

SPRING 2024

PUNITIVE & PRODUCTIVE SUFFERING

*The Southern Baptist Convention, American Warfare, and the
Celebration of Foreign Victims*



*Urakami Church and environs seen from the heights of Matsuyama-machi, Shigeo Hayashi, October 12, 1945,
Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum*

by **Drew Letellier, Columbia University '23**

Written for **Senior Thesis Seminar**

Advised by **Professor Natasha Lightfoot** and **Professor Paul Chamberlin**

Edited by **Zadie Winthrop, Ryo Nagao, Owen Hannon, and Zahra Yarali**

INTRODUCTION

The Wages of Sin

IN JUNE 1945, two months before atomic bombs would fall on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, leaders from the Southern Baptist Convention assembled in Nashville for its annual denomination-wide meeting. Items on the agenda of the Annual included the routine election of new board members, a petition to reduce alcoholism in the American workforce, and a reminder of interracial marriage's evils. The Annual's chief political concern, however, was the ongoing war effort against Imperial Japan, "still raging with increasing fury and frightfulness."¹ Despite lingering wartime anxieties, the German surrender a month prior had left Southern Baptist leaders with confidence in an imminent victory over Japan.² Typically used to chart basic international circumstances, the 1945 edition opens by reflecting on lessons from the war in the Pacific, so self-evident that "even a fool can understand them."³ Citing passages from Romans and the Book of Psalms, the brief report explains in plain terms that, for Japan and every other country, "the wages of sin is death," and "the nations that forget God shall be turned into hell."⁴

These comments would become disturbingly prophetic when, two months later, Little Boy and Fat Man detonated over Japan.⁵ By conservative estimates,

the bombs killed 130,000 Japanese civilians and military personnel, some instantaneously and others over the arduous weeks and months that followed.⁶ In both cities, the bombs demolished every home within 1.5 miles of ground zero. Surface temperatures exceeded 4,000°C. Radioactive rain fell upon the earth.⁷ The cautionary biblical metaphor presented during the Southern Baptist Convention's annual conference had become a cruel reality. The bombs had reduced Hiroshima and Nagasaki to veritable hellscape. However, in the decades-long aftermath of the attacks, the denomination's wartime portrayal of the Japanese as an irredeemable people deserving of the infernos was soon complicated by a peculiar counterweight: the same denomination's eager valorization of the Japanese and their swift adoption into the kingdom of God. Less than a year later, at the 1946 Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, the scorched ruins of Japan represented an enduring symbol of sinners' fate and, at the same time, "one of the outstanding missionary opportunities of all Christian history."⁸

This thesis seeks to understand Southern Baptist narrations of tragedy and explain the denomination's apparent doctrinal flexibility in adapting Convention narratives alongside the United States' changing relationship with Japan. In an evolution of the Southern Baptist's original June 1945 stance toward Japan, the denomination gradually dropped justifications of atomic punishment, what I call "punitive suffering," and replaced them with narratives of spiritual redemption and the purifying forces of destruction and suffering, what I call "productive suffering." Notably, the Church's

¹ Austin Crouch, "Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1945," 1945, 597, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1946.pdf.

² Crouch, "Annual of the Southern," 597.

³ Crouch, "Annual of the Southern," 29.

⁴ Crouch, "Annual of the Southern," 29.

⁵ The names of the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively.

⁶ Rinjirō Sodei, "Hiroshima/Nagasaki as History and Politics," *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (December 1, 1995): 1118–23.

⁷ The Avalon Project, "Chapter 9 - General Description of Damage Caused by the Atomic Explosions," in *The Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (Yale Law School, 2008), https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mp09.asp. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mp09.asp.

⁸ Duke McCall, "Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1946" (Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meet, Miami, Florida, 1946), 661, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1946.pdf.

transition from punitive justifications to productive ones was uneven and generally more reflective of ever-changing global circumstances and the shifting views of individual ministers than a single instance of organizational decision-making. Throughout this process, the Convention's shifting interpretations depended on an assumption of racial, national, and religious superiority. Though each element of this trifecta was emphasized at different points, to varying degrees, and without a prevailing organizational preference, it was nonetheless the foundation on which the SBC structured its interpretations.

Additionally, throughout the evolution of their narratives of Japanese suffering, Southern Baptists maintained a close, and frequently explicit association with the American military. Deliberately or not, a rotating framework of justifications for American military actions ensured that the SBC functioned as a valuable reinforcer of American foreign policy during the postwar era and into the back half of the twentieth century.

The significance of the Southern Baptist Convention's relationship with victims of American warfare becomes more evident within the context of the denomination's organizational prominence. Today composed of more than 13,000,000 registered members, the Southern Baptist Convention is the second-largest Christian denomination in the United States (behind Catholicism) and the largest Protestant denomination. In past decades, the denomination made up an even higher proportion of Americans. Between 1945 and 1990, total membership figures within the Church saw a peak of fifteen million congregants and never dipped below five million.⁹ Because of its size and Protestant orientation, the Church has stood as

one of the United States' most culturally and politically influential religious bodies since the second half of the twentieth century.

Colored by its white supremacist origins and evangelical underpinnings, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) adheres to a conservative brand of politics. Since its split from the Northern Baptists in 1845 as the slave-holding wing of Baptists, the challenges of an increasingly secularizing world have prompted leaders within the SBC to reiterate the Convention's evangelistic fundamentalism in response to the perceived threats of modernism.¹⁰ The progression of the Convention's official statement on faith and guiding theological principles—known as the Baptist Faith & Message (BF&M)—map these developments.¹¹ Revised in 1925 and 1963 in response to congregational controversies, every version of the BF&M holds the conservative position of biblical inerrancy, that the Holy Bible is “a perfect treasure of divine instruction” and “without any mixture of error.”¹² Because of this, SBC interpretations of the Bible are typically less fluid than might be found in more liberal denominations and ascribe a certain infallibility to Convention stances. Such certainty is particularly potent when interpreting mass death and suffering.

The SBC's structure also makes it a suitable candidate for analysis, given its status as a religious body that supports coherent, systematically-held ideologies. That said, an initial analysis of SBC's decentralized bodies might suggest the inability to draw overarching conclusions about the Convention from leadership alone. Indeed, the organization affords each Southern Baptist congregation a large degree of autonomy. Although the BF&M serves as the denomination's governing document, SBC churches are not strictly

9 David Atchison and Jan Cunningham, “Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1991” (Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meet, Atlanta, Georgia, 1991), 545, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1991.pdf.

10 The SBC was founded in 1845 after having split from the northern Baptists, a separation stemming from the denomination's insistence on the morality of slavery and the importance of its preservation (Woods et al. 2018, 5); Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2009).

11 Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon Southern Baptist Conservatives*, 206.

12 Herschel Hobbs, “Baptist Faith and Message” (Southern Baptist Convention, May 9, 1963), Southern Baptist Historical Library & Archives, <https://bfm.sbc.net/>.

required to adhere to its tenets. Every church within the Convention is also responsible for its own budget allocation, ministries, and finer points of theological emphasis.¹³ These churches fall into the larger unit of regional associations, which form larger state conventions and lead finally to the national organization of the SBC itself. It would appear, then, by the very nature of the various autonomous units, that directives from the SBC leadership and the conclusions reached by the annuals would have little bearing on Southern Baptists' actual structure and beliefs.

However, despite doctrinal controversy and the pressures of modernization, a consistent, unified Southern Baptist identity prevailed in the twentieth century. As historian Bill Leonard notes in his history of the Convention, the ability of SBC leaders to “[imbue] their constituency with a sense of organizational unity” ultimately reconciled the seemingly irreconcilable forces of “local autonomy, theological conservatism, and doctrinal imprecision.”¹⁴ Consequently, the Convention structure resembles a top-down organization more closely than a bottom-up one. During the 1900s, evangelical educational agencies and programs increasingly fell under the same authority of the SBC. The Convention “evolved into a highly centralized corporation supported by a loose confederation of autonomous congregations and theologically diverse subgroups.”¹⁵ Thus, contrary to what its decentralized policies would imply, the theological standards and rhetoric maintained by SBC leadership hold significant weight and represent broader Southern Baptist beliefs. Furthermore, during the most critical decades of the inquiry, individual congregation leaders rarely advocated for contrarian viewpoints hostile to the central governing body of the SBC. With this in mind, evaluating both the leadership and lower-level ministers will help analyze the evolution of Southern Baptist discourse about victims of warfare.

Finally, crucial to the operations of the SBC is its emphasis on missionary work and the spreading of the evangelistic gospel worldwide, work that has been a cornerstone of the Convention since its establishment. At the previously referenced June 1945 Annual, a description of the ideal Baptist theological seminary reveals the Convention's understanding of mission priorities, explaining that “the seminary that is to hold the balance of greatest power, wield the most far-reaching influence, and render the greatest service is the seminary that trains and sends out the largest number of missionaries for the home and foreign fields.”¹⁶ Ultimately, the SBC's combination of prominent conservatism, elevated missionary work, and political influence fostered several paradoxical narratives throughout the twentieth century. This is notably present in the simultaneous dismay and rejoicing in the wake of foreign suffering and, as this thesis will discuss, in the SBC's approach to those killed and wounded in Japan during WWII. This apparent contradiction and its effect on the Southern Baptist understanding of American foreign policy is the heart of what this thesis seeks to understand.

Previous works provide tremendous insights on some of the issues discussed in this thesis, including the historical relationship between Christians and tragedy, the worldwide affairs of Southern Baptist evangelicals, and the flexibility of American public opinion. Writing in the context of the Holocaust, Michael Steele's *Christianity, Tragedy, and Holocaust Literature* provides an excellent foundation for considering the SBC's relationship with tragedy. Steele contends that the Christian “tragic theory” that suffering must have some greater meaning often undercuts the “terrible complications of life and death.”¹⁷ In a targeted analysis of Western civilizations, he argues that, as Christianity expanded its cultural footprint, its optimistic and transcendent views of tragedy have become societally ingrained; consequently, understandings of human-inflicted brutality

13 Bill Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990).

14 Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope*, 53.

15 Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope*, 54.

16 Crouch, *Annual of the Southern*, 25.

17 Michael R. Steele, *Christianity, Tragedy, and Holocaust Literature, Contributions to the Study of Religion, Christianity and the Holocaust*, no. 41 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 13.

and genocide degrade. As a result, the Christian insider, “anesthetized by consolatory theism,” cannot register in a meaningful capacity the mass suffering of outsiders (non-Christians). Steele’s interpretation of a specifically Christian type of grief can be applied when interpreting Southern Baptist Convention documents that seem particularly callous, misguided, or ruthless regarding non-Christian Japanese civilians.

More urgently, Steele argues that the same interpretative shortcomings of European Christianity that prevent the understanding of genocide were also “intimately involved in...setting the stage for the Final Solution” and “part of the necessary preconditions for the Holocaust.”¹⁸ Steele’s analysis can be applied to Southern Baptists and the horrors wrought by American warfare. In the Convention’s optimistic tendency to integrate bombs and fire into a divine plan, the SBC dismissed the suffering of non-Americans and non-Christians, thus upholding the policies responsible for their suffering. Just as Steele claims that transcendent interpretations of atrocity are “incomplete, incongruent, and incompatible,” this thesis will argue that the same transcendent elements found within SBC interpretations of American warfare likewise “badly falsify the event[s].”¹⁹

The work of Historian Naoko Shibusawa, which uses the case study of post-war Japan to interrogate American relationships with conquered nations, is further helpful in understanding the SBC’s own transforming interpretations of Japan. In *America’s Geisha Ally*, she describes the American public’s swift and paternalistic transition of the hated Japanese enemy into a sympathetic people in need of proper guidance. Her analysis of the United States’ cultural transformation provides a valuable schema through which to view the Southern Baptist’s rhetorical reversal in writings about the Japanese during and after the war, one that broadly follows the pattern identified by Shibusawa in which

American policies and popular thought rationalize Japan’s subjugation in the hierarchical terms of adult and child. Additionally, *America’s Geisha Ally* observes that “the citizens of a powerful nation can unwittingly or subconsciously perpetuate their nation’s foreign policy.”²⁰ Shibusawa diagnoses an essential feature of the American post-war vision of Japan in her examination of the Hiroshima Maidens project. This American program funded plastic surgery for 25 female survivors of the atomic bomb. She notes the largely symbolic project’s important role in “channeling atomic guilt” and reinforcing an “interpretive framework that cast the Japanese as the dependents of a big-hearted and wise US breadwinner, protector, and parental figure.”²¹ Recognizing these elements of national guilt and race, this thesis will both identify many of the same dynamics of paternalism and religious reinforcement of foreign policy within the ideology of the Southern Baptist Convention and consider their ramifications for the United States and civilians abroad.

Despite the circulation of useful historical and theological frameworks, the specific dissonance I identify within the Southern Baptist Convention has yet to be analyzed. The organization implicitly and explicitly advocated for violent foreign policies and subsequently rejoiced when their bloodthirsty approach maimed non-Americans, non-Christians, and non-whites, creating the opportunity to save spiritually. This tendency amounts to a clear, grim effort to advance a distinctly Southern Baptist agenda, one inseparable from American politics. Others have assessed Southern Baptist opportunism; Helen Kim notes the inherent contradiction in the logic of global Southern Baptist evangelical movements, which simultaneously offer international charity and endorse white supremacist aims domestically.²² Within the SBC, Kim describes a “global compassion without global equality,” suggesting that without the latter, any genuine compassion that might

18 Steele, *Christianity, Tragedy, and Holocaust Literature*, 13.

19 Steele, *Christianity, Tragedy, and Holocaust Literature*, 14.

20 Naoko Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 12.

21 Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 12.

22 Helen Jin Kim, *Race for Revival: How Cold War South Korea Shaped American Evangelical Empire* (New York, NY, United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2022).

have existed is cheapened, turned into a cynical tool of conversion and thus power.²³ Kim's work complements Shibusawa, as it contends that even apparently innocuous religious ideas have political ramifications.²⁴ These notions, in particular, will play a vital role in demonstrating the profoundly problematic relationship that manifested between Southern Baptist Churches at home and death abroad even while Baptist ministers outwardly promote images of togetherness and mercy. The ministers' production of monstrously cynical, punitive visions of war-mongering and the churchgoers' benign prayers that the United States might save the Japanese from themselves by inflicting pacifying, productive suffering are ultimately more alike in their advocacy for destructive intervention than they are different. The remainder of this thesis will investigate how the Southern Baptist Convention, the second-largest Christian denomination in the United States, frequently changed the way it spoke about and treated foreigners as they transitioned from wartime enemies to victims of American aggression and allies. Specifically analyzing discussions of Japanese victims during World War II, I will demonstrate how the SBC repeatedly deployed similar rhetorical and imperial strategies to promote the growth of the Church and spread its conservative evangelical values through the use of real victims and purely rhetorical ones that existed only in sermons. Additionally, the thesis will survey how geopolitical change influenced shifts in the rhetoric of the SBC. I will pay special attention to how the SBC walked the metaphorical tightrope between purportedly peace-loving Christians and bellicose interventionists. As a necessary component of these considerations, the thesis will also consider the often racialized nature of Southern Baptist characterizations of victims. Whether blatant or subtle, condemnatory or paternalistic, all appeals to race by the Church ultimately contributed to the sanctification of future wars and the rationalization of their painful consequences.

