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COMPETING VISIONS: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION PASTORS'
CONFERENCE AND SBC FORUM, 1961-1991

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Brian Steven Dubberly, Jr.
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SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION PASTORS'
CONFERENCE AND SBC FORUM, 1961-1991

Brian Steven Dubberly, Jr.

Read and Approved by:

Robert A. Vogel (Chair)

Thomas J. Nettles

Gregory A. Wills

Date _____

To God's greatest gift to me in this life—my precious wife, Lauren.

Here's to new adventures and quick getaways.

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PREFACE

Writing a dissertation has not been easy, and I do not believe it was supposed to be. Doubtless it would not have been possible without the abundant support and influence of the many wonderful people God has placed in my life. Pride of place must first be given to my beautiful and godly wife, Lauren. Her loving support is the reason I was able to complete this daunting task. She is in every way my soul mate and best friend, God's greatest gift to me in this life. I treasure her beyond words and will forever be thankful for her confidence in me throughout my degree program. I am also greatly indebted to our children—Judson (age 3), Delaney (age 2), and Beau (age 3 weeks)—for the profound ways in which they have inspired and encouraged me. I am unspeakably proud of them. The thought that some day they may look at my dissertation and be proud of me moves me deeply.

I am grateful as well for my parents, Brian and Laura Dubberly. I am not sure they can ever fully know how proud and thankful I am to call them “Dad” and “Mom.” I am an extremely blessed man, and I consider them to be among God's choicest of blessings in my life. Whatever of my life is worthy of recognition must be credited to their account in large measure. Truly, they raised me in “the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” A word of appreciation is also in order to my in-laws, Anthony and Judy McKinnon. They have been enormously supportive these past few years. Mrs. Judy especially provided support by way of childcare during the final stages of this dissertation. I am proud to call the McKinnons my family.

I need also to recognize the churches it has been my honor to serve throughout the course of my formal education. To the congregations of Eastside Baptist Church in Douglas, Georgia; Forest Baptist Church in Forest, Virginia; Eastwood Baptist Church in

Bay Minette, Alabama; Milton Baptist Church in Milton, Kentucky; and Southside Baptist Church in Hazlehurst, Georgia: from the bottom of my heart, thank you for letting me serve as a part of your church family while I have pursued my education. May God richly bless you.

Additionally, I am grateful for the guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Robert Vogel. It has been my privilege not only to study under him, but also to serve as his Garrett Fellow from 2012 to 2015. I have learned much from his experience, expertise, and kindness. He has been a mentor to me in many ways, both pastorally and professorially. Indeed, he epitomizes what it means to be both a gentleman and a scholar. I am also appreciative to Dr. Gregory Wills and Dr. Thomas Nettles—both of whom graciously and helpfully served as members of my supervisory committee. It was a joy to participate in their seminars and to benefit from their great passion for and breadth of learning. I am a blessed man to be able to have set at the feet of such remarkable doctors of the church as Drs. Vogel, Wills, and Nettles.

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“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever” (Ps 136:1).

Deek Dubberly

Hazlehurst, Georgia

May 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Southern Baptist Convention has been in a few fights.¹ Perhaps this is because they have been overly quarrelsome. Arguably, it may be better explained by the fact that they are a convictional group of people who have perennially sought to hold fast to both the idea of and a body of unchanging truths in the midst of a rapidly changing world. Whatever the case, Southern Baptists have been no strangers to controversy. Their largest controversy came in the second half of the twentieth century. Broadly speaking, there were two main parties engaged in the conflict—conservatives and moderates.² The episode is known alternatively as the Conservative Resurgence or the Fundamentalist Takeover.³

¹For an introduction to the major controversies that have shaped Southern Baptist life, see Walter B. Shurden, *Not a Silent People: Controversies That Have Shaped Southern Baptists* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2012).

²There have been many different names given to the respective parties. For example, Nancy Ammerman has identified and described five different labels for persons involved in the controversy: 1) self-identified fundamentalists; (2) fundamentalist conservatives; (3) conservatives; (4) moderate conservatives; and (5) self-identified moderates. For more on these labels, see Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 78-79. The labels of “conservative” and “moderate” are preferred in this work for two reasons. First, they are widely recognized and are therefore helpful for avoiding confusion. As a result, even if one prefers other labels such as “fundamentalist” or “liberal,” most will understand to whom the names “conservative” and “moderate” refer. Second, neither side seems to have a major problem with these designations so far as they apply to themselves. One will find many moderate works in which moderates refers to themselves as moderates. Similarly, conservatives do not mind being referred to as conservatives.

³Those who sympathize more with the conservative party typically prefer the designation of “Conservative Resurgence.” They see the convention’s emphasis upon a more conservative doctrine as a positive result. Those who sympathize more with the moderate party mostly refer to the episode as a “Fundamentalist Takeover” of the convention. These alternate names provide quite a commentary on how the various sides read the controversy. “Conservative Resurgence” is the phrase preferred in this work. The main reason is that the convention’s leadership and institutions were more conservative, doctrinally speaking, after the controversy than they were before the controversy. Further, there are at least two reasons for objecting to the designation of a “Fundamentalist Takeover.” First, it is disputable whether or not conservatives, historically and theologically, should be dubbed as fundamentalists. Further, the notion of “takeover” connotes negative ideas such as hostility, unfairness, and perhaps even illegality. These connotations are not fair or helpful for moving one’s understanding of the controversy forward.

The Controversy and Baptist Identity

The primary question this dissertation seeks to answer is twofold: (1) what was the Conservative Resurgence really all about; and (2) who were Southern Baptists during these most tumultuous years as revealed by the issues over which they divided? In order to answer this question, this dissertation analyzes the pulpit rhetoric of the Pastors' Conferences and SBC Forums from 1961 to 1991 in concert with three complementary methods of rhetorical criticism.

The sermons of the Conservative Resurgence offer great promise for understanding what it means to be a Baptist, as they are a valuable and plentiful supply of primary sources that have remained mostly untouched in terms of critical study. An interpretation of conservative and moderate sermons delivered during the controversy provides an extraordinary case study of modern Baptist history in which Baptists refined and forged their identity not only against the inevitable forces of time and change, but also against one another. This work offers an interpretation of the issues, the setting, the people, the values, and the visions of the Conservative Resurgence by way of the preaching of the Pastors' Conference and Forum.

The most contested issues of the conflict as expressed in its sermons are described and discussed. Conservatives and moderates often preached about the same topics, but they spoke about them differently. These differences are demonstrated and clarified. Further, the conservative and moderate movements are presented as unique peoples entangled in a movement-counter movement relationship. In this regard, their respective distinctives will be examined.

This work also depicts the historical setting in which the sermons of the controversy were preached. The Conservative Resurgence did not take place in a vacuum. The Southern Baptist Convention from 1961 to 1991 was an environment rife with potential for disruption and change. Therefore, the historical components of the setting of the controversy are put forward and analyzed in terms of their relation to the

divisive preaching.

The primary values of the two groups are also explored. A discovery of the most treasured values of the conservative and moderate movements reveals something of what was at the heart of each group. These truths are contained in the ideas that the two camps frequently spoke for and/or against in their pulpit rhetoric. They represent the distinguishing values of each group of people.

Finally, the overall vision of conservatives and moderates is summarized and defended. A vision stands for a utopian idea of what life would look like in a best possible scenario. Conservatives and moderates held forth competing visions for Southern Baptists during the Resurgence. Their visions were encapsulations of what was most important to them. These visions are available for analysis in the preaching of the period. By unearthing and expressing the conservative and moderate visions for Baptist identity, as well as by exploring the ways in which these visions competed with one another for the hearts and minds of a denomination, this dissertation seeks to understand and explain what happened when the Southern Baptist Convention submitted itself to a very public, very divisive, and quite transformative controversy. This dissertation is thus, ultimately, a rhetorical consideration of the Conservative Resurgence.

Thesis

This dissertation contends that the pulpit rhetoric of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum reveals that the Conservative Resurgence was a competition between conservative and moderate visions for Baptist identity as differentiated by the mutually exclusive manner in which each group perceived of doctrine and the constitution of denominational fellowship. The democratic processes inherent within Southern Baptist polity largely reveal the competitive nature of the controversy. There were two main parties—conservatives and moderates. Both parties engaged in something of a political effort to win the support of the convention's constituency, a support evidenced primarily

by the election of the respective party's presidential candidate. Both parties had a voice through the sermons of their representative preachers, and a vote through their sympathizing messengers. At the end of the controversy, there was a clear winner and loser. Conservatives defeated moderates in what was a competition to lead the convention.

The competition had mainly to do with Baptist identity—that is, with what it means to be a Baptist. The conservative vision for Baptist identity was concerned with protecting Christian orthodoxy from the dangers of theological liberalism. The moderate vision for Baptist identity was concerned with protecting Baptist freedom from the oppression of religious fundamentalism. These competing concerns manifested at one particular point in the struggle for control of the convention—namely, the place where doctrine and denominationalism intersect.

Conservatives and moderates understood doctrine and the basis of denominational fellowship in what proved to be mutually exclusive ways. Conservatives stressed orthodoxy, calling for more specific doctrinal definition and tighter doctrinal accountability for employees of Southern Baptist institutions—most especially, for professors at the convention's colleges and seminaries. Moderates emphasized freedom as they rejected such calls for a more rigid system of doctrinal maintenance, arguing instead for a greater tolerance of doctrinal diversity so as to promote wider participation in the convention's cooperative missionary endeavors. Accordingly, conservatives prioritized the doctrinal unity of the denomination, while moderates focused on the functional unity of the denomination.

Eventually, the differences between conservative and moderate visions for Baptist identity came to a crossroads. Conservatives believed the moderate vision was too open. Moderates believed the conservative vision was too closed. One vision's gain was the other vision's loss. It was as if the visions were two different poles with a cable suspended tautly between them. The pull of both visions lifted the cable, thereby creating

and maintaining the tension of Baptist identity in the twentieth century. The two ends, however, continued to grow apart until eventually the cable reached a breaking point. Southern Baptists could not simultaneously pursue both visions. Thus, the controversy became a story about competing visions.

The Reflection of a Denomination

This dissertation studies the sermons of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991 and the sermons of the SBC Forum from 1984 to 1991. Both the Pastors' Conference and the SBC Forum were inspirational meetings held in the same city as and just prior to the annual meeting of the convention. They were intended to be a source of encouragement, fellowship, and worship for the many Southern Baptist messengers who had traveled into town to attend the convention's business meetings. The Pastors' Conference during this time contained quite a wide array of sermons. Some preachers used their time in the conference's pulpit to campaign for a conservative vision for Baptist identity, while other preachers used the platform to cast vision for moderate ideas regarding Baptist identity. However, by the mid-1970s conservatives gained control of the Pastors' Conference and effectively used it as a soapbox upon which they often aired their views and paraded their leaders before the convention.

Moderates believed themselves to be at a great disadvantage for no longer having opportunities to preach at the conservative-led Pastors' Conference. Therefore in 1984 they started their own pre-convention ministers' conference. They called it the SBC Forum.⁴ From 1984 to 1991 moderates hosted the SBC Forum as a place where the moderate voice could be heard and moderate Southern Baptists could find encouragement and fellowship prior to the convention's annual meeting.

⁴See John H. Hewett, "The History of the SBC Forum," in *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement*, ed. Walter B. Shurden (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994), 73-92.

The preaching of these two conferences during the given time periods provides an authentic representation of the competing visions operating in the denomination during the Conservative Resurgence. Such was the conclusion of George Steincross at the height of the conflict in 1987. At the time, Steincross was the chairman of the SBC Forum's steering committee. Writing to Charles Fuller, chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Peace Committee—a committee appointed by the denomination to search out the primary sources of the controversy—Steincross perceptively declared that the relationship between the Pastors' Conference and the SBC Forum provided “a rather accurate reflection of the dilemma of our denomination.”⁵ Assuming Steincross' description of the two conferences is accurate, this dissertation will assess the unique perspective provided by the preaching of these meetings in order to gain deeper insight into the Conservative Resurgence.

The Value of Studying the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum

The sermons of the Pastors' Conferences and SBC Forums have largely been neglected in the literature devoted to the study of the conflict. Yet they are a relatively large body of primary sources from within the period that are simultaneously rich in content and mostly untapped in terms of their potential for providing insight into Southern Baptist identity. The Forum sermons especially have been all but forgotten for their role in the conflict. Therefore a study of the sermons from these annual meetings holds forth promise for filling in an important gap in studies of the Conservative Resurgence. The preaching of the two meetings also provides a good timeline of the controversy, a glossary of many of its most important terms, and a roster of most of its major players. A side-by-side comparison of the especially conservative sermons and the

⁵George W. Steincross, “Letter from George W. Steincross,” January 8, 1988, cited in Shurden, *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, 85.

markedly moderate sermons yields a vivid and revealing contrast between the competing groups for how they understood themselves, one another, and the controversy as a whole.

From Progressive to Conservative

The sermons preached at the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum from 1961 to 1991 provide a sort of panoramic, before-and-after snapshot regarding the effects of the Conservative Resurgence. In 1961 there was a strong presence of moderate rhetoric in the preaching of the Pastors' Conference. By 1991 there was not any moderate rhetoric present in the preaching of the Pastors' Conference. Further, 1991 was the final year in which moderates hosted the SBC Forum. The developments in the convention from 1961 to 1991 represent a basic reversal of trajectory regarding the theological direction of the convention as expressed by the preaching of the Pastors' Conference.

There are at least two reasons why 1961 is a good starting point for this study. First, 1961 was the year in which Ralph Elliot published his controversial book, *The Message of Genesis*.⁶ Elliot's book represented a more progressive side of Southern Baptist scholarship as it utilized the historical-critical method of interpretation, so that the so-called religious or theological message of the Bible was separated from the scientific and historical details of the Bible.⁷ Prompted by K. Owen White's exposé of its tendency toward liberal-friendly methodology and interpretations, Elliot's book started its own

⁶Ralph H. Elliot, *The Message of Genesis* (Nashville: Broadman, 1961).

⁷What is meant in this sentence by the term "progressive" has been well summarized by Gregory A. Wills, "Progressive Theology and Southern Baptist Controversies of the 1950s and 1960s," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1 (2003): 13. Wills explained, "The progressives drew on the tradition of Protestant liberalism from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They shared its sense of crisis—modern science appeared to contradict many of the teachings of traditional orthodoxy and therefore to discredit the Christian faith as a whole. They shared its conviction that the solution to the crisis was to reconcile faith and science by adopting a view of inspiration that restricted the Bible's meaning to the religious sphere only. They shared its earnest apologetic aim to make Christianity credible to the modern scientific mind. And they shared its reverence for Jesus and the Bible." In his article, Wills uses the terms "progressive" and "moderate" interchangeably so far as they relate to a concept of Baptist identity that stood in competition against the more conservative view of Baptist identity. This dissertation understands the terms "progressive" and "moderate" similarly.

controversy among Southern Baptists.⁸ In fact, Elliot would later write, reflecting back on his controversy and its role in the Resurgence, “There is a real continuity between the 1960s ‘Genesis controversy’ era and the present literalisms, power struggles, and theological debates.”⁹ In further proof of the influential connection between the Elliot controversy and the Resurgence, Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson—both very instrumental and public leaders of the conservative movement—have cited Elliot’s book and the liberalism with which it was so comfortable as a primary influence in their decisions to commit themselves to involvement in the conservative cause.¹⁰

A second reason why 1961 is defensible as a starting point for this work is because it was one of the foremost years in which progressives were featured in the lineup of speakers at the Pastors’ Conference. Greg Wills described the 1961 conference by writing, “In 1961 the Southern Baptist Convention’s Pastors’ Conference, the premier venue for Southern Baptist preachers, gave great hope to Southern Baptist liberals as the presence of Dale Moody and Carlyle Marney made it the most progressive and controversial lineup in memory.”¹¹ Speakers such as Marney and Moody, both considered paragons of Southern Baptist learning and sophistication, exemplified a modernistic, cosmopolitan shift in Southern Baptist leadership. It is telling of the changes wrought in the convention by the conservative movement that neither Marney nor Moody—both headliners, so to speak, at the 1961 Pastors’ Conference—would remain Southern Baptists by the end of the Conservative Resurgence.

⁸K. Owen White, “Death in the Pot,” *Baptist Standard*, January 10, 1962.

⁹Ralph H. Elliot, *The Genesis Controversy and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992), 13.

¹⁰Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist’s Journey* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 51–52; Paige Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation: The Southern Baptist Convention 1978-2004* (Ft. Worth, TX: Seminary Hill Press, 2011), 1.

¹¹Gregory Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 407.

The year 1991 is an apropos point at which to end this study for at least three reasons. First, moderates essentially surrendered the contest to conservatives by not fielding a presidential candidate at the 1991 Convention. Second, moderates hosted the SBC Forum for the final time in 1991. There would no longer be any meaningful moderate voice and fellowship prior to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Third, it was in 1991 that moderates launched the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an alternative means through which like-minded Baptists could fellowship and associate for the purpose of Christian missions.

Enough time has passed from the period under review that its sermons may be studied with appropriate perspective. New generations of Southern Baptists are beginning to appear for whom the Conservative Resurgence was not personally experienced. It is hoped that this work will help contribute to the education of such persons so that the convention will not soon forget how influential role the Resurgence played in establishing Baptist identity.

A Rhetorical History of the Conservative Resurgence

This dissertation utilizes several methods of rhetorical criticism in order to interpret the preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum with a view towards understanding the Conservative Resurgence. All sermons preached at the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991, and all sermons delivered at the SBC Forum from 1984 to 1991 were included for analysis.¹² The result will be something of a rhetorical history of one of the more significant forces in the movement—its preaching.

¹²A methodological caveat is in order. It is acknowledged that there is some repetition of sermon quotations both within and across the rhetorical analysis chapters of this work (chaps. 3, 4, and 5). For instance, one will find quotes from the preaching of Clark Pinnock repeated in each rhetorical analysis chapter. Such repetition is justifiable on the grounds that sermons like those of Pinnock demonstrate more than one rhetorical strategy—strategies which are revealed in different, yet complementary ways by the variety of rhetorical methods highlighted and employed in the rhetorical analysis chapters of this dissertation.

Richard Weaver's thoughts on the nature of rhetoric help to establish some of the warrant of this study. Weaver described the relationship between rhetoric and politics by explaining, "Rhetoric must be viewed formally as operating at that point where literature and politics meet, or where literary values and political urgencies can be brought together. The rhetorician makes use of the moving power of literary presentation to induce in his hearers an attitude or decision which is political in the very broadest sense."¹³ The pulpit rhetoric of the Conservative Resurgence provides an excellent body of primary sources upon which rhetorical criticism may be performed to the end that new insight may be gained regarding Baptist identity and Southern Baptists' most embroiled controversy. The preaching of the conflict is the most public and accessible place where Southern Baptist values and denominational politics were brought together, thus meeting Weaver's description of rhetoric.

The Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum, 1961-1991

There were 501 sermons delivered at the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991, and 43 sermons delivered at the SBC Forum from 1984 to 1991. Though all of these were examined in this research, space does not permit a comprehensive summary of each of these events and every one of these sermons. However, chapter 2 does present an overview of the meetings and sermons that best demonstrate the rift between conservatives and moderates, as well as a brief explanation of the topics over which conservatives and moderates most often divided. Many of the sermons introduced in chapter 2 are treated more thoroughly in the rhetorical analysis chapters of this work. Additionally, chapter 2 relates key sermonic rhetoric to relevant denominational developments in order to situate the important conference preaching within the larger

¹³Richard M. Weaver et al., *Language Is Sermonic: Richard M. Weaver on the Nature of Rhetoric* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 225.

context of the Southern Baptist controversy.

The Conservative Resurgence as a Social Movement

In chapter 3 the sermons of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum are treated as the rhetoric of a social movement. Lloyd Bitzer's theory regarding the historical components of a rhetorical situation and Michael McGee's theory regarding the collectivization of "the people" of a movement prove especially helpful in interpreting the controversy by way of its pulpit rhetoric.¹⁴ Bitzer's method of identifying the rhetorical exigencies, the rhetorical audience, and the rhetorical constraints present within the setting of a movement is well suited for a study of the Southern Baptist Convention during the Resurgence. Similarly, McGee's idea about how "the people" of a movement are defined by their rhetoric is quite pertinent to the study of the preaching of the controversy and the subject of Baptist identity.

The Use of Ultimate Terms

In chapter 4 the selected sermons are analyzed for their use of ultimate terms. Ultimate terms are the words and/or phrases used within a group's lexicon which contain the most potent motivational ideas of the group. Ultimate terms include god words and devil words—or words with positive associations or negative associations, respectively. Noted rhetorician Richard Weaver has done more than any other theorist to develop the idea of ultimate terms.¹⁵ He referred to them as "rhetorical absolutes"—the terms to which the very highest respect is paid."¹⁶ The ultimate terms of conservative and moderate rhetoric are discovered according to the preaching of the Pastors' Conference

¹⁴Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1–14; M. C. McGee, "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 235–49.

¹⁵Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Press, 1952), 211–32.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 212.

and SBC Forum.

Fantasy Theme Analysis

In chapter 5 Ernest Bormann's theoretical contributions regarding fantasy themes and rhetorical vision are applied to the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum sermons.¹⁷ Bormann argued that there is significant rhetorical power in the dramatization of ideas. As ideas are dramatized, hearers are not only struck with a message, but they are invited to participate in a world filled with actors engaged in a conflict of good versus evil. Fantasy themes are particular ideas in which hearers are often called upon to participate during the course of a piece of rhetoric. A rhetorical vision refers to the assimilation of a group's fantasy themes into a unified whole. Bormann's method of fantasy theme analysis is applied to conservative and moderate rhetoric in order to discern and explain their respective fantasy themes and overall rhetorical visions.

A Summarized Integration of Findings

In chapter 6 the findings of all previous chapters are summarized and integrated. The results of studying the sermons preached at the Pastors' Conference and SBC from 1961 to 1991 are brought together in order to present and interpret the respective issues, settings, peoples, values, and visions of conservative and moderate rhetoric during the controversy. It is believed that such a presentation and interpretation will provide a meaningful and original contribution to the continued discussion surrounding the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention and the subject of Baptist identity.

¹⁷Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972): 396-407.

CHAPTER 2
THE SERMONS OF THE PASTORS' CONFERENCE
AND SBC FORUM, 1961-1991

This chapter introduces the preaching of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference and the SBC Forum from 1961 to 1991.¹ First, a brief methodical qualification is outlined in order to explain which sermons were especially relevant to this study. Second, an overview is given wherein are highlighted several of the conferences and sermons that best exemplify the divisions that prompted and sustained the Conservative Resurgence. These are analyzed more fully in the rhetorical analysis chapters of this work. Third, relevant denominational developments are presented in order to relate the key sermons of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum to the larger setting of the Southern Baptist controversy.

Topical Method of Sermon Selection

In order to determine the pulpit discourse most useful to a rhetorical analysis of the Conservative Resurgence, the sermons of the Pastors' Conference and Forum have been analyzed in terms of the presence or absence of certain topics over which conservatives and moderates regularly divided. Sermons were deemed particularly relevant for treatment in this study to the extent that they contained such topics. The topics were chosen in accordance with what virtually all of the literature regarding the

¹Most of these sermons are available online in manuscript form in a collection of *Baptist Press* news releases hosted on the website of the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives. "Baptist Press Archives from 1948 to 1996," Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, accessed May 9, 2017, http://www.sbhla.org/bp_archive/index.asp.

controversy agrees were the main issues that divided Southern Baptists during the controversy.²

The Topics of the Controversy

Eight divisive topics were featured at both the Pastors' Conference and the SBC Forum. Both sides spoke about the controversy by addressing the following eight issues: (1) the controversy itself; (2) the Bible; (3) Baptist identity; (4) denominational politics; (5) authority; (6) freedom; (7) creeds and confessions; and (8) the priesthood of believers.³ The preachers of the two pre-convention meetings did not always say the same sorts of things about these eight topics. That both groups felt compelled to discuss them, however, does reveal something of the nature of the controversy. Additionally, there were five divisive topics unique to the Pastors' Conference: (1) doctrine, (2) liberalism; (3) seminaries; (4) inerrancy; and (5) creation.⁴ Likewise, there were six

²See, for examples: Bruce T. Gourley, *The Godmakers: A Legacy of the Southern Baptist Convention?* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1996), 57-70; Jerry Vines, *Vines: My Life and Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2014), 132-45; David T. Morgan, *The New Crusades, the New Holy Land: Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969-1991* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996), 152; Walter B. Shurden, *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994), xix-xx; James C. Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Dallas: Criterion, 1986), 35; Grady C. Cothen, *What Happened to the Southern Baptist Convention? A Memoir of the Controversy* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1993), 11; Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 6; Bill J. Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 131-72; Cecil Sherman, *By My Own Reckoning* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Pub, 2008), 131-48; Nathan Finn, "Southern Baptist History: A Great Commission Reading," in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God's Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Adam Greenway and Chuck Lawless (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 65-68; C. Douglas Weaver, "Baptists and Denominational Identity and the Turn toward Creedalism: 2000" in *Turning Points in Baptist History: A Festschrift in Honor of Harry Leon McBeth*, ed. Michael E. Williams, Sr. and Walter B. Shurden (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2008), 296-7; James Leo Garrett Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 491-506; Walter B. Shurden, *Not a Silent People* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2012), 83-112; Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 681-7; Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservative and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 1-13; Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 93; Paige Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation* (Ft. Worth, TX: Seminary Hill Press, 2011); R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "A Conflict of Visions: The Theological Roots of the Southern Baptist Controversy," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 4-11.

³See table A1 in appendix 1 for information regarding the similarities between the employment of divisive topics in the preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum.

⁴See table A2 in appendix 1 for statistics regarding the use of divisive topics unique to the sermons of the Pastors' Conference.

controversial topics unique to the preaching of the SBC Forum. They were: (1) the differences between conservatives and moderates; (2) women in ministry; (3) the oppressive, controlling nature of conservatives; (4) preaching; (5) soul competency; and (6) doctrinal accountability in Southern Baptist institutions.⁵ These topics are demonstrated from the preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum and discussed more fully throughout the remainder of this dissertation, especially in the chapters containing rhetorical analysis.

The Frequency of the Topics

Preachers at the Pastors' Conference delivered five hundred and one total sermons from 1961 to 1991. One hundred and twenty-seven of these sermons contained one or more of the divisive, controversy-related topics. Thus, 25.35 percent of all preaching at the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991 was immediately connected to the Conservative Resurgence by way of the presence of its most contested topics.⁶ The controversy therefore, though an important and relatively common subject, was not the overwhelming theme of Pastors' Conference preaching during the Conservative Resurgence.

Forum preaching was much more divisive. Contested subjects dominated the preaching of the SBC Forum. Forum preachers gave a total of forty-three sermons over the course of the eight-year history of the event. Thirty-eight of forty-three sermons contained one or more of the contested issues closely associated with the Resurgence. Therefore 88.37 percent of the sermons preached at the Forum were directly related to the controversy as revealed by the presence of divisive preaching.⁷ The overwhelming

⁵See table A3 in appendix 1 for numeric data concerning the use of divisive topics unique to the preaching of the SBC Forum.

⁶See Table A4 for more specific information about the percentage of Pastors' Conference sermons that contained divisive topics. See table A5 in appendix 1 for a listing of the divisive topics and the frequency with which they were addressed in the Pastors' Conference.

⁷See table A7 for more details about the percentage of SBC Forum sermons that contained

majority of preaching at the Forum was controversial. For five of the eight years of the Forum's existence—1984, 1985, 1989, 1990, and 1991—every speaker delivered a message in which at least one of the topics of division was addressed.⁸ For the other three years—1986, 1987, and 1988—the percentage of sermons with controversial topics was still very high. The preaching at the Forum was controversial from start to finish.

Insights Gained from the Topical Comparison

A comparison of the divisive topics and the frequency with which they were employed in the preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum has revealed at least three important details about the Southern Baptist conflict.⁹ First, there was indeed a serious controversy. Such a claim is supported by the fact that the most often cited topic of controversy at both the preaching meetings was the controversy itself. Seventy percent of Pastors' Conference messages containing divisive topics referenced the controversy, while nearly sixty percent of Forum sermons with divisive topics spoke of the controversy.

Second, the Resurgence was mostly a conflict about the Bible. This reality is borne out by the fact that the second-most discussed subject of controversy was the Bible—and this was true in both the Pastors' Conference and the SBC Forum. Third, the controversy was very much a battle regarding Baptist identity. Accordingly, the subject of Baptist identity was a significant emphasis in the divisive preaching of both the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum. That the Conservative Resurgence was a serious

divisive topics. See table A8 in appendix 1 for specifics regarding the divisive topics and the frequency with which they were addressed in the Forum.

⁸The 1984 Southern Baptist Convention Forum (Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984); 1985 Southern Baptist Convention Forum (Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985); 1989 Southern Baptist Convention Forum (Las Vegas, NV, June 12, 1989); 1990 Southern Baptist Convention Forum (New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990); 1991 Southern Baptist Convention Forum (Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991).

⁹See table A9 in appendix 1 for a side-by-side comparison of the amount of divisive sermons preached at the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum from 1961 to 1991.

controversy about the Bible and Baptist identity is not really disputed. It is mentioned here simply to establish that such was clearly revealed by this dissertation's analysis of the presence and frequency of divisive topics in the preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum.

The Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, 1961-1991

Over five hundred sermons were preached at the thirty-one meetings of the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991. Space does not permit a thorough description of each of these conferences and sermons. However, what follows are descriptions of key sermons wherein may be observed the major features of the preaching most relevant to this work. In addition to the messages described in this chapter, Appendix Two contains pertinent information for every Pastors' Conference sermon during the time frame.¹⁰ The thirty-one years' worth of preaching has been divided into four phases. Each phase is described and explained by way of sermons from within the period that best characterize the nature of the denomination's struggle as it developed over time.

Tension in the Convention (1961-1967)

The preaching of the conference from 1961 to 1967 revealed a significant tension between the incipient moderate and conservative movements. The 1962 and 1966 meetings, for example, contained sermons that sufficiently demonstrate this tension. In these two instances the tension concerned the respective beliefs of both groups regarding two issues very closely connected to the controversy—namely, the conservative-liberal divide and the degree to which one's doctrine of revelation ought to be defined and defended.

¹⁰For a year-by-year presentation of the Pastors' Conferences and their preaching, see appendix 2. The tables in appendix 2 contain the date, location, theme, and president of each Pastors' Conference. They also contain the speaker, sermon title, sermon Scripture, and main idea(s) of each sermon.

The 1962 Pastors' Conference took place on June 2-3 in San Francisco, with Carl Bates presiding. There were eleven sermons that spoke directly to the turmoil bubbling in the convention. The most notable were the ones delivered by J. Sidlow Baxter and Roy McClain. Baxter appealed to the more conservative group, warning that, "We Baptists always have been champions of the duty of private judgment, but liberty to interpret the Bible never meant liberty to discredit the Bible."¹¹ Jim Newton reported that Baxter "received a standing ovation after a scathing sermon condemning neo-orthodox theology, liberalism, and existentialism."¹² Baxter's condemnations of liberalism were so strongly worded that one apparently moderate-sympathizing individual was so provoked that he jumped on stage while Baxter was preaching and demanded that Bates, "Hush up that man."¹³

Roy McClain sounded quite a different note at the conference, expressing views more in harmony with the later developing moderate movement. Whereas Baxter lambasted liberalism, McClain "chided Baptists who . . . were trying to climb the denominational ladder to glory by condemning intellectuals in the name of 'defending the Word (of God).'"¹⁴ McClain viewed what would become the conservative movement as power-hungry Fundamentalists who criticized professors at Baptist colleges and seminaries in ways that were both unfair and uninformed. He added that it was a "disgrace for grown men to go around with sharp axes hacking on innocent lambs."¹⁵ McClain also directly addressed the divisive labels of "conservative" and "liberal,"

¹¹J. Sidlow Baxter, "Pentecost and Inner Experience" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Francisco, CA, June 5, 1962).

¹²Jim Newton, "For Wednesday AM's," *Baptist Press*, June 5, 1962.

¹³Gerald Martin, *Sir We Would See Jesus: The Story of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference* (Memphis: Wimmer Brothers, 1968), 19.

¹⁴Jim Newton, "For Tuesday AM's," *Baptist Press*, June 4, 1962.

¹⁵Roy O. McClain, "Making Disciples" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Francisco, CA, June 4, 1962).

describing both terms in positive and negative ways. He was attempting to defuse the conservative-liberal tension by suggesting that, though there may be unhealthy, extremist versions of each position, there were also versions of each position that should be commended and welcomed within the convention.

Baxter and McClain represented two very different views of the controversy. Baxter and the conservative movement were convinced that theological liberalism was the problem and that it needed to be removed from the denomination's institutions. They believed it had sneaked into the convention underneath the cover of so-called Baptist liberty. McClain and the moderate group, however, did not believe that liberalism was the problem, suggesting instead that the problem was more to blame on what Baxter described as a very unflattering version of conservatism (read: Fundamentalism).¹⁶

The presence of stress regarding conservatism and liberalism in the preaching of the Pastors' Conference was related to the fact that Southern Baptists updated their confessional statement, the *Baptist Faith and Message*, in 1963.¹⁷ The update was occasioned perhaps most of all by the Elliot controversy, and was an attempt to appease conservatives who were upset that the historical-critical method of interpretation was being relied upon and taught by professors in southern Baptist schools. Baptist historian Bill Leonard commented that though the updated confession may have appeared to be a victory for conservatives, in practice "the historical-critical method continued to be utilized in many Southern Baptist seminaries and universities."¹⁸

The 1966 Pastors' Conference provides another set of sermons that help to

¹⁶McClain, "Making Disciples." McClain explained, "If as a conservative you mean a man has ALL the answers revealed to him by the Spirit, or that everyone else is wrong if they disagree with him, then being a conservative is no compliment at all."

¹⁷"Comparison of 1925, 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message" (The Southern Baptist Convention), accessed May 7, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfmcomparison.asp>.

¹⁸Bill J. Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 72.

establish the uneasy nature of the early setting of the controversy. A sermon by Clark Pinnock, representing the conservative viewpoint, and sermons by Herschel Hobbs and Carl Bates, representing the moderate perspective, convey that the conflict had very much to do with the nature of the Bible. Pinnock preached a very conservative sermon about the nature of the Bible in which he articulated and defended the doctrine of inerrancy.¹⁹ He referenced the ongoing debate in the convention over the nature of Scripture and charged Southern Baptists to “increase the clarity of our conviction regarding it.”²⁰ Seeking to determine what the Bible said about itself, the conclusion to Pinnock’s message was essentially, “The Bible does not err, because God cannot lie.”²¹ Conservatives embraced Pinnock and his understanding of the nature of the Bible as God’s inerrant Word.

Rather than spelling out their own doctrine of Scripture like Pinnock, Hobbs and Bates said something very different about the Bible. Both preachers responded to conservative notions of defending the Word of God by saying that the Bible does not need to be defended. Hobbs said, “The Sword of the Spirit does not need defending. It needs to be unsheathed.”²² Bates preached similarly, “I believe it would be an utter waste of time for me to attempt some involved polemic concerning whether or not God speaks and, if so, whether or not we have an accurate record of that word.”²³ The preaching of Pinnock, Hobbs, and Bates at the 1966 Pastors’ Conference indicates that indeed there was tension in the convention during this first phase of the controversy, and even more

¹⁹Clark Pinnock, “Our Source of Authority: The Bible” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Detroit, MI, May 23, 1966).

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Herschel H. Hobbs, “Worthy of Our Vocation” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Detroit, MI, May 23, 1966).

²³Carl Bates, “Is There Any Word from the Lord?” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Detroit, MI, May 23, 1966).

specifically that this tension concerned not only the nature of the Bible, but also the extent to which Southern Baptists believed they should define and defend it.

A Struggle Over Ideas (1968-1978)

The sermons from this period demonstrate a growing sense of ideological organization for both conservatives and moderates. Whereas sermons in the previous phase merely expressed a growing tension between the two groups—one that was largely doctrinal in nature—sermons in this phase reveal more of the visionary maturation of the conservative and moderate movements. The result was that each group began to develop their own unique sort of vision for why and how they believed their ideas about the convention should be adopted in order to help Southern Baptists to be the very best Baptists they could be.

Clark Pinnock delivered three addresses at the 1968 Pastors' Conference.²⁴ They are perhaps the clearest and most organized expression of conservative rationale for the Resurgence anywhere in the over 500 sermons studied in this work. At the time, Pinnock was a professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he wielded a pivotal influence upon students who would later, mostly in the 1970s and 1980s, become deeply involved in the conservative movement. Some of his more well known students during his years as an influential Southern Baptist professor were Paige Patterson, Jerry Vines, and Adrian Rogers—men who would later become some of the most recognizable leaders of the conservative movement.

It is difficult to estimate just how instrumental Pinnock was in the whole episode of the Conservative Resurgence. Southern Baptist leader, Russell Moore,

²⁴Clark Pinnock, "The Evangelical Imperative" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 3, 1968); Clark Pinnock, "Sola Scriptura" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 4, 1968); Clark Pinnock, "The Fact of Christ" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 4, 1968).

believes the Resurgence would not have happened had it not been for Clark Pinnock.²⁵ Pinnock took a bold, strong stand on the issue of biblical inerrancy very early on in the Controversy. Though he later changed his mind on the subject of inerrancy, his influence as an early apologist for inerrancy remains.²⁶

Pinnock's conference sermons are very helpful for understanding the controversy. Accordingly, they feature very prominently in the rhetorical analysis chapters of this work. In his first message, he addressed modern attacks on Christianity's doctrine of revelation. He compared the Southern Baptist controversy of his day to Charles Spurgeon's Downgrade Controversy, saying of Spurgeon's contemporaries, "The Baptist leaders were preferring denominational peace to their duty of dealing with error."²⁷ Pinnock warned with very little ambiguity: "A denomination which preserves its outward tranquility at the high cost of the Biblical gospel is not to be admired. Cemeteries are also peaceful. There is no controversy in the grave."²⁸ The main issue for Pinnock was "a loss of conviction about the objective authority of Scripture."²⁹ Pinnock qualified his argument by adding the Southern Baptist theological decline was at an early stage.

Pinnock's second address provides the most pointed and concise articulation of the conservative perspective on the controversy in all of the Pastors' Conferences. Among other things, he contended that the people of the Convention adhered to a much more conservative doctrine of revelation and Scripture than the professors in the

²⁵Russell Moore, "Why Conservative Evangelicals Should Thank God for Clark Pinnock," *Russell Moore*, accessed May 7, 2016, <http://www.russellmoore.com/2010/08/17/why-conservative-evangelicals-should-thank-god-for-clark-pinnock/>.

²⁶For a discussion of Pinnock's changes regarding the Bible, see Ray C. W. Roennfeldt, *Clark H. Pinnock on Biblical Authority: An Evolving Position* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993).

²⁷Pinnock, "The Evangelical Imperative."

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

convention's colleges and seminaries.³⁰ He claimed,

If the percent of our pastors who hold to Biblical infallibility is very large, the percent of our professors who do is very small Most of the delegates to our Convention believe that the Bible is the very word of God to man. It is not merely a human, fallible witness to someone else's revelation, it is divine revelation itself The strong minority in positions of considerable power continue to vocalize their sub-Biblical view of inspiration just as if the opinion of the body were of no importance, as if merely to remind them of the fact were to infringe upon their freedom, as if the Christian faith involves no more matters of truth than the individual may wish to embrace."³¹

He explained that the view of many professors was that the church was always to be learning more about God and the Bible and never to arrive at a full and complete knowledge of the truth. Such a view, Pinnock complained, was terribly convenient, allowing them to quote the Bible when they wished and backpedal on whatever made them uncomfortable. He concluded, "The difficulty in the discussion is the smokescreen which the minority opinion uses in order to prevent attention being focused on their basic denial of the integrity of the Bible."³²

Pinnock argued similarly in his third address that there was a great deal of double-speak going on in the Convention.³³ Double-speak was what he referred to when someone used familiar Christian language, but filled it with unfamiliar, heterodox meaning. Much more is said about Pinnock's pulpit rhetoric at later points in this dissertation. His messages were crucial expressions of both the ideas and the identity of the conservative movement.

The year 1970 marked the beginning of what would become known as the *Broadman Commentary* controversy, in which conservatives successfully led a campaign to have the first volume of the *Broadman Bible Commentary* series withdrawn because it

³⁰Pinnock, "Sola Scriptura."

³¹Pinnock, "Sola Scriptura."

³²Ibid.

³³Pinnock, "The Fact of Christ."

was too liberal. G. Henton Davies wrote that first volume on Genesis.³⁴ The volume was subsequently rewritten by Clyde Francisco and republished by Broadman Press.³⁵ The *Broadman Commentary* incident helped to further establish the conservative movement as a formidable presence within the convention. Conservatives believed it a significant part of the mission of their movement to discover and rectify what they deemed to be sub-conservative doctrine, most especially regarding the doctrine of revelation, in the convention.

Another telling episode in the library of Pastors' Conference sermons transpired in the contrast between the respective sermons of W. A. Criswell and Grady Cothen at the 1971 meeting. Criswell presented a conservative message regarding "the long and bitter controversy about the inerrant and infallible Word of God."³⁶ Criswell confronted the modern argument that the Bible contains historical and scientific errors and "jabbed at those who would 'rewrite the Bible on the basis of the latest scientific information.'"³⁷ Criswell compared the ever-changing annals of scientific hypothesizing to the steadfast Word of God and urged his hearers to stand upon the Bible over and against the evolving knowledge of science. Criswell presented a very bold and clear understanding of the conservative concerns regarding the doctrine of Scripture. Bob O'Brien, reporting for Baptist Press, referred to Criswell's message as "The Amen-punctuated sermon."³⁸

Grady Cothen, then president of the New Orleans Baptist Theological

³⁴G. Henton Davies, *Genesis*, in vol. 1 of *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, ed. J. Clifton Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), 99-304.

³⁵Clyde T. Francisco, *Genesis*, rev. ed., in vol. 1 of *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, J. Clifton Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1973), 101-288.

³⁶W. A. Criswell, "God's Preacher and His Mandate" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 31, 1971).

³⁷Bob O'Brien, "Pastors' Conference Roundup," *Baptist Press*, June 1, 1971, 1.

³⁸*Ibid.*

Seminary, delivered a fiery piece of rhetoric regarding what he believed to be the less than admirable actions of the conservative movement. His was a very different message from that of Criswell. His message represented the growing moderate response to the conservative push within the convention. Describing the moderate perception of the conflict, Cothen asserted,

There is a great deal of hatred thinly masked under the guise of orthodoxy in the Southern Baptist Convention today. Denominational blackmail is not at all unknown as struggles continue in various aspects of religious life. Horse-trading of politicians which is often decried from the pulpit is sometimes paralleled by the horse-trading of some of us as we pledge others that we will support them in something IF. The problems of basic honesty confront us on every side We are all acquainted with false insinuations that leave unfortunate impressions about our fellow ministers Theological labels are carelessly used to the detriment of many of God's wonderful servants. One pastor, to my knowledge, has been seriously penalized by his brethren in his consideration for a prominent post by the fact that he had been labeled carelessly, thoughtlessly and dishonestly as a liberal. Many careless labels are now being thrown around concerning the classification of the brethren according to their understanding of the Scriptures.³⁹

Cothen's forthright assessment of the growing conflict in Southern Baptist life reveals several important moderate perceptions of the controversy. First, Cothen sees the conservative movement as motivated by hatred and political ambition, not a desire for orthodoxy as conservatives claimed. Second, Cothen views the doctrine-inspecting actions of the conservative movement as dishonest, careless, and detrimental. Cothen decried theological labeling. He pointed out that to be labeled as a "liberal" in the Southern Baptist Convention could be very bad for one's career. He even called such labeling gossip. Cothen did not mince words regarding what he believed were the underlying motives of the conservative movement.

In 1973 a faction of outspoken conservatives founded the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, a partisan group of Southern Baptists expressly dedicated to ridding the denomination of theological liberalism. The group's publication was the *Southern*

³⁹Grady C. Cothen, "God's Men" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 31, 1971).

Baptist Journal. James Hefley, himself a conservative, acknowledged that the publication occasionally dipped into “scandal-mongering.”⁴⁰ The hunt was on for theological liberalism in the Southern Baptist Convention and members of this group were publicly leading the charge.

In 1975 Russell Dilday provided one of the best expressions of the moderate interpretation of the still escalating controversy.⁴¹ He shared how preachers ought to handle the word of God, how they should handle disagreement, and how they should handle their own attitude. His sermon comes across somewhat like an instructional message on how not to be a conservative. He explained that preachers did not need more calls to faithfulness to the Bible. He suggested that preachers needed to preach rightly, but that they were not in need of being told to preach rightly. His sermon has much negative application for the conservative leaders and speakers within the Convention. He warned,

We have too many groups checking on the orthodoxy of other groups, too many pastors lurking to catch their brother . . . Heresies are not nearly as dangerous as are sensitive, touchy defenders . . . Don’t jump to the defense of orthodoxy. The word of God will stand without your apologetics . . . [He further warned against] stupid and senseless controversies, [and told hearers] not [to] be abrasive and quarrelsome, walking around with a theological chip on our shoulder.”⁴²

He referred to the antagonists against whom he warned as “pharisaical creedalists.”⁴³ He was referring to the aggressive, doctrine-policing conservative movement.

Russell Dilday lost the 1975 election for Pastors’ Conference president to an up and coming leader of the conservative movement, Adrian Rogers. Rogers’ election was itself a bit controversial. Dan Martin, writing for *Baptist Press*, commented on the

⁴⁰James C. Hefley, *The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 2005), 36.

⁴¹Russell Dilday, “The Pastor—A Teacher Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Miami Beach, FL, June 9, 1975).

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

following year's conference, over which Rogers presided, noting, "Personalities and politics were brought into focus here as the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference opened amidst an air of expectancy."⁴⁴ Many thought Rogers would put together a completely lopsided Pastors' Conference, catering only to the more conservative Southern Baptist constituency. Rogers said in an interview after the opening session, "Many people have prejudged the Pastors' Conference to be a political caucus. That is simply not true . . . It is amazing to me that those who have castigated the Pastors' Conference in their editorials for attempting to influence the convention prior to the convention seem to be moving heaven and earth to do the same thing."⁴⁵

The 1976 Pastors' Conference was important for several reasons, not least of which is how one-sided it was perceived to be. As Pastors' Conference president, Adrian Rogers could invite whomever he wanted to preach. So he did.⁴⁶ A conservative attending the meeting would very likely have been pleased with the lineup Rogers put together. A moderate attending the meeting would very likely have been worried that the speakers were going to preach against everyone with any beliefs deemed less conservative than their own.

Rogers' election signaled that the conservative movement was gaining traction. The Pastors' Conference would be decidedly conservative from then on. It basically became a pep rally for the conservative cause. Bill Leonard, for example, reflected on the 1977 Pastors' Conference by writing, "The Pastors' Conference became an important vehicle for fundamentalists in denouncing liberalism and promoting possible candidates

⁴⁴Dan Martin, "Pastors' Conference Opens Amidst Expectancy," *Baptist Press*, June 13, 1976.

