



## Southern Baptists Condemn Use of Ethnicity as One's Identity

While not the complete victory that more conservative Southern Baptists were hoping for, the Southern Baptist Convention voted on Tuesday to “reject any theory or world view that finds the ultimate identity of human beings in ethnicity or in any other group dynamic.” While not addressing Critical Race Theory (CRT) by name, it was quite clear that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) opted to distance itself from a resolution adopted in 2019 that saw CRT as a useful “analytical tool.” While the 2019 resolution was not a blanket endorsement of CRT, it still proved to be highly contentious among Southern Baptists across the denomination.



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Southern Baptist Convention is both the name of the denomination and the annual meeting of the nation's largest non-Catholic Christian denomination.

The person considered most responsible for the CRT resolution from two years ago (no convention was held in 2020 due to COVID-19) was Russell Moore, a former aide to a Democrat member of Congress, who was the director of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). While the ERLC retained the SBC's strong pro-life stance on abortion it has held for decades, under Moore many Southern Baptists were alarmed at what has been called the liberal “drift” in SBC life, largely attributed to Moore, women's Bible teacher Beth Moore, and California pastor Rick Warren.

Beth Moore and Russell Moore (no relation) left the denomination shortly before this year's convention. Warren has not yet left the convention, but some Southern Baptists have expressed concern over Warren's membership in the globalist Council on Foreign Relations, his support of government action on so-called climate change, and theological differences.

J.D. Greear, the outgoing president of the SBC, told the messengers, “CRT arises out of a world-view at odds with the gospel,” but he also said that the denomination should have expressed more concern about racial discrimination over the years. Greear reiterated that the SBC needs to follow the authority of the Bible and its doctrines, and should focus on evangelism rather than be “a people of the elephant [the symbol of the Republican Party] or the donkey [the symbol of the Democratic Party].” Instead he advised the messengers that the SBC should be a people “of the Lamb.” (A common biblical reference to Jesus and His atoning death on the cross).

“Messengers” are the people elected by local churches to represent them at the annual Southern Baptist Convention. The SBC is not a hierarchical denomination. Each congregation is independent and elects its own officers, and adopts its own policies. As such, the denomination is not under the supervision of the SBC agencies in Nashville (where this year's convention was held). In fact, the SBC



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does not even have one headquarters. Some agencies are located outside of Nashville, in places such as Atlanta, Georgia. The messengers are therefore not “delegates,” but they do take actions that ultimately determine many actions of the denomination. Churches in the SBC work together for joint mission, educational, and charitable causes.

One of the most important actions the messengers do take is the election of the president of the SBC to a one-year term. The president makes appointments to boards and commissions, which in turn hire directors of agencies, trustees of entities such as the six theological seminaries of the convention, and the like.

This year’s election was very close, with Georgia pastor Mike Stone — the candidate of the Conservative Baptist Network (CBN) — losing narrowly to Ed Litton, an Alabama pastor, by a 52-48 margin in a run-off. While not considered a liberal by any means, Litton did not place as much emphasis on getting rid of CRT as Stone. In fact, Litton was cast as a less divisive figure than Stone.

“I want to continue broadening ethnic diversity on our board to reflect who we actually are and who we’re becoming,” Litton said. “I want to build bridges.” Many conservative SBC members are nervous about what Litton might do during his tenure, but his powers are limited, and there is another election next year, when the SBC meets in Anaheim, California.

Stone was not without support from the SBC’s growing number of black Baptists, however. Lee Brand, the dean of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and a black Southern Baptist who strongly opposes CRT, told the Conservative Baptist Network breakfast the morning of the presidential vote, “I do not believe that any human being is better than any other human being.” Brand was the CBN’s candidate for first vice-president of the SBC. (Although the messengers cast their ballots for that post, the results will not be announced until Wednesday morning.)

Another black Southern Baptist, Carol Swain, a retired law professor, told the CBN breakfast meeting that she had been warning about the Marxist Critical Race Theory (CRT) for years, which she called “racism,” and a “different gospel” than what is found in the Bible. She added that she had “lost count” of the number of times that Southern Baptists have “apologized” to African-Americans, adding that it was time for the apology to be accepted and forgotten.

The second vice-presidential candidate of CBN, Javier Chavez, told the breakfast meeting that he had grown up under socialism in his native Peru.

Other resolutions adopted by the messengers on Tuesday was one in support of the Hyde Amendment, which forbids any federal funds being used for abortion, and opposition to the so-called Equality Act being debated now in Congress. They also condemned the suppression of Muslims in Communist China.

CBN activists told me that this is just the first year of the battle to right the Southern Baptist ship, noting that when the conservative resurgence happened in the 1980s in the SBC, it took several years.



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