Most of this thesis will rely upon analysis and close reading of significant Southern Baptist texts. These include major Southern Baptist publications such as the Baptist Press and Word & Way, as well as

Baptist convention notes, the sermons of notable Baptist leaders, various essays, missionary pamphlets, and other significant SBC materials. It is worth noting that many of the most revealing sources emerged several years or even decades following the events in question (e.g., SBC descriptions of Hiroshima survivors in 1953 or a missionary handbook on Japan from 1970). My thesis will trace the evolution of the SBC's framing of tragedy, answering how and when various acts of international aggression were justified or condemned within the SBC community.

The first chapter describes the SBC's punitive justifications of American foreign policy in the weeks and months immediately following the atomic bombings. Compared to later ones, these initial justifications were unconcerned with optimism, interested solely in inflicting pain on the idolatrous Japanese people. It also offers additional contextualization of the SBC relative to other religious and political factions. Furthermore, this chapter investigates how the Southern Baptist response to the Holocaust previewed the denomination's eventual response to the atomic bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The second chapter will demonstrate how the Convention's initial narration of Japanese victims shifted over time, firstly including more Japanese testimony that reinforced punitive suffering and then settling into notions of productive suffering as were exhibited during the Holocaust. In a striking synthesis with the celebration of the Hiroshima convert, these new narratives of the bombings began suggesting, explicitly or implicitly, the presence of a causal connection between the massive destruction inflicted upon Japan and the thousands of Christians converted in the crucible of war. Using this logic, the Convention reasoned that the tragic misery wrought by war was also perversely advantageous in bringing so many Japanese people closer to God's light. The underlying meaning of Southern Baptist rhetoric is clear: bombs, despite, or perhaps because of, their potential for destruction, play a crucial role in the evangelizing process.

The third chapter explains how the Southern Baptist Convention's relationship with the military

23 Kim, *Race for Revival*.

24 Kim, *Race for Revival*.

during the 1940s and onward accentuated the damaging rationalizations of punitive and productive suffering. By repeating government talking points and blurring the line between missionary and soldier, SBC publications combined missiological aims with military ones, further compromising its ability to interpret governmental policies honestly. The chapter also explores how the relationship between state and church persisted even when appearing to falter. Finally, the chapter then briefly examines how productive suffering and the defense of military actions continued in the decades that followed World War II.

The epilogue of this thesis will explore the implications when increasing concerns about political Islam force the SBC to reflect on religiously justified violence against Christians. This particular moment in American history reveals more recent political positions within the SBC and addresses an instance in which the dynamic of armed proselytism is significantly altered. The SBC's doctrinal hypocrisies and troubling consistencies become more acutely evident.

This thesis hinges on an examination of those whose suffering was exploited for religious and political gain. With that in mind, it will be essential to acknowledge the different degrees to which survivors were anonymously used as rhetorical instruments by the SBC and those survivors who successfully leveraged their circumstances to promote a political message. At times, firsthand witnesses of American warfare chose to advance a spiritual platform and keep memories of the atrocities they endured alive. Though the line between the active agent and the passive instrument is rarely cut and dry, the remainder of this thesis will strive to be mindful of these important distinctions while arguing that the Southern Baptist Convention frequently capitalized on such beliefs to harmful effect.

CONDEMNATION & DEVIATION

Southern Baptists During and Immediately After the War

THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONCEPTION of Japanese suffering immediately after the atomic bombings was dramatically altered from the understandings that rose to popularity in the years following V-J Day. Though the precise rhetoric used to justify every attack on Japan saw subtle variations, the Southern Baptist reinforcement of military actions was unchanging and began as soon as the government announced that Hiroshima had been destroyed. In a complex, multilayered religious environment, Americans and the global public were grasping the magnitude of nuclear power for the first time. Within this context, the Southern Baptist Convention was among the few religious organizations whose leaders almost universally basked in the light of victory and Japanese destruction. However, as international relations between the United States and Japan improved, the final assessment of Japanese deaths demanded a more forgiving angle without denouncing the use of incendiaries and atom bombs. For this, the SBC applied their earlier evaluation of Jewish death in the Holocaust to the victims of the nuclear attacks in Japan. As tensions eased and contexts changed, Southern Baptists eventually portrayed both tragedies as unfortunate but spiritually fruitful. Firstly, explaining Southern Baptists' immediate reactions and framing them in a broader context will offer insights into the Convention's initial position and anomalous status among mainstream American churches.

“O God, Give them Their Just Deserts!”: The SBC and Divine Retribution

The first Southern Baptist reactions to the use of the atom bomb were largely unconcerned with the tragedy of the events.²⁵ Without a sense of remorse, there was no immediate paradox in which Japanese pain was both regretted and welcomed, a phenomenon that appeared only later. Southern Baptists largely welcomed Japanese destruction in August 1945 and the following months. Coming out of a grueling conflict in the Pacific in which over 100,000 American soldiers had died, the Southern Baptists' initial refusal (along with the vast majority of Americans) to entertain sympathetic thoughts toward Japan is perhaps understandable, if unmerciful.²⁶ Before the Southern Baptists' metaphorical adoption of the *hibakusha* (a Japanese word meaning “person(s) who were bombed,” specifically referring to the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) and reframing of the atomic bombings, Convention leaders demonstrated, in line with Shibusawa's description of the American perspective, a “racial hatred...border[ing] on genocidal rage” of the Japanese, both during and shortly after the war.²⁷

In addition to the 1945 Annual that biblically justified and even welcomed Japan's transformation into a hellish wasteland, the convention's typical wartime attitudes toward the nation and its people represent the height of its potential for racial and nationalistic fury. In a 1944 letter, Baptist fundamentalist J. Frank Norris addresses a loyal follower upset by statements he had made against those who defended the Japanese. Norris doubles down on his original stance, writing that “there's nothing in all the annals of history that can compare to the inhuman atrocities of these beasts” and that “of all the people in the world that should not

lift their voice in defence of the Japanese it's the ministry.”²⁸ Such an emotional, violent response precisely represents the wartime perceptions that would linger after the war until their slow, uneven evolution in the years that followed the war.

Speaking of nuclear destruction without a hint of redemptive justification, some unambiguously applauded the bombs as an impressive, technical landmark and fitting retribution. In a 1946 sermon, popular Southern Baptist preacher Eddie Martin commends the amazing accomplishment of the bomb itself. He explains how the tremendous capabilities of the weapon meant that the previous “1,000 plane achievements of the Air Force...have now faded into the annals of history as forgotten, weak efforts in comparison to the atomic achievement.”²⁹ Martin, turning his attention to those who endured and perished under the full might of the bombs, conjures the legendary biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, demolished by God for their sinful behavior. He justifies atomic retaliation not through Japan's litany of war crimes nor military necessity but for the nation's disobedience to God. Martin establishes their disobedience as having existed as a necessary precursor to any “such divine fire,” the likes of which could only have occurred following a grievous crime against God.³⁰ Indeed, the very magnitude of the punishment itself suggests some previous Japanese sin that Martin does not strictly define. In this way, Martin ascribes to those with the capability of unleashing “divine fire” the power to retroactively paint its victims as sinners; after all, only sinners could possibly face such suffering. The terrible advent of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was, according to Martin, not the first time in human history that “God wholly destroyed two wicked cities, and smote a population of the earth with such brimstone and burning that not a blade of grass or a tree

25 The title “O God, Give Them Their Just Deserts!” derives from Psalms 82:8 (The New American Bible).

26 An oft-cited Gallup poll from August 1945 notes that 85% of Americans approved of the atom bomb's use on the Japanese cities (The Quarter's Polls, 1945); Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000*, 2nd ed (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001), 584-591.

27 Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 1.

28 J. Frank Norris, March 3, 1944, SBHLA.

29 Eddie Martin, “The Relationship of the Atomic Bomb to the End of the World” (1946), SBHLA.

30 Martin, “The Relationship of the Atomic Bomb to the End of the World,” 22.

has since grown in that cursed soil.”³¹ Absent from the sermon are any considerations for the innocent men, women, and children swept up in the carnage; in the view of Martin and of the broader Convention, there were no innocents. Doctrinally heretical, politically enemies, and racially less than human, the SBC’s trilemma of superiority prevented any organizational stance that would allow for Japanese innocence.

Striking many of the same notes of international discipline as Martin, Reverend Jesse Hendley, in a dramatic sermon mere weeks after the August 1945 bombings, incorporated the atom bomb into God’s grand plan. Responding directly to an archbishop in the Church of England who criticized the United States’ decision to drop the bombs, Hendley sharply denounces the archbishop’s reasoning; referencing Amos 3:6, Hendley alleges in blatant terms (even for the SBC) that “this war is for punishment” and that “every evil that comes upon a city, the Lord has done.”³² Continuing his explanation, Hendley infuses elements of racial superiority by referencing the physical stature of Japanese people, declaring that “God Almighty is not going to put up with a little two-by-four man sitting over there in Japan.”³³ By introducing race, Hendley suggests that Japan’s punishment derives just as much from their racial and national identity as their religious one. Their sin arises out of their beliefs, but also out of their appearance and loyalties. Another editorial in the Tennessee newspaper *Baptist and Reflector* downplayed the bomb as “just another releasing of the power and might of God.”³⁴ Compared to the interpretations and discussions that followed in later months, these initial reactions stand out for their refusal to

identify any silver lining in the suffering. Compared to later SBC analyses of war, here Southern Baptists offer a more straightforward interpretation of the war. The terrible power of the bombs was not a means of accomplishing some lofty plan of spiritual rehabilitation; instead, the ability alone of atomic warfare to inflict ubiquitous misery upon the hated Japanese enemy was justification enough.

Mordecai Ham, an evangelist who purportedly converted 1,000,000 Baptists (including the famous Billy Graham) and had sermons broadcasting on 32 Southern radio stations, couches his arguments in favor of the cities’ destruction in similarly biblical terms.³⁵ In a radio broadcast the month after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Ham warns that the atom bomb (or “when the air is set on fire”) “means the destruction of everything in its reach.”³⁶ Ham’s soon unveils ruthless Christian metaphors, as he draws deliberate comparisons between God and the atom bomb, noting the Biblical claim that God Himself “is a consuming fire” and that everything God judges burns.³⁷ Explaining who this all-consuming fire will spare, Ham directs the reader to Matthew 13:30: “Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the weeds, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.”³⁸ Ham harnesses the destructive forces of the atomic bomb and, in doing so, relieves the American people of both spiritual guilt for the suffering of innocents and mortal dread that calamity could befall a chosen people such as themselves. “It is the enemies of Christ who are sowing these weeds...but the Lord says he is going to gather them together and burn them.”³⁹

31 Martin, “The Relationship of the Atomic Bomb to the End of the World,” *Ibid.*, 22.

32 Jesse M. Hendley, “The Atomic Bomb In God’s Prophetic Plan,” August 26, 1945, SBHLA, 9.

33 Hendley, “The Atomic Bomb in God’s Prophetic Plan,” 10.

34 “Atomic Bomb,” *Baptist and Reflector*, September 13, 1945, Newspapers.com.

35 “Rev. Mordecai Ham Dies at 84; Evangelist Converted a Million.” *The New York Times*, November 2, 1961.

36 Mordecai Ham, “The Atomic Bomb,” (*Temple Trumpet*, 1945), *Baptist Trumpet*, https://baptisttrumpet.com/?dna_download_file=3636638817772e42b59d74cff571fbb3.

37 Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 215.

38 Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 215

39 “The Atomic Bomb” (*Temple Trumpet*, September 23, 1945), *Baptist Trumpet*, https://baptisttrumpet.com/?dna_download_file=3636638817772e42b59d74cff571fbb3.

God, the atom bomb, and the American people are rhetorically united. They are linked by their fairness and opposition to the castigated Japanese, mere biblical examples of those deserving the full might of His righteous, nuclear rage. These Christian justifications of mass slaughter at the hands of atomic bombs also recall Steele. Even as they lamented the awful power of the bomb and its genocidal wrath, those within the Southern Baptist Convention nonetheless conceded that its victims were the deserving, idolatrous, beastly Japanese people. Any semblance of regret or remorse quickly fades.

Divine Retribution in Religious and Political Context

The vindictive justifications of the bombings by the Southern Baptist Convention broadly reflected the sentiments of the American public but stood alone among contemporary religious denominations. The controversy over the military decision among most contemporary Christian denominations in the United States demonstrates the extent to which the Southern Baptist Convention's unanimous satisfaction in the bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was an outlier. Even when Southern Baptist discussions of warfare mirrored the sentiments held by other fundamentalist groups, the Convention's political ascendancy, historically wielding an outsized influence on American party platforms, positions the Convention as unique agents worthy of investigation.⁴⁰

The initial opinions of Southern Baptist leaders

on the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki diverged from mainstream Protestant views. While Southern Baptists unambiguously praised the attacks, many church leaders in other sects identified terrible faults in the bombings. In 1946, the Federal Council of Churches, an ecumenical body composed of various Christian divisions (excluding the Southern Baptist Convention, which refused membership), convened in Columbus, Ohio.⁴¹ Members within the FCC included the Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church, the United Lutheran Church in America, and every major sect of the Presbyterian Church, as well as both Northern Baptists and National Baptists.⁴² The FCC's 1946 Calhoun Commission harshly condemns the United States' "irresponsible" decision to drop the bombs on two "murdered cities":

*Even though use of the new weapon last August may well have shortened the war, the moral cost was too high. As the power that first used the atom bomb under these circumstances, we have sinned grievously against the laws of God and against the people of Japan. Without seeking to apportion blame among individuals, we are compelled to judge our chosen course inexcusable.*⁴³

As close to an official condemnation as mainstream Protestantism would get, this statement and its many endorsers suggest that the SBC's stance was far from the typical response among Protestant denominations in the United States.

Other elements paint the same picture of a Southern Baptist anomaly. In line with the FCC's pronouncement, Boyer writes of the response of mainstream Protestant leaders and Protestant publications in

40 Oran P. Smith, *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 8-9.

41 R. Albert Mohler Jr., "The Southern Baptist Convention and the Issue of Interdenominational Relationships," July 16, 2009, <https://albertmohler.com/2009/07/16/the-southern-baptist-convention-and-the-issue-of-interdenominational-relationships>.

42 The National Baptist Convention USA, a predominantly Black denomination, is the second largest Baptist denomination in the world (Emerson et al. 2020, 518).