⁴⁵As quoted by Dan Martin, "Pastors' Conference Opens Amidst Expectancy."

⁴⁶"Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference," *Baptist Press*, March 26, 1976. Speakers included outspoken conservative leaders such as Charles Stanley, Homer Lindsay, Jr., Jerry Vines, W. A. Criswell, and Robert G. Lee. There were several other speakers in the 1976 Pastors' Conference lineup, but these names are worth mentioning because of these men's notoriety as leaders in the conservative movement.

for the SBC presidency.”⁴⁷

In the last few years of the 1970s some of the conservative messages of the Pastors’ Conference became a bit caustic. For example, at the 1978 conference James Robison compared non-inerrantists to the gay rights movement, insisting that the former represented a perversion of God’s Word, while the latter represented a perversion of human sexuality.⁴⁸

The preaching of the Pastors’ Conference from 1968 to 1978 revealed some important ideological characteristics of both the burgeoning conservative and moderate movements. Conservatives desired to purge liberalism from the convention. Moderates did not believe there was any liberalism in the convention. Conservatives promoted the inerrancy of the Bible. Moderates did not believe inerrancy was a meaningful, necessary, or helpful doctrinal requirement. Conservatives were willing to stir up trouble in the denomination in order to address what they believed were legitimate doctrinal problems. Moderates believed many conservatives, especially the leaders, were power-hungry agitators. It was becoming quite evident that the two groups were not only different, but also that they interpreted the controversy in very different ways.

The Conservative and Moderate Movements (1979-1990)

The sermons during these years reveal a preaching that took on more political overtones—that is, “political” meaning that which relates to the ideas and action plans of a particular group (i.e., conservatives and moderates), not “political” meaning that which primarily concerns the affairs of the American government. Preachers delivered sermons that were more directly political in the sense that they encouraged their hearers to

⁴⁷Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope*, 135-6.

⁴⁸James Robison, “Where Are the Prophets?” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 12, 1978).

participate in the conflict by thinking and acting in certain ways that were advantageous to either conservatives or moderates. The Pastors' Conference became so dominated by the conservative movement during this time that moderates were compelled to split away from the traditional pre-convention meeting, founding instead an alternative pastors' conference, the SBC Forum.⁴⁹ Both meetings would function, at least in part, as something of a political instrument for their respective parties for the remainder of the controversy.

Most who have studied the Conservative Resurgence agree that it formally began in 1979 with the election of Adrian Rogers as convention president. Per the strategy of conservative leadership, Rogers used his presidential powers of appointment to nominate strictly conservative persons to positions of influence within the convention and her institutions. Not surprisingly, the preaching of the Pastors' Conference continued on the very conservative-friendly track it had been on since the mid 1970s. In fact, Walter Shurden commented on the lineup of 1979 Pastors' Conference speakers, saying that it looked like "a Who's Who of future Fundamentalist leaders."⁵⁰

The first and perhaps most blatant example of a more political preaching during this time was W. A. Criswell's sermon in the 1979 conference. During his opening remarks he did something purportedly unprecedented in Southern Baptist life when he used his time on the platform to endorse publicly Adrian Rogers as the next convention president. Criswell claimed, "We will have a great time here if for no other reason than to elect Adrian Rogers as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention."⁵¹ Rogers preached as well at the same meeting, insisting that evangelistic

⁴⁹The establishment and preaching of the SBC Forum is treated more fully in its own section later in this chapter.

⁵⁰Walter B. Shurden, ed., *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994), ix.

⁵¹W. A. Criswell, "The Blood of Jesus" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 10, 1979).

success was tied together with the inerrancy position.⁵² James Robison added that toleration of theological liberalism would kill the Southern Baptist Convention.⁵³ The 1979 meeting was very strong for outspoken conservatives at the Pastors' Conference. It represented what would continue in the conference for the remainder of the conflict.

The tone of the Pastors' Conference was slightly less aggressive in 1980 as compared to the previous few years. There was more preaching on the issue of the Bible. There was also preaching to the effect of "Let's stop fighting." Related to the conservative movement, the convention passed a resolution in 1980 titled "Resolution On Doctrinal Integrity," in which it was resolved that the trustees of the denomination's institutions "carefully preserve doctrinal integrity."⁵⁴ In 1980 Paul Pressler made his infamous "go for the jugular" comment, in which he made the analogy that the trustee positions in the convention's institutions were the lifeblood of the convention. Therefore, Pressler reasoned, in order to lead true denomination-wide change conservatives needed to "go for the jugular"—that is, attempt to put conservatives in trustee positions.⁵⁵ It was also in 1980 that moderates mounted their own political countermovement. Cecil Sherman called together a meeting of seventeen ministers in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, in order "to counter the Fundamentalists assault on the SBC."⁵⁶ All of these events signal that the controversy was well underway and that both sides in the contest were becoming

⁵²Adrian Rogers, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 10, 1979). The title, "Untitled Message," is used at numerous points in this dissertation where sermon information is available and relevant, but incomplete in the sense that there was no sermon title provided in the sources consulted. Where these sermons have been cited in this dissertation, the date of the sermon becomes essential for distinguishing between sermons bearing the designation, "Untitled Message," delivered by the same speaker at Pastors' Conferences or SBC Forums that took place in other years.

⁵³James Robison, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 10, 1979).

⁵⁴The full text of the resolution may be viewed online at "Resolution on Doctrinal Integrity" (Southern Baptist Convention, St. Louis, MO, 1980), <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/443/resolution-on-doctrinal-integrity>.

⁵⁵Shurden, *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, xi.

⁵⁶Ibid.

increasingly more political. It should not be surprising, therefore, to discover that the preaching of the Pastors' Conference reflected both of these developments.

In 1983 Ron Herrod preached a message that was important for the way it coupled conservative doctrine with the conservative understanding of what constitutes the basis of denominational fellowship. He proclaimed, "One of the basics that must bind Baptists is the belief in the infallible, inerrant Word of God; otherwise we have no authoritative Word, just theological jello I would no more believe a Bible with one bad verse than I would take one capsule from a cyanide-laced bottle of Tylenol."⁵⁷ Herrod's comments not only make it clear that conservatives believed in inerrancy and desired other Southern Baptists to believe in it as well. They also reveal that conservatives believed their doctrine—specifically, their views regarding the nature of the Bible—ought to be included as a standard by which denominational cooperation is judged to be fit or unfit. Herrod made a strong claim regarding, as his title described it, "The Basics that Bind Us." He was speaking to the issue of Baptist identity. For Herrod and conservatives, it appeared that part of what it meant to be a Baptist was to adhere to a certain conservative expression of the Christian faith, even down to the detail that the nature of the Bible should be understood as inerrant.

Adrian Rogers also preached at the 1983 Pastors' Conference.⁵⁸ Though not mentioning the term *inerrancy*, Rogers is said to have held his Bible high in the air as he proclaimed, "I make no apologies—though some say it is controversial and some say it doesn't need to be said anymore—for believing this book and standing by it I'm going to keep the faith. And, friend, if it's not absolute, it's obsolete."⁵⁹ David

⁵⁷Ron Herrod, "The Basics That Bind Us" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, June 13, 1983).

⁵⁸Adrian Rogers, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, June 13, 1983).

⁵⁹*Ibid.*; as quoted and described by David Wilkinson, "Monday Night Pastors Conference," *Baptist Press*, June 13, 1983.

Wilkinson described Rogers' sermon: "Rogers . . . echoed other sermons in the two-day meeting with an appeal for unapologetic commitment to an inerrant Bible."⁶⁰ Rogers and conservatives were unapologetically fighting for inerrancy.

Several important developments transpired in 1984. Most significant was the formation of the moderate alternative to the conservative-controlled Pastors' Conference, the SBC Forum. The two meetings were quite different, and represented a seemingly irreparable breach between conservatives and moderates. Until 1991, when the SBC Forum dissolved and Forum participants were encouraged to be a part of the newly founded Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, conservatives and moderates would remain apart for the pre-convention preachers' meetings. It should also be pointed out that in 1984 conservatives successfully led an effort to pass a resolution in expression of their belief that the role of the pastorate ought to be limited to qualified men.⁶¹ Whether or not the Bible sanctioned women to serve as pastors was very often a key dividing line between conservatives and moderates.

The controversy perhaps reached its highest point in 1985. Nearly 50,000 Southern Baptists traveled to Dallas, Texas, for the convention's annual meeting, the largest such attendance before or since. It was also in 1985 that Southern Baptists appointed the Peace Committee, a group comprised of both moderate and conservative leaders, and tasked with determining the sources of controversy in the denomination.

Thomas Elliff and W. A. Criswell both preached noteworthy messages at the 1985 Pastors' Conference. Their messages were important to the controversy because they were about the nature of the Bible and the future of the Southern Baptist Convention. Elliff made a case for inerrancy. He argued that the Bible is settled—

⁶⁰Wilkinson, "Monday Night Pastors Conference."

⁶¹See the full text of the resolution at Southern Baptist Convention, "Resolution on Ordination and the Role of Women in Ministry" (Southern Baptist Convention, Kansas City, MO, 1984), <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1088/resolution-on-ordination-and-the-role-of-women-in-ministry>.

meaning that it is “established, fixed, stationed, unmoveable, indisputable.”⁶² His argument—a very common one in conservative rhetoric—was that the Bible is inerrant because God is inerrant. He defended his thesis, explaining, “It is *God’s* Word. Would He lie? Would He mislead? Would He make a mistake? It is inconceivable that a Sovereign God would ever have to say ‘Oops! Sorry!’ It is *His* Word and *He* has jealously protected it through the ages so that we might have a sure a word from Him as did Abraham or Daniel, Peter or Paul.”⁶³ Criswell spoke on the theme of death and resurrection in persons, movements, and institutions. He identified a trend of decline that followed in the wake of “neo-orthodoxy and German higher biblical criticism.”⁶⁴ His argument was that Southern Baptists would die if they compromised on the nature of the Bible. Criswell proclaimed, “Whether we continue to live or ultimately die lies in our dedication to the infallible word of God.”⁶⁵

In 1987 the official report of the Peace Committee was submitted and approved by the convention. The report concluded that the primary source of the controversy were theological differences between conservatives and moderates. It also indicated that there were political causes of the controversy as well. The report stated, “The primary source of the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention is the Bible; more specifically, the ways in which the Bible is viewed.”⁶⁶

The Pastors’ Conference in 1987 showcased several conservative preachers who spoke directly to what the committee concluded was the source of controversy—the

⁶²Thomas D. Eliff, “Settled in Heaven” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Dallas, TX, June 19, 1985).

⁶³Eliff, “Settled in Heaven.”

⁶⁴Bob Stanley and Jim Lowry, “Pastors’ Conference Wrapup (Revised),” *Baptist Press*, June 10, 1985.

⁶⁵W. A. Criswell, “Why Not America? Why Not Now?” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

⁶⁶“Report of the Peace Committee,” in *Going for the Jugular: A Documentary History of the SBC Holy War* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 208.

nature of the Bible. Addressing the inerrancy controversy, Bailey Smith said that one's beliefs about the Bible impact one's efforts at evangelism. He declared, "If the Bible is full of fables and folklore and fairy tales and myths and mistakes, we're on a sinking ship. I have news for you. It is the inerrant, infallible Word of God. All of it. And, as we preach it, I learn that the issues of our faith are centered in what people think of the Word of God."⁶⁷ Another preacher, David Miller, went so far as to claim, "Jesus is conservatively sound in his Doctrine! Regarding bibliology, He is an inerrantist."⁶⁸

Another conservative preacher, Jerry Sutton, spoke at the 1987 meeting about a variety of topics related to the controversy.⁶⁹ Most significant were his comments defending the overt use of denominational politics by conservatives. He declared,

We need to realize that the Southern Baptist Convention is a political system. An organization or entity becomes political as soon as choices must be made between two or more alternatives. We ask questions like: Who are we? Where are we going? How can we best accomplish our purpose? And who is going to lead? These are political questions, and there is nothing wrong with this! To call politics unchristian and accuse our brothers and sisters of "playing politics" is naïve at best and dishonest at worst.⁷⁰

Sutton's remarks explain the conservative rationale behind the use of politics to effect denomination change.

W. A. Criswell preached another exemplary conservative sermon at the 1988 Pastors' Conference.⁷¹ It was very similar to one he had preached at the conference in 1977.⁷² He laid out numerous arguments for adopting a conservative doctrine of

⁶⁷Bailey E. Smith, "The Emmanuel Factor in the Compassion for Souls" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, June 14, 1987).

⁶⁸David Miller, "The Emmanuel Factor in the Church" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

⁶⁹Jerry Sutton, "The Emmanuel Factor and Contending for the Faith" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹W. A. Criswell, "The Infallible Word of God" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Antonio, TX, June 13, 1988).

⁷²W. A. Criswell, "The Infallible Word of God" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Kansas City, MO, June 13, 1977).

Scripture. He maintained that the Bible was inerrant, and even extended this inerrancy to biblical content regarding science and history. He leveled what came across as an unmitigated attack against what he called “the curse of liberalism.”⁷³ He contended that the encroachment of liberalism into the Southern Baptist denomination was the reason for a declining number of baptisms. He identified the moderates with theological liberalism when he said, “A skunk by any other name still stinks.”⁷⁴

The last year of this phase of the Pastors’ Conference was 1990. By this time, conservatives had secured a majority of seats on many boards of trustees within the agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention. It also appeared that they would continue to do so until they controlled all of the denomination’s agencies and institutions. The 1990 annual meeting was the last one in which moderate fielded a presidential candidate. The controversy was coming to a close and both sides knew it. Adrian Rogers preached at the 1990 Pastors’ Conference and offered an analysis that adequately encapsulates the conservative interpretation of the controversy. Rogers stated, “It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error Unity is a wonderful thing, good and pleasant. But beloved, it must be unity of the spirit.”⁷⁵ Rogers was very likely addressing the notion that the Southern Baptist Convention could unify across competing doctrines of Scripture. That he was is supported by his later statement, “We have some today who would jettison truth on the altar of cooperation.”⁷⁶ Rogers made clear that he and the conservatives who followed him valued doctrinal purity regarding the Bible more than a version of denominational cooperation wherein doctrinal differences about Scripture were laid aside as inconsequential.

⁷³Criswell, “The Infallible Word of God,” June 13, 1988.

⁷⁴Criswell, “The Infallible Word of God.”

⁷⁵Adrian Rogers, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, New Orleans, LA, June 10, 1990).

⁷⁶Ibid.

A Different Convention (1991-)

The Pastors' Conference sermons from this last year disclose that the Conservative Resurgence was essentially over. There was not as much divisive preaching directly tied to the controversy as there had been for many years prior. Conservative preaching focused less on the doctrinal issues that divided the convention and more on the moral problems that plagued the nation. There was some Resurgence-related preaching. For example, Bailey Smith patronized the doctrinal preaching of moderates as overly decorous and lacking in conviction; and W. A. Criswell belittled moderate preaching as cheaply intellectual and doctrinally compromised.⁷⁷ Most of the preaching, however, centered upon moral and social issues rather than immediately doctrinal and controversy-related issues.

The preaching of the 1991 Pastors' Conference supports the notion that: (1) conservatives had won the competition for control of the convention; (2) they had already begun setting in motion what they believed to be a process that would establish and protect doctrinal conservatism in the denomination's institutions; and (3) they were taking the denomination in a very different direction than that which existed prior to the Resurgence. Whereas Southern Baptists had been trending in a theologically leftward direction before the conflict, they were very clearly marching on a much more rightward doctrinal course after the conflict. Moderates, having lost the competition, either begrudgingly left the denomination they loved or were otherwise relegated to participate in a Southern Baptist convention in which they no longer had viable opportunities to ascend to leadership, and with which they no longer sympathized regarding the divisive issues that drove the controversy. As noted elsewhere moderates, for the first time since the controversy began, did not field a presidential candidate in the convention's 1991

⁷⁷Bailey E. Smith, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991); W. A. Criswell, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991).

election. Also, it was in 1991 that moderates started the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as an alternative association for Baptist groups to the conservative-controlled Southern Baptist Convention.

The SBC Forum, 1984-1991

Conservatives had been successful at electing their candidate for convention president from 1979 to 1983. By 1984, it was clear that moderates needed more organization and wanted to stage a comeback. It was reported, “Both parties spent months preparing for the showdown through massive telephone calling and precinct-type organizing to get out the vote.”⁷⁸ Moderate leader Cecil Sherman admitted that after the strongly conservative Pastors’ Conference of 1983, moderates were discussing the wisdom of an alternative pastors’ conference.⁷⁹ By February of 1984 the moderate plan for an alternative pastors’ conference officially went public. It would be called the “SBC Forum.”⁸⁰

An Alternative Pastors’ Conference

The first SBC Forum was scheduled to take place at the same time as the Pastors’ Conference, but organizers were adamant that the event was not intended to compete with or to be a split from the Pastors’ Conference. Instead, organizers asserted the Forum was simply “an attempt to provide a meeting for those messengers not attending any other pre-convention meetings.”⁸¹ Bill Bruster, Southern Baptist pastor and publicity chairman for the first SBC Forum, stressed that the event, “Will not be

⁷⁸Stan Hastey, “Ultraconservatives Hold Convention,” *Baptist Press*, June 14, 1984, 1.

⁷⁹Walter L. Knight, “Wait ’Til Next Year?,” *SBC Today* 1, no. 4 (July 1983): 10; see also Larry Chesser, “Pastors Emphasize Authority,” *SBC Today* 1, no. 4 (July 1983): 6.

⁸⁰Dan Martin, “‘SBC Forum’ to Offer Pre-Convention Option,” *Baptist Press*, February 29, 1984, 1-2.

⁸¹Bill Bruster, publicity chairman for the SBC Forum, as quoted in *ibid.*

political, and underline the ‘not.’”⁸² Everyone seemed to agree that the conservatives had been using the Pastors’ Conference to spread their influence ever since they had taken over the event in 1975 with the election of Adrian Rogers as Pastors’ Conference president. John Hewitt wrote in his history of the Forum, "Fundamentalists had effectively used the pre-convention Pastor's Conference, which they also controlled, as an orchestrated political rally for their movement."⁸³ Even conservatives have admitted that they used the Pastors’ Conference to their advantage.⁸⁴ Moderates, however, cried foul at such use and vowed not to use their Forum in a similar manner.

As the name “Forum” implies, moderates attempted to “invite thoughtful, convictional Southern Baptists to debate current issues of importance to Baptists from differing points of views.”⁸⁵ The first issue Forum organizers wanted to mull over was the ordination of women in ministry.⁸⁶ Forum leaders invited Adrian Rogers, Paige Patterson, Mark Corts, and Morris Chapman to represent the so-called “convictional Fundamentalist” position. All four men refused the invitation. Rogers responded to the invitation by saying, “No. And I am not going to help you gather a crowd.”⁸⁷ Many viewed the inception of the Forum as a controversial split between moderate and conservative pastors. Many conservative pastors, therefore, did not want to lend their

⁸²Quoted in Martin, “SBC Forum,” 2.

⁸³Hewitt, “The History of the SBC Forum,” in Shurden, *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, 72.

⁸⁴Paige Patterson cites and agrees with Nancy Ammerman’s analysis that conservatives “had developed a following after years on the revival and Pastors’ Conference circuit and were broadly admired as the leading pulpits of the day.” See Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 178; also see Paige Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation: The Southern Baptist Convention 1978-2004* (Seminary Hill Press, 2011), 7.

⁸⁵Shurden, *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, 75.

⁸⁶Ibid. Interestingly, there was not one sermon devoted to the topic of the ordination of women in ministry in the body of nearly 500 Pastors’ Conference messages that were delivered between 1961 and 1991.

⁸⁷This quote is from a letter written by Cecil E. Sherman to Peter Rhea Jones dated July 25, 1989, as cited by Shurden, *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, 75.

support to the moderate meeting. When the idea of a dialogical meeting between conservatives and moderate did not materialize, Forum organizers agreed instead that the Forum “would be an alternative pre-convention meeting for Moderates who had no place to go. They would put on their kind of program, showcase their brightest and best preachers and musicians, and give Southern Baptists a clear choice.”⁸⁸

The Preaching of the SBC Forum

Forty-three sermons were preached at the SBC Forum during the eight years of its existence from 1984 to 1991. Though there are constraints in this work that render imprudent an exhaustive description and interpretation of every one of these sermons, Appendix Two is offered as a way at least to identify and briefly describe each sermon.⁸⁹ This section presents what are believed to be the most significant sermons of the Forum as related to the controversy, the sermons that best characterize the moderate movement as revealed by their conference preaching. Because there are only eight years of Forum preaching, the sermons have not been divided into phases as with the Pastors’ Conference body of sermons. Instead, several key sermons are simply presented in chronological order.

In 1984 moderates immediately used the pulpit of the Forum to share their perspective on the controversy and its contested issues. First, David Matthews preached against the idolatry of making too much out of the Bible.⁹⁰ He explained, “We are committed to the Bible But it is not God Our Bible witnesses to the ‘depths of God (1 Cor. 2:9-10), but its words are not synonymous with those depths If you

⁸⁸From a letter written by Cecil E. Sherman to Peter Rhea Jones dated July 25, 1989, as cited by Shurden, *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, 75.

⁸⁹For a year-by-year presentation of the SBC Forums and their preaching, see appendix 2. The tables in appendix 2 contain the date, location, theme, and president of each Forum. They also contain the speaker, sermon title, sermon Scripture, and main idea(s) of each sermon.

⁹⁰David Matthews, “Preaching and the Sovereignty of God” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984).

make too much of the words . . . you will find yourselves among the Pharisees.”⁹¹ His aim was to discredit those in the Convention who insisted upon open espousal of inerrancy as a test of orthodoxy. Matthews presented what many moderates believed was one of the biggest problems of the conservative movement—namely, they misconstrued the nature of the Bible, both overemphasizing and perhaps even idolizing the Scriptures.

Also preaching in 1984, R. Kirby Godsey spoke out against the conservative push to enforce doctrinal accountability in Southern Baptist institutions like the one over which he then presided, Mercer University in Macon, GA.⁹² He referred to efforts within the denomination to require Southern Baptist schools to adhere to a conservative doctrinal standard as a willingness “for our children to be slaves of ignorance and victims of narrow-minded bigotry if we can just get them to recite the right religious words.”⁹³ Godsey described conservative ideas about accountability for Baptist educators as “the work of our own littleness and myopic arrogance.”⁹⁴ He made it very clear what he thought of the conservative efforts to change the denomination when he charged that conservative leaders would “sacrifice the wisdom of listening for God and loving each other to the glory of determining who is going to be in charge of the convention.”⁹⁵ Rather than placing themselves under the bondage of stricter doctrinal accountability, he instead urged his hearers to be open to new religious ideas and “even a fresh voice from God.”⁹⁶

A third important sermon from the 1984 Forum was that of Sara Ann Hobbs,

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²R. Kirby Godsey, “The Spirit of Learning and Learning of the Spirit” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984).

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

who preached a topical sermon on the subject of women in the ministry.⁹⁷ Both her presence and topic were quite controversial—a woman preaching at a Southern Baptist meeting in defense of women in the pastorate. She provided a historical survey of how women have served in important roles of the church. She declared confidently of women in the pastoral ministry, “Whether they will serve in Southern Baptist churches or not is still unanswered. But serve they will.”⁹⁸ She also presented statistics regarding women in ministry. She explained how the number of women enrolled in Southern Baptist seminaries was increasing, even while the number of ministerial jobs available to women was decreasing. She guessed that changes in society regarding women’s roles would cause Southern Baptists to be more accepting of women as pastors. Hobbs’ message reached a climax when she said, “God is not listening to those who say he cannot call women to certain kinds of ministry and is continuing to call out bright, committed young women . . . [and] women are not listening to those who say God cannot call them to ministry and they are responding to his call and preparing themselves for ministry.”⁹⁹ Hobbs concluded her sermon with a few points of application. She exhorted her audience: (1) to encourage young women to heed the call of God to the ministry; (2) to speak up for young women who are considering entering the ministry; (3) to recommend young women to churches for positions of ministry; and (4) to hire young women to positions of ministry.

At the 1985 SBC Forum Walter Shurden preached what was perhaps the most defining moderate message given on a national stage at any time during the controversy.

⁹⁷Sara Ann Hobbs, “Women As Ministers” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984); see also Anita Bowden, “Hobbs at SBC Forum,” *Baptist Press*, June 11, 1984. Hobbs’ message at the 1984 SBC Forum was the first one to focus upon the subject of women in ministry among all the messages preached at the Pastors’ Conference from 1961 to 1991 and the SBC Forum from 1984 to 1991.

⁹⁸Hobbs, “Women As Ministers.”

⁹⁹Ibid.

His entire discourse was about the subject of soul competency, which he referred to alternatively as soul freedom, the baptistification of faith, and the priesthood of believers. His message was dramatized in the sense that he spoke as a character—namely, a personified version of soul competency.

Soul competency, like the doctrine of the Scriptures, was one of the more divisive issues of the controversy. It was divisive not because one side adhered to it and the other side adhered to something else, but because each side understood the doctrine in different, competing ways. Shurden presented his version of soul competency when he said, “Soul competency asserts the inalienable right and responsibility of every person to interpret God for himself.”¹⁰⁰ He explained further: “[It] is a spirit that pervades all of Baptist principles. It is the spirit of freedom. That is what I, soul competency, represent and symbolize and stand for in Baptist life. I am the Baptist statue of liberty . . . I am the single most important contribution of Baptists to the religious world.” He did not mince words in describing just how foundational his notion of soul competency was to his vision for Baptist identity. He concluded, “The only freedom you do not have is the freedom not to choose . . . I am soul competency and I stand as a flaming sword to protect your conscience in matters of individual faith.” Shurden admonished his hearers to stand up for their freedom, even if it means some may call you liberal.¹⁰¹

Similar to Shurden’s message at the 1985 Forum was Norman Cavender’s sermon at the 1986 Forum. Cavender spoke about the subject of personal religious liberty as the highest of Baptist values. He proclaimed,

All that we are as Baptists can be summed up in that word, liberty. For it is the call of liberty, more than any other message, that Baptists have seized and proclaimed, honored and practiced. The song of liberty is the sound of the living out of Baptist faith . . . All we say about our Baptist faith translates into the word ‘liberty’.

¹⁰⁰Walter Shurden, “I Am Soul Competency” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985); see also commentary from Jerilynn Armstrong, “Forum,” *Baptist Press*, June 10, 1985.

¹⁰¹Shurden, “I Am Soul Competency.”

Priesthood of believers. Soul competency. Autonomy of the local church. The free-church tradition. A free pulpit. And above all, an open Bible in the hands of a free people, each one of us in sacred individual liberty studying for ourselves under guidance of God . . . Liberty and Baptist mean the same thing.¹⁰²

Cavender touched upon many of the controversial topics of the times by applying his understanding of liberty to various denominational scenarios. He spoke to the issue of the convention's presidential elections by saying, "For the past seven years we have elected presidents who do not believe in liberty among our own people."¹⁰³ Cavender offered his thoughts on the divisive topics of bibliology and hermeneutics by mocking, as he put it, "silly pronouncements demanding that only one set of opinions of the first eleven chapters of Genesis be tolerated, with no liberty allowed for other views."¹⁰⁴ Cavender chastised those within the convention who desired greater doctrinal accountability from Baptist institutions of higher learning, claiming that such persons were sacrificing the ring of freedom with "noisy demands for the removal of professors who do not adopt rigid fundamentalists positions."¹⁰⁵ Cavender cast his vision for Baptist identity by describing moderates as the "*real Baptist[s]*," and conservatives as "non-Baptist."¹⁰⁶

James Slatton and Lavonn Brown preached important messages at the 1987 Forum. Slatton aptly described the contours of disagreement between conservatives and moderates when he said Southern Baptists "must decide between unity in diversity and unanimity by conformity, between inclusiveness and exclusiveness, between functional and creedal unity, between commitment to the Bible and commitment to doctrinal

¹⁰²Norman Cavender, "The Bells of Liberty" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 9, 1986).

¹⁰³Cavender, "The Bells of Liberty."

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid. emphasis ; Carolyn Weatherford, "Women in Our Southern Baptist Heritage" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 9, 1986).

formuli about the Bible, and between freedom and coercion.”¹⁰⁷ Slatton insisted that the denomination had to choose between two alternatives—namely, between the conservative and moderate visions for Baptist identity. Lavonn Brown preached on the subject of spiritual maturity, rather indiscreetly describing maturity in terms of moderate notions of Baptist identity and immaturity in terms of conservative ideas about Baptist identity.¹⁰⁸

It was also at the 1987 Forum that participants adopted the following as the stated purpose of the SBC Forum: “To be a gathering of Southern Baptists where, on the Sunday and Monday before the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, a loyal witness to historic Baptist principles can be sounded and where the leadership of our churches, boards, agencies, and institutions can be encouraged.”¹⁰⁹ As indicated in the adopted statement, moderates very much considered themselves to be the faithful representatives of Baptist tradition.

In 1988 Alan Neely summarized how many moderates perceived of the Conservative Resurgence when he declared, “We have learned nobody wins a fight with belligerent, hostile fundamentalists.”¹¹⁰ He coached fellow moderates to stop fighting with conservatives and “leave them to fight amongst themselves.”¹¹¹ Neely pointed out that Southern Baptists could not fight denominational battles while simultaneously meeting the real needs of the world.¹¹² Neely finished his message by saying that he had

¹⁰⁷James Slatton, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987); Anita Bowden, “Forum—Monday AM,” *Baptist Press*, June 15, 1987.

¹⁰⁸Lavonn D. Brown, “The Journey from Faith to Faith” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

¹⁰⁹Hewett, “The History of the SBC Forum,” in Shurden, *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, 83.

¹¹⁰Alan Neely, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, San Antonio, TX, June 13, 1988).

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²See also the description of Neely’s address by “Forum, Pastors’ Conference Take Divergent Viewpoints,” *Baptist Press*, June 20, 1988.

been “disinherited and disenfranchised by his family.”¹¹³

The 1990 Forum was not the last of such pre-convention meetings. It was, however, the final year in which the Forum heard sermons. John Killinger’s message at the 1990 event sounded a common moderate refrain regarding freedom. Killinger preached, “Free people don’t need to hold other people in bondage. My gospel is about being free. It’s not about gaining control.”¹¹⁴

Herbert Reynolds delivered a memorable sermon at the 1990 meeting, in which he sought to place the conservative movement in a historical and psychological context.¹¹⁵ He argued that the leaders of the conservative movement displayed many of the same characteristics as other mass movement leaders, even such leaders as Adolph Hitler.¹¹⁶ His comments about conservative leaders were representative of the way many moderates felt about the conservative push within the convention. He claimed of conservative leaders,

[They are] ambitious malcontents [with a goal] to control and manipulate a large mass of people to satisfy their own unhealthy personality needs I am seeking to portray the characteristics of yet another mass movement in history in which there is significant sociopathology The leaders of the fundamentalist movement possess classical mass movement personality characteristics in that they have demonstrated time and again that they have an unfulfilled craving for work, power, recognition and goals that cannot be found in their ordinary pursuits [They need] both an issue and a worthy adversary in order to rally the masses to their cause [So] they concocted the Bible as the issue and resurrected the “liberal” label to create a worthy adversary.¹¹⁷

Reynolds’ accusations were quite harsh.

Franklin Pollard also preached a telling sermon at the 1990 Forum. He opined

¹¹³Neely, “Untitled Message.”

¹¹⁴John Killinger, “Living with a Trouble Maker” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

¹¹⁵Herbert Reynolds, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990); see descriptive comments by Art Toalston, “SBC Forum Participants ‘Recapture’ Frustrations,” *Baptist Press*, June 12, 1990.

¹¹⁶Reynolds, “Untitled Message.”

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*; Art Toalston, “Monday Morning Forum,” *Baptist Press*, June 11, 1990.

about the struggles in the convention, offering the following diagnosis,

Denominations do not die because they embrace faulty doctrine. I believe in sound doctrine founded upon the Word of God. I am an inerrantist. I believe the Bible is the Word of God. But denominations die because they let the fire of compassion go out. Then they begin to argue over lesser things. They engage in the dangerous sport of mountain climbing over molehills.¹¹⁸

Pollard and the moderates to which he spoke did not believe the Southern Baptist Convention had a meaningful doctrinal problem regarding liberalism. They believed conservatives were engaging in theological hair-splitting in the worst of ways. Further, Pollard revealed an important distinction that needs to be made about moderates. Not all moderates had a problem with inerrancy. They did have a problem with conservatives insisting upon inerrancy as a basis for cooperation.

Only two speakers presented at the 1991 SBC Forum, the last time the Forum would meet. Both of the speakers addressed the controversy. Dan Martin, former editor of Baptist Press, gave the first message. He shared a personal story about how he had recently been fired by the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention under accusation of biased reporting.¹¹⁹ John Hewett delivered the second and final message, presenting an overview of the recent birth of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.¹²⁰ The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Hewett informed his hearers, was a newly formed entity that sought to provide moderate Southern Baptists with an alternative to the Cooperative Program as a channel through which churches can associate together for the purpose of supporting missions. The 1991 Forum hosted just a couple hundred attendees. Members present voted to dissolve the Forum indefinitely. Instead, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was encouraged to provide an opportunity

¹¹⁸Franklin D. Pollard, "Entrusted with the Gospel" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

¹¹⁹Dan Martin, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991).

¹²⁰John H. Hewett, "Overview of the Birth of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991).

for moderate Southern Baptists to fellowship together at future meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Conclusion

The summary of controversy-related preaching contained in this chapter should be sufficient to demonstrate that conservatives and moderates were two very different kinds of Baptists. They disagreed about many important issues: the nature of the Bible and the extent to which such a doctrine should be defined and defended; the extent to which theological liberalism was present in the Southern Baptist Convention; the topic of women in ministry; the meaning of the freedom of the soul before God. It should be patently clear that they interpreted the Conservative Resurgence very differently. These differences exacerbated and sustained the conflict.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT RHETORIC OF THE PASTORS' CONFERENCE AND SBC FORUM

This chapter analyzes the Conservative Resurgence as a social movement and the sermons of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum as social movement rhetoric. The first main section presents theories for understanding social movements and their rhetoric. Emphasis is given to theories that explain the situational and functional dynamics of social movement rhetoric. The second main section integrates these situation- and function-based rhetorical methods and applies them to certain historical components and key sermonic rhetoric of the Conservative Resurgence.

Social Movements, Rhetorical Situation, and the Functions of Social Movement Rhetoric

This section contains theories regarding social movements and their rhetoric. There are many such theories. Special attention is given here to those theories that highlight the situation in which a social movement and its rhetoric transpired, and to those theories that accentuate the functions of social movement rhetoric.

Social Movements and Their Rhetoric

The second half of the twentieth century was rife with movements. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Vietnam protests, and the Feminist Movement are a few major examples. The proliferation of social movements led to a surge in research regarding the rhetoric of social movements.¹ Here in summary form is

¹Bernard L. Brock, "Editor's Commentary," *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983): 67. Brock writes, "Journals and conventions were flooded with studies focusing on a specific aspect of a given social movement or comparing a specific characteristic or strategy across two or more movements."

the fruit of some of this research.

Social movement theory. What exactly is a social movement? Sociologist William Cameron argued, “A social movement occurs when a fairly large number of people band together in order to alter or supplant some portion of the existing culture.”² Cameron’s definition is about as broad as it gets. Another sociologist, John Wilson, defined social movements somewhat more specifically. Wilson wrote, “A social movement is a conscious, collective, organized attempt to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order by non-institutionalized means.”³ With one exception, Wilson’s definition is virtually the same as Cameron’s—the exception being that Wilson qualifies the means by which a social movement seeks to bring about change. According to Wilson, the means of bringing about change must be non-institutionalized.

Professor of Communication, Herbert Simons, offers an even more detailed understanding of social movements. Simons writes,

A social conflict is a clash over incompatible interests in which one party’s relative gain is another’s relative loss. Conflicts are not simply misunderstandings, semantic confusions, or communication breakdowns; nor are they disagreements, differences of opinion, or controversies—they are always something *more than that*. Divergent interests are at stake, interests important to one or both parties. At the same time, however, that the antagonists are prompted to oppose each other, they also find it necessary to cooperate with each other.⁴

Simons’ definition is more nuanced than the others. He calls a social movement a clash, and that is apropos. According to Simons, a bona fide movement must involve more than mere misunderstanding. There is a genuine conflict between one party and another. The outcome of the conflict will leave one party with victory and the

²William Bruce Cameron, *Modern Social Movements: A Sociological Outline* (New York: Random House, 1966), 7.

³Robert Cox and Christina R. Foust, “Social Movement Rhetoric,” in *The Sage Handbook of Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009), 606.

⁴Herbert W. Simons, *Persuasion: Understanding, Practice, and Analysis* (Boston: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1976), 273.

other with defeat. Simons further indicates that a social movement involves two parties working against one another yet within the same system. Thus, there is both opposition and cooperation. Without opposition you have no tension leading to movement. Without cooperation, you have no intersection for meaningful opposition to take place. What is basic to a social movement, then, according to Simons' definition, is that something meaningful is actually at stake.

Social movements often develop through a series of apparent stages.⁵ The stages do not develop and take place in reality with boundary markers as clear as those in theory. Movements may move through a stage quite quickly, or even pass a stage altogether. They may stay within one particular stage for an extended period of time. They may exhibit characteristics of more than one stage simultaneously. Movements may revert to previous stages, or may skip some stages. Every movement is different. The stages as described are simply helpful tools, rather than hard and fast rules, for analyzing and describing movements.

Social movement rhetorical theory. Experts have studied social movements from a variety of different perspectives, mostly historical and sociological. The rhetorical study of movements, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon.⁶ Leland Griffin, in his survey of the history of the rhetorical study of movements, references a paper read in 1946 by his doctoral supervisor, Herbert Wichelns, at a conference for the Speech Association of America. Wichelns urged students of rhetoric to study movements.⁷ Not long after that, Griffin completed his dissertation on the rhetoric of the Antimasonic

⁵Roderick Hart and Suzanne Daughton write that a "social movement . . . by definition, proceeds sequentially through time," in *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Routledge, 2004), 115-6.

⁶C. A. Wilkinson, "A Rhetorical Definition of Movements," *Central States Speech Journal* 27 (1976): 88.

⁷Leland Griffin, "On Studying Movements," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 225.

movement.⁸ Griffin's dissertation was one of the earliest rhetorical studies of a movement.

Not only was Griffin's dissertation groundbreaking, but also many view his 1952 article on social movement rhetoric as a sort of starting point for the study of the rhetoric of social movements.⁹ Edwin Black commented on Griffin's seminal influence: "In suggesting the reconstitution of the subject matter of rhetorical criticism from the individual speaker or the individual speech to the persuasive movement, Griffin has opened a new and exciting prospect to rhetorical criticism."¹⁰ Robert Cox and Christina Faust add, "Griffin is widely credited with the first attempt to characterize the rhetoric of movements as a distinct area for rhetorical scholarship."¹¹

The Rhetorical Situation of a Social Movement

In 1968 Lloyd Bitzer wrote an article on rhetorical situation. His main point was that rhetoric is situational rather than that situations are rhetorical. He complains of traditional rhetorical theory: "Typically the questions which trigger theories of rhetoric focus upon the orator's method or upon the discourse itself, rather than upon the situation which invites the orator's application of his method and the creation of discourse."¹² He explains that rhetoric is situational in seven different ways. First, rhetoric exists as a response to situation. Second, discourse is given rhetorical significance by the situation. Third, situation must exist in order for rhetoric to exist. Fourth, many rhetorical situations exist without ever calling forth rhetorical discourse. Fifth, situations are rhetorical in that they need and compel rhetoric to participate with and even change situation. Sixth, speech is to be considered rhetorical so long as it appropriately responds

⁸Leland Griffin, "The Antimasonic Persuasion: A Study of Public Address in the American Antimasonic Movement, 1826-1838" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1950).

⁹Robert Cox and Christina R. Foust, "Social Movement Rhetoric," in *The Sage Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, ed. Andrea A. Lunsford, Kirt H. Wilson, and Rosa A. Eberly (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009), 605.

¹⁰Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965), 12.

¹¹Cox and Foust, "Social Movement Rhetoric," 606.

¹²Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 2.

to situation. Seventh, the situation is master over the rhetoric.¹³ Bitzer defines rhetorical situation as “a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence.”¹⁴

Gerald Biesecker-Mast, summarizing Bitzer’s work, has described “the three central historical components of the rhetorical situation” necessary for the critical analysis of a social movement’s rhetoric.” The three historical components are exigence, audience, and constraints.¹⁵

Exigence. An exigence, in general, is an urgent need or demand that calls for action. Within the field of social movement rhetoric, an exigence is, as defined by Biesecker-Mast, “that [which] makes possible a movement rhetoric.”¹⁶ An exigence is considered rhetorical, according to Lloyd Bitzer, “when it is capable of positive modification and when positive modification requires discourse or can be assisted by discourse.”¹⁷ Rhetorical exigencies call for rhetors to give voice to “the constitutive hope that defines the future for the movement, the imagined state of affairs in which the exigence would be missing and the movement’s goal(s) accomplished.”¹⁸

There is typically one master exigence—a “controlling exigence” and/or “nodal point” of a movement’s rhetoric.¹⁹ The master exigence is the main concern of

¹³Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 5-6.

¹⁴Ibid., 6.

¹⁵Gerald J. Biesecker-Mast, “How to Read Social Movements Rhetorics as Discursive Events,” *Iowa Journal of Communication* 28 (1996): 74-101.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” 7.

¹⁸Biesecker-Mast, “How to Read Social Movements Rhetorics as Discursive Events.”

¹⁹Ibid.

the movement, enveloping all other related or subsidiary concerns. The controlling exigence “specifies the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected.”²⁰ Movement rhetoric is offered in response to the rhetoric of the status quo, which also has a controlling exigence or nodal point. Critics should concern themselves primarily with understanding how a social movement develops and employs its own controlling exigence and how a social movement responds to the controlling exigence of the status quo against which it is reacting.

Audience. The second historical component necessary for a critical analysis of a social movement and its rhetoric is audience. Explaining the concept of audience, Biesecker-Mast has written, “The rhetorical critic should show how a movement rhetoric constitutes its audience as an oppressed or threatened people that is established over and against an oppressing or threatening people or institution.”²¹ Bitzer qualifies that an audience is only rhetorical when it “consists . . . of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change.”²² In establishing rhetorical audience critics should demonstrate from a movement’s rhetoric how that movement perceives of itself and how that movement perceives of the person(s), group(s), and/or institution(s) against which they are reacting. To do this critics should look to the mythical and narrative elements of a group’s rhetoric in search of how the group relates to its own ideas about the past. Understanding the collective identities of the parties involved in a social movement is one of the key features of social movement rhetorical criticism.

²⁰Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” 7.

²¹Biesecker-Mast, “How to Read Social Movements Rhetorics as Discursive Events.”

²²Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” 8.

Constraints. The third and final historical component necessary for social movement rhetoric is constraint. A rhetorical constraint is anything that is a part of the rhetorical situation—e.g., persons, events, objects, and relationships—that has the power to affect decisions and actions needed to change the rhetorical exigence(s). Biesecker-Mast refers to constraints as “specific conditions of possibility.”²³ Bitzer notes that typical constraints in any given rhetorical situation “include beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives and the like.”²⁴

There are two types of constraints, alternatively referred to as proofs. Artistic proofs are those constraints in a rhetorical situation created or controlled by the rhetor. Inartistic proofs are those constraints inherent and perhaps operative in the rhetorical situation.

The Functions of Social Movement Rhetoric

What does the rhetoric of a social movement do? Charles Stewart is a leading proponent of what is called the functional approach to social movement rhetoric. In an article outlining his functional approach, Stewart argues that rhetoric is “the primary *agency* through which social movements perform necessary *functions* that enable them to come into existence, to meet opposition, and, perhaps, to succeed in bringing about (or resisting) change.”²⁵

Various functions. There are many perceived functions of rhetoric within social movements. Herbert Simons, writing from “a leader-centered conception of persuasion in social movements,” cites the following as “rhetorical requirements” for

²³Biesecker-Mast, “How to Read Social Movements Rhetorics as Discursive Events.”

²⁴Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” 8.

²⁵C. J. Stewart, “A Functional Approach to the Rhetoric of Social Movements,” *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 299.

leaders of social movements. First, they must attract, maintain, and mold workers into an efficiently organized unit. Second, they must secure adoption of their product by the larger structure. Third, they must react to resistance generated by the larger structure.²⁶ An interesting point running throughout Simons' theory is that the leaders are the rhetoricians. Indeed they are.

Simons, writing with Elizabeth Mechling and Howard Schreier, added that the three broad functions of movement rhetoric—organizing followers, effecting change, and responding to resistance—are accomplished through eight other, more specific rhetorical tasks. First, the rhetoric of social movements must justify its mission to its followers and to third parties. Second, leaders of social movements can use rhetoric to infuse the mission of the movement with a sense of urgency. Third, rhetoricians within social movements can acquire material and nonmaterial resources through rhetorical means. Fourth, the movement must organize activists into a disciplined and cohesive unit. Fifth, there must be some gratification of constituents' personal needs. Sixth, movements must convince or enforce upon its opponents a desired program of change. Seventh, rhetoricians must seek to discredit the arguments or the persons of its opposition. Eighth and finally, organizations must respond to and counter efforts at social control.²⁷

A rhetorical, function-based description of social movements. There are different types of movements. Griffin argues for two broad types: pro movements and anti movements. Pro movements take place when groups employ rhetoric in an attempt to raise awareness and create buy-in within a group regarding the “creation or acceptance

²⁶Herbert W. Simons, “Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements,” in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne, 2nd ed. (State College, PA: Strata Pub Co, 2006), 37.

²⁷H. W. Simons, E. W. Mechling, and H. N. Schreier, “The Functions of Human Communication in Mobilizing for Action from the Bottom Up: The Rhetoric of Social Movements,” in *Handbook of Rhetoric and Communication Theory*, ed. C. C. Arnold and J. W. Bowers (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1984), 792–867. The list of eight tasks summarized and paraphrased here was initially curated by Stewart, “A Functional Approach to the Rhetoric of Social Movements,” 153.

of an institution or idea.”²⁸ In anti movements the rhetorical attempt is made in order to persuade others to destroy or reject an institution or idea.²⁹

Robert Cathcart differentiates between different kinds of movement rhetorics by referring to managerial forms and confrontational forms.³⁰ The managerial form of movement rhetoric does not want or seek to destroy the current system within which the movement is taking place. The confrontational form of movement rhetoric takes place in “periods of societal breakdown or when moral underpinnings are called into question.”³¹ The confrontational form of social movement rhetoric comes from outside the system in order to break the system, while the managerial form of social movement rhetoric comes from inside the system in order to change the system. Managerial forms of rhetoric are reformist rather than revolutionary. They seek to adjust the existing order, not reject it. Cathcart explains, “The reformist campaign stays inside the value structures of existing order and speaks with the same vocabularies of motive as do the conservative elements in the order.”³² Simons, Mechling, and Schreier explain that the label reformist is appropriate to a movement so long as that movement only seeks to change laws, the enforcement of laws, or changes in governing personnel.³³ Further, they add that movements might be labeled revolutionary if they sought to replace entire institutions or public philosophies.³⁴

Simons, Mechling, and Schreier provide a helpful survey of the different

²⁸Leland Griffin, “The Rhetoric of Historical Movements,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38 (1952): 186.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰R. S. Cathcart, “Movements: Confrontation As Rhetorical Form,” *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 43 (1978): 439.

