faculty and curriculum gives insight into what the Trustees were thinking about their mission when they organized this program. Anderson quotes from the 1918–19 BBI catalog which said, “This city is cosmopolitan, with large foreign settlements. It is estimated that there are 60,000 French, 25,000 Italians, and 40,000 Spanish people in the city.” While the language program was certainly an academic endeavor and as Anderson said “...marks a unique and significant achievement in our Baptist theological training,” the purpose of learning the languages was to reach the people who spoke these languages as well as all the communities in New Orleans with the Gospel. This would be the hallmark of training at both BBI and NOBTS from then until the present. Adrian Rogers, an NOBTS alumni, called this combination of scholarship and evangelism “scholarship on fire.” Indeed,

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<sup>2</sup> Anderson, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary*, 11.

<sup>3</sup> William A. Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer: A History of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary* (New Orleans, LA: NOBTS Press, 1969).

this “scholarship on fire” can be seen in the lives of the faculty of which this chapter is about.

## Legendary Teachers

### John Tyler Christian (1854–1925)

John T. Christian joined the faculty of BBI in 1919 and served as professor of Church History and Librarian until his death in 1925. Mueller summarizes his career by quoting that he was a “seasoned minister and denominational leader.” He goes on to say that “Professor Christian” had “wide experience in the pastorate both North and South, a militant apologist for strict Baptist origin views, an ardent popularizer and preacher, a historian of some merit, a lecturer of parts, a theological professor who loved and collected books.”<sup>4</sup> His work would hardly be paralleled by any other Southern Baptist in any age.

Along with him, Christian brought what was an immense library for the day, numbering over 18,000 volumes. Anderson, in his work, tells how valuable this library was, not in money but in content. Apparently, there was some speculation about where Christian would go to teach, Southwestern Seminary being one opportunity and BBI the other. Perhaps J. B. Gambrell was the person from Southwestern that suggested that school.<sup>5</sup> Anderson says that Southern Seminary would never have been an option due to the famous Whitsitt Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention. William H. Whitsitt was President at Southern, and Christian had been an outspoken critic of his theories of baptism.<sup>6</sup>

1919 had not been the first association Christian had with BBI. In 1915, he, G. H. Crutcher, M. E. Dodd, and others met at that year’s Southern Baptist Convention in Houston, Texas, to discuss the possibility of forming BBI. It was Dodd and Christian that drafted the constitution for BBI in 1917. In this, John T. Christian can be numbered as one of the founders of the institution.

Christian was one of the most prolific writing scholars to serve the institution, writing ten books. His work is best seen as it connected to the historical developments of his time. It seems that

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<sup>4</sup> Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer*, 54.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary*, 55.

<sup>6</sup> For more information on the Whitsitt Controversy see Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptist*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1982), 20, and H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1987), 446–47.

most of his work was created to speak to a certain occasion or issue that had arisen or was something that Christian was intimately interested in. He traveled widely throughout Europe and the Near East and was forever the collector of books, manuscripts, and artifacts. As Mueller mentions, Christian was not a trained church historian, he was, however, highly recognized in the field, being a member of the “Society of Christian Archaeology of Greece, the Academy of History of France, the Academy of Science, Arts and Belles Lettres of the Mediterranean and the American Society of Church History.”<sup>7</sup> Included in the books that he wrote were, *American or Rome, Which?*, *Americanism or Romanism, Which?*, both written in 1895;<sup>8</sup> *Baptist History Vindicated*, 1899; *Close Communion: or, Baptism as a Prerequisite for the Lord’s Supper*, 1892, written prior to the Whitsitt Controversy; *Did They Dip: or, an Examination into the Act of Baptism as Practiced by the English and American Baptists before the Year 1641*, 1896, which foreshadowed the Whitsitt Controversy, however, antedated it, but helped defend against what many Southern Baptists considered a heresy propagated by Whitsitt. Christian also showed another interest of his life when he presented lectures at the University of Chicago in 1901 and turned those lectures into a book called *The Form of Baptism in Sculpture and Art*, 1907.

During his teaching tenure at BBI, Christian produced three works of note. The first, written across the period of 1922–26 (the last published after his death in 1925) was a two volume work *History of the Baptists*. Because of his great familiarity with Louisiana, he also produced a work in 1923 called *A History of the Baptists in Louisiana*. His final work, although other publications came out later, was *The Trial of Jesus*, which was published in 1924, just prior to his death.

Christian is also credited with writing twenty journal articles in addition to these books. These articles were published in various Baptist journals. Mueller said that the articles were written on several subjects including: “seven of which are on Roman Catholics,

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<sup>7</sup> Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer*, 57.

<sup>8</sup> This likely was written in response to the Know Nothing Movement from 1854–56 where Protestant men as members militated against immigration (especially Italian and Irish Catholic) and the power of the papacy in America. See Dale Baum, “Know-Nothingism and the Republican Majority in Massachusetts: The Political Realignment of the 1850s,” *Journal of American History* 64 (1977–78): 959–86.



five on the Waldensians, one each on the Pilgrim Fathers, Jefferson's Religion and the ancient Paulicians." Christian also used the medium of the newspaper to share his ideas, writing articles which were published in the " *Arkansas Democrat, Courier-Journal, Hattiesburg American* and the *Chicago Standard*. Twenty-five articles appeared in the *Western Recorder*."<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the best reflection of who John T. Christian was is found in the words of the first President of BBI, Byron DeMent:

Dr. Christian brought to his work a magnificent equipment of knowledge and love for his task. His zeal was all-consuming. With elasticity and alacrity of youth, he began and continued his work of research, writing, and teaching. Dr. Christian was free from the pride of learning and filled with the humility of wisdom. He was a superb lecturer and first class drill master. He knew the great points for historical emphasis and had a fine perspective of the entire course of events in every age and land.<sup>10</sup>

So is the brief summary of the life of a Baptist scholar. The library of NOBTS bears his name and there could be no better tribute to him, nor appropriate memorial for the school than that it bears the name of the man who started the library with his own 18,000 volumes.

### **James Washington Watts (1896–1975)**

J. Wash Watts, as he was commonly known, came to BBI in the fall of 1931 and would serve the institution until 1967. Watts earned his B. A. degree from Furman University in 1925 and the ThM degree from Southern Seminary in 1922. Watts had studied at Southern Seminary under the famous Hebrew and Old Testament scholar, John R. Sampey, earning the PhD degree in 1933 after joining the faculty at New Orleans. Prior to his coming to New Orleans, he and his wife Mattie Leila Reid Watts, whom he

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<sup>9</sup> Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer*, 59.

<sup>10</sup> Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer*, 61. Mueller quotes Byron DeMent from an article in *The Baptist Record* dated December 24, 1925. This reference was also cited in Joe Madison King, "John Tyler Christian: A Study of his Life and Work" (ThD diss., NOBTS, 1953), 10.

had married in 1920, served the Foreign Mission Board as a missionary in Palestine for the years 1923–1928.<sup>11</sup>

His arrival to New Orleans was not under the best of circumstances for at least two reasons. He was to replace James Dean, who had been released due to his modernist views about the Bible, and he came at a time of dire financial need at BBI.

W. W. Hamilton had taken the presidency of BBI in 1928, just at the beginning of the Great Depression. Up to that time, the small faculty had written fourteen books, many tracts, Sunday school lessons, and articles for the denominational press and the library contained 40,000 volumes.<sup>12</sup> Although Hamilton had worked diligently to raise funds for the very promising institution, the nation and the whole world were in the throes of the worst financial depression known in history. After the 1932 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida, the Trustees of BBI made a decision. They said, “It seems absolutely necessary to rearrange our course of study and to build all of our curriculum around not more than five men, including the President.”<sup>13</sup> J. Wash Watts was one of the four professors, along with W. W. Hamilton, E. F. Haight, John W. Shepard, and A. E. Tibbs, who remained to propel BBI forward, even in times such as these were.

J. Wash Watts served BBI and later NOBTS in a number of roles. He was best known for his work as professor of Old Testament, but also served as Dean of Students and on three different occasions as Interim President. The first time he was Interim President was immediately after W. W. Hamilton departed in 1942 and he served until Duke McCall became President. He also served as interim when McCall departed. Watts was once again called to fill the role of interim president when Roland Q. Leavell suffered a stroke and retired in 1958.<sup>14</sup>

Watts, above all, was a gifted teacher. He is best known for his lecture on Psalm 23, which would bring so many students and faculty to listen to the presentation that they would line the walls

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<sup>11</sup> Claude L. Howe, *Seventy Five Years of Providence and Prayer: An Illustrated History of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary* (NOBTS, LA: Josten's, 1993), 65–66.

<sup>12</sup> Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer*, 75

<sup>13</sup> Howe, *Seventy Five Years of Providence and Prayer*, 61.

<sup>14</sup> Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer*, 95.

of the classroom, standing for the lecture.<sup>15</sup> These lecture notes were captured in his book, *In the House of the Lord: Psalm 23* (Broadman, 1964). Another work that came from his lecture notes was *A Survey of Old Testament Teaching*, which was divided into two parts: Adam to David and Solomon to Malachi and was published in 1947. This work came from an earlier publication that he called *Outline of Old Testament Teaching*, published in 1943. Published in 1951, his work on biblical Hebrew, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* (Broadman; revised for Eerdmans, 1964), became a very popular work among professors of Hebrew. Another of his works was *A Distinctive Translation of Genesis* (Eerdmans, 1963).<sup>16</sup> In his earlier ministry, he had published *Living of the Gospel* (Broadman, 1939).

After Watts's death, his son, John D. W. Watts, published posthumously his works in Exodus and Isaiah following the motif of *A Distinctive Translation*. Also included with these posthumous publications was *Glimpses of God*, all of which were published in 1977.

As would be the case for many of those who would follow him, Watts gave his life to NOBTS. As President Hamilton had said of him when he came in 1931, "Prof. Watts is known as a most lovable and loyal man, a gifted preacher as well as teacher," so the years proved that to be a true description of a most remarkable man.

### **Helen Emery Falls (1916–2012)**

Helen Falls joined the faculty of NOBTS in 1945, signing the Articles of Religious Belief, as did all faculty. She was hired to replace Ruby Daniel as Dean of Women. Her responsibilities also included teaching courses in remedial English and Women's Missionary Union methods. In 1946, Park Anderson became ill, so Falls began to teach missions courses. She began a network of correspondence with field missionaries all over the world and became what was certainly one of the most knowledgeable of her peers in regards to understanding what was going on in SBC missions (and other denominations as well) around the world.

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel Holcomb, personal interview with Jim Parker, New Orleans, LA, October 6, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Howe, *Seventy Five Years of Providence and Prayer*, 66.

In 1965, Falls graduated from Columbia University with a PhD and continued to teach missions at NOBTS until her retirement in 1981. Never having married, most students knew her as “Miss” Falls, although she was legitimately Dr. Falls.

Her network of correspondence was vast,<sup>17</sup> and this enterprise must have taken a great deal of time. Nevertheless, Falls found time to publish, first with her research in *An Examination of Changes Made Necessary in the Work of the Baptist Foreign Missionary by Changes in Society* (1965) and then through a collaboration with Rees Watkins for the Women’s Missionary Union in 1983, *Teaching Guide: Annie Armstrong, Dreamer in Action and the New Lottie Moon Story*.

### John Olen Strange (1918–1995)

John Strange was born in Campobello, South Carolina in 1918. He completed a BA (1940) at Furman University and went on to complete the Bachelor of Divinity (1949) and Doctor of Theology (1954) degrees at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He did post-doctoral work in Israel in 1963, at Hebrew Union College from 1967–1968, and at Vanderbilt University in 1976.

Strange had a very long teaching career at NOBTS, teaching as full-time professor from 1953 until the end of 1982 and then as a contract teacher from 1983 until 1990. He was best known for his work as a Hebrew grammarian. Waylon Bailey, his colleague and collaborator, said of him, “He had a wonderful way of teaching his subject. He taught so you could remember.”<sup>18</sup> Strange and Bailey would go on to publish the fruit of their work in biblical Hebrew.<sup>19</sup>

Ordained in 1936, Strange pastored churches in South Carolina, Kentucky, and Louisiana. He also served as a chaplain in the US Army in the Pacific theatre during World War II from 1943–1946. One of the most memorable and perhaps one of the most important life events for Strange was a chance meeting with a First Sergeant while he was stationed in Korea. The other soldier’s

<sup>17</sup> For Jim Parker, “It was a great privilege to speak to Helen Falls on the telephone shortly before her death. She was as excited about missions and what God was doing in the world as she was when she was a young woman.”

<sup>18</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (January 23, 1995), 1.

<sup>19</sup> D. Waylon Bailey and John O. Strange, *Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (New Orleans, LA: Insight, 1985).

name was George W. Harrison, who would become not only a student of Strange, but also his colleague on the NOBTS faculty. Harrison would say of Strange, “He was a distinguished scholar, a gifted teacher, a compassionate preacher, a devoted family man and a warm personal friend to hundreds of students and colleagues.”<sup>20</sup> A loyal Southern Baptist, he was at his best in one-on-one situations. Obviously, he was excellent at student enlistment. Waylon Bailey said, “His greatest contribution came as personal contact with students, pastors and colleagues. Strange was a warm human being for whom everyone was important. He always had time for people. If you had a need, he had time.”<sup>21</sup> Janice Meier, a fellow and secretary to Strange, said, “He frequently quoted Lamentations 3:22–25, a reference to the steadfast love and faithfulness of the Lord. He never failed to demonstrate that kind of compassion and loyalty in all of his dealings with others.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition to his Hebrew grammar, Strange published studies on the books of Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, and especially Isaiah. He taught graduate-level courses on Isaiah for many years and wrote *The Preacher’s Notebook on Isaiah* (Pelican 1983) with colleague Joseph H. Cothen.

### **George William Harrison (1926–2018)**

George William Harrison was born in Aetnaville, Kentucky (Ohio County) in 1926. After attending Western State College and the University of Kentucky, he served in the military in the US Army infantry. His military service include the Battle of Okinawa, one of the bloodiest battles of World War II, for which he earned a Bronze Star, as well as other medals. He finished his Army service during the Korean occupation, where he first met John Strange, who later would become his teacher and colleague at NOBTS. When he returned from military service, Harrison earned the AB degree from Georgetown College, Georgetown, Kentucky, in 1949. Upon graduation at Georgetown, Harrison immediately entered Southern Seminary where he was awarded the BD in 1952 and the ThD in 1963. He did further post-doctoral work at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1963, San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1966–1967, also the Graduate Theological Un-

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<sup>20</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (January 23, 1995), 1.

<sup>21</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (January 23, 1995), 1.

<sup>22</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (January 23, 1995), 1.

ion in Berkeley, California, the Toronto School of Theology of the Wycliffe and Knox College 1974–1975 and Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, in 1981.

While teaching at Georgetown College from 1955–1960, the next 32 years, however, were spent teaching Hebrew and Old Testament studies at NOBTS. Harrison served under three Seminary presidents and two acting presidents during his tenure. Harrison recounted more than fifty new faculty members during his career. Quoted on the occasion of his thirtieth anniversary with NOBTS, Harrison said, “I’ve been amazed at the administration’s ability to secure replacements of equal quality with those who are departing, so we have not suffered a weakening of academic strength and outreach of our faculty.”<sup>23</sup>

Harrison published a number of articles in publications including *The Biblical World* by Baker Publishers (1966) and *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* by Moody Press (1975). The majority of his writing was for the Sunday School Board of the SBC producing lessons for various Sunday school curriculum, including lessons on Jeremiah and Psalms.

### **Fisher Humphreys (b. 1939)**

Fisher Humphreys joined the NOBTS faculty in 1970, after completing a BA at Mississippi College, BD at NOBTS, an MLitt at Oxford University, a MA at Loyola University in New Orleans, and a ThD from NOBTS. After all of this and almost humorously, he was enrolled in accounting classes at the University of New Orleans.<sup>24</sup> As is apparent, he was a man with an insatiable appetite for learning across all disciplines. He stated at the time that he was interested in “the language of numbers” and how they were used in communication, an important subject to a theologian.

He wrote widely on many subjects. His publications include *Speaking in Tongues*, with Malcolm Tolbert (Insight, 1973); *Thinking about God: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (1974, revised in 1994 and 2016); *The Christian Church* (Insight, 1974); *The Almighty* (Cook, 1976); *The Death of Christ* (Broadman, 1978); *The Heart of Prayer* (Broadman, 1980); *Nineteenth Century Evangelical Theology*, editor (Broadman, 1983); *A Dictionary of Doctrinal Terms*, with Philip Wise

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<sup>23</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (March 27, 1990), 4.

<sup>24</sup> Jim Parker was Humphreys’s student in 1985–1986, when Humphreys was enrolled in accounting classes.

(Broadman, 1983); and *The Nature of God* (Broadman, 1985). Humphreys left NOBTS in 1990 to teach at the newly-formed Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and served there until his retirement.