43 "Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith," in *Report of the Commission on the Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith to the Federal Council of Churches* (Columbus, Ohio: Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, 1946), <https://archive.org/details/atomicwarfareandthechristianfaith/page/n17/mode/2up>.

which “one finds, even in the flush of victory, expressions of moral unease.”⁴⁴ Meanwhile, despite the Vatican’s refusal to take an official position, the American Roman Catholic response to the attacks was overwhelmingly negative.⁴⁵ Only after the Soviet development of the atom weapon in 1949 did American Catholics consolidate into a position that was more accurately anti-Communist than pro-bomb.⁴⁶ Although the stance of church leadership in these denominations was usually unrepresentative of the laity, “the greatest concentration of critical comment on the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings came from the churches,” a level of criticism entirely absent from SBC commentaries.⁴⁷

Even so, few religious groups saw a unified response to the bombings among leadership, including the SBC. Even Southern Baptist papers occasionally published notes and articles in which the morality of nuclear war was questioned or denounced. Dr. Edwin McNeill Poteat, the president of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School and a lifelong Southern Baptist, signed a petition soon after the bombings that condemned them as “reckless and irresponsible” and “an atrocity of a new magnitude.”⁴⁸ However, even Poteat’s abnormal stance reveals the essence of productive suffering. In a speech delivered at Limestone College in South Carolina, Poteat regrets that “We use [atomic power] to destroy” and suggests that, unlike man, “God’s wisdom and power was never used as an end but as a means to a good end.”⁴⁹ Although, in his opinion, the American government has wrongly used the power, his belief that “God used atomic power to bring sons to glory” speaks to the eventual rationale of other Southern Baptists in

justifying aggressive military actions, so long as they brought sons to glory (to Christianity).⁵⁰

Cases like Poteat’s were outliers within the SBC. Out of the hundreds of Southern Baptist documents speaking on Japan, only one published Japanese testimony that explicitly condemned American actions without question. Two weeks after Japan’s unofficial surrender, the Missouri state newspaper *Word & Way* reported the condemnatory comments of the Japanese Christian and peace activist Toyohiko Kagawa. In a few brief paragraphs in the *World News* section, Kagawa describes an American military strategy that “revealed ‘a moral degeneration beyond imagination’” and that “the methods employed by the United States against Japan have exceeded in ‘horrible cruelty’ the atrocities perpetrated by Genghis Khan.”⁵¹ The paper does not assess the legitimacy of Kagawa’s charges against the US, marking the only time in an SBC publication that American military actions in Japan are not presented in a triumphal political or spiritual light. Making the *Word & Way*’s inclusion of this report even more remarkable was its proximity to the attacks, when American sentiments toward Japan had not yet cooled and national guilt had yet to set in. The speaker’s authority, a well-known Christian who had previously been imprisoned for condemning the government of imperial Japan, ensures that this small inclusion represents an incredible outlier in the Southern Baptist narrative.⁵²

Although the supportive position of Southern Baptist leaders stood out in a field of Christian condemnation, politically speaking, the denomination aligned with the great majority of the American people who

44 Paul S. Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, 1st ed (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

45 Robert C. Batchelder, *The Irreversible Decision 1939-1950* (Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, 1961).

46 Emma Catherine Scally, “Between Piety and Polity: The American Catholic Response to the First Atomic Bombs,” *Of Life and History* 1 (May 2018), <https://crossworks.holycross.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=oflifeandhistory>.

47 Scally, “Between Piety and Polity,” 200.

48 “Limestone Speech Cites Education Obligations,” *Herald-Journal*, November 5, 1945, Google News.

49 “Limestone Speech, *Herald-Journal*.”

50 “Limestone Speech, *Herald-Journal*.”

51 “World News,” *The Word and Way*, August 30, 1945, Newspapers.com.

52 Robert Schildgen, *Toyohiko Kagawa: Apostle of Love and Social Justice* (Berkeley, Calif., USA: Centenary Books, 1988), 225.

supported the attacks. Boyer writes of “a spontaneous impulse of most Americans to support their government’s decision” that was soon buoyed by other authorities on the issue.⁵³ Defenses from public figures like physicist Karl Compton and former Secretary of War Henry Stimson offered an already supportive American public with authoritative arguments in support of their position. Vague symbolism and more generalized considerations of the event supplanted interest in the immediate destruction of the cities.⁵⁴ And so, the response of the Southern Baptist Convention, though religiously an outlier, coincided with public sentiments of approval. However, its reasons for support mostly ignored the typical secular justifications of shortening the war and sparing American lives. In this way, the SBC remained unique in its stance.

“The Chosen but the Christ-less People”: The Jewish Holocaust and Productive Suffering

Ultimately, the initial Southern Baptist condemnations of Japan would not hold.⁵⁵ In the years following the war, various elements found their way into SBC thought for the first time, including Japanese testimony and a growing sadness at the suffering inflicted by the atomic bombs. Despite new circumstances and the resumption of Japanese relations, the stance of the SBC never undermined past American policy, including the use of nuclear bombs. To salvage the ethical legitimacy of the attacks and continue to endorse a

global missionary movement among a newly admired Japanese people, members of the SBC returned to a framework of productive suffering, one the Convention had already employed during the Jewish Holocaust.

Occurring between 1933 and 1945, the Holocaust saw the extermination of over six million Jews in Europe. The Southern Baptist response to the Holocaust and its narration of atrocity preview the denomination’s later response to the tens of thousands of Japanese killed in the atomic bombings. Southern Baptist discussions of the Holocaust, whether in state papers or copies of the Annual, largely revolved around the efforts and accounts of one missionary, Dr. Joseph Gartenhaus. Beginning work in 1921 as the first Southern Baptist missionary to focus his efforts specifically on the Jewish, Gartenhaus soon became the head of the Department of Jewish Evangelism, a new wing of the SBC’s domestic missionary organization, the Home Mission Board.⁵⁶ His work, lasting until 1948, universally emphasizes his desire to guide his Jewish brethren to the light of Christ and work toward the salvation of Israel. While these goals were standard for all missionaries, the added context of the Holocaust shifts the implications of Gartenhaus’ work.⁵⁷

Upon the mass murder of his target demographic, Gartenhaus’ evangelical commitments, rather than faltering, took on a new conviction. As the situation in Europe deteriorated during the 1930s and 40s, Gartenhaus expressed increasing optimism in his missionary work. Elaborating further on his missionary efforts, Gartenhaus explains that “in no preceding year have I been privileged to see such a turning to Christ on the part of my [Jewish] people.”⁵⁸ In a June 1941

53 Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light*, 189.

54 Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light*, 193.

55 The title “The Chosen but Christ-less People” derives from a *Word & Way* article describing Jewish people (Gray 1921).

56 SBC memos introducing Gartenhaus to Southern Baptists feel the need to emphasize his “fine character and good culture” and his status as a “sincere convert to Christianity” (Gray 1921, “Personals, Events” 1923); James Cary, “Southwestern Seminary News,” January 23, 1941, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/335192021/?terms=Gartenhaus&match=1>.

57 J.B. Lawrence, “Rev. Jacob Gartenhaus Completes Twenty Years of Service,” *The Word & Way*, May 29, 1941, [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).

58 Jacob Gartenhaus, “Jewish Work,” 1945, 291–95, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1946.pdf.

article titled "Jewish Trophies," Gartenhaus celebrates his successes of the previous few years, attributing them to a newfound receptivity toward Christ among Jews. Against the backdrop of genocidal, racial extermination, he explains that "we are witnessing that long-desired and hoped-for-day of Israel's awakening."⁵⁹ Despite a widespread refusal among Americans to believe rumors of the Holocaust and the full extent of the carnage, Gartenhaus was under no such misapprehensions.⁶⁰ Fully conscious of what he describes as "the bitterest hour of Jewish history," Gartenhaus remains bullish on the future of Jewish conversions and a growing "army of Jewish disciples of Christ."⁶¹ Two years later, Gartenhaus makes a sobering observation and, in doing so, encapsulates the fundamental framework of the Southern Baptist view of productive suffering: "On one hand we are witnessing the greatest tragedy and on the other hand we are witnessing one of the most remarkable and amazing changes in the attitudes of the Jews toward Jesus."⁶²

These especially brazen examples of Christian optimism, even in the face of genocide, and indeed because of genocide, foreshadow Southern Baptists' eventual reversal of attitudes toward the Japanese and the atom bombs' portrayal as a terribly destructive force but one that was ultimately responsible for more spiritual good than tortuous bad. The same paradoxical sentiments that later became visible in Japan first emerged before a single American bomb dropped in the Pacific; Gartenhaus and his Southern Baptist publishers acknowledge and lament the immense tragedy of the situation but, ultimately, celebrate it.

Even miraculous Holocaust accounts of escape and survival are not attributed to extraordinary Jewish perseverance; as in future stories of Japan, the story's

heroes are always decidedly Christian. Gartenhaus' overview of missionary work amongst the Jewish in the 1945 SBC Annual alludes to Nazi Germany's mass genocide of Jewish people but notes "a ray of light" piercing through the darkness. That ray of light, in this instance, is the thousands of courageous Christian families offering refuge to Jewish children, good deeds that field secretary Jacob Gartenhaus believes will "bring the true Christ and Israel together."⁶³

Similarly, those suffering the mental anguish and radiation burns of the atom bomb are never heroic in their ability to endure. The SBC celebrates only the Christian Japanese survivors, their forgiveness of Americans evidence of a remarkably faithful, Christ-like attitude. Likewise, only the Christian Americans, raising funds and dictating governmental functions, can dig the Japanese out of the ditch American Christians created. In this way, the Jewish and the Japanese become objects of Christian malice and goodwill rather than the subjects of their own survival stories. They are admirable only to the extent that they can learn the lessons taught by gas chambers and nuclear bombs.

In almost every analysis, Southern Baptists absolve Christians of wrongdoing as long as they repent.⁶⁴ Those unrepentant and guilty of what would have been considered the most egregious crimes (i.e., participating in genocide and attacking Americans) are excluded entirely from the umbrella of Christendom. Often this meant denying a perpetrator's own professed Christianity. In this way, the SBC employed a circular logic in which unchristian activities disqualified practicing Christians from ever having been Christian, a practice most evident in Southern Baptist discussions of Nazi Germany. Gartenhaus needed to account for the white, Christian perpetrators of the Holocaust. How could he

59 Jacob Gartenhaus, "Jewish Trophies," *The Word & Way*, June 5, 1941, Newspapers.com.

60 Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America Since 1945: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

61 Niel Morgan, "RELIGIOUS AND PERSONAL LIBERTY MUST BE PRESERVED IN AMERICA," *The Word & Way*, August 14, 1941, Newspapers.com.

62 "Radio Discussion Tabled," *The Word & Way*, December 16, 1943, Newspapers.com.

63 Gartenhaus, "Jewish Work," 291.

64 The soldiers of Imperial Japan, too, were absolved of wrongdoing in cases of conversion. The conversion of Mitsuo Fuchida, who commanded the bombing attack on Pearl Harbor, became a popular story in Southern Baptist publications. His conversion to the Christian faith and realization of American honor led Baptists to absolve his past crimes (McGregor 1962).

revel in Christian heroism while ignoring the complicated Christian value structures and Christian people that orchestrated the slaughter?⁶⁵ Very simply, Gartenhaus deems all of the men responsible, regardless of their professed beliefs, as belonging to the “paganism of Nazi Germany,” a notion he juxtaposes with the “true Spirit of Christ.”⁶⁶ In this view, Christians were not responsible at all for the Holocaust. The terrible actions of supposedly Christian Nazis necessarily designated them as non-Christians acting on behalf of an ideology that was definitionally evil and thus incompatible with Gartenhaus’ Christianity. The poison within these rhetorical gymnastics is evident. By expressly denying the true origins of the Holocaust and deliberately miscategorizing the parties responsible, Gartenhaus ensured that Southern Baptists and Christianity could sidestep a spiritual and moral reckoning. In doing so, he not only cheapened the deaths of millions but, with his insistence that the Jewish people remain targets of conversion, risked encouraging the same condemnatory, genocidal mindsets that had manifested the Final Solution.

Only by 1947 was Jewish suffering acknowledged in less triumphant terms. At the seventh global meeting of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), a resolution proposed by Gartenhaus and adopted by the BWA expresses sorrow at “the unprecedented suffering through which the people of Israel have passed” and the persistence of “the poisonous propaganda and destructive designs of anti-Semitism.”⁶⁷ Still, Christian organizations’ contribution to the Holocaust is nowhere acknowledged. The final passage of the resolution reiterates the divine command from Jesus to evangelize every nation, including Israel, insisting that “only when Christ is accepted as Lord will Jews or any other people find salvation, peace, and freedom.”⁶⁸

Prior to American involvement in the war,

Southern Baptists even viewed the military aggression of Japan in China as a potential blessing. In a January 1941 article titled *Divine Purpose in Japan’s Offensive*, a mission executive writes for the *Biblical Recorder* that “the bombs and guns which are driving the Chinese to the interior provinces are, indirectly, sending the gospel to new and untouched fields.”⁶⁹ The article praises the Japanese who, along with their invasion, are constructing new highways that “are making our Christian churches more accessible.”⁷⁰ Indeed, within this mindset of productive suffering, there is no crime so egregious and no criminal so foreign that even modest evangelical results cannot offset them. When more closely used to justify the actions of the American military to American congregants, the Convention’s acceptance of foreign bloodshed transforms from shocking to complicit.

Despite idealist visions of the future, the assertions of Gartenhaus and other Southern Baptists demonstrate the broader tendency of the SBC to turn the most monstrous of crimes, even those perpetrated by non-Americans, into a cause for celebration of their evangelical potential. The unabashed willingness of the SBC to extend notions of redemptive suffering to the most extreme of circumstances risks contributing to and supporting the reemergence of those circumstances, especially when perpetrated by the American government. Thus these dynamics prefigured the logic deployed in discussions about Japan in the years after the war.

65 Steele, *Christianity, Tragedy, and Holocaust Literature*, 94.

66 Gartenhaus, “*Jewish Work*,” 291–95.

67 Jacob Gartenhaus, “*Report on the Jewish Conference*,” *The Word & Way*, October 9, 1947, Newspapers.com.

68 Gartenhaus, “*Report on the Jewish Conference*.”

69 Charles E. Maddy, “*Divine Purpose in Japan’s Offensive*,” *The Biblical Recorder*, January 8, 1941, Wake Forest Archives.

70 Maddy, “*Divine Purpose in Japan’s Offensive*,” 21.

CHRISTENING THE BOMB

Productive Suffering in Japan

IN THE YEARS AFTER THE SECOND World War, Japanese soldiers and civilians—those living and killed during the conflict—emerged as critical figures within the SBC for advancing Southern Baptist values and doctrine and the general supremacy of American political and religious values. This development generally followed a typified selection of responses and interpretations of Japanese destruction. To salvage the American relationship with Japan and restore Southern Baptist missionaries, SBC characterizations of the conflict gradually shifted away from justifications of punitive suffering toward an emphasis on productive suffering. This process, although occurring over just a few years, was uneven. Gradually, along with the American public, the SBC softened its stance toward the nation. In doing so, the Convention adopted the same paradoxical theological sentiments that Joseph Gartenhaus espoused to interpret the Jewish Holocaust. The language of the SBC transformed Japanese sufferers from a contemptible monolith of God deniers into an open-minded group ready to receive God. They came to the Church despite, and because of, tremendous hardship.