³¹Ibid., 440.

³²Ibid.

³³Simons, Mechling, and Schreier, “The Functions of Human Communication,” 793.

³⁴Ibid.

typologies of social movements.³⁵ Movements that resist change are often referred to as countermovements. Countermovements may be resistance movements in that they seek to resist change. They may otherwise be restorative movements in that they seek to lead groups back to old beliefs and practices.

Movements that promote change have been divided into smaller, more specific classifications. For example, D. Aberle recognized four different types of change-promoting social movements.³⁶ First, Aberle identified movements seeking total change in their social structure as transformative movements. Second, movements seeking partial change were referred to as reformative movements. Third, movements desirous of total change in individuals were understood to be redemptive movements. Fourth, movements looking for partial change in individuals are known as alternative movements. Aberle's distinctions are helpful.

Other types of social movements that have been identified by theorists include norm-oriented, value-oriented, and innovational movements. Norm-oriented movements seek change within a system. Value-oriented conflicts seek not merely to change a system, but to change the values, and therefore the end goals, of a system.³⁷ Innovational movements desire change but believe the proposed change will not conflict with the beliefs of the current system.³⁸

On how rhetoric defines the people of a movement. Rhetorical theorist, Michael McGee, has developed some very helpful ideas regarding the relationship

³⁵Simons, Mechling, and Schreier, "The Functions of Human Communication," 795-6.

³⁶D. Aberle, *The Peyote Religion among the Navaho* (Chicago: Aldine, 1966), cited in Simons, Mechling, and Schreier, "The Functions of Human Communication," 795.

³⁷Denton E. Morrison, "Some Notes toward Theory on Relative Deprivation, Social Movements, and Social Change," *American Behavioral Scientist* 14 (1971): 675-90.

³⁸Ralph R. Smith and Russel R. Windes, "The Innovational Movement: A Rhetorical Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65 (1975): 140-53.

between rhetoric, the identity of the people who comprise a social movement, and the stages of a social movement.³⁹ McGee argues that inherent in many rhetorical-social theories is an incorrect, or better yet, an imprecise presumption regarding whom “the people” are—“the people” referring mostly to social groups in social theory and audience in rhetorical theory. McGee writes, “Critics have taken ‘people’ and ‘audience’ to be no more than plural abstractions of ‘person’ or ‘individual.’”⁴⁰ Just who “the people” are is left largely undefined and undefended. McGee says the consequence is that “any appeal to ‘a people’ is almost by definition an argumentative fallacy and hence an ‘irrational’ form of persuasion.”⁴¹ McGee proposed an alternative way of defining just who “the people” actually are. McGee explains, “Most rhetorical scholarship presupposes a ‘people’ or an ‘audience’ which is either (a) an objective, literal extension of ‘person,’ or (b) a ‘mob’ of individuals whose significance is their gullibility and failure to respond to ‘logical’ argument.”⁴²

In seeking actually to define, rather than presume, “the people,” McGee has proposed that the idea of “the people” may be construed in terms of the “rhetorical function of ‘the people.’”⁴³ He writes, “a kind of rhetoric defines ‘the people’ at each stage in a ‘collectivization process’ of coming-to-be, being, ceasing-to-be an objective reality.”⁴⁴ People in social movements—“the people,” so to speak—are brought together or collectivized in different ways through the various rhetorics that take place throughout the process of a social movement being born, developing, crystallizing, effecting a

³⁹M. C. McGee, “In Search of ‘The People’: A Rhetorical Alternative,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 235-49.

⁴⁰Ibid., 236.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., 238.

⁴³Ibid., 239.

⁴⁴Ibid., 243.

response, and then powering down.

There are four stages of the collectivization process, the process in which individuals become “the people” in a social movement. First, there is a stage of dormancy. McGee refers to this stage as a place where “the seeds of collectivization stay dormant,” though they are very much present and suggest the potential for what “the people” could become.⁴⁵

Second, there is a stage of organization. At this point in a social movement’s process of collectivization “advocates organize dissociated ideological commitments into incipient political myths, visions of the collective life dangled before individuals in hope of creating a real ‘people.’”⁴⁶ The myth created in the stage of organization contains “the people.” The myth is not a myth in the sense that it is untrue. It is a myth in the sense that it is dramatic and meaningful. It is a myth in the sense that it helps to explain “the people” who cling to it, are inspired by it, and place their hopes in it and in what it represents that they seek to accomplish.

Third, there is a stage of response where in large groups of people react to a myth. The response is not limited merely to collective behavior, but to the observable way in which “the people” act together for the sake of their myth without regard for their individual well-being. At this point, McGee argues, the persons participating actually become “the people” in a specific, objective way.⁴⁷

Fourth and finally, there is a stage of decay. Decay does not necessarily imply defeat or failure on the part of “the people.” Instead, decay refers to what happens to the previously collectivized unit of ideological commitments that represent “the people” as the larger society makes adjustments—whether to give in, to defeat, or to ignore the

⁴⁵McGee, “In Search of ‘The People,’” 243.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

social movement—to “the people” and their goals.

McGee’s rhetorical theory makes an important point about the nature of myth and fantasy regarding “the people” and their movement. Some rhetorical theorists claim that social movements and “the people” who participate in them are in some way illusory.⁴⁸ The events happen, to be sure, but the events are simply events. They are merely phenomena to which people like sociologists, historians, and rhetorical critics apply the labels of “movements,” “society,” “the people,” and the like. In other words, “the people” only exist in people’s minds as they think about, participate in, or reflect upon a movement. They do not exist in objective reality, only in social fantasy. The language of myth and fantasy is not intended to be condescending in the sense that “the people” have been duped into believing something objectively untrue to be reality.

McGee believes otherwise that things like myth and fantasy and “the people” exist both in objective reality and in social fantasies. McGee qualifies his viewpoint in this way: “‘The people’ are more process than phenomenon. That is, they are conjured into objective reality, remain so long as the rhetoric which defined them has force, and in the end wilt away, becoming once again a collection of individuals.”⁴⁹

According to McGee, throughout each of these phases of a social movement’s development,

The heart of the collectivization process is a political myth, a vision of mass man dangled before persons in the second stage of their metamorphosis into a “people.” In a sense, the myth contains all other stages of the process: it gives specific meaning to a society’s ideological commitments; it is the inventional source for arguments of ratification among those seduced by it; and it is the central target for those who will not participate in the collective life either because they are hostile to the myth itself or because they have tired of the myth and are not inclined to defend it.⁵⁰

⁴⁸For a summary of this other approach to understanding of social movements and their rhetoric, see Simons, Mechling, and Schreier, “The Functions of Human Communication,” 809.

⁴⁹McGee, “In Search of ‘The People,’” 242.

⁵⁰Ibid., 243.

The collectivizing myth does not necessarily have to be untrue, or contradictory to reality. The term myth or vision or even fantasy simply represents that which is dramatic and which is taking place in the minds of “the people.” That which is taking place in the minds of “the people” may or may not be taking place outside the minds of “the people” in objective reality. Whether the myth is taking place in objective reality is not McGee’s primary concern regarding rhetoric.

McGee suggests that critics ought to analyze rhetorical documents in order to discern and describe “the people’s” beliefs. In doing so, critics will observe actual, objective elements of situation—things like material forces, events and themes. McGee adds the caveat that the critic observes these materialistic phenomena not merely as they are in and of themselves, but as they have been selected, interpreted, and communicated—or “filtered,” to use McGee’s word—through the leader/rhetor whose words the critic studies.⁵¹ Simons, Mechling, and Schreier summarize McGee’s work by writing “McGee has contended that movements help to define social problems and also define ‘the people’ in whose name proposals for change are advanced.”⁵² The “political myth” of which McGee speaks is the vision for “the people.” McGee explains something very important about a movement’s vision when he cites with approval the French revolutionary, Georges Sorel, arguing that a vision is “identical with the convictions of a group, being the expression of those convictions in the language of a movement.”⁵³ Describing a movement’s vision is thus crucial to understanding the movement.

Understanding the Preaching of the Conservative Resurgence as the Rhetoric of a Social Movement

This chapter has presented theories relevant to the study of the rhetoric of

⁵¹McGee, “In Search of ‘The People,’” 249.

⁵²Simons, Mechling, and Schreier, “The Functions of Human Communication,” 810.

⁵³McGee, “In Search of ‘The People,’” 244; Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T. E. Hulme and J. Roth (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 50.

social movements. Included were theories regarding social movements and their rhetoric, the rhetorical situation of social movements, and the functions of social movement rhetoric. The remainder of this chapter will apply these theories to the Conservative Resurgence as a social movement and the sermons of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum as social movement rhetoric.

The Conservative Resurgence as a Social Movement

The Conservative Resurgence was indeed a social movement. Three scholarly definitions of a social movement were provided earlier in this chapter.⁵⁴ These definitions were mostly complementary to one another. These definitions are synthesized by the following definition of a social movement original to this work: a social movement is a competition between two cooperating groups in which the winner gets to arbitrate the contested direction for the organization within which both groups cooperate.

It is not difficult to imagine how the Conservative Resurgence fits this definition of a social movement. The Conservative Resurgence was a competition between two groups—namely, conservatives and moderates, co-operating through the denomination of the Southern Baptist Convention. Conservatives won the competition and were thus able to set the direction for the convention.

According to social movement theory, social movements progress through a series of stages. The Conservative Resurgence developed through a series of stages. The stages can be demonstrated through the rhetoric of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum sermons. How the Conservative Resurgence developed through a series of stages has been demonstrated in a subsequent portion of this chapter.⁵⁵

⁵⁴See definitions by William Cameron, John Wilson, and Herbert Simons on pp. 2-3 of this work.

⁵⁵See the section titled "The Stages of a Social Movement as Exemplified in the Preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum, 1961-1991" beginning on p. 93 below.

The Rhetorical Situation of the Conservative Resurgence

This section describes the rhetorical situation of the Conservative Resurgence. The theory of rhetorical situation maintains that the situation in which rhetoric transpires is inseparably relevant to the rhetoric itself. According to the theory, one must understand the background information of a given rhetoric in order to understand the rhetoric. The primary historical components of rhetorical situation are exigencies, audience, and constraints.

The rhetorical exigencies of the Conservative Resurgence. A rhetorical exigency is the *raison d'être* of any social movement. Social movements come into existence because of and in order to alleviate the perceived exigencies of a situation. The exigency is the problem the movement hopes to solve. According to the controversial preaching of the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991, the controlling exigency of the Conservative Resurgence was a concern for orthodoxy in influential positions of leadership in the denomination's institutions. Conservatives were alarmed at the presence of bibliologies that they viewed as not being conservative enough. Accordingly, when conservatives preached to the movement, they spoke about the Bible more than any other issue.⁵⁶

There were other important exigencies that compelled movement conservatives to act and to speak. For example, Pastors' Conference preachers frequently addressed such topics as denominational politics, Baptist identity, and Southern Baptist seminaries.⁵⁷ However, even in these—and really all of the other controversial topics—the controlling exigency of a concern for orthodoxy can be seen as the foundational

⁵⁶The “Bible” and “Inerrancy” combine to be the two controversial topics about which Pastors' Conference preachers most frequently preached.

⁵⁷Pastors' Conference preachers spoke to the issue of the Southern Baptist seminaries in 18.9 percent of their controversial preaching, the issue of Baptist identity in 14.96 percent of their controversial preaching, and the issue of denominational politics in 14.17 percent of their controversial preaching.

reason for concern. Conservatives viewed denominational politics as a means by which heterodoxy could be legitimately and effectively addressed. Conservatives viewed orthodoxy as an irrevocable tenet of Baptist identity. They viewed the seminaries as the place where orthodoxy mattered perhaps most because the seminary trained pastors who would lead churches. It is not difficult at all to explain how basically every controversial topic within the preaching of the Pastors' Conference is directly related to the controlling exigency of concern for orthodoxy in the convention's institutions.

Perusing the frequency with which preachers at the Pastors' Conference addressed controversial topics is not the only way to establish the controlling exigency of the conservative movement. In fact, key movement leaders have acknowledged that their controlling exigence was a concern for orthodoxy as expressed in language about the nature of the Bible. Paige Patterson, Adrian Rogers, and Paul Pressler—perhaps the three most well known, and maybe even most important leaders of the Conservative Resurgence—have each stated very clearly why they felt compelled to get involved in the Conservative movement and what, at least for them, was the controlling exigence of the movement.

Paige Patterson has written that conservatives intentionally chose “to focus primarily on one issue: the reliability of the Bible.”⁵⁸ Patterson explained, “There were a host of other concerns, but the issue of the nature of Scripture was chosen [because] . . . if the epistemological issue were resolved, then the basis for resolving all other issues was in place.”⁵⁹ Very similar to Patterson's understanding of the controlling exigency of the Resurgence was that of Adrian Rogers. Rogers said in response to a question about whether the Conservative Resurgence was strictly a theological debate,

⁵⁸Paige Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation: The Southern Baptist Convention 1978-2004* (Seminary Hill Press, 2011), 7.

⁵⁹Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation*, 7.

I think that it was primarily a theological debate—strictly is too big a word. It was primarily a theological debate, and had we been able to coalesce on the meaning of Scripture, that would have been a safety net where we could have worked out the other problems. We were not able to have the safety net to work out the other problems Let me say I hope that the coming historians will be able to see that the issue was very simple. It was the nature of Scripture. Still, sociologists try to explain it by regional differences. Church-state people try to explain it by some sort of political agenda, and that the issues of Scripture are only smoke screen. That I don't believe.⁶⁰

Paul Pressler was also primarily concerned about orthodoxy. As Pressler has detailed in his autobiography, the issue was orthodoxy—more specifically, orthodoxy concerning the Bible. Pressler explained it was Ralph Elliot's 1961 publication of a controversial book on Genesis that prompted him to action.⁶¹ Pressler said Elliot's book disturbed him deeply: "I could not understand how anyone who believed the Bible was completely true could write this It was particularly disturbing because the author was at one of the Southern Baptist seminaries teaching young men to be preachers."⁶²

The controversial preaching of the Pastors' Conference—both the controversial topics and the frequency with which the controversial topics were employed—indicates that the controlling exigency of the conservative movement's rhetoric was a concern for orthodoxy regarding the nature of the Bible. The autobiographical comments of the conservative movement's leaders support this claim.

The rhetorical audience of the Conservative Resurgence. The rhetorical audience of a social movement refers to the ways in which the movement's discourse describes the participants in the movement. The discourse of a movement reveals the movement's rhetorical audience. It does so by the way it communicates the tension and relationship between movement participants seeking to overcome the movement's

⁶⁰Adrian Rogers, *Oral Memoirs of Adrian Rogers* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 2003) 6.

⁶¹Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey* (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 51-52; Ralph H. Elliot, *The Message of Genesis* (Nashville: Broadman, 1961).

⁶²Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die*, 52.

controlling exigency and movement antagonists who are in charge of maintaining the status quo. Conservative Southern Baptists were the primary rhetorical audience of the controversial preaching of the Pastors' Conference. This would have been pastors, lay-leaders, their family members who may have been present, and Southern Baptist messengers—all of these persons were represented at the Pastors' Conference meetings from 1961 to 1991 and are a part of the rhetorical audience of the social movement.

It is important to understand how conservatives thought of themselves as a people who were in so vulnerable a position that they had to act. Conservative rhetoric needed to convey that conservatives had been trapped and were left with no place else to go other than to speak out against the status quo. To do this, conservative preachers employed a number of different rhetorics to define who they were as a people and why they were in need of acting out against the status quo.

Clark Pinnock, then professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered one sermon at the 1966 Pastors' Conference and three sermons at the 1968 conference. His preaching at the pre-convention meeting provides one of the very best examples of how conservatives perceived of the Conservative Resurgence and the parties involved. Pinnock described the rhetorical audience of the controversy as well as, if not better than, any other preacher during the three decades of Pastors' Conference preaching under review in this work.

In constructing a rhetorical audience, Pinnock employed four different rhetorics to define who conservatives were as a people and why they were in need of acting out against the status quo. These rhetorics not only describe how conservatives perceived of themselves, but also how they perceived of those Southern Baptists against which they were reacting as a movement.

Pinnock utilized four principal lines of argumentation in order to compose a rhetorical audience. First, he preached that conservatives were concerned for orthodoxy above all else. He was concerned with convincing Southern Baptists that the

conservative movement was not a movement seeking power, but a movement seeking to protect the Christian faith.

Pinnock began his first message at the 1968 meeting by declaring, “At this moment the Christian Church is facing the greatest crisis in all her history It is a crisis of faith an assault has been launched on the foundation of doctrine revelation.”⁶³ With his opening lines, he revealed who conservatives were and what they were all about. Conservatives believed that they needed to defend the faith against the enemy of theological liberalism. They believed Christian faith was under attack primarily at the point of revelation—more specifically, the Bible. Liberalism had cast doubt upon the doctrine of revelation, and in so doing, had attacked Christianity at its base, the Scriptures.

Pinnock articulated the fears that motivated conservatives when he contended: “There is growing, however, a new view of the Bible. Under the impact of form criticism, demythologising, evolutionary thought, and current antisupernaturalism, many of our teachers and scholars have lost their belief in its integrity.”⁶⁴ Conservatives were suspicious that Southern Baptist seminaries harbored closet liberals. Pinnock’s sentiments express this suspicion well. Conservatives believed that affirming and defending the inerrancy of the Bible was the best way to ensure orthodoxy.

Conservatives believed that upholding inerrancy was not merely needed in order to preserve orthodoxy. They also believed inerrancy best honored God. Pinnock presented the conservative logic regarding inerrancy when he reasoned, “The Bible does not err, because God cannot lie. Its accuracy is guaranteed by the trustworthiness of God.”⁶⁵ Therefore, for conservatives, to refuse inerrancy was not merely to make a

⁶³Clark Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 3, 1968).

⁶⁴Clark Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 4, 1968).

⁶⁵Clark Pinnock, “Our Source of Authority: The Bible” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’

decision about the nature of Scripture. To suggest the Bible was errant was to cast aspersion on the character of God.

Pinnock's sermons reveal why conservatives were always so concerned about defending the Bible. They believed that an attack on the Bible was an attack on the faith itself, because conservatives viewed the Bible as the perfectly reliably, totally inerrant, eternally unchanging sourcebook for the faith. Pinnock expressed the conservative viewpoint on the importance of getting the Bible question right by analogizing the Bible as a map. Pinnock preached: "The Holy Scriptures are a roadmap or pathfinder to assist the believer [to] find his way about the spiritual order. A map which explains the direction to the seashore is certainly less exciting than the beach and sand, but it is the indispensable condition for one's arrival there. A distorted compass or a faulty map can lead to ruin and shipwreck."⁶⁶ The idea is that if you get the Bible wrong, you will eventually get the Christian faith wrong. Pinnock therefore warned, "We stand in great danger of losing the gospel altogether."⁶⁷ His map analogy addressed moderate concerns that conservatives often confused the Bible with God. Pinnock's analogy demonstrates that conservatives did not believe the Bible was God (i.e., that the map was as exciting as the beach), but that one could not get to God without the reliable roadmap of the Bible. Pinnock's sermons reveal that the rhetorical audience of conservatives was a group of Southern Baptists who were, in terms of their relationship to the controversy, most immediately devoted to a concern for orthodoxy.

Second, Pinnock further developed a rhetorical audience by couching the controversy in terms of an "us" versus "them" proposition. The "us" were conservatives. The "them" were moderates. Conservatives were right. Moderates were wrong. It was

Conference, Detroit, MI, May 23, 1966).

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Pinnock, "The Evangelical Imperative."

an internecine version of the good guys versus the bad guys. Pinnock insisted that moderates were perpetuating something of an unjust system by using their positions of power to withstand the doctrinal desires of the convention's large majority of conservatives. Pinnock maintained, "There is little doubt that the vast majority of Southern Baptist pastors and people have a very high regard for the Bible If the percent of our pastors who hold to Biblical infallibility is very large, the percent of our professors who do is very small. As long as this discrepancy exists we may expect friction."⁶⁸ Pinnock not only argued that moderates held positions of power, but that they forced their more progressive views of doctrine upon a constituency who was strongly conservative. Pinnock asserted,

Most of the delegates to our Convention believe that the Bible is the very Word of God to man. It is not merely a human, fallible witness to someone else's revelation, it is divine revelation itself. This is the voice of heaven itself. But for all the resolutions we pass and all the approval we register for the high doctrine of Biblical authority, nothing seems to change. The strong minority in positions of considerable power continue to vocalise the sub-Biblical view of inspiration just as if the opinion of this body were of no importance, as if merely to remind them of the fact were to infringe on their freedom, as if the Christian faith involves no more matters of truth than the individual may wish to experience.⁶⁹

Pinnock even went so far as to suggest that moderates who held positions of influence in the convention—mainly administrative and professorial posts in convention colleges, universities, and seminaries—were illegitimately serving, even if unwittingly, as a sort of priestly intermediary between average Southern Baptists and God. He explained, "We are not subject to a hierarchy of priests mediating between us and God. Nor are we subject to a hierarchy of scholars telling what in the Scripture we may believe."⁷⁰ The idea in Pinnock's accusation is that conservatives wanted to believe in the Bible and construe of faith in expressly conservative ways, and they desired to

⁶⁸Pinnock, "Sola Scriptura."

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Pinnock, "Sola Scriptura."

articulate their faith through convention channels such as resolutions, confessional statements, and official measures of doctrinal accountability. However, because it was mostly moderates who ran the convention at the institutional level, a minority of moderates was able to inhibit a majority of conservatives from expressing their faith the way they wanted. Conservative faith could only be expressed, so long as it wished to be expressed in the convention, through the filter of moderate leadership.

Third, Pinnock argued that conservatives were better Baptists than moderates. Not only did Pinnock articulate a vision for conservatives such that their primary concern was for orthodoxy, and such that they were in a battle wherein they were the “good guys” and moderates were the “bad guys,” but Pinnock also contended that conservatives were the truer, more accurate representation of what it meant to be a Baptist. Pinnock professed that conservatives were better Baptists for three reasons: (1) Baptists of the past were conservative; (2) Jesus was conservative; and (3) conservatism yields greater evangelistic success and congregational health.

Pinnock wanted his audience to connect the conservative movement with the great Baptist tradition of the past. He referred to the “great, traditional, conservative theology, for which Southern Baptists have been famous, and of which we have been proud.”⁷¹ He called Southern Baptists “to return unequivocally to the fundamental evangelical faith,” arguing that “It was our Biblical theology which once made us large and great; on the day we give that up we will only be large but not great.”⁷² Moderates did not want to take action to enforce a doctrinal code upon Southern Baptists. Conservatives did. Pinnock described this tension: “There is an almost universal unwillingness to question unscriptural preaching and teaching. Our fathers were not afraid to confront error and expose it. But we now out of fawning respect for scholarly

⁷¹Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

⁷²Ibid.”

opinion are reluctant even to question sub-Biblical teaching.”⁷³ Pinnock desired for conservatives to connect themselves to Baptist tradition. He insisted that it was moderates who parted ways with Baptists of the past, not conservatives.

Pinnock also reasoned that conservatives were better Baptists than moderates because Jesus was a conservative. Pinnock used Jesus’ comments about the Scriptures to argue that Jesus was opposed to progressive versions of bibliology such as neo-orthodoxy with its distinction between God’s revelation and the actual text of the Bible. Pinnock proclaimed, “Jesus Christ himself constituted Christianity a religion of Biblical authority. It is his doctrine of inspiration that we are concerned to honour He never dreamed of separating revelation from Scripture.”⁷⁴ Pinnock wanted Southern Baptists to know that Jesus had a position in the debate about Scripture. He wanted conservatives to know that Jesus gave them warrant to fight for an objectively authoritative, totally inerrant Bible. He wanted moderates to know that they stood opposed to Jesus in their doctrine of revelation, Scripture, and authority. Pinnock accused moderates of inconsistency when they affirmed Christ’s lordship, but denied his own teaching about Scripture. Pinnock charged, “To affirm his lordship in one breath, and then deny his specific teaching in the next, is intellectual schizophrenia of a dangerous kind.”⁷⁵

Pinnock further presented conservatives as better Baptists by associating evangelistic success and denomination greatness with conservative doctrine. He preached, “There is an intimate relation between our conservative theology and our evangelistic outreach.”⁷⁶ He warned, ““If we allow ourselves to become a trumpet giving an uncertain sound, we will fail spiritually, theologically, evangelistically.”⁷⁷ He

⁷³Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

⁷⁴Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura.”

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

⁷⁷Ibid.

challenged, “If our Convention is to flourish [we must] sustain the highest possible regard for Scripture.”⁷⁸ Convincing conservatives that they were the better Baptists, and that they had several reasons for believing so was crucial to the startup, the maintenance, and the overall success of the conservative movement.

Fourth, Pinnock preached in such a way to make conservatives believe that they could actually make a difference in the convention. Pinnock did not desire only to rouse the fear and anger of conservatives by raising awareness of liberalism in the convention. The extent to which Pinnock did that was really only a means to an end. What he really wanted was for conservatives to unite, stand up, and get to work in an attempt to make a difference. Pinnock wanted conservatives to know that they could stop the influx of theological liberalism. They could reverse modern theological trends in their denomination. They could safeguard the content of the Christian faith from modernist presumptions about the need for doctrine to change with the times.

Pinnock called his hearers to account, saying, “Those who love this great convention must not stand idly by, and watch it lose its grip on the good news, and ultimately its life.”⁷⁹ He forewarned, “Southern Baptists are at a crossroads.”⁸⁰ Preaching in 1966, he called upon Southern Baptists to do something: “Let us continue to believe the Book inspired of God, and increase the clarity of our convention regarding it.”⁸¹ He continued, “It is our perennial task and privilege to make unequivocal our stand on its integrity and reliability.”⁸² Speaking in 1968, he charged conservatives to action, asking, “Will we in obedience to the Word of God direct men to our Lord and Savior, or

⁷⁸Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura.”

⁷⁹Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

⁸⁰Clark Pinnock, “The Fact of Christ” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 4, 1968).

⁸¹Pinnock, “Our Source of Authority: The Bible.”

⁸²Ibid.

will we merely turn with the winds and through spinelessness forfeit our calling to preach the eternal gospel?”⁸³ Pinnock wanted to make sure his hearers knew that they could make a difference by how they voted on certain convention-related issues—whether presidential elections, resolutions, motions, etc. He went on to respond, “Part of the answer will be given by this Convention of 1968 If we are convinced the historic Biblical gospel is true, then let us go on in the power of God to spiritual conquest. Houston is the place, and now is the hour, to give our answer!”⁸⁴ In another address at that same conference, Pinnock warned Southern Baptists, “We must decide which way we want our denomination to move before it is too late.”⁸⁵

Taken together, these four facets of the conservative rhetorical audience provide a helpful summary of some of the more common features of the conservative preaching of the Pastors’ Conference from 1961 to 1991. Pinnock’s sermons were exemplary of what many other conservative preachers said at the meeting. His messages were to provide clear, forthright samples of conservative rhetoric.

The rhetorical constraints of the Conservative Resurgence. Rhetorical constraints are those parts of a rhetorical situation that can actually make a difference. Constraints might be objective factors inherent to the rhetorical situation. They might be subjective factors imported into and/or managed by the orators of the situation. In any case, as Bitzer has put it, “[Constraints] have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence.”⁸⁶ Biesecker-Mast helpfully refers to constraints as the “conditions of possibility” in any given rhetorical situation.”⁸⁷

⁸³Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura.”

⁸⁶Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” 8.

⁸⁷Biesecker-Mast, “How to Read Social Movements Rhetorics as Discursive Events.”

What were the significant rhetorical constraints of the Conservative Resurgence? The controversial preaching that took place in the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991 did not take place in a vacuum. There were many other constraining influences both inside and outside of the convention. Particularly, there were social, theological, and denominational constraints.

Social constraints. The 1960s were a time of significant social change in America. Americans' dissatisfaction with the cultural status quo can be seen in and were affected by the Civil Rights Movement, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, the Vietnam War and the antiwar protests associated with it, the Feminist Movement, the Black Power Movement, widespread student activism, the Sexual Revolution, and the Gay Rights Movement. All of these expressions of cultural upheaval took place in the 1960s and reveal just how volatile American society was during the decade.

These changes in American society were impacting the South, and by extension, the Southern Baptist Convention. Charles Roland has described how the 1960s and 1970s threatened to create a South that was less distinctively Southern. Roland claims that the South did experience some loss of its regional distinctiveness and began to look more like the rest of the American mainstream.⁸⁸ Roland added, however, that Southern devotees would not give up their ways of life standing idly by.

Bill Leonard applied Roland's ideas to the arena of values, remarking that "typically Southern values were confronting the values of a more pluralistic nation."⁸⁹ Leonard added, "Clearly the cultural upheavals within the region have had a significant

⁸⁸Charles Roland, "The Ever-Vanishing South," *The Journal of Southern History* 48, no. 1 (February 1982): 3.

⁸⁹Bill J. Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 16.

impact within the Southern Baptist Convention.”⁹⁰ Tying these changes together with the rhetoric of the Conservative Resurgence, Leonard deftly observed, “Indeed, one of the powerful appeals of fundamentalism has been its promise to protect the convention from the upheavals of modernity and cultural transition.”⁹¹ It is precisely this powerful appeal of which Leonard speaks that is relevant as an influential constraint in the rhetorical situation of the Conservative Resurgence. The social changes taking place in American culture were not the only source of rhetorical constraint impacting the conservative movement’s discourse, nor were they necessarily the most significant. Some, however, have argued that they were.⁹² Regardless, social constraints were a very real presence and a powerful factor during the controversy.

Denominational and theological constraints. The discourse of the conservative movement was also influenced by doctrinal disturbances in the convention.

⁹⁰Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope*, 16.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Barry Hankins has argued that it was this cultural component of the Conservative Resurgence that was most important to the movement’s success and the changes wrought in the Southern Baptist Convention as result. Hankins explains, “A certain stance toward culture was the major component in this new public personality.” Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservative and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 2002) 10; see also Hankins’ concluding comments, “At this early stage in the interpretation of the SBC Conservative movement, the cultural program is the glue that is holding conservatives together.” Ibid., 276. Hankins readily admits that the Conservative Resurgence was a theological battle, and not merely a cultural one. He qualifies this admission by arguing that the theological and cultural motivations behind the conservative movement “are so closely related that a failure to understand one is a failure to understand the other.” Hankins further argues that one cannot explain the Resurgence without both. Hankins, “And the Answer Is, ‘Yes!’,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1 (2003): 50. Bill Leonard also explains the Conservative Resurgence in sociological and cultural terms. He writes, “Fundamentalism reasserted itself in southern religion in general and the SBC in particular in reaction to the loss of the old cultural securities. At the same time, the inability of the convention itself to resist the onslaught of fundamentalist extremism . . . is due in part to the loss of the same cultural sensibility. In other words, the cultural pluralism and transition that turned many people to fundamentalism also rendered the old Southern Baptist coalition powerless to respond to a fundamentalist takeover of the denomination itself.” Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope*, 17. Nancy T. Ammerman has also argued that the controversy of the SBC “cannot be separated from the vast cultural changes that have revolutionized the region that is its home.” Ammerman “The New South and the New Baptists,” *The Christian Century* 103, no. 17 (1986): 486. Gregory A. Wills, on the other hand, has maintained, “Southern Baptist conservatives would have fought this battle regardless of trends in American culture. Their first concern was to secure sound doctrine in the seminaries and in denominational leadership generally They were indeed concerned about social evils and false worldviews, but these considerations hardly drove the conflict.” Wills, “review of *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture*, by Barry Hankins,” *Church History* 73, no. 3 (2009): 705-7.

Doctrinal disturbances were not new to the denomination. Bill Leonard correctly stated, “Theological controversy and the threat of schism are nothing new in the Southern Baptist Convention. The history of the denomination records a succession of doctrinal debates, each related in some way to the question of biblical authority.”⁹³ However, one can trace a pretty direct line from doctrinal controversies regarding a progressive theology in Southern Baptist seminaries in the late 1950s to the Conservative Resurgence of the 1970s and 1980s.

Here are six examples of points that would be on such a line. Each of these points represents the denominational and theological milieu in which the rhetoric of the conservative movement took place. As such, the occurrence of these points, and the trajectory they comprise, constrained the rhetoric of the conservative movement.

First is Duke McCall’s dismissal of thirteen Southern Seminary professors in 1958. McCall’s stated reason for firing the professors was insubordination. Greg Wills, in his history of the seminary, indicates “most Southern Baptists interpreted the dismissals as an overdue purge of liberal theology at the seminary.”⁹⁴ This popular-level interpretation was not inaccurate. The professors had been fired for insubordination, but it was what their insubordination concerned that revealed the doctrinal nature of their dismissal. McCall asked the men to be more cautious in the ways they presented their progressive beliefs. Toning down their progressive language would help place the seminary in a better position to respond whenever it was accused of liberalism. The faculty refused to abide by McCall’s instructions, so McCall let them go. The McCall ordeal in 1958 revealed that there was liberalism in the seminaries and that institutional leadership protected liberalism by encouraging liberal professors to be less than forthcoming about their liberal views.

⁹³Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope*, 132.

⁹⁴Gregory Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2009), 403.

Second is the Elliot Controversy. In 1961, Ralph Elliot published *The Message of Genesis*.⁹⁵ At the time, Elliot was a professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Elliot's book was undergirded by an implicit trust in the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation, complete with what, at best, were neo-orthodox, and at worst, heterodox or heretical views of biblical revelation. As such, Elliot's interpretive conclusions were often the result of a liberal-inspired division between the so-called message of the Bible and the facticity of the science and history of the Bible. Southern Baptists responded quickly and rather negatively to Elliot's method and findings. K. Owen White, pastor of First Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, wrote an article in response to Elliot's book.⁹⁶ Elliot's book and White's article, which introduced many Southern Baptists to Elliot's book, made a significant impact within Southern Baptist circles.⁹⁷

Third, there was the 1963 update to the *Baptist Faith and Message*.⁹⁸ Largely in response to Elliot's work and the negative publicity it garnered, and in an attempt to reaffirm Southern Baptists' faithfulness to the Bible, the messengers at the 1962 Southern Baptist Convention voted to update the denomination's confession of faith, the *Baptist Faith and Message*.⁹⁹ The updated confession temporarily assuaged some conservatives' concerns about the doctrinal integrity of the convention. However, the confession's language about the Bible—specifically, that it qualifies inerrancy as only applying to the

⁹⁵Elliot, *The Message of Genesis*.

⁹⁶K. Owen White, "Death in the Pot," *Baptist Standard*, January 10, 1962.

⁹⁷Paul Pressler has stated that it was the liberalism in Elliot's book that prompted him to become involved in the controversy. See Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die*, 51–52; Paige Patterson has indicated that it was White's article that first exposed him to the need for a conservative resurgence. See Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation*, 1.

⁹⁸"Comparison of 1925, 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message" (The Southern Baptist Convention), accessed May 7, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfmcomparison.asp>.

⁹⁹"Comparison of 1925, 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message" (The Southern Baptist Convention), accessed May 7, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfmcomparison.asp>.

Bible’s “matter,” and that it stipulates Jesus Christ as “the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted”—left something to be desired for others.¹⁰⁰ Bill Leonard commented that, though the updated confession may have appeared to be a victory for conservatives, in practice “the historical-critical method continued to be utilized in many Southern Baptist seminaries and universities.”¹⁰¹ Similar to both McCall’s firing of professors in 1958 and the Elliot controversy of 1961 and 1962, the 1963 update to the *Baptist Faith and Message* was not a substantial offering to appease concerned conservatives. It seemed almost as if denominational leaders were promising doctrinal integrity and accountability in the convention’s institutions, all the while winking at liberal professors and crossing their fingers behind their backs.

Fourth, there was the tussle over G. Henton Davies’ commentary on Genesis—which has come to be known as the *Broadman Bible Commentary Controversy*.¹⁰² Davies’ interpretation of many of the stories in Genesis, like Elliot’s before him, utilized the historical critical method such that the Bible’s message was distinguished from the Bible’s historical and/or scientific accuracy. Davies’ book was widely read within the ranks of Southern Baptist preachers and lay-teachers because it was published by the Convention’s publishing arm at the time, Broadman Press. Uproar ensued. Southern Baptists voted at the 1970 annual meeting that Davies’ historical-critical assumptions, and the corresponding anti-supernatural effect they had on his interpretation were not conservative enough to represent the Southern Baptist Convention. Ultimately, Davies’ book was pulled from the *Broadman Bible Commentary* set and a new volume on Genesis was commissioned. Clyde Francisco wrote the new edition of the book.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰“Comparison of 1925, 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message” (The Southern Baptist Convention), accessed May 7, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfmcomparison.asp>.

¹⁰¹Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope*, 72.

¹⁰²G. Henton Davies, *Genesis*, in vol. 1 of *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, ed. J. Clifton Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), 99-304.

¹⁰³Clyde T. Francisco, *Genesis*, rev. ed., in vol. 1 of *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, J.

Fifth, the Conservative Resurgence escalated in 1979 with the election of Adrian Rogers as president of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Resurgence revolved around an intentional strategy to effect change in the convention by electing conservative presidents who would appoint conservative Southern Baptists to influential posts in the convention who, in turn, would nominate more conservative persons to other influential positions in the convention, and so on and so forth. The idea was that a conservative president's conservatism could, if enough conservative presidents were elected for enough years in succession, trickle down throughout the convention with the result being that the entire denomination was led in a rightward theological direction. The plan ultimately succeeded.

Sixth, the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee was formed in 1985 in order to investigate and determine the causes of controversy in the ongoing Southern Baptist conflict. The Peace Committee met fourteen times, but it only took one meeting to determine that the primary source of the controversy was theological differences between conservative and moderate Southern Baptists.¹⁰⁴ The committee indicated in its report to the convention, "The primary source of the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention is the Bible; more specifically, the ways in which the Bible is viewed."¹⁰⁵

The Peace Committee concluded that there were political causes of the controversy as well. In the Committee's own words: "The controversy of the last decade began as a theological concern. When people of good intention became frustrated because they felt their convictions on Scripture were not seriously dealt with, they organized politically to make themselves heard. Soon, another group formed to counter

Clifton Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1973), 101-288.

¹⁰⁴"Report of the Peace Committee," in *Going for the Jugular: A Documentary History of the SBC Holy War* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 208.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

the first and the political process intensified.”¹⁰⁶ The Peace Committee’s findings lend support to the notion that there were theological and denominational constraints bearing upon the rhetorical situation of the Conservative Resurgence.

Two more constraints related to the denomination were present in the rhetorical situation of Pastors’ Conference discourse. First, preaching was very important in Southern Baptist life. Paige Patterson has dubbed the Southern Baptist Convention “the most pulpit-oriented denomination since the glory days of the Scotch Presbyterians.”¹⁰⁷ Preaching at the annual gatherings of the Southern Baptist Convention was especially important. Ergun Caner and Emir Caner have expressed well why and how the convention-wide preaching of the denomination’s annual meeting is so important. Though their comments are about the President’s address at the annual meeting of Southern Baptists, what they say applies just as well to the rhetoric of the Pastors’ Conference. The Caners claim,

These addresses are portraits of history precisely due to their nature. Each president addressed the crisis of the hour and the pressing need. The general moments in time are reflected by their sermons and serve as a panorama of American history We cannot overstate the case for the significance of these sermons to the church history or Baptist reader. These addresses pulse with the lifeblood of our leaders and . . . their most impassioned convictions.¹⁰⁸

Conservative rhetoric was also impacted by the artfulness and forcefulness with which preachers spoke. Historians and commentators of both sides of the conservative-moderate divide have agreed that conservatives had the better preachers. Paige Patterson has claimed, “The prowess of eloquent pulpiteers who thundered with almost prophetic authority was a profound impetus.”¹⁰⁹ Nancy Ammerman, herself a

¹⁰⁶“Report of the Peace Committee,” in *Going for the Jugular*, 212.

¹⁰⁷Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation*, 7.

¹⁰⁸Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner, eds., *The Sacred Desk: Presidential Sermons to the Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-2003* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2004), 2-3.

¹⁰⁹Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation*, 7.

moderate sympathizer, has written of the great facility with which conservative leaders could preach, explaining,

These leaders were preachers of remarkable ability, able to stir crowds with their words, able to evoke response in their hearers. They had developed a following after years on the revival and Pastors Conference circuit and were broadly admired as the leading pulpiteers of the day, even by people who later joined the moderate cause against them.¹¹⁰

Ammerman goes on to explain that moderate preachers were simply not as good at persuading Southern Baptists to join their cause as were conservative preachers. In her own words, “The pastors who took up the moderate fight were very good preachers But a Cecil Sherman was unlikely to move a crowd as an Adrian Rogers could. And Roy Honeycutt’s doctrinal expositions could not match the popular appeal of Jimmy Draper’s.”¹¹¹ It is no mere coincidence that the two conservatives Ammerman mentions as exemplary preachers—Jimmy Draper and Adrian Rogers—preached at or presided over the Pastors’ Conference for a combined eighteen times during the period from 1961 to 1991.¹¹² Conservative historian, Jerry Sutton, agreed with Ammerman’s analysis and added that the Pastors’ Conference was the place where this discrepancy was perhaps most demonstrably evident. Sutton writes, “The one strong advantage that the conservatives had in the twenty-year struggle among Southern Baptists was the power and influence of strategic pulpits Nowhere has this more ably been demonstrated than in the Pastors’ Conference.”¹¹³

Second, the structure of the convention, particularly the appointive powers granted to the president, made it possible for genuine, convention-wide change to take

¹¹⁰Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 178.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Draper presided over the 1980 Pastors’ Conference and preached at the 1978, 1982, 1987, and 1991 Pastors’ Conferences. Rogers presided over the 1976 Pastors’ Conference and preached at the 1972, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1989, 1990, and 1991 Pastors’ Conferences.

¹¹³Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 178.

place. The president, by virtue of his office, holds certain appointive powers that, if used with prudence and a vision to affect long-term change, can genuinely make a difference in the convention and its churches. This process is depicted in figure 1 and explained below.

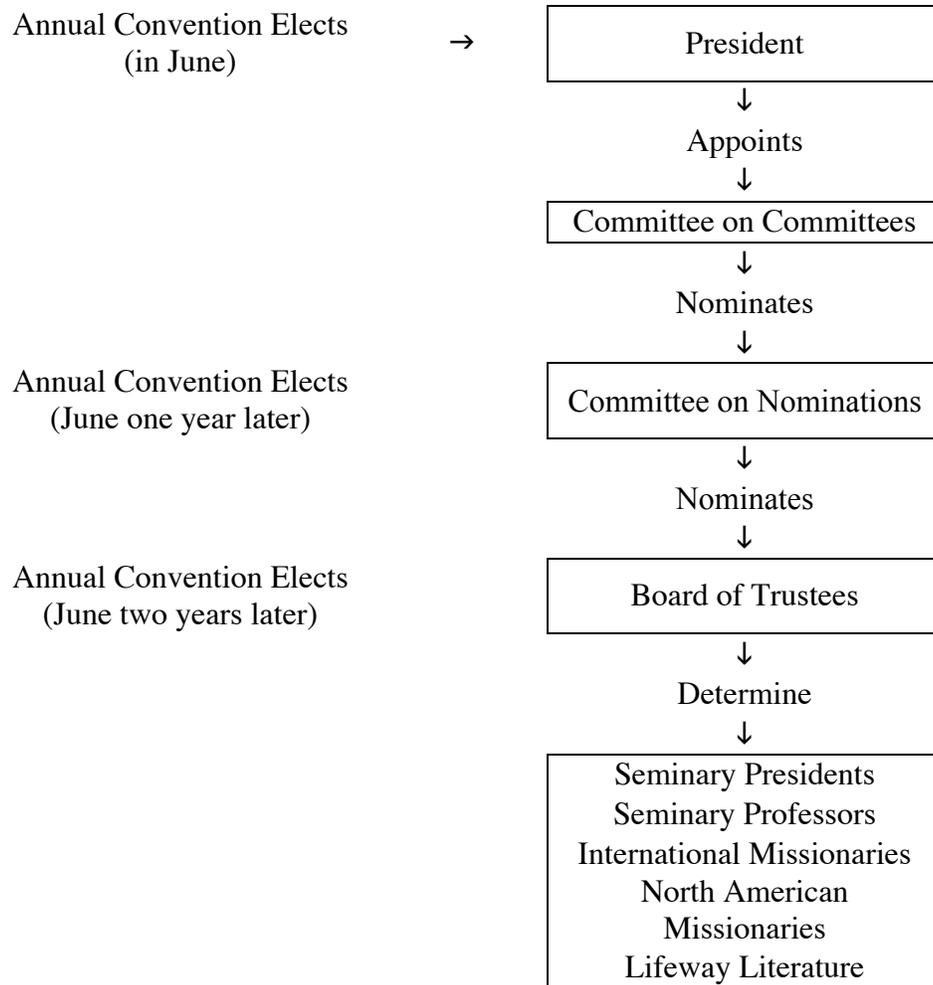


Figure 1. Convention president appointment flowchart

The messengers of the annual convention elect the president of the convention. It then falls to the president to appoint persons to the Committee on Committees. The Committee on Committees nominates persons to serve on the Committee on Nominations. The nominees for the Committee on Nominations are voted upon at the

next year's annual meeting. Upon their election, the Committee on Nominations then nominates persons to serve on the various Boards of Trustees for the denomination's institutions—e.g., Southern Baptist seminaries and mission boards. The nominees for membership on the various Boards of Trustees are voted upon by messengers at the following year's annual meeting, which is two years removed from when the elected President of the convention began this process with his appointments to the Committee on Committees. Once the nominees for the Boards of Trustees are elected, they can then impact, by way of their voice and vote in board meetings, who is elected to serve in important positions such as seminary president, seminary professor, international missionary, or North American missionary.

The Conservative Resurgence as a Particular Kind of Social Movement

Social movement theorists have outlined a number of different kinds of social movements. It is helpful to note where the Conservative Resurgence sits along the spectrum of social movement identity. Defining what kind of movement the Resurgence was provides a broad, almost summary-like description and analysis of the movement. The following categories of social movements apply to the Conservative Resurgence.