### **Billy Simmons (1931–2017)**

Billy Simmons taught at NOBTS from 1976 until 1996, which was an amazing twenty years of service. Simmons had been professor of Religion at East Texas Baptist University from 1968 until 1976 but decided to return to his alma mater. He held the BA degree from Mississippi College (1956), BD (1959) and ThD (1962) degrees from NOBTS. Simmons pastored for six years before he went to ETBU to teach, and those six years gave him more than ample examples of the people and situations that came forth out of the New Testament that he taught so well. Hilarious would likely not be a strong enough word for the humor that Simmons shared in his classes. He was best known for his “Aggie” (Texas A&M) jokes, but his pastorates provided much material, too.<sup>25</sup>

While Simmons seemed to be a comedian in a scholar’s body, his humor only helped to express his scholarship. He had written extensively over his scholarly career producing works such as *A Functioning Faith* (Word, 1967); *Resplendent Themes* (Crescendo, 1971); *Galatians* (Crescendo, 1972); *The Incomparable Christ* (Broadman, 1980); and *Be Born in Us Today* (Broadman, 1982). Along with these monographs, he also wrote many articles for *Proclaim*, *Biblical Illustrator*, and *Quarterly Review*, and curriculum for the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Simmons was also an avid traveler, taking many to Israel to visit the Holy Land sites. He was well versed in the geography and background of the Bible, especially the New Testament, and brought it to life to those who traveled with him.

### **Billy K. Smith (1928–1997)**

Billy K. Smith had what was perhaps the longest-running relationship with NOBTS than anyone has, or likely will have. Present at NOBTS for 43 years, Smith was a student, faculty member, trustee, provost, and interim president. Debbie Moore reported, “King David of Israel had his mighty men, the best of the best of

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<sup>25</sup> Jim Parker felt it a privilege to have him for several courses from 1985–1987.

his soldiers. We shall remember Dr. Billy K. Smith as one of the mighty men of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the best of the best from the army of the soldiers of the Lord who passed through the gates of this school of providence and prayer.”<sup>26</sup>

Smith attended NOBTS from 1953–1963 earning both the BD (later converted to the MDiv) and the ThD degrees, specializing in Old Testament and Hebrew. His dissertation was entitled *The Problem of the Future Life in the Book of Job*. This would be the firstfruits of a number of scholarly works including, but not limited to, *Obadiab, Jonab, Amos*, volume 19 in the New American Commentary series by Broadman & Holman. Smith also wrote many articles for the Sunday School Board of the SBC and a number of articles for *The Theological Educator*, the NOBTS faculty publication. Further, he contributed nine articles to *Biblical Illustrator*, the last of which was “The Meaning of ‘God’s Spirit Moved.’” “His last writing assignment was a series of lessons on selected Psalms, set to appear in the spring 1999 issue of the *Explore the Bible Commentary*. He completed and mailed these lessons to his editor just three weeks before he died.”<sup>27</sup>

Serving as chairman of the division of Biblical Studies for many years, Smith was named vice president for academic affairs at NOBTS in 1992. Later that same year, he was named provost and academic dean of the graduate faculty.

Smith certainly was a scholar par excellence. Jim Parker remembers being in class, with Smith facing the class, a piece of chalk in hand, writing on the blackboard behind him in Hebrew without even looking. Smith once shared with Parker that perhaps the time of testing for his scholarship was when he was called upon to be a consultant at the Southern Baptist Convention during the year of the Ralph Elliott controversy. He said that he had waited with great apprehension but that he was not needed in the meeting. This was not only a great compliment to Smith as a scholar, who could have been called on to deliver the inspired, inerrant, interpretation of Genesis 22, but to trust him to do so in

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<sup>26</sup> Debbie Moore, “Prolific Seminary Servant Dies Peacefully at Home,” Baptist Press (January 30, 1998), <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/prolific-seminary-servant-dies-peacefully-at-home/>, accessed 5 October 2020. Jim Parker can personally attest to this assessment, having been Smith’s student from 1985–1987.

<sup>27</sup> Moore, “Prolific Seminary Servant Dies Peacefully at Home.”



such a volatile climate. Smith was such a humble man; many who were close to him never knew that he had been selected for this service.

His upbringing as a Primitive Baptist might have informed his theology, as he is quoted as saying, “If you consider that God is sovereign, you just have to do what he has assigned you to do and wait on him.”<sup>28</sup> All of those who knew Smith until the end of his earthly journey can attest that he never wavered in this position.

### **Macklyn Ward Hubbell (b. 1930)**

Macklyn (Mack) Ward Hubbell served as professor of Psychology and Counseling in the Pastoral Ministries Division at NOBTS from 1980 until 1978. Hubbell had an interesting path in his educational preparation. He graduated from Baylor University in 1952 with a BA degree. He then enrolled in an MA program at the University of Houston, completing that degree in 1953. Hubbell then went to Zurich, Switzerland where he attended the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon. After a year there, he returned to the United States and attended The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where he earned both the Bachelor of Divinity and the Master of Theology degrees. Hubbell then went on to earn the PhD degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1972.

Hubbell wrote a number of books across his very active career. He authored *Being a Good Senior Samaritan* (Convention, 1983); *Helping the Hurting* (Insight, 1988); *His Daddy Is God* (Insight, 1992); and *Who Me? Go Where? Do What?: The Missionary and the Mission* (Insight, 1995). He and his wife, Elizabeth, also collaborated on two books about life in New Orleans: *Food in the Faubourgs: Dining in the Neighborhoods of New Orleans* (MacBet, 1989); and *On the Stoop* (Insight, 1993), stories about fifty-six citizens of this diverse city. In addition to these monographs, Hubbell was also a contributor to SBC publications such as *The Theological Educator*, *The Baptist Record*, *Home Life*, *Church Administration*, *Equipping Youth*, and *Church Training*.

### **C. Ferris Jordan (1934–2014)**

C. Ferris Jordan earned his B.A. degree from Louisiana College in 1955, his BD degree from NOBTS in 1958, his ThD degree

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<sup>28</sup> Moore, “Prolific Seminary Servant Dies Peacefully at Home.”

from NOBTS in 1965, and an MS from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1989.

Jordan joined the faculty of NOBTS in 1978 serving as the J. M. Frost Baptist Sunday School Board Professor of Christian Education and Professor of Adult Education. In 1989, he was appointed faculty liaison between NOBTS and the Sunday School Board, also serving as the chairman of the Christian Education division.

From his extensive work in senior adult ministry, he was led to establish a gerontology specialization in the MACE curriculum. In light of the demographics of the baby-boomer generation, this served the academic community and the churches well.<sup>29</sup>

Upon his retirement and reflecting on his twenty years as a faculty member of NOBTS, Jordan was quoted as saying, "One of the most fulfilling things for me as a teacher has been seeing what former students are doing now as missionaries, professors, and church staff ministers."<sup>30</sup> He further mentioned some of those students that had brought him great joy, one of them being Jeanine Bozeman, whose doctoral committee he chaired. Jordan said, "I am a perfect specimen of the teacher whose students have excelled him."<sup>31</sup> As all who knew him will testify, his humility, which made him a great man, was with him till the end.

While majoring on the practical side of ministry, Jordan did not let the academic side escape him. He was responsible for several works including: *Bible Teaching for Adults through the Sunday School* (Convention, 1984); *Living Values for Today's Singles* (Convention, 1985); *Study Guide for Hebrews: Call to Christian Commitment* (Convention, 1985); *Bonded Together in Love: Singles Building Relationships* (Convention, 1989); *Grandparenting By Grace*, co-authored with Irene Endicott (LifeWay, 1994); and *Grandparenting by Grace: Leader Guide* (LifeWay, 1994). And he contributed to several works including: *Adult Sunday School Work*, *Equipping Deacons as Partners in Ministry*, *A Church Ministering to Adults*, and *Professors Can Preach*. In addition to all of this, Jordan also wrote Adult Sunday School curriculum materials in the Life and Work and the Bible Book Series for Convention Press, Church Training curriculum for Baptist Youth, and was author of the student's guidebook and the teach-

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<sup>29</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (April 6, 1998), 1.

<sup>30</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (April 6, 1998), 1.

<sup>31</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (April 6, 1998), 1.

ing guide for the course “Adult Education in the Church” produced by the Seminary Extension Department of the SBC. There were also many articles that he contributed to *Proclaim*, *The Deacon*, *Media*, *Search*, *Baptist Program*, *Church Administration*, and *Christian Single*. Jordan also wrote devotional readings in several editions of *Open Windows*.

C. Ferris Jordan was the epitome of the servant scholar, bringing the church to the classroom and taking the classroom to the church. His ministry career trajectory was forty years, but his memory will last far beyond that.

### **Robert Lee Hamblin (1928–2013)**

Robert Lee (Bob) Hamblin earned the BA degree from Union University in 1950. He then, in quick succession, earned the BD (1954) and the ThD (1959) degrees from Southwestern Seminary. The ThD degree was converted to the PhD in 1979. In addition to this academic work, Hamblin was also awarded the honorary DD degree from Mississippi College in 1978 and the LLD from Union University in 1983.

Hamblin pastored many churches in his long career. He also served the SBC faithfully as the vice president of the Home Mission Board (HMB, now North American Mission Board) in the role of director of evangelism from 1982–1988. In between the pastorates and his service at the HMB, Hamblin served as associate professor of Evangelism at NOBTS from 1980–1982. Hamblin returned to NOBTS in 1994 as chairman of the Pastoral Ministries Division and also as professor of Evangelism.

Hamblin authored several works including *Studies in Galatians* (Four Star, 1974); *The Spirit Filled Trauma* (Broadman, 1978); *Triumphant Strangers: A Contemporary Look at First Peter* (Broadman, 1983); *The Doctrine of Lordship* (Convention, 1990); *Meet My Messiah: A Contemporary Look at the Life of Christ* (Hancock Foundation, 1993); *Amazing Graced: A Contemporary Look at Ephesians* (Hancock Foundation, 1993); *How to Be Happy: A Contemporary Look at the Sermon on the Mount* (Insight, 1992). Hamblin also authored a number of articles on evangelism in the 1986 publication of the *Discipleship Study Bible* along with many articles on evangelism and church growth in various periodicals.

**Harold T. Bryson (b. 1938)**

Harold T. Bryson was born in Tupelo, Mississippi, in 1938. He graduated with a BA degree from Mississippi College in 1960 and came immediately to NOBTS to work on a BD degree, which he earned in 1963. Entering into the doctoral program, he earned a ThM in 1967 and then the ThD in 1971.

Bryson joined the faculty of NOBTS in 1976, serving as professor of Preaching and ultimately as chairman of the Division of Pastoral Ministries. After serving for 16 years, Bryson left NOBTS in 1992 to become the national consultant on preaching and worship for the Baptist Sunday School Board.<sup>32</sup>

Bryson was a member of the Academy of Homiletics and wrote a number of books during his career as follows: *Yes, Virginia There Is a Hell* (Broadman, 1975); *Portraits of God* (Broadman, 1978); *Evangelism: Christ's Imperative Commission*, co-authored with Landrum Leavell (Broadman, 1979); *Building Sermons to Meet People's Needs*, co-authored with James C. Taylor (Broadman, 1980); *Increasing the Joy: Studies in 1 John* (Broadman, 1982); *The Reality of Hell and the Goodness of God* (Tyndale, 1984); *How Faith Works: Studies in James* (Broadman, 1985); and *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching from a Bible Book* (Broadman & Holman, 1995). In addition to books, Bryson also had sermons included in the *Zondervan Pastor's Annual* for the years 1976–1986. He also wrote articles for a number of journals and magazines including *Proclaim*, *Search*, *Church Administration*, *Adult Sunday School Life and Work*, *Church Training Magazine*, *At Home With the Bible*, *Sunday School Leadership*, and *The Theological Educator*.

**Harry Lee Eskew (b. 1936)**

Harry Lee Eskew was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 1936. He earned a BA in Church Music from Furman University in 1958. He then went on to earn an MSM (Musicology) from NOBTS in 1960 and a PhD in American Musical Studies from Tulane University in 1966. Eskew did post-doctoral work at the University of Erlangen where he engaged in German language study for the purpose of studying German-American hymnody. He also studied at the University of New Orleans where he completed a degree in Cultural Anthropology and at Notre Dame

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<sup>32</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (December 7, 1992), 4.

Seminary where he studied Theology of Christian Worship. He was also a Research Fellow in Residence at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Eskew joined the faculty of NOBTS in 1965 and retired in 2001 after a marvelous thirty-six year tenure.

Eskew's major publications consisted of *Sing With Understanding*, with Hugh T. McElrath (Broadman, 1980); six articles for *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Macmillan, 1980); twenty-eight articles for *New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (Macmillan, 1986); and 149 articles for *Handbook to The Baptist Hymnal* (Convention, 1992).

At a banquet in honor of his retirement, NOBTS president Chuck Kelley said of Eskew, "What all of us know in this room, if NOBTS ever had a world class scholar in a particular area, that world class scholar is – not would be – Dr. Harry Eskew."<sup>33</sup>

### **Jimmy Ward Dukes (b. 1941)**

Jimmy Ward Dukes was born in Jackson Mississippi on December 18, 1941. He graduated from Delta State University with a BA degree in 1969. Beginning at the age of 19, Dukes pastored for 16 years before starting seminary. He came to NOBTS and earned an MDiv degree in 1979 and a ThD degree in New Testament and Greek in 1983.

In 1984, Dukes became a faculty member, teaching in the area of New Testament studies and in 1990, succeeding Jerry Breazeale, he was made director of the School of Christian Training.<sup>34</sup> In this role, he led the baccalaureate program, which would ultimately become Leavell College. He was Dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies, Dean of the North Georgia Campus, and Dean of the Extension Center System during his tenure at NOBTS. In addition to his role as Dean for several areas, Dukes also served as Registrar, Assistant Provost, and Interim Provost. He also was responsible for starting the seminary's Compressed Interactive Video (CIV) classes. Dukes served on the board of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and worked extensively with ATS on accreditation for NOBTS and many other schools.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (February 5, 2000), 1.

<sup>34</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (November 14, 1994), 2.

<sup>35</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (September 6, 1999), 3.

Dukes is known by his NOBTS colleagues as a person with a “practical bent.” Daniel Holcomb said of him, “He is a visionary who very early saw the potential of distance education, in the sense of extension centers, but also quickly saw the benefit of electronic education. He was usually at the point of advances as far as the Seminary was concerned and was supported by both Presidents Leavell and Kelley.” Holcomb said that Dukes “saw this ‘electronic education’ as a wave of the future.”<sup>36</sup>

While another chapter in this book will deal with the NOBTS’s prison programs, it must be stated that no one involved in that ministry was as instrumental in its long-range success as was Dukes.

### **Don H. Stewart (b. 1935)**

Don H. Stewart earned his BA from William Carey College in 1957, his BD (1960) and his ThD (1965) [converted to the PhD in 2002] from NOBTS. He joined the faculty as professor of New Testament and Greek and came to NOBTS as executive vice president in 1978. He had taught at William Carey College for the previous fifteen years.

In addition to his work as professor of New Testament and executive vice president, Stewart also served as director of the doctor of ministry program and led the seminary extension center system. On the occasion of the Board of Trustees naming Stewart professor emeritus, Chuck Kelley, president of NOBTS said Stewart “is one of the most faithful and dedicated administrators and teachers this school has ever had.”<sup>37</sup>

Stewart wrote prolifically for the Sunday School Board over his career. He authored a number of works for Senior Adults, January Bible Studies and Study Guides for Ephesians and I Corinthians, a Bible Book Study Commentary on I Corinthians, a Hebrews Study Guide, Adult January Bible study in the Sermon on the Mount entitled *Design for Discipleship*, the Bible Book Study Commentary on Hebrews and James, The “Adult Teacher” for the Uniform Lesson Series on Galatians and Romans, and Adult Bible Study on Colossians and Revelation.

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<sup>36</sup> Daniel Holcomb, personal interview with Jim Parker, New Orleans, LA, December 14, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (Dec. 15, 2003), 3.

During the 2003 Celebration of Excellence, Steve Lemke, provost of NOBTS, said about Stewart, “His heart and his love is teaching New Testament.”<sup>38</sup> The NOBTS newsletter, *The Gatekeeper*, observed, “He is best known for his pastoral, yet scholarly approach to teaching the New Testament.”<sup>39</sup> Upon his promotion to professor emeritus, Stewart said, “Teaching is the thing I’ve enjoyed most of all that I’ve done. God called me to minister to people and to teach people not to teach subjects. I’ve always tried to do that and it’s been very gratifying.”<sup>40</sup>

Stewart is best remembered by his students and colleagues as a pastoral encourager. Jim Parker can attest to the Godly demeanor and encouraging persona that is Don H. Stewart.

### **Daniel Harrell Holcomb (b. 1933)**

Daniel H. Holcomb holds a BA degree from Mississippi College (1954), a BA and MA degree from the University of Southern Mississippi (1957), a BD degree (1959) from NOBTS, a ThM (1963) and a ThD (1969) from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS). He has done additional study at Notre Dame Seminary (Archdiocese of New Orleans), Yale University, Oxford University, and Vanderbilt University.