This transformation occurred via different processes and with varying degrees of Southern Baptist sympathy and admiration. Sometimes these processes involved a Japanese individual taking action, as evident in hibakusha testimonials to Southern Baptist missionaries. At other times, prominent members of the Southern Baptist Convention used more abstract, indirect methods of narrativizing Japanese victimhood, later contorting it into a call to repent before Jesus. In the first testimonies, Japanese guilt and self-flagellation were popular inclusions in discussions of war. These instances assuaged guilty American consciences and affirmed the previously held notions of punitive suffering

while allowing more room for Japanese voices.

Often, the novel circumstances of atomic bomb survivors were enough to serve a rhetorical function. But there is a critical difference between those survivors anonymously used as rhetorical instruments and those who used their position as firsthand survivors of American attacks to promote their beliefs or keep memories of the atrocities alive. Not every converted Baptist hibakusha was an unwitting, powerless messenger of evangelicalism. In reality, the agency of Japanese victims, however important to acknowledge, rarely factored into Southern Baptist portrayals; the consequences of the denomination's ability to capitalize on Japanese sorrow were often the same. Victims were neither explicitly mourned nor elevated, instead becoming mere symbols in evangelical messaging or cautionary tales. The SBC promoted a uniquely Southern Baptist worldview while simultaneously sanitizing the actions of the United States military and assuaging Americans' growing sense of guilt. At the heart of Southern Baptists' rhetorical reversal is the same consistent, dangerous message that unites branches of Christianity and joins the disparate attitudes toward Japan: the suffering of foreign, non-Christian peoples can always be justified through the lens of Christianity.

To Redeem Us From All Wickedness: Japanese Gratitude and Remorse After the War

Even after the United States reached friendlier relations with Japan, elements of punitive justifications remained in Southern Baptist thought. During the transition to more sympathetic notions of redemption, explicit condemnations of the Japanese people fell to the wayside, replaced by justifications of 'might makes right' and depictions of eager Japanese subservience that justified occupation. Also increased in frequency were patterns of Japanese remorse and personal apologies for the irreligious actions of the Japanese people and government. Unlike during wartime, Japanese Christians finally found a voice in Southern Baptist publications. However, these voices remained heavily censored and often conveyed the same message: Japan was to blame

for its own destruction.

In keeping with the punitive understandings of suffering, SBC publications left little room for diversity in Japanese sentiment. In their tendency to attribute “testimonies” vaguely and to entire nationalities, quotes often fail as genuine testimony. One 1948 article in *Baptist and Reflector* reveals that “the people of that bombed city now say: ‘The atom bomb brought peace to the world,’” and that “Hiroshima is one of the strong Christian centers in Japan.”⁷¹ In a dramatic simplification of the situation, missionary Edwin Dozier’s 1948 Southern Baptist Annual report on Japan includes bizarre, monolithic quotes attributed simply to “the Japanese people” in which they beg the United States to send hundreds of missionaries. With one voice, they insist that “Christianity is the only solution to our problems.”⁷² The report claims that “[the Japanese] say this partly because it is the religion of the conqueror.” In a line representative of the Southern Baptist middle ground between a retention of old antipathies and a welcoming of the converted, the Annual portrays the Japanese people as somehow both repentant and immoral. Dozier explains that military failure left a “deep sense of shame and willingness to make apology although the consciences of many feel little guilt on moral issues,” depriving the Japanese of any genuine goodwill and leaving them with attentive, child-like obedience to the United States.⁷³

The report also describes the typical reasoning of Japanese converts. At times, they are trying to uncover the Christian secret to the victors’ success; at others, they merely seek better relationships with occupation forces. In a remarkable acknowledgment of this apparent symbiosis between the military and Southern

Baptists, Dozier claims that these truths “lead to the conclusion that Christianity is the tool of the military.”⁷⁴ He never offers a deeper exploration of this idea or how it misportrays reality. And so, in the context of a missiological aim frequently described as “world conquest” for Christ and promoted with the motto “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” the potential for Southern Baptists’ “might makes right” justifications to pave the way for military intervention, regardless of circumstance, becomes frighteningly evident.⁷⁵

One identifies Dozier’s same reasoning two years prior in the 1946 Annual, which features a conversation with President Mizumachi of Seinan Gakuin.⁷⁶ In line with Dozier’s claims, Mizumachi believes that Japanese interest in America is peaking because “if America defeated Japan, then the Americans have the answers. The Americans know better than we.”⁷⁷ More specific Japanese political inquiries into the US complement this formation of a patriarchal-type relationship between the two nations. Blurring the lines between Southern Baptist missionary and American ambassador, the Annual recounts a Japanese professor’s claim that “Missionaries are going to be looked to for an interpretation of American Democracy” and that the superintendent of schools in Fukuoka was looking to speak to Americans about “American Democracy, Christianity, and the American Educational System.”⁷⁸ In this telling of events, the Japanese awe at American victory left them enamored at the possibilities of the American way of life. These claims contribute to the broader sentiment that, because of the United States’ success, the Japanese eagerly sought to emulate American customs, politics, and religious beliefs and, in doing so, can elevate their country.

71 “Hiroshima,” *Baptist and Reflector*, June 17, 1948, Newspapers.com.

72 Edwin Dozier, “Japan Moves Forward” (Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1948, Southern Baptist Convention, 1948), http://media2.sbhl.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1948.pdf.

73 Dozier, “Japan Moves Forward,” 110.

74 Dozier, “Japan Moves Forward,” 111.

75 Pat M. Niff, “Foreign Mission Opportunities and Obligations,” *Word & Way*, September 20, 1945, Newspapers.com.

76 Seinan Gakuin is a Southern Baptist University in Fukuoka, Japan.

77 Harold Menges, “Japan on the Highway to Peace” (Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1946, Miami, Florida, 1946), 241–47, http://media2.sbhl.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1946.pdf.

78 Menges, “Japan on the Highway,” 244.

Beyond a fascination with the US, Japanese testimonies in Southern Baptist documents reveal the more brutal aspects of the war. Perhaps surprisingly, SBC-sponsored publications frequently included first-person Japanese testimonies that described their wartime suffering in detail, marked by horrific descriptions of death and a hesitant but clear questioning of American ethics. However, such articles were always accompanied by a thoughtful apology for the sinful behavior of Japan. Sin, rather than concrete policy decisions, was always portrayed as the true culprit for the war. In a 1950 sermon, Reverend Kimura, pastor of the Hiroshima Baptist Church, describes at length his terrible memories of the piles of dead women and children and other scenes “far more awful than that of Hell described by Dante.”⁷⁹ Kimura recalls a little girl who came to him with severe burns, wishing she could show her wounds to the Americans responsible, seemingly implying that Americans should indeed feel guilt for the bomb. The presence of such elements in a Southern Baptist publication in 1950 certainly complicates the SBC’s position on the bombs and their spiritual advantages. The Church did not promote an entirely one-sided perspective that ignored civilian sufferings.

The Southern Baptist angle, while not wholly blind, was extremely limited in its portrayal and never concluded that Americans must repent for their government’s actions abroad. Kimura’s tone, at first seeming to encourage a reconsideration of the events by Southern Baptists, soon pivots. Despite the uncharacteristically “brutal” actions from those Americans professing “the best religion in the world,” Kimura concludes that “We, as Japanese, should not judge whether [the attack on Hiroshima] is good or bad.”⁸⁰ At the end of the sermon, his harrowing story of pain and hardship leads him not to condemn the decision but to “ask pardon for my weakness... and for my sin as a pastor, and also

I must ask forgiveness for Japan.”⁸¹ Kimura adopts a stance resembling that of the Southern Baptists who had previously reveled in Japan’s punitive suffering: “The A-bomb was the ‘Paradise Lost’ to the world which had been... indulged in all kind of evil.”⁸² In sacrificial terms, Kimura understands that the 200,000 dead “whose blood poured into the ground as redemption for Hiroshima” will inspire him to continue the struggle against his two strongest enemies: “extreme materialism” and “hedonism.”

Another Japanese testimony, published in February 1946, reflects many of the same difficulties in deciding whether to worship or condemn Americans. The author, an unnamed Tokyo woman to an SBC missionary, does not hesitate to question American ethics:

*I lost my dear friends in Nagasaki, many of them at a moment! They were really so nice and innocent. You Americans I admire so much, who are rightly judging the Japanese atrocities in the Philippines, but why did you use atomic bombs and wiped off my spiritual home (I spent my happiest and most inspiring days in a Christian college in Nagasaki)? Why did you kill so many women and children in towns, by using your brightest brains and the most wonderful spirits? They had hardly escaped from burning cities to neighboring forests when your accurate bombing hit them to death.*⁸³

In line with most other publications at the time, Word & Way publishes these more accusatory sentiments within the letter but ignores their implications. An introductory paragraph portrays the woman’s writing not as a call to reflection but as “one of the most poignant appeals for spiritual help that has come out of this war.”⁸⁴ The publisher’s refusal to address the woman’s more critical sentiments amounts to a wilful misrepresentation of her assessment, even as a converted

79 Kimura, “The Atomic Bomb and My Personal Experience,” Word & Way, July 13, 1950, Newspapers.com.

80 Kimura, “The Atomic Bomb and My Personal Experience,” Word & Way, July 13, 1950, Newspapers.com.

81 Kimura, “The Atomic Bomb.”

82 Kimura, “The Atomic Bomb.”

83 “Only God Can Save Japan,” Word & Way, February 14, 1946, Newspapers.com.

84 “Only God Can Save Japan,” Word & Way.

Christian.

Soon, the tone of this testimony also shifts. Just as Kimura's devastated writing gives way to an understanding of Japanese deservedness, so too does the Tokyo woman come to realize why her nation had to suffer. She reasons that, despite the last four years of war, the US ultimately loves peace more than any country on earth, and she "now willingly accept[s], painful as it is, that [American] victory is God's providence." The familiar contrition from other accounts appears again: "I believe that Japan's misery is due to her primitive conception of God."⁸⁵ The SBC's publication of the woman's piece reinforces its own conception of racial hierarchy and, in doing so, fuses the racial with the theological. She suggests that the totalitarian Japanese regime had come to power not only because the "common Japanese people were so simple, innocent and easy to manage" but also "because they had no right conception of God."⁸⁶ She acquiesces that the people of Japan are not evil or aggressive but merely "lost sheep, without a shepherd."⁸⁷ In embracing American missionaries, this nameless woman from Tokyo appears to welcome both political occupation and religious domination; the Convention capitalizes on her position, making her an avatar of supplication and universal representative of Japanese sentiment. Regardless of the testimony's veracity, it provided the Southern Baptist Convention with the propaganda needed to justify American oversight and religious counsel while confirming the need for white tutelage of a lesser race.

Reports on Japan in the 1946 Annual promoted the narrative that Japanese Christians deeply regretted their inability to stop the evil that seized their nation. When asked by a Southern Baptist what message he has for other members of the SBC, Japanese Baptist Mizumachi says, "The present miserable condition of Japan was caused by the lack of a strong Christian spirit among the Japanese people."⁸⁸ Without directly appealing to past notions of punitive suffering, in apologizing

for Japan's unchristian nature, Mizumachi nonetheless justifies the original Southern Baptist hardline that "the wages of sin is death."⁸⁹ Going a step further, Mizumachi rationalizes the death of his son in the war as a necessary sacrifice and a necessary cleansing of the bad living from Japanese soil, explaining his understanding "that he died as a part of the sacrifice that we are paying for a new Japan."⁹⁰ His ability to find theological meaning in his son's death, however individually uplifting, reinforces the non-negotiability of Japanese blood in rebuilding a friendly, Christian Japan.

Portrayals of the Japanese approval of their own punitive suffering and fascination with America's winning culture naturally led to another strain of Southern Baptist justification: the notion that suffering brings instruction, and the potential to lead and push people to Christian salvation: "productive suffering." As American perceptions of Japan continued to improve, productive suffering became increasingly popular in Southern Baptist thought, replacing an emphasis on Japanese deservingness with Japanese spiritual growth. This growth sometimes arose out of the punishment itself and sometimes out of profound anguish.

Productive Suffering: Dropping Bombs and Opening Doors in Japan

As the American relationship with Japan began to evolve, the SBC's conception of Japanese suffering as productive required more nuanced explanations that would allow for the redemption of the Japanese people. Though not organizationally mandated, the years after World War II saw Church leaders adopt new rhetorical methods of simultaneously justifying American attacks and organizing missions in the once-targeted cities. Mainstream Baptist newspapers, Baptist sermons, and official Baptist pamphlets understood American warfare

85 "Only God Can Save Japan," Word & Way.

86 "Only God Can Save Japan," Word & Way.

87 "Only God Can Save Japan," Word & Way.

88 Menges, "Japan on the Highway to Peace," 245.

89 Menges, "Japan on the Highway to Peace," 245.

90 Menges, "Japan on the Highway to Peace," 245.

to have made Japanese victims into Christian pupils. Without the war and the pain brought by the American military, the new Japanese Christians would never have converted. Ultimately, punitive suffering's eventual insufficiency saw the rise of productive suffering as the preferred way of viewing the brutality of American actions, the same technique Gartenhaus had used years before to understand German ones. Although a move away from earlier, harsher condemnations of Japan, notions of productive suffering nonetheless amounted to a dangerous (albeit more subtle) endorsement of policies that were designed to kill and maim civilians.

The Southern Baptists' understanding of American bombs hinged on the spiritually productive facets of suffering. Duke McCall, a prominent figure within the Church during the twentieth century, highlights a few especially notable instances of productive suffering in a January 1951 article published in the Baptist Press (BP) as well as the Southern Baptist Annual and multiple Baptist-sponsored papers, including that with the highest readership, the Baptist Standard in Texas.⁹¹ McCall, then the Executive Secretary of the SBC Executive Committee, writes of the immense gratitude of various Japanese civilians who survived the American bombings. In his retelling, this gratitude invariably guided them to embrace the gospel. He ascribes a special significance to the conversion of 189 survivors of the bomb to "Jesus as a way of life," which, to McCall, represents the ultimate spiritual perseverance.⁹² Six years after the war's end, the Japanese targets were now admirable followers of Christ, possessing an enviable religious fortitude.

McCall described to thousands of readers the power of the Southern Baptist Convention to deliver Japanese victims from the emotional and material wreckage of American warfare to Christ. McCall recounts the story of the formation of one of the few existing churches in Kokura, Japan. Here, American bombs

are a paradoxical double-edged sword, killing and guiding. McCall reveals that an unexploded American fire bomb that had landed in the attic of one man (Mr. Kasa) filled him with so much appreciation for God's mercy that he dedicated his house to Him. Thus, then and there, a church was founded in the house. In no uncertain terms, McCall writes that "A bomb started [the church]."⁹³ McCall understood the survival of Kokura and Mr. Kasa's home to be the reason for the church's post-war success.⁹⁴ McCall — and Southern Baptist thought — illustrate a blurry picture of American foreign policy in which bombs, in their awesome ability to guide foreigners to the Church, effectively become Southern Baptist missionaries. His retelling of events eliminates the possibility of any ethical objections to American foreign policy because, according to him, these policies functionally save more Japanese people than they kill on an eternal timescale.