Anti Movement

Leland Griffin argues for two large categories of social movements—pro movements and anti movements. A pro movement employs rhetoric in order to raise awareness and engender support in favor of something, perhaps a new organization or idea.¹¹⁴ An anti movement uses its discourse to reject an institution or idea.¹¹⁵ Regarding these two categories, it is best to consider the Conservative Resurgence, rhetorically

¹¹⁴Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," 186.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

speaking, an anti movement. The conservative movement was anti-status quo, if nothing else. They desired change. Additionally, their discourse was largely anti-liberal rhetoric. There was often an alarmist, reactionary feel to conservative rhetoric. This was not always the case, of course. Many controversial messages of conservative preachers were positive presentations of conservative doctrine as much as, if not more than they were negative presentations regarding liberal doctrine. It would be difficult to separate the anti-liberal message of conservatives from their pro-inerrancy message. Nevertheless, it was not the absence of inerrancy that moved conservatives to act in favor of inerrancy. It was the presence of liberalism that moved conservatives to act in opposition to less than conservative doctrine. In this sense, the conservative movement is to be understood as an anti movement.

Managerial Movement

Robert Cathcart has differentiated between different kinds of movement rhetorics by referring to managerial forms and confrontational forms.¹¹⁶ A managerial social movement does not seek to do away the system in which it operates. A confrontational movement does. Managerial forms of rhetoric seek to adjust the existing order. Confrontational forms of rhetoric reject the existing order. The managerial form of social movement rhetoric operates from inside the system in order to change the system. The confrontational form of social movement rhetoric operates from outside the system in order to break the system.

The Conservative Resurgence as a social movement was a managerial movement, not a confrontational movement. Conservatives abided within the system of the Southern Baptist Convention throughout the entirety of the movement. Conservatives may not have operated according to unwritten, but widely accepted political protocol, but

¹¹⁶Cathcart, "Movements: Confrontation As Rhetorical Form," 439.

that is not to say that they did anything illegal or operated from outside of the system. For example, Bill Leonard cites an example of unwritten political protocol that was neglected by conservatives: “Denominational statesmen, in a gentlemen’s agreement, had previously considered it unbecoming for a former SBC president formally to endorse a candidate for the office.”¹¹⁷ Yet, that is precisely what W. A. Criswell did during his sermon at the 1979 Pastors’ Conference. Criswell declared triumphantly, “We will have had a big time here, for no other reason than to elect Adrian Rogers as president of the Southern Baptist Convention.”¹¹⁸ Leonard commented on Criswell’s endorsement, “It not only solidified popular support for Rogers but it also signaled that things had changed in the SBC.”¹¹⁹ Regardless of whether one thinks Criswell’s endorsement was uncouth, there is an important difference between doing something that is uncommon or even frowned upon and doing something that is illegal. Criswell’s backing of Rogers signaled that the SBC was heading in a new direction, but it was still the SBC. The system was being changed, but not overthrown. Thus, according to Cathcart’s designations, the conservative movement was a managerial and not confrontational movement.

Cathcart adds that managerial forms of social movements are reformist rather than revolutionary in that they seek to adjust the existing order, not reject it.¹²⁰ Simons, Mechling, and Schreier explain that the label reformist is appropriate to a movement so long as that movement only seeks to change laws, the enforcement of laws, or changes in governing personnel.¹²¹ Conversely, Simons, Mechling, and Schreier add that movements are revolutionary if they seek to replace entire institutions. The Conservative

¹¹⁷Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope*, 137.

¹¹⁸W. A. Criswell, “The Blood of Jesus” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 10, 1979); see also Charlie Warren, “Criswell Endorses Adrian Rogers for SBC Presidency,” *Baptist Press*, June 11, 1979.

¹¹⁹Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope*, 137.

¹²⁰Cathcart, “Movements,” 440.

¹²¹Simons, Mechling, and Schreier, “The Functions of Human Communication,” 793.

Resurgence was a reformist, and not revolutionary, type of managerial movement.

The goal of the Resurgence was almost exactly as Simons, Mechling, and Schreier described the goal of reformist movements—namely, to change laws, the enforcement of laws, and governing personnel. The conservative motivation to elect a conservative president was the pursuit of reformation by way of changing governing personnel. The conservative desire to hold denominational employees accountable to the doctrinal standard of the *Baptist Faith and Message* was precisely an attempt to change the enforcement of laws within the system of the convention. Conservatives did not believe the seminaries were holding their professors accountable to believe in accordance with the agreed upon confessional statement of the convention. Further, it is clear from the 2000 update of the *Baptist Faith and Message* that conservatives sought to change laws within the system of the denomination.¹²² Conservatives desired to change the convention from within in order to ensure conservative doctrine at institutional levels. Accordingly, the Conservative Resurgence as a social movement is rightly understood as a managerial, reformist movement.¹²³

Value-Oriented Movement

Another way of distinguishing between different types of types of social movements has to do with the nature of the ends for which movements strive. Norm-oriented movements merely seek change within a system. Value-oriented movements do not merely seek change on a policy level, but change on a values or basic goals level.¹²⁴ The conservative movement was more of a value-oriented movement than a norm-oriented movement. In several ways, the controversy could be interpreted as a battle over

¹²²“Comparison of 1925, 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.”

¹²³It is not a coincidence that conservative works about the Resurgence contain the language of reformation. For example, see Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation*; and Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*.

¹²⁴Morrison, “Some Notes Toward Theory on Relative Deprivation, Social Movements, and Social Change.”

values. What separated conservatives and moderates can be understood as a response to the question of what was the more basic Baptist value, orthodox doctrine as defined by conservatives or Baptist freedom as defined by moderates. Moderates were willing to overlook what conservatives viewed as significant doctrinal differences for the sake of honoring freedom and the cooperation it fostered. Conservatives were willing to overlook what moderates viewed as a nonnegotiable freedom for the sake of assurance that conservative doctrine was being taught in the convention's educational institutions. It was a battle of values, a competition of visions. Thus, the conservative movement is rightly understood as a value-oriented movement rather than simply a norm-oriented movement.

The Functions of Social Movement Rhetoric in the Preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum, 1961 – 1991

Social movements are practical. They seek to change things in observable, meaningful ways. The rhetoric of a social movement is developed in an attempt to effect change. But how so? What does the rhetoric of a social movement actually do? It is not difficult to corroborate that the Conservative Resurgence was a social movement. The controversial preaching of the Pastors' Conference demonstrates how the conservative movement used rhetoric to perform a host of different functions. First, conservative rhetors used their controversial preaching to attract, maintain, and mold Southern Baptists into an organized unit. As early as 1976, the Pastors' Conference was referred to as a sort of political caucus for conservatives in the convention. Adrian Rogers provided comments in an interview after the opening session of the 1976 meeting that signal as much. Rogers reported that he had been questioned about the motive of the Pastors' Conference. Rogers spoke of how Baptist journalists had "castigated the Pastors' Conference . . . for attempting to influence the convention."¹²⁵ At the time, Rogers

¹²⁵Dan Martin, "Pastors' Conference Opens Amidst Expectancy," *Baptist Press*, June 13, 1976.

denied the accusation. Since then, conservatives and moderates have both agreed that the Pastors' Conference was used strategically and politically for the advancement of the conservative movement. For example, conservative Jerry Sutton has acknowledged, "From 1979 on, the Pastors' Conference was used as a platform to inform and motivate conservatives as to how to vote and how to assess the merit of issues that would come before the Southern Baptist Convention."¹²⁶ Likewise, moderate Nancy Ammerman has agreed, "Since the 1970s, the Pastors Conference program had been dominated by conservatives Their sermons almost always centered on conservative issues like biblical inerrancy."¹²⁷ Moderate John Hewett went so far as to claim that conservatives "had effectively used the preconvention Pastor's Conference . . . as an orchestrated political rally for their movement."¹²⁸

Second, conservative preachers helped to ensure that the conservative movement achieved its goal of electing conservative presidents. In fact, conservatives have yet to lose an election since the Resurgence officially began in 1979 with the election of conservative stalwart, Adrian Rogers. It should be clear from the preceding comments regarding the role of the Pastors' Conference as a sort of pep rally for conservatives that conservative rhetoric—i.e., preaching like that which took place at the Pastors' Conference—indeed helped to secure the adoption of conservative goals. The most immediate goal for conservatives was the election of a conservative president who could use his appointive powers to place conservative persons in positions of decision- and appointment-making influence.

Third, conservative speakers responded to the resistance of the moderate

¹²⁶Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 85.

¹²⁷Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 5.

¹²⁸See Hewett, "The History of the SBC Forum," in *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement*, ed. Walter B. Shurden, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994), 73.

countermovement. This is Simons' third rhetorical requirement regarding the functions of social movement rhetoric. Indeed, conservative rhetoric delivered at the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991 engaged in some back and forth with moderate resistance. For instance, speaking at the 1988 Pastors' Conference, Ronnie Floyd responded to the common moderate argument that the Bible and the Christian faith have no need of being defended. Floyd replied, "I dare you when you get to heaven to walk up to Stephen who was stoned and tell him he did not need to defend the faith. I dare you to walk up to Paul who was beheaded or to Peter who was crucified upside down and tell them they did not need to defend the faith."¹²⁹ Floyd's comments were typical of conservative responses to moderate arguments.

In an article he co-authored with Elizabeth Mechling and Howard Schreier, Simons adds that there is more to the functions of movement rhetoric than the broad ideas of recruitment, adopting goals, and responding to resistance. The three rhetorical scholars outline eight more specific functions that are involved in the accomplishment of the three broader functions. First, the rhetoric of social movements must justify its mission to its followers and to third parties. One thinks of Clark Pinnock's scathing diatribe against the toleration of less than conservative bibliologies in Southern Baptist institutions of higher learning. Pinnock warned with very little ambiguity: "A denomination which preserves its outward tranquility at the high cost of the Biblical gospel is not to be admired. Cemeteries are also peaceful. There is no controversy in the grave."¹³⁰

Second, leaders of social movements can use rhetoric to infuse the mission of the movement with a sense of urgency. This is precisely what conservative preachers did

¹²⁹Ronnie W. Floyd, "How to Be God's Man for the Hour" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Antonio, TX, June 13, 1988).

¹³⁰Pinnock, "The Evangelical Imperative."

at the Pastors' Conference when they said that, if tolerated, liberalism in the denomination's seminaries would kill the convention.¹³¹ Third, rhetoricians within social movements can acquire material and nonmaterial resources through rhetorical means. Perhaps the greatest resource available to the rhetors of the conservative movement was the ability to affect the ballot with which messengers cast their vote in the business sessions of the convention's annual meetings. Indeed, Pastors' Conference speakers sometimes tried to preach in such a way so as to influence how messengers voted in the ensuing Convention proceedings. For example, when the Conservative Resurgence formally began, both James Robison and W. A. Criswell used their time in the conference pulpit to campaign for Adrian Rogers to be the next president. Criswell opined, "We will have a great time here if for no other reason than to elect Adrian Rogers as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention."¹³² Similarly, James Robison insisted, "We must elect a president not only dedicated to the inerrancy of the word of God, but who will stand to remove any seminary professor who doesn't believe in the inerrant word of God."¹³³

Fourth, the movement must organize activists into a disciplined and cohesive unit. Pastors' Conference speakers aided in the development of discipline and cohesion of the conservative movement primarily by becoming a place where, immediately prior to the annual meeting of the denomination, conservatives could be inspired and informed regarding the things that conservative leadership felt to be important. There is a remarkable consistency to the message of conservatives over the thirty-one year course of the controversial preaching at the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991. Conservative speakers helped keep their constituency unified by presenting a constant, unified message

¹³¹Perhaps the most blatant example of a conservative leader fulfilling this rhetorical function was provided by James Robison, "Untitled Message," 1979.

¹³²Criswell, "The Blood of Jesus."

¹³³Robison, "Untitled Message," 1979.

regarding the importance of restoring confessional integrity to the institutions of the convention.

Fifth, there must be some gratification of constituents' personal needs. Conservative speakers gratified their constituency in at least two ways. First, they spoke about the topics conservatives wanted to hear. Reports of audience reactions to overtly conservative preaching attest to this. In 1962, J. Sidlow Baxter was said to have "received a standing ovation after a scathing sermons condemning neo-orthodox theology, liberalism, and existentialism."¹³⁴ Adrian Rogers, while preaching at the 1977 Pastors' Conference, was "interrupted numerous times . . . [with] thunderous ovations."¹³⁵ Second, conservatives were rewarded each year, beginning in 1979 and throughout the entirety of the Resurgence, as one conservative president was elected after another. The conservative rhetoric of the Pastors' Conference helped to ensure that these conservative men were elected, thus demonstrating that rhetoric functioned to gratify constituents' needs.

Sixth, movements must convince or enforce upon their opponents a desired program of change. The program of change desired by conservatives was the strategy of the Resurgence—through legitimate denominational political processes, fill the top positions in the convention with conservatives and allow their conservatism to trickle down throughout the denomination. The plan worked, utilizing effective preaching as a key instrument in ensuring its success. Conservatives did not necessarily convince moderates to embrace their program for change. They outvoted them. In this sense, it can be said that conservatives enforced their program of change.

Seventh, rhetoricians must seek to discredit the arguments or the persons of its

¹³⁴Jim Newton, "For Wednesday AM's," *Baptist Press*, June 5, 1962.

¹³⁵Dan Martin and Stan Hasteley, "Pastors Elect Smith, Hear Battery of Sermons," *Baptist Press*, June 14, 1977.

opposition. One common argument of the moderate opposition was that conservatives trampled upon the freedom of others when they sought to enforce doctrinal accountability based upon an unchanging interpretation of the Bible. There are many examples of conservatives responding to this argument. Vance Havner responded by insisting that some people want “too much room” within the convention for heterodox views of the Bible.¹³⁶ Ray Wood responded by saying that freedom should not give license to disobey Christ.¹³⁷ Jarry Autrey responded by saying that some were using freedom as a cover for believing non-Baptist doctrines.¹³⁸ It is clear from this one example, though many others could be cited, that conservative rhetoric functioned to respond and discredit the arguments of moderate opposition.

Eighth and finally, organizations must respond to and counter efforts at social control.¹³⁹ Status quo leaders often respond to movement rhetoric by applying a diplomatic sort of damage control. The idea is not to really change anything, but simply to give the appearance of change in an effort to appease those who are upset and desire change. The Elliot controversy, the 1963 update to *The Baptist Faith and Message*, and the Broadman Bible Commentary controversy exemplify this strategy. In each of these controversies, conservatives were upset and suspicious that Southern Baptist institutions were harboring liberalism. In each of these situations, denominational leadership provided the appearance of doctrinal accountability. However, Elliot was not reprimanded for his views on inspiration, even though they were terribly out of

¹³⁶Vance Havner, “Time to Wake Up!” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Kansas City, MO, May 6, 1963).

¹³⁷H. Ray Wood, “Save to the Uttermost Means Saved Forever” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, New Orleans, LA, June 10, 1969).

¹³⁸Jarry Autrey, “Six Essentials” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Philadelphia, PA, June 5, 1972).

¹³⁹Simons, Mechling, and Schreier, “The Functions of Human Communication,” 792-867; the list of eight tasks summarized and paraphrased here was initially curated by Stewart, “A Functional Approach to the Rhetoric of Social Movements,” 153.

synchronization with what conservatives desired. The new version of the convention's confessional statement still left room for the very neo-orthodox views that had occasioned its update. Broadman Press replaced G. Henton Davies' commentary with an almost equally neo-orthodox volume by Clyde Francisco. Clark Pinnock, preaching in 1968, responded to moderate attempts at appeasing conservatives by complaining, "For all the resolutions we pass and all the approval we register for the high doctrine of Biblical authority, nothing seems to change."¹⁴⁰ Conservatives mostly responded to these moderate attempts at social control by failing to be satisfied and continuing their movement.

It is clear that the conservative rhetoric of the Pastors' Conference functioned in all the ways that movement rhetoric is supposed to function. The controversial preaching of conservatives in the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991 fulfilled both the broad rhetorical requirements provided by Stewart's theory as well as the more specific rhetorical functions outlined by by Simons, Mechling, and Schreier.

The Stages of a Social Movement as Exemplified in the Preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum, 1961 – 1991

This section applies Michael McGee's theory regarding rhetoric and "the people" of a social movement to the sermons of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum. McGee argued that an audience becomes "the people" of a movement as they participate in the dramatic vision set before them by the movement's rhetor-leaders. This section administers some of McGee's insights to the preaching of the Conservative Resurgence in order better to understand the identity of "the people" of the controversy—namely, conservatives and moderates. McGee identified four different stages in the process of becoming, being, and terminating as "the people" of a movement. He contended that a

¹⁴⁰Pinnock, "Sola Scriptura."

movement's rhetoric defines "the people" at each stage in the process. The remainder of this section will present samples of rhetoric in which "the people" of the conflict are identified and described at different stages during the life Resurgence as a social movement.

Dormancy (1961 – 1967)

The first stage of being "the people" is that of dormancy.¹⁴¹ Dormancy implies inactivity, but also potential. Such is true of movements in this stage. Movements in dormancy contain, to borrow McGee's phrase, "the seeds of collectivization," the fruit of which will be the movement itself. These seeds are often present, albeit latent, in the short, pithy statements that recur in popular rhetoric. These seeds also represent what the movement could become.

The section on dormancy begins in 1961 for the same reasons the dissertation begins its work in 1961, reasons that have already been stated. The period of dormancy ends in 1967 because of two developments that transpired in 1968. First, there is a noticeable decline in the number of moderate sermons preached at the Pastors' Conference from 1968 onward. Moderate sermons increasingly became the exception at the Pastors' Conference. Second, Clark Pinnock's sermons at the 1968 conference are exemplary pieces of conservative rhetoric that demonstrate the sort of ideological organization that justifies the presence of McGee's second stage of being "the people," the stage of organization.

Conservative rhetoric. Many preachers at the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1967 expressed views consistent with what would eventually become the conservative movement. Though only in a stage of dormancy, the conservative sermons already

¹⁴¹M. C. McGee, "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 243.

contained important, often divisive ideas that are observable in various words and statements regarding the denomination's mounting controversy. These statements are each related to the subjects of doctrine and/or the denomination.

Conservatives spoke much about doctrine. In general, they spoke about doctrine in two primary ways. First, they were concerned about the impact of certain historical, intellectual, and theological forces. These forces were identified in their preaching through an assortment of "-isms." These "-isms" represented recent modern theological developments, the effects of which were believed to significantly alter the doctrinal content of the Christian faith. For example, R. G. Lee cautioned strongly against rationalism, modernism, and liberalism. He claimed, "Rationalism prostitutes divine inspiration to the level of human genius."¹⁴² He made the accusation, "Modernism, or Liberalism . . . is infidelity with a fancy name."¹⁴³ Similarly, J. Sidlow Baxter is said to have "received a standing ovation after a scathing sermon condemning neo-orthodox theology, liberalism, and existentialism."¹⁴⁴ Conservatives expressed antagonism toward many different "isms," each of which represented for them voguish theological trends that adulterated the orthodoxy of the Christian faith. Conservatives were strongly compelled to protect or "conserve" the Christian faith. More liberal persons were open to change. They were generous or "liberal" toward the theological evolution that took place in an effort to keep pace with the scientific advancements of modern society.

Second, conservatives also gave voice to their concerns about the doctrine of the Bible. This second point is not really a separate point, but more a case in point. The

¹⁴²Robert G. Lee, "The Word of God Not Broken and Not Bound" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Atlantic City, NJ, May 18, 1964).

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴J. Sidlow Baxter, "Pentecost and Inner Experience" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Francisco, CA, June 5, 1962); Jim Newton, "For Wednesday AM's," *Baptist Press*, June 5, 1962.

conservative movement, even in its earliest of stages, was most concerned with the effect of the “isms” (read: modern theological trends) upon the doctrine of Scripture. Vance Havner, for instance, cried out, “There are those who would force the Scriptures into the Procrustean beds of their own theories to fit human experience on one hand and human explanation on the other.”¹⁴⁵ He admonished his hearers, “It’s about time we let the Bible be the Bible.”¹⁴⁶ He referred to the Bible as “the temple of truth,” and claimed it was under attack by liberal theologians.¹⁴⁷ In like fashion, Robert G. Lee defended the Bible by declaring,

Philosophers have tried to drown it in the muddy waters of their philosophy and ignorance. Science has tried to laugh it out of court The archaeologist with his crowbar, the geologist with his hammer, the physicist with his battery—all those have fought against the Book. Some scientists and astronomers lifted up haughty mouths . . . against the Book. The dissecting knives of some theological anatomists have cut at its milk veins. Inexorable censors have sat, and sit now, like Jehoiakim before the fireplace in his summer house, Bible on knee, penknife in hand, calmly mutilating the only reliable franchise of our Christian hopes. Snipers, some from behind pulpit stands, some from behind college chairs, some from editorial desks, are accustomed to aim ill-grounded propositions against the Scriptures.¹⁴⁸

Havner’s and Lee’s comments exhibit strong, memorable language concerning the doctrine of the Bible. Important, developmental facets of the identity of the conservative movement are contained in this strong language. Conservatives believed they were fighting for the faith in defense of the Word of God against modern, liberal theology.

Conservatives not only spoke about doctrine. They also spoke about the state and basis of the denomination. They believed the denomination was in danger of compromising its convictions in response to the theological liberalism. They further believed that it was within the purview of the denomination to exercise doctrinal

¹⁴⁵Vance Havner, “Time to Wake Up!” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Kansas City, MO, May 6, 1963).

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Lee, “The Word of God Not Broken and Not Bound.”

accountability with regard to the convention's institutions of higher learning. J. Sidlow Baxter, speaking in 1962, warned of the dangers of allowing liberal doctrine to tamper with the credibility of the Bible. Baxter proclaimed, "We Baptists always have been champions of the duty of private judgment, but liberty to interpret the Bible never meant liberty to discredit the Bible."¹⁴⁹ Conservatives believed there was a dangerous presence of liberalism in the convention. They believed the convention should do something about it. Vance Havner preached in 1963, for example, "We are being exercised these days about our theology and doctrine. It's about time."¹⁵⁰

The conservative movement's rhetorical identity during the stage of dormancy was defined by their understanding of doctrine, denominationalism, and the relationship between the two. The issues of doctrine and denominationalism are virtually inseparable in a discussion about the rhetoric of the controversy. In speaking to both issues conservatives revealed two important features of their vision for the movement. They revealed that their vision for Southern Baptists was one in which Southern Baptists were united around not only a common purpose (i.e., cooperative missions), but also a common set of conservative beliefs.

To be sympathetic to the ideas contained in conservative rhetoric at this early stage in their process of collectivization was to (1) view doctrine as something that does not change, and therefore something that needs to be "conserved" in the midst of all of modernity's culture-shaping "-isms"; (2) perceive that the doctrine of the Bible—particularly its nature—was the most important theological linchpin of the controversy; (3) acknowledge the presence of a dangerous theological liberalism in the convention, especially among professors at the convention's colleges and seminaries; and (4) believe that denominational mechanisms of doctrinal accountability could and should be utilized

¹⁴⁹Baxter, "Pentecost and Inner Experience."

¹⁵⁰Havner, "Time to Wake Up!"

in order to defend the faith from liberalism.

Moderate rhetoric. There were also moderate preachers at the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1967. Their expression of certain key ideas helped to establish the beginnings of a moderate vision for Baptist identity. Like conservatives, when moderates spoke to the controversy they spoke primarily about doctrine and the denomination. Regarding doctrine, moderate preachers addressed some of the “-isms” with which conservatives took issue. Of modernism, which many conservative preachers derided and blamed for theological decline, William Walter Adams insisted, “It was ignorance, not modernism that threatened Southern Baptists.”¹⁵¹ Of liberalism, which was the most common scapegoat for conservative speakers, Roy McClain argued, “If you mean a liberal is one who believes in fundamentalism but doesn't like the fundamentalist tag, one who is open minded in the search for truth, one who knows he doesn't have all the answers but wants to make a contribution through intellectual study and research, then being a liberal is a great compliment.”¹⁵²

Moderates were not afraid of or opposed to such “-isms” like conservatives were. Moderates were open to new theological ideas. Referring to previous conservative actions of opposing modern, liberal trends in theology, Carlyle Marney declared, “Four times in our recent history we have denied the door to a larger world and have turned back to a lesser bailiwick. In each case, the view we have renounced and the man we rejected would have led us into enough new light to blind us, and enough new knowledge and new brothers to have changed the heartland of a nation.”¹⁵³ Likewise, William

¹⁵¹William Walter Adams, “The Minister and a Decaying Society” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Dallas, TX, May 31, 1965).

¹⁵²Roy O. McClain, “Making Disciples” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Francisco, CA, June 4, 1962).

¹⁵³Carlyle Marney, “Keeping the Unity of the Faith” (The Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 22, 1961). Marney cites Crawford Toy, William Whitsitt, and Walter Rauschenbusch as examples of the men Southern Baptists rejected.

Walter Adams explained that doctrine must “go through periods of adjustment, discarding the partial in favor of a richer faith.”¹⁵⁴ Quotes like these reveal that moderates, on the whole, were more open to the findings of liberal theology than conservatives were. Conservatives believed in protecting the faith from change. Moderates were open to some change, so long as they believed an improvement was being made and something was left of the older version of doctrine.

Moderates also responded to conservative concerns about the doctrine of the Scriptures. The conservative movement believed defining the nature of the Bible was the most important and influential issue in the controversy. Many of these sermons were about the Bible. They often postured themselves so as to believe the Bible better or more fully than moderates. Moderates naturally responded to such posturing. One of the more common responses was that the Bible does not need to be defended because it can fend for itself. Herschel Hobbs and Carl Bates both responded this way at the 1966 Pastors’ Conference. Hobbs contended, “The Sword of the Spirit does not need defending. It needs to be unsheathed.”¹⁵⁵ Bates preached similarly, “I believe it would be an utter waste of time for me to attempt some involved polemic concerning whether or not God speaks and, if so, whether or not we have an accurate record of that word.”¹⁵⁶ This was a very different approach to doctrine in the denomination than that proposed by conservative visionaries.¹⁵⁷

The emerging moderate vision further considered doctrine by commenting

¹⁵⁴Adams, “The Minister and a Decaying Society.”

¹⁵⁵Herschel H. Hobbs, “Worthy of Our Vocation” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Detroit, MI, May 23, 1966).

¹⁵⁶Carl Bates, “Is There Any Word from the Lord?” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Detroit, MI, May 23, 1966).

¹⁵⁷For example, Vance Havner argued, “It’s about time” Southern Baptists got worked up over their doctrine. Likewise, Clark Pinnock declared that it was the “perennial” task of Southern Baptists to make clear what they believed about important issues like the Bible. Vance Havner, “Time to Wake Up!”; and Clark Pinnock, “Our Source of Authority: The Bible” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Detroit, MI, May 23, 1966).

upon the labels of “conservative” and “liberal.” In 1962, Roy McClain used wordplay with these labels, describing them in different ways to make the point that both could be good or bad.¹⁵⁸ His point was that simply identifying an individual as either one or the other is neither inherently complimentary nor derogatory. Southern Baptists could respect both and should strive for unity in diversity. McClain also tried to establish that the labels were imprecise and could be applied with an unhelpful bias and uncritical subjectivity. He urged his audience of ministers to refrain from the use of divisive labeling. Nonetheless, it is telling that when McClain provided his own descriptions of what it meant to be “conservative” and “liberal,” each one—whether good or bad—bore a strong theological orientation. Southern Baptists on both sides of the controversy applied the labels mostly with regard to one’s theology and the posture with which one held to one’s theology.

Moderate-sympathizing preachers also preached about denominational issues. They were mostly concerned with confronting conservative actions they deemed to be inappropriate in the context of the Southern Baptist Convention. There were two particular conservative actions of which moderates disapproved. First, they chastised conservatives for seeking to perform doctrinal inspection. Second, they accused conservatives of using the defense of the faith in the convention to claw for political power in the convention. Moderate preachers clearly articulated that they believed both of these actions were inappropriate within the denomination.

Moderates deplored the conservative effort of so-called “heresy hunting.” For every year during the conservative movement’s stage of dormancy, moderates responded negatively to conservative attempts at doctrinal control. In 1961, Dale Moody asserted that scouring the seminaries in an attempt to purge the so-called “liberal” professors was

¹⁵⁸McClain, “Making Disciples.”

both pointless and demonstrative of “a shallow, secular view of the church.”¹⁵⁹ In 1962, Roy McClain described such conservative actions by saying it was a “disgrace for grown men to go around with sharp axes hacking on innocent lambs.”¹⁶⁰ In 1963, Jess Moody analogized doctrinal inspection to “dusting the furniture while the house is on fire,” referring to the conservative plan for doctrinal fine-tuning as “tragic misemphases.”¹⁶¹

In 1964, Penrose St. Amant warned about “the inquisitions, the bigotry, the excessive concern for theological subtleties or, what is worse . . . tendencies toward extremes, liberal or conservative.”¹⁶² In 1965, Ronald Prince described such conservative actions as “sheer stupidity” and “petty fault findings,” insisting “happiness will never be enjoyed if we base it on a demand that all of us agree.”¹⁶³ In 1966, Carl Bates touched upon the controversy regarding doctrinal accountability by suggesting it would be “an utter waste of time” to spell out an overly-specific set of doctrinal parameters and then insist that everyone adhere to it. In 1967, William Hendricks hypothesized why there was so much doctrinal distrust: “Most of our religious arguments and much of our misunderstanding rises, not because we are asking men to believe the Bible; rather it arises because we are asking them to believe some fantastic interpretation of our own which is not what the Bible is saying.”¹⁶⁴

Moderates not only disagreed with conservative attempts at enforcing doctrinal

¹⁵⁹Dale Moody, “The Winds of Doctrine” (The Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 23, 1961) Moody added that “the storm still rages and pitching a few more professors and pastors into the deep is not likely to satisfy the angry waves.”

¹⁶⁰McClain, “Making Disciples.”

¹⁶¹Jess C. Moody, “The Home” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Kansas City, MO, May 7, 1963).

¹⁶²C. Penrose St. Amant, “The Genius of Our Ecclesiastical Heritage” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlantic City, NJ, May 18, 1964).

¹⁶³Ronald Prince, “Fellowship through Happiness” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Dallas, TX, May 31, 1965).

¹⁶⁴William L. Hendricks, “The Pastor Speaks to the World of Religious Authority” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Miami Beach, FL, May 30, 1967).

accountability. They also distrusted conservative motives for doing so. Some moderates believed that conservatives were employing doctrinal dispute in their service of their own pursuit of power and prestige in the convention. Roy McClain reportedly “chided Baptists who . . . were trying to climb the denominational ladder to glory by condemning intellectuals in the name of ‘defending the Word (of God).’”¹⁶⁵ Jess Moody compared fighting Southern Baptists to a stumbling, drunken elephant, exhorting, “We must not stagger because we are intoxicated on exaggerated self importance, taking ourselves too seriously, and fighting for political power.”¹⁶⁶

What was the rhetorical identity of moderates during the conservative movement’s stage of dormancy? Moderate-sympathizing preachers conveyed ideas that reveal something of a moderate vision for Southern Baptists. Moderates were beginning to self-identify in terms of their understanding of doctrine and the denomination. Doctrinally, moderates were (1) more comfortable with and more generous toward modern theological trends (read: theological liberalism and neo-orthodoxy) than conservatives; (2) unconvinced that the Bible needed to be defended with what they perceived to be the hair-splitting, casuistic polemics of conservatives; (3) opposed to theological labels of “conservative” and “liberal,” though they acknowledged the presence of such doctrinal diversity in the convention.

Denominationally, moderates believed (1) that conservative calls for tighter doctrinal accountability were unwarranted, divisive, and uninformed; and (2) that conservative emphasis upon doctrine was something of a cypher for political and personal gain in the convention. Further, whereas conservatives emphasized the doctrinal unity of the convention, moderates emphasized the functional unity of the convention.

¹⁶⁵McClain, “Making Disciples”; Jim Newton, “For Tuesday AM’s,” *Baptist Press*, June 4, 1962.

¹⁶⁶Jess C. Moody, “The Minister Faces a World on the Move” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Miami Beach, FL, May 29, 1967).

Conservatives maintained that Southern Baptists could not work together fruitfully if they believed too differently from one another. Moderates declared otherwise, that Southern Baptists could not work together fruitfully if they insisted upon rigid doctrinal conformity.

Organization (1968 – 1978)

The second stage of being “the people” of a social movement is organization. The organization refers more expressly to ideas than to people, though people organize as well. When rhetors combine otherwise dissociated belief commitments they formulate what McGee described as “a vision of mass man dangled before persons in the second stage of their metamorphosis into a ‘people.’”¹⁶⁷ The vision itself contains the idea of “the people,” regardless of whether a “people” actually obtains. “The people” as such do not yet exist in an objective sense. Their actual existence awaits the development of the third stage in McGee’s theory, the stage of response.

The stage of organization begins in 1968 with the rhetor-leadership of Clark Pinnock. Pinnock showed conservatives what they could be with his visionary trio of sermons at the 1968 conference. The stage of organization ends in 1978 because the Conservative Resurgence formally began in 1979 as Southern Baptists began responding to competing conservative and moderate visions by voting in the convention’s annual presidential elections.

Conservative rhetoric. Clark Pinnock’s messages at the 1968 Pastors’ Conference are among the best, most comprehensive expressions of the conservative movement’s vision for Baptist identity. Pinnock provided organization to a host of conservative ideas and thereby presented a centralized vision for what conservatives believed Southern Baptists should be like. Pinnock’s vision brought together at least six

¹⁶⁷McGee, “In Search of ‘The People,’” 243.

different issues that rhetorically defined the conservative movement. Each of these issues can be arranged into two broad categories—doctrinal issues and denominational issues.

Pinnock brought together three doctrinal issues to help form the conservative vision. First, there was the issue of providing clearer definition to doctrine. He believed that a people should know well what they believe, and in order to do this doctrine must have well-defined parameters. Hinting at this facet of the conservative vision, he proclaimed a couple of years earlier at the 1966 Pastors' Conference, "It is our perennial task and privilege to make unequivocal our stand [on doctrinal issues.]"¹⁶⁸ Only two years later, at the 1968 meeting, he complained, "A strange ambiguity has settled in, and the sharp edges of gospel truth have been made dull."¹⁶⁹ Pinnock gave both voice and vision to the conservative desire for a better-defined faith.

Pinnock also warned against a shallow, sloganeering expression of orthodoxy, warning that what Southern Baptists needed more than merely to say the right theological words or phrases. He explained, "So much of our Bible believing religion is very shallow and has little reality of the living Lord in it. We do not need more slogans, more 'rousements', more shibboleths God will not honour superficial conservatism. God does not send power to those who merely thump the Bible, but to those who profoundly preach the whole counsel of God."¹⁷⁰

Pinnock also accused moderates of being less than forthcoming regarding their doctrinal convictions. He warned, "The difficulty in this discussion is the smokescreen which the minority opinion uses in order to prevent attention being focused upon their basic denial of the integrity of the Bible."¹⁷¹ He explained that liberal theologians often

¹⁶⁸Pinnock, "Our Source of Authority."

¹⁶⁹Clark Pinnock, "The Evangelical Imperative" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 3, 1968).

¹⁷⁰Pinnock, "The Evangelical Imperative."

¹⁷¹Clark Pinnock, "Sola Scriptura" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 4, 1968).

used the language of orthodoxy, but filled that language with the meaning of heterodoxy, or even heresy. He charged, “They insist on using doubletalk to lead the people astray,” and then gave the example, “They talk of the ‘divinity of Christ’ when all they mean is his ‘God-likeness.’”¹⁷²

Arising quite naturally from this first doctrinal issue was a second, consequent issue—namely, that of the conservative-liberal divide. The conservative vision for a more clearly marked set of doctrinal parameters created two groups of people—those on the inside and those on the outside of said parameters. For Pinnock and the movement for which he spoke, theological conservatism was inside the boundaries and theological liberalism was outside. Pinnock believed that conservative doctrine was an historical, integral part of Southern Baptist identity. He lauded the “great traditional, conservative theology, for which Southern Baptists have been famous, and of which we have been proud.”¹⁷³ He contended, “There is little doubt that the vast majority of Southern Baptist pastors and people” are strongly conservative in their beliefs.¹⁷⁴ Pinnock’s vision for the conservative movement assumed that conservative doctrine—as he and the movement meant it—was what most Southern Baptists had always believed.

If, according to Pinnock’s vision, conservatism represented the time-honored position of a “vast majority” of the convention, then liberalism represented a modern deviation from orthodoxy to which only a coterie of highbrow Southern Baptists subscribed. He referred to the advent of theological liberalism and its impact upon the church not only as “a crisis of faith,” but as “the greatest crisis” in all the church’s history.¹⁷⁵ This preeminent sense of urgency was very much a part of the conservative

¹⁷²Clark Pinnock, “The Fact of Christ” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 4, 1968).

¹⁷³Clark Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

¹⁷⁴Clark Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura.”

¹⁷⁵Clark Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

vision.

Conservatives believed that the task of maintaining conservative doctrine was unquestioningly important. They viewed liberalism as an aberration, an unwelcomed departure from the Christian faith. Repeatedly, Pinnock refers to liberalism as representing a “new view” of the Christian faith, or a “new view” of the Bible.¹⁷⁶ He synonymized liberalism with “unbelieving modernism.”¹⁷⁷ He spoke of the father of liberal theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and declared, “The Jesus of Schleiermacher is not the Jesus of the Gospels The New Testament knows nothing of him Men do not need the Christ of liberal theology.”¹⁷⁸

Pinnock also connected Southern Baptists’ curation of conservative theology with their success in evangelizing the lost. He reasoned, “There is an intimate relation between our conservative theology and our evangelistic outreach. If we put aside our traditional, Bible-believing message, we can expect the candlestick to be removed and the glory depart.”¹⁷⁹ Pinnock believed that the convention would “fail spiritually, theologically, [and] evangelistically” if they neglected to hold fast to conservative doctrine.¹⁸⁰ He based his views on the belief that, “It was [Southern Baptists’] Biblical theology which once made us large and great; on the day we give that up we will only be large but not great.”¹⁸¹

The third doctrinal issue that Pinnock enlisted in the conservative vision was the nature of the Bible. He believed that the issue of the Bible was the most important

¹⁷⁶Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura.”

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Pinnock, “The Fact of Christ.”

¹⁷⁹Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

issue because it was “the foundation of doctrine.”¹⁸² To tamper with one’s doctrine of Scripture was, according to Pinnock’s vision, to tamper with all of one’s beliefs. He explained that the church faced the “greatest crisis in all her history” precisely because there was “a loss of conviction about the objective authority in Scripture.”¹⁸³ He surmised that the “only hope is for a new Reformation from God A return to Biblical standards and to profound Scriptural preaching.”¹⁸⁴ Pinnock advanced a conservative vision that believed “that a doctrine must be Biblical to be valid.”¹⁸⁵

The problem, according to Pinnock, was that “many of our teachers and scholars have lost their belief in [the Bible’s] integrity.”¹⁸⁶ He claimed that Southern Baptist institutions of higher learning sheltered professors who had adopted “a new view of the Bible,” one that had been skewed by the liberal methodologies and theories such as “form criticism, demythologising, evolutionary thought, and current antisupernaturalism.”¹⁸⁷ How widespread was this problem in Southern Baptist schools? Pinnock acknowledged, “This new view of the Bible is very widely held among the men teaching religion in our colleges and seminaries.”¹⁸⁸

Pinnock appealed to a conservative bibliology he claimed was evident in the teachings of Jesus. He declared,

Jesus Christ himself constituted Christianity a religion of Biblical authority. It is his doctrine of inspiration that we are concerned to honour Jesus’ ministry down to the smallest detail was governed by what the Scriptures foretold. He never dreamed of separating revelation from Scripture For Jesus and the Apostles the Bible was a divine book, created by a miracle of God, through the Holy Spirit. This

¹⁸²Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

¹⁸³Ibid.

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura.”

¹⁸⁶Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura.”

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

conviction lay at the root of their whole concept of religion and authority. Christ's doctrine of Scripture was fundamental to his entire ministry.¹⁸⁹

If there was only one doctrinal issue that was *the* issue for conservatives, it was the nature of Scripture. Conservatives, led by visionary sermons such as Pinnock's, maintained, "If our Convention is to flourish, we must sustain the highest possible regard for Scripture."¹⁹⁰

Pinnock's vision for the conservative movement contained more than doctrinal issues. He also spoke to denominational issues, specifically, to three. First, he insisted upon using denominational means to hold accountable the employees of the convention's institutions to certain doctrinal standards. He described a lack of doctrinal accountability as one of the "symptoms of our decline."¹⁹¹ He explained,

There is an almost universal unwillingness to question unscriptural preaching and teaching. Our fathers were not afraid to confront error and expose it. But we now out of fawning respect for scholarly opinion are reluctant even to question sub-Biblical teaching. This is not to be attributed to the increase of the virtue of tolerance; it is due to our cowardice and infidelity to Biblical standards. One cannot but help notice a conspiracy of silence, almost an amnesia, in the matter of our great traditional, conservative theology.¹⁹²

Pinnock ties together several different strands of controversial talking points in order to develop his vision. He speaks of doctrinal accountability, denominational history, freedom/tolerance, academia, and conservative theology. Southern Baptists were supposed to be conservative in their beliefs. For Pinnock and the conservative movement, being Southern Baptist could not be reduced to anything less than conservative doctrine, regardless of moderate appeals to personal and academic freedom.

The second denominational issue in Pinnock's rhetoric was the relationship between controversy and peace. Pinnock conceded that the conservative movement

¹⁸⁹Pinnock, "Sola Scriptura."

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Pinnock, "The Evangelical Imperative."

¹⁹²Ibid.

would disrupt peace in the convention. He qualified his concession by arguing that temporary disturbance of peace was necessary to save Southern Baptists from significant doctrinal drift. He did not believe fighting over doctrine was inherently righteous, but he did believe that theology that failed to accord with Scripture was inherently unrighteous. He believed that doctrinal compromise would ultimately lead to denominational demise. To those in the convention who criticized the conservative movement for disturbing the peace, he quipped, “Cemeteries are also peace. There is no controversy in the grave.”¹⁹³

The third denominational issue in Pinnock’s vision for the conservative movement was a call to action. His logic terminates upon this issue. He believed there were significant doctrinal problems in the convention. He believed the denomination was well within its rights to employ doctrinal accountability. He believed that a Southern Baptist dispute over doctrine—namely, over the nature of Scripture—was justified. Therefore, he called upon conservatives to act—to vote, to make motions, to hold institutional employees accountable, to raise their concerns, to be involved in the democratic processes of the convention. He asserted, “Southern Baptists are at a crossroad.”¹⁹⁴ There was urgency in his words: “Houston is the place, and now is the hour, to give our answer!”¹⁹⁵

So who were “the people” of the conservative movement, as defined by Pinnock’s rhetoric? Granted, they were not yet a material people. An objective, actual “people” could only be realized in the third stage of collectivization, the stage of response. However, Pinnock’s sermons revealed that the movement’s potential existed in a vision of Southern Baptists who: (1) welcomed more precise doctrinal definition; (2) perceived of the controversy in terms of a conservative-liberal divide; (3) believed the

¹⁹³Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

¹⁹⁴Pinnock, “The Fact of Christ.”

¹⁹⁵Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative.”

nature of the Bible was *the* primary issue of division; (4) called for more rigid doctrinal accountability in the convention's institutions of higher learning; (5) justified fighting over doctrine because they believed they were defending the faith; and (6) mobilized for change by participating in the inherent political processes of the convention.

Moderate rhetoric. Russell Dilday's sermon at the 1975 Pastors' Conference proposed a competing vision for Southern Baptists. His message was exemplary among moderate pieces of rhetoric from 1968 to 1978 for the way it organized several different moderate convictions regarding the controversy, casting a moderate vision for Baptist identity. In some ways, his sermon was similar to Clark Pinnock's messages in 1968. Like Pinnock, Dilday spoke to doctrinal and denominational issues. Also like Pinnock, Dilday identified problems in the convention and offered his ideas for solutions. Further still like Pinnock, Dilday offered his vision in response to what he perceived to be dangerous beliefs and actions on the part of others in the denomination—namely, the burgeoning conservative movement. If Pinnock's vision was a reaction to perceived liberalism in the convention, then Dilday's vision was a counteraction to perceived fundamentalism in the convention. If Pinnock presented a conservative vision, Dilday argued for something of an opposing, moderate vision for being Baptist.

Dilday made four overarching points in his 1975 sermon, two of which may be described as doctrinal, and two of which may be described as denominational. Dilday's two doctrinal points were about the status of doctrine in the Southern Baptist Convention. First, Dilday responded to conservative claims that there was liberalism in the convention by arguing that theological liberalism was both real and shameful, but not present among Southern Baptists. Second, he responded to accusations like those of Pinnock, who said that there was "a new view of the Bible" present and growing in the convention's colleges and seminaries, by asserting that the denomination's teachers were faithful to the

Bible.¹⁹⁶ Southern Baptists were, he contended, soundly orthodox.

Dilday related orthodoxy to faithfulness to the Bible. To be orthodox was to get the Bible right. Orthodoxy was biblical, both in the sense that the Bible called for orthodoxy, and in the sense that the Bible was the standard for orthodoxy. He explained, “The word ‘orthodoxy’ . . . means ‘straight thinking.’ Straight teaching is based upon straight thinking about the Bible. To handle the word of God any other way is to be what Paul calls a workman that *needeth* to be ashamed.”¹⁹⁷ He exhorted his hearers to “teach the word of God—straight—without distortion, without bending it, without obscurity, without modification.”¹⁹⁸

Dilday recognized the possibility of teachers failing to meet standards of orthodoxy (i.e., what conservatives would have labeled simply as “liberalism”). He did this by referring to Hymenaeus and Philetus in 2 Tim 2:17. He described their doctrinal errors, “They could not believe in the resurrection of the dead so they ‘demythologized’ it and taught that the resurrection was an allegory of the rising of the soul from the death of ignorance to the light of knowledge.”¹⁹⁹ He very much recognized the existence of orthodox teaching and unorthodox teaching, what Pinnock would have referred to as conservative doctrine and liberal doctrine.

However, Dilday did not believe Southern Baptists had a problem with unorthodoxy or theological liberalism. He also denied that Southern Baptists had departed from their commitment to the Bible. He declared rather confidently, “Surely this conference needs no more calls to faithfulness to the Bible. Surely by now we have

¹⁹⁶For Pinnock’s comments about a “new view of the Bible,” see “Sola Scriptura.”

¹⁹⁷Russell Dilday, “The Pastor—A Teacher Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Miami Beach, FL, June 9, 1975).

¹⁹⁸Dilday, “The Pastor—A Teacher Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth.”

¹⁹⁹Ibid. Both Dilday and Pinnock cite demythologization—that is, the attempt to separate the Bible’s claims about events that purportedly happened in time and space from its moral and theological instruction—as an example of unorthodoxy. See also Clark Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura.”

learned that in order to be teachers approved by God, we must handle the word of God properly.”²⁰⁰ Dilday’s thoughts about doctrine in the convention were quite simple. He did not believe there were any significant doctrinal problems. Therefore, he believed the conservative movement’s attempt to provide doctrinal course-correction was misguided at best, and perhaps something else—something rather ominous—at worst.