Holcomb began his teaching career as a Teaching Fellow and Instructor in Church History at Southern Seminary. From there he went to Oklahoma Baptist University, where he was associate professor of Religion and Chairman of the Department of Religion. Holcomb taught there for ten years before coming to NOBTS and joining the faculty in 1979. He was named chairman of the Division of Theological and Historical Studies upon the retirement of Claude Howe in 1994 and also served as professor of Church History, occupying the John T. Westbrook Chair of Church History. In 2005, his colleagues selected him as the “Outstanding Classroom Teacher,” high praise indeed and well deserved.

During his tenure at NOBTS, Holcomb was arguably the most eloquent member of the faculty, able to weave together threads from a variety of disciplines, such as history, theology, philosophy, hermeneutics, and homiletics, and to create a meaningful narrative.

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<sup>38</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (May 12, 2003), 2.

<sup>39</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (May 12, 2003), 2.

<sup>40</sup> *The Gatekeeper* (Dec. 15, 2003), 3.

His lively delivery earned him the affectionate nickname “Smoke ‘Em Holcomb” among his students.<sup>41</sup>

Holcomb is best remembered for his class entitled “Christian Devotional Classics,” lauded by former students as the pinnacle of their seminary education. The class surveys historic Christian works, including Augustine’s *Confessions*, Pascal’s *Pensees*, and Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and recent books like *The Divine Conspiracy* and *The Cost of Discipleship*.<sup>42</sup> Holcomb has published several works, including *Costly Commitment*; *Our Heritage of Faith*; *The Recovery of Excellence*; *Beyond Narcissism: The Christian Alternative to Self Worship*; and *Readings in Baptist History*.

Holcomb remembers that during his BD years at NOBTS, he was enchanted by church history due largely to the influence of Penrose St. Amant, who later moved to SBTS to teach. Holcomb said, “St. Amant was an eminent Southern Baptist historian and master teacher. More than anyone else, he whetted my appetite for church history.”<sup>43</sup> It was St. Amant that encouraged him to seek his doctorate, had him first teach Church History at SBTS, and recommended him to the position at OBU. When asked in an interview what was driving him to continue to serve so faithfully, he offered two answers, “A calling that God has sustained over the years,” and the joy and fulfillment received from teaching.<sup>44</sup>

Among his six diplomas that decorate his office wall, Holcomb has hanging in the center a prayer that symbolizes “his personal drive to unite theology and ministry, a prayer that has been the theme of his teaching career.” The prayer, “A Litany of Truth,” reads as follows:

From the irresponsibility which casts  
Aside all old truths in search of nothing  
Better than novelty;  
From the cowardice that shrinks from  
All new truth;

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<sup>41</sup> Thus, Holcomb joined Claude “Clean Your Plow” Howe and Lloyd “Not So” Harsch as church historians with endearing nicknames.

<sup>42</sup> *Vision* (Holiday Edition 2004), 21; see also *The Gatekeeper* (March 14, 2005), 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Vision* (Holiday Edition 2004), 21; see also *The Gatekeeper* (March 14, 2005), 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Vision* (Holiday Edition 2004), 21; see also *The Gatekeeper* (March 14, 2005), 1.



From the lethargy that rests content  
    With Partial truth;  
And from arrogance that lays claim  
    To total truth;  
O God of Truth, deliver us.

### **Jeanine Cannon Bozeman (b. 1929)**

Many students' favorite professor at NOBTS is Dr. Jeanine Bozeman, currently distinguished professor of Social Work and 35-year veteran of teaching at the seminary. Dr. Bozeman received her BA at University of Montevallo, Alabama; her MSW at Tulane University, New Orleans; and her MRE and PhD at NOBTS. Bozeman also did additional study at Tulane in 1992 and at the University of Alabama, earning a Certificate in Thanatology (the study of death and dying) in 2001. Bozeman also has a number of professional certifications, including the Board Certified Diplomate in Clinical Social Work, she is a Licensed Professional Counselor, and is a member of the Clinical American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy.

Before and during her tenure at NOBTS, she served also as a pastor's wife. Her husband, Welby, pastored churches in Alabama and Louisiana until his death in 2008. She served churches in a variety of capacities, including Family Life Coordinator at First Baptist Church, Chalmette, Louisiana (1980–1983) and Interim Minister of Education at Parkview Baptist Church, Alexandria, Louisiana (1984–1985). When Bozeman began her teaching career at NOBTS in 1985, she brought nearly two decades of social work experience in Orleans Parish in the 9<sup>th</sup> Ward, Gentilly, and New Orleans East, and as a Special Education social worker in Orleans and Rapides Parish. Out of this well of experience, Bozeman poured forth the knowledge and wisdom that has made her legend among her students and a prolific speaker throughout the SBC.

Bozeman served as professor of Social Work her entire career at NOBTS; however, she also aided the institution with her many administrative gifts as well. From 1997 until her transition to senior professor in 2003, she served as the chairperson of the Christian Education Division. While performing the many duties of a division chairperson, she never neglected her teaching role, garnering her the award for "Outstanding Classroom Teacher" in 2003.

Bozeman has made major contributions to the ongoing teaching ministry of NOBTS. One is the course, “Interpersonal Relationship Skills,” which she developed along with Dr. Argile Smith, professor of Pastoral Ministries at NOBTS. The two professors co-authored the textbook, *Interpersonal Relationship Skills for Minister*. The need for this course among ministerial students is self-evident.

Another course that Bozeman pioneered is “Death, Loss, and Grief.” Again, the application of this course to a minister’s life is obvious. “One characteristic of Bozeman’s teaching the Death, Loss and Grief class is her use of role-play. Each student must act out receiving crushing news from someone and giving that information to another person. It forces students to face situations that are sure to arise in ministry.”<sup>45</sup> Bozeman draws from her own experiences to teach her students: the sudden death of her mother in an automobile accident; the crisis of Hurricane Katrina; and the death of her beloved husband, Welby, after forty-eight years of marriage. She also invites guest speakers to come to class and share their own experiences with grief.

One other contribution made by Bozeman is “Senior Fest,” a senior-adult conference conducted annually. Founded by Bozeman, this one-day event is sponsored by the Social Work Program and is hosted on the campus of NOBTS. Senior adults are provided with enriching breakouts, engaging worship, and opportunities for fun and fellowship with other believers.

At the time of her transition to senior professor in 2003, Bozeman spoke about the many conversations she had with students over the years of her tenure at NOBTS, many she said over breakfast in the cafeteria. She noted that it was in these conversations that she learned about the challenges that these students faced and she concluded that “God does not waste anything in people’s lives. He sort of brings it all together.”<sup>46</sup> But of course, now looking back over the arc of Jeanine Bozeman’s life, that conclusion has been many times over affirmed.

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<sup>45</sup> Michael McCormick, “20 years on faculty helped profs withstand hurricane’s trauma,” *Baptist Press* (September 28, 2006), <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/20-years-on-faculty-helped-profs-withstand-hurricanes-trauma/>, accessed 5 October 2020.

<sup>46</sup> *Vision* (Summer 2003), 15.

### **World-Class Research<sup>47</sup>**

NOBTS professors have made contributions to scholarship not only in publishing books and articles, presenting scholarly papers, and teaching courses, but also by establishing centers and institutes for the purposes of research and ministry. These centers and institutes serve such diverse goals as evangelism and church growth, Baptist heritage and thought, archaeology, New Testament textual criticism, counseling, youth ministry, and apologetics. Through these centers and institutes, the founding professors extend their scholarly contributions beyond their tenures at the seminary.

#### **Landrum P. Leavell II Center for Evangelism and Church Growth**

In spring 1991,<sup>48</sup> the Center for Evangelism and Church Growth was established as the first such facility in the Southern Baptist Convention. In March 1995, the center was renamed in honor of Landrum P. Leavell II, seventh president of the seminary, upon the occasion of his retirement after twenty years at NOBTS. Leavell long had worked in the areas of evangelism and church growth and had emphasized both during his tenure as president. Sometime later, the name was finalized as Landrum P. Leavell II Center for Evangelism and Church Health (LCECH), in recognition of its broader goal of achieving church health as well as church growth.

The first director of the Center was Charles Lowry, who had served as Minister of Christian Education under Dr. Leavell at First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls. Although he had never functioned in an academic setting, he joined the faculty as an evangelism professor and added courses in evangelism and church growth to the curriculum. At the beginning of the 1992–1993 academic year, Lowry left NOBTS to return to local church ministry,

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<sup>47</sup> Many thanks to Dr. Rex Butler, professor of Church History at NOBTS, who interviewed numerous people and wrote all of the history of the centers with the exception of the Center for Archaeological Research and the Michael and Sara Moskau Institute of Archaeology.

<sup>48</sup> Some sources date the opening of the Center in January 1992, but Dr. Chuck Kelley remembers that it opened during his sabbatical leave from 1990 to 1991. Chuck Kelley, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 5, 2017.

and Dr. Chuck Kelley, professor of Evangelism, became the interim and later the permanent director of the Center.<sup>49</sup> It was Dr. Kelley who recommended that the Center be renamed in honor of Dr. Leavell.

An early function of the Center was continuing education in evangelism and church growth, and, in fact, the only continuing education space on the campus was located in the Center. As part of its continuing education program, conferences often were conducted there, but its maximum capacity for one hundred seats limited the scope of conferences that it could host. Eventually, the conference space at the Center was opened up for purposes other than evangelism and church growth alone.<sup>50</sup>

The major purpose of the Center is to serve churches, not academics. One service that LCECH provides churches is demographics analysis, which can be focused on the community or on the church's story. At one time, the only demographics reports were simply pages of statistics, but Linda Tse, the first secretary at the Center, was able to interpret such statistics in color graphs that were attractive and easier to understand.<sup>51</sup> Since then, LCECH has invested in technology "to provide comprehensive demographic analysis of any church field in the nation, growth analysis for any church in the SBC, and a Louisiana mapping center database to facilitate door-to-door outreach in our state."<sup>52</sup>

Interestingly, during the 1990s, the Center functioned as Research and Development for the remainder of the campus and actually became the leading edge of technology at NOBTS. When finances were tight, Dr. Kelley purchased a color laser printer and provided the ink for reports and overhead transparencies not only for the Center but also for the other faculty. Eventually, income from demographics services provided computers and other equipment for the Center, which housed the first computer network on campus.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Howe, *Seventy Five Years of Providence and Prayer*, 179; Chuck Kelley, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 5, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Chuck Kelley, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 5, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> Chuck Kelley, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 5, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> <https://nobts.edu/leavell-center/default.html>, accessed 5 October 2020.

<sup>53</sup> Chuck Kelley, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 5, 2017.

In a personal interview, Dr. Kelley observed that the Leavell Center focused on two emphases: evangelism, typically housed under Pastoral Ministries; and church growth, usually connected to Christian Education. The Leavell Center then created a bridge between these two disciplines and brought them together in a unique way to serve the Kingdom. In a broader sense, the Leavell Center also brought about opportunities for interaction and cooperation between two SBC entities: the Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board) with its emphasis on evangelism and the Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) with its emphasis on church growth through the Sunday School.<sup>54</sup>

This cross-disciplinary interaction at the Leavell Center led to dynamic changes in the Doctor of Ministry program at NOBTS. The faculty of the Pastoral Ministries and Christian Education divisions cooperated to develop a DMin major in Evangelism and Church Growth, which allowed students to select seminars in both disciplines. Thus, the Center became a catalyst for this combination of disciplines and led to a healthier DMin program.<sup>55</sup>

Since Dr. Kelley became the seminary's eighth president, three men have served as director of LCECH: Dr. Chuck Register, Dr. David Meacham, and Dr. Preston Nix, who currently fills that position.

According to the Center's Vision Statement, "The Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Health exists to assist Southern Baptist churches and agencies in developing and implementing strategies for effective evangelism and measurable church growth." The stated priorities of the Center are evangelizing the lost, revitalizing churches, and praying for spiritual awakenings.<sup>56</sup>

## **H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies**

The H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies (CNTTS) is "a research center devoted to the study of the New Testament text in the Greek manuscripts."<sup>57</sup> In 1992, Dr. Bill

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<sup>54</sup> Chuck Kelley, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 5, 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Chuck Kelley, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 5, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> <https://nobts.edu/leavell-center/default.html>, accessed 5 October 2020.

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.nobts.edu/cntts/>, accessed 5 October 2020.

Warren started the work that later became the center, with the center proper beginning in 1998. The story of the beginning of the center has become legendary as Chuck Kelley often offers it up as an example of a professor's dream that came to fruition. Warren went to Kelley with a request for a computer and a table in order to start a textual studies center. According to Warren, "Dr. Kelley responded with much more than I had hoped for, way more." Previously, Warren's work had been based on a couple of shelves in his office, but what Kelley offered was "a fantastic expansion and fulfillment of a dream."<sup>58</sup> The seminary furnished facilities and funds for operations as well as acquisitions to expand the collection of manuscripts. Currently, the center is located in the Hardin Student Center and includes several research stations, a reference library, a collection of manuscripts in a variety of forms, a microfilm reader-copier and other equipment, and a database of manuscript evidence compiled by the center – facilities far beyond the original request of "a computer and a table."

As well as Warren, the director of the CNTTS, on-site personnel include several research assistants, an administrative assistant, and two project directors. In connection with the CNTTS, a number of courses are offered in the area of New Testament textual criticism at both the master's and PhD levels are available at NOBTS. PhD students majoring in New Testament may acquire a substantial amount of specialization and even write dissertations in this field.

An endowment was provided for the CNTTS by H. Milton Haggard and his wife Miriam, both members of Diamondhead Baptist Church, Mississippi, where Warren was a long-term interim pastor. Milton became connected to the seminary through his friendship with Dr. Landrum Leavell II, former NOBTS president, and after Milton had passed away, the connection deepened due to Warren's ministry to Miriam Haggard, Milton's wife who was homebound due to health problems. At Miriam Haggard's request and based on this couple's generous estate gift, the center was named in honor of H. Milton Haggard.

As mentioned earlier, one of the goals of the CNTTS is to acquire and maintain manuscripts in multiple forms, including digital, microfilm, facsimile, and hard copies as well as to obtain access to manuscripts by loan. As a result of research on these manuscripts,

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<sup>58</sup> Bill Warren, e-mail message to Rex Butler, January 2, 2017.

“In 2010, the center reached a milestone with the completion of the world’s first comprehensive searchable, electronic database of variants in the entire New Testament.”<sup>59</sup> This database is available through multiple Bible study software programs, making the center’s research available to New Testament scholars worldwide.

As beneficial as digital manuscripts are, hard copies and facsimiles still have considerable value in the work of the CNTTS. In March 2010, Warren had the opportunity to acquire a facsimile of Codex Petropolitanus Purpureus, notable for its purple-dyed leather pages. This codex is further distinguished by its text lettered in silver ink with sacred names set apart in gold ink. During an academic tour of Greece, Warren visited the Monastery of St. John the Theologian located on the Island of Patmos. He had been tipped off by Dr. Dan Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary that a facsimile might be available there. In telling his story about the acquisition of the Codex Petropolitanus Purpureus, Warren recalled: “When we got to the monastery, we entered and there was a small gift shop in a small courtyard. I saw the facsimile on the back shelf versus out front where everyone would have seen it. Knowing right away what it was, I purchased it for about \$500, and walked away with my prize! But then I realized that this thing was HEAVY to carry around. So I gave the ‘privilege’ of carrying it to some of the NT PhD students who were on the trip (Matt Solomon and Nathan VanHorn)!”<sup>60</sup> Today, the facsimile of this beautiful, unique codex, one of a limited number of copies, is on display in the NOBTS Bible and Archaeology Museum.

### **Youth Ministry Institute**

The Youth Ministry Institute (YMI) of NOBTS was established in 1999 under the leadership of Dr. Allen Jackson, professor of Youth Education and Collegiate Ministry. According to its vision statement, YMI exists “to extend the mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary through leadership in advanced research, practical application, quality training, and on-going dialogue with local youth ministers.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> <https://www.nobts.edu/cntts/general-overview.html>, accessed 5 October 2020.

<sup>60</sup> Bill Warren, e-mail message to Rex Butler, January 2, 2017.

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.youthministryinstitute.org/>, accessed 5 October 2020.

The original intent of the Institute was to provide training for extension center students seeking specialized training in youth ministry. Jackson recalls the early plans for YMI in this way:

The dream of doing a conference/class at the seminary was the first inkling of what would become a major part of the youth ministry education strategy at NOBTS. I had taught at the Atlanta extension for three years prior to joining the faculty on the main campus, and I knew that it was difficult for students to get a youth ministry elective in their coursework. Because accrediting standards at that time mandated on-campus classes as part of every degree, I thought the January interterm would be a good time for youth ministers. The logic was that their students had just started back to school and they might have the ability to get away for a conference.<sup>62</sup>

With this rationale in mind, Jackson began to plan a January conference for youth ministers. He recruited Jim Graham, who was at the time a PhD student and already a veteran youth minister, and Stephanie Wright, who served as first administrative assistant for YMI.<sup>63</sup> In January 2000, this conference, which became the flagship event of YMI, debuted with almost one hundred students participating in an intensive academic workshop with professionals teaching from their expertise in youth ministry.