Even in Nagasaki, a city hit far harder than Kokura, McCall understands the nuclear attack to have seeded a deep gratitude within its survivors. This gratitude, he then claims, ultimately led them toward the redeeming power of Christ. In his writings on the bombing of Nagasaki, the broad testimony of Nagasaki citizens is, like so many other Southern Baptist Japanese quotes, unattributed. The unnamed group of survivors might as well have been imaginary characters created for the sole purpose of preaching. In his argument, McCall details the historical hill at the center of the city on which 26 Christians were crucified centuries prior, a fact the Nagasaki locals rarely acknowledged. However, in a miraculous twist of fate, he explains how the same hill saved the city from the brunt of the nuclear explosion as "the blast struck the hillside and bounced over the city."⁹⁵ According to the article, the story of the martyrs soon spread throughout Nagasaki and "always ended, 'The Christians saved our city.'" The survivors of the bomb (again, specified only as "the people of

91 The BP had a 1950 circulation of almost one million readers, making it the largest religiously affiliated publication in the United States (Yeats 2007). The Baptist Standard had a 1951 circulation of 243,000 readers (Reed 1951).

92 Duke McCall, "Tale of Three Cities," Baptist Press, January 15, 1951, SBHLA, 3.

93 McCall, "Tale of Three Cities," 3.

94 McCall, "Tale of Three Cities," 3.

95 McCall, "Tale of Three Cities," 4.

Nagasaki”) once more attributed their survival to the workings of the Christian God.⁹⁶ Regardless of reality, McCall presents an astonishing vision of Nagasaki in which tens of thousands died at the hands of American Christians, yet nonetheless holds that it is Christians who saved the city from a more devastating nuclear demise.

Throughout the article, Japan’s racial makeup remains a point of interest and fascination. McCall writes of searching for the “tears and smiles in their eyes” as they embraced Christ, a necessity to “keep my eyes from focusing on the ugly scars” left by the bomb.⁹⁷ Here, his acknowledgment of facial deformity functions outwardly as sympathy, yet practically reflects the SBC’s frequently racializing discussion of the foreign. His focus on their scars serves to distance the Japanese from the untainted whiteness embodied by the Southern Baptists.

War’s ability to sink its foreign victims from the level of physically separate into the physically grotesque demands the counterbalance of God’s all-redeeming love. In this way, bombs, rather than bringing their victims to see God’s mercy, throw them deeper into an unspoken racialized sin, necessitating the intervention of missionaries and the Gospel. Throughout the article, McCall’s repetition of the same beats demonstrates the perceived usefulness of the “victims-to-Christians” narrative and the endurance of racial differences in Southern Baptist perceptions even while political barriers fall away. His emphasis on their gratitude toward the United States and fascination with their scars are prominent in other SBC accounts of Japan.

Common to nearly every Annual report, Southern Baptist briefing, and Japanese testimonial was an insistence that the opportunity to Christianize

Japan was greater than ever and a dire necessity. As early as 1945, several Southern Baptist commentators offered their thoughts on Japan’s suddenly open door. This opportunity was usually explicitly credited to the country’s wartorn, hopeless character. The President of the Foreign Mission Board alludes to “the greatest opportunity...and most terrific responsibility since the beginning of the Christian era.”⁹⁸ The Executive Secretary of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood warns that a failure to meet the unprecedented opportunity would be nothing short of a “denominational tragedy.”⁹⁹ Every Annual between 1946 and 1950 emphasizes the remarkable ongoing opportunity in Japan. Amidst this flurry of reports describing Japan as more open and receptive to Christ than any nation has ever been, one line in the 1951 SBC Annual stands out for its particularly brazen perspective and recalling of destruction’s role in opening Japan: “The great demand for the Bible in Japan, since World War II, is not just an ‘open door,’ but ‘the whole side of the house has fallen out,’ and we are free to walk right in.”¹⁰⁰

Monroe Swilley (who later founded the Atlanta Baptist College) depicts a fascinatingly transactional plea from a Japanese victim to a Southern Baptist American in a 1956 article. In another anecdote that blurs the lines between genuine account and apocryphal tale, Swilley describes a converted Japanese Christian and survivor of the atomic bomb speaking with an American in Hiroshima. The Japanese man says, “The explosion of that bomb not only shattered our homes and blasted our lives, but it also seared our souls. We are looking to you and our friends in America to share with us the light you have for the darkness of our souls.” Regardless of its authenticity, this passage’s insistence that Christians strive to save the “multimillions...in

96 McCall, “Tale of Three Cities,” 3-4.

97 McCall, “Tale of Three Cities,” 3.

98 Howard Jenkins, “Foreign Mission Opportunities and Obligations,” *Word & Way*, September 20, 1945, Newspapers.com.

99 Lawson H. Cook, “Foreign Mission Opportunities and Obligations,” *Word & Way*, September 20, 1945, Newspapers.com.

100 Thomas T. Hollaway, “Japan Is the Land of Great Advance,” in *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1951* (Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meet, San Francisco, California, 1951), 466, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1951.pdf.

spiritual slavery” suggests that the cause of the Japanese man’s anguish is also the solution.¹⁰¹ Or, to put it in economic terms, the American suppliers of “the light” (Southern Baptist Christianity) created their own demand by decimating Japan with the atom bomb that brought “the darkness.”¹⁰² Swilley effectively sets up a causal link in which American bombs sow devastation, which demands victims find the Church to emotionally survive. Those Japanese victims portrayed within Convention-sponsored media often identified the Christian merits of their suffering. A Southern Baptist documentary, “Nagasaki – One Man’s Return,” aired on syndicated television in 38 states in April 1976. The documentary, voted the best Christian Film Documentary in 1976 by the New York Film Festival, follows a former Marine and Baptist pastor Buckner Fanning’s return to Nagasaki thirty years after the atomic bombing in which he grapples with the effects of the attack and discusses the experiences of survivors. Within the first minutes of the documentary, Fanning sits down with an unnamed survivor of the bombing. She retells the painful events of August 9, 1945, and explains that, after her “life was spared” and her family was not, she began searching for life’s purpose, which eventually led her to the Church to look for “a life of God.” The Nagasaki survivor reasons that “if people realize that people are made by God... then there wouldn’t be any of these awful disasters.”¹⁰³ As she describes her injuries, the camera pans down to her arms, still scarred by the heat of the bomb, and displays her lasting deformity. Like the stories told by other victims, the documentary deploys her statement as an advertisement for the Southern Baptist way of life and the importance of religious dedication. More subtly, however, the documentary and Fanning himself emphasize the unnamed survivor’s attribution of the atomic bombing to human weaknesses as broad evidence of global godlessness,

turning a general meditation on man into a call for universal conversion in order to prevent future disasters. Fanning never pins the bomb’s usage on the wartime aggression of the American government, reflecting the tendency of the SBC to absolve the United States of blame. Even her word “disaster” parallels McCall’s passive characterization of the attacks, suggesting responsibility lies less with military operations and instead more regrettably with natural catastrophe. Ultimately, despite demonstrating a newfound SBC consciousness of atomic horrors, the documentary does not entertain the responsibility of the United States, instead lamenting vague ideas of humanity’s spiritual confusion.

In a story evoking a similar message, the 1965 article “Shadows in the City” tells the story of a Hiroshima survivor referred to only as Mrs. Yamashita. Published in the Foreign Mission Board’s Commission journal by a marine-turned-missionary to Hiroshima, the article shows a level of respect for the magnitude of the event while at the same time downplaying the lasting impact of the bomb on the people of Hiroshima. Indeed, the missionary paints the picture of a city that “seems to have forgotten” the bombing and in which misguided advocates for disarmament are said to be “generally resented by Hiroshima residents.”¹⁰⁴ Rather than holding lasting resentment toward Americans, the testimony of Mrs. Yamashita suggests that many have found peace and even gratitude for the attack. She describes her experience as an 18-year-old caring for her young brother when the bomb dropped. She recounts his death, a slow deterioration accompanied by high fever, hair loss, and a bloated abdomen. Of her own experiences with sickness, she describes pain that was “torture...beyond words.”¹⁰⁵ And yet, despite the tragedies she experienced at the hands of American weaponry, Mrs. Yamashita rejoices, concluding that she “can trace my birth of new life to this unfortunate event. Death,

101 Monroe Swilley, “The Day of March Has Come” (Woman’s Missionary Union, May 1956), SBHLA, <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/462,30-May-1956.pdf>.

102 Swilley, “The Day of March.”

103 Nagasaki – One Man’s Return, Documentary (Miller Productions, Inc., 1976), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNaHuOQHyeG&ab_channel=BucknerFanning.

104 Melvin J. Bradshaw, “Shadows in the City,” Commission, July 1965, SBHLA, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/missionjournals/commission/1965/com_1965_07.pdf.

105 McCall, “Tale of Three Cities,” 3.

which is an undeniable fact, sorrow from losing my loved one, these things led me into seeking something above human.”¹⁰⁶ Her qualification of death as “an undeniable fact” is especially noteworthy, equating the universal experience of dying with the inevitability of Hiroshima’s destruction as if the event itself were an unstoppable and uncontrollable biological necessity. Like other SBC arguments before hers, Yamashita’s charitable retelling of events strips American decision-makers of responsibility. It ends any discussion on the ethics of the attack before it can begin.

Another piece from a Hiroshima missionary, “Rebirth in the City,” includes a translated testimonial from a victim akin to Mrs. Yamashita’s. First, the writer, Mrs. Tokie Ochi, mourns the bomb’s destruction of her property and loved ones. However, any sense of anguish is soon replaced by the deepest gratitude as she thanks the missionary for showing her the evangelical light: “I was saved...I give thanks for Mr. Askew coming over the ocean to teach us... to believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁷ The indebtedness with which Ochi speaks borders dangerously on a feeling of indebtedness to the United States for her original misery. Ochi admits a previous hatred for Americans and begs the Church to “Please, please forgive me!” for her past animosities. And so, despite the manner in which an American atomic bomb has devastated her home, killed her parents, and tormented Ochi herself – at the time of the bomb she was covered in purple blisters and with “radioactivity in [her] blood,” she apologizes to Americans for her unfair, severe judgments of them.¹⁰⁸ Ochi provides another example of the spiritual power vested within the divinely reinforced innocence of American explosives, an image of Japanese gratitude the Convention eagerly promoted. The bomb has opened the door for Baptist evangelicals to purge the society of its heathenism; the ever-growing list of Japanese converts cleanses any innocent blood on American hands.

The frequently racialized nature of Southern Baptist rhetoric remains a thread throughout the portrayals of Japan. Reporting in 1958, Frederick Horton describes the pronounced spiritual struggles of those who “come to Christ straight out of heathenism” and asks that the reader pray for “our newly baptized babes in Christ.”¹⁰⁹ Horton clarifies that “some of them are older people, but still ‘babes,’” making plain that the leagues of sinful Japanese still so sought after by the SBC are, in essence, spiritually children and need to be cared for and nurtured accordingly. Even those Japanese already converted remain vulnerable to reversion, their simple-minded tendencies constantly threatening to undo their spiritual progress.¹¹⁰

Ultimately, Southern Baptist conceptions of warfare against Japan both during and after the war show a consistent pattern of justifying American military actions. The shift of these justifications parallels the changing American relationship with Japan; initially dependent only on the legitimacy of divine punishment, as Japan transformed into an American ally against the new scourge of Communism, Southern Baptists identified more complex justifications of American warfare and engagement in Japan. Instead of emphasizing the infliction of suffering for the sake of suffering, the SBC focused on how the previously inflicted suffering opened the door to Christian missionaries and pushed its victims toward the acceptance of Jesus Christ. In both explicit case studies and implicit suggestions, the SBC becomes an advocate for suffering and suffering’s ability to both purge a society of sinners and familiarize a fallen nation with the Southern Baptist God and doctrine. The end result was the reinforcement of SBC values and, as a necessary component of that reinforcement, the justification of American military actions that destroyed the lives of innocents abroad.

106 McCall, “Tale of Three Cities,” 3.

107 McCall, “Tale of Three Cities,” 6.

108 McCall, “Tale of Three Cities,” 6.

109 Frederick M. Horton, “Accepting Christ in Japan Means Sharp Change from Former Life,” Commission, July 1959, SBHLA, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/missionjournals/commission/1959/com_1959_07.pdf.

110 Horton, “Accepting Christ in Japan.”

III. A FORMULA FOR WORLD CONQUEST

Southern Baptists and the American Government

THE BROADER IMPACTS OF THE particular shift in emphasis from punitive to productive suffering seen in the SBC would, in most religious organizations, be at the very least limited by the scope of its denominational adherents. However, the church's unusually deep connections with the United States military catalyzed the penetration of SBC views into concrete American policies. Across the changing theological interpretations of Japanese victims and American attacks, the Southern Baptist Convention maintained close ties to the American military, explicitly and rhetorically.¹¹¹ The SBC's tendency to identify the spiritual positives within acts of foreign aggression against non-Americans reframed debates of international right and wrong. In the global perspective of the SBC, evaluating the ethics of any given action, attack, or genocide becomes a matter of determining the extent to which it brought the non-Christians of the world to the Church. This harmful rethinking of morality becomes much more damaging when the actions being assessed are those of the American government (that is, policies that the SBC can more directly influence). Indeed, notions of punitive and productive suffering not only minimized complicated tragedies by forcing them through a Southern Baptist viewpoint, but also elevated every

instance of blind American nationalism. The close relationship between the SBC and the American military throughout the 1940s casts further doubt on the ability of the Church to comment on military actions faithfully and underlines the danger in justifying and dismissing foreign pain.

Neither the churches nor the American public were aware of the atomic bomb until the announcement of its use. Sixteen hours after the bomb had detonated, President Harry Truman released a statement announcing its deployment, much of which celebrated the creation of the bomb and the fulfillment of American vengeance. Truman writes that, for the crime of Pearl Harbor, "[The Japanese] have been repaid many fold. And the end is not yet."¹¹² The power of the sun had been "loosed upon those who brought war to the Far East."¹¹³ Truman does not shy away from religious invocations, alluding to divine selection in suggesting that "We may be grateful to Providence that the Germans...did not get the atomic bomb at all."¹¹⁴ Throughout the statement, he ignores the terrifying efficacy of the bomb and its fallout, remarking instead upon its status as "the greatest achievement of organized science in history" and its historical triumph as the largest bomb ever used in human warfare. In the week following Hiroshima & Nagasaki, Southern Baptist leaders who spoke on the bomb would echo these talking points (contrary to other Protestant leaders). For example, as was already discussed in chapter four, Eddie Martin's sermon applauds the weapon as a tremendous national accomplishment.¹¹⁵ These moments of rhetorical similarity reveal the SBC's frequent tendency to back government positions.

The SBC's discussion of the bomb suggests a symbiotic relationship between the aims of the American government and Southern Baptists. In the years following the war, Southern Baptist publications

111 The title "A Formula for World Conquest" derives from a Biblical Recorder article describing Baptist methods of strengthening the Convention (Gambrell 1917).