Second, in addition to addressing doctrinal issues, Dilday also communicated what he perceived to be two denominational issues that were the driving forces behind the convention’s division. First, he insisted that the conservative movement was intolerant of any views other than their own. Second, he suggested that the conservative movement suffered from ignorance regarding what does and does not constitute orthodoxy or unorthodoxy. He acknowledged, “There is still disagreement among us—varying opinions, differing viewpoints,” and recommended that the conservative movement needed to “learn how to disagree in an agreeable manner.”²⁰¹ He proposed that the problem in the denomination was not that there was doctrinal error, but that the conservative movement was guilty of a “harsh intolerance” of what he believed to be the convention’s innate doctrinal diversity.

Referring to conservative attempts at doctrinal accountability, Dilday argued, “We have too many groups checking on the orthodoxy of other groups, too many pastors lurking to catch their brother in some error.”²⁰² He exhorted the Pastors’ Conference attendees: “Don’t jump to the defense of orthodoxy.”²⁰³ He reasoned, “The word of God will stand without your apologetics.”²⁰⁴ Whereas the conservative vision for Baptist

²⁰⁰Dilday, “The Pastor—A Teacher Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth.”

²⁰¹Dilday, “The Pastor—A Teacher Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth.”

²⁰²Ibid.

²⁰³Ibid.

²⁰⁴Ibid.

identity believed that doctrinal deviation from orthodoxy would kill the convention, Dilday expressed the moderate vision by warning, “Heresies are not nearly so dangerous as are sensitive, touchy defenders People who develop pride of opinion until they are constantly defending their position instead of pleading for loyalty to Christ are really hindering the cause of Christ.”²⁰⁵ For Dilday and the moderates for whom he spoke, doctrine was not the problem. Intolerance was the problem. “Stupid and senseless controversies” were the problem.²⁰⁶ “The irresponsible pettiness of hair-splitting, academic disputes” was the problem.²⁰⁷ He concluded of the conservative movement’s attempt to identify and root out theological liberalism: “It is senseless, stupid, unedifying, godless chatter, profane jargon and undermines the faith. Such conflict over words destroys the health of the church. It doesn’t feed men’s souls; it feeds *on* them—eating away like a cancer the health of the church.”²⁰⁸

Dilday also derided the conservative movement for its ignorance. His point seems to be that people wrapped up in the movement know just enough about the Bible to be dangerous. He said that conservatives “forget what great doctrines mean to life and think of them only as prooftexts for debate.”²⁰⁹ He used the words “stupid” and “senseless” several times to describe their actions. He described conservative inquisitions as the “careless tossing about of unanswerable questions.”²¹⁰ His argument regarding the doctrinal suspicions of conservatives was essentially that conservatives did not know what they were talking about. They were ignorant. If they had been better informed, they would not have polarized the convention into the repressive categories of

²⁰⁵Dilday, “The Pastor—A Teacher Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth.”

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷Ibid.

²⁰⁸Ibid.

²⁰⁹Ibid.

²¹⁰Ibid.

“conservative” and “moderate.”

Dilday’s rhetoric defined moderates in a way that contrasted sharply with Pinnock’s vision for conservatives, even at McGee’s fairly early stage of organization. Dilday’s sermon revealed that moderate Southern Baptists existed in a vision of Southern Baptists who (1) were the countermovement to the conservative movement; (2) did not believe there was theological liberalism in the convention; (3) believed the Bible was the standard of orthodoxy; and (4) believed the problems in the denomination were not the result of doctrinal deviation on the part of moderates, but the result of doctrinal intolerance and ignorance on the part of conservatives.

For both conservatives and moderates, questions of doctrine and denominationalism defined “the people” of the Southern Baptist Convention during the organization stage of the controversy. The nature of the Bible and posture toward doctrinal diversity were two of the key issues involved.

Response (1979 – 1990)

The third stage of being “the people” of a social movement is response. In this stage “the people” actually become an objective reality. They do so by responding in certain ways to the vision-casting rhetoric of the movement’s rhetor-leader(s). As they respond to the movement, they become a part of the movement. Movement participants respond in two ways. First, they exhibit collective behavior. Second, they publicly ratify the transaction wherein they give up being an individual actor in order to become a vision-pursuing member of the movement.²¹¹

The Conservative Resurgence formally began in 1979. It was then that conservative leaders enacted a plan to elect conservative presidents and use the president’s powers of appointment to fill the most influential positions in the convention

²¹¹M. C. McGee, “In Search of ‘The People,’” 243.

with like-minded, conservative persons. Conservatives actually became “the people” of the conservative movement in 1979 as they exhibited collective behavior by attending the convention’s annual meetings in higher numbers than ever before or since. They publicly ratified their participation in the movement by voting for conservative presidents and causes. The response stage ended in 1990, the last year conservatives and moderates both ran candidates for convention president. At the 1991 annual meeting, the conservative candidate, Morris Chapman, ran unopposed. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship also began in 1991, providing moderates with an alternative means of fellowship and cooperative missionary involvement.

Conservative rhetoric. Conservative rhetoric changed somewhat as the movement entered into the stage of response. The preaching of the Pastors’ Conference remained focused on the same doctrinal and denominational issues that it had during its previous two stages. There are numerous examples of sermons that denounce liberalism, promote a very conservative view of the Bible (read: inerrancy), and call upon tighter doctrinal accountability for employees of the denomination’s institutions. The preaching of the conference changed not in its topics, but in its tone and in its purpose. In both senses, conservative rhetoric took on a more political feel. By describing the preaching as “political,” it is meant that the preaching was geared more directly to the presidential elections within the convention. Conservative rhetoric continued to depend upon all of the same ideas it had previously organized into a cohesive vision for the future of Southern Baptists. The difference is that in the stage of response, those visionary ideas were used to draw out a specific response—namely, to win as many conservative votes as possible from as many messengers as possible for the convention’s presidential election.

Two different preachers at the 1979 Pastors’ Conference explicitly mentioned the presidential election. W. A. Criswell—himself a former president—publicly

endorsed Adrian Rogers as a candidate during his conference sermon.²¹² James Robison did not endorse any candidate by name, but he did insist upon electing a candidate who strongly affirmed inerrancy and who would purge any college and seminary professors who refused to do likewise.²¹³ For years, conservative rhetor-leaders had been building a constituency by forming and casting a vision based on conservative doctrine and tighter doctrinal accountability in the denomination. Now conservative-leaders called upon the people of their movement to respond to their vision by voting for conservative presidential candidates.

There were not many instances of preachers publicly endorsing a candidate, aside from Criswell and Robison in 1979. It was considered to be in bad form to do so. The political nature of such was just too overt. However, conservatives found other ways to use the preaching of the Pastors' Conference as a powerful campaigning tool for their movement. Whenever a conservative speaker preached about a divisive topic at the Conference, they were casting their vision for Baptist identity with regard to that topic. Casting a vision became virtually synonymous with campaigning.

The conservative use of political rhetoric is also evident when one considers the number of times conservative presidential candidates were given the opportunity to speak at the Pastors' Conference from 1979 to 1991. During this period of time, there were only six different convention presidents—Adrian Rogers (1979, 1986, 1987), Bailey Smith (1980, 1981), Jimmy Draper (1982, 1983), Charles Stanley (1984, 1985), Jerry Vines (1988, 1989), and Morris Chapman (1990, 1991).²¹⁴ These six men combined to

²¹²W. A. Criswell, "The Blood of Jesus" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 10, 1979).

²¹³Robison, "Untitled Message," 1979).

²¹⁴Andy Beachum and Rebecca Wolford, "Since 1845, Southern Baptists Have Elected 58 Men from Fifteen States to Serve as President of the Southern Baptist Convention," *SBC Life*, September 2014, <http://www.sbclife.net/Articles/2014/09/sla9>.

speak at the Pastors' Conference thirty-five times during this thirteen-year period.²¹⁵ Each of these men also served as the president of the Pastors' Conference during the controversy, a very influential role considering that the president decides who gets to preach. That the men who would represent the conservative movement in the convention's presidential election would be given so many opportunities to speak at or preside over the Pastors' Conference is no mere coincidence. Conservatives desired for their candidates to receive as much exposure to the voting messengers as possible. Baptist historian, Jerry Sutton, picked up on this conservative phenomenon, and wrote:

From 1979 on, the Pastors' Conference was used as a platform to inform and motivate conservatives as to how to vote and how to assess the merit of issues that would come before the Southern Baptist Convention. Often the conservative nominee for president of the Convention would be one of the keynote speakers at the Pastors' Conference on Monday evening before the vote for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention on Tuesday.²¹⁶

Conservatives gained control of the Pastors' Conference in the mid 1970s and used its rhetorical opportunities as a political implement for their movement. This is one of the key ways in which their rhetoric defined the movement. The conservative movement took on an increasingly political identity as they worked to ensure the election of their candidates.

Preaching at the 1987 Pastors' Conference, Jerry Sutton both acknowledged and defended the ways in which the conservative movement and its rhetoric became more political. Sutton declared,

We need to realize that the Southern Baptist Convention is a political system. An organization or entity becomes political as soon as choices must be made between two or more alternatives. We ask questions like: Who are we? Where are we going? How can we best accomplish our purpose? And who is going to lead? These are political questions, and there is nothing wrong with this! To call politics unchristian and accuse our brothers and sisters of 'playing politics' is naïve at best

²¹⁵Chapter 2 of this dissertation contains information regarding when and how many times each of these men preached and/or presided at the Pastors' Conference.

²¹⁶Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 85.

and dishonest at worst.²¹⁷

Sutton offered his remarks about politics in response to moderate suggestions that engagement in denominational politics was inherently unethical.²¹⁸ He connected that which is political with that which seeks to answer questions such as, “Who are we?” and “Where are we going?” He made an explicit association between conservative rhetoric, politics, and the important notions of identity and vision. In so doing, he contended that the controversy more than merely a struggle for power. It was a struggle for identity, a struggle for the future. It was a competition between two different visions, two different views of Baptist identity.

The most observable way in which Southern Baptists responded to visionary rhetoric was by attending the convention’s annual meetings. It was at the annual meeting that the presidential election took place. Table 1 and figure 2 present the number of registered messengers at the convention’s annual meetings from 1961 to 2015.²¹⁹

Table 1. Average attendance at SBC annual meeting

| <i>Years</i> | <i>Stage</i> | <i>Average Attendance</i> |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1961-1967 | Dormancy | 12,558 |
| 1968-1978 | Organization | 15,779 |
| 1979-1990 | Response | 24,856 |
| 1991-Present | Decay | 11,239 |

Attending an annual meeting and voting for a party’s candidate was perhaps the most

²¹⁷Jerry Sutton, “The Emmanuel Factor and Contending for the Faith” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

²¹⁸Examples of such moderate accusations have been provided below.

²¹⁹The number of registered messengers is published each year in an annual prepared by the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives has digitized these annuals and made them available on their website. See “SBC Annuals” (Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives), accessed September 24, 2016, http://www.sbhla.org/sbc_annuals/.

impactful way Southern Baptists indicated which side of the controversy they were on. During this stage of response, participation at the annual meetings skyrocketed.

The data in table 1 suggest that there was at least a relationship of correlation between the development of the conservative movement's rhetoric and the attendance of the convention's annual meetings. As the conservative movement developed through McGee's stages of collectivization, the attendance at the denomination's annual meetings increased. As conservatives preached their ideas, then organized those ideas into a vision, then called upon people to respond to that vision, Southern Baptists showed up at the annual meetings in greater numbers than ever before. Furthermore, when the conservative movement began to decay—to use McGee's term for the fourth and final stage of a social movement, attendance at the annual meetings began to decline.

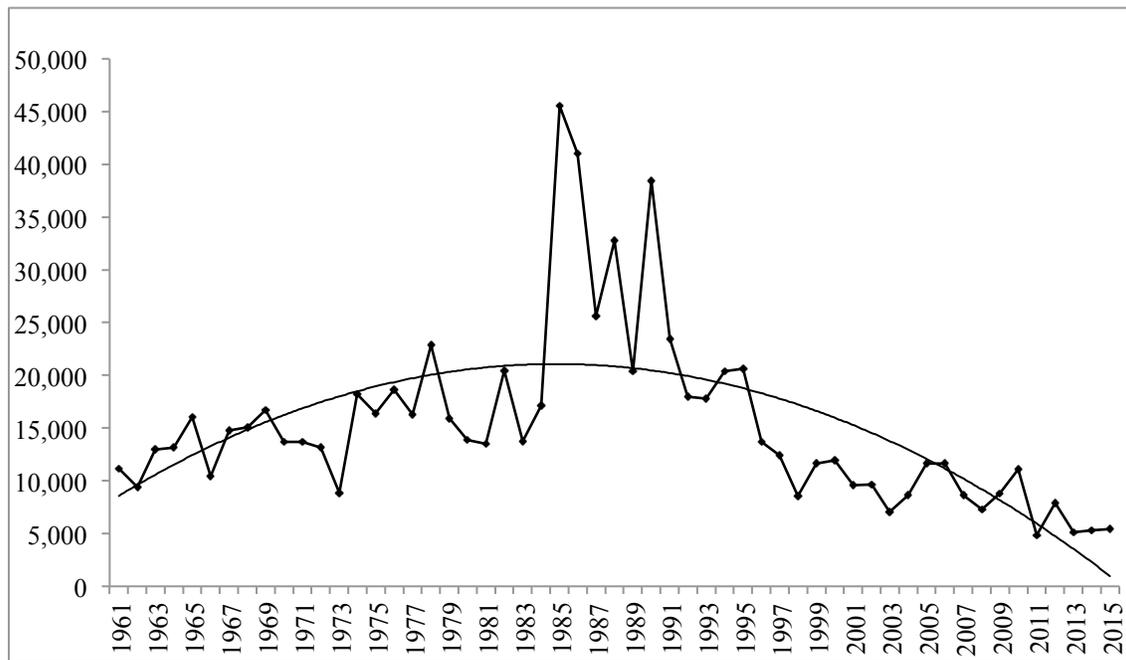


Figure 2. SBC annual meeting attendance, 1961-2015

The jagged lines in figure 2 represent the actual attendance at each year's meeting. The curved line is a trend line, representing the general course of attendance

over the time period. The trend line in figure 2 rises with the development of conservative rhetoric and falls with the decay of conservative rhetoric. It is perhaps too bold a conclusion to suggest that conservative rhetoric singularly caused the ebb and flow of attendance. It is not unreasonable, however, to contend that the lifespan of the conservative movement is very much related to the unmistakable rise and fall of attendance at the annual meetings. The relationship between the maturation of the conservative movement's rhetoric and the participation of Southern Baptists in the convention's annual meetings supports the idea that the conservative movement was in a stage of response from 1979 to 1990. Southern Baptists responded to the vision of the conservative movement's rhetor-leaders by showing up at annual meetings in large numbers and electing conservative presidents every year from 1979 to the present.

The rhetorical identity of the conservative movement during its stage of response became increasingly political. As defined by their rhetoric, conservatives were Southern Baptists who (1) adhered to and promoted a strongly conservative theology, most especially regarding the nature of the Bible; (2) construed of the relationship between doctrine and the denomination in such a way so as to emphasize the doctrinal unity of the convention over the functional unity of the convention; (3) were committed to electing conservative presidents in order to effect long-term change in the convention's institutions through the president's appointive powers; (4) learned how to use the influential pulpits of the convention's annual meetings in order to campaign both for their leaders and their ideas in the battle for control of the denomination.

Moderate rhetoric. In response to the developments in conservative rhetoric, moderates became increasingly alarmed that they were not being given very many opportunities to share their vision for Baptist identity from the wide-reaching pulpit of the Pastors' Conference. They were understandably concerned. There were essentially no sermons in which the moderate vision for Southern Baptists was presented in the

pastors' meetings from 1979 onward. This was a great problem for moderates, especially since conservatives had engaged in a more concretely political strategy and were using their rhetorical opportunities in more overtly political ways. Conservative leaders did not allow moderates to have much of a voice in the Pastors' Conference once the Resurgence began. One must have a voice in order to cast vision. Moderates desperately needed to have a voice during the activities of the annual meetings. Therefore they started an alternative version of the Pastors' Conference, the SBC Forum.

The SBC Forum was the place where the moderate voice was heard most clearly, most consistently, and most loudly in all the years of controversy. The Forum's split from the Pastors' Conference was also one of the more pronounced responses of moderates to the conservative movement, especially since conservative rhetoric had taken on a more political tone.

Moderate leaders decried the use of the pulpit to politick and pledged to avoid such at the Forum. It is quite understandable that moderates desired a place where their voice could be heard, a place where they could cast their vision for Southern Baptist identity. Indeed, moderates were Southern Baptists too. They were every bit as invested in the denomination as were conservatives. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to understand how moderates could split away from the Pastors' Conference and start up an alternative, competing conference without engaging in denominational politics. In fact, when one analyzes the preaching of the Forum, it becomes rather apparent that moderates responded to conservative politics by engaging in their own politics.

Moderate rhetoric engaged in politicking when they used the sermons of the SBC Forum to campaign for their vision for Southern Baptist life. They spoke to doctrinal and denominational issues in much the same way that moderate messages did previously in the Pastors' Conference. Moderates continued to disagree with conservatives that liberalism was a problem in the Southern Baptist Convention. They consistently maintained that Southern Baptists were committed to the authority of the

Bible, insisting the inerrantist position was unnecessary for orthodoxy. They decried what they believed was an often politically motivated application of the labels of “conservative” and “liberal.” They also inferred that conservative attempts at doctrinal control were merely the results of intolerance and ignorance. Regarding these issues the moderate message was fairly stable throughout the controversy.

Moderates also directly addressed the issue of denominational politics, mostly by insisting that conservatives were wrong for using political means to win the conflict. Here are a few examples of such accusations. In 1984, Kirby Godsey convicted conservatives of sacrificing love for “the glory of determining who is going to be in charge of the convention.”²²⁰ In 1986, Norman Cavender complained about conservative presidential candidates by making the claim, “For the past seven years we have elected presidents who do not believe in liberty among our own people.”²²¹ In 1987, John Hewett warned that conservatives were going to destroy the convention with “political weapons aimed at the heart.”²²² In 1988, in a very similar fashion, Bill Leonard charged that Southern Baptists were being “torn apart by . . . power politics.”²²³ These comments represent the way most moderates spoke about the conservative use of political means to win control over the direction of the convention.

There was at least one moderate leader who viewed denominational politics somewhat differently. Moderates had been complaining about how political the Pastors’ Conference had become under conservative leadership. By 1985, however, Cecil

²²⁰R. Kirby Godsey, “The Spirit of Learning and Learning of the Spirit” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984).

²²¹Norman Cavender, “The Bells of Liberty” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 9, 1986).

²²²John H. Hewett, “Devising the Indivisible” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

²²³Bill J. Leonard, “Improvising Grace” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, San Antonio, TX, June 12, 1988).

Sherman acknowledged that the Forum had also “become a political caucus.”²²⁴ Sherman admitted of his own sermon, “Indirectly, it is very political.”²²⁵ Sherman would later write that the SBC Forum was a place where moderates “would put on their kind of program, showcase their brightest and best preachers and musicians, and give Southern Baptists a clear choice.”²²⁶ The language of providing Southern Baptists with “a clear choice” is basically the same language Jerry Sutton used when he described what it meant to be engaged in politics within the denomination.²²⁷ Inasmuch as the Pastors’ Conference had become a pep rally for the conservative movement, the Forum had become just the same for the moderate countermovement.

The rhetorical identity of moderates during the conservative movement’s stage of response was as follows. Moderates (1) had become a political party within the denomination who stood up against the conservative movement; (2) were more open toward modern theological trends than were conservatives, but they did not believe that made them “liberal”; (3) felt like tighter doctrinal control was outside the bounds of Southern Baptists’ commitment to freedom and contrary to the denomination’s purpose of uniting together for missions; (4) were very upset by the conservative movement’s political attempt to take over the convention; (5) committed to the Bible as authoritative, but not necessarily as inerrant.

Decay (1991 to the Present)

The fourth stage of being “the people” of a social movement is that of decay.

²²⁴Cecil E. Sherman, “To Trust Again” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

²²⁵Ibid.

²²⁶This quote is from a letter written by Cecil E. Sherman to Peter Rhea Jones, dated July 25, 1989, as cited by Walter B. Shurden, ed., *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994), 75.

²²⁷Sutton declared, “An organization or entity becomes political as soon as choices must be made between two or more alternatives.” See Sutton, “The Emmanuel Factor and Contending for the Faith.”

The label of decay is not intended to imply defeat or negligence, as if movements devolve only because their participants abandon them to decomposition. Decay is simply McGee's word for describing what happens to the rhetoric of a movement when movements inevitably end. When movements begin to lose power, regardless of outcome, the rhetoric that defines "the people" of the movement becomes somewhat entropic. Accordingly, the capacity of the movement's rhetoric to define "the people" begins to decrease. Decay happens either when the movement becomes successful and society adapts to acquiesce to the movement's demands, or when the movement becomes unsuccessful and participants are forced to submit to the demands of the larger society or leave for an alternative society. The conservative movement reached the stage of decay when moderates effectively conceded defeat in the thirty-year controversy. Moderates conceded in 1991 in at least three ways. First, they did not run a presidential candidate. Second, they dissolved the SBC Forum. Third, they started the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Conservative rhetoric. The conservative movement was successful in defeating moderates for control of the convention. By 1991, their rhetoric began to reflect this victory. Whereas roughly 25 percent of Pastors' Conference sermons from 1961 to 1990 contained controversial, divisive topics germane to the ongoing controversy, only 13 percent of the sermons in 1991 contained such topics. Being victorious, they no longer needed to campaign as diligently to win the battle for the denomination. Only two of the fifteen sermons contained references to the controversy or topics over which conservatives and moderates regularly divided. Even of these two sermons, their connection to the controversy was tenuous at best. W. A. Criswell ridiculed skittish, effeminate preachers who would rather have the respect of the academy than proclaim the inerrancy of the Bible.²²⁸ Criswell's comments may have been a veiled

²²⁸W. A. Criswell, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference,

reference to moderate-sympathizing pastors. Bailey Smith made a more direct reference to the controversy when he blamed the lukewarm status of many congregations on “moderate preaching.”²²⁹ Smith’s comment was only a small part of a message on a larger topic, but it was related quite closely to the conflict.

Conservative rhetoric appeared to be moving on from the controversy. They had won the denominational battle. Their newly developing rhetoric suggested they were moving on to fight another battle—namely, the battle for morality in America. Five of the fifteen messages were about how Christians should help America be a more moral place. Adrian Rogers preached on the evils of immorality.²³⁰ Oliver North, Tim LaHaye, and Tony Evans each spoke about the need for Christians to be involved in the American political process.²³¹ In a surprise appearance—for he was not on the program in advance—Jerry Falwell gave a short message on social problems in America such as drug abuse, abortion, and pornography.²³²

The rhetorical identity of the conservative movement clearly began to change by 1991. Whereas they had won the battle for the denomination, now they were moving on to fight other battles. No longer did they sense as great a need to fight for faith within the Southern Baptist Convention. They turned their attention to a different arena. Now they would fight for morality in America.

Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991).

²²⁹Bailey E. Smith, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991).

²³⁰Adrian Rogers, “The Playboy’s Payday” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 2, 1991).

²³¹Oliver North, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 2, 1991); Tim LaHaye, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 2, 1991); Tony Evans, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 2, 1991).

²³²Jerry Falwell, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 2, 1991).

Moderate rhetoric. The SBC Forum heard only two messages at their meeting in 1991, neither of which were sermons. Dan Martin, previously the editor at *Baptist Press*, shared the story of how conservative actions led to his termination.²³³ The general tenor of his message was that conservatives were not very nice. John Hewett shared an informational message concerning the newly formed Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. He explained that the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship would provide moderate Southern Baptists with an alternative means of fellowship and cooperation. Hewett led the group to vote to dissolve the SBC Forum and give any remaining funds to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The rhetorical identity of moderates during the stage of decay was that of defeat. They had lost the battle for control of the convention. The convention was now heading in a direction with which they disagreed. Their rhetoric reveals that they were essentially withdrawing from the fight and focusing their efforts elsewhere.

A Competition of Baptist Visions

This section has applied Michael McGee's social movement rhetorical theory to the preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum during the most turbulent years of the Southern Baptist controversy. What it has revealed is that the Conservative Resurgence was a struggle to determine Baptist identity, specifically regarding doctrinal diversity and the nature of Scripture. Throughout the entirety of the controversy, moderate and conservative preachers repeatedly clashed at one particular point—namely, the place where doctrine and denominationalism converge. It is at this point where the differences between conservative and moderate visions for Baptist identity are most vividly on display.

²³³Dan Martin, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991).

CHAPTER 4
ULTIMATE TERMS IN THE PASTORS' CONFERENCE
AND SBC FORUM

Introduction

Noted twentieth-century rhetorician, Richard Weaver, contended that all language is sermonic. What he meant is that, “We are all of us preachers We have no sooner uttered words than we have given impulse to other people to look at the world, or some small part of it, in our way.”¹ If Weaver is right, that all language is sermonic, then one should not be surprised to find the language of an actual sermon to be especially, intentionally influential.

It is no secret that preachers work hard to compel their hearers, and there are many rhetorical tools available to preachers to use to that end. One such tool is known as lexicon. The word “lexicon” is broadly synonymous with the word “vocabulary.” In the field of rhetoric, though, the idea of lexicon takes on a more specialized meaning. Roderick Hart and Suzanne Daughton indicate that lexicon refers to “words that are unique to a group or individual and that have special rhetorical power.”² Often rhetors seeking to take advantage of a group’s lexicon will use ultimate terms as a motivational strategy. Ultimate terms are words or phrases that contain paramount rhetorical potential within a given group’s lexicon.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the use of ultimate terms as a

¹Richard M. Weaver, “Language Is Sermonic,” in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, ed. Patricia Bissell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston: Bedford Books, 1990), 1054.

²Roderick Hart and Suzanne Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Routledge, 2004), 152.

rhetorical strategy in the controversial preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum from 1961 to 1991. In order to achieve this purpose two steps are employed. First, a presentation is given to demonstrate what ultimate terms are and why they are important in rhetoric. The work of Richard M. Weaver is of primary significance in this first step. Second, the controversial preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum is summarized and critiqued with a view toward understanding the utilization of ultimate terms for rhetorical effectiveness in that controversy.

What Are Ultimate Terms?

Richard L. Johannesen writes about the theory of ultimate terms by listing its two most prominent thinkers and describing its foremost characteristic. Johannesen writes that "As used by twentieth-century rhetoricians Kenneth Burke and Richard M. Weaver, [an ultimate term is] a phrase that represents the ideas or values that hold primary motivational potency or preeminent ranking in the public discourse of an era, culture, or community."³ The most motivating values of a given group of people are expressed in words or phrases known as ultimate terms. Kenneth Burke said that ultimate terms were "names for the ultimates of motivation."⁴ Richard Weaver referred to ultimate terms as "those expressions to which the populace, in its actual usage and response, appears to attribute the greatest sanction . . . [i.e.,] the 'rhetorical absolutes'—the terms to which the very highest respect is paid."⁵ Johannesen comments on the relationship between Burke and Weaver's respective contributions regarding the idea of ultimate terms by writing that "Richard M. Weaver directly, but without acknowledgement, employs many of Burke's insights on ultimate terms and also adapts

³Richard L. Johannesen, "Ultimate Terms," in *The Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, ed. Theresa Jarnagin Enos (New York: Routledge, 1996), 741.

⁴Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 74.

⁵Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Press, 1952), 212.

and extends these ideas for his own purposes.”⁶ Burke’s influence can perhaps best be seen in the following from Weaver. Weaver describes ultimate terms by saying they “become the salvation man is placed on earth to work out; and just as there can be no achievement more important than salvation, so there can be no activity more justified in enlisting our sympathy and support than [the use of ultimate terms.]”⁷ Accordingly, ultimate terms help small people feel like they are involved in something larger than themselves.⁸

Though Burke’s influence upon Weaver’s development of ultimate terms is undeniable, the present study focuses more on the more detailed presentation regarding ultimate terms found in Weaver’s work. In particular, Weaver’s chapter on “Ultimate Terms in Contemporary Rhetoric” is most relevant.⁹ Weaver illustrates rhetorical force as “a power transmitted through the links of a chain that extends upward toward some ultimate source,” and further explains that the “higher links of the chain must always be of unique interest to the student of rhetoric, pointing, as they do, to some prime mover of human impulse.”¹⁰ The point of Weaver’s illustration is that the higher a rhetor moves up the chain, the more persuasive the rhetoric’s speech. Ultimate terms are the highest links in the chain of rhetorical force, and are therefore potent ammunition for persuasion in the weapon of the rhetor. Figure 3 illustrates ultimate terms along a spectrum of motivational potency.

⁶Johannesen, “Ultimate Terms,” 741.

⁷Richard M. Weaver et al., *Language Is Sermonic: Richard M. Weaver on the Nature of Rhetoric* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 213.

⁸Ibid., 214.

⁹Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 211-32.

¹⁰Ibid., 211.

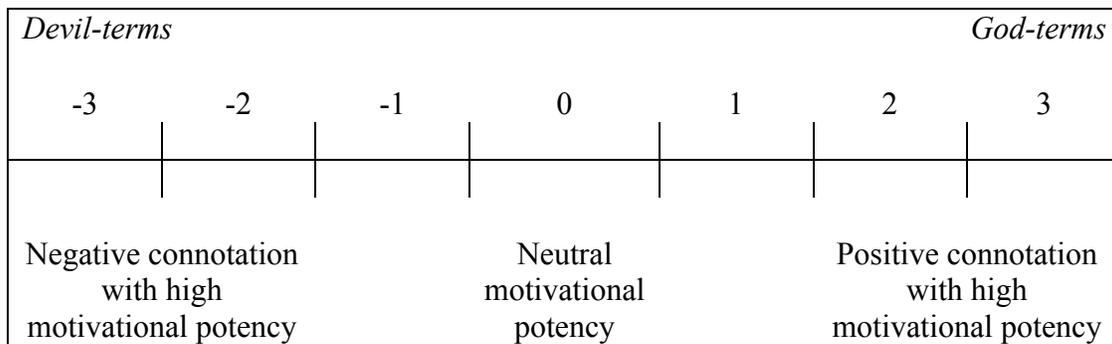


Figure 3. Ultimate terms and motivational potency

Ultimate terms are specific to the groups out of which they arise. Symbolizing the highest motivating ideals and values as they do, ultimate terms are as different from one group of people to another as are the ideals and values of one group of people to another. Weaver explains that “since the affections of one age are frequently a source of wonder to another, the most we can do . . . is give a descriptive account” of whatever age or group is under consideration.¹¹ Weaver explains that the phenomenon of ultimate terms exists because it is human nature to “revolve around some concept of value”—that man “has to know where he is in the ideological cosmos in order to coordinate his activities.”¹² Humanity’s desire to have an evaluative point of reference serves as the basis for ultimate terms in rhetoric.

Different Types of Ultimate Terms

Ultimate terms can have positive or negative connotations. Weaver identified ultimate terms with a positive connotation as “god terms,” and defined a god-term as “that expression about which all other expressions are ranked as subordinate Its force imparts to the others their lesser degree of force, and fixes the scale by which

¹¹Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 212.

¹²*Ibid.*, 213.

degrees of comparison are understood.”¹³ Rhetoricians refer to them as “god terms” because of their god-like qualities—namely, they are terms that give blessing to people and, in turn, expect servitude and sacrifice. Writing in the 1950s, Weaver put forward the word “progress” as a god-term for the Western world.¹⁴ He explains how the word “progress” operates as a god-term:

This [i.e., progress] seems to be the ultimate generator of force flowing down through many links of ancillary terms. If one can “make it stick,” it will validate almost anything. It would be difficult to think of any type of person or of any institution which could not be recorded to the public through the enhancing power of this word. A politician is urged upon the voters as a “progressive leader”; a community is proud to style itself “progressive”; technologies and methodologies claim to be “progressive”; a peculiar kind of emphasis in modern education calls itself “progressive,” and so on without limit. There is no word whose power to move is more implicitly trusted than “progressive.”¹⁵

Progress as a god term carried blessing in the sense that it was believed to enhance the human condition. Progress demanded obedience and sacrifice in the sense that people were expected to give up old ways of living and traditional values for the sake of moving the human condition forward. Weaver notes that other similar ultimate terms specific to mid-twentieth century America are “fact,” “science,” “modern,” “efficient,” and “American.”¹⁶

Weaver dubbed ultimate terms with a negative connotation as “devil-terms,” and explained that devil-terms also have very powerful motivational impact.¹⁷ The counterpart to god-terms, devil terms are terms that evoke significant negative imagery. Weaver suggested of the existence of devil-terms in rhetoric, “Perhaps this is but a version of the tribal need for a scapegoat.”¹⁸ Words like “un-American,” “Nazi,” and

¹³Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 212.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., 212-13.

¹⁶Ibid., 214-20.

¹⁷Ibid., 222.

¹⁸Ibid.; Such a correlation between devil-terms and scapegoats is precisely the argument made

“Communist” are given as examples of devil-terms in the rhetorical lexicon of mid-twentieth century America.¹⁹ One insightful devil-term is the word “prejudice.”

Weaver’s explanation of “prejudice” as a devil-term is instructional:

Etymologically it [i.e., prejudice] signifies nothing more than a prejudgment, or a judgment before all the facts are in; and since all of us have to proceed to a great extent on judgments of that kind, the word should not be any more exciting than “hypothesis.” But in its rhetorical applications “prejudice presumes far beyond that. It is used, as a matter of fact, to characterize unfavorably any value judgment whatever I suspect that what the users of this term are attempting, whether consciously or not, is to sneak “prejudiced” forward as an uncontested term, and in this way to disarm the opposition by making all positional judgments reprehensible.²⁰

As Weaver has demonstrated with “prejudice,” devil-terms can have substantial rhetorical marketability.

Characteristics of Ultimate Terms

Roderick Hart and Suzanne Daughton provide a helpful list of five rhetorical capacities of ultimate terms.²¹ First, they observe that ultimate terms are abstract—that is, ultimate terms most often refer to ideas, not physical objects. That ultimate terms are abstract also means, though, that their meaning can be fluid enough to “be twisted [or] be used to encompass more than they were intended.”²² Weaver explains, “The very fact that a word is not used very analytically may increase its rhetorical potency.”²³ Second, ultimate terms are efficient. They can bring to mind all sorts of positive or negative associations simply with one mention. For example, since September 11, 2001

by Brent Kice in his study of religious rhetoric, “The Religious Rhetoric of Scapegoat Reliance,” *Memphis Theological Seminary Journal* 50 (2012), <http://mtsjournal.memphisseminary.edu/vol-50-1/the-religious-rhetoric-of-scapegoat-reliance-by-brent-kice>.

¹⁹Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 222-3.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 223-4.

²¹Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 155-56.

²²*Ibid.*, 155.

²³Weaver et al., *Language Is Sermonic*, 217.

the word “terrorist” has taken on all sorts of motivational potency. It brings to mind numerous killings, political unrest in the Middle East, visions of smoke billowing from the World Trade Centers, et al. Rhetors may take motivational shortcuts—and that can be good or bad—simply by understanding which terms are loaded with ultimate motivational power.

Third, ultimate terms are hierarchical. Hart and Daughton write that “[ultimate terms] lie at the top of society’s pantheon of values and subsume all lesser terms. For this reason, they are used to pull rank, to make an opponent’s case seem small and expedient.”²⁴ Figure 3 displays the hierarchical nature of ultimate terms. Positioned at the far ends of the high motivational potency scale, ultimate terms subsume the potency that lesser words convey. Fourth, ultimate terms are pre-emptive in that they “let a rhetor carve out rhetorical territory and then seal it off from others.”²⁵ Ultimate terms help rhetors anticipate disruptions to persuasion and build detours around them. Socrates hinted at this quality of rhetoric when he said, “If you let me define the terms, I win the argument.”²⁶

Fifth and finally, ultimate terms have unstable meanings. Accordingly, ultimate terms have meaning that can change over time, or when used in different contexts. As a result, ultimate terms can be dangerous and misleading. Weaver warns that when “the ultimate terms become a series of bare abstractions, the understanding of power is supplanted by a worship of power.”²⁷

Another Ultimate Term

In addition to god-terms and devil-terms, Weaver also refers to a special class

²⁴Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 156.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Cited in *ibid.*

²⁷Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 230.

of ultimate terms—those of a certain charismatic nature. A group’s charismatic term is “the supreme term . . . [the] term to end all other terms or a rhetoric to silence all other rhetoric.”²⁸ Weaver describes six characteristics of these very special rhetorical terms. First, charismatic terms are considerably powerful. When a word achieves a certain charisma it becomes the strongest, most rhetorically potent word in a group’s lexicon. Second, charismatic terms do not inherently contain the power they exercise over groups. They are given such power by way of convention. Charisma, as Weaver understands it, refers to the impulsion given to such terms by convention. Weaver explains that the power of the charismatic term “is in some mysterious way given.”²⁹ Weaver adds that charismatic terms “are rhetorical by common consent, or by ‘charisma.’”³⁰

Third, charismatic terms have become detached from any discernible or meaningful referent. Rhetoricians typically understand persuasive terms through their connection to observable “referents of objectively known character and tendency.”³¹ In other words, rhetorical terms can be well understood because of their connection to the object or idea they represent. Charismatic terms, however, have become untethered from referential connections. Weaver concludes of charismatic terms, “Their meaning seems inexplicable unless we accept the hypothesis that their content proceeds out of a popular will that they *shall* mean something.”³²

Fourth, charismatic terms occupy a very small, but incomparably powerful, place within a group’s rhetoric. Accordingly, there can be only a limited number of charismatic terms in a given period. Fifth, charismatic terms do not lend themselves

²⁸Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 231.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 227.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

toward definition. Like ultimate terms in general, charismatic terms have, at best, unstable meanings. Add to this the fact that, as has already been discussed, charismatic terms are unhinged from any real referential basis. Weaver also explains how charismatic terms do not merely lack definition, but they actually resist definition. Weaver concludes, “It may well be that such resistance to definition . . . arises from a subconscious fear that a term defined in a usual manner has its charisma taken away.”³³

Sixth, charismatic terms are irrational. Irrationality in this sense is evidenced in a couple of different ways. First, irrationality means that a term does not correlate to its referent. Second, irrationality often shows up “in the increasing tendency to employ in the place of the term itself an abbreviated or telescoped form—which form is nearly always used with even more reckless assumption of authority.”³⁴ Weaver provides the examples of “U S” and “Gestapo” to demonstrate terms in an abbreviated and telescoped form.³⁵ Weaver explains that such terms represent the “bloodless abstraction” of strong governmental power. Weaver also comments, “It is a fact of ominous significance that this use of foreshortened forms is preferred by totalitarians, both the professed and the disguised.”³⁶

Weaver offers the term “freedom” as an example of a charismatic term in America in the 1950s. He observes irony in how the idea of freedom—which entails release from constraint—has compelled so many Americans willingly to make sacrifices that seemingly do just the opposite. For example, for the sake of freedom many have voluntarily bound themselves to service in the military. Moreover, politicians use the

³³Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 229.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵“U S” is, of course, an abbreviation for the United States. “Gestapo” is the telescoped form of the German for “Secret (Ge-) State (sta-) Police (po).” Telescoping refers to making something smaller or shorter by folding it into itself.

³⁶Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 229-30.

word “freedom” in order to get citizens to undertake more responsibilities.

Weaver’s point is that “freedom” is a highly powerful force of motivation for Americans, even though the freedom Americans so highly prize actually demands that they give up so much freedom in order to maintain it. Weaver concludes regarding “freedom” as a charismatic term, “Unless we accept some philosophical interpretation, such as the proposition that freedom consists only in the discharge of responsibility, there seems no possibility of correlation between the use of the word and circumstantial reality.”³⁷ Speaking further of the nature of charismatic terminology, Weaver notes, “The variety of things it is used to symbolize is too weird and too contradictory for one to find even a core meaning.”

Weaver implies that there are two different types of charismatic terms—those of a naturally occurring nature and those of a more fabricated nature. Both are powerful, but both are not of the same ethical quality. Weaver also cautions against the potential power inherent in charismatic terms. He writes that a charismatic term can be a term to end all other terms or a rhetoric to silence all other rhetoric.”³⁸ One example of this is perhaps the accusation of racism in twenty-first century America. There is not much worse in today’s climate of tolerance and political correctness than to be labeled a racist. In this sense, racism is understood as an ultimate term—more specifically, a devil-term. Frequently, one does not have either to define racism or explain how someone has engaged in racism in order for the accusation of racism to land with rhetorical effect. Definition may indeed reduce rhetorical power. Weaver describes that this feature of ultimate terms “arises from a sub-conscious fear that a term defined in the usual manner has its charisma taken away.”³⁹ “When the ultimate terms become a series of bare

³⁷Weaver et al., *Language Is Sermonic*, 228.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 231.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 229.

abstractions, the understanding of power is supplanted by a worship of power It is easy to see, however, that a group determined upon control will have as one of its first objectives the appropriation of sources of charismatic authority.”⁴⁰ Periods of crisis are best suited for the rise of charismatic terminology.

Ultimate Terms and the Ethics of Rhetoric

Weaver theorized that ultimate terms could reveal the ethical quality of a group’s rhetoric. Weaver outlined two ethical tests for ultimate terms, both of which must be passed in order for an ethical judgment to be made regarding a group’s ultimate terminology. First, did the group intentionally promote terminology up the ladder of motivational potency in order to facilitate the terminology’s adoption as ultimate? Weaver writes, “The surest way to detect the fabricated charismatic term is to identify those terms ordinarily of limited power which are being moved up to the front line We may suspect the act of fabrication when terms of secondary or even tertiary rhetorical rank are pushed forward by unnatural pressure into ultimate positions.”⁴¹ Second, was the ultimate terminology true to reality? If the answer is affirmative to the first question and negative to the second question, then the rhetoric ought to be deemed unethical.

Weaver refers to rationality as the test for determining the ethical quality of ultimate terminology. He explains, “Rationality is measured by correlations and by analyzable content.”⁴² In other words, something is rational if it coheres to reality. In this sense rationality refers to consistency between theory and practice.

The Ultimate Terms of Conservative Rhetoric

What were the ultimate terms of conservative rhetoric during the Conservative

⁴⁰Weaver et al., *Language Is Sermonic*, 230-1.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 231.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 229.

Resurgence? According to the preaching of the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991, the ultimate terms were all related to the Bible and to orthodox Christian teaching.

God Term

A god term is a word or phrase that has the greatest amount of rhetorical impact within a group's discourse. God terms are positive. God terms, like gods, both bless and demand allegiance from their adherents. So what was the primary god term of conservative rhetoric? The god term of conservative rhetoric was inerrancy. Inerrancy was so much the dominating term of the period that some historians have dubbed the episode, "The Inerrancy Controversy."⁴³ It is also not uncommon for those commenting on the controversy to refer to conservatives as inerrantists, or as the inerrancy party.⁴⁴ Leon McBeth explained, "The buzzword . . . was inerrancy," and observed of inerrancy, "That word quickly moved to center stage and dominated the controversy."⁴⁵ The specially appointed Peace Committee concluded that the primary source of controversy was inerrancy.⁴⁶ Inerrancy became so important to the entire conflict mainly because it was one of the most readily and consistently observable dividing lines between conservatives and moderates. Regardless of what one thinks of inerrancy, and further what one thinks about the ways in which inerrancy was used as a major factor in conservative rhetoric, it is difficult to dispute that inerrancy was indispensable to, and perhaps even preeminent among the ideas of conservative rhetoric during the Resurgence.

In table 2 controversial sermons are listed in descending order of topic

⁴³James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 491-513.

⁴⁴Russell H. Dilday, *Higher Ground: A Call for Christian Civility* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2007), 27.

⁴⁵Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 681.

⁴⁶"Report of the Peace Committee," in *Going for the Jugular: A Documentary History of the SBC Holy War*, ed. Walter B. Shurden and Randy Shepley (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 206-23.

frequency.

Table 2. Pastors' Conference sermons that were controversial by topic

| | <i>Controversial Topic</i> | <i>Number of Sermons in Which Preachers Employ Controversial Topic</i> | <i>Percentage of Controversial Sermons (%)</i> | <i>Percentage of Total Sermons (%)</i> |
|----|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | Controversy | 89 | 70.08 | 17.76 |
| 2 | Bible | 65 | 51.18 | 12.97 |
| 3 | Doctrine | 63 | 49.61 | 12.57 |
| 4 | Liberalism | 52 | 40.94 | 10.38 |
| 5 | Seminaries | 24 | 18.9 | 4.79 |
| 6 | Inerrancy | 24 | 18.9 | 4.79 |
| 7 | Baptist Identity | 19 | 14.96 | 3.79 |
| 8 | Denominational Politics | 18 | 14.17 | 3.59 |
| 9 | Authority | 15 | 11.81 | 2.99 |
| 10 | Freedom | 11 | 8.66 | 2.2 |
| 11 | Creation | 5 | 3.94 | 1.0 |
| 12 | Creeds and Confessions | 3 | 2.36 | 0.6 |
| 13 | Priesthood of Believers | 2 | 1.57 | 0.4 |

The second and sixth items in the list are Bible and Inerrancy, respectively. The topics are separated in table 2 so that the sermon content may be represented as accurately as possible. The Bible as a general topic and inerrancy as a more specific topic combined to appear in over seventy percent of the controversial sermons of the Pastors' Conference during the time period from 1961 to 1991. The topics are here combined because, as used in the pulpit rhetoric, they both concern the nature of Scripture.⁴⁷ Regardless of

⁴⁷Weaver's theory recognizes the value in analyzing different words that convey the main idea of an ultimate term. For example, in his analysis of the ultimate term of "progress," Weaver also gives

whether some form of the word “inerrant” was used, nearly all the sermons in the “Bible” category addressed the nature of Scripture. Eighty-nine out of one hundred and twenty-seven controversial sermons were about inerrancy and/or the Bible. Clearly the subject of the Bible and inerrancy was very important to Pastors’ Conference preachers who directly engaged the controversy.

Inerrancy manifests each of the five rhetorical qualities cited by Hart and Daughton as characteristic of god terms—namely, that they are abstract, efficient, hierarchical, pre-emptive, and unstable.⁴⁸ First, inerrancy meets the criterion of abstractness, as an idea as opposed to an object. Inerrancy regards the nature and quality of the Bible (abstraction), but it is not to be confused with the Bible itself (object).

Second, inerrancy also meets the requirement of efficiency. For an ultimate term to be efficient means that it can communicate a great deal of information through one word or phrase. Inerrancy is efficient in the sense that to say someone was an inerrantist was to say many things about that person. It was to say what one believed about the scientific and historical details of the Bible—that they are accurate. It was to say what one’s position was regarding the Genesis account of creation—specifically, that God personally created the heavens and the earth and that Adam and Eve were real historical persons.

Russell Dilday explained this quality of inerrancy well when he wrote that inerrancy “provided a simplistic yardstick for testing loyalty to the party. Those who were willing to say, ‘I believe the Bible is inerrant’ passed the test. Those who for one reason or another did not like the term ‘inerrant’ failed the test.”⁴⁹ The idea of inerrancy

attention to the related words “fact” and “science.” See Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 215.