The initial, ongoing plan for the YMI scheduled the conference during the first two weeks every January. On-campus and off-campus students came to the campus to earn three to six hours of credit in youth ministry electives that enabled them to conduct youth ministry more effectively. At first, academic credit was available only for master's level classes, but eventually YMI added tracks for undergraduate, certificate, and doctoral (Doctor of Ministry) levels.

A number of nationally known leaders in youth ministry shared their expertise at YMI conferences. Past guest speakers include

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<sup>62</sup> Allen Jackson, e-mail message to Rex Butler, January 2, 2017.

<sup>63</sup> Allen Jackson, e-mail message to Rex Butler, January 2, 2017. Jim Wright is now youth and children's minister at Trinity Baptist Church, Katy, Texas. Stephanie Wright went after graduating from NOBTS to LifeWay Christian Resources and ultimately to Beth Moore's Living Proof Ministries. Jackson felt a dedication to Stephanie was appropriate in memory of her tragic death in a car accident in 2005.



Walt Mueller (Center for Parent-Youth Understanding), Mark Matlock (Youth Specialties/Planet Wisdom), Greg Love (Ministry Safe), Richard Ross (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), Bart Millard (Mercy Me), Mark Hall (Casting Crowns), Duffy Robbins, Doug Fields, Ed Newton, and many others willing to share their time and talents.

First and foremost, the mission of YMI is to “make an impact on youth ministry in the local church.” A second, significant aspect of YMI is to conduct research on issues that impact youth ministry. Under the leadership of Jackson and Graham, YMI identified the essential competency base for youth ministry training. The four areas of ministry competency include: “1. Biblical, theological, and pastoral competency; 2. Personal skill competency; 3. People skills competency, and 4. Administration competency.”<sup>64</sup>

In January 2015, after sixteen years of service to NOBTS and YMI, Jackson stepped down as the director in order to serve Dunwoody Baptist Church in Georgia. He continues to contribute to youth ministry education at the seminary as a ministry-based professor and as a speaker at YMI events and conferences. The new Director of YMI is Dr. David Odom, associate professor of Youth Ministry, who brings to this position years of experience and much scholarship in youth ministry. “The Youth Ministry Institute will continue to be a vital asset for youth ministers and students alike for years to come.”<sup>65</sup>

### **Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry**

In 2002, the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry (BCTM) was founded by Dr. R. Stanton Norman as an expression of his passion for theology and his love for Baptists. Looking back on the origin of BCTM, Norman recalled: “The Baptist Center was birthed out of a desire that I had to try to provide a platform for diverse groups within Baptist life to come together to address issues that are relevant to Baptist churches and ministries. We often talk past each other, about each other, but not to each other. I envisioned the Baptist Center as a place where the professor, pastor, layman, denominational worker, missionary, and evangelist could

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<sup>64</sup> <http://yminobts.wixsite.com/youthmininstitute/history>, accessed 2 January 2017.

<sup>65</sup> <http://yminobts.wixsite.com/youthmininstitute/history>, accessed 2 January 2017.

come together for scholarly, thoughtfully driven discussion – recognizing that not everyone would be considered a scholar but certainly would have a credible voice to contribute to the discussion about what is pertinent to Baptist life.”<sup>66</sup>

A significant contribution of the BCTM to Baptist life is the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*, all issues of which are available on the website. The inaugural issue of the journal was published in spring 2003 with Norman as the editor. In his introduction, Norman stated that the ongoing goal of the journal is to present articles and essays that “address issues and concerns relevant for Baptist life.” Appropriately, therefore, the first volume was devoted to “Issues in Baptist Life” and included articles about evangelism, apologetics, denominational life, church practice, and Christian living. Going forward, the journal welcomed contributions from professors from all SBC academic institutions as well as pastors and denominational leaders. Norman encouraged a broad participation in the journal: “All Baptists are invited to inform us of topics of interest or relevance for Baptist thought or ministry.”<sup>67</sup>

During February 2004, the Baptist Center hosted its first conference, which focused on “Issues in Church Polity,” specifically congregational and elder-led polities. Norman described polity as “an issue that was percolating in Baptist life and that was of interest to everyone. We tried to get a swath of individuals with expertise related to that topic.”<sup>68</sup> The goal of the opening conference of the BCTM was to make contributions to the ongoing discussion of polity in the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>69</sup>

Speaking of the goals of the Baptist Center, Norman said:

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<sup>66</sup> R. Stanton Norman, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 19, 2017.

<sup>67</sup> R. Stanton Norman, “Editorial,” *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 1.1 (Spring 2003): 1–3, available at [https://www.nobts.edu/baptist-center-theology/journals/journals/spring-2003/JBTM\\_1-1\\_Spring\\_2003\\_01\\_Editorial.pdf](https://www.nobts.edu/baptist-center-theology/journals/journals/spring-2003/JBTM_1-1_Spring_2003_01_Editorial.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> R. Stanton Norman, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 19, 2017.

<sup>69</sup> Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., represented elder-led polity, and the supporters of congregationalism included David Dockery, president of Union University, Jackson, Tennessee; Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; James Leo Garrett, distinguished professor emeritus of theology at Southwestern Seminary; and Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

I had a heart to connect the academic side of our denomination to the practical side, the ministry side. I think that is one of the geniuses behind Southern Baptist higher education, seminary education – it is ecclesially minded and ecclesially driven. The target of the center was to encourage, equip, and enable Baptist life. So my philosophy for the Baptist Center was for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in particular and seminary professors in general to develop clear lines of service and connections outside of the immediate boundaries of our students, to expand our influence to the local church, both the staff and the laity.<sup>70</sup>

After Norman departed NOBTS to serve at other Baptist institutions, Dr. Steve Lemke, provost, assumed the duties of the director of the center and editor of the journal. Lemke oversaw the publication of nine issues of the journal and expanded the center's resources by recording interviews and soliciting academic papers for circulation through the website.

In 2013, Dr. Adam Harwood came to NOBTS as associate professor of Theology and director of the BCTM. In recent years, the Baptist Center has hosted conferences on topics such as Bible translation as missions as well as a multiple-views conference on theological and ministry questions concerning infants and children in the church. Journal articles have addressed topics such as the gospel, evangelism, salvation, chaplaincy, student ministry, and preaching the Bible. Some of the content from the journal and the conferences is reaching a wider audience by being published as books.<sup>71</sup> Harwood explains, "My hope is that the resources produced by the Baptist Center will make a small contribution to God's work in the world through his churches and its ministries."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> R. Stanton Norman, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 19, 2017.

<sup>71</sup> See as examples David L. Allen, Eric Hankins, and Adam Harwood, ed. *Anyone Can Be Saved: A Defense of "Traditional" Southern Baptist Soteriology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016) and Adam Harwood and Kevin Lawson, ed. *Infants and Children in the Church: Five Views on Theology and Ministry* (Nashville: B&H, 2017).

<sup>72</sup> Adam Harwood, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 10, 2017.

## Institute for Christian Apologetics

In spring 2008, the Institute for Christian Apologetics (ICA) was founded as a ministry of NOBTS with Dr. Bob Stewart, professor of Philosophy and Theology, as Director and Dr. Mike Edens, professor of Theology and Islamic Studies, as associate director. Two years later, Dr. Rhyne Putman, professor of Theology and Culture, joined the team as associate director.

ICA is supported in many ways by the faculty of the Theological and Historical Studies Division. Disciplines such as philosophy, theology, church history, ethics, and Islamic studies inform Apologetics, which in turn is applied to evangelism and missions. The Institute partners with the Center for Islamic Studies to meet the challenge of Islam in our culture.<sup>73</sup>

In his proposal for ICA, Stewart explained: “The need for Christian apologetics has never been greater than it is today in our pluralistic culture. The Christian faith is challenged by relativism, naturalism, world religions, cults, and various other worldviews that compete with the Christian worldview. Scripture commands us ‘to make a defense at all times to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope within you’ (1 Pet 3:15). The world today desperately needs the hope that only Jesus Christ truly offers.” He went on to state the purpose of ICA, which is: “To equip Christians to defend the Christian faith and present compelling reasons for embracing the Christian faith in a manner that is comprehensible and relevant in our contemporary culture.”<sup>74</sup> The target audience of ICA includes not only students and scholars but also lay people and churches.

The purposes of ICA are fulfilled in a number of ways but most prominently in two major events: the Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum and the Defend the Faith Conference. The Greer-Heard Forum actually began in spring 2005 and, therefore, preceded the formation of ICA, but it now functions under the auspices of the Institute. In the twelve years since the inaugural Greer-Heard Forum, it has become a well-known event that showcases the intellectual talents of a number of world-class scholars. The premise of the Forum is to “provide a venue in

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<sup>73</sup> Robert Stewart, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 9, 2017.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Stewart, “Proposal for the Formation of the Institute for Christian Apologetics,” provided in an e-mail message to author, January 9, 2017.

which respected scholars of differing opinions dialogue on critical issues in religion, science, philosophy, and/or culture from their differing perspectives.”<sup>75</sup> In this way, students at NOBTS see apologetics modeled by leading evangelical scholars. Furthermore, this event always attracts a large audience from the community and beyond, representing a variety of worldviews but hearing an intellectual Christian viewpoint from the evangelical scholars.

The Institute conducted the first Defend the Faith Conference on the campus of NOBTS in January 2009 and then took the Conference on the road to the North Georgia Extension Center in June of that year. Defend the Faith brings to the NOBTS campus leading experts in apologetics, philosophy, theology, world religions and cults to lecture in plenary gatherings and to teach in breakout sessions. Students can earn up to six hours of credit in a number of courses offered at the conference, and again, visitors from the New Orleans community come to the campus to hear these nationally known scholars.

The Institute hosts and participates in other events. In November 2009, ICA hosted the Evangelical Philosophical Society’s Stand for the Faith Apologetics Conference, which brought together twenty top Christian apologists. ICA also sends speakers such as Drs. Stewart, Edens, Putman, Page Brooks, and Steve Lemke to a variety of venues, including Collegiate Weeks at Gloria and Ridgecrest, and also to churches and associations throughout the nation.<sup>76</sup>

In the years since its inception, ICA has enhanced the overall teaching ministry of NOBTS by developing a number of degrees at multiple levels. ICA serves as the platform for the Master of Divinity in Christian Apologetics, Master of Divinity in Islamic Studies, Master of Arts in Christian Apologetics, Master of Arts (Apologetics), Doctor of Ministry in Christian Apologetics, and Doctor of Philosophy in Christian Apologetics.

In summarizing the mission of the Institute, Rhyne Putman, associate director, said, “Our mission is to train as many people as possible to share their faith as effectively as they possibly can. Apologetics is not a substitute for evangelism but it can be a sig-

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<sup>75</sup> <http://greerheard.com/wp/about/>, 9 January 2017.

<sup>76</sup> Mike Edens, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 9, 2017.

nificant aid for evangelism in removing intellectual roadblocks to faith.”<sup>77</sup>

### **Leeke Magee Christian Counseling Center**

In August 2014, the Leeke Magee Christian Counseling Center (LMCCC) opened on the NOBTS campus in a facility dedicated to its services. For decades previously, the faculty and students of the Psychology and Counseling Department (now part of the Division of Church and Community Ministries) provided limited services to clients from the campus and the community beyond. Now, with the establishment of LMCCC not only as a facility but also as a ministry, the Center is able to amplify its training of student interns and its ministries to those in need.

Dr. Kathy Steele, professor of Counseling and director of LMCCC, enjoys telling the story of God’s provision for the Center.<sup>78</sup> The late Dr. Jim Headrick and several of the counseling faculty long had dreamed of a facility for counseling when the former William Carey building on the NOBTS campus came available. At just the right time, an estate gift from the late Leeke Magee provided the funds necessary to convert the space into a facility for counseling and for housing the faculty of the CCM division. Therefore, the center is named in honor of this generous Louisiana Baptist and NOBTS supporter.

Steele goes on to tell of God’s providence through other donors, whose gifts met the needs for ongoing ministry. The material needs included furnishings for the counseling rooms, a Wi-Fi system, an electronic filing system, capability for video recording, and office equipment. Human resource needs included staff needs, including an Associate Director and three receptionists. One gift made possible specialized training for counseling trauma, which is a significant issue with their clients from drug rehab programs. “One of the miracles of LMCCC was that unsolicited donations came in to take care of the ‘dream list’ for the Center. It was exciting to see step-by-step how God provided what we needed.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Rhyne Putman, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 10, 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Kathy Steele, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 10, 2017.

<sup>79</sup> Kathy Steele, personal interview with Rex Butler, New Orleans, LA, January 10, 2017.

The LMCCC provides an array of biblical, evidenced-based counseling services that are affordable, accessible and address the diverse mental health and relational counseling needs of individuals, couples, and families in the greater New Orleans community, including children, adolescents, elderly clients, and, in particular, the Bethel Colony and Women at the Well ministries. Regarding the mission of the LMCCC, NOBTS then-president Chuck Kelley said,

We deeply believe that Southern Baptists need to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to engage the communities around our churches. We have to find a way to start the conversation about Jesus with people who are not in our churches and we think a counseling program centered in Christ does that and we believe that community-based ministries, again, centered in Christ and the church, can do that.<sup>80</sup>

Steele pointed out that the NOBTS counseling program emphasizes a biblical worldview. Counseling students take many of the foundational biblical and theological courses common to other master's degrees. She said,

All of the students have to learn how to examine the foundational and philosophical assumptions of the techniques, models or theories of counseling to see how these fit into the biblical worldview. In typical counseling, the primary goal is to alleviate pain, alleviate suffering. That is not our primary goal. Our primary goal is to help clients come to the fullness of what God has created them to be. That doesn't always mean that you eliminate pain and suffering.<sup>81</sup>

The counseling program at NOBTS is unique in that it provides the educational background necessary to achieve state licensure. Currently, NOBTS is the only Southern Baptist seminary offering a licensure track in counseling. The extensive curriculum offered here makes it possible for counseling graduates to serve not only as church-based counselors but also in nonprofit organizations and private counseling groups in order to meet needs of

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<sup>80</sup> <http://www.nobts.edu/ccm/counseling-center.html>, accessed 5 October 2020.

<sup>81</sup> <http://www.baptistpress.com/44688/counseling-center-trains-with-biblical-worldview>, accessed 5 October 2020.

those outside the church. The counseling students at NOBTS are committed to biblically based ministry that takes the Gospel to hurting people everywhere.

Dr. Ian Jones, professor of Counseling and chair of the CCM Division, made this statement about the LMCCC and its mission:

Christ challenged believers to be salt and light in the world “so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16). The division of church and community ministries is committed to training students with the skill sets necessary to help churches connect with their communities through counseling and social ministries, building up the church and bringing the transforming power of the Gospel into the world. The new Leeke Magee Christian Counseling Center will be a significant part of this ministry as students are trained to provide an array of biblical, effective and accessible counseling services to individuals, couples and families in the greater New Orleans community.<sup>82</sup>

### **The Center for Archaeological Research and the Michael and Sara Moskau Institute of Archaeology**

Archaeology has been a vested interest of NOBTS since its founding. John T. Christian was an avid traveler and collector and brought back many artifacts to the school’s library from all over the Near East. J. Wash Watts was also well traveled, having served in the 1930s as a missionary in “Palestine,” which is now the State of Israel. He served before there was a ban on removing antiquities from Israel, so he was able to acquire many very nice pieces. He brought back to NOBTS several things of great interest and value, including a piece of a scroll similar to the Aleppo Codex and which had come out of the Aleppo synagogue.

While these men were avid collectors and others had taught courses on archaeology, professional archaeology did not come to NOBTS until the 1970s in the person of George Kelm. Kelm, an archaeologist, led teams to several locations during the time he was at NOBTS, including Tel Aphek and Timnah on the Soreq River. Kelm apparently arranged artifacts that NOBTS already had, as mentioned above, and added some of the more recent finds to

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<sup>82</sup> <http://www.nobts.edu/ccm/counseling-center.html>, accessed 5 October 2020.



the collection.<sup>83</sup> These were all exhibited in an area of the John T. Christian library.

A number of NOBTS students and faculty members worked with Kelm on these projects. For example, Mike Edens, long-time IMB missionary and current distinguished professor of Theology and Missions, and his wife Madelyn, worked with Kelm at Aphek in 1973. Many others experienced digging in the Holy Land during this period, but probably none was more important to the institution than Dennis Cole. Cole became an avid digger, working in numerous archaeological excavations over a period of time that spans from the very early 1980s until the present. His persistence over the years and the fine cooperation of the administrations of NOBTS kept archaeology and biblical backgrounds in front of the students.