112 Harry S. Truman, "Statement by the President Announcing the Use of the A-Bomb at Hiroshima," August 6, 1945, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-the-president-announcing-the-use-the-bomb-hiroshima>.

113 Truman, "Statement by the President."

114 Truman, "Statement by the President."

115 Eddie Martin, "The Relationship of the Atomic Bomb to the End of the World."

frequently featured writings and letters from General Douglass MacArthur in which he spoke on the atom bomb, the ongoing occupation of Japan, and the pressing need for Christian values in the East. A 1947 editorial in the *Biblical Recorder* explained that “powers unseen...imbued [MacArthur] with a sense of mission, and with an awareness of dependence on the grace of Almighty God.”¹¹⁶ The author cited MacArthur’s announcement on V-J Day that “The Holy Mission has been completed” as well as his understanding of Japanese occupation as “basically theological.”¹¹⁷ In a 1947 letter from MacArthur to the president of the Southern Baptist Convention (at the time, Dr. Louie Newton) later published in the *Baptist Bulletin Service* and several other high-profile publications, MacArthur explains that progress in the occupation of Japan, although a politically oriented process, has relied heavily upon the spirit of Christianity:

*[P]rogress has rested more upon the application of those guiding tenets of our Christian faith— justice, tolerance, understanding – which, without yielding firmness, have underwritten all applied policy, than upon the power or threat of Allied bayonets. This has deeply stirred the consciousness of the Japanese people and will have a far-reaching and lasting influence upon the future of Japanese society. It has led them increasingly to turn to Christianity to strengthen them through the ravage of destructive defeat and the bewildering realization of the complete failure of their own past faith.*¹¹⁸

MacArthur suggests that the difference between American victory and Japanese defeat was spiritual in nature, and further discusses the presence of a “vacuum

which events have left in the spiritual phase of Japanese life,” leading to an “opportunity without counterpart, since the birth of Christ” to Christianize Japan and change the course of civilization forever.¹¹⁹ Harkening to myths of productive suffering, MacArthur also entertains the narrative of the Japanese individual, facing the “ravage of destructive defeat” now turning to God for guidance and strength.¹²⁰

Military officials beyond MacArthur also featured heavily in major Southern Baptist publications, disclosing the remarkable connection between the Southern Baptist church and the State. An article in the *Baptist Standard*, a Texas newspaper with the widest readership of any state Baptist paper, published an article written by Major J. Griffin Chapman, an advisor on General MacArthur’s staff. Chapman overviews the religious background of the conflict with Japan, describing the religiously inspired cruelty of the Japanese as they “burned thousands of women and children alive... with a look of ecstasy on their faces.”¹²¹ Alluding to the Japanese notion of a “Divine Wind,” Chapman suggests that the Divine Wind actually arrived “when the atoms began to split over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”¹²² While playing into notions of a deserved, punitive suffering approved by God, Chapman also emphasizes the mercy of the bomb. Rather than focusing his discussion on the 200,000 dead Japanese, he reminds Baptists that the explosions “not only had saved Japan from a bloody invasion, [they] saved hundreds of thousands of lives in Japan and other nations.”¹²³ Chapman reiterates the thoughts of MacArthur, commenting on the sudden appearance of a vacuum in Japan, one that will be filled not by Buddhism or Shintoism but by either Christianity or Communism in a “struggle for the mastery of

116 Ivan L. Bennett, “General MacArthur,” *The Biblical Recorder*, February 19, 1947, Wake Forest Archives, <https://digital.olivesoftware.com/olive/apa/wakeforest/default.aspx#panel=document>.

117 Bennet, “General MacArthur.”

118 Douglas MacArthur, “Letter from MacArthur.” April 13, 1947, SBHLA.

119 MacArthur, “Letter from MacArthur.”

120 MacArthur, “Letter from MacArthur.”

121 J. Griffin Chapman, “Tojo Being Dead Yet Speaketh,” *Baptist Standard*, January 13, 1949, Baylor University Libraries, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FFIIOCq9wPkYpb0FJ8MRjzHwIPIAbHT289cSMA2bJck/edit>. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FFIIOCq9wPkYpb0FJ8MRjzHwIPIAbHT289cSMA2bJck/edit>.

122 *Ibid.*

123 *Ibid.*

the Japanese mind.”¹²⁴ Chapman’s article reinforces the power of Christianity to assist in Japan’s Westernization and, in doing so, to save the country from damnation.

Missionaries as Soldiers and Soldiers as Preachers

As a recurring theme in Southern Baptist philosophy, the SBC frequently blurred the line between soldier and missionary.¹²⁵ The language used to describe both often intertwined their functions and combined their identities as peacemakers into a single missionary-soldier. Writing for the Baptist Standard, missionary J.W. Marshall writes that “Volunteers for war are volunteers for missionaries,” reasoning that “many of the same young men and women who volunteered to serve their country in war, are now volunteering to return as missionaries of the gospel.”¹²⁶ Seeing within missionaries the ability to Christianize sinners and thus prevent war, Marshall criticizes the United States, not understanding “how America could send ten million of her finest men to fight for freedom yet be unwilling to support an adequate mission program.”¹²⁷ However, rather than advocating for the replacement of soldiers with missionaries, Marshall establishes a link between the two. He describes missionaries as complementary to soldiers, pacifying foreigners before they can do harm: “We have been thankful many times that our boys have been cared for by friendly natives. We must never forget that those who gave kind treatment to our loved ones did so because of the influence of evangelical mission

work.”¹²⁸

The blending of soldier and missionary intensified in the latter half of the twentieth century. A 1964 article in the *Biblical Recorder* explains that the strong friendship between the United States and Japan formed as a result of “the witness of American GI’s following World War II” and “the benevolent occupation of their country by our soldiers.”¹²⁹ In a 1962 article discussing the relationship between foreign missions and military activities abroad, evangelist and missionary H. Daniel Friberg notes that the duties of both the missionary and the military “might be an assignment by God and might therefore both be carried out with his approval and blessing.”¹³⁰ He explains, in terms mirroring Southern Baptist speech after the bombing of Japan, that war itself is among “God’s major ways of punishing mankind” and “a substantial part of the cost of mammon-worship and other idolatry.”¹³¹ Together, these condemnatory attitudes reinforce that any nation or people staring down the barrel of an American M16 are cosmically deserving of their fate. Friberg’s writings reflect the Church’s belief that every war, by virtue of its own existence, should be viewed as a deliberate act of God. Friberg identifies yet another connection: because wars serve as divine punishment for idolatrous peoples, a “failure to evangelize the world implies a world at war.”¹³² Adding this final piece to the puzzle, he understands evangelizing the entire globe to be necessary to establish international peace. His final argument, that “all of the American troops...should be true Christians witnessing as earnestly for Christ...as any of the missionaries” further links the duty of the soldier and the

124 Ibid.

125 A particularly curious instance occurs in the Baptist Standard, which claims that the Marines themselves started a fund to rebuild a church in the Japanese city of Sasebo (Rankin 1945).

126 J.W. Marshall, “What Will Time Tell?,” *The Baptist Standard*, October 31, 1946, Baylor Libraries.

127 Marshall, “What Will Time Tell?”.

128 Marshall, “What Will Time Tell?”

129 “Japan Considers U.S. Close Friend, WMU Convention Told by Dr. Coleman D. Clarke,” *The Biblical Recorder*, March 21, 1964, Wake Forest Archives.

130 H. Daniel Friberg, “Shifting Balances: Missionaries or Marines?” *Christianity Today*, August 3, 1962, Christianity Today Archives, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1962/august-3/shifting-balances-missionaries-or-marines.html>.

131 Friberg, “Shifting Balances.”

132 Friberg, “Shifting Balances.”

missionary.¹³³ In equivalating war with evangelization, this decidedly pro-war stance is a constant, evident both in the advocacy for ruinous foreign policies and subsequent celebrations of the steadfast survivors whose suffering has brought them to Christendom.

Missiological Failures and Militaristic Remedies

The blurring boundaries between missionary and soldier and their shared power to neutralize had been expressed in Southern Baptist thought before and reached the logical conclusion that the performance of Southern Baptist missionaries could be measured in the world's depravity, or lack thereof. Long before the end of the American war against Japan, a 1942 article in the *Western Recorder* makes a similar argument to Friberg, essentially asserting that an ounce of evangelical prevention is worth a pound of expensive, martial cure: "The single tithes... given into their respective churches to support a world-enveloping program to build the Kingdom of God in human hearts would have obviated the present necessity of putting four tithes into taxes to support a world-enveloping war to destroy."¹³⁴ In a remarkable twist, culpability for the plight that had previously fallen squarely on the unchristian people of Japan was frequently redirected toward the missionaries themselves. One quarterly SBC report from 1945 laments that "World War II is definitely traceable to our failure to enter Japan vigorously in the 1880s and to build European evangelical seminaries fifty years ago."¹³⁵ Reports in the 1949 Annual explained that the "reconstruction of Japan along peaceful lines is an

utter impossibility without the message of Christ in the hearts of her people."¹³⁶ Missionaries served a clear political purpose: "To destroy the military power of Japan and then fail to bring the message of Christ to her masses would be a fatal mistake."¹³⁷

Two decades later, Pastor Garland Henricks expressed the same sentiment in a 1963 edition of the Southern Baptist journal *Christian Frontiers*. Henricks catalogs famed missionary John Mott's warning that the Christian world and the SBC failed to heed. He reminds the reader that, long before World War II, Mott "came back from the Orient and told us that if we did not send ten thousand missionaries to Japan, we would later have to send a hundred thousand soldiers."¹³⁸ Ignoring this advice cost Americans dearly. Mott asserts that the prevention of war can and must be accomplished by maintaining worldwide evangelization efforts. These examples reveal the SBC's promotion of a tight relationship between the American military's presence and healthy Southern Baptist missions; in doing so, the Convention underscores the vitality of both to a healthy world but ultimately preferring evangelization as a preventative, even financially prudent measure. Money spent on missionaries is money saved on soldiers.

The ideas expressed in the previous chapter that link the conversion of Japanese people to the pain they suffered resurface in a 1963 Baptist Press article by Herschel Hobbs, the president of the SBC at the time. Hobbs identifies a new metaphor in the era of the communist threat. In his sermon "God and History," Hobbs explains the need to launch "an unprecedented program of world missions" to combat the spread of communist ideology.¹³⁹ Counter to expectation, he strongly contends that "we cannot defeat the nefarious ends of

133 Friberg, "Shifting Balances."

134 Ellis A. Fuller, "All Things Must Needs Be Fulfilled," *Western Recorder*, May 28, 1942, SBHLA.

135 Earle V. Pierce, "The Quarterly Review: A Survey of Southern Baptist Progress," vol. 5 (Southern Baptist Convention, 1945), 66, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/periodicals/quarterly_review/qr_1945_4.pdf.

136 Baker J. Cauthen, "The Orient," 1949, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1949.pdf.

137 Cauthen, "The Orient," 125.

138 Herschel Hobbs, "God and History," *Baptist Press*, May 8, 1963, SBHLA, <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/1739,08-May-1963.pdf>.

139 Hobbs, "God and History."

Communism with bombs and bullets.”¹⁴⁰ However, Hobbs does not intend to dispense with the military. In his conception, the military, although not the ultimate solution to global unrest, is a tool for wrenching the metaphorical door of communist nations open so that the true work of evangelization may begin. The military does not convert souls itself but instead facilitates the valuable work of the SBC. As such, “our nation must remain militarily strong.”¹⁴¹ Hobbs further obscures the line between military might and evangelical vigor, concluding that “we are in a battle to the death, and the prize of war is the souls of men.”¹⁴² In accordance with this statement, waging war in nations across the globe becomes a constant, unchanging political necessity in order to cleanse religious impurity.

The SBC lost the battle for Japanese souls. For all the Convention’s talk about the wide open doors in Japan, neither American bombs nor American missionaries ever brought anything resembling spiritual renewal. Despite claims that more Bibles had been sold in Japan than in any other country besides the US, it never became a Christian nation, much less a Southern Baptist one.¹⁴³ Current statistics from the Baptist World Alliance suggest that the four Southern Baptist organizations in Japan are home to only 20,000 members out of a population of 125 million.¹⁴⁴ A 2020 article in the International Mission Board refers to Japan as a “missionary graveyard,” and the country currently qualifies as “unreached” according to Southern Baptist guidelines.¹⁴⁵ However, hints of pessimism appeared much earlier. As early as 1949, it had become clear to some Southern Baptist officials that their envisioned Christian ally would never materialize and that excitement for “a stampede to embrace Christianity as a

religion of the victorious nations” was unwarranted.¹⁴⁶ By the 1950s, some within the Convention had become disillusioned with the failed Japanese missionary efforts of the SBC and what they viewed as organizational complacency. Demonstrating the perseverance of productive suffering, missionary to Japan Marshall Barnett writes in the Baptist Standard of his disappointment:

*I wrote from Japan in 1945 asking you to send 500 missionaries. We had taken care of housing, made preliminary arrangements for preaching points, and had the interest of the Baptists of Japan. I was certain that since you had cremated 120,000 Japanese people with the fabulous American brainchild for Hiroshima and Nagasaki that you would readily and eagerly want to show the world that the Christ-way was the only way to lasting peace. I look back 12 years today and I can hear the cock crow, every day.*¹⁴⁷

In the denomination’s failure to capitalize on the dead, Barnett detects that the logic of productive suffering has failed to come to fruition. As a result, the missionary perceives a degree of moral failure within the Church; the atom bombs, without the widespread conversion of their targets and their targets’ families, become spiritually useless. They have killed and maimed, but without fulfilling their divine purpose.

As recently as 2015, articles in the *Baptist Press* repeat the same concerns as those published seventy years prior. David Roach, at the time the Chief National Correspondent of the BP, published an article overviewing much of the same history discussed in this thesis. The article offers no form of remembrance or remorse. Harkening back to Southern Baptist claims just

140 Hobbs, “God and History.”

141 Hobbs, “God and History.”

142 Hobbs, “God and History.”

143 “Japan Considers U.S. Close Friend, WMU Convention Told by Dr. Coleman D. Clarke.”

144 Baptist World Alliance. “Member Unions,” April 2023. <https://baptistworld.org/member-unions/>.

145 Bryan Pittman, “Awakening in the Land of the Rising Sun” (International Mission Board, January 7, 2020), <https://www.imb.org/2020/01/07/awakening-in-japan/>.

146 Cauthen, “The Orient.”

147 Marshall D. Barnett, “The Cock Crows Every Day,” *The Baptist Standard*, July 27, 1957, Baylor University Libraries, <https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/baptist-standard-volume-69-number-30-dallas-texas-july-27-1957/1942511?item=1942520>.

after the war, Roach quotes the writing of contemporary Southern Baptists to portray Japan as “a missed evangelical opportunity” after World War II and a nation whose “spiritual openness stemmed from Japan’s military defeat.”¹⁴⁸ Roach rightly acknowledges that Southern Baptists largely defended the use of the bombs, but offers no counter. He parrots American claims that the bomb saved more than it killed and brought with it tremendous scientific opportunities.