⁴⁸Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 155-6.

⁴⁹Dilday, *Higher Ground*, 27; Cecil Sherman described the power of inerrancy in a similar manner when he described how inerrancy worked in conservative preaching. Sherman wrote, “If you believed in inerrancy, you believed the Bible. If you did not believe in inerrancy, you did not believe the Bible. It was as simple as that. That a person might not believe in inerrancy and still be a quite conservative Christian—well that was impossible. The inerrancy rally cry defined all.” See Sherman, “An

was thus a quite efficient way for conservatives to summarize their beliefs and effectively prove their orthodoxy.

Third, inerrancy is also a hierarchical term. Hierarchical was the word used by Hart and Daughton to describe that facet of ultimate terms wherein ultimate terms are the most foundational and determinative values of a culture.⁵⁰ The most basic values of a culture are necessary for other lesser values to be present. Thus, hierarchical values subsume many other values. Values at the top of a group's pyramid of values represent or include the other values in the pyramid.

Inerrancy served in this capacity for conservatives. For example, inerrancy implies a certain conservative doctrine of inspiration. It subsumes the acceptance of the supernatural elements of Scripture. It understands all the historical and scientific details of Scripture to be factually accurate. Inerrancy entailed the authority of Scripture, the truthfulness of Scripture, and the infallibility of Scripture. The god term, inerrancy, was what conservatives understood the phrase “without any mixture of error” to mean when they read the phrase in the *Baptist Faith and Message*.⁵¹ Inerrancy was virtually synonymous with a particular type of hermeneutic, a closely conservative hermeneutic—what was popularly termed a literalistic hermeneutic.⁵² Inerrancy was also nearly synonymous with being a conservative. There are a few notable exceptions, but the majority of inerrantists were conservatives.⁵³

Overview of the Moderate Movement,” in Walter B. Shurden, *Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994), 38.

⁵⁰Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 156.

⁵¹“Comparison of 1925, 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message” (The Southern Baptist Convention), accessed May 7, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfmcomparison.asp>.

⁵²Kell and Camp describe this hermeneutic as a “reassuring and reliable” emphasis upon certain biblical prooftexts that enable persons to “affirm the literal and accurate nature of the Bible.” See Carl L. Kell and L. Raymond Camp, *In the Name of the Father: The Rhetoric of the New Southern Baptist Convention* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001), 32.

⁵³Perhaps the most well known exception was Daniel Vestal. Vestal represented moderates in the convention's presidential election on several occasions. Vestal was an avowed inerrantist. For an example of his view on inerrancy, Dan Vestal, “The Word of God (Isaiah 40:6-8),” *Southern Baptist*

Fourth, inerrancy is a pre-emptive term. To preempt is to take action in order to prevent an anticipated event from taking place. Conservatives could preempt a significant amount of nuanced bibliological discussion by simply asking one question: “Do you believe the Bible contains errors, yes or no?” It is a simplistic question, to be sure, but it is effective rhetoric. Liberalism was one of the most common scapegoats throughout the conflict. Conservatives portrayed inerrancy as a sort of floodgate, holding fast against the swelling forces of liberalism. Therefore, to be an inerrantist, according to conservative rhetoric, was to stand against liberalism. Failure to adhere to inerrancy was believed to be a quite vulnerable position. It was to endanger oneself by way of a certain optimism and naiveté towards the deceptive, destructive subtleties of modern liberalism. Therefore, conservatives wielded inerrancy as a preemptive tool, and sometimes at the expense of stifling, rather than promoting, discussion.

Moderates believed they offered a more careful, qualified doctrine of Scripture. They contended, however, that conservatives would reach many of the same conclusions regarding bibliography if they would just explain more specifically and more honestly their approach to the Scriptures. For instance, at the 1985 SBC Forum, Cecil Sherman quoted some non-inerrantist sounding lines from the *Criswell Study Bible* and then declared, “W. A. Criswell and I use the Bible very much the same.”⁵⁴ Sherman, citing a rather naturalistic explanation from Criswell regarding the Nile River being turned into blood in Exodus, asked, “Why am I a liberal if I do [that] and he’s an inerrantist if he does?”⁵⁵ Sherman believed that conservatives had often unfairly and preemptively taken advantage of the rhetorical power of inerrancy.⁵⁶

Advocate 2, no. 3 (June 1981): 8-10.

⁵⁴Cecil E. Sherman, “To Trust Again” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶For another example of this, see Herbert Reynolds, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990). Reynolds charged that conservatives had

Fifth, inerrancy did not always have an agreed upon meaning. This is not necessarily to say that it was unstable in the sense that its meaning changed significantly over time. Instead, it is to imply that there was present in the movement quite a wide swath of views regarding inerrancy, specifically having to do with the thoughtfulness and precision with which different conservatives adhered to it. As a result, just what inerrancy looked like and how it worked was not always clear in conservative rhetoric. There were times in which conservatives articulated very clearly what they meant by and how they arrived at the doctrine of inerrancy.⁵⁷ There were times when conservatives more or less assumed that their audience knew what they meant when they referred to inerrancy.⁵⁸ Inerrancy, when used this second way, could often devolve into something more akin to a slogan than a doctrine. This feature of inerrancy as a god term is perhaps best described by autobiographical comments from conservative leader, Paige Patterson. Patterson explained, “Most Baptists believed the Bible was every whit true. In some cases, the conviction was not a particularly thoughtful one, but Baptists in the pew almost always grimaced when someone found fault with the Bible.”⁵⁹ Conservatives did not uniformly define and/or comprehend inerrancy, but they did uniformly reject the idea that the God committed errors in the Bible.

“concocted the Bible as the issues and resurrected the ”liberal“ label to create a worthy adversary.” In a similar vein, Clyde Fant argued that the result of the conservative hermeneutic would be that, “eventually, there is no room for the Bible—the Bible as it really is. It’s too open, too varied [for] fundamentalist interpreters.” See Clyde Fant, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Las Vegas, NV, June 12, 1989).

⁵⁷See especially Clark Pinnock, “Our Source of Authority: The Bible” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Detroit, MI, May 23, 1966); and “Sola Scriptura” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 4, 1968).

⁵⁸Adrian Rogers, for instance, held his Bible high in the air and proclaimed, “I make no apologies—though some say it is controversial and some say it doesn’t need to be said anymore—for believing this book and standing by it And, friend, if it’s not absolute, it’s obsolete.” See Rogers, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, June 13, 1983).

⁵⁹Paige Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation: The Southern Baptist Convention 1978-2004* (Seminary Hill Press, 2011), 7.

It Was All About Inerrancy

The role of inerrancy as a conservative god term is evident in that nearly all of the controversial preaching of the Pastors' Controversy can be explained in terms of its relationship to inerrancy. Preachers at the Pastors' Conference addressed the following controversy-related topics from 1961 to 1991: the controversy itself, the Bible, doctrine, liberalism, the seminaries, inerrancy, Baptist identity, denominational politics, authority, freedom, creation, creeds/confessions, and the priesthood of believers. This work has already demonstrated and described these topics in a previous chapter. Here they are related to the god term of inerrancy.

The controversy itself was very much related to inerrancy. The controversy was certainly about more than inerrancy, but it was not about less. Initially, conservatives desired for the inerrantist position to be *represented* in the convention's institutions. Not long after the controversy was over, conservatives wanted the inerrantist view to be *required* in the convention's institutions. For example, in 1990 conservative trustees at Southern Seminary adopted a policy that essentially used the "Findings" and "Recommendations" sections of the Peace Committee's report as a litmus test for electing and/or awarding tenure to faculty.⁶⁰ The report basically confirmed the conservative movement's views of the Bible as inerrant. The trustee's new policy would therefore ensure that only conservatives who ascribed to inerrancy would be hired and/or be promoted. The policy was a foretaste of what was to come in Southern Baptist life.

The controversial topic of the Bible was also very much related to inerrancy, even if somewhat circularly. The issue of the Bible, specifically its nature, was the primary source of controversy. Was the Bible inerrant or not, and to what extent should inerrancy be required as a test of doctrine for Southern Baptist leadership—these were

⁶⁰“Report of the Peace Committee,” in Shurden and Shepley, *Going for the Jugular*, 206-23; Gregory Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 490-5.

two very important questions of the controversy. They demonstrate the clear connection between the Bible as a controversial topic and inerrancy as a conservative god term.

The subject of doctrine was also a popular topic of controversy. Specifically, was one's doctrine conservative enough? Regarding a host of issues—the atonement, social work, evangelism, etc.—conservatives spoke in behalf of conservative doctrine. Increasingly, inerrancy became a sort of shortcut for answering questions about doctrine. It was not so much that inerrancy guaranteed sound doctrine, but that the lack of inerrancy guaranteed a certain vulnerability of sound doctrine. Clark Pinnock, for example, compared the Bible to a map and inerrancy to the map's accuracy. Pinnock declared, "A faulty map can lead to ruin and shipwreck."⁶¹ For someone to claim inerrancy was, in effect, to claim the conservative position on a host of other doctrinal points. Conservative rhetoric desired to secure orthodoxy as much as possible within the convention's institutions. Inerrancy was the shield that protected doctrine.

If inerrancy was the god term of conservative rhetoric, liberalism was its devil term. More is said elsewhere about liberalism in this regard, but here suffice it to say that, according to conservative rhetoric, there was nothing worse than being a theological liberal. Conservative rhetoric declared that inerrancy was the lynchpin of the denomination's orthodoxy. To leave the pin in place—i.e., to adhere to inerrancy—was to safeguard the denomination's orthodoxy. To remove the pin was to open up the convention to liberalism.⁶²

Inerrancy was also related to the convention's seminaries. Often, conservatives held up doubt-producing, Bible-questioning seminary professors as a sort of archetype for liberalism. When conservatives sought to demonstrate liberalism in the

⁶¹Pinnock, "Our Source of Authority."

⁶²Ibid. Again, an analogy from Clark Pinnock demonstrates this use of inerrancy within conservative preaching. Pinnock made the point, "As a faulty prescription from a doctor could poison the patient, so an error-ridden Bible can undermine the foundation of our certainty in the gospel itself."

convention they turned to the writings of seminary professors. When they wished to warn of the dangers of liberalism, they cited almost mythical stories about young ministry students losing their faith under the influence of liberal seminary professors.⁶³ Preaching in 1965, James Hatley responded to such ideas with a moderate complaint: “We seem to fear so much the possibility of tainting our young men that we choose silence.”⁶⁴ W. Clyde Martin, in giving a testimony to the ministry of Robert G. Lee, praised those who were angered whenever they heard about a liberal professor expressing skepticism toward the Word of God, causing young ministers in training to doubt the Bible.⁶⁵ Conservatives sought the power to remove liberals from Southern Baptist seminaries and replace them with more conservative teachers.

The subject of Baptist identity was also very much related to inerrancy. Conservative rhetoric sought to establish at least two ideas regarding this relationship. First, conservatives desired to show that Baptists had always believed in inerrancy of the Bible, even if they used different words to describe it. Second, conservatives sought to establish orthodoxy as a characteristic of Baptist identity that should not be taken for granted. One picks up on this in comments like the following from Adrian Rogers in 1986. Referring to those within the denomination who questioned the virgin birth of Christ, Rogers insisted, “I wouldn’t give you half a hallelujah for your chances in heaven if you don’t believe in the virgin birth.”⁶⁶ They believed that orthodoxy needed the

⁶³Examples of this were perpetuated by appeals to works such as that by Noel Wesley Hollyfield, “A Sociological Analysis of the Degrees of ‘Christian Orthodoxy’ among Selected Students in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary” (ThM thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976); and Clayton Sullivan, *Called to Preach, Condemned to Survive: The Education of Clayton Sullivan* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985). Both of these works provide examples of how Southern Baptist seminary education was the impetus of religious doubt in ministry students.

⁶⁴James W. Hatley, “The Recovery of Denominational Adaptability” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Dallas, TX, May 31, 1965).

⁶⁵W. Clyde Martin, “Pastors Are Encouraged” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 3, 1968).

⁶⁶Adrian Rogers, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 8, 1986).

protective cover of inerrancy.

Denominational politics were connected with inerrancy. Conservatives often sought to use the political opportunities available in the convention to achieve the end of orthodoxy in the convention's institutions. The desired orthodoxy was viewed as best achieved and secured through a policy of inerrancy. Conservatives therefore sought to use political means to elect inerrantist presidents who would appoint inerrantist persons to certain influential committees that could hopefully, over time, effect true change reflective of the inerrancy cause. This feature of the conservative movement is admittedly more evident when one analyzes the movement as a whole, rather than merely by solely emphasizing the preaching of the Pastors' Conference. Nonetheless, some speakers at the conference did indicate both an awareness and approval of politically motivated preaching. Jerry Sutton, for instance, readily acknowledged the use of politics when he contended, "We need to realize that the Southern Baptist Convention is a political system . . . and there is nothing [inherently] wrong with this!"⁶⁷

Authority, freedom, creeds and confessions, and the priesthood of believers were all doctrinal issues dotted along an important controversy-related spectrum. The spectrum had to do with the tension between the authority of the Bible, the authority of certain interpretations of the Bible as expressed in creeds/confessions, and the freedom of an individual's soul before God as expressed in common iterations of the priesthood of believers and soul competency. Conservatives did not use their pulpit rhetoric primarily to define these topics, but to expose how they could be misunderstood in order to provide harbor for liberalism. For example, Jarry Autrey warned that professors were using so-called "freedom" as loophole to maneuver around certain Baptist doctrines.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Jerry Sutton, "The Emmanuel Factor and Contending for the Faith" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

⁶⁸Jarry Autrey, "Six Essentials" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Philadelphia, PA, June 5, 1972); "Autrey Urges Removal of Bible Rejectors," *Baptist Press*, June 5, 1972.

All parties involved in the controversy believed in some version of the authority of the Bible and in some version of soul freedom. The doctrinal diversity among Southern Baptists regarding these beliefs was a large reason for the controversy itself. One's position regarding inerrancy was very likely an indicator of one's position regarding these other doctrines. Inerrancy nearly demanded a certain, quite conservative hermeneutic. Accordingly, inerrantists desired Southern Baptists to adhere to interpretations of authority, freedom, confessionalism, and priesthood as maintained by the inerrancy hermeneutic. Non-inerrantists did not hold such interpretations, and believed that to be asked to submit to the authority of such interpretations was an infringement upon their freedom and an insult to their status as priests before God. Thus, inerrancy was an important factor in the division that existed between conservatives and moderates regarding the authority-freedom dynamic.

The doctrine of creation was also an important topic of controversy. Inerrantists held that the Genesis account of creation was, at least, a literal and historical account of what really happened when God created the heavens and the earth. Non-inerrantists balked not at inerrantists' belief regarding creation, but at their insistence that others believe similarly or else their doctrine of Scripture and attendant hermeneutic was sub-conservative.

Devil Term

The primary devil term of conservative rhetoric was liberalism. Conservatives mostly railed against liberalism in general, rather than naming people in the convention. It was only later in the controversy that conservatives more regularly and more directly associated liberalism with the moderate cause.⁶⁹ At least, that is certainly the case in the

⁶⁹One is reminded of the way in which W. A. Criswell, preaching in 1988, identified liberalism with Southern Baptist moderates by declaring, "A skunk by any other name still stinks." W. A. Criswell, "The Infallible Word of God" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Antonio, TX, June 13, 1988).

controversial preaching of the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991. Concerning the percentage of sermons that were controversial by topic, the idea of liberalism was present in 40.94 percent of the controversial sermons. Liberalism ranked fourth out of thirteen topics in terms of frequency of appearances in controversial sermons.

Weaver referred to devil terms as the “terms of repulsion” and “prime repellants” within a group’s discourse.⁷⁰ Weaver explained not only the role of devil terms, but also the apparent need for them in a culture’s rhetoric:

There seems indeed to be some obscure psychic law which compels every nation to have in its national imagination an enemy If a nation did not have an enemy, an enemy would have to be invented to take care of those expressions of scorn and hatred to which peoples must give vent Perhaps the truth is that we need the enemy in order to define ourselves.⁷¹

The point in quoting Weaver here is not to suggest that conservatives invented the enemy of liberalism as a sort of superficial-but-powerful foil against which they could contrast their vision for a more orthodox and inerrancy-supporting convention. Rather, the point is twofold: (1) to highlight the power and necessity of devil terminology for a compelling rhetoric; and (2) to emphasize the importance of an enemy for the development of a group’s identity. Portraying one’s enemy provides an important rhetorical opportunity for groups to say who they are by highlighting who they are not. It is really one of the most common techniques of persuasion in any field. The idea is to describe a problem and then offer a solution. For conservative rhetoric the problem was liberalism and the solution was orthodoxy guided by a commitment to an inerrant Bible.

Conservative rhetoric outlined liberalism as the problem of the convention in several ways. First, liberalism was compared to unbelief. Len Turner provides an excellent example of this in his sermon at the 1983 Pastors’ Conference. Turner derided liberal scholars who offered natural explanations for supernatural accounts in the Bible.

⁷⁰Weaver et al., *Language Is Sermonic*, 222.

⁷¹Ibid.

Turner responded, “Well, I’m not that smart! I believe.”⁷² Second, conservative rhetoric conveyed that liberalism was dangerous. One notable instance of this was James Robison’s message to the 1979 Pastors’ Conference, in which he warned that toleration of liberalism would kill the convention.⁷³ Third, liberalism was said to be unmanly. Conservatives believed it took boldness to proclaim inerrancy and conservative theology. W. A. Criswell’s described a liberal preacher: “When I hear a sissy, effeminate preacher, I want to crawl up behind him surreptitiously and holler, ‘Boo’ and scare the living daylights out of him . . . Without conviction and uncertain of anything. So many preachers seek a sophistry of cheap, intellectual veneer.”⁷⁴ Criswell was describing how he saw liberal preachers. Later in this same message he would state plainly, “If you don’t believe the Bible is the Word of God I think you should quit the ministry!”⁷⁵

Fourth, conservative rhetoric employed the devil term of liberalism to mean that liberals were elitist and arrogant. Often, liberal arrogance was paired with comments about intellectualism. Criswell, this time preaching at the 1978 Pastors’ Conference, warned of how liberals, “In the name of scholarship and research, scoff and laugh at this Holy Book.”⁷⁶ Fifth, conservatives argued that liberalism was bad for churches and for America. Charles Stanley linked moral decline in America to liberalism in American churches in his sermon at the 1979 Pastors’ Conference.⁷⁷ Similarly, Bailey Smith,

⁷²Len B. Turner, “Are You Ready to Preach?” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, June 13, 1983).

⁷³James Robison, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 10, 1979).

⁷⁴W. A. Criswell, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991).

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶W. A. Criswell, “Preaching the Word of God” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 12, 1978).

⁷⁷Charles Stanley, “Stand Up America” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 11, 1979).

preaching at the 1991 Pastors' Conference, blamed stagnation in the convention on liberalism within it.⁷⁸ Sixth, conservative rhetoric declared that liberalism was uncharacteristic of what it meant to be a good Southern Baptist. One sampling of this type of rhetoric is provided by Sam Cathey's message at the 1977 Pastors' Conference. Cathey opined that a true Southern Baptist would stand on the inerrant Word of God.⁷⁹

Liberalism as the devil term of conservative rhetoric had all five of the rhetorical capacities of ultimate terms as outlined by Hart and Daughton. Hart and Daughton wrote that ultimate terms are abstract, efficient, hierarchical, pre-emptive, and have unstable meanings.⁸⁰ Liberalism is indeed an abstract idea, not an object. It is an idea or a quality that attaches to an object. For someone or something to be liberal is for that person or thing to be open to new ideas.

In the case of the Conservative Resurgence, the idea of liberalism attached to a certain theology, or to persons who held that theology. Gary Dorrien's definition of liberalism is instructive:

Liberal theology is defined by its openness to the verdicts of modern intellectual inquiry, especially the natural and social sciences; its commitment to the authority of individual reason and experience; its conception of Christianity as an ethical way of life; its favoring of moral concepts of atonement; and its commitment to make Christianity credible and socially relevant to modern people.⁸¹

The conservative devil term of liberalism also demonstrated the rhetorical capacity of efficiency, to be able to communicate a great amount of information with as few words as possible. The term "liberalism" communicated most of what conservatives desired to know about either a person or a doctrinal position. To accuse someone of

⁷⁸Bailey E. Smith, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991).

⁷⁹Sam Cathey, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Kansas City, MO, June 13, 1977).

⁸⁰Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 155-6.

⁸¹Gary J. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), xxiii.

being liberal was effectively to summarize their position on basically all, or at least most, of the controversial issues of the conflict. Was the person a liberal? If so, he did not believe in inerrancy. He likely did not believe in the historicity of the Genesis account of creation. He probably valued academic freedom in the convention's seminaries over and against confessional orthodoxy. There is a good chance he accepted the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation with little qualification, with the result being that the Bible could contain all sorts of factual errors—be it in regard to dates, numbers, miracles, etc.—and yet retain its authority. According to conservative rhetoric and the employment of liberalism as a devil term, all this could likely be deduced simply by determining whether a person was a liberal.

The third rhetorical capacity of a devil term is that it is hierarchical, meaning that it represented the highest of values within a group and therefore subsumed lesser, related values. Liberalism definitely served in this capacity for conservative rhetoric in the Resurgence. If inerrancy was the god term of conservatives, then it is quite consistent for that which inerrancy protected against (i.e., liberalism; unorthodoxy) to be at the top of the conservative “pantheon of values” in a negative sense.⁸² For conservatives, the opposite of orthodoxy was liberalism. According to conservative rhetoric, the devil term of liberalism encompassed many different, lesser ideas—lesser in the sense that they did not rank as high in the conservative pyramid of values. For example, opposition to inerrancy, denial of significant modernistic influence upon the theology of Southern Baptist seminary professors, naturalistic explanations of many of the Bible's miraculous accounts, and a very broad view of soul competency and priesthood of believers—these and other ideas were subsumed under the larger term of liberalism.

Liberalism was also a pre-emptive term. Hart and Daughton describe the pre-

⁸²“Pantheon of values” is Hart and Daughton's phrase. See Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 156.

emptive function of devil terms: “In persuasion, whoever scrambles to the high ground first can set the parameters for the debate and, often, its necessary conclusion as well.”⁸³ Conservatives often sought to do precisely this, to assume the high ground of orthodoxy by referring to others as liberals. One of the more outlandish examples of liberalism as a pre-emptive term was that of James Robison in his sermon at the 1978 Pastors’ Conference. Robison exclaimed, “My blood boils when I hear people call Southern Baptists liberals.”⁸⁴ To be liberal was nearly the worst thing imaginable. Robison even goes so far as to compare liberalism with homosexuality, with the former representing a perversion of the Bible and the latter a perversion of sexuality.⁸⁵

Conservative rhetoric often sought to end discussion by throwing around the word “liberal.” Moderates certainly perceived conservative rhetoric this way. Grady Cothen spoke out strongly against the conservative practice of labeling others “carelessly, thoughtlessly and dishonestly as a liberal.”⁸⁶ Cothen believed that conservatives used the label of liberalism to blacklist others uncritically. In doing so, they supposedly preempted discussion concerning whether and in what way(s) the accused were actually liberal.

Liberalism had an unstable meaning in the controversy. The parties involved in the conflict never agreed upon just exactly what constituted being a liberal. Conservatives maintained that there was a strong, influential presence of liberalism in the convention’s institutions. Moderates consistently disagreed. Nowhere is the instability of the meaning of liberalism on more open display than in Roy McClain’s sermon at the

⁸³Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 156.

⁸⁴James Robison, “Where Are the Prophets?” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 12, 1978).

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Grady C. Cothen, “God’s Men” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 31, 1971).

1962 Pastors' Conference. McClain opined,

If by liberal you mean a smart alec who begins with a premise of his own intellect to determine a theological question, or one who devotes himself to getting out of a theological jungle by his own reasoning power and leaves his followers with no faith at all, then being a liberal is not a compliment but a condemnation If you mean a liberal is one who believes in fundamentalism but doesn't like the fundamentalist tag, one who is open minded in the search for truth, one who knows he doesn't have all the answers but wants to make a contribution through intellectual study and research, then being a liberal is a great compliment.⁸⁷

McClain gives two vastly different meanings for liberalism. The description of a liberal in the first half of McClain's statement is a fair summary of the way conservatives often perceived of liberals in the convention. In a similar manner, the description in the second half of McClain's statement is a reasonable explanation of how many moderates viewed so-called liberals in the convention, and a form of liberalism with which they identified.

Charismatic term(s)

Inerrancy was the primary ultimate term of conservative rhetoric during the years from 1961 to 1991. While inerrancy met some of the requirements of charismatic terms as described by Weaver, it did not meet all of the requirements. Weaver argued that charismatic terms were terms of considerable power. Certainly inerrancy wielded great power as a rhetorical term during the controversy. However, its power was not mostly a power that changed minds. The rhetoric of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum does not reveal a power in the term that converted people from one side of the controversy to the other. Its power was that of a revealer, a decoder. What one thought about inerrancy—specifically, whether one adhered to it and/or whether one believed faithfulness to Scripture required one to adhere to it—was perhaps the greatest indicator of whether one sympathized more with the moderate or conservative cause. The inerrancy rhetoric made Southern Baptists choose sides. In this sense, it was a very

⁸⁷Roy O. McClain, "Making Disciples" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Francisco, CA, June 4, 1962). It is worth mentioning that McClain referred to himself in this message as a "liberal-conservative."

powerful term. However, all ultimate terms hold significant power. So power alone does not make a term charismatic. Power makes the term ultimate.

Second, inerrancy derived power from conservatives' perception of God as the author of Scripture. Conservative promoters did not concoct power and give it to inerrancy unnaturally. Conservatives understood the power of inerrancy to be derived from the power of the Word of God, and the power of the Word of God to be derived from God himself. Conservatives consistently maintained that the Bible was inerrant because God wrote it, and God does not commit error. Thus, inerrancy held a rhetorical power closely associated with the power of God.

Third, inerrancy was not detached from its referent, the idea of a perfect, error-free Bible. Detachment from a referential counterpart is one of the key distinguishing features of charismatic terms. Charismatic terms maintain their power even as they move away from meaningful correspondences from the idea or thing that they signify.

Fourth, inerrancy did occupy very limited space as one of, if not the most, rhetorically potent terms in conservative rhetoric. This is certainly a quality of charismatic terms, but not one that distinguishes them from more general ultimate terms.

Fifth, inerrancy did not resist definition. Inerrancy may have had an unstable meaning, that is, conservatives may have understood inerrancy one way and moderates another. However, to have an unstable meaning and to have a broad range of meaning is not the same as to resist definition. One of the most distinctive features of the rhetorical use of charismatic terms is the resistance to definition for fear that nuance and texture will decrease persuasive impact. Inerrancy was not a charismatic term according to this measurement. In fact, conservatives often worked diligently in order to define and explain what they meant by the term inerrancy. Eighty-nine of the 127 most directly controversy-related sermons of the Pastors' Conference were about the Bible and/or inerrancy. Both Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson—two of the most widely recognized leaders of the conservative movement—were original adopters and signers of the

“Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy?”⁸⁸ Southern Baptists led the Conference On Biblical Inerrancy, and were responsible for the resultant publication of essays devoted to defining and understanding inerrancy.⁸⁹ Thus, conservatives promoted, rather than resisting, the definition of inerrancy. Conservatives certainly used inerrancy as a part of their rhetorical strategy, but they did not proactively discourage understanding of the term.⁹⁰

Sixth, inerrancy was not irrational. Weaver argued that charismatic terms were irrational in the sense that they sustained no meaningful correlation with the ideas or things to which they referred. Charismatic terms are largely irrational because their detachment from referents renders their relationship to a referent very unclear. Inerrancy was not irrational in this way. Inerrancy referred to an idea about the Bible. Whether or not one agreed with the position of inerrancy, it was never in doubt what the referent of inerrancy was—namely, the concept of an error-free Bible. Further, Weaver suggested that charismatic terms often resorted to abbreviated or telescoped forms in order to depersonalize their force. This was never the case with inerrancy in the rhetoric of the conservative movement.

⁸⁸See “List of Signers of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” (Summit I of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, Chicago, 1978), http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1_typed.pdf; see also the actual statement, “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” (Summit I of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, Chicago, 1978), http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf. Pressler’s and Patterson’s signatures on the Chicago Statement do not necessarily prove that the conservative movement worked diligently to define and explain inerrancy. It does demonstrate that two of the movement’s leaders—two very important, influential, and visible leaders—were willing to attach themselves to a very careful, well-defined, and accessible presentation of inerrancy.

⁸⁹Broadman Press, *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, 1987* (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1987).

⁹⁰Conservative leaders obviously did not require a sophisticated, theologically literate understanding of inerrancy in order for participation in their movement. Neither side maintained such stipulations. The conservative strategy did, however, appeal to a very simple, common Baptist desire—the desire to honor God’s Word. Accordingly, for many of the more uninformed among Southern Baptists, the conservative rhetoric must have at least sounded as though it was more biblical. This was a large part of the appeal of the conservative rhetorical strategy regarding inerrancy. The average Southern Baptist preferred the idea that the Bible does not have errors in it to the idea that the Bible very well might have errors in it, but that the errors do not really matter. Conservative rhetoric concerning inerrancy certainly took advantage of this Southern Baptist preference.

Weaver proposed two main tests for the discernment of charismatic terms. The first test is the intentional, contrived, top-down promotion of a more normal term to the status of a charismatic term. The second test is irrationality as defined by a lack of correspondence between term and referent. Inerrancy does not meet the demands of either of these tests. Conservative leadership did promote inerrancy, but not unnaturally. The theological movements effected by modernism, the growth of neo-orthodoxy, and the openness in Southern Baptist seminaries to the higher-critical method of biblical and historical interpretation were all factors that gave rise to the conservative movement and its god term of inerrancy. The conservative movement was a natural reflex reaction to the growing openness toward theological liberalism in the institutions of the Southern Baptist Convention—openness demonstrated in the early years of the Pastors’ Conference surveyed in this work. Had this openness not been present, then perhaps it could be argued that inerrancy was a fabricated or unnaturally elevated rhetorical term.

Weaver’s theory suggests an ethic of rhetoric regarding charismatic terminology. Inerrancy did not satisfy any of Weaver’s descriptive qualifications of a charismatic term. It may be concluded, therefore, that use of the term “inerrancy”—regardless of one’s position regarding it—was not an unethical rhetorical strategy based upon the canon of Weaver’s concept of ultimate terms.

The Ultimate Terms of Moderate Rhetoric

Conservatives were not the only ones who developed and took advantage of ultimate terms. Moderates also had their own special terminology. The predominant god term of moderate rhetoric was “freedom.” And while there was not one overarching devil term in moderate rhetoric, there were several very negative ideas represented by a variety of terms.

God Term

The topic of freedom does not show up explicitly—that is, by direct naming or

referencing—in the preaching of the SBC Forum with quite as much regularity as the conservative god term of inerrancy did in the preaching of the Pastors’ Conference. In terms of explicit references, freedom shows up in only 15.79 percent of the Forum sermons directly related to the controversy, while inerrancy was immediately present in 18.9 percent of the Pastors’ Conference sermons directly related to the controversy. However, when one considers the way in which freedom served as an ultimate value and guiding principle for basically all of the controversial topics of the Forum, and when one factors in that 88.37 percent of all Forum sermons contained topics directly related to the controversy, one concludes with warrant that freedom dominated the preaching of the SBC Forum. More is said below in order to establish the connection between the god term of freedom and the other controversy-related topics present in moderate preaching. First, however, it is beneficial to demonstrate that freedom exhibits all of the rhetorical capacities of an ultimate term as summarized by Hart and Daughton.⁹¹

First, freedom is abstract rather than concrete, an idea, not an object. According to Walter Shurden, who spoke about freedom at the 1985 SBC Forum, freedom is “the inalienable right and responsibility of every person to interpret God for himself.”⁹² Shurden was dealing in the realm of ideas, not the realm of tangible, measurable objects.

Second, freedom is efficient. Efficiency here refers to the ability to accomplish much with little verbiage. James Slatton demonstrated the efficiency of the term “freedom” in his 1987 address to the SBC Forum. He summarized the entire controversy as a choice “between freedom and coercion [*sic*].”⁹³ The word “freedom”

⁹¹Hart and Daughton list the following five rhetorical capacities of ultimate terms: that they are abstract; efficient; hierarchical; pre-emptive; and that they have unstable meanings. See Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 155-6.

⁹²Walter Shurden, “I Am Soul Competency” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

⁹³James Slatton, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

was efficient enough for Slatton to describe the entire moderate movement. Third, and also demonstrative of efficiency, is the hierarchical nature of ultimate terms. Norman Cavender, speaking at the 1986 SBC Forum, illustrates both the subsuming and hierarchical nature of freedom as a moderate god term. Speaking of freedom, Cavender stated, “All that we are as Baptists can be summed up in that word.”⁹⁴ In other words, for Cavender and moderate rhetoric, to say Baptists are free is to say both many things about what it means to be Baptist and the most important thing about what it means to be Baptist.

The fourth rhetorical capacity of ultimate terms is that they are pre-emptive. Moderate preachers indeed used freedom pre-emptively. Moderates declared that freedom was an undeniable right. To say something is undeniable is to attempt to forestall an opponent’s rebuttal—i.e., it is to work pre-emptively. Walter Shurden concluded about freedom, “The only freedom you do not have is the freedom not to choose.”⁹⁵ In other words, freedom cannot be denied. It exists. One may argue with it, or one may seek to restrict it or infringe upon it. One cannot, however, do away with it.

Fifth, freedom also displays the final rhetorical characteristic of unstable meaning. Freedom meant many different things in moderate rhetoric. Shurden referred to freedom as soul freedom, soul competency, the baptismification of faith, and the priesthood of believers. Admittedly, freedom is related to each of these things. However, in order to be so connected freedom must have a pretty elastic definitional capacity.

The ultimate nature of freedom is demonstrated by the ways in which each of the Forum’s divisive topics can be explained in terms of their relationship to freedom.

⁹⁴Norman Cavender, “The Bells of Liberty” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 9, 1986).

⁹⁵Shurden, “I Am Soul Competency.”

These topics are listed in table 3.

Table 3. SBC Forum sermons that were controversial by topic

| | <i>Controversial Topic</i> | <i>Number of Sermons in Which Preachers Employ Controversial Topic</i> | <i>Percentage of Controversial Sermons (%)</i> | <i>Percentage of Total Sermons (%)</i> |
|----|--|--|--|--|
| 1 | Controversy | 22 | 57.89 | 51.16 |
| 2 | Bible | 14 | 36.84 | 32.56 |
| 3 | Differences between Conservatives and Moderates | 14 | 36.84 | 32.56 |
| 4 | Authority | 7 | 18.42 | 16.28 |
| 5 | Freedom | 6 | 15.79 | 13.95 |
| 6 | Women in Ministry | 6 | 15.79 | 13.95 |
| 7 | Conservatives Are Oppressive | 5 | 13.16 | 11.63 |
| 8 | Preaching | 5 | 13.16 | 11.63 |
| 9 | Denominational Politics | 4 | 10.53 | 9.3 |
| 10 | Priesthood of Believer(s) | 4 | 10.53 | 9.3 |
| 11 | Creeds and Confessions | 4 | 10.53 | 9.3 |
| 12 | Doctrinal Accountability in Baptist Institutions | 2 | 5.26 | 4.65 |
| 13 | Baptist Identity | 3 | 7.89 | 6.98 |
| 14 | Soul Competency | 2 | 5.26 | 4.65 |

The first topic is the controversy at large. Freedom was a large and important factor in

the controversy. Most Forum speakers directly addressed the denominational conflict. In fact, out of all the preaching that took place in the SBC Forum, the topic of the controversy itself was mentioned significantly more than any other topic. Forum speakers addressed the turmoil in 51.16 percent of their total sermons from 1984 to 1991. In an important way, the controversy as a whole was a battle over freedom. It was not so much a battle over whether Baptists should be free, but it was a battle about the dynamic tension between freedom and authority. Particularly, it was a battle over how the freedom of the individual soul is to be understood and related to the authority structures at work within the denomination. The authority structures consisted of the Bible, different interpretations of the Bible, and confessional expressions about and of the Bible.

The god term of freedom was also closely related to the controversial subject of the Bible. Moderates argued for the freedom of individuals to interpret Scripture for themselves. Conservatives responded that freedom of interpretation does not guarantee accuracy of interpretation. Conservatives desired to tighten the accountability measures within Southern Baptist institutions so as to safeguard orthodoxy.⁹⁶ Moderates responded that such accountability to specific interpretations of the Bible and a specific view of the nature of the Bible was a crime against the freedom of one's soul before God.

The ultimate term of freedom was closely connected with how moderates perceived the differences between themselves and conservatives. Preaching at the 1987 Forum, James Slatton explained that the difference between conservatives and moderates was the difference "between freedom and coercion [*sic*]."⁹⁷ Freedom was also at one end of the tension between freedom and authority, one of the defining issues of the

⁹⁶For example, James Slatton described conservative attempts at accountability as "conformity" and "exclusiveness." See James Slatton, "Untitled Message." Likewise, Lavonn Brown declared that conservative notions of doctrinal accountability were "unexamined and legalistic." See Lavonn D. Brown, "The Journey from Faith to Faith" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

⁹⁷James Slatton, "Untitled Message."

controversy. Moderates believed that the Bible was authoritative, but that the authoritative nature of the Bible was intended to be exercised more on a personal spiritual level rather than a denominational enforcement level.

The subject of women in ministry was controversial. It was also closely tied to moderate ideas about freedom. The idea was that individual women were free to hear God's call for themselves. They did not need the approval of the denomination. Further, individual Baptists and individual churches were free to interpret the Scriptures relevant to women's ordination for themselves.

Two other controversial topics—that conservatives are mean and that conservatives preach in a more mean fashion than moderates—can also be understood in terms of their relationship to freedom. Moderates viewed conservatives as mean for two main reasons, both of which concerned the apparent conservative need for control. First, conservatives sought to remove moderates from positions of influence in the convention and replace them with conservatives. In this sense, the Conservatives Resurgence was indeed a takeover effort. Second, conservatives could be mean. Conservatives were not the only ones in the controversy who could be mean, but they could be mean.⁹⁸ Both sides were made up of sinners. Accordingly, both sides engaged in less than flattering behavior and speech.

Kenneth Chafin, speaking at the 1985 SBC Forum, talked about how appealing mean preaching was to a crowd. He warned against the lure of this type of preaching and urged his hearers to engage in encouraging preaching instead.⁹⁹ Herbert Reynolds,

⁹⁸When Sam Cathey told non-inerrantists to get out of the convention and make sure not to take any churches when they go, he was not being nice; Cathey, "Untitled Message." Similarly, when Earl Quinn referred to a conservative as "some ministerial blimp whose attainments are gastronomical rather than intellectual, and whose only achievement is an ability to speak at great length on a full stomach," he was not being nice either. Earl Quinn, "Walking Worthy of the Vocation" (The Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 22, 1961).

⁹⁹Kenneth Chafin, "An Encouraging Word" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984).

speaking at the 1990 SBC Forum referred to conservative leaders as “ambitious malcontents [with a goal] to control and manipulate a large group of people to satisfy their own unhealthy personality needs.”¹⁰⁰ Moderates viewed meanness—whether in preaching style, takeover strategies, or in unnecessary and hurtful language—as a reproach to genuine freedom. For example, John Killinger related at the 1990 SBC Forum, “Free people don’t need to hold other people in bondage. My gospel is about being free. It’s not about gaining control.”¹⁰¹

Moderate rhetoric also related denominational politics to the governing idea of freedom. Moderates believed their freedom was on the line, and the only way to protect it was by electing a moderate president. In 1985, Cecil Sherman lamented at the Forum, “It was never in the intention of the founders of the Forum that this should become a political caucus In these days no one can speak without making reference to our division.”¹⁰² Sherman then conceded of his own sermon, “It is very political.”¹⁰³

Three other topics closely connected with the controversy—the priesthood of believers, Baptist identity, and soul competency—were also directly related to the god term of freedom, that moderates viewed them as inseparable, and in some ways, synonymous with freedom. One was a priest before God because one was free before God. The soul was competent to deal directly with God because the soul was free. Moderate rhetoric perceived any threat to the priesthood of believers, Baptist identity, and soul competency as a direct threat to freedom.

The remaining two topics of controversy—creeds/confessions tighter doctrinal accountability in Southern Baptist institutions—are also connected to freedom. To have

¹⁰⁰Reynolds, “Untitled Message.”

¹⁰¹John Killinger, “Living with a Trouble Maker” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

¹⁰²Sherman, “To Trust Again.”

¹⁰³Ibid.

a confession such as the *Baptist Faith and Message* was one thing to moderates. To attempt to hold Southern Baptist institutions accountable to the conservatives' interpretation of the *Baptist Faith and Message* was another. Moderates perceived the conservative emphasis on the *Baptist Faith and Message* and conservative attempts to rein in liberalism in the denomination's seminaries as an unnecessary, anti-Baptist, creedalistic infringement upon freedom.

Freedom was the god term of moderate rhetoric, for moderates saw everything in the controversy as an issue of freedom. As has been demonstrated, each controversy-related topic is readily explained by its relationship to freedom. Freedom encompassed everything moderates stood for and everything moderates believed conservatives stood against.

Devil Term

While freedom is clearly the god term of moderate rhetoric, it is not quite as clear what its devil term was. Moderates certainly engaged in negative rhetoric, just not quite as consistently with one term as conservatives did with liberalism. There were several terms or ideas that moderates spoke out against often. They frequently spoke negatively about inerrancy, fundamentalism, and anything seemingly opposed to freedom.

Inerrancy. The one term that moderates spoke out against most consistently in the preaching of the SBC Forum was inerrancy. In moderate rhetoric, inerrancy does not meet all the requirements of an ultimate devil term. It does, however, meet a few of those requirements. Further, moderates consistently employed negative rhetoric in opposition to inerrancy. Moderates were not uniformly opposed to inerrancy. Rather, they were uniformly opposed to inerrancy as a standard by which to judge the soundness

of one's theology.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, in actual practice moderate preachers often spoke out negatively against inerrancy.

Moderates employed negative rhetoric against inerrancy at all but one of the meetings of the SBC Forum, with the exception being the 1991 meeting.¹⁰⁵ In 1984 David Matthews preached that inerrancy was bibliolatry.¹⁰⁶ In 1985, Cecil Sherman complained that conservatives were unfairly selective in how they applied inerrancy and how they went about labeling persons as liberals.¹⁰⁷ Also in 1985, Randall Lolley referred to the inerrancy debate as a trivial dispute.¹⁰⁸ Lolley also charged that inerrancy was a simplistic, literalistic, legalistic way to understand the Bible.¹⁰⁹ William Self explained that defending inerrancy was unnecessary because "the God we serve was big enough to take care of Himself."¹¹⁰

At the 1986 SBC Forum Norman Cavender referred to inerrancy as "silly pronouncements demanding that only one set of opinions of the first 11 chapters of Genesis be tolerated, with no liberty allowed for other views."¹¹¹ Also in 1986, Peter

¹⁰⁴Franklin Pollard is an example of a moderate who was not only unopposed to inerrancy, but was actually an inerrantist. Pollard claimed to be such in his message at the 1990 SBC Forum. He had no problem with inerrancy; he had a problem with, as he put it, the denomination arguing over lesser things. Pollard compared arguing over inerrancy to making a mountain out of a molehill. Franklin D. Pollard, "Entrusted with the Gospel" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

¹⁰⁵It should be noted that the 1991 meeting was not a preaching conference as the previous years had been. There were only two speakers at the 1991 Forum, Dan Martin and John Hewett. Neither Martin nor Hewett preached, strictly speaking. They shared testimonies. Martin shared about his experience as an editor with Baptist Press. Hewett shared about the formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. See Dan Martin, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991); and John H. Hewett, "Overview of the Birth of the the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 3, 1991).

¹⁰⁶David Matthews, "Preaching and the Sovereignty of God" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984).

¹⁰⁷Sherman, "To Trust Again."

¹⁰⁸Randall Lolley, "Integrity in Proclaiming the Gospel" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰William L. Self, "What They Don't Teach You At a Baptist Preacher's School" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

¹¹¹Cavender, "The Bells of Liberty."

Flamming warned that inerrantists made each of the following mistakes: (1) they were often more devoted to a book than to Jesus; (2) they overreached when they made claims about the Bible; and (3) they were spending too much time in debate over the Bible and not enough time living in accordance with the teaching of the Bible.¹¹²

In 1987, James Slatton opined that moderates were committed to the Bible, while conservatives were committed to doctrinal formulae about the Bible.¹¹³ Likewise, Nancy Sehested Hastings referred to inerrancy as a “helium-filled balloon of abstraction.”¹¹⁴ In a similar manner, John Hewett insisted that demanding compliance to inerrancy was akin to biblical accounts of Jewish Christians who desired circumcision as a requirement in order to be a part of the people of God.¹¹⁵

At the 1988 SBC Forum Bill Leonard said inerrancy was a Bible controversy intertwined with power politics that was unnecessarily tearing the convention apart.¹¹⁶ Tony Campolo warned that conservatives were fighting over the Bible while refusing to believe what it said.¹¹⁷ Clyde Fant went so far as to suggest that inerrancy pushed the Bible out of its own place, warning that, for inerrantists, “There is no room for the Bible—the Bible as it really is. It’s too open, too varied [for] fundamentalist interpreters.”¹¹⁸

In 1990, Herbert Reynolds accused conservatives of concocting inerrancy as

¹¹²Peter James Flamming, “Orthodoxy of Love” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 9, 1986).

¹¹³Slatton, “Untitled Message.”

¹¹⁴Nancy Hastings Sehested, “Will the Real Minister Please Stand Up?” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

¹¹⁵John H. Hewett, “Devising the Indivisible” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

¹¹⁶Bill J. Leonard, “Improvising Grace” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, San Antonio, TX, June 12, 1988).

¹¹⁷Anthony Campolo, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, San Antonio, TX, June 12, 1988).

¹¹⁸Fant, “Untitled Message.”

the issue of the controversy.¹¹⁹ Randall Lolley warned that inerrantists had “used our Bible to bludgeon persons into submission to their imperfect interpretations.”¹²⁰ Franklin Pollard argued that conservatives would kill the convention by arguing over lesser things and making mountains out of molehills—that is, by insisting that inerrancy was so important.¹²¹

Like a devil term, inerrancy is abstract, an idea about the Bible, not to be confused with the Bible. The Bible is an object; the doctrine of inerrancy is not. Also like a devil term, inerrancy had an unstable meaning. In moderate rhetoric sometimes inerrancy referred to a literalist interpretation of the Genesis account of creation, at others inerrancy referred to replacing God with the Bible. Other times inerrancy referred to fundamentalist tendencies regarding certain conservative interpretations of the Bible. It is clear that inerrancy was a broad idea that could mean or refer to a number of different ideas within moderate rhetoric.