In 1996, under the leadership of Dennis Cole, NOBTS founded the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) for the purpose of unifying the biblical background curriculum, archaeology, and travel in Israel. Clay Corvin took over the travel program in 1984, raising funding and arranging scholarships for students to see the Holy Land.

The center performed very well during the next few years and with the hiring of Steve Ortiz, another professional archaeologist who had studied with William Dever at the University of Arizona, the CAR expanded and looked for an opportunity to perform its own excavations in Israel. That opportunity came in 2004–2005, when Steve Ortiz, under the auspices of NOBTS, was given a permit by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) to excavate Tel Gezer. Unfortunately, Hurricane Katrina interrupted those plans and Ortiz soon departed to Southwestern Seminary. Ortiz continued to press forward at Tel Gezer from Southwestern, and NOBTS joined the consortium for that dig and continued to take students to Gezer.

In 2008, NOBTS was given the opportunity to excavate the ancient water system of Gezer with the Senior Archaeologist of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, Tsvika Tsuk. At this time, Daniel Warner, an archaeologist who had recently begun to teach at the NOBTS Orlando extension center, and who had dug with Ortiz at Gezer, became one of the co-directors along with Dennis

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<sup>83</sup> These artifacts were acquired prior to 1973, the year the antiquities law was passed in Israel.

Cole and Jim Parker. The team began excavations on the ancient water system in 2010, after two years of study and preparation. That excavation is still ongoing at present.

In 2009–2010, Jim Parker met with the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) regarding new laws and rules that they had enacted and what was required of NOBTS to maintain an archaeological excavation in Israel. Several things came out of that discussion including the founding of the Michael and Sara Moskau Institute of Archaeology. One of the requirements for a foreign entity to excavate in Israel is that they have an institute. Out of that need the Moskau Institute was founded. The institute took its name from Mike Moskau, the Seminary's general contractor who had rebuilt the campus after Hurricane Katrina. Moskau, and his wife Ginger (Sara) had made numerous trips to Israel and had become avid promoters of the NOBTS archaeology program. Unfortunately, Mike Moskau died in 2015 at only 58 years old; however, the Moskau Institute proudly bears his name. The Center for Archaeological Research, while still using that name at times, has become the Moskau Institute.

As a part of the Moskau Institute and in collaboration with the Harvard New Testament Textual Center and the John T. Christian Library, the Museum of the Bible and Archaeology at NOBTS was constructed and now houses many of the precious artifacts, manuscripts, and bibles possessed by NOBTS. The museum is located on the second floor of the Hardin Student Center in a space specifically constructed for it.

### Conclusion

Over a hundred years ago, the initial report from Baptist Bible Institute delivered to the Southern Baptist Convention in May 1918 listed five faculty members, including the president, Byron H. DeMent.<sup>84</sup> Subsequently, as has been seen, the faculty has been multiplied many times over with outstanding scholars. Furthermore, faculty members at NOBTS have furthered the scholarship of their seminary by founding numerous research centers and institutes. This chapter has listed only a sampling of scholars and scholarship that reflect favorably on our institution. May God continue to bless New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with

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<sup>84</sup> Howe, *Seventy Five Years of Providence and Prayer*, 29.

the academic resources needed to “prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.”



## **The School of Providence and Prayer: From the Great Depression through Hurricane Katrina and Beyond**

**Steve Lemke, PhD**

*Steve Lemke is vice president for Institutional Assessment, provost emeritus, and professor of Philosophy and Ethics at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.*

### **Difficult Early Days**

The year was 1918. Classes began at the new Baptist Bible Institute in New Orleans on October 1, 1918, but a problem quickly arose – a yellow fever and influenza epidemic had struck the city! Health officials declared a quarantine until November 19 and ordered all schools, colleges, and churches to be suspended indefinitely. The United States Health officer also requested the use of part of two of the buildings on the BBI campus to care for the sick, which was granted. The faculty met (a precursor to what a later faculty would do almost a century later after Hurricane Katrina) to discuss how to continue classes despite the quarantine. They made weekly assignments through November and gave tests each week (by mail correspondence, if not in person). As the end of the quarantine neared, yet another unexpected challenge arose. The United States had entered World War I by the declaration of war in April 1917. Although only 14,000 American Expeditionary Forces troops were in France in June 1917, that number had increased to over a million by May 1918 and over 2 million troops in France by the end of the war. In light of these events, War Department officials met with President DeMent and other BBI representatives to seek the use of some of the BBI facilities as a hospital for injured soldiers. The BBI representatives unanimously agreed that it was their patriotic and Christian duty to make the space available. Still, the Armistice was signed on November 11, precluding the military's need for the facilities. What a challenging first semester!

From that shaky start until today, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has faced many challenging days. The 1920s brought many challenges to the young institution. BBI had initiat-

ed a fund-raising campaign in Louisiana and had raised \$163,000 in subscriptions for that campaign. Even so, Southern Baptists instituted the \$75 million campaign in 1919, and these funds were turned over to the \$75 million campaign to be allocated.<sup>1</sup> Though the \$75 million campaign appeared to be a success at first, bringing in pledges of over \$92 million, it produced just \$58 million as the economy faltered (for example, cotton prices had plunged from 40 cents a pound to 10 cents a pound). BBI had been pledged \$500,000 out of the campaign, and BBI faculty and students pledged \$37,000 toward the campaign but received just \$83,000.<sup>2</sup> The Great Depression hit the United States economy in 1929, the same year that Clinton S. Carnes, treasurer of the Home Mission Board, was revealed to have embezzled about \$900,000 from that Baptist agency. These events brought severe economic pressures on Southern Baptists and their young school in New Orleans for years to come.

Students and faculty members alike were only getting by financially. Those who served in churches over the weekends often came back to New Orleans having been paid with vegetables, eggs, or other foods. Some students went downtown by the docks to pick up any bananas that had fallen off while banana boats were being unloaded. The families would put what they had received on a common table, and everyone took what they needed, so everyone's base needs could be met. Because of God's provision through these challenging days, BBI's first president, Byron Hoover DeMent, referred to the seminary as "the child of Providence and Prayer,"<sup>3</sup> and often called the institution "The School of Providence and Prayer."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ethel L. Holcomb, "The Life and Labors of Byron Hoover DeMent" (MCT thesis, Baptist Bible Institute, 1935), 22.

<sup>2</sup> Holcomb, "The Life and Labors of Byron Hoover DeMent," 22.

<sup>3</sup> Byron H. DeMent, *Bulletin of the Baptist Bible Institute*, Memorial Number, (January 1933), 1; c.f. Holcomb, 22–23; Claude L. Howe, *Seventy Five Years of Providence and Prayer: An Illustrated History of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary* (NOBTS, LA: Josten's, 1993), 28.

<sup>4</sup> William A. Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer: A History of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary* (New Orleans, LA: NOBTS Press, 1969), 139. The phrase was included in both the first and second *alma maters* (pp. 19, 139).

### Continuing Financial Challenges

The seminary itself suffered financially through these difficult days. The situation was so dire that there were rules about turning out the lights. President Hamilton saw that a light was on in one of the classroom buildings one night, so he quickly dressed and walked over from his house to turn off the light. When he arrived there, he saw what had become common on the BBI campus – students praying for God’s intervention and help in the financial crisis.<sup>5</sup> By 1932, the SBC became concerned about the financial viability of BBI. The seminary had a bonded indebtedness of \$45,000 to \$50,000 maturing each year over the next six years. Some Baptists began to wonder if BBI could survive, and a committee was formed to investigate the financial viability of BBI. Eventually, in 1932, the seminary’s trustees determined that just five faculty members (inclusive of the president) could be retained. The decision came down to which faculty members to retain. The Trustee Instruction Committee chose to retain some of the younger professors since they had advanced degrees, but one of the younger faculty members pled with the board to allow him to resign and retain the older faculty members in light of their experience and their larger family responsibilities. The young faculty member asserted that he had a better chance to find other employment.<sup>6</sup> However, with the reduced faculty, the seminary was able to stay afloat. Costs were cut while donations increased, and BBI was able to pay off its debt entirely by 1943. As President Hamilton said, “the Bible Institute refused to die.”<sup>7</sup>

Under the brief presidency of Duke McCall, BBI changed its name to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and its overall financial situation continued to improve. His successor, Roland Q. Leavell, brought in significant contributions to help the seminary relocate to its new location on Gentilly Boulevard. Dr. Leavell was an effective leader and fundraiser. Not only did he find monies to support the building of the new campus, but student enrollment surged from less than 400 students in 1947 to

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<sup>5</sup> Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer*, 83.

<sup>6</sup> Howe, *Seventy Five Years of Providence and Prayer*, 59–60; Mueller, *The School of Providence and Prayer*, 82–86.

<sup>7</sup> W. W. Hamilton, “Baptist Bible Institute History,” 19; cited in Howe, *Seventy Five Years of Providence and Prayer*, 58.

over 1,000 students in 1957. Tragically, Leavell experienced serious health concerns and had to resign in 1958.

New challenges arose during the presidency of Leo Eddleman through the decade of the 1960s. A doctrinal civil war arose from within the faculty. Faculty members were criticizing other faculty members in the classroom. At times, doctoral students associated with one faculty member were penalized with poor grades by a faculty member on the opposite side of the issue. The situation became so toxic that some faculty left the seminary and student enrollment began to plunge, increasing stress to the school's financial situation. Two hurricanes further negatively impacted the seminary during this period – Hurricane Betsy in 1965 and Hurricane Camille in 1969. Hurricane Betsy, which hit New Orleans on September 9–10, 1965, had a devastating impact on the city. In many ways, Hurricane Betsy foreshadowed the impact of the later Hurricane Katrina. With its winds of over 100 miles per hour, Hurricane Betsy pushed a storm surge of water into Lake Pontchartrain, causing the levees on both sides of the Industrial Canal to break, flooding Gentilly and the Upper and Lower 9<sup>th</sup> Wards, just as it would almost exactly forty years later.

President Eddleman summarized the impact of hurricane Betsy on the NOBTS campus, which hit New Orleans the evening after convocation had been celebrated in the chapel that morning, with these words:

For a whole day after the recent hurricane, most New Orleanians sat around stunned and looking at one another. The presence of up to 36 inches of water on the northern one-third of this campus, with fish almost as long as your hand swimming therein, was unbelievable. But I saw it. After visiting two or three dormitories around 10:00 P.M. the night of the hurricane, Mrs. Eddleman and I returned and stood briefly on the screened porch of the southern side of the home we occupy. A sudden booster gust of wind ripped an entire section of screen from the porch as though it were tissue paper. We went inside. Shortly after, a baby tornado was spawned, entered the campus at the southeast corner, felled a tree between Dr. J. Wash Watts' home and the one we occupy, proceeded to the chapel where it ripped off numerous shingles of the roof, from there to Carey Hall where it brought untold havoc, then departed the campus to stage



a Sherman-like march of destruction for at least four blocks off campus.<sup>8</sup>

The wind-driven rain damaged many campus buildings, some of them by the numerous trees and limbs that fell all over the campus. This was, of course, before the day of mobile phones, so the campus was effectively knocked out of all electronic communications, with all electricity and phone lines out from Thursday evening, September 9, until Monday, September 13. The campus's damage was so extensive that a study committee considered relocating the seminary, but the decision was made to remain in its existing location in New Orleans.

Then, just four years later, New Orleans received an indirect hit from hurricane Camille on August 17, 1969. Although the hurricane turned slightly to strike the Mississippi Gulf Coast more directly, it damaged or destroyed many churches in South Mississippi, which had supported the seminary financially and offered ministry opportunities for NOBTS students. All of these factors contributed to an emerging financial crisis at the seminary. An austerity budget was implemented in 1969. Both Dean Kennedy (in August 1968) and President Eddleman (in January 1970) resigned, and the search was on for new leadership.

Grady Cothen was elected the next president, and though he served just four years in that role, he helped stabilize the seminary's economic position. He economized the operation of the seminary, including requiring the president's signature on virtually every expenditure. These financial controls brought the seminary's budget back into alignment.

After Cothen's resignation, Landrum P. Leavell II was elected in 1970. During the twenty-year presidency of Dr. Leavell, the seminary's financial picture slowly improved, with the seminary endowment and student enrollment increasing significantly. Under Leavell's leadership, innovations such as the creation of extension centers, the use of compressed interactive video (CIV), and the recreation of the seminary's undergraduate program swelled the seminary's student enrollment to over 2,000 students. Leavell was able to raise the seminary's endowment from less than a million dollars to over \$20 million.

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<sup>8</sup> Leo Eddleman, *Vision* (December 1965), 2; cited in Howe, *Seventy Five Years of Providence and Prayer*, 133.

The endowment raised by Leavell provided a firm financial foundation for the early presidency of Chuck Kelley, who became president in 1996. New curriculum and new delivery systems were implemented under President Kelley and the new provost, Dr. Steve Lemke, and the seminary's student enrollment doubled over the next five years. By 2004, NOBTS had achieved its largest student enrollment ever, which was the largest student enrollment of any SBC seminary. Then came August 2005.

### Through the Storm

Hurricane evacuations are not particularly rare on the Gulf Coast, and even through Hurricane Katrina, the campus suffered only modest damage from the wind, rain, and fallen branches. Then the levees broke, and the situation became entirely different. Much of the city of New Orleans was flooded – including most of the NOBTS campus. The entire situation changed overnight. The entire main campus in New Orleans was going to be unavailable for a year. How could the institution keep afloat and keep having classes when faculty offices, faculty homes, student and staff housing, classrooms, and the library were not available for use? The answer is the amazing story of the survival of NOBTS through the destruction of Hurricane Katrina.<sup>9</sup>

On August 23, 2005, a tropical storm touched the southeastern coast of the Bahamas. Early projections predicted that Hurricane Katrina would make landfall far to the east of New Orleans, so many people in New Orleans weren't paying that much attention to it. The winds strengthened to make Hurricane Katrina a weak hurricane by the time it made landfall on the east coast of Florida on Thursday, August 25, but it weakened again to tropical storm status while crossing Florida. The weather prognosticators predicted that the storm would strike somewhere along the Florida panhandle and posed no threat to New Orleans. But by Friday afternoon, August 26, unusual weather conditions caused the storm to go off track westward, eventually placing the city of New

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<sup>9</sup> This story has been recounted in greater detail by two works by several former NOBTS faculty members. See Curtis Scott Drumm, *Providence through the Storm: The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Hurricane Katrina Experience* (Metairie, LA: Journey Publications, 2009); and Steve Echols and Allen England, *Catastrophic Crisis: Ministry Leadership in the Midst of Trial and Tragedy* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2011).

Orleans squarely in its sights. The storm dramatically intensified on Saturday, August 27, to become a major hurricane, and by Sunday, it became the strongest hurricane ever recorded in the Gulf of Mexico.

As soon as the hurricane's direction and strength changed, the NOBTS administration met and called for an immediate evacuation from the campus. Typically, hurricane evacuations involve evacuating for just several days until the storm has passed and electric power is restored if interrupted. Sometimes hurricanes make a last-minute turn and miss the evacuated area altogether. Thus, many people who have lived along the coast for many years choose to stay home to either ride through the storm or enjoy a couple of days off. Those who left often viewed the evacuations as sort of a weekend vacation. However, this evacuation came so suddenly and unexpectedly that few people had made any preparation for evacuation. By Sunday, August 28, the mayor of New Orleans had ordered the entire city's mandatory evacuation, a virtually unprecedented decision. Since almost no one had evacuated early, traffic jams extended for over a hundred miles from New Orleans, and trips that were normally five hours took at least twice that time. Hotels in safer areas at a distance from New Orleans sold out of rooms.

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on Monday, August 29. The winds were high, blowing down tree limbs and shattering the Leavell Center stained glass window over its classic organ. But by Monday evening, the small crew still on the seminary campus reported that the damage had been comparatively minor, and that classes could begin again in a few days.

Then the levees broke. The wind-driven rain drove 20 feet of water into Lake Pontchartrain and other waterways, flooding the city's levee system to overflowing. Disaster officials for many years had warned of the possibility of a "perfect storm" – a hurricane tracking up the Mississippi River up to New Orleans, driving a storm surge of water into Lake Pontchartrain and from there into the city. That is exactly the path that Katrina took. The city's levees are at a higher elevation than much of the city, which is five to eight feet below sea level. The levee system functions to pump the water out of New Orleans and into Lake Pontchartrain. But the storm surge left the water with nowhere to go. The NOBTS campus slowly began to flood on Monday evening, August 30. Although the academic buildings of the seminary, which sit atop

one of the higher elevations in Orleans Parish, largely escaped flooding, much of the campus housing was flooded the next morning with from three to eight feet of water.

New Orleans immediately after the flood was a dangerous place. Power lines were down, increasing the danger of electrocution. The safety of the flood water itself was unknown, since it had swept over so many toxic chemicals from various locations. Roving gangs were looting neighborhoods, and even shot at police helicopters. A small group of campus security returned to the campus to protect it, at some personal risk to themselves. However, through several providential connections, and because the front of the campus was not flooded, National Guard troops and visiting police groups from several states came to use the campus as their base. They stayed at the Providence Guest House, and military helicopters came and went from Hardin Student Center. This strong presence of National Guard troops and police on the campus helped preserve the campus from looting and vandalism through these difficult days.