Even in acknowledging that pastors “used the widespread fear of nuclear annihilation as an occasion to call sinners to trust Christ for salvation,” Roach perceives no deeper implications in such rhetoric.¹⁴⁹ The only confession included does not apologize for or even consider the incineration of hundreds of thousands of civilians. Just as Southern Baptists in 1945 expressed deep regret in their failure to evangelize Japan and thus prevent World War II, in his 2003 memoir, missionary W.H. Jackson expresses solemn repentance in the failure of Southern Baptists to act on the once-historic opportunity for conversion: “We must confess...that we failed to accept the challenge God gave us for Japan. We did not give Japan what we could have given, what they requested, and what God expected us to give.”¹⁵⁰

“A Tragedy and a Triumph”

Although dangerous in their own right, Southern Baptists’ association with the American military and frequent comparing of missionaries to soldiers accentuated the foreboding implications of punitive and productive suffering.¹⁵¹ The Convention’s interpretive adaptability and fascination with military solutions bolstered its ability to advocate for world missions and diminish the carnage inflicted by the United States in Japan. As a consequence of this position, explanations of

divine necessity and religious awakening are inherently connected with violent actions of the US government abroad and useful in minimizing domestic dissent. Furthermore, Southern Baptist positions toward military actions in Japan laid the groundwork for the future of conflict interpretation, better preparing Americans to at first despise and then welcome defeated enemies of the state. Nowhere are frameworks of productive suffering more evident than in the American work in Vietnam.

As Southern Baptist discussions of Japan evolved in their emphasis from the punitive to the productive, other conflicts around the world began to demand American attention. Southern Baptist narrations of tragedy in Vietnam took similar forms as they had after the Japanese defeat. The recurrence of punitive and productive suffering, coupled with the Church’s defense of military objections, resulted in the same emphasis on national, religious, and racial superiority.

The theological position of Billy Graham, among the most significant de facto leaders within the SBC, demonstrates the extent to which frameworks of punitive and productive suffering would be used to defend American military actions and justify the suffering of foreign people of color in the name of political and spiritual interests. In a public cleansing of American crimes in the *New York Times*, Graham discusses the 1968 My Lai Massacre and atrocities committed by Lieutenant William Calley in which between 200 and 400 unarmed South Vietnamese civilians were killed, gang-raped, and mutilated by Calley and his men. Despite the brutality of his offenses, Graham builds on Southern Baptist philosophies, disregarding the brutal murder of unarmed, allied civilians by American soldiers as an unfortunate but inevitable outcome of war: “I have never heard of a war where innocent people were not killed. Tens of thousands of innocent people were killed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”¹⁵² Graham dismisses the

148 David Roach, “Hiroshima & Nagasaki Remembered by Baptists,” Baptist Press, August 15, 2015, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/hiroshima-nagasaki-remembered-by-baptists/>.

149 Roach, “Hiroshima & Nagasaki Remembered by Baptists.”

150 Dub Jackson, *Whatever It Takes: The Amazing Adventures of God’s Work around the World* (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003).

151 The title “A Tragedy and a Triumph!” derives from a Billy Graham article published in the *New York Times* that is discussed in this chapter (Graham 1971).

152 Billy Graham, “Billy Graham: On Calley,” *The New York Times*, April 9, 1971.

My Lai Massacre as being morally equivalent to the dropping of the atomic bombs two decades earlier; every wartime incident in which innocents perish is largely the same, identical in their tragic inevitability. Both are regrettable but ultimately inevitable. Graham goes a step further, implying not only the universality of such tragedies to warfare but also to the individual lives of each reader, suggesting that “We have all had our My-lais one way or another [sic].”¹⁵³

The article ends with a metaphor evocative of this thesis’ core discussions. Inquiring into the origins of the term “Good Friday” to describe the day Jesus died, Graham asks, “Was it possible for anything good to come out of such seeming tragedy?” Graham then reminds the reader of the special import of Jesus’ forgiveness of those who had wronged him, forgiveness “given amid suffering, injustice, and death,” which allowed the pardoning of sin and hope of heaven; Graham declares that Jesus’ crucifixion, just like Calley’s murders, “was a tragedy and a triumph!”¹⁵⁴ The simultaneity of tragedy and triumph is precisely the essence of Southern Baptist victim narratives. It is a logic that unifies two sentiments that, in a just world, should be irreconcilable; for the Southern Baptist Convention, the triumph of a reborn Christian overcomes the tragedy of loss, war, nuclear attacks, genocide, and everything in between.

IV. EPILOGUE

E

CHOES OF THE dynamic between the Southern Baptist Convention and foreign victims remain today. Still, tectonic geopolitical shifts and the ascendance of new

threats have left its dimensions warped. As the postwar era witnessed glowing Southern Baptist accounts of foreigners converted by the brimstone of American weaponry and an emphasis on preventive evangelism, at the turn of the twenty-first century, Baptists found themselves on the other end of spiritually-founded destruction. Baptists were now the unrepentant heathens abroad facing a religious organization that evinced a theology with striking overlaps with twentieth-century Southern Baptist thought. This theology espouses the capability and necessity of violence in expanding spiritual horizons and punishing infidels in distant lands. Today, Southern Baptists grapple with the real and imagined threats of international terrorism and extreme expressions of political Islam. On September 11, 2001, 2,996 people were killed in a series of terror attacks carried out against the United States.¹⁵⁵ Along with nearly every other religious or political organization in the United States, the Southern Baptist Convention harshly condemned the 9/11 attacks. In the first resolution of the SBC’s 2002 Annual, the convention warns of an international network of terrorist groups that menace innocents and threaten “to escalate this terror through the use of...weapons of mass destruction.”¹⁵⁶ Although wholeheartedly endorsing the actions of the United States military in its “just war” against terrorism, the resolution predictably maintains that the complete elimination of terrorism can occur only through “the conversion of the people of all nations to salvation through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁷ Just as the frightening revelation of atomic energy meant that “we cannot afford to have even one nation unevangelized,” again, the Convention presents deeply complex international diplomacy issues as having a single, Southern Baptist solution.¹⁵⁸ Given the Church’s historical posture, the bellicose response of the SBC is perhaps unsurprising. So too, is the

153 Graham, “Billy Graham: On Calley.”

154 Graham, “Billy Graham: On Calley.”

155 9/11 Memorial & Museum (blog), 2023, <https://www.911memorial.org/connect/commemoration>.

156 John L. Yeats, “Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 2002” (Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, St. Louis: Southern Baptist Convention, 2002), 74, http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_2002.pdf.

157 Yeats “Annual of Southern Baptist,” 74.

158 Marshall, “What Will Time Tell?”

denomination's emergence, two years later, as the only Protestant organization in the United States to endorse the Iraq War.¹⁵⁹

Notably, Southern Baptist campaigns to combat and discredit Islam revolved primarily around a perception of the religion as barbaric and violent as well as containing irrational religious logic. Rarely did Southern Baptist writers distinguish between Islam and extremist expressions of Islam. An article published in the Baptist Press six months after 9/11 details the experiences of the Caner brothers, former Muslims who had converted years prior and had become Southern Baptist scholars. Notably, one of the brothers, Ergun, dashes any lingering notion of Islam as a peaceful religion, asserting that "Islam at its core is a religion of warfare."¹⁶⁰ Another 2004 Baptist Press article similarly describes Islam as inherently hostile and notes that, although happy to accept converts, the religion holds that "unbelievers do not have a right to live."¹⁶¹ The outrage expressed in these articles, in addition to painting Islam with an irresponsibly broad brush, is seemingly blind to the Convention's own documented advocacy for the death and injury of nonbelievers as a global and personal remedy. The criticisms levied against Islam, in these instances concerned with its extreme intolerance and warring impulses, evoke memories of the several cases in which prominent members of the Southern Baptist Convention endorsed the deaths of idolatrous civilians in warfare settings. Consider modern SBC characterizations of Islam in light of Atlanta preacher Jesse Hendley. His previously analyzed 1946 sermon directly attributes the disintegration of the "idolatrous Japanese" to God Himself, whom Hendley imagines as

having triumphantly said, "I did that!"¹⁶² The legacy of Southern Baptist celebration of the nuclear bombing of Japan as divine punishment and instruction is further complicated by more contemporary cautionings of the SBC which seem to bristle at the very idea of killing in the name of God.

These incompatibilities in Southern Baptist philosophy continue well after the September attacks that revealed them. A 2015 *Baptist Press* article by David Roach warns of Iran's jihadist plan to annihilate the United States (or "the great Satan") with nuclear weaponry as a means of societal retribution. In light of the broader history of SBC positions, Roach's criticism of Iran's "genocidal theology" becomes particularly difficult to square with the positions of the Church during and immediately following the war against Japan.¹⁶³ Other stances taken within the Church are decidedly more consistent with the past ideology of the SBC but no less troubling. Writing in 2002, Gregory Tomlin directly compares the bombing of Hiroshima to the attack on the World Trade Center, noting that suffering can be "punitive, educating and motivating," and that it is certainly possible that God endorsed or at the very least permitted the attacks as punishment.¹⁶⁴ His application of a theology that is reconcilable with punitive understandings of the atom bomb, although coherent, demonstrates a disturbing willingness to permit and even welcome mass suffering so long as the being inflicting it is unknowable. On matters of judgment and death, God's inscrutability necessarily leads to a dangerous malleability that the SBC has not only historically abused, but continues to abuse.

159 Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy: American Religion after September 11*, Religion, Politics, and Public Life (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2008).

160 Tammi Reed Ledbetter, "New Book on Islam Framed by Brother Scholars' Conversion," Baptist Press, March 26, 2002, Baptist Press, baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/new-book-on-islam-framed-by-brother-scholars-conversion/.

161 Basil Shelton, "Can Democracy Flourish in a Muslim Society?," Baptist Press, May 24, 2004, Baptist Press, baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-can-democracy-flourish-in-a-muslim-society/.

162 Hendley, "The Atomic Bomb In God's Prophetic Plan," 9.

163 David Roach, "Islamic Jihad, in Many Forms, 'Gaining Ground,'" Baptist Press, February 25, 2015, Baptist Press, baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/islamic-jihad-in-many-forms-gaining-ground/.

164 Gregory Tomlin, "FIRST-PERSON: The Day the World Changed — Again," Baptist Press, September 9, 2002, baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-the-day-the-world-changed-again/.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Southern Baptist leaders, pastors, and missionaries consistently justified the death and suffering of the Japanese during and after World War II. The rationalizations of the Convention demonstrated remarkable adaptability in transitioning from notions of punitive suffering to productive suffering as political circumstances changed. Reliant on different techniques, both conceptions of punitive and productive suffering of the SBC recklessly incorporated bombs into Southern Baptist practice and proselytism. Whether celebrating Japanese suffering or advocating for suffering's spiritual advantages, both frameworks rationalized the government-sponsored annihilation of non-Americans. Additionally, the Convention's close association with members of the American military and consistent, abnormal endorsement of American foreign policies in Japan promoted an incomplete, irresponsibly sanitized image of US actions. The maneuvers and rhetorical relationships that the SBC developed in this era set a precedent for the justification of future American invasions through a uniquely missiological lens.

Questions remain about how the missiological aims of the Southern Baptist Convention can ethically endure if the Convention continues to discredit non-Christians and stoke the cultural, religious, and racial divisions that too often produce suffering. The Southern Baptist endeavor to snatch the positive from the negative and to spot the elusive "ray of light," would most often be considered an admirable pursuit.¹⁶⁵ The Southern Baptist approach makes clear, however, that this tendency, when taken to the extreme, carries social and political ramifications that undermine any productive outcomes and threaten far worse ones in the future. Of course, precisely defining the boundaries of this mentality is difficult; at what point does the Convention's optimism become dangerous justification and the cynical exploitation of atrocity? Despite the admitted complexities of drawing such a boundary, American scholar, Rabbi Irving Greenberg, offers a poignant recommendation for when to silence those rejoicing in

suffering's constructive potential: "No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of burning children."¹⁶⁶ ♦

165 Gartenhaus, "Jewish Work."

166 Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," in *Wrestling With God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, 1977, 499–522.

WORKS CITED

- 9/11 Memorial & Museum, 2023. <https://www.911memorial.org/connect/commemoration>.
- Aho, James A. *Religious Mythology and the Art of War: Comparative Religious Symbolisms of Military Violence*. London: Aldwych Press, 1981.
- Allitt, Patrick. *Religion in America Since 1945: A History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Askew, D. Curtis. "Rebirth in the City." Commission, July 1965. Southern Baptist Historical Library & Archives. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/missionjournals/commission/1965/com_1965_07.pdf.
- Atchison, David, and Jan Cunningham. "Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1991," 545. Atlanta, Georgia, 1991. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1991.pdf.
- "Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith." In Report of the Commission on the Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith to the Federal Council of Churches. Columbus, Ohio: Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, 1946. <https://archive.org/details/atomicwarfareandthechristianfaith/page/n17/mode/2up>.
- Baptist and Reflector. "Atomic Bomb." September 13, 1945. Newspapers.com.
- Baptist and Reflector. "Hiroshima." June 17, 1948. Newspapers.com.
- Baptist Press. "500 Baptist Pastors Surveyed: Nixon, Wallace Favored By Most." August 5, 1968. <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/2637,05-Aug-1968.pdf>.
- Baptist Press. "Faith in God Sustained Him, Ex-POW Tells Congregation." March 7, 1973. SBHLA. <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/3544,07-Mar-1973.pdf>.
- Baptist World Alliance. "Member Unions," April 2023. <https://baptistworld.org/member-unions/>.
- Barnett, Marshall D. "The Cock Crows Every Day." Baptist Standard, July 27, 1957. Baylor University Libraries. <https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/baptist-standard-volume-69-number-30-dallas-texas-july-27-1957/1942511?item=1942520>.
- Bartlett Jr., Eugene M. "Gospel Singing in Hiroshima." *The California Southern Baptist*, February 14, 1946. SBHLA. <https://cdm16061.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16061coll23/id/162/rec/3>.
- Batchelder, Robert C. *The Irreversible Decision 1939-1950*. Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, 1961.
- Bennett, Ivan L. "General MacArthur." *The Biblical Recorder*, February 19, 1947. Wake Forest Archives. <https://digital.olivesoftware.com/olive/apa/wakeforest/default.aspx#panel=document>.
- Boyer, Paul S. *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*. 1st ed. New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- Bradshaw, Melvin J. "Shadows in the City." Commission, July 1965. SBHLA. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/missionjournals/commission/1965/com_1965_07.pdf.
- Cary, James. "Southwestern Seminary News," January 23, 1941. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/335192021/?terms=Gartenhaus&match=1>.
- Cauthen, Baker J. "The Orient," 1949. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1949.pdf.
- Chapman, J. Griffin. "Tojo Being Dead Yet Speaketh." Baptist Standard, January 13, 1949. Baylor