It is not certain just how efficient inerrancy was as a term for moderates. It held some qualities of efficiency. For example, to speak of those who insist on a certain view of the Bible was to bring to mind the entire conservative movement. However, inerrancy was much more efficient for conservative rhetoric than it was for moderate rhetoric. Conservatives understood inerrancy to encompass all sorts of other bibliological traits such as truthfulness, integrity, authority, and infallibility. For moderates, inerrancy did not contain these concepts. Moderates held that the Bible could be all of these other things without necessarily being inerrant.

In some ways moderates used inerrancy pre-emptively in the course of their rhetoric. They often attempted to prove how wonderful the Bible was without necessarily

¹¹⁹Reynolds, “Untitled Message.”

¹²⁰W. Randall Lolley, “Lest a Bramble Rule Over Us” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

¹²¹Pollard, “Entrusted with the Gospel.”

being inerrant. This was a sort of pre-emptive strategy, attempting to achieve what inerrancy portrays—namely, a very high view of the Bible—without having to bring inerrancy into the discussion. However, conservatives used inerrancy as a pre-emptive rhetoric much more than moderates.

Unlike a devil term, inerrancy was not a hierarchical term in moderate rhetoric. Inerrancy was important to moderate rhetoric because it had to respond to all of the inerrancy-laden rhetoric coming from conservatives. It was a term of control, a control that sought to abridge their freedom. Inerrancy represented an attempt at conservative control, one that stood very much in opposition to moderate freedom. Therefore moderates had to speak to the issue of inerrancy, regardless of whether they agreed with it as a description of the Bible.

Fundamentalism. Moderates also spoke out against fundamentalism with some frequency in the preaching of the SBC Forum. Cavender spoke out against conservatives as fundamentalists in 1986.¹²² Slatton did so at the 1987 Forum.¹²³ Alan Neely called conservatives “belligerent, hostile fundamentalists” at the 1988 Forum meeting.¹²⁴ John Killinger spoke out against the fundamentalist tendencies of those conservatives who wanted to put an end to the Forum in 1989.¹²⁵

Fundamentalism perhaps meets several of the characteristics of ultimate terms. Fundamentalism is abstract. It is also efficient. It is not necessarily hierarchical. It is pre-emptive. It also has an unstable meaning. Nonetheless, the actual usage of

¹²²Cavender, “The Bells of Liberty.” Cavender chided conservatives for demanding the removal of professors who did not adopt “rigid fundamentalist positions.”

¹²³Slatton, “Untitled Message.” Slatton complained that conservatives were “Fundamentalists [who] are willing to count moderates’ noses and money, but do not have room for their theology.”

¹²⁴Alan Neely, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, San Antonio, TX, June 13, 1988).

¹²⁵Killinger, “Living with a Trouble Maker.”

fundamentalism as a term within moderate rhetoric at the Forum was not frequent enough to justify calling it a devil term of their discourse.

Charismatic Terms

The moderate god term of freedom meets most of Weaver's characteristics of a charismatic term. First, freedom was a powerful term, especially in the hearing of moderate Southern Baptists. However, all ultimate terms are powerful, not merely charismatic terms. Second, the power of freedom was derived in some ways and it was given in other ways.¹²⁶ Power that is derived is not charismatic power. It is true that the Baptist idea of freedom was very important to Baptists well before the controversy. In this sense, the power of freedom as an ultimate term was derived. However, moderates worked rather intentionally to rekindle the power of freedom as a direct response to the conservative rhetoric of inerrancy. In this sense, the power of freedom was in some measure given. Given power is charismatic power. Freedom bears the qualities of both given and derived power.

Third, freedom was not attached very well to a single, observable, agreed-upon referent. The moderate vision of freedom as the nexus of Baptist identity may well be a charismatic term. Weaver explains, “[Charismatic] terms seem to have broken loose somehow and to operate independently of referential connections.”¹²⁷ It is true freedom became a defining characteristic of Baptist identity as progressive Baptists sought to respond to modernism in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries.¹²⁸ However,

¹²⁶Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 227. Weaver has noted that charismatic terms “have a power which is not derived, but which is in some mysterious way given.”

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸See Gregory A. Wills, “Southern Baptist Identity: A Historical Perspective,” in *Southern Baptist Identity: An Evangelical Denomination Faces the Future*, ed. David S. Dockery (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 65-87. Wills provides a historical outline of Baptist identity that demonstrates both the older, orthodoxy-based concept of Baptist identity, and the later-developing, freedom-based concept of Baptist identity.

to suggest that freedom is unquestionably the defining mark of Baptist identity is seriously to risk untethering oneself from the historical reality that, for the first two to three hundred years of Baptist history, Baptists conceived of orthodoxy as the center of Baptist identity.¹²⁹

Was there any sort of idealist sense of freedom—religious or otherwise—to which moderates referred when they lauded freedom in protest of the conservative movement? Moderates may very well have meant freedom simply in the sense of “not conservatives.” In other words, the freedom movement of moderate Southern Baptists was not a freestanding end in and of itself. It was a response. Freedom was a needed response to the rhetoric of the conservative movement. As such, moderates pushed freedom up the rhetorical ladder of potency in order to bolster their own politics. This is not to deny the presence of freedom as an important part of Baptist identity well before the controversy. It is to suggest that freedom’s importance was intentionally promoted by moderate rhetoric.

Fourth, freedom was one of a small number of powerful rhetorical terms. Again, however, this is a feature of all ultimate terms, not only charismatic terms. Fifth, freedom was not easily defined. Unstable meanings are characteristic of ultimate terms. Imprecise meanings are more of the nature of charismatic terms. Moderate rhetoric certainly offered definitions of freedom. Those definitions were quite abstract, though. Walter Shurden’s definition of freedom states, “[freedom is] the inalienable right and responsibility of every person to interpret God for himself.”¹³⁰ This is a definition, but it is one that provides great license, and as such can mean just about anything someone who is “interpret[ing] God for himself” wants it to mean. According to this definition of

¹²⁹Wills, "Southern Baptist Identity," 70. Wills explains, “For most Baptists prior to the twentieth century, Baptist identity derived almost entirely from the shared belief and practice of their churches.”

¹³⁰Shurden, “I Am Soul Competency.”

freedom, nearly any religious claim could be made with the defense of freedom as a justification. In fact, Shurden's definition of freedom leaves room for someone to change the very definition of freedom—so long as that person is acting in accordance with his right to interpret God for himself. The openness of such a definition renders it not necessarily meaningless, but inexhaustibly definable.

Carl Kell and Raymond Camp have rightly pointed out that conservative rhetoric often employed the argument by genus, or argument by definition.¹³¹ Weaver identified this type of argumentation: “All arguments made through genus are arguments based on the nature of the thing which is said to constitute the genus.”¹³² Weaver postulated that the nature of the genus could be applied to the nature of the genus' various species for purposes of persuasion. For example, if the Bible is inerrant—with the Bible being the genus and inerrancy being its nature—then Baptists, if they wish to be biblical, must be inerrantists so that the nature of the species (i.e., inerrantist Baptists) matches the nature of the genus (i.e., an inerrant Bible).

It should be noted that moderates attempted to do the same thing with their freedom rhetoric. Moderates insisted that being Baptist meant freedom. SBC Forum messages bear out this notion of the Baptist identity as one of freedom. Walter Shurden referred to freedom as “the baptistification of faith,” and maintained that the freedom was the “spirit that pervades all of Baptist principles.”¹³³ Norman Cavender declared, “All that we are as Baptists can be summed up in that word, liberty The song of liberty is the sound of the living out of Baptist faith All that we say about our Baptist faith translates into the word ‘liberty’ Liberty and Baptist mean the same thing.”¹³⁴

¹³¹Kell and Camp, *In the Name of the Father*, 5, 20-21, 27, 29, 30, 46, 51.

¹³²Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 56.

¹³³Shurden, “I Am Soul Competency.”

¹³⁴Cavender, “The Bells of Liberty.”

According to moderate rhetoric, anything that balked against freedom was to be perceived as not being Baptist. Indeed, this was an argument by genus, or an argument from definition. Conservatives sought to restrict freedom in the sense that they desired confessional orthodoxy in the convention's institutions and positions of leadership. Accordingly, per the moderate rhetoric of freedom, conservatives were not acting as Baptists.

Sixth, freedom also exhibits some of what Weaver refers to as the irrational qualities of charismatic terms. Weaver described the irrationality of charismatic terms as lacking meaningful correlation to any observable referent. The referent to which freedom correlated was never entirely clear. Moderate rhetors referred to freedom as liberty, competency, the baptistification of faith, the priesthood of believers, and autonomy. One is reminded of Weaver's description of a charismatic term: "The variety of things it is used to symbolize is too weird and too contradictory for one to find even a core meaning in present-day usages."¹³⁵ The best referent for the moderate notion of freedom, based upon its usage in SBC Forum preaching, seems to be, quite broadly speaking, that quality of Southern Baptist life that enabled the most progressive Southern Baptists to be in the same denomination with the most fundamentalist-minded Southern Baptists in a setting where theological accountability was all but prohibited. A freedom such as this, though, is quite hard to distinguish from license. Not only that, but a freedom such as this cannot feel terribly liberating to any Southern Baptist whose interpretation of God leads him to desire confessional accountability. For those Southern Baptists—i.e., the conservative movement—freedom is not freedom. It is precisely the opposite. It is coercive, exclusive, and intolerant. It may even smack of fundamentalism. When freedom is coercion, freedom is irrational.

Freedom as a charismatic term is anti-definitional. The anti-definitional

¹³⁵Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 228.

posture of freedom lends itself toward irrationality. Moderate rhetoric took the well-known Baptist phrase, “No creed but the Bible,” and used it synonymously with “freedom” in order to defend an inhibition of confessional articulation. Clyde Fant, preaching at the 1989 SBC Forum, warned that the Bible is much too open and varied for conservative interpretations.¹³⁶ In other words, conservatives cannot be right because their theology is too defined. The moderate notion of Baptist identity has been well described by Tom Nettles as constituting “a puffy-edged Baptist self-consciousness, while the massive points of variety, and even contrariety, in each broadly-conceived area of commonality must be seen as perfectly acceptable under the umbrella of Baptist freedom.”¹³⁷

Is there any aspect of freedom that allows Baptists to arbitrate between other Baptists when there is a disagreement regarding what one Baptist’s freedom has led him to believe versus what another’s freedom has led him to believe? Does freedom have such a capacity for this? Does freedom actually allow for mutually exclusive, directly contradictory interpretations to exist side by side without sanction for either one? Can both be right? Is it ever right to question another’s freedom? What about the concept of freedom as defined by Shurden? Can one question the legitimacy of such so long as they confess it was their interpretation of God that led them to do so? Can any stand against anything be made without admittedly limiting someone’s freedom? Nettles describes this aspect of freedom well: “A person’s testimony to the soul’s encounter with the divine has no dependence on the cogency of an evidential framework.”¹³⁸ An evidential framework is rational. Moderate independence from such betrays rationality as described by Weaver.

¹³⁶Fant, “Untitled Message.”

¹³⁷Tom Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 3, *The Modern Era* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2007), 370.

¹³⁸Nettles, *The Baptists*, 369-70.

There is an inherent danger contained in a charismatic term such as freedom. It is a not very well defined, open-ended, circularly reasoned, self-protecting concept. It is a charismatic term, and in the wrong hands it could be used as a manipulative, coercive rhetoric. For example, telling conservatives that they were not being very good Baptists because they were trying to more narrowly define their faith is not a celebration of freedom for conservatives. It is an inconsistent application of freedom. It is anti-freedom. Moderates were quick to point out that conservatives were not allowed to censure the beliefs of other Baptists. However, in doing so moderates were censoring the beliefs of conservatives.

Arguably, freedom meets the criteria of Weaver's charismatic term, with the one exception being that aspect of irrationality that seeks to abbreviate, telescope, or depersonalize terminology. It is not a coincidence that Weaver, writing in the middle of the twentieth century, put forward "freedom" as the principal charismatic term of the age.¹³⁹ Weaver, of course, was not writing about Southern Baptists. He was writing about the modern, western world of America. However, this was precisely the world in which Southern Baptists experienced their greatest controversy. Wills argues that the moderate vision of freedom was not simply the vision of Baptists, but the vision of Baptists living in and influenced by modern America. Wills writes, "Trends in modern western culture aided and abetted moderate views of Baptist identity on the one hand, and constituted an independent source of influence that eroded traditional sources of identity on the other."¹⁴⁰ Freedom, as expressed in moderate rhetoric, may very well be just as much an American idea (if not more) as a Baptist idea.

The charismatic terms of moderates were, by definition, not very well defined. Moderates insisted upon freedom, and then sought to curtail the freedom of anyone who

¹³⁹Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 228.

¹⁴⁰Wills, "Southern Baptist Identity," 84.

disagreed. If freedom means priesthood, soul competency, personal religious liberty, individualism, and the right to private interpretation, freedom is almost an “anything goes” proposition. If that is the case, then freedom means potentially everything. When freedom means everything, it does not mean much of anything. In this sense, freedom as an ultimate term took on some important characteristics of Weaver’s concept of charismatic terms.

Conclusion

Could it be that the locus of the controversy was that conservatives were more concerned with being Christian than they were with being Baptist, while moderates were more concerned with being Baptist than they were with being Christian? A rhetorical analysis of the respective ultimate terms of conservative and moderate rhetoric suggests this is the case. This is not at all to imply that moderates were not Christians, or that being Christian was unimportant to them. It is instead to suggest that their Christian credentials were more or less assumed as they pursued a freedom-centric vision of Baptist identity, whereas conservatives felt compelled never to take their Christian status for granted merely because they were Baptists. The conservative vision for orthodoxy called for the testing of doctrine. The moderate vision for freedom called for openness and diversity. Conservatives were driven by the pursuit of purer doctrine. Moderates were driven by the pursuit of purer denominational distinctiveness. Conservatives sought to be better Baptists by ensuring orthodoxy. Moderates sought to be better Baptists by ensuring freedom.

Conservative rhetors worked to make clear the connection between their important terms and referents. Moderate rhetors worked to make the connection less clear by insisting upon freedom. The popular moderate refrain, “No creed but the Bible,” is not merely an expression of opposition to credalism. It is also an expression of opposition to defining and defending the faith in the sense in which conservatives meant

it.

Weaver described a group's charismatic term by analogy when he wrote, "They often seemed like the very gospel of one's society."¹⁴¹ It is more than coincidence that John Killinger, proclaiming the message of moderates, declared, "My gospel is about being free."¹⁴² Freedom operated as a charismatic term in moderate rhetoric during the controversy. Accordingly, the moderate rhetoric of freedom is somewhat suspect.

There is one important caveat that needs to be established. Weaver qualifies the use of charismatic terminology by explaining, "The machinery of propagation and inculcation is today so immense that no one avoids entirely the assimilation and use of some terms which have a downward tendency."¹⁴³ Groups with a discernible rhetoric of ultimate terms will engage in the use of terms that bear some characteristics of charismatic terms. This is not to say, however, that such use is unethical outright. It is, at least, just as much a reflection of the nature of society at large—a society that, especially in times of change, is fertile breeding ground for ultimate terms, and perhaps even charismatic terms.

¹⁴¹Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 232.

¹⁴²Killinger, "Living with a Trouble Maker."

¹⁴³Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 232.

CHAPTER 5

A FANTASY THEME ANALYSIS OF THE PASTORS' CONFERENCE AND SBC FORUM

Introduction

In 1984 moderates created their own version of the Pastors' Conference, the SBC Forum. The birth of the Forum signaled that the differences between conservatives and moderates were substantial enough for moderates to justify holding their own meetings, desiring a place where they could come together and share in their vision for Baptist identity. The Pastors' Conference had become just such a place for conservatives. A side-by-side comparison of the conservative preaching of the Pastors' Conference and the moderate preaching of the SBC Forum reveals the ways in which the two groups were different.

In this chapter, Ernest Bormann's method of fantasy theme analysis is applied to the preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum in order to highlight the different ways in which conservatives and moderates understood the controversy. What such an analysis has disclosed is not only that the two groups were very different, but also that the more they learned about themselves and one another the more they continued to grow apart. The preaching of the Pastors' Conference and the SBC Forum demonstrate that the fires of the denomination's controversy forged two very different notions of Baptist identity. The conservative-led Pastors' Conference and the moderate-led Forum became a place for each group to celebrate their vision for Baptist identity. These visions were equipped with the basic components of a drama. These dramas provided Southern Baptists with a means to interpret the controversy.

Fantasy Theme Analysis

A small group setting of complete strangers is a good analogy for explaining the concept of fantasy themes. A waiting room in a doctor's office is a good example of such a setting. The room is quiet and perhaps even a little awkward. One person picks up a magazine and makes an almost under-the-breath comment about the cover story. Then another person responds with something like, "I know, right." Then a third person chimes in with, "I saw something about that on the news this morning." In a matter of just a few moments the entire room is participating in a conversation. It quickly becomes clear that these persons share a common concern and perhaps even similar opinions about the subject of the magazine's cover story. The conversation links rather quickly and easily from one person and his contribution to the next person and her contribution. These links form a sort of chain. The ways in which the persons relate to one another by relating to the story through their own personal anecdotes form a fantasy theme. The entire episode would be what rhetoricians refer to as a fantasy chain.

Social psychologist Robert Bales provided groundbreaking research in small group communication when he discovered this phenomenon and referred to it as group fantasizing.¹ Bales writes that "The culture of the interacting group stimulates in each of its members a feeling that he has entered a new realm of reality—a world of heroes, villains, saints, and enemies—a drama, a work of art."² Ernest Bormann brought Bales' discovery over into the field of rhetorical criticism and explained, "Bales provides the critic with an account of how dramatizing communication creates social reality for groups of people and with a way to examine messages for insights into the group's culture, motivation, emotional style, and cohesion."³ Bormann applies Bales' findings about

¹Robert Freed Bales, *Personality and Interpersonal Behavior* (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969).

²Robert Freed Bales, *Interaction Process Analysis: A Method for the Study of Small Groups* (Addison-Wesley Press, 1951), 152.

³Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58, no. 4 (December 1, 1972): 396.

fantasizing in small group communication to larger groups hearing a public discourse.

Bormann's thesis is that

the dramatizations which catch on and chain out in small groups are worked into public speeches and into the mass media and, in turn, spread out across larger publics, serve to sustain the members' sense of community, to impel them strongly to action (which raises the question of motivation), and to provide them with a social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions, and attitudes.⁴

Bormann wished to be able to conduct historiography by way of rhetoric. Fantasy theme analysis enabled him to do just that. As such, it is an appropriate methodology to employ in the pursuit of understanding the Conservative Resurgence. The Resurgence was a movement that depended upon and expressed itself through the rhetoric of preaching. Therefore, a fantasy theme analysis of the preaching of the controversy is warranted.

The critic seeking to discover and understand a group's fantasy themes must operate on a philosophical level by questioning the presuppositions underlying a group's rhetoric.⁵ The critic must "isolate the stories told most often in a given body of rhetoric and then . . . ask what 'lessons' they appear to be teaching: about people in general, about the capacity of individuals, about right and wrong."⁶ Hart and Daughton recommend asking the following types of questions as critical probes for fantasy theme analysis of a given discourse.

What are people like? What are the possibilities for group action? On what can most people depend? What is humankind's fundamental purpose on earth? What are the fundamental measures of right and wrong? How can success be measured? What sort of information is most dependable? Why do things happen as they do? What responses does [the rhetoric] invite from the audience?⁷

⁴Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 398.

⁵Roderick P. Hart and Suzanne M. Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 3 ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2004), 253.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 254.

The “fantasy” in fantasy theme analysis does not refer to an imaginary world or unreality. Instead, fantasy is, according to Bormann, “the creative and imaginative interpretation of events that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need.”⁸ The word “interpretation” is very important in this definition. A fantasy is an interpretation. It is a way of viewing the world. It is a way of trying to make sense out of the things that happen in life. A fantasy in this sense is not inherently true or false in terms of its correspondence to reality. The point of a fantasy is not to determine what is true or false, but to provide a framework of understanding wherein people can find their bearings through a community of others who also share in the framework of the fantasy. Bormann explains that the purpose of fantasy theme analysis is “to illuminate how individuals talk with one another about their here-and-now concerns until they come to share a common consciousness and create a new sense of identity and community.”⁹

The purpose of a fantasy theme is the dramatization of ideas. Roderick Hart and Suzanne Daughton describe fantasy themes as “*mythic shorthand*, the stories told by subgroups in society.”¹⁰ Fantasy themes spread or chain out through a group. Hart and Daughton explain the almost viral effect of fantasy themes: “People become caught up in these visions and then repeat them for others.”¹¹ Fantasy themes within a group of people combine to form a sort of idyllic vision for what life should be like according to the group. Fantasy themes often leave traces in the rhetoric in which they appear. These traces are dramatic devices such as “wordplay, narratives, figures, and analogies.”¹²

⁸Ernest Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy: Restoring the American Dream* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001), 5.

⁹Ibid., 3.

¹⁰Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 251.

¹¹Ibid., 253.

¹²Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 6.

When someone shares his or her fantasy with another person, if the fantasy resonates with that person, a fantasy chain has been constructed between the persons sharing in the fantasy. The content of the fantasy is a fantasy theme. In the discourse of a group, reoccurring fantasies—what Bormann refers to as a “stock scenario repeated again and again”—are fantasy types.¹³ A group’s most shared fantasy themes combine to form the group’s rhetorical vision. According to Bormann, “A rhetorical vision is a unified putting-together of the various scripts which gives the participants a broader view of things.”¹⁴ Sonja Foss described a rhetorical vision as “the composite dramas which catch up large groups of people in a symbolic reality.”¹⁵ A rhetorical vision is the dramatic means by which a group finds its place and purpose in the world.

Drama makes sense out of life. Robert Frost explained the great appeal of fantasy themes when he wrote, “Society can never think things out: it has to see them acted out by actors.”¹⁶ Society does not appreciate the tedious nature of a nuanced, technical, objective presentation of information. Society wants a story. Society needs something that is right or wrong; it needs heroes and villains. Fantasy themes offer these things, and through them provide a perspective by which adoptees of said fantasy themes understand the world around them.

A Methodological Caveat

One may notice some overlap between this chapter’s application of Bormann’s theory of fantasy themes and the previous chapter’s application of Weaver’s theory of ultimate terms. There are a few similarities both in terms of the primary sources utilized

¹³Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 7.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵Sonja K. Foss, “Equal Rights Amendment Controversy: Two Worlds in Conflict,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65, no. 3 (October 1, 1979): 276.

¹⁶Robert Frost, “A Masque of Reason,” cited by Ernest G. Bormann, “I. Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: Ten Years Later,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68, no. 3 (August 1, 1982): 300.

and the insights gained. The correspondence between the two theories is that both may be applied to a large number of discourses delivered by many different rhetors in order to discern the key ideas within a group's rhetoric. Both theories help to discern meaning within rhetoric. If the theories are applied consistently, the meanings discerned should be quite similar, though arrived at through different avenues of criticism. Ultimate terms name meaning. Fantasy themes dramatize meaning. Whereas an ultimate term is a word whose referent provides a verbal description of a group's key idea, a fantasy theme is a story whose referent provides a dramatic illustration of a group's key idea. One might understand an ultimate term as a sort of dictionary wherein meaning is defined, while a fantasy theme is more like a script wherein meaning is enacted by *dramatis personae*. Therefore both theories may be applied to the conservative and moderate rhetoric in order better to understand the meaning of the Conservative Resurgence.

The Appeal and Function of Fantasy Themes

Knowing the functions of fantasy themes helps to understand their appeal. Here are ten functions of fantasy themes. All of the functions are closely connected. First, fantasy themes simplify. Life can be quite confusing. Fantasy themes untangle the interconnected web of life's experiences and lay out a plain, understandable explanation for what has taken place. Bormann explains, "The public can most easily understand the issues . . . when speakers portray them by placing symbolic personae in dramatic action in which they contend with other symbolic personae symbolizing other positions."¹⁷ Bormann adds, "The unfolding of experience is often chaotic and confusing. Fantasy themes, in contrast with experience, are organized and artistic."¹⁸

¹⁷Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 9.

¹⁸Ibid.

Second, fantasy themes dramatize, that is, they render experience as drama. They are the result of a speaker presenting real-life occurrences in the form of a drama. The dramatic portrayal of experience is appealing because it helps members of a group assimilate things that have taken place.

Third, fantasy themes invite participation. For instance, regarding a sporting event in which he has no particular allegiance to either side, the viewer may not care who wins. He may not understand what is at stake in the competition, or may simply be ignorant of the way the sport works. In any case, he is uninvolved. However, after only a few moments of the contest one team commits an egregious foul against the other team, or at least so it appears. He is immediately invited to participate by the dramatic action of the foul. He now has an interest in the sporting event. Drama invites participation. Fantasy themes dramatize life, and thereby invite participation.

Fourth, fantasy themes identify. Considering the aforementioned sporting event, after observing the grievous foul, the viewer may very well interpret the sporting event as a contest between good and evil. A fantasy theme could easily be developed wherein the foul-committing team is the villain and the team against which the foul was committed is the hero. The viewer may, perceiving the injustice of the foul, choose to support the team of the player who was just attacked, a team who is now perceived as wounded but heroic. The heroes are battling against a group of unsportsmanlike misfits. Now the viewer is participating in the fantasy theme. The event has some drama attached to it. The viewer is a part of the action. The drama reveals that there are distinct sides in the contest. The fantasy theme identifies the parties engaged in the conflict. The prominent fantasy themes in a controversial context reveal the nature of the identities at war with one another. Bormann argues that to share in the fantasies of a group is to

“answer the question, ‘Who are we?’”¹⁹ In particular, fantasies that distinguish the good guys from the bad guys are “crucial to the emergence of [a group’s] consciousness.”²⁰

Fifth, fantasy themes magnify. Foss describes this function by explaining that a fantasy theme “enlarges the battle into a struggle for justice.”²¹ The sporting event analogy continues to be helpful. The viewer of the event, by way of his fantasy, was no longer watching a trivial athletic contest between two teams. The fantasy explained the game in terms of the forces of good versus the forces of evil.

Sixth, fantasy themes motivate. When drama is applied to the presentation of information, it is much easier to motivate those who are receiving the information. The viewer of the sporting event, impelled by his sense of right and wrong, was motivated to begin supporting a team to which he previously had no affiliation or attachment. Drama motivates.

Seventh, fantasy themes divide. Fantasy themes are, by nature, one-sided and reductionist. They offer a limited, slanted explanation of events. Where there are fantasy themes there is likely a contest. Bormann describes the competitive nature of fantasy themes: “They provide a rhetorical means for several communities of people to account for and explain the same experiences or the same events in different ways.”²² When several communities account for the same experiences in different ways there will be division. Again considering the scene of the viewer watching the sporting event, the viewer believed he was watching a contest between a just team and an unjust team. That was his way of interpreting the events of the game. That was his fantasy. What if, however, the viewer had only just tuned in to the match and had actually missed the

¹⁹Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 12.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Foss, “Equal Rights Amendment Controversy,” 278.

²²Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 10.

entire first half? And what if the viewer did not know that the team he was now supporting had committed multiple fouls of a grievous nature against their opponents in the first half of the contest? In that case, someone else watching the same sporting could create his or her own fantasy theme, one completely opposite of the original viewer. There is great opportunity for division here. Thus fantasy themes divide.

Eighth, fantasy themes sustain participation. They are useful not only for the purpose of inviting others to participate in a particular way of understanding events, they are also useful in retaining people within a party, movement, or group. The viewer of the sporting event, if he is to continue his support of the supposed good team, will have to engage in further participation in the fantasy that his team is morally superior to the other team. He can do this by highlighting all the instances in which it appears his team exhibits qualities of fairness and sportsmanship. He can also do this by promoting all the ways in which other teams prove themselves to be mean-spirited, poor sports. He can also do this by offering explanations, excuses, or even deflections for instances in which it appears that his team is engaging in play unbecoming of his fantasy.

Ninth, fantasy themes legitimize knowledge. In so doing, they reveal a group's epistemology. Fantasy themes quite often contain a certain rubric by which a group distinguishes fact from opinion. Bormann discovered through his analysis of early American religious and political rhetoric that "Every rhetorical vision . . . had some such core fantasies that provided the ultimate legitimization of knowledge, and, thus, of the proper way to provide good reasons and arguments for belief and action."²³ In other words, there are special fantasy themes at the heart of a movement that not only provide adherents with a way to view the world, but with epistemological justifications for doing so. Identifying these fantasy themes is pivotal to understanding the rhetoric of a movement, and the movement itself.

²³Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 17.

Tenth and finally, fantasy themes interpret. This function of fantasy themes is not distinct from the other functions; it is better understood as a description of and an explanation of all the other functions. Fantasy themes perform the function of interpretation by way of the other functions. They interpret real life by simplifying issues, dramatizing information, inviting participation, identifying parties, magnifying significance, motivating actions, dividing parties, sustaining participation and legitimizing knowledge. A fantasy theme, then, is an interpretation of current or recent events. It represents part of a worldview.

Bormann summarizes his theory of fantasy theme analysis, “The rhetorical critic can describe the social reality contained in the shared consciousness as represented in the rhetorical vision constructed from a study of the fantasy themes and types, the analogies and figurative language in a body of discourse.”²⁴ In other words, groups create their own little worlds by way of rhetoric. They invite others to join them in their worlds. Rhetors employ fantasy themes—that is, dramatized interpretations of real life—in order to cast a vision for how best to make sense out of the often chaotic and confusing “unfolding of [real life] experience.”²⁵ Those who share in the group’s dramatized interpretations become participants in the group’s fantasy themes. They become part of the group, inhabiting the world created by the group’s rhetoric.

The role of the critic is to describe the rhetorical world in which groups participate through their rhetoric. The rhetorical world—or “rhetorical vision,” to use Bormann’s phrase—is accessible through the study of a group’s fantasy themes and types, and through the dramatizing devices in the group’s discourse.

²⁴Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 24.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 9.

This Study

A variety of fantasy themes surface as a result of asking these types of questions of relevant Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum sermons. The fantasy themes are placed into one of two categories—conservative rhetoric and moderate rhetoric. The themes are synthesized in order to discern and construct both a conservative and a moderate rhetorical vision. A variety of primary and secondary sources related to the Controversy are utilized to inform the rhetorical vision revealed by the fantasy themes.

The value of this approach is that each side is allowed to speak for itself. The fantasy themes are theirs, the visions theirs as well. Using their own dramas, what was the message that conservatives and moderates were trying to sell, how did they attempt to sell it, and how well did they do at selling it? It becomes clear that both conservatives and moderates used their time in the pulpit of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum attempting to persuade Southern Baptists to embrace a particular vision for Baptist identity. Their respective visions often clashed. Ultimately, their visions were in a competition, the result of which was largely a parting of ways, often rancorous and bitter. The winners of the competition achieved their vision for Baptist identity. Year after year they won by electing presidential candidates who appointed like-minded persons to influential positions in the convention's institutions, a move that continues to shape the denomination in profound ways. The losers saw their vision for Baptist identity pushed aside and silenced upon the convention stage. Accordingly, many within the losing camp left the Southern Baptist Convention to pursue their ideas for being Baptist elsewhere.

The Conservative Rhetorical Vision

A rhetorical vision is comprised of the most important, most frequently told stories (fantasy themes) within a subgroup of society. Fantasy themes disguise a group's presumptions by "dramatizing ideas for audiences who sometimes lack the imagination to

see what the world will be like if they accept new ideas.”²⁶ Fantasy themes contain presuppositions underlying a group’s rhetoric.²⁷ By describing, explaining, and analyzing the most frequently occurring fantasy themes within a group’s discourse, a critic can discern the philosophical underpinnings of a group.

Conservative Fantasy Themes

There were six main fantasy themes found in the conservative preaching of the Pastors’ Conference from 1961 to 1991. First, conservatives believed they were defending the faith by joining with the conservative cause. Second, and closely related, conservatives believed the position of inerrancy was required in order to be able to say that the Bible was God’s perfect word. Third, conservatives portrayed moderates as liberals who sheltered heterodoxy underneath a view of Christian freedom that was—again, according to conservatives—erroneous at best and dishonest at worst. Fourth, conservatives believed that getting doctrine right was more important than achieving a superficial peace. Fifth, conservatives believed that the large majority of Southern Baptist church members were theologically conservative. Sixth, conservatives believed that moderates often participated in doublespeak—that is, that they would speak as a liberal in liberal-friendly settings and as conservative in liberal-unfriendly settings. These six themes were given dramatization in the conservative preaching of the Pastors’ Conference. Here are some samples of these dramatized themes.

Defending the faith. The most common theme in conservative rhetoric is that of defending the faith from theological liberalism. Conservatives used this fantasy primarily to dramatize, magnify, and interpret the controversy. The Conservative

²⁶Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 252; Hart and Daughton cite Ernest G. Bormann, John F. Cragan, and Donald C. Shields, “In Defense of Symbolic Convergence Theory: A Look at The Theory and Its Criticisms After Two Decades,” *Communication Theory* 4, no. 4 (November 1, 1994): 259-94.

²⁷Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 253.

Resurgence, according to this theme, was not merely an insignificant, unwarranted grab for power. It was a worthy cause. It was a battle of good versus evil. It was a stand for truth. Fantasizing about the conflict in these terms provided a dramatic subtext to the episode. It magnified its importance. It provided an overall interpretation of what took place.

For example, Vance Havner, preaching at the 1963 Pastors' Conference, analogized theological liberalism's effect upon the church: "The temple of truth has never been damaged so much by woodpeckers on the outside as by termites within who are double dangerous because they are so quiet about it."²⁸ Havner supplies drama to a discussion of different views of the nature of the Bible by suggesting that the less conservative view is dangerously eating away at the foundation of the Bible like a termite destroys a structure. Havner believed that unchecked liberalism would continuously eat away at conservative doctrine until it had consumed it all. Particularly, he believed liberalism was weakening Southern Baptists' understanding of the nature of the Bible.²⁹ He thus called upon the convention to stand up against the forces of liberalism in order to defend the faith.

There was a certain new school versus old school element to the fantasies shared by conservatives regarding the theology and liberalism. Conservatives sought, as their name implies, to conserve the faith. Liberals sought to conserve something of the faith—its spirit or essence—while discarding the historically conditioned doctrinal vessels within which the essence of the faith sojourns from one generation to the next. Many conservative preachers tapped into this fantasy. W. A. Criswell did with his message at the 1963 Pastors' Conference, defending a biblically based preaching over

²⁸Vance Havner, "Time to Wake Up!" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Kansas City, MO, May 6, 1963).

²⁹That Havner was concerned about Scripture was made clear when he declared, "It's about time we let the Bible be the Bible." Ibid.

and against “the wisdom of the world.”³⁰ He cautioned that every preacher will go through a crisis in which he must choose whether to defend the faith or capitulate to the ever-changing fads of modern, liberal theology. He declared, “Every preacher goes through a . . . crisis. Will he stay with the gospel of the cross, or will he exchange it for the new thought, the new theology, the latest academic cult, [and/or] the newest psychological method, and turn to discussions of personal, social and economic amelioration?”³¹ In other words, when doctrine supposedly advances or progresses alongside the intellectual movements of the age, every preacher must choose to be doctrinally conservative by defending the faith against such changes or theologically liberal toward such adaptations. Criswell’s comments demonstrate another important function of fantasy themes, that of legitimizing knowledge. He indicated that knowledge was proven not so much by correspondence to intellectual fads, but by accordance with God’s Word.

Conservatives emphasized that the truth of God is unchanging. For example, in 1971 J. D. Grey remarked, “A prophet is not a philosopher to evolve truth but a prophet to accept the message and utter it.”³² Conservatives opposed the progressive, open quality of theology as promoted by theological liberalism. Moderates, on the other hand, often expressed sentiments toward doctrine that stood in opposition to the conservative fantasy of conserving and defending the faith. For example, William Walter Adams argued that the Christian faith must “go through periods of adjustment, discarding the partial in favor of a richer faith.”³³

³⁰W. A. Criswell, “The Preaching of the Cross” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Kansas City, MO, May 7, 1963).

³¹Ibid.

³²J. D. Grey, “God’s Prophet and His Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 31, 1971).

³³William Walter Adams, “The Minister and a Decaying Society” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Dallas, TX, May 31, 1965). More is said about the moderate stance toward doctrinal change in a separate section on moderate rhetoric. Specifically, see the section in this

Conservatives often set up modernism as an opponent. W. A. Criswell spoke at the 1974 Pastors' Conference in defense of doctrines that he warned may offend modern sensibilities.³⁴ Criswell heralded the inerrant Bible, the blood atonement of Christ, and the literal second coming of Christ. He also proclaimed the "scientific accuracy of the Word."³⁵ Criswell's sermon title, "Old Time Religion," is a summary statement of the fantasy theme of old conservatism versus new liberalism. Criswell's rhetoric was somewhat divisive as it suggested that conserving theology represented one side in the controversy while adapting theology to modern thought represented the other side. Division is another function of fantasy themes.

Ronald Prince was another who personified liberalism as a way of speaking about the important issues of the controversy in a dramatic fashion. Prince claimed, "The great verities of the Christian Faith are constantly under attack by enemies with purpose and often unsuspecting students who think of themselves as scholars."³⁶ There is an element of the fantasy theme of defending the faith in Prince's comments. It is very clear in Prince's rhetoric that conservatives dramatized their role in the conflict as defending the faith because the faith was under attack. He particularized their enemies—they were "scholars."

Adrian Rogers preached against the philosophical foundations of modernism at the 1977 Pastors' Conference.³⁷ Rogers derided the way modernism had cast skepticism upon the Christian faith, saying that it had poisoned religion.³⁸ Rogers dramatized the

chapter titled, "A progressive faith."

³⁴W. A. Criswell, "Old Time Religion" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Dallas, TX, June 9, 1974).

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ronald Prince, "The Church Is Here to Stay" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1974).

³⁷Adrian Rogers, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Philadelphia, PA, June 5, 1972).

³⁸Ibid.

tension in the convention by personifying the forces of modernism, arguing that it had attacked the faith.

W. A. Criswell, preaching on the doctrine of Scripture at the 1978 Pastors' Conference, warned against modern attacks upon the Christian Faith. Criswell preached,

An attack that continues during our lifetime, [one that] is the deadliest and the bitterest of all. It is the onslaught of modern rationalism . . . who, in the name of scholarship and research, scoff and laugh at this Holy Book. They deny the Deity of Christ. They make fun of the supernatural. They scoff at the miracles of the Lord. They say that this Book is nothing other than a collection of the folklore, the tales, the myths, and the legends of an ancient people So deadly and so merciless has been the poison of rationalism in the schools, in the universities, [and] in the seminaries.³⁹

Adrian Rogers preached about defending the faith at the 1983 Pastors' Conference. As he held his Bible high in the air, Rogers told the pastors, "I make no apologies—though some say it is controversial and some say it doesn't need to be said anymore—for believing this book and standing by it I'm going to keep the faith. And, friend, if it's not absolute, it's obsolete."⁴⁰

Speaking at the 1986 Pastors' Conference, Adrian Rogers addressed just how serious it was to veer away from orthodoxy. Rogers maintained, "If you do not accept the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, you have some real problems I wouldn't give you half a hallelujah for your chances in heaven if you don't believe in the virgin birth."⁴¹

Ronnie Floyd, preaching at the 1988 Pastors' Conference, spoke out against the common moderate argument that the Bible and the Christian faith have no need of being defended.⁴² Floyd responded to this argument,

³⁹W. A. Criswell, "Preaching the Word of God" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 12, 1978).

⁴⁰Adrian Rogers, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, June 13, 1983), quoted and described by David Wilkinson, "Monday Night Pastors Conference," *Baptist Press*, June 13, 1983.

⁴¹Adrian Rogers, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 8, 1986).

⁴²Ronnie W. Floyd, "How to Be God's Man for the Hour" (San Antonio, TX, June 13, 1988). For examples of the moderate argument against which Floyd was responding, see comments made above regarding the respective sermons Herschel Hobbs and Carl Bates preached at the 1966 Southern Baptist

I dare you when you get to heaven to walk up to Stephen who was stoned and tell him he did not need to defend the faith. I dare you to walk up to Paul who was beheaded or to Peter who was crucified upside down and tell them they did not need to defend the faith. When John Huss was sentenced to death and tied to the stake to be burned they went to him for the final time to retract his faith in Jesus and he replied firmly, “NO! I have never preached any false doctrine; and that which I have taught with my lips, I will now seal with my blood.” He was soon burned at the stake. I dare you to walk up to John Huss in heaven and say, “Brother John, you did not need to defend the Word of God and your faith in Christ.”⁴³

Floyd dramatized the conservative movement by associating with heroic narratives from Scriptures and the history of the church.

At the 1988 Pastors’ Conference, W. A. Criswell identified moderates as liberals by saying, “A skunk by any other name still stinks.”⁴⁴ Criswell preached against “the curse of liberalism.”⁴⁵ The picture of a moderate as an odorous liberal is a dramatic characterization of an opponent, and the negative imagery invoked would surely escalate conflict in the drama. A liberal was not some straw man attacking orthodoxy somewhere outside of the convention. Liberals were moderates, and they stunk.

John MacArthur preached at the 1990 Pastors’ Conference. He preached about defending the faith against theological liberalism. He declared,

I’m thrilled to be a soldier It isn’t just that I have an ugly personality and make enemies It’s the battle over truth. And I am greatly distressed that we live in a time when the idea is that you don’t want to be a battler for truth, you want to do all you can to set aside any theology that might make someone else disagree with you. It’s frightening to me. We are to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.⁴⁶

MacArthur articulates the “defending the faith” interpretation of the Resurgence as well as anyone. He argues that it is not simply that he is mean or cantankerous—no, it is that

Convention Pastors’ Conference; Herschel H. Hobbs, “Worthy of Our Vocation”; Carl Bates, “Is There Any Word from the Lord?”

⁴³Floyd, “How to Be God’s Man for the Hour.”

⁴⁴W. A. Criswell, “The Infallible Word of God” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, San Antonio, TX, June 13, 1988).

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶John MacArthur, “The Man of God” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

he is in a war for truth. Wars dramatize conflict and entail pain, but sometimes they are necessary.

John Bisagno, preaching at the 1990 Pastors' Conference, charged, "Hold the line when you can There is no way to overstate the disdain God has for the person who tampers with the integrity of the word of God."⁴⁷ Bisagno also compared the Southern Baptist Convention's controversy with Charles Spurgeon's Downgrade Controversy and Gresham Machen's Presbyterian controversy.⁴⁸

Another facet of the fantasy theme of defending the faith was the perceived practical effect of conservative and liberal theology. Conservatives believed that their theology was more evangelistically effective than liberal theology. If there was one thing Southern Baptists on both sides of the controversy believed in, it was evangelism. Granted, they may have defined the term differently, but Southern Baptists have always heralded the importance of the Great Commission. Conservatives mostly engaged in this feature of the defending the faith fantasy theme by blaming liberalism for decline in evangelistic effectiveness. John Haggai argued just that in his sermon at the 1969 Pastors' Conference.⁴⁹ This feature of the "defending the faith" fantasy functioned to motivate conservatives. It was not simply that conservative theology was correct. It was not only that less than conservative theology was a threat. It was that people's souls were at stake if conservatives did not get involved and get doctrine right.

James Robison stated in the 1979 Pastors' Conference that not only liberalism,

⁴⁷John Bisagno, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

⁴⁸For a treatment of the major controversies in Spurgeon's life, see Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009); for a treatment of the Machen's controversy within the Presbyterian church, see Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁴⁹John E. Haggai, "The Unlit Paths" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, New Orleans, LA, June 9, 1969).

but the toleration of liberalism would kill the Southern Baptist Convention.⁵⁰ Charles Stanley, also speaking to the 1979 Pastors' Conference, added that liberalism was killing America.⁵¹ Liberalism in America's churches was leading to moral decline in the country—that was Stanley's line of reasoning. Likewise, Ronald Long added his voice to the idea that liberalism kills evangelism. Preaching at the 1983 Pastors' Conference, Long declared, "The soul-winning churches of our convention have pastors who preach the Bible, the word of God." Long described the word of God as the inerrant Bible.⁵² W. A. Criswell, preaching at the 1985 Pastors' Conference, declared that a trend of decline followed theological liberalism. Criswell concluded, "Whether we continue to live or ultimately die lies in our dedication to the infallible word of God."⁵³

Landrum Leavell, speaking at the 1987 Pastors' Conference, charged that liberalism makes the gospel call less reliable. He preached, "Lost men won't rest their souls and risk eternity on question marks. A preacher's question marks must be straightened into exclamation points by the resurrected, living Jesus." The denial of the supernatural obliterates the need for God, Christ, the Spirit, the Church, and makes man a free-standing entity, a law unto himself."⁵⁴

At the 1988 Pastors' Conference, Bailey Smith urged pastors to be conservative because conservatism is needed for greater evangelistic effectiveness.⁵⁵

⁵⁰James Robison, "Untitled Message" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 10, 1979).

⁵¹Charles Stanley, "Stand Up America" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 11, 1979).

⁵²Larry Chesser, "Monday Morning Pastors Conference," *Baptist Press*, June 13, 1983.

⁵³W. A. Criswell, "Why Not America?, Why Not Now?" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

⁵⁴Landrum Leavell, "The Emmanuel Factor in Resurrection" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, June 14, 1987).

⁵⁵Bailey E. Smith, "There's Victory in the Pea Patch" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Antonio, TX, June 12, 1988).

Smith declared, “Folks, I don’t like anything that puts a question mark over the word of God. Do you know why? Because watered down penicillin never cured anybody.”⁵⁶ W. A. Criswell blamed liberalism within the convention for the declining number of baptisms in the convention’s churches.⁵⁷

Richard Lee preached about evangelism and liberalism at the 1988 Pastors’ Conference.⁵⁸ Lee cited a study that correlated baptisms and bibliology. The study indicated that many Baptist ministers did not believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. Lee’s response to the study: “No wonder our baptisms are down. Let’s put the blame where it belongs. It’s not politics or programs. It’s puny preaching from powerless pulpits by men who don’t believe the word of God.”⁵⁹

Conservatives mostly criticized the negative impact of theological liberalism. There were some instances, however, in which conservatives lauded the positive effect of conservative theology. Conservatives routinely claimed that conservative doctrine increased the likelihood that a church would be a growing, healthy church. Wallace Rogers said as much in 1970 when he preached, “A friend of mine—not a relative—a friend named Adrian Rogers, is pastor of a great church in Merritt Island, Florida. One reason it is great is that Adrian Rogers never compromises.”⁶⁰ Whereas moderates were open to the idea that doctrine could be improved by way of progress, conservatives viewed any deviation from orthodoxy as a compromise. At the 1979 Pastors’ Conference, Adrian Rogers declared, “Every Baptist church with an excellent track

⁵⁶Smith, “There’s Victory in the Pea Patch.”

⁵⁷Criswell, “The Infallible Word of God.”

⁵⁸Richard Lee, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, San Antonio, TX, June 13, 1988).

⁵⁹Ibid., cited in “Forum, Pastors’ Conference Take Divergent Viewpoints,” *Baptist Press*, June 20, 1988.