Meanwhile, the faculty who lived on the New Orleans campus had evacuated to 8 states and the staff and students to 28 states, as they each went to temporary housing offered by family or friends. Most families evacuating from the campus took just enough clothing and supplies for the weekend, anticipating that they could go back to New Orleans in a few days after the storm had passed. As it turned out, those few possessions would prove to be virtually all that survived the storm. They literally had to start over with clothing, houseware, linens, and all such things that might normally be given to a newly married couple beginning their life together. Also, school had already begun, so the faculty families were forced to make fairly quick decisions about where to live so that children could get in a school. Sometimes the temporary situation they chose was far short of ideal, but it was the best that could be done in such demanding circumstances.

Many questions came to mind in light of these events. The campus and New Orleans itself were inaccessible to the public for weeks to come. Although some classrooms were available, there was no livable housing for students, staff, or faculty members. How could classes go forward that semester when the classrooms, faculty offices, and the library were inaccessible? How could the semester continue when the faculty members had evacuated to 8 states and students to 28 states? How could students be recruited

when there was no campus to which to recruit them? Could the seminary continue to be viable at all into the future?

When the reality of this new situation was driven home, a team of seminary leaders met in the seminary's extension center in metropolitan Atlanta to come up with answers to these questions. For years, the seminary's Atlanta extension was housed in the Columbia Drive Baptist Church in Decatur, Georgia, and it was here on September 1, 2005, that a diverse team of about sixteen administrators, faculty, staff and students gathered. After a devotional and information-sharing time, the team that was there broke into three groups, each of which addressed a key question about the future of the seminary.

The academic team, led by Provost Steve Lemke, sought to develop a plan for how the seminary could possibly continue classes that semester. Because the seminary had extension centers in a number of Southeastern cities, including Atlanta, it was fairly easy to go forward with those classes, although adjustments had to be made to teach courses by compressed interactive video (CIV) from Atlanta rather than from New Orleans. But the big problem was how to continue the New Orleans campus courses. Fortunately, the seminary had been utilizing some internet classes since 2000, so some courses could be shifted to a fully online delivery system. But in addition, in many of the on-campus classes, faculty members were using the same Blackboard software as was used in the online classes to supplement their class time. Some classes used the Blackboard format to give quizzes or conduct threaded discussions online between class sessions. So the academic team proposed continuing all the New Orleans campus courses by enhancing these Blackboard tools that were already in existence. Of course, the faculty member would have to completely revise the syllabus for the semester, shift more of the class material and tests online, and utilize the threaded discussions tool much more significantly. The faculty would be given until the first of October to reshape their classes, and then the fall semester would continue in this new format. Ironically, these changes strangely paralleled the sort of adjustments made back in 1918 to respond to the health quarantine. Because of the new format focused on replacing the classroom discussions with "threaded discussions" online, the academic team came to call this format "TDS" classes. This alternative delivery system would prove key to not only salvaging the semester and allow eligible students to graduate in December, but

literally in making the long-term survival of the seminary more possible.

A second team, led by Dean of Students Craig Price, came up with a plan to locate and communicate with each New Orleans campus student. Since the students had evacuated to live temporarily with family or friends, this proved to be a challenging but crucial task. Many of these calls involved grieving with the students that were coming to grips with the fact that it was likely, particularly if they lived on the first floor of their housing, that they lost most or all of their possessions back in New Orleans. But these calls shared key information and provided needed counseling at times to keep the student body on board as a whole. Without that personal contact, many of the students would have given up on their seminary plans.

The third team, led by Vice President for Development Charlie Harvey, came up with plans for the crucial task of soliciting funds to rebuild the New Orleans campus, aid hurting faculty, staff, and students, and make it possible for the seminary to achieve long-term survival financially. Southern Baptists would prove to be very generous in supporting NOBTS through this time of crisis.

With these initial plans in place, the faculty and their spouses gathered on the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary campus in Fort Worth, Texas, on September 9–11, 2005. On the first night, Dr. Kelley and others shared what the situation was on the New Orleans campus. He showed pictures from the campus, including showing pictures of faculty homes under several feet of water. For most of the faculty and their spouses, this was the first view they had seen of the campus, and it was shocking. To see their own houses under several feet of water was devastating emotionally. The president assured the faculty families that the seminary intended to rebuild in New Orleans and led in some devotional thoughts and prayer. The next couple of days, the faculty began working within the normal faculty academic divisions to see if the provisional plan that had been proposed in Atlanta would actually work. Without exception, each academic division agreed to shift their classes to this alternative delivery system to keep the semester going. Faculty members who lived in the Northshore area were not as severely impacted by the Katrina experience, and they proposed that some classroom type classes continue at First Baptist Church of Covington, Louisiana. This plan was also approved, and about a hundred students living in that area utilized

that option. The faculty families received encouragement from Southwestern Seminary faculty families who hosted them in their homes, as well as being offered a large number of clothing options from churches in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

The administrative team relocated to Atlanta to make the Decatur extension center the seminary's temporary base of operations. Some lived in housing provided by churches in the Atlanta area, but many lived in the Clairmont Crest senior adult housing facility owned by the Georgia Baptist Convention. Food, clothes, cooking implements, and dishware were collected in the former church gym at the Decatur campus to help meet the needs of faculty, staff, and students alike. First Baptist Church of Atlanta offered classrooms for students, so almost all the classes were relocated there to allow the Decatur location to house all the administrative offices. Chick-fil-A generously catered a meal one day a week, and the fellowship in the former church cafeteria area was always warm between faculty, staff, and students over meals at that location. Many of the administrative team were able to relocate back to New Orleans early in 2006, living for months in the Providence Guest House. Most of the campus housing was ready for faculty and students by August 2006, and a modest on-campus program began again that academic year.

Because the seminary was able to continue virtually all of its classes in the difficult days following Katrina, the student body stayed largely intact through the Katrina crisis. Students in their last semester of seminary in fall 2005 were able to complete the work toward their degrees and receive their diplomas at graduation exercises in December 2005 at the seminary's Birmingham extension center location, Church at Brook Hills. Even though sister institutions made the kind offer to allow NOBTS students to transfer and enroll at no charge in the fall 2005 semester, most NOBTS students stayed enrolled at NOBTS, or laid out a semester or two and then resumed their studies at NOBTS. The part of the student body most impacted by the storm were international students, whose immigration status could have been in jeopardy if the semester had not gone forward. So many international students, particularly doctoral students, went to the sister SBC seminaries offering the free tuition. But as a whole, the Katrina event did not cause a large drop in student enrollment. Between the 2005–2006 and 2006–2007 academic years, student enrollment declined just about 350 students, from 3,761 to 3,412. However, it

had bounced back to 3,605 students by the next academic year, 2007–2008, and by 2014–2015 a new enrollment record of 3,908 had been reached, surpassing even the previous all-time high enrollment in 2003–2004.

At one meeting in the midst of these challenging days, the administrative team began to list all the ways that God had providentially provided for NOBTS long before the storm to prepare our way to survive the storm. An opportunity had come to increase the seminary's property insurance just months before the storm, and the insurance protection was essentially tripled from \$10 million to \$33 million. The seminary had sold off a couple of off-campus apartment buildings to another institution, largely because of security concerns, but these buildings were greatly damaged and the income from the sale was more valuable to the recovery efforts than the storm-damaged buildings were worth. The seminary had moved from a health insurance policy for its employees primarily served by one New Orleans hospital to a nationally transportable health insurance policy, which was crucial for the faculty families who evacuated to different states. The existence of the large facility donated by Columbia Drive Baptist Church to house the seminary's temporary headquarters in Decatur, Georgia, was a Godsend, including the fact that it housed the backup servers for the Seminary's internet system. The seminary's early adaptation of the online class delivery system, and the use of internet-assisted components even in regular semester on campus classes, made the transition to the all-online "threaded discussion" format possible. The seminary's large extension center system, largely unaffected by Katrina, continued as an anchor for student enrollment through the post-Katrina days. The seminary's consortial agreements with other Louisiana libraries (LOUIS) and Georgia libraries (GALILEO), along with its online resources and agreements with various Baptist college libraries, made it possible for the seminary to continue without immediate access to the John T. Christian Library on campus. The recent construction of the Providence Guest House provided a venue to house National Guard and state police troops at the seminary, and their presence prevented the sort of looting on the seminary campus that was rampant across the city. In all, the administrative team listed two pages of specific ways in which they realized in retrospect that God had prepared his seminary to survive the tragic damage caused by Hurricane Katrina.



### **The Pandemic of 2020**

In Spring of 2020, another worldwide pandemic, reminiscent of the one in the Seminary's first year, impacted NOBTS and Leavell College. The COVID-19 numbers were very high in New Orleans, and the Louisiana governor imposed a quarantine with statewide limitations on businesses and public gatherings. The New Orleans mayor imposed some even stronger limitations on the city. As with schools across the country, NOBTS and Leavell College moved their in-person classes to internet classes in March 2020 and continued through the semester to complete all classes. Chapel had to be discontinued; the cafeteria closed; and all offices closed. Faculty and administrative meetings were held by video conferencing.

Some schools lost tens of millions of dollars due to the pandemic, but because of its Katrina experience and its early adoption of online learning, NOBTS was well-positioned to make this transition. Almost all the Seminary students stayed enrolled, and most who lived on campus continued to do so. The school had several "socially distanced" social events through the Spring and Summer to help break the isolation of faculty members, staff, and students caused by the quarantine.

The Seminary administration outlined several budgetary adjustment options in case the school experienced financial reversal, but happily only the most modest of these options had to be implemented. The school was concerned that Summer enrollment would decrease, so the administration launched a "Bridge Campaign" to assist students financially, many of whom had lost jobs and income. The school's donors came through in an amazing way with \$435,000 to assist students, and Summer enrollment held steady.

Like at all institutions of higher learning, the Seminary administration was concerned about the Fall semester enrollment as well. The institution's student enlistment personnel were not able to travel to recruit new students because of the pandemic. But the Seminary initiated "Bridge Campaign 2.0" for the Fall semester, and again the donors came through with \$275,000 to help the students through this crisis time. Fall enrollment remained steady. The school was able to obtain a Paycheck Protection Program to continue paying Seminary personnel whose offices were closed.

The Seminary reached its \$1 million goal for the Providence Fund to help fund the budget. The SBC Cooperative Program, which some thought would face dramatic reductions, continued within just a few percentage points of the budgeted amount. Amazingly, through it all, NOBTS was able to finish the year “in the black” financially. NOBTS was begun as the School of Providence and Prayer in the midst of a pandemic, and it is still the School of Providence and Prayer to this day!

## **Theological Education Delivered to You: The Extension Centers and Online Learning**

**Norris Grubbs, PhD**

*Norris Grubbs is provost and professor of New Testament and Greek at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.*

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary was one of the pioneers of theological education through extension centers and online learning. Extension center education partners with the local churches to offer accredited theological training to equip leaders where they are called to serve. Many extension centers are located in a local church setting. Extension center education allows students who feel called to further their theological training the opportunity to do so without having to move to New Orleans.

### **Extensions Center Beginnings**

NOBTS began extension center education during Dr. Landrum P. Leavell II's presidency. The first extension center work was in partnership with the Home Mission Board and the Florida Baptist Convention. In 1979, the seminary helped begin an "ethnic center" for training in South Florida, reaching Hispanic and Haitian pastors. Not long after that, Dr. John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana, encouraged the seminary to start a center for training in Shreveport. A series of undergraduate off-campus centers began in 1979 under the leadership of Dr. Jerry Breazeale, the dean of the School of Christian Training (later called Leavell College). The first extension centers offered a portion of the Associate of Divinity degree and included Boaz, Alabama; Tampa, Florida; Shreveport, Louisiana; and North Georgia. One goal of extension work was to give opportunities for theological training to those who were already serving in a local church but did not feel called to leave their ministries. Dr. Jimmy Dukes, former dean of the extension centers, remarked, "We were able in the early years to reach out particularly to pastors who had not gotten theological training and were not considering theological training because it was so far away. They had families and responsibilities and could not 'pull up stakes' and

move to campus. So, we reached out to those kinds of people in the five southeastern states.” Starting an extension close to where the students were serving in ministry allowed them to gain quality theological training without relocating to New Orleans.

Dukes began to work with the undergraduate extensions in 1983 and helped expand the program. The seminary knew that traditionally 40% of Southern Baptist pastors had no higher education or theological training, so the need for theological training was great, specifically with the undergraduate program. Dukes commented, “I remember meeting with several associational directors in Mississippi and asking for names of pastors in their association without a college degree. In just a few days, I had 120 names. We saw the need.”

Undergraduate courses were typically offered on Mondays, with students able to take three or four classes each semester towards their degree. Qualified local pastors helped the seminary provide accredited training by teaching as adjuncts in the various extension centers. All undergraduate students had to complete a residency requirement of at least 24 credit hours taken on the New Orleans campus. One-week intensive workshops on the New Orleans campus allowed students the opportunity to complete their residency hours in a timely manner. Students were also able to complete their degrees by transferring in general education classes from local colleges.

The first graduate centers were officially opened in 1982. A few classes had been offered since 1980 in the North Georgia center due to repeated requests from local pastors, denominational leaders, and interested students. In 1982, a cycle of courses was established at the North Georgia center, which began at the Roswell Street Baptist Church, where alumnus and former trustee Dr. Nelson Price was pastor. Five other graduate centers were begun in 1982 as well, including Birmingham, Alabama; Mobile, Alabama; Graceville, Florida; Shreveport, Louisiana; and Jackson, Mississippi. The Jackson site was eventually moved to Mississippi College, and the Graceville site was established at the Baptist College of Florida. Partnering with the local Baptist colleges has been a fruitful aspect of the extension center system.

As NOBTS began extension center education, each graduate center had a four-year cycle of courses offered for required work in the Master of Divinity program. Courses were typically scheduled on Mondays. Professors from the New Orleans campus

commuted to the extension locations and taught an afternoon class with an adjunct teacher leading the evening class. In some locations, this required the professor to fly and then be picked up for a several-hour drive to the local extension. After teaching the class, the professor would be driven back to the airport and fly home. Often students would volunteer to transport the professors between the airport and the center, and the professor and student shared valuable conversations.

The task of providing quality training at the extension centers was not easy. Dr. William Warren, professor of New Testament and Greek, who taught at the extension center when he first began at the seminary recalled,

My first time to teach in one of our extension centers was in Orlando about a year after having come to NOBTS in 1990. Teaching in an extension center was somewhat of a privilege, with teaching opportunities offered through the dean's office. The day started early, with a flight to Orlando via Nashville. I would leave New Orleans around 6:30 a.m., then arrive in Orlando around 12:15 p.m. At that point, a student would pick me up at the airport, and we would rush to class so that we could begin at 1:00 p.m. Almost as soon as the class finished around 5:00 p.m., we would rush back to the airport so that I could catch the flight back to New Orleans via Nashville. I would arrive home at about 11:00 p.m., barring no flight delays. I remember one week, the flight was delayed in Nashville, so I finally arrived home at about 2:00 a.m. The next day I had a class to teach at 8:00 a.m. Such schedules were not for the faint of heart, but at least we got to keep the frequent flyer miles!

In each location, the seminary retained a liaison/director to handle administrative details such as registration, collection of fees, ordering textbooks, and so forth. Each center contained some library facilities, and often there were cooperative agreements with local libraries so NOBTS students could access their resources. Students could complete approximately two-thirds of the degree at the local extensions, and the other part of the degree could be completed through one-week intensive workshops on the New Orleans campus.

In 1994, NOBTS began experimenting with Compressed Interactive Video (CIV) for extension center education. The use of CIV allowed a professor to teach from New Orleans to various

extension center sites, which were also connected through the phone line to a CIV monitor. At the time, CIV was on the leading edge of educational technology, and very few schools were doing anything like it. The seminary's accrediting agencies approved NOBTS to utilize CIV in 1997, beginning as an experimental project. The utilization of CIV multiplied the efforts of the New Orleans faculty and provided access to the campus resources to students throughout the Southeast.

The initial attempts at CIV were not without problems. Dr. Charlie Ray commented, "I remember teaching one of the first classes using CIV, and we were told not to move from place to place. If you moved, there would be a little trail of your body showing on the screens elsewhere since there was a brief delay. We've come a long way since then." The seminary made significant investments in CIV equipment to facilitate this type of training, and the faculty in New Orleans learned to teach with this emerging technology. Faculty were encouraged to travel to extension sites a couple of times a semester, but the use of CIV limited the number of trips New Orleans faculty were required to make to the extensions. In 2013, the seminary began to use web-conferencing technology to facilitate distance education. The seminary continues to investigate ways that improved technology may allow for greater access to theological education. Each year, as the quality of internet access has improved across the Southeast, the student experience has continued to develop and grow. Interaction between New Orleans faculty and extension center students has continued to be an important part of the courses taught via CIV.