- University Libraries. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FFIIOCq9wPkYpb0FJ8MRjzHwLPIAbHT289cSMA2bJck/edit>.
- Christianity Today. "Peace In Our Time: What Are the Pacifists Doing?" October 26, 1962. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1962/october-26/peace-in-our-time-what-are-pacifists-doing.html>.
- Clodfelter, Micheal. *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000*. 2nd ed. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001.
- Cook, Lawson H. "Foreign Mission Opportunities and Obligations." *Word & Way*, September 20, 1945. Newspapers.com.
- Crouch, Austin. "Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1945," 597, 1945. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1946.pdf.
- Dozier, Edwin. "Japan Moves Forward." *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1948. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1948.pdf.
- Emerson, Matthew Y., Christopher W. Morgan, and R. Lucas Stamps. *Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Toward an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity*. Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Academic, 2020.
- Friberg, H. Daniel. "Shifting Balances: Missionaries or Marines?" *Christianity Today*, August 3, 1962. *Christianity Today Archives*. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1962/august-3/shifting-balances-missionaries-or-marines.html>.
- Fuchs, Anne. *After the Dresden Bombing: Pathways of Memory, 1945 to the Present*. Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Fuller, Ellis A. "All Things Must Needs Be Fulfilled." *Western Recorder*, May 28, 1942. SBHLA.
- . "The Atomic Bomb." *Baptist Standard*, August 23, 1945. Baylor University Libraries. <https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/baptist-standard-volume-lvii-number-34-dallas-texas-august-23-1945/1814534>.
- Gambrell, J.B. "A Formula for World Conquest." *The Biblical Recorder*, August 8, 1917. <https://digital.olivesoftware.com/olive/apa/wakeforest/default.aspx#panel=document>.
- Gartenhaus, Jacob. "Jewish Trophies." *The Word and Way*, June 5, 1941. Newspapers.com.
- . "Jewish Work," 291-95, 1945. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1946.pdf.
- . "Report on the Jewish Conference." *The Word and Way*, October 9, 1947. Newspapers.com.
- Gentile, Emilio. *God's Democracy: American Religion after September 11*. Religion, Politics, and Public Life. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2008.
- Graham, Billy. *Approaching Hoofbeats: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984.
- . "Billy Graham: On Calley." *The New York Times*, April 9, 1971.
- . *Peace in a Nuclear Age*. Sermon. New Haven, CT, 1982.
- . "Satan's Religion." *The American Mercury*, August 1954.
- Gray, B.D. "SOME NEW HOME MISSION WORKERS." *The Word and Way*, August 18, 1921. Newspapers.com.
- Greenberg, Irving. "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust." In *Wrestling With God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the*

- Holocaust, 499–522, 1977.
- Hall, Matthew J. “AT WAR WITH THE EVIL EMPIRE: SOUTHERN BAPTISTS AND NUCLEAR ARMS.” *Fides et Historia* 47, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2015): 33–46.
- Halsell, Grace. *Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War*. Westport, Conn: Lawrence Hill & Co, 1986.
- Ham, Mordecai. “The Atomic Bomb.” *Temple Trumpet*, September 23, 1945. Baptist Trumpet. https://baptisttrumpet.com/?dna_download_file=3636638817772e42b59d74cff571fbb3.
- Hankins, Barry. *Uneasy in Babylon Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture*. Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2009.
- Hansen, David. “Vic’s War.” *Christianity Today*, October 1, 2003. Christianity Today Archives. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2003/fall/15.104.html>.
- Hastey, Stan. “Rogers, Others Call Nation to Repentance.” *Baptist Standard*, May 7, 1980. Baylor University Libraries.
- Hendley, Jesse M. “The Atomic Bomb In God’s Prophetic Plan,” August 26, 1945. SBHLA.
- Herald-Journal. “Limestone Speech Cites Education Obligations.” November 5, 1945. Google News.
- Hiroshima for Peace. “Economic Loss.” n.d. <https://hiroshimaforpeace.com/en/reconstruction/page-2-5/#:~:text=It%20estimated%20there%20was%20884%2C100%2C000,in%201944%20was%201%2C044%20yen.&text=The%20reconstruction%20of%20Hiroshima%27s%20industrial,by%20a%20variety%20of%20factors>.
- Hobbs, Herschel. “Baptist Faith and Message.” Southern Baptist Convention, May 9, 1963. SBHLA. <https://bfm.sbc.net/>.
- . “Because of the Cross.” 2019 Southern Baptist Convention, June 12, 2019. SBHLA. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/sbc/sbc_sermons/2019_Stephen_Rummage.pdf.
- . “God and History.” Baptist Press, May 8, 1963. SBHLA. <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/1739,08-May-1963.pdf>.
- Hollaway, Thomas T. “Japan Is the Land of Great Advance.” In *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1951*, 466. San Francisco, California, 1951. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1951.pdf.
- Horton, Frederick M. “Accepting Christ in Japan Means Sharp Change from Former Life.” Commission, July 1959. SBHLA. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/missionjournals/commission/1959/com_1959_07.pdf.
- Jackson, Dub. *Whatever It Takes: The Amazing Adventures of God’s Work around the World*. Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003.
- Jenkins, Howard. “Foreign Mission Opportunities and Obligations.” *Word & Way*, September 20, 1945. Newspapers.com.
- Jerden, Larry. “POWs Created ‘Living Bible’ From Memory, Baptist Pilot Says.” Baptist Press, March 13, 1973. <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/3547,13-Mar-1973.pdf>.
- Kim, Helen Jin. *Race for Revival: How Cold War South Korea Shaped American Evangelical Empire*. New York, NY, United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Kimura. “The Atomic Bomb and My Personal Experience.” *Word & Way*, July 13, 1950. Newspapers.com.
- Laden, Osama bin. “Letter to America,” November 2002. <https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/bitstream/handle/10066/4746/OBL20021124.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.
- Lawrence, J.B. “Rev. Jacob Gartenhaus Completes

- Twenty Years of Service." *The Word and Way*, May 29, 1941. Newspapers.com.
- Ledbetter, Tammi Reed. "New Book on Islam Framed by Brother Scholars' Conversion." Baptist Press, March 26, 2002. Baptist Press. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/new-book-on-islam-framed-by-brother-scholars-conversion/>.
- Leonard, Bill. *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention*. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990.
- MacArthur, Douglas. "Letter from MacArthur." April 13, 1947. SBHLA.
- Maddy, Charles E. "Divine Purpose in Japan's Offensive." *The Biblical Recorder*, January 8, 1941. Wake Forest Archives.
- . "Many Face Famine in War-Torn Areas." *The Biblical Recorder*, March 19, 1941. Wake Forest Archives.
- Marshall, J.W. "What Will Time Tell?" *Baptist Standard*, October 31, 1946. Baylor University Libraries.
- Martin, Eddie. "The Relationship of the Atomic Bomb to the End of the World," 1946. SBHLA.
- McCall, Duke. "Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1946," 661. Miami, Florida, 1946. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1946.pdf.
- . "Tale of Three Cities." Baptist Press, January 15, 1951. SBHLA.
- McCartney, R.T. "10,888 Make Decisions During Japan Crusade." Baptist Press, April 25, 1963. SBHLA. <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/1734,25-Apr-1963.pdf>.
- McClelland, Gwyn. *Dangerous Memory in Nagasaki: Prayers, Protests and Catholic Survivor Narratives*. London ; New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2020.
- McGregor, Don. "Father, Forgive." *Baptist Standard*, February 7, 1962. Baylor University Libraries. <https://digitalcollections-baylor-quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/baptist-standard-volume-74-number-6-dallas-texas-february-7-1962/1814443?item=1814456>.
- Mead, Walter Russell. "God's Country?" *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 5 (2006): 24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20032068>.
- Menges, Harold. "Japan on the Highway to Peace," 241–47. Miami, Florida, 1946. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1946.pdf.
- Merrell, Betty. "Everyday Example." *Commission*, June 1966. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/missionjournals/commission/1966/com_1966_06.pdf.
- Milligan, Jeffrey Ayala. "Teaching in the Presence of Burning Children: Attending to Tragedy and Faith in Philosophy of/and Education." *Educational Foundations*, Winter 2003, 18.
- Milton, Nicholas. *Neville Chamberlain's Legacy: Hitler, Munich and the Path to War*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword History, 2019.
- Mohler Jr., R. Albert. "The Southern Baptist Convention and the Issue of Interdenominational Relationships," July 16, 2009. <https://albertmohler.com/2009/07/16/the-southern-baptist-convention-and-the-issue-of-interdenominational-relationships>.
- Mojtabai, A. G. *Blessed Assurance: At Home with the Bomb in Amarillo, Texas*. 1st Syracuse University Press ed. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1997.
- Morgan, Niel. "RELIGIOUS AND PERSONAL LIBERTY MUST BE PRESERVED IN AMERICA." *The Word and Way*, August 14,

1941. Newspapers.com.
- Nagasaki – One Man’s Return. Documentary. Miller Productions, Inc., 1976. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNaHuOQHyEg&ab_channel=BucknerFanning.
- Niff, Pat M. “Foreign Mission Opportunities and Obligations.” *Word & Way*, September 20, 1945. Newspapers.com.
- Norris, J. Frank, March 3, 1944. SBHLA.
- O’Brien, Robert. “Baptist Minister Featured in Prime Time TV Special.” Baptist Press, April 8, 1976. SBHLA. <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/4175,08-Apr-1976.pdf>.
- Phan Thi, Kim Phuc. “These Bombs Led Me to Christ.” *Christianity Today*, April 20, 2018. *Christianity Today Archives*. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/may/napalm-girl-kim-phuc-phan-thi-fire-road.html>.
- Pierce, Earle V. “The Quarterly Review: A Survey of Southern Baptist Progress,” Vol. 5. Southern Baptist Convention, 1945. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/periodicals/quarterly_review/qv_1945_4.pdf.
- Pittman, Bryan. “Awakening in the Land of the Rising Sun.” International Mission Board, January 7, 2020. <https://www.imb.org/2020/01/07/awakening-in-japan/>.
- Putnam, Robert D., and David E. Campbell. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. 1st Simon & Schuster hardcover ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010.
- Rankin, M. Theron. “Southern Baptists and Foreign Missions.” *Baptist Standard*, December 6, 1945. <https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/baptist-standard-volume-lvii-number-49-dallas-texas-december-6-1945/1815031?item=1815040>.
- Reed, R. Alton. “Report of Baptist Standard Board of Directors,” 160, 1951. <https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/annual-of-the-baptist-general-convention-of-texas-held-at-houston-texas-containing-the-proceedings-of-the-103rd-annual-session-65th-since-consolidation-october-23-25-1951/1103121?item=1103466>.
- “Rev. Mordecai Ham Dies at 84; Evangelist Converted a Million.” *The New York Times*, November 2, 1961.
- Roach, David. “Hiroshima & Nagasaki Remembered by Baptists.” Baptist Press, August 15, 2015. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/hiroshima-nagasaki-remembered-by-baptists/>.
- . “Islamic Jihad, in Many Forms, ‘Gaining Ground.’” Baptist Press, February 25, 2015. Baptist Press. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/islamic-jihad-in-many-forms-gaining-ground/>.
- Scally, Emma Catherine. “Between Piety and Polity: The American Catholic Response to the First Atomic Bombs.” *Of Life and History* 1 (May 2018). <https://crossworks.holycross.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=offlifeandhistory>.
- Schildgen, Robert. *Toyohiko Kagawa: Apostle of Love and Social Justice*. Berkeley, Calif., USA: Centenary Books, 1988.
- Settje, David E. *Faith and War: How Christians Debated the Cold and Vietnam Wars*. New York: New York University Press, 2011.
- Shelton, Basil. “FIRST-PERSON: Can Democracy Flourish in a Muslim Society?” Baptist Press, May 24, 2004. Baptist Press. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-can-democracy-flourish-in-a-muslim-society/>.
- Shibusawa, Naoko. *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006.

- Smith, Oran P. *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism*. New York: New York University Press, 1997.
- Sodei, Rinjirō. "Hiroshima/Nagasaki as History and Politics." *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (December 1, 1995): 1118–23.
- Steele, Michael R. *Christianity, Tragedy, and Holocaust Literature. Contributions to the Study of Religion, Christianity and the Holocaust*, no. 41. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995.
- Stricklin, David. *A Genealogy of Dissent: Southern Baptist Protest in the Twentieth Century*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999.
- Swilley, Monroe. "The Day of March Has Come." *Woman's Missionary Union*, May 1956. SBHLA. <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/462,30-May-1956.pdf>.
- "The Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki : Chapter 9 - General Description of Damage Caused by the Atomic Explosions." *The Avalon Project*. Yale Law School, 2008. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mp09.asp.
- The Biblical Recorder. "Japan Considers U.S. Close Friend, WMU Convention Told by Dr. Coleman D. Clarke." March 21, 1964. Wake Forest Archives.
- The New American Bible. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- "The Quarter's Polls." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1945): 365–93.
- The Word and Way. "Personals, Events Comments." March 1, 1923. Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/335061383/?terms=Gartenhaus&match=1>.
- The Word and Way. "Radio Discussion Tabled." December 16, 1943. Newspapers.com.
- The Word and Way. "World News." August 30, 1945. Newspapers.com.
- Tomlin, Gregory. "FIRST-PERSON: The Day the World Changed — Again." Baptist Press, September 9, 2002. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-the-day-the-world-changed-again/>.
- Truman, Harry S. "Statement by the President Announcing the Use of the A-Bomb at Hiroshima," August 6, 1945. The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-the-president-announcing-the-use-the-bomb-hiroshima>.
- Walker, Richard L. "US Churches Press for World Peace, Nuclear Arms Control: Usually Conservative Southern Baptists Lend Their Weight to the Effort." *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 14, 1982.
- Wallis, Jim, and Wes Michaelson. "A Change of Heart." *Sojourners*, August 1979. Sojourners Archives. <https://sojo.net/magazine/august-1979/change-heart>.
- Weeks, Nan F. "Followers of Jesus in Japan," 84. St. Louis, Missouri: SBC, 1947. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1947.pdf.
- Whitt, Jacqueline E. *Bringing God to Men: American Military Chaplains and the Vietnam War*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
- Woods, Curtis, John Wilsey, Kevin Jones, Jarvis Williams, Matthew J. Hall, and Gregory Wills. "Report on Slavery and Racism in the History of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary." *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, December 12, 2018. <https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/sbts/uploads/2018/12/Racism-and-the-Legacy-of-Slavery-Report-v4.pdf#page=6>.

Word & Way. "Only God Can Save Japan." February 14, 1946. Newspapers.com.

Yavenditti, Michael J. "The American People and the Use of Atomic Bombs On Japan: The 1940s." *The Historian* 36, no. 2 (1974): 224–47.

Yeats, John L. "Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 2002," 500. St. Louis: Southern Baptist Convention, 2002. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_2002.pdf.

———. "Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 2022." Southern Baptist Convention, 2022. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_2022.pdf.

———. "State Baptist Papers Reflect Decline." Baptist Press, December 6, 2007. SBHLA. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/state-baptist-papers-reflect-decline/>.