From the beginning in 1979, NOBTS has expanded, relocated various extension centers, and adjusted what was offered at each site, but the philosophy remained largely the same. The seminary wanted to make theological education accessible to as many people as possible, and the extension centers provided a convenient way for many to receive quality training for ministry.

### **Extension Center Expansion**

By 1992, seminary courses were offered in eleven locations, including a campus in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and a significant portion of NOBTS students were extension center students. That same year, Dr. Jimmy Dukes was tasked with the oversight of the graduate extension centers in addition to what he was already do-

ing with the undergraduate sites. By the mid-1990s, NOBTS had expanded to fifteen extension center locations, and over one thousand students were enrolled off-campus. The use of CIV allowed faculty to teach to several centers at once, which was an important factor in the expansion. At this point, a significant portion of the seminary's student body was composed of extension center students. For example, in 1997, 32% of the students were enrolled at extension centers. Another 12% of the student enrollment was from prison extension sites and Church Leadership Certificate sites. Thus, in 1997, over 40% of the NOBTS student population was enrolled somewhere other than New Orleans. The number of extension center students peaked in 2003–2004, when 1,351 students were enrolled as extension center students.

The growth and expansion of extension centers prepared the seminary for the coming storm. When Hurricane Katrina hit on August 29, 2005, approximately half of the student body was enrolled somewhere other than New Orleans. As a result, many NOBTS students were relatively unaffected by the storm personally. Their homes and their classrooms were never in the storm's area of destruction. Also, New Orleans students scattered throughout the Southeast because of Katrina were able to pick up their seminary education through offerings at the closest extension site. Many of the classes students were taking were not impacted by the total shutdown of the New Orleans campus. Perhaps no other seminary in the world was better equipped to handle the devastation brought on by Hurricane Katrina.

After Hurricane Katrina, the student population was more heavily focused off-campus than in New Orleans. Whereas 56% of the students were on campus in 1997 and still 51% in 2005, that number dropped to 46% the year after Katrina. The impact of internet classes shifted this number as well. In 2019, approximately 44% of students enrolled were on the New Orleans campus.

In the year following Katrina, the seminary decided to place a renewed emphasis upon extension center education, establishing three "hubs" to serve the extension center system and moving full-time faculty to some extensions. Three regional deans were commissioned to administrate the hubs. Dr. Norris Grubbs was tasked with the role of the regional dean for Louisiana and Mississippi. Dr. Steve Echols was the regional dean for Georgia and Alabama, and Dr. Mark Stephens was the regional dean for Florida.

Dr. Jimmy Dukes, the associate provost, was tasked with overseeing all extension center work. Each regional dean was responsible for the centers in their area and coordinating the extension center for maximum efficiency. While the personnel and responsibilities have shifted some, the seminary maintains the general administrative structure established in 2006.

Since the late 1990s, NOBTS had offered theological training at fifteen locations. While there was some movement and interchange, the number of extension sites remained stable until 2007 when the North Mississippi Center was started on the campus of Blue Mountain College. From 2012 until 2017, the number of extension centers increased by one-third. The strategy for extension centers was adjusted in 2013 to focus on smaller centers closer to where the students lived. Thus, several new centers were established within driving distance from existing centers. The extension center expansion included sites in Huntsville, Rainsville, and Tuscaloosa in Alabama, as well as Duluth, Jonesboro, Savannah, Augusta, and Columbus in Georgia. At its peak, the seminary had twenty-five extension centers located throughout the Southeast.

### **Online Education**

As the role of internet education has increased, the need for extension center education has subsided. NOBTS was an early adapter of online education. The seminary experimented with online courses as early as 2000 but has more heavily invested in this delivery format in recent years. Consequently, the seminary has closed several extension center sites in the last few years. The seminary currently has fifteen extension sites serving students throughout the Southeast. In many cases, students attend the extension center because they desire a community of learning, which they struggle to maintain online. NOBTS will have to continue to manage the size of the extension center system since student interest continues to shift.

### **Beginnings**

NOBTS began offering online classes in the spring semester of 2000. One graduate course and two undergraduate courses were offered. One of the undergraduate courses did not enroll any students, and the two classes that went forward were relatively small. The graduate course was Philosophical Foundations of Christian



Education taught by Dr. Tim Searcy, and Dr. Thomas Strong taught Greek 1 as the undergraduate course. Strong remarked,

I found it both challenging and exciting – challenging to learn a new way of offering courses and exciting to be on the cutting edge of online learning for our institution. In reflection, it was actually new to many institutions at that time – few had ventured into online learning at other institutions, so there were few models to imitate. Also, we had many experiments, both with the uploading of information and the presentation of the information. Some of the experiments succeeded, and some failed. For those which failed, we simply saw it as an opportunity to seek another possible means to accomplish the task. For example, because we had difficulty getting a font that we could use, I had to learn simplified HTML in order to create the tables and Greek words in each lesson. I distinctly remember some thinking that it was a passing fad and required too much investment of time/energy. Though they were correct about the incredible investment of time/energy, they were incorrect about this being a passing fad. We have come a long way, but I am glad that we continue to emphasize the importance of accessible education. I am honored and thankful to have been a part of the groundbreaking process of online learning at NOBTS.

The following semester, twelve online classes were offered. At this time, the seminary's accrediting agencies only allowed a portion of a degree to be offered through distance education, including online courses. Thus, the online courses were mainly offered to help students speed their coursework along or reach students who could not take classes on a regular schedule.

Many students valued the online offerings as a matter of convenience. Students were no longer required to drive to the nearest extension center or campus, and those who worked during the times when classes were offered were still able to take classes. At first, students who lived on or near the New Orleans campus were not allowed to register for online courses. Over time, this restriction was dropped, and students throughout the NOBTS system enrolled in online courses.

### **The Impact of Hurricane Katrina**

In the weeks following Hurricane Katrina, the NOBTS faculty was scattered without access to their homes or office. The administration decided to try and continue classes for the fall 2005 semester using online course offerings. Two weeks after Katrina, the seminary faculty met on the campus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and discussed how to redesign the curriculum and offer every course through an online format. Faculty were provided with laptops and given the monumental task of continuing to teach the courses through an online format that they were previously offering on-campus in New Orleans. While some faculty had been teaching online before this time, many had not. The seminary provided training, and the faculty helped each other learn how to navigate the BlackBoard Learning Management System. A few faculty had thought to bring an electronic copy of their notes on their way out of New Orleans, but many were essentially building their classes from the ground up without many resources at hand. Every faculty member had to spend hours learning to teach in a new way. Students were given the opportunity to continue their classes online, and many did. Professors and students alike were grateful to have the opportunity to communicate with those who had been separated so suddenly. A few professors were able to teach at an extension or at a class on the New Orleans campus in the spring of 2006, but most of the faculty were primarily online teachers for the 2005–2006 academic year.

For obvious reasons, the Katrina experience drastically increased the number of classes that were ready to be offered online as well as the number of faculty who were equipped to teach online. However, as the New Orleans campus reopened in the fall 2006 semester, several factors pushed against the growth of online education. Many faculty were so relieved to get back to a “normal life” that their focus was on the traditional classroom. Before Katrina, faculty volunteers had taught online, but not everyone was forced to teach in the new format. Katrina forced some who did not see themselves as online teachers to teach in the new delivery method. When these professors returned, they were happy to resume teaching on campus and hesitant to teach online in the near future. The seminary’s online programs did continue to grow, but the growth was steady rather than dramatic.

## **Degree Completion and Hybrids**

Before 2014, the seminary was not permitted by the accrediting agencies to offer any degrees completely online. Online courses were used primarily to supplement the ways students could take courses. In 2009, Leavell College began to outline how students who had completed the associate's degree could use the online offerings with workshops to complete their degree. Students were afforded the opportunity to finish degrees that, otherwise, they would not have been able to complete, and the seminary continued to make education as accessible as possible.

Before 2012, the faculty had begun to experiment with hybrid courses that combined occasional face-to-face meetings with an online learning component. While the faculty continued to utilize hybrid courses in various ways, the administration outlined a cycle for hybrid courses that met four times beginning in fall 2012. These courses allowed the seminary to reach out regionally to those who could travel to campus just four times in a semester while completing the rest of the work online. Students who were able to attend half of the class meetings in a "hub" or on the New Orleans campus could fulfill part of their on-campus requirements. Some students found it easier to commit four days a semester to fulfill the residential requirement than to commit a full week for a workshop. Many students found the hybrids to be a healthy balance between a fully-online environment and coming to class every week. Again, the faculty were forced to learn to teach in new ways to make theological training accessible.

Since each hybrid class was based upon a robust online course, the development of online courses was an important factor for the growth of hybrids. Similarly, some online courses were developed because of the need to have the backbone for the hybrid course. The continued development of courses was vital for the time when the seminary would be allowed to offer fully online classes.

## **Online Learning Center and the Rubicon Project**

Since the seminary was constantly developing new online courses, the administration decided to appoint someone to help oversee the internet delivery system. Dr. Craig Price was appointed the associate dean of Online Learning in 2008. Price and his staff were responsible for creating the Online Learning Center,

which promotes the online delivery systems and helps maintain a system of quality control for the courses.

By 2011, most of the undergraduate and graduate courses were available online. However, some essential classes were missing for a full degree to be available. Dr. Kelley and the administration wanted NOBTS to be ready to offer fully online degrees whenever the accrediting agencies approved such a course of action. Thus, they made an important decision to “cross the Rubicon” and finish out the courses needed to offer fully online degrees. In a spring faculty meeting, each faculty member was tasked with creating a new online course to help round out the needed courses for the online delivery program. Faculty received technological help if needed for creating courses, but faculty members were responsible for completing their new course in the following year. Every faculty member was enrolled in the “Teaching in the Twenty-First Century” graduate certificate as a means of providing needed technological training for the new types of teaching. “The Rubicon Project,” as Kelley titled it, was essential in preparing NOBTS for the coming days of fully online degrees.

### **Fully Online Degrees**

The seminary first offered fully online degrees in 2014. That year, the Master of Theological Studies, a 48-hour degree, was approved to be offered completely online. The Master of Arts (Biblical Studies) and Master of Arts (Theology) were developed and offered online as well. NOBTS was among the first seminaries to be approved to offer all-online degrees by the Association of Theological Schools. While some students were interested in these shorter degrees, there was still a desire for the standard degrees to be offered online.

In 2015, the seminary began to offer the associate’s, bachelor’s, and Master of Divinity degrees online. That year, the trustees approved removing the residency requirement for NOBTS students. The removal of an on-campus requirement meant that students could truly complete their studies completely online. Many students began to utilize the online delivery method instead of workshops or hybrid options for courses. Most NOBTS students today do not complete their classes totally online but use the online courses to continue their education during semesters when they could not attend at an extension or the New Orleans campus. Some students can only take classes through the online method,

and NOBTS continues to expand its global reach through internet courses.

Currently, the seminary offers multiple completely online degrees and as well as certificates for specialized training. Degrees are offered in English, Spanish, and Korean. In 2018–2019, the student body was composed of 19% internet-only students, and almost 26% of the credit hours taught were taken online. The majority of students at the seminary will take at least one online course before they finish.

In addition to traditional online courses, which are asynchronous, NOBTS and Leavell College offer some courses which utilize web conferencing software to enable online students to participate in the live class on campus. Students who take NOLA2U Live classes participate in the class from their home or office computer as if they were in the class on campus. Many of the PhD classes are offered in this format. Students who take NOLA2U Flex classes can either participate live or watch the class's video within a short period to receive credit. Regardless of the format, the administration and faculty of NOBTS and Leavell College have shown that they will continue to seek ways to make theological education accessible to those called to pursue it.



## **The NOBTS and Leavell College of Tomorrow: The Future of Theological Education**

**Norris Grubbs, PhD**

*Norris Grubbs is provost and professor of New Testament and Greek at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.*

Theological education has undergone fundamental changes in recent years, and the pace of change seems to increase year by year. In light of these changes, no one can responsibly predict exactly what theological education will be like in 25–50 years. However, based on the heritage of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) and Leavell College and the initiatives we have begun, we anticipate that the future NOBTS (and perhaps most successful seminaries) will have several key characteristics. Every successful institution has to be driven by its mission, and that will be just as important in the future as now. In addition, successful seminaries will likely be more urban and ethnically diverse, provide flexible learning opportunities, find ways to deal with rising costs, develop partnerships with churches and other educational institutions, and provide more efficient pathways to the traditional degrees.

### **A Foundation for the Future**

Every institution has to deal with an ever-changing environment. NOBTS recently experienced presidential change when Dr. Jamie Dew became the ninth president of our School of Providence and Prayer in June 2019. Successful institutions face challenges with the mission in mind. Dr. Dew led us to articulate the NOBTS and Leavell College mission statement in these words: “NOBTS and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.” The seminary and college will be guided by this mission as we face the future. Each word in this statement was chosen prayerfully and carefully. Everything we do or decide not to do will be decided in part by it. Let us examine the new mission statement in greater detail.

We exist to *prepare servants*. In Matthew 20, the mother of James and John came to Jesus, bowed down, and requested that he

would let her sons sit on his right and left in the kingdom. When the other disciples heard about it, they were angry, presumably because they wanted the place of honor (28:24). Jesus responded by teaching the disciples about the nature of his kingdom and the importance of being a servant.

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for man.” (Matt 20:25–28)<sup>1</sup>

A Christian is one who follows Christ. If we truly follow him, we must be servants. Therefore, NOBTS and Leavell College will focus attention and energy on producing graduates who serve.

The first sermon Dr. Jamie Dew preached in chapel was from Phil 2:5–11, entitled “Kill the Peacock.” A “peacock” is one who struts around and shows off. Even though their bodies are small, peacocks spread their feathers to make themselves look larger than they really are. The peacock attitude is the exact opposite of Jesus’s attitude. Jesus demonstrated the attitude of a servant when he “emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant” (Phil 2:7). Our desire is for God to help us mold and shape graduates who would pick up the towel and the basin and serve others for God’s glory.

We will prepare servants to *walk with Christ*. Those who have attended seminary or a religious college understand an ironic truth. The time spent preparing for ministry and studying the Bible can often be a time that is spiritually dry. Perhaps because the Bible is used as a textbook and examined thoughtfully and not simply read devotionally, students often struggle during seminary with their relationship to God. They come excited and “on-fire” for the Lord, and, if not careful, they can lose the excitement and fervor that drove them to seminary for God’s glory.

As a seminary, we want to combat the spiritual decline that sometimes accompanies formal education. We seek to do this

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible.



through many avenues. The curriculum is designed to include courses focused upon spiritual formation. Our faculty and administration must cultivate a close walk with Christ so that students can learn and grow with them. Often students grow in their relationship to Christ as faculty and staff mentor and guide them during their time of education. Our campus event calendar must provide opportunities for students to build the kinds of relationships that can lead to accountability and disciple-making moments. When they first arrive, we sometimes tell students that if they leave our institution with a full head and an empty heart, we have failed in our task. Not only do we pray their intellectual knowledge increases while at NOBTS and Leavell College, but we also pray they grow deep roots in their faith, which can sustain them for a lifetime of ministry.

The need for students to walk with Christ is painfully obvious. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). The key to successful ministry is abiding in Christ. NOBTS and Leavell College can equip students with the tools they will need for ministry in various ways, but even the best training cannot give the strength needed to serve faithfully in a ministry setting. Our students must grow deep in their relationship with Christ to withstand the storms of ministry that are certain to come.

NOBTS and Leavell College will prepare servants to walk with Christ and *proclaim His truth*. God desires more than servants who walk with him. He wants his followers to call others into the kingdom. Thus, our graduates need to be prepared to proclaim the truth of God's Word effectively. Our curriculum is designed to guide students as they learn more about how to study the Bible. This includes understanding the culture and context of the biblical audience, learning how Christians have understood the truth of Scripture through the ages, and discovering how to think about the challenges of today's world in light of God's Word. In addition, graduates will have opportunities to learn about and practice preaching and teaching God's Word, serving others in a ministry setting, and leading others to grow in their relationship with God.

While many schools have left the moorings of the Bible in search of "relevance," NOBTS and Leavell College are determined to remain anchored to the Word of God. We recognize that only God's Word is inerrant and able to transform lives.

Nothing is more relevant than God's Word to his people. Therefore, our graduates must dedicate themselves to knowing and sharing the truth of God to be effective.

The final piece of the revised mission statement of NOBTS and Leavell College is to *fulfill His mission*. Each of the former elements (serving, walking with Christ, proclaiming His truth) are pointed towards this goal of fulfilling the mission God has given. Each of the four Gospels gives a version of the Great Commission. After Jesus was resurrected, he gave his disciples final marching orders. Matthew records his version in Matt 28:18–20.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

One could certainly expand on what the mission involves, but the Great Commission is the unchanging foundation. As a seminary, we are aimed at changing the world for Christ. We want to see lost people being saved, previously unreached nations hearing about Jesus, stagnated churches growing again, and believers living their lives in total obedience to Christ. We want to see disciples. Students who come to NOBTS and Leavell College are not simply trying to gain an education, and we are not merely trying to educate them. Instead, we are seeking to equip graduates to go out in the power of Christ to make disciples and change the world. May God help us to be effective as we prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission!

### **Glimpses of a Possible Future**

A Danish proverb states, "Predictions are difficult, especially when they involve the future."<sup>2</sup> In the same vein, James warns against presuming to plan the future without considering God's will in chapter 4, verses 13–15:

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Frank Shapiro, "Quotes Uncovered: Fools and Theory," Freakonomics Blog (italicized – word won't let you use italics in comments), July 30, 2009, <https://freakonomics.com/2009/07/30/quotes-uncovered-fools-and-theory/>.

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

Therefore, we are hesitant to prognosticate about the future of theological education. Certainly, all that we think might happen is subject to the sovereign will of God. In addition, we are best able to speak about the future from the perspective of a Southern Baptist seminary, in the context of New Orleans, even though we expect many seminaries will find similar experiences and challenges in the future. With these cautions in mind, we will offer six suggestions of what the future might look like for a seminary like ours.

First, seminaries of the future will provide *flexible learning opportunities*. NOBTS and Leavell College currently provide classes in traditional formats and through online offerings that are asynchronous. Also, students may take classes through "NOLA2U Live" courses that provide synchronous online interaction between professors and students through "NOLA2U Flex" classes, which provide the freedom to participate in the live class or participate online during the week of class. Students may also take classes through mentoring classes in partnership with a local ministry setting and at various extension centers hosted by local colleges and churches. Some of these offerings were not possible even ten years earlier. Therefore, we are hesitant to predict exactly what formats future classes may take.

Instead, we suggest seminaries will continue to provide flexible learning opportunities to meet the needs of students. The most recent accreditation standard revisions by the Association of Theological Schools (June 2020) allow for fully online degrees at every level except the research doctoral degree with proper approval. NOBTS and Leavell College already offer a variety of undergraduate and graduate degrees fully online, and the Doctor of Ministry, Doctor of Educational Ministry, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees are available with limited trips to campus. In today's world, students can communicate in real time with the professor and the rest of the class from any internet connection. As schools compete for students and seek to maximize their impact, this trend will only continue.

A predicted rise in flexible options for obtaining a degree should not be taken to forecast the demise of residential education. Each of the options above has been added by NOBTS and Leavell College while maintaining a robust focus upon the campus in New Orleans. We believe that some students will continue to want to focus on their education through a residential setting. While students may receive a quality education fully online, students who primarily get their degree in a residential setting are more likely to be full-time students, and, for this reason, they are more likely to complete their degree successfully. In addition, on-campus students benefit from the curriculum and culture of the classroom. They may have lunch with a professor or fellow students and think through topics discussed in class or issues in their particular ministry setting. They will gather in the coffee shop and refine some deep theological issues in their minds. Therefore, we are not predicting the abandonment of residential education. Virtually every degree will be available from a distance, but the need for a residential campus will remain.

Second, seminaries will be *more urban and ethnically diverse*. Through much of our history, Southern Baptists have been a rural people. Beginning primarily in the 1960s, Southern Baptists have moved into suburban metropolitan areas. Our culture, however, is becoming more and more urbanized each day. People around the world are flocking to larger cities. For Southern Baptists to fulfill the Great Commission, without neglecting the rural and suburban areas that have been our base, we must impact lostness in the great cities of America and around the world. Few seminaries are in a better situation to prepare ministers for this brave new urban world than NOBTS. We are not predicting that seminaries of the future will only be in the cities. Rather, even if seminaries have a rural location, their students, staff, and faculty makeup will likely come from those who grew up in urban areas.

Moreover, population trends in the United States will create a more ethnically-diverse student body. According to an article by the Brookings Institute, the US will become “minority white” by 2045.<sup>3</sup> Since American society is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, Southern Baptists must train leaders to reach these persons for Christ. Non-Anglo congregations in the SBC have

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-minority-white-in-2045-census-projects/>

increased from 6,083 in 1998 to 11,605 in 2020.<sup>4</sup> Non-Anglo congregations increased from 5% of SBC congregations to now comprising 22.5%. Over 3,900 of these congregations are predominantly African American, and about 3,500 SBC congregations are Hispanic. Currently, about 7.5% of our SBC congregations are African-American (having more than doubled from 1,907 congregations in 1998 to 3,902 in 2020), and 6.7% are Latino.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Southern Baptists have over a thousand Asian congregations and congregations representing a variety of other minority groups.<sup>6</sup> Of course, the count of these ethnic congregations does not include the many ethnic and racial minorities who are members of racially mixed and/or predominantly Anglo churches. As the makeup of Southern Baptist churches becomes more ethnic, so will the makeup of Southern Baptist seminaries.

NOBTS and Leavell College currently offer classes in Spanish, French Haitian, and Korean. The need for multi-ethnic training will only increase in the future. As a part of this training, our faculty and administration must become more diverse as well. NOBTS has made a determined effort to broaden the ethnicity of both its faculty and its students over the last decade. In April 2018, the NOBTS approved a “Policy to Increase Ethnic, Racial, and Gender Diversity at NOBTS.”<sup>7</sup> While much work remains to be done in this area, the future need is clear. The membership of Southern Baptist churches is going to be more multi-ethnic as we move toward the future. Theological schools across America are training many more students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. One of the responsibilities of the seminaries of the future is to train students who can minister to the ethnic and language congregations in America’s cities.

Third, seminaries of the future will be *more costly and dependent upon fundraising for scholarships*. Every institution of higher learning is struggling with higher costs, including seminaries. Southern Baptist seminaries, including NOBTS, are blessed to be supported by

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/baptists/sbc-executive-committee-affirms-racial-diversity-report/>;

<http://www.sbc.net/BecomingSouthernBaptist/FastFacts.asp>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.sbc.net/BecomingSouthernBaptist/FastFacts.asp>

<sup>7</sup> The statement can be accessed online at <https://www.nobts.edu/faculty/itor/LemkeSW-files/Policy%20to%20Increase%20Faculty%20Ethnic%20Racial%20and%20Gender%20Diversity%20at%20NOBTS.pdf>

the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention. A little less than 30% of the total budget of NOBTS and Leavell College comes from the Cooperative Program. In essence, every Southern Baptist student receives a substantial scholarship because of the convention support. Therefore, Southern Baptist students feel the impact of rising costs of higher education less than others, but even at Southern Baptist schools, education has become significantly more expensive.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Cooperative Program (CP) accounted for approximately 70% of the budget at NOBTS. Declining CP income and increasing costs have shifted our budget from one that was primarily funded by the denomination to one primarily funded by tuition. As a result, we have been forced to raise more money for scholarships and raise the cost of education. The annual fund for NOBTS used to be something that friends of the seminary gave to and represented a small portion of the budget. Today, the “Providence Fund” is at least one million dollars of the seminary’s operating fund. In the same way, we have raised substantial funds for scholarships so that more than 40% of our tuition each year is provided by scholarships.

Rising costs are an issue for every institution. Some costs are specific to NOBTS and our location (such as increased flood insurance cost after Hurricane Katrina), but many of the expenses we bear are common to other schools. For example, every educational institution spends more money to meet the rigors of accreditation today than in previous years. As expectations have increased, largely due to federal regulations, schools are forced to hire more employees who will focus on issues of accreditation. In the same way, schools face rising costs associated with technology. Student desires have also shifted in the last few generations. While in the past, students expected to live in dorms that were dated and shared a communal bathroom, today, most students come to seminary, having lived in some version of apartment living. Students expect high-speed WiFi, flexible course offerings, writing centers, a full campus life, and all the “extras” that make for a full educational experience. Each of these items comes with an added cost to the institution, which typically is passed to the student.

In some ways, this is not a prediction as much as a look in the mirror. However, we don’t see anything on the horizon shifting the trend. In the future, school administrators will focus more attention on fundraising to keep the costs manageable, but in many

cases, tuition will continue to rise. This trend is one about which we are particularly concerned. Many Southern Baptist ministers do not have any formal theological education. While we are doing everything we can to make it more accessible, rising costs may prevent many from taking advantage of the opportunities offered.

Fourth, seminaries of the future will have *more partnerships*. We already see this happening in many ways. At NOBTS, we have articulation agreements with several Baptist colleges. Through our Accelerated MDiv program, religion majors at Baptist colleges can reduce their time in seminary and save a substantial amount of tuition. Partnerships like this enable students to gain the education that is needed without having to repeat courses they have already had in college. Also, we have many partnerships with church ministry schools and mentoring sites, allowing students to earn part of their degree while serving in a ministry setting with a local mentor. We even have a partnership with the North American Mission Board through their Send Network to train students in church planting and allow them to receive credit towards their MDiv degree.

We think rising costs and other pressures will encourage more partnerships in the future. Baptist colleges and seminaries are uniquely situated to partner together. Often, colleges offer degree programs that seminarians might desire. At the same time, many Baptist college students are interested in a seminary degree. Schools will be encouraged to think of partnership possibilities as they seek to recruit students for their programs. In addition, the role of the local church in theological education has always been important. As classes are offered through flexible online offerings, partnership possibilities with churches are more available than ever. Southern Baptist seminaries have not often partnered together, but we have hopes that schools might partner together in ways that are beneficial for all the institutions involved. For example, is it necessary for each SBC seminary library to maintain subscriptions to every journal, or could there be a consortium that involved sharing resources? As technology needs rise, could the SBC seminaries dream of ways to partner with technology that might be beneficial to all involved? Many secular schools have begun experimenting with consortiums in the past decade with vary-

ing success.<sup>8</sup> In the future, successful seminaries will be open to any partnership that is helpful to their students.

Fifth, seminaries will provide *shorter pathways to traditional degrees*. Several factors are lead to this conclusion. Many students enter college with a significant amount of credit towards their bachelor's degree already earned through dual-enrollment and Advanced Placement classes. Thus, the traditional time of four years in college is already being shortened. In addition, all of the SBC seminaries offer master's degrees that can be earned in one year of full-time study. Simultaneously, the Master of Divinity degree remains the recommended degree by seminary faculty and administration. As tuition and living costs rise, students may not be willing to invest four years of college and three years of seminary to earn the traditional MDiv. Thus, schools will be encouraged to provide shortened means to the MDiv and other traditional degrees.

NOBTS and many other seminaries already offer five-year programs that allow students to achieve their BA and MDiv in a total of five years. Through a combination of advanced standing and allowing qualified students to take graduate courses and count them toward their undergraduate degrees, students can save thousands of dollars and up to two years. Programs like this will become essential as costs continue to rise, and students have other degree options. In the future, shorter pathways to the DMin and PhD will also be important. In secular institutions, students often earn their master's degree while working on the research doctorate. Seminaries have typically not followed this model; in the future, however, they likely will.

Finally, successful seminaries of the future will be able to *deal with an increasingly rapid rate of change*. Institutions of higher education are not known for their adaptability. Historically, the pace of change for seminaries and colleges is slightly faster than the proverbial snail. In the last few decades, we have all been forced to adjust as the culture and environment have shifted. In the late 1990s, when I first began teaching for Leavell College, only a handful of professors were using PowerPoint, and color transpar-

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<sup>8</sup> See the following articles from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* for examples <https://www.chronicle.com/article/library-consortium-tests-interlibrary-loans-of-e-books/>; <https://www.chronicle.com/article/why-colleges-should-pool-teaching-resources/>; <https://www.chronicle.com/article/new-consortium-of-colleges-will-share-homemade-software-19812/>



encies were considered “high tech.” Hardly anyone had a laptop computer, and smartphones were not yet on the scene. The average classroom environment was basically the same as it was in the middle of the twentieth century. Not much had changed. However, in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, we have seen rapid change. Virtually every student has a laptop and a smartphone. Our classrooms provide WiFi access to the internet, and NOBTS has moved from having virtually no online presence to fully online degrees, synchronous class offerings at every level, including the PhD, and offering classes in ways that no one could have imagined in 1999.

Higher education has dealt with tremendous changes in areas like technology, libraries, student expectations, and learning management systems, to mention a few. Who can safely predict what changes artificial intelligence or some new discovery we do not even know about now might have upon colleges and seminaries? Instead, we want to suggest that the leaders of colleges and seminaries should be prepared for rapid change. Successful schools will not be able to keep doing things the way they have always been done and remain successful. They must be agile institutions ready to maintain focus on the mission while remaining flexible.

People respond to change in a variety of ways. Many people hate change. Some seem to thrive in the face of it. We think it is important to face change with a confident trust in the God who knows all things. Proverbs 3:5–6 says it best: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.” Our prayer is that God would bless New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Leavell College, and all who would seek to proclaim his kingdom as we enter into the future.



## Guiding Principles for NOBTS

**James (Jamie) K. Dew Jr., PhD**

*James (Jamie) K. Dew Jr. is president and professor of Christian Philosophy at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.*

I am deeply grateful for the contributors of this edition of the journal that have reflected upon the wonderful 100 years of history of NOBTS and Leavell College. As we turn now to the next century of ministry, we have given ourselves to a simple mission:

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

This mission will set the course for everything we do in the years to come. Every program we offer, every course we teach, every dollar we raise, and every initiative we unfold will come back to this mission. It captures who we have been for the last 100 years, what we are well situated to do now in our present day, and expresses the calling that God has placed upon us. Within this statement are four distinct principles that shape and direct our work.

### Servanthood

Quite literally, followers of Jesus go where he goes, do what he does, love what he loves, and are about what he is about. And as we look to Jesus himself, we find our Lord exemplifying servanthood in the way he loved people and showered them with grace. In Mark 10:42–45, for example, the Bible says:

Jesus called them over and said to them, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. But it is not so among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. For

even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus further demonstrated this in John 13 when “got up from supper, laid aside his outer clothing, took a towel, and . . . poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet” (vv. 4–5).

In response to Jesus’s example and call on our lives, the people of NOBTS and Leavell College commit ourselves to a life of servanthood. Though imperfect in our execution, we strive to crucify the pride and arrogance that often drives us, and instead follow our Lord in making ourselves low for the benefit of others and the advancement of the kingdom. In whatever tasks God gives us to do, we pray that we will do it with great humility and submission to God.

### Devotion

Absolutely nothing is more important for us as a people than that we walk with God and commune with him in all that we do. God made us for himself and in him is fullness of life. In the pursuit of theological education, we cannot allow our faith to transition from being something deeply spiritual and personal to being something purely academic and professional. This happens far too often in our institutions, and our lives and our work are the poorer for it. As Paul reminds us in Col 2:6–8, “So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in him, being rooted and built up in him and established in the faith.”

But there is also a very practical reason that we must cultivate and nurture our communion with God. In short, we cannot do what we are called to do without his sustaining power and provision within our ministries. In Ps 127:1, this is made painfully clear. The psalmist says, “Unless the Lord builds a house, its builders labor over it in vain; unless the Lord watches over a city, the watchman stays alert in vain.” We must remember that the work we are called to do is not just difficult work, it is impossible work—at least if we are doing it within our own power. Therefore, we remember the words of Jesus who said:

Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references are taken from the Christian Standard Bible.

branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. (John 15:4–5)

With this in mind, we commit ourselves to our walk with God and to cultivating an environment on campus where devotion is fundamental and spiritual formation takes place in all that we do. We pray that God would cleanse us of our sin and bring a renewal among us that others who have gone before us have tasted.

### **Gospel Proclamation**

As the first two principles have focused on who we seek to be, the second two focus on what it is that we do. NOBTS and Leavell College have been a people of proclamation, and we seek to be that for the age come. No matter what kind of ministry or vocation our students take up, we train them to proclaim the gospel in the places that God puts them. We prepare them by making sure they are well established in the doctrines of the faith as stated in the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. This document articulates both the faith once delivered to all the saints and also captures our doctrinal identity as Southern Baptists.

But being theological by itself is not enough. To be faithful to our calling, we must also develop our students in such a way that they become passionate proclaimers of our faith. As Paul instructs us, we must “preach the word . . . in season *and* out of season” (2 Tim 4:2). In every context and in every season, “we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23–24). Our students will do this in the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention and well beyond. May God work in us to make us a generation of gospel preachers that are faithful to the work of proclamation.

### **Mission**

Finally, in the years before us, we strive to do our part in sending people to the nations for the sake of Christ and his gospel. As Jesus instructed his disciples before leaving earth, we must take the gospel to those who have not heard. Jesus said,

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.  
Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. (Matt 28:18–20)

Given its location and positioning for cultural and global impact, NOBTS was started to be a seminary that takes the gospel to this nation and the nations abroad. There was a time when students poured off of our campus to the nations. We want to see that again in our lifetime, and pray for God's favor to us such that once again, he would raise up a generation of missionaries on this campus that will take the good news to the dark places of the world.

God has been faithful to us for over one hundred years, and he is faithful to us in the present age as well. Together, we move forward as the people of NOBTS and Leavell College to carry out this mission. May God add his favor to the work of our hands for the advancement of his kingdom.