⁶⁰Wallace R. Rogers, “The Word: Pastor, Prophet, Priest?” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Denver, CO, June 1, 1970).

record in annual baptisms is a conservative, Bible-believing church with pastors who believe in the inerrant, infallible word of God.”⁶¹

God’s perfect Word. The second most prominent conservative fantasy theme was that of God’s perfect Word. In this fantasy theme, conservatives insisted upon the inerrancy of the Bible. The Bible was made personal when preachers referred to it as God’s Word. It was made even more so when preachers tied the Bible’s perfection to God’s perfection. Clark Pinnock, in his first appearance at the 1966 Pastors’ Conference, reasoned, “The Bible does not err, because God cannot lie.”⁶² The content of the Bible (an object) is closely associated with the character of God (a person). This is a potent fantasy theme, for it suggests that to deny inerrancy is to risk demeaning the character of God. Conservatives did not merely view the subject of inerrancy as an academic issue regarding the Bible, but as a moral issue regarding the trustworthiness of God. With this line of rhetoric, conservatives greatly magnified the issue of inerrancy. They also interpreted the struggle for correct doctrine as a struggle to uphold the honor of God and his Word.

Pinnock also employed an analogy to dramatize his message about inerrancy. Pinnock ratiocinated, “As a faulty prescription from a doctor could poison the patient, so an error-ridden Bible can undermine the foundation of our certainty in the gospel itself.”⁶³ Pinnock’s figure of speech immediately magnifies the significance of inerrancy. According to Pinnock’s fantasy theme, discussions about inerrancy are not merely scholastic exercises in pedantry. Fighting for inerrancy is concomitant with defending the very gospel.

⁶¹Adrian Rogers, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 10, 1979).

⁶²Clark Pinnock, “Our Source of Authority: The Bible” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Detroit, MI, May 23, 1966).

⁶³Ibid.

W. A. Criswell spoke out strongly against those who would “rewrite the Bible on the basis of the latest scientific information.”⁶⁴ Criswell’s message was directed at, as he put it, the long and bitter controversy about the inerrant and infallible Word of God.” Many in the audience of the 1971 Pastors’ Conference participated in the fantasy theme of Criswell’s sermon. Bob O’Brien, writing for *Baptist Press*, gave evidence of fantasy sharing when he referred to Criswell’s oration as “The Amen-punctuated sermon.”⁶⁵ “Amens” are verbal signals that an audience is participating in the fantasy theme presented by the speaker. The amens indicate that the sermon was an important opportunity to invite and sustain participation in a group’s fantasies.

Criswell drew a very close association between God’s person and God’s Word at the 1978 Pastors’ Conference. He reasoned, “To receive God’s testimony is to receive God Himself. To receive the Holy Word is to receive the Lord Himself. For God’s Word is like God Himself—the same yesterday, today, and forever.”⁶⁶ This is a fantasy theme that conservatives shared in regularly. They associated the idea of inerrancy with the character of God. The theme allowed conservatives to believe that they were not merely fighting to argue for a particular theory and/or result of inspiration, but that they were defending the honor of God. Their participation in the movement was not simply theological dispute. It was something more akin to holy war.

Bailey Smith, preaching at the 1980 Pastors’ Conference, also drew a very close relationship between God and the Bible, comparing the Bible to the Ark of the Covenant.⁶⁷ Smith declared, “And that which represents God today is the Word of God,

⁶⁴W. A. Criswell, “God’s Preacher and His Mandate” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 31, 1971).

⁶⁵Bob O’Brien, “Pastors’ Conference Roundup,” *Baptist Press*, June 1, 1971.

⁶⁶Criswell, “Preaching the Word of God.”

⁶⁷Bailey E. Smith, “Stand Firm in Jordan” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, June 9, 1980).

the Holy, infallible, inerrant Word of God.”⁶⁸ Adrian Rogers declared, “If its not absolute, its obsolete,” declaring the issue of inerrancy to be an essentially all or nothing proposition.⁶⁹ This fantasy showed up in a number of different sermons.

Tom Eliff argued at the 1985 Pastors’ Conference that the Bible is settled—that is, that it is “established, fixed, stationed, unmoveable, indisputable.”⁷⁰ Eliff defended his view by relating God and the Bible. He reasoned, “It is *God’s* Word. Would He lie? Would He mislead? Would He make a mistake? It is inconceivable that a Sovereign God would ever have to say ‘Oops! Sorry!’ It is *His* Word and *He* has jealously protected it through the ages so that we might have a sure a word from Him as did Abraham or Daniel, Peter or Paul.”⁷¹

David Miller declared at the 1987 Pastors’ Conference, “Jesus is conservatively sound in his Doctrine! Regarding bibliology, He is an inerrantist.”⁷² No one would want to have a doctrine of Scripture that contradicted that of Christ’s. Clark Pinnock also appealed to Jesus’ understanding of the nature of the Bible, preaching in 1968, “Jesus Christ himself constituted Christianity a religion of Biblical authority. It is his doctrine of inspiration that we are concerned to honour. Failure to acknowledge the full authority of Scripture as he did is an intellectual impenitence on the part of the Christian that God will judge.”⁷³ To compromise on the doctrine of Scripture could very well be, according to Pinnock’s rhetoric, the commission of a sin.

⁶⁸Smith, “Stand Firm in Jordan.”

⁶⁹Rogers, “Untitled Message,” June 13, 1983.

⁷⁰Thomas D. Eliff, “Settled in Heaven” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Dallas, TX, June 19, 1985).

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²David Miller, “The Emmanuel Factor in the Church” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

⁷³Clark Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 4, 1968).

Vance Havner, preaching at the 1963 Pastors' Conference, warned, 'There are those who would force the Scriptures into the Procrustean beds of their own theories to fit human experience on one hand and human explanation on the other.' Havner's response: "It's about time we let the Bible be the Bible."⁷⁴

R. G. Lee often personified the forces that attacked God's Word, using a common device for dramatization.⁷⁵ Preaching at the 1964 Pastors' Conference, Lee held forth:

With the polite and patronizing attitude that becomes occasionally rude and coarse and denunciatory, Rationalism prostitutes divine inspiration to the level of human genius—comparing the inspiration of the Scriptures with that of Homer and Shakespeare. Whether Rationalism be calmly philosophical or boisterously infidelic, whether it sometimes praises and exalts or sometimes derides and degrades, whether it appears to be sometimes openly hostile and sometimes professedly Christian ("choosing the livery of heaven to serve the Devil"), it is an avowed enemy of the Bible as the one unique Book. No matter under what veils of pretense it makes its assault, Rationalism regards the Bible as a human product.⁷⁶

The idea that the Bible was under attack by the forces of modernism was a very common one in the rhetoric of conservatives. In 1967, William Hendricks warned that some Southern Baptists were "substituting individual experience for the authority of the Bible."⁷⁷ One of the effects of modernism upon liberal Christianity was an emphasis upon the relationship between personal experience and God's revelation as opposed to the relationship between Scripture and revelation.

Conservatives generally held that liberals impugned the Bible from the ivory towers of the academy. They charged moderates with being distant, almost elitist in the way that they talked about the Bible compared to the way it was perceived that most

⁷⁴Havner, "Time to Wake Up!"

⁷⁵Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 5.

⁷⁶Robert G. Lee, "The Word of God Not Broken and Not Bound" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Atlantic City, NJ, May 18, 1964).

⁷⁷William L. Hendricks, "The Pastor Speaks to the World of Religious Authority" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Miami Beach, FL, May 30, 1967).

Southern Baptists talked about the Bible. J. D. Grey spoke out against “philosophers who speculate about the world and its ills from comfortable arm chairs.”⁷⁸

Conservatives did not view doubting the Word of God as a merely intellectual exercise. They considered it unbelief. At the 1975 Pastors’ Conference, Criswell suggested that people who doubt the word of God are infidels.⁷⁹ He forthrightly stated, “If a man does not believe the Bible is the Word of God, he ought to get out of the ministry.”⁸⁰ His comments served to simplify the controversy. For Criswell and other conservatives, the conflict was very easily explained. A person either believed the Bible was true and accurate or not. Those who did not were on the wrong side of the conflict—this according to conservative rhetoric. Such rhetoric not only simplified the controversy. It also divided the parties involved, identifying the good guys and bad guys. The good guys did not question the veracity of God’s Word—even the historic and scientific details; the bad guys did.

Barry Landrum gave a message about the Genesis account of creation at the 1982 Pastors’ Conference.⁸¹ Landrum poked fun at the idea of humanity coming into being by means of evolution. Landrum revealed, “Self-creation, how ridiculous! Chance-creation, how preposterous! Evolution by natural selections, how naïve! A watch without a watchmaker. A building without an architect. A city erected by chance. A man evolving from dead atoms. Life without a living one to originate it! How unbelievable that unbelief is.”⁸²

⁷⁸Grey, “God’s Prophet and His Message.”

⁷⁹W. A. Criswell, “The Pastor—A Proclaimer of God’s Word” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Miami Beach, FL, June 9, 1975).

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Barry Landrum, “The Great Beginning” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, New Orleans, LA, June 14, 1982).

⁸²Ibid.

Franklin Paschall compared liberalism to unbelief when he lamented, “In the theological circles surely there has been a leakage of reality across the centuries concerning the nature of the Scriptures One has the right to reject the report of the Gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but he does not have the right to modify the report.”⁸³

Ronald Long was adamant that Southern Baptists did not come to church to hear “some pseudo-intellectual express his personal doubts about the credibility of God’s Word.”⁸⁴ Long’s comments reveal that conservatives viewed academic skepticism not as careful, responsible scholarship, but as an attack against God and his Word—an attack that needed to be defended against.

Conservative rhetoric also maintained that to question any part of God’s Word was, by consequence, to call into question every other part of God’s Word. Ron Herrod expressed this argument with an analogy: “I would no more believe a Bible with one bad verse than I would take one capsule from a cyanide-laced bottle of Tylenol.”⁸⁵ The function of legitimizing knowledge is observable in this expression of the “God’s perfect word” fantasy theme. To believe in inerrant Bible is to legitimize the knowledge revealed by Scripture. To balk against inerrancy is to, in some sense, delegitimize the knowledge revealed in the Bible.

Len Turner, speaking at the 1983 Pastors’ Conference, mocked liberal scholars who sought to explain away the miraculous, supernatural parts of the Bible.⁸⁶ Turner

⁸³Franklin Paschall, “The Great Sacrifice” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, New Orleans, LA, June 14, 1982).

⁸⁴Ronald Burke Long, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, June 13, 1983).

⁸⁵Ron Herrod, “The Basics That Bind Us” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, June 13, 1983).

⁸⁶Len B. Turner, “Are You Ready to Preach?” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, June 13, 1983).

responded, “Well, I’m not that smart! I believe.”⁸⁷ In a similar fashion, Bailey Smith preached at the 1984 Pastors’ Conference from Exodus 15:23-27 on how to have hope in difficult times. Smith explained that Moses’ throwing of a tree into the waters, with the result that the waters were now safe for human consumption, was nothing short of a miracle. Smith complained, “One commentator said that when Moses threw the tree in, the leaves had a magnetism that got all of the incrustations out of the water, but I don’t believe it really happened like that. This was undoubtedly a miracle of God.”⁸⁸

Conservatives like Smith often defended the supernatural elements of the Bible while dismissing modern, rationalistic attempts to explain the miraculous in terms of naturally occurring physical phenomena. They sustained participation in their movement by way of providing new examples of attacks upon God’s Word.

Conservatives believed so strongly in the inerrancy of the Bible that some even proposed that inerrancy was a necessary component of Baptist identity. Sam Cathey, preaching at the 1977 Pastors’ Conference, declared, “A true, Southern Baptist . . . will stand on the ‘inerrant’ Word of God.”⁸⁹ Likewise, James Robison opined, “All Southern Baptists believe the Bible is the infallible, inspired, inerrant word of the Holy God.”⁹⁰ Ron Herrod claimed similarly, “One of the basics that must bind Baptists is the belief in the infallible, inerrant Word of God.”⁹¹ This aspect of the “God’s perfect Word” fantasy served to identify conservatives. They were inerrantists, a distinguishing feature of their identity.

⁸⁷Turner, “Are You Ready to Preach?”

⁸⁸Bailey E. Smith, “Encouraging the Servant of God” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Kansas City, MO, June 10, 1984).

⁸⁹Sam Cathey, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Kansas City, MO, June 13, 1977).

⁹⁰James Robison, “Where Are the Prophets?” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 12, 1978).

⁹¹Herrod, “The Basics That Bind Us.”

A false view of freedom. Conservatives often couched the controversy in the fantasy of a false versus a true view of freedom. Baxter did precisely this in his message at the 1962 Pastors' Conference. Baxter opined, "We Baptists always have been champions of the duty of private judgment, but liberty to interpret the Bible never meant liberty to discredit the Bible."⁹² Ray Wood did something similar when he qualified the doctrine of freedom by arguing that Baptist freedom does not negate Christ's lordship or the Christian's duty of obedience.⁹³ Jarry Autrey said he didn't believe in academic freedom and accused some professors of using it as a cover, apparently to get around certain Baptist doctrines.⁹⁴

Vance Havner also contradicted moderate notions of freedom with his comments at the 1963 Pastors' Conference.⁹⁵ Havner declared, "There are those today in the church who say, 'We have room for all shades and grades of doctrine.' That is too much room, more room than there ever was in the New Testament Church."⁹⁶ Likewise, Sam Cathey responded to moderates who insisted the convention had "enough elasticity" to accommodate all sorts of different Baptist viewpoints by saying, "Baloney!"⁹⁷

Nelson Price, speaking at the 1990 Pastors' Conference, argued that the academic community was often inconsistent in their allegiance to freedom. Price explains, "We desire accreditation while decrying creeds. However, the root word for

⁹²J. Sidlow Baxter, "Pentecost and Inner Experience" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Francisco, CA, June 5, 1962).

⁹³H. Ray Wood, "Save to the Uttermost Means Saved Forever" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, New Orleans, LA, June 10, 1969).

⁹⁴Jarry Autrey, "Six Essentials" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Philadelphia, PA, June 5, 1972); "Autrey Urges Removal of Bible Rejectors," *Baptist Press*, June 5, 1972.

⁹⁵Havner, "Time to Wake Up!"

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Cathey, "Untitled Message"; Dan Martin and Stan Haste, "Pastors Elect Smith, Hear Battery of Sermons," *Baptist Press*, June 14, 1977.

creed and accredit are the same.”⁹⁸ Price is pointing out the hypocrisy of educational institutions disliking doctrinal accountability from their constituency, while welcoming educational accountability from nationally recognized accrediting bodies.

In each of these conservative protests against moderate notions of freedom, it becomes clear that conservatives did not believe freedom provided license for doctrinal deviation. Conservative rhetoric regarding freedom mostly stood against what it perceived to be abuses of freedom, rather than outlining an affirmative presentation of the parameters of freedom. Conservatives did not wish to allow moderates the opportunity to claim freedom as a shelter to protect them from the checks provided by a more strictly enforced doctrinal accountability. The fantasy of a false view of freedom served the function of legitimizing/delegitimizing knowledge. For conservatives, freedom before God did not legitimize knowledge—Scripture did. Conservatives did not believe that the freedom to interpret the Bible for oneself demanded the right to have no one question an interpretation.

Right doctrine over wrong peace. Clark Pinnock, speaking at the 1968 Pastors’ Conference, argued against Southern Baptists who opted for denominational peace over sound doctrine. Pinnock warned unequivocally, “A denomination which preserves its outward tranquility at the high cost of the Biblical gospel is not to be admired. Cemeteries are also peaceful. There is no controversy in the grave.”⁹⁹ Adrian Rogers shared this fantasy theme at the 1990 Pastors’ Conference. Rogers said, “It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error Unity is a wonderful thing, good and pleasant. But beloved, it must be unity of the spirit.”¹⁰⁰ Rogers continued,

⁹⁸Nelson L. Price, “The Path Is a Person” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

⁹⁹Clark Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 3, 1968).

¹⁰⁰Adrian Rogers, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, New Orleans, LA, June 10, 1990).

“Unity, yes—but unification at the price of peace, absolutely not. We have some today who would jettison truth on the altar of cooperation.”¹⁰¹ The fantasy of valuing correct doctrine over superficial peace functioned as an intentionally divisive rhetoric. To an extent, conservatives desired a certain amount of division. Division was necessary for the dramatization of their vision, for drama necessarily entails conflict. They needed a sufficient number of conservatives to stand up against the status quo so that change could take place.

A conservative majority. Conservatives maintained a fantasy theme in which most of the convention’s constituency was conservative, but they were competing against a minority in positions of power such as institutional officials and seminary professors. Clark Pinnock, speaking in one of his several messages to the 1968 Pastors’ Conference, declared,

If the percent of our pastors who hold to Biblical infallibility is very large, the percent of our professors who do is very small Most of the delegates to our Convention believe that the Bible is the very word of God to man. It is not merely a human, fallible witness to someone else’s revelation, it is divine revelation itself The strong minority in positions of considerable power continue to vocalize their sub-Biblical view of inspiration just as if the opinion of the body were of no importance, as if merely to remind them of the fact were to infringe upon their freedom, as if the Christian faith involves no more matters of truth than the individual may wish to embrace.¹⁰²

This fantasy served primarily to motivate, invite, and sustain participation by way of dramatizing the controversy as a contest between ruling elites and the peasant majority. Conservative rhetor-leaders sought to convince Southern Baptists that they were poorly represented—at least, doctrinally speaking—at the level of institutional leadership. The thought that moderate elites were leading the convention in a direction of which a large majority of constituents disapproved was quite unsettling to many. Thus, the fantasy

¹⁰¹Rogers, “[Pastors’ Conference Message,]” June 10, 1990.

¹⁰²Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura.”

theme caught on.

The strategy of doublespeak. Conservatives perpetuated a fantasy theme that accused moderates of speaking one way around other moderates and another way around conservatives in order to avoid being accused of liberalism. Pinnock utilized this fantasy theme when he accused seminary professors of being less than forthcoming about their personal beliefs. Pinnock described “the smokescreen which the minority opinion uses in order to prevent attention being focused on their basic denial of the integrity of the Bible.”¹⁰³ Ralph Elliot admitted that Southern Baptists professors regularly engaged in doublespeak.¹⁰⁴ Gregory Wills referred to this as a “realistic” approach to helping a conservative constituency become more theologically progressive over time.¹⁰⁵ Conservatives accused moderates of doublespeak in order to simplify what might otherwise be a difficult to understand conversation of doctrine and semantics. Conservatives believed moderates were sometimes dishonest when they spoke about theology.

The Functions of Conservative Fantasy Themes

Rhetors can accomplish a variety of important functions by effectively calling upon hearers to participate in fantasy themes. Ten of those functions were identified above.¹⁰⁶ Using the most frequently employed fantasy theme of defending the faith as an

¹⁰³Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura.”

¹⁰⁴Ralph H. Elliot, *The Genesis Controversy and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992), 33-34; Elliot cites Glenn Hinson when discussing doublespeak; see Glenn Hinson, “Between Two Worlds,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 20, no. 2 (April 1985): 28-35.

¹⁰⁵Wills writes, “The realist policy existed because the beliefs and aims of the seminary faculty differed in significant ways from those of Southern Baptists generally . . . the faculty [of Southern Seminary] had become broadly liberal in their theology and progressive in their social views. The realist policy was a means of preventing the differences between the faculty and the denomination from degenerating into open hostility.” Gregory Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 371-2.

¹⁰⁶Fantasy themes simplify, dramatize, invite participation, identify parties, magnify or amplify

example here are some of the ways conservative rhetors used fantasy themes to fulfill the ten functions discussed above. First, conservatives sought to simplify the controversy by portraying it as a simple defense of the Christian faith against the force of modernism and its liberalizing effects upon theology. The conflict involved a host of influential social and historical factors. However, the fantasy theme of defending the faith was not concerned with providing critical nuance and qualification. Either one stood in defense of Christian orthodoxy or one did not—at least, according to the conservative fantasy theme of defending the faith.

Second, conservatives gave drama to an otherwise theological, and potentially pedantic, discussion. The subject of the nature and effects of the inspiration of the Bible is not a dramatically stimulating one. It is heady. It is theoretical and abstract. Conservatives could not win control of the convention's institutions by offering overscrupulous apologies for the inerrancy of the original autographs of the Bible. However, if inerrancy could be presented as a valiant way to stand up and fight for the truth, conservatives believed that would be a persuasive message.

Third, they invited Southern Baptists to participate in a meaningful contest in which the Christian faith itself was under attack from forces of evil and unbelief. To defend the faith is to imply it is under attack—a dramatic portrayal. Such drama tends to draw people into the fray. Fourth and related to the function of inviting participation, the dramatic fantasy of conservatives identified the heroes from the villains. The heroes were those who would stand up for the Christian faith by standing up for an inerrant Bible. The villains were those who were either unwilling to speak up for God's truth, or who were calling God's truth into question.

Fifth, conservatives magnified the importance of the conflict. They were not merely fighting for a certain interpretation of the *Baptist Faith and Message's* phrase—

significance, motivate actions, divide, sustain participation, legitimize knowledge, and interpret.

“truth without any mixture of error.”¹⁰⁷ Conservatives were fighting for the Christian faith itself. Inerrancy implied a certain hermeneutic. One’s hermeneutic determines one’s theology. Therefore, according to conservative rhetoric, inerrancy was the pivotal point at which one could either get the Christian faith right or wrong.

Sixth, the idea of defending the Christian faith served as excellent motivation for conservatives. Their messengers flocked from all over the country to arrive at the annual meetings so that they could have a part in electing a conservative president to keep the conservative movement going. Conservatives were motivated by the sense of purpose and meaning they derived from believing they were defending the faith.

Seventh, conservative fantasy themes were often divisive. They implied that those who were not defending the faith were attacking the faith, or at the very least, sitting idly by while others attacked the faith. This is a message that divides. The theme involves an “us vs. them” proposition, which is inherently divisive.

Eighth, the idea of defending the faith helped to sustain participation in the conservative movement. Conservative preachers continued to point out new examples of liberalism and its influence and thereby helped to sustain the movement. The message of maintaining the fight for orthodoxy in a world that continues in unbelief has exceptional staying power.

Ninth, conservative fantasy was very closely associated with how conservatives legitimized knowledge. Conservatives sought to defend the veracity of the Bible because the Bible was the primary source of religious knowledge. Conservatives believed the Bible was true—completely true in all of its contents, no matter whether they were theological, historical, or scientific. If inerrancy was not defended, then the ultimate source of knowledge—the Bible—was no longer to be considered reliable.

¹⁰⁷“Comparison of 1925, 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message” (The Southern Baptist Convention), accessed May 7, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfmcomparison.asp>.

Tenth, the defending of the faith motif provides an ultimate interpretation of what happened in the Southern Baptist Convention from 1961 to 1991. Conservatives believed they needed to fight back against the forces of modernism and theological liberalism in order to defend the Christian faith and rescue the denomination from the certain tragedy of a future without orthodoxy. Conservatives interpreted the controversy as a conservative resurgence.

The World of Conservative Fantasy

The fantasy themes in which conservatives shared can be narrowed down to six main themes. In descending order of frequency of appearance, the fantasy themes were (1) defending the faith; (2) God's perfect word; (3) a false view of freedom; (4) right doctrine over wrong peace; (5) a conservative majority; and (6) the practice of doublespeak. These themes were demonstrated and discussed above.

A group's most shared fantasy themes combine to form the group's rhetorical vision. A rhetorical vision is the dramatic means by which a group finds its place and purpose in the world. So what was the rhetorical vision of conservatives? When all the "various scripts" and "composite dramas" of their fantasy themes are put together, what was conservatives' overarching vision of what the world could be like, at least the world of the Southern Baptist Convention in which their fantasies operated? There was one common idea that appeared in each of the conservative fantasy themes—namely, concern for orthodoxy. Overwhelmingly, conservatives expressed a concern for correct doctrine when they participated in fantasy themes. Accordingly, the conservative rhetorical vision was a vision of orthodoxy. This vision was remarkably consistent in their preaching, and it explains each of their six fantasy themes.

The conservative world, rhetorically speaking, was comprised of certain spaces, people, and actions. The sacred space was conservative orthodoxy, reached and retained by way of a commitment to an inerrant Bible. The profane space was

theological liberalism and its leftward pull. Liberal space was seen as dangerous, unbelieving, elitist, and oftentimes dishonest. Conservatives considered liberalism dishonest for the way it sought to fill the terminology of orthodoxy with the meanings of heterodoxy, or perhaps even heresy. The good people stood up for God's Word—the inerrant Bible—and conservative doctrine. The bad people cast aspersion on God's Word by denying inerrancy, by offering natural explanations for the Bible's supernatural phenomena, or by reasoning that the Bible and the Christian faith did not need to be defended. Righteous actions were those that defended the faith. Actors could defend the faith by fighting for the inerrancy cause, with all its theological and political trappings. Unrighteous actions were those that doubted the credibility of God's Word, or that valued man's opinion about religious, historical, or scientific affairs more than what the Bible records about such affairs.

The rhetorical vision of conservative discourse, with its six main fantasy themes, explains why conservatives prefer to view the controversy as a conservative resurgence. Conservatives believed that theological liberalism had hijacked the convention and steered it away from its conservative roots. Conservatives sought to bring about a resurgence of theological conservatism in order to protect Christian orthodoxy.

The Moderate Rhetorical Vision

Moderates, like the conservatives, often shared in stories. They frequently utilized dramatizing devices such as personification and personal experience to add excitement, emotion, and theatrical appeal to their vision for the Southern Baptist Convention. These dramatic renderings of the issues involved in the controversy were their fantasy themes.

Moderate Fantasy Themes

Moderate preaching utilized six main fantasy themes at the Pastors'

Conference and SBC Forum from 1961 to 1991. In order of frequency of appearance, they are: (1) conservatives are controlling and oppressive; (2) freedom and oppression; (3) faithful in defeat; (4) a progressive faith; (5) faith can defend itself; and (6) not different enough.

Conservatives are controlling and oppressive. The most common fantasy theme of moderate rhetoric was that conservatives were bad or mean in the sense that they sought to control others by oppressive means. The point was not merely that conservatives were wrong, mistaken, or misguided. Conservatives were bad. By portraying conservatives in moral terms—i.e., bad as opposed to good—moderates sought to create a drama for their hearers to participate in, a drama in which conservatives were clearly the villains. That conservatives were bad also served the function of interpreting the controversy. Moderates largely viewed the controversy as the result of the misdeeds of conservatives. Rather than a conservative resurgence, moderates saw the events as a fundamentalist takeover.

There were several different ways in which conservatives were “bad” according to moderate rhetoric, each of which had to do with how conservatives were believed to denigrate freedom. Moderates argued that conservatives were bad because they were negative. Preaching at the 1984 Forum, Duke McCall so portrayed conservatives.¹⁰⁸ He decried the popular appeal of negative preaching, arguing that it is easier to arouse support by preaching against what people dislike than to preach for what people like. Similarly, Kenneth Chafin, also preaching at the 1984 Forum, said that, contrary to popular opinion, “good” preaching is not necessarily mean preaching.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸Duke McCall, “The Revelation We Proclaim” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984).

¹⁰⁹Kenneth Chafin, “An Encouraging Word” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984).

Chafin exhorted his hearers, “Pastors should spend more time encouraging their congregations than lambasting them with accusations about a lack of Christian commitment.”¹¹⁰ Such negative preaching was believed to devalue freedom.

Randall Lolley, speaking at the 1985 Forum, compared the conservative hermeneutic—one that Lolley described as literalism—to the mistaken hermeneutic of New Testament era, legalistic scribes.¹¹¹ This is a charge of legalism, and legalism demoted Christian freedom. Alan Neely criticized conservatives in his 1988 message to the Forum by saying, “We have learned that nobody wins a fight with belligerent, hostile fundamentalists.”¹¹² Herbert Reynolds, presenting at the 1990 Forum, compared leaders of the conservative movement to other mass movement leaders—namely, Adolph Hitler.¹¹³ Reynolds described conservative leaders with the following:

[They are] ambitious malcontents [with a goal] to control and manipulate a large mass of people to satisfy their own unhealthy personality needs I am seeking to portray the characteristics of yet another mass movement in history in which there is significant sociopathology The leaders of the fundamentalist movement possess classical mass movement personality characteristics in that they have demonstrated time and again that they have an unfulfilled craving for work, power, recognition and goals that cannot be found in their ordinary pursuits [They need] both an issue and a worthy adversary in order to rally the masses to their cause [So] they concocted the Bible as the issue and resurrected the “liberal” label to create a worthy adversary.¹¹⁴

Reynolds’ was a divisive rhetoric, and not by coincidence. Moderates needed their rhetoric to get people’s attention. They needed Southern Baptists to realize the stakes were high and there were two sides. One side was oppressive and controlling because

¹¹⁰Chafin, “An Encouraging Word,” described by Anita Bowden and Michael Tutterow, “‘Forum’ Premieres Before 2000 Persons,” *Baptist Press*, June 12, 1984.

¹¹¹Randall Lolley, “Integrity in Proclaiming the Gospel” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

¹¹²Alan Neely, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, San Antonio, TX, June 13, 1988).

¹¹³Herbert Reynolds, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*; Art Toalston, “Monday Morning Forum,” *Baptist Press*, June 11, 1990.

they did not sufficiently value freedom (i.e., conservatives). The other side was good because they promoted freedom (i.e., moderates). It was also a rhetoric with which moderates sought to motivate the denomination to oppose conservatives.

Randall Lolley also spoke about how bad conservatives were with his address at the 1990 Forum. Lolley compared conservative leaders to “an ugly, useless, undesirable plant which bears no fruit and appears to have no redeeming purpose.”¹¹⁵ Lolley claimed conservatives had “used our Bibles to bludgeon persons into submission to their imperfect interpretations.”¹¹⁶ He believed conservatives were bad because they attempted to enforce doctrine according to their own interpretations, thus infringing upon the freedom of others.

At the 1987 Forum, James Slatton aptly described the contours of disagreement between conservatives and moderates when he said Southern Baptists “must decide between unity in diversity and unanimity by conformity, between inclusiveness and exclusiveness, between functional and creedal unity, between commitment to the Bible and commitment to doctrinal formulæ [*sic*] about the Bible, and between freedom and coercion [*sic*].”¹¹⁷ In each of these pairings, moderates represent the nice things and conservatives represent the bad things. The fantasy helps to identify the actors playing out the drama. Conservatives were bad. Moderates were not.

The fantasy theme that conservatives are bad also contained the idea that conservatives were prickly heresy hunters. Moderates told stories about ignorant fundamentalists tromping through the convention’s seminaries and churches in search of theological liberalism. Dale Moody mentioned this in his sermon at the 1961 Pastors’

¹¹⁵W. Randall Lolley, “Lest a Bramble Rule Over Us” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷James Slatton, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987); Anita Bowden, “Forum—Monday AM,” *Baptist Press*, June 15, 1987.

Conference.¹¹⁸ So did Earl Quinn, who referred to antagonistic conservatives as “self-appointed custodians of orthodoxy.”¹¹⁹ William Walter Adams, speaking at the 1965 Pastors’ Conference, suggested that it was ignorance, and not modernism, that was threatening Southern Baptists.¹²⁰

Ronald Prince seemed not to hold back his thoughts regarding the growing doctrinal controversy in the convention. Preaching at the 1965 Pastors’ Conference, Prince said the policing of doctrine conservatives attempted was nothing more than “sheer stupidity” and “petty fault findings.”¹²¹ Kirby Godsey articulated his view of conservative actions as “the work of our own littleness and myopic arrogance.”¹²²

Accusations of heresy hunting functioned to simplify the conflict. According to moderate rhetoric, there was little need to have in depth theological discussions to determine whose doctrine is right or wrong. The problem was not that complex. The problem was simply that conservatives were doctrinally paranoid and unnecessarily splitting hairs. By patrolling doctrine in such stringent ways, conservatives were restricting freedom—such was the argument of conservative rhetoric.

Lavonn Brown preached a message on spiritual maturity at the 1987 Forum.¹²³ Brown suggested that conservatives were not nearly as spiritually mature as moderates. Brown described the sort of spiritual immaturity of which he said conservatives were guilty:

¹¹⁸Dale Moody, “The Winds of Doctrine” (The Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 23, 1961).

¹¹⁹Earl Quinn, “Walking Worthy of the Vocation” (The Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 22, 1961).

¹²⁰Adams, “The Minister and a Decaying Society.”

¹²¹Ronald Prince, “Fellowship through Happiness” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Dallas, TX, May 31, 1965).

¹²²R. Kirby Godsey, “The Spirit of Learning and Learning of the Spirit” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984).

¹²³Lavonn D. Brown, “The Journey from Faith to Faith” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

Faith at this level tends to be unexamined and legalistic. In conventional faith authority is generally located externally. At this stage people will move toward someone who will ‘speak the final word’ for them. They desire clear-cut, black and white answers. They seek relief from the responsibility to think for themselves. They demand formulas for how to behave. Faith at this stage tends toward dogmatism and legalism. Adherents are utterly convinced their way of doing things is the only way. They are constantly trying to “fix” others rather than accepting them.¹²⁴

The “conservatives are controlling and oppressive” fantasy theme gained further traction when moderates insisted that conservatives were not really fighting in defense of the faith, but that they were really fighting to gain power in the convention. Jess Moody, preaching at the 1967 Pastors’ Conference, charged that conservatives were causing controversy for no better reason than to gain position and notoriety in the convention. Moody reckoned, “We must not stagger because we are intoxicated on exaggerated self importance, taking ourselves too seriously, and fighting for political power.”¹²⁵ Moody’s fantasy theme was one with staying power for moderates throughout the controversy. Moderates regularly suggested that conservatives were not merely Southern Baptists desirous of doctrinal consensus, but that they used the issues of the controversy—most notably, inerrancy—as a ploy to gain power over the convention’s resources. Moody’s comments reveal how this fantasy served to interpret the controversy. Moderate rhetoric consistently interpreted the actions not merely as innocent, though wrongheaded, but as selfish and controlling. Such rhetoric sought to guide hearers in how to perceive conservatives. They were hungry for power and were willing to sacrifice the religious freedom of others in order to gain power—at least, that is how moderate rhetoric portrayed them.

At the 1990 Forum, Franklin Pollard responded to the conservative fantasy theme that liberalism kills church health by saying, “Denominations do not die because

¹²⁴Brown, “The Journey from Faith to Faith.”

¹²⁵Jess C. Moody, “The Minister Faces a World on the Move” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Miami Beach, FL, May 29, 1967).

they embrace faulty doctrine But denominations die because they let the fire of compassion go out. Then they begin to argue over lesser things. They engage in the dangerous sport of mountain climbing over molehills.”¹²⁶

The idea that conservatives were bad was also developed through the argument that conservatives had inhibited the witness of the convention because of their great antagonism. The idea that dispute over doctrine hindered witness and ministry was a common fantasy theme in moderate rhetoric. Jess Moody preached at the 1963 Pastors’ Conference, “We go through the emotional orgy of the liberal-conservative tensions and settle most of those issues on the basis of our glands instead of our brains.”¹²⁷ Moody continued, “While we have resolved, resolute, amended, and whereased—wresting with theological issues the seeds of which were sown when we were seminary or college students, Bob, Mary, Sally, and Billy have gone without any sure word from the Lord concerning the heartbreaking disintegrating of their little home.”¹²⁸ Larry Rohrman, preaching at the 1970 Pastors’ Conference, warned Southern Baptists about being distracted from mission by lesser things. Rohrman suggested, “Maybe our preoccupation takes the form of theological argumentation.”¹²⁹

Speaking at the 1981 Pastors’ Conference, Arthur Blessit argued that people needed Jesus, not a theological debate.¹³⁰ The idea is that the convention’s time would be better spent being on mission than arguing over the nature of the Bible. Some conservatives gave credence to this fantasy by saying such things, “We are spending too

¹²⁶Franklin D. Pollard, “Entrusted with the Gospel” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

¹²⁷Jess C. Moody, “The Home” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Kansas City, MO, May 7, 1963).

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Larry Rohrman, “Our Fellowship with Christ” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Denver, CO, June 1, 1970).

¹³⁰Arthur Blessit, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Los Angeles, CA, June 8, 1981).

much time defending our beliefs to others who already believe and not enough time proclaiming the Gospel to unbelievers.”¹³¹

Tony Campolo joined in the chorus of moderate voices complaining that convention conflict stifled convention witness. Campolo declared, “I don’t know what you’re arguing about in Dixieland, but the real issue is are you going to love people that everyone else hates? You’re creating a church that no one is going to want to join.”¹³² Alan Neely pointed out in his message at the 1988 Forum that Southern Baptists could not fight denominational battles and meet the real needs of the world at the same time.¹³³ Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, speaking at the 1990 Forum, insisted that Southern Baptists were losing credibility in American because they were unable to work out their problems.¹³⁴ By emphasizing that conservative actions were hurting the convention’s witness, moderate rhetor-leaders invited participation in their movement. Conservatives had to be stopped. Their actions were not merely causing trouble. They were keeping lost people from hearing the gospel.

Moderates also supported the notion that conservatives were bad people by accusing them of bibliolatry—that is, of worshiping the Bible instead of God. William Hendricks cautioned at the 1967 Pastors’ Conference that some Southern Baptists were “confusing the Bible, God’s message, with God Himself.”¹³⁵ David Matthews described what moderates meant when they claimed conservatives worshiped the Bible in his address at the 1984 Forum. Matthews declared, “We are committed to the Bible But

¹³¹Herrod, “The Basics That Bind Us.”

¹³²Anthony Campolo, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, San Antonio, TX, June 12, 1988).

¹³³Neely, “Untitled Message.”

¹³⁴Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, “A Trustee Worthy of Trust” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

¹³⁵Hendricks, “The Pastor Speaks to the World of Religious Authority.”

it is not God Our Bible witnesses to the ‘depths of God (1 Cor. 2:9-10), but its words are not synonymous with those depths If you make too much of the words . . . you will find yourselves among the Pharisees.’¹³⁶ Moderates also insisted that conservatives used the Bible incorrectly when they simply quote proof-texts in order to defend their doctrines. Jess Moody, speaking at the 1973 Pastors’ Conference, is reported to have “chided ‘Bible quoters’ who spend so much time defending the deity of Christ that they forget his humanity.”¹³⁷

Peter James Flamming spoke about the Bible at the 1986 Forum.¹³⁸ Flamming accused conservatives of being more committed to the Bible than to Jesus. His stated reason for such a charge was that conservatives were spending too much time in debate over the Bible and not enough time living in accordance with the teaching of the Bible. Here Flamming draws upon two different Bible-related fantasy themes—that conservatives committed the sin of bibliolatry, and that conservatives’ defense of the Bible forestalled their more important work of missions and ministry.

Freedom and oppression. Moderates often shared the fantasy that conservatives were oppressive and moderates believed in freedom. This was one of the primary ways in which moderates sought to dramatize the conflict. It was not a struggle of old leadership versus new leadership, nor a struggle over doctrine. It was a battle between freedom and oppression. This narrative makes the controversy more of a story of struggle between the good and the bad. In this way, the fantasy of freedom and oppression also served the important function of identifying and describing the characters

¹³⁶David Matthews, “Preaching and the Sovereignty of God” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984).

¹³⁷Jess C. Moody, “Learning to Follow Jesus” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Portland, OR, June 11, 1973); Bob O’Brien, “Pastors’ Conference Wrapup,” *Baptist Press*, June 12, 1973.

¹³⁸Peter James Flamming, “Orthodoxy of Love” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 9, 1986).

involved in dramatic conflict. Moderates portrayed themselves as lovers of freedom and conservatives as deniers of freedom.

Demonstrations of freedom and oppression in moderate rhetoric abound. For example, Kirby Godsey, speaking at the 1984 Forum, claimed that conservative desires for greater doctrinal accountability in Baptist schools demonstrated a willingness “for our children to be slaves of ignorance and victims of narrow-minded bigotry if we can just get them to recite the right religious words.”¹³⁹ Godsey further articulated his view of conservative actions as “the work of our own littleness and myopic arrogance.”¹⁴⁰

The subject of women in ministry was an important one for moderates related to the fantasy theme of freedom and oppression. Sara Ann Hobbs, speaking at the 1984 Forum, said that women would serve regardless of whether Southern Baptists accepted them or not.¹⁴¹ Hobbs’ message reached a climax when she said, “God is not listening to those who say he cannot call women to certain kinds of ministry and is continuing to call out bright, committed young women . . . [and] women are not listening to those who say God cannot call them to ministry and they are responding to his call and preparing themselves for ministry.”¹⁴²

Walter Shurden gave an address at the 1985 Forum all about soul competency, which he referred to also as freedom or liberty.¹⁴³ Shurden explained, “[It] is a spirit that pervades all of Baptist principles. It is the spirit of freedom. That is what I, soul competency, represent and symbolize and stand for in Baptist life. I am the Baptist statue

¹³⁹Godsey, “The Spirit of Learning and Learning of the Spirit.”

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Sara Ann Hobbs, “Women As Ministers” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984).

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Walter Shurden, “I Am Soul Competency” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

of liberty I am the single most important contribution of Baptists to the religious world.”¹⁴⁴ Speaking in the first person as soul competency, he used the device of personification to create a fantasy in which moderate hearers participated.¹⁴⁵

Norman Cavender preached about freedom in his 1986 message to the Forum.¹⁴⁶ Cavender’s sermon was quite similar to Shurden’s from the previous year in that both messages were entirely devoted to the subject of freedom. Both speakers believed that the controversy was a struggle for freedom against forces of oppression. In fact, in reference to the conservative plan to elect conservative presidents, Cavender claimed, “For the past seven years we have elected presidents who do not believe in liberty among our own people.”¹⁴⁷ Cavender referred to conservative ideas regarding doctrinal accountability as “silly pronouncements demanding that only one set of opinions of the first 11 chapters of Genesis be tolerated, with no liberty allowed for other views.”¹⁴⁸

John Hewett spoke at the 1987 Forum about being missional by being adaptable.¹⁴⁹ Preaching from the Acts 15 account of missionary advance and the question of circumcision, Hewett extrapolated that the conservative insistence upon inerrancy was akin to Judaizing attempts to enforce circumcision as a requirement to be part of the people of God.

Molly Marshall Green, in her comments to the 1989 Forum, spoke out against

¹⁴⁴Shurden, “I Am Soul Competency.”

¹⁴⁵Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 5. Bormann wrote that rhetors use “personification to create scenarios in which abstract entities [become] characters in the dramatic action.”

¹⁴⁶Norman Cavender, “The Bells of Liberty” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Atlanta, GA, June 9, 1986).

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹John H. Hewett, “Devising the Indivisible” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

creeds, confessions, and over-extended, misapplied pastoral leadership.¹⁵⁰ Green explained that conservatives, by attempting to exercise doctrinal accountability, were usurping a position that belongs solely to God.

Clyde Fant preached at the 1989 Forum.¹⁵¹ Fant referred to conservatives as “pulpit popes” because they sought to tell people what they were supposed to believe. John Killinger presented the freedom and oppression motif with his message to the 1990 Forum. Killinger preached, “Free people don’t need to hold other people in bondage. My gospel is about being free.”¹⁵² Moderates shared in the fantasy of freedom and oppression as a way of magnifying what for them was the most important Baptist distinctive—freedom.

Faithful in defeat. Moderates began to develop a new fantasy theme in the second half of the 1980s. Whereas previously they shared in certain themes in hope of victory, when it began to be clear that conservatives would win the conflict, moderates began to share different types of messages. Some of the fantasy themes were positive. For example, moderates believed they could be faithful through trials, and they developed fantasy themes along these lines. Other fantasy themes were negative. For example, James Slatton, speaking at the 1987 Forum, declared that conservatives had “disenfranchised” moderates.”¹⁵³

Nancy Sehested shared the message that, even though moderates were losing the denominational battle, they could claim the higher ground by being faithful through

¹⁵⁰Molly Marshall-Green, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Las Vegas, NV, June 12, 1989).

¹⁵¹Clyde Fant, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Las Vegas, NV, June 12, 1989).

¹⁵²John Killinger, “Living with a Trouble Maker” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

¹⁵³Slatton, “Untitled Message.”

trials. In her message to the 1987 Forum, Sehested preached that true ministerial power and authority does not come through worldly successes such as winning elections and pastoring large churches, but through faithfulness to God in trials.¹⁵⁴ The subtext of her sermon seems to be that moderates wielded a truer, more biblical power and authority than conservatives because moderates were suffering through the trial of losing their influence within the denomination because of their beliefs.

Libby Bellinger spoke at the 1988 Forum.¹⁵⁵ She spoke about the Magi being warned in a dream to avoid returning to Herod. She told her moderate audience that they might have to “deal with the Herods in [their] midst” and reminded them, “God’s presence can be experienced in other conventions and denominations.”¹⁵⁶ In other words, Bellinger told the Forum that God may very well want them to leave the Southern Baptist Convention, and that that was okay because God is not confined to one denomination. The moderate fantasy theme of being faithful by leaving the denomination is quite a different theme from that which moderates participated in earlier in the struggle.

Alan Neely, with his comments at the 1988 Forum, urged his hearers to “leave [conservatives] to fight amongst themselves.”¹⁵⁷ He believed leaving the convention could be the honorable thing to do. Even though conservatives were winning the battle for control of the convention, he suggested that moderates were winning the battle to see who could behave best. Moderates believed they could be faithful in defeat by taking the higher ground of a peaceful exit rather than staying and continuing to fight in the bitter disagreement.

¹⁵⁴Nancy Hastings Sehested, “Will the Real Minister Please Stand Up?” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, St. Louis, MO, June 15, 1987).

¹⁵⁵Libby S. Bellinger, “Going Home by a Different Way” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, San Antonio, TX, June 12, 1988).

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Neely, “Untitled Message.”

Winfred Moore preached at the 1988 Forum.¹⁵⁸ He encouraged moderates to stay in the convention even though it looked as though they would lose the conflict. He reasoned that moderates could remain and be an influence for good. He explained, “No good cause will take care of itself if we leave it by itself.”¹⁵⁹ Brian Harbour similarly called upon moderates to be faithful in defeat, also contending that faithfulness could be achieved by staying in the convention. Preaching at the 1989 Forum, he told his audience that being faithful “requires being you and staying true and seeing it through.”¹⁶⁰

Gene Garrison, preaching at the 1990 Forum, presented the theme that Christians are called to be faithful in every battle, but not necessarily called to win every battle.¹⁶¹ Garrison said further that moderates, through their faithfulness, might one day see their denomination return to peace. Garrison’s comments are similar to Harbour’s in that through them hearers might be compelled to stay in the convention as a means of faithfulness to their vision for Baptist identity. Either way, moderate speakers presented different ways for their moderate hearers to remain faithful Baptists even though they were losing the battle for control of the denomination.

The fantasy of remaining “faithful in defeat” was one of the main ways moderates sought to sustain participation in their movement. By the mid-1980s, after conservatives had won several presidential elections in a row, moderates had to respond to these losses in such a way as to motivate and sustain their constituency. By being “faithful in defeat” moderates rhetor-leaders offered their hearers a way to “lose” gracefully and perhaps save face. The fantasy transformed the way those who shared in it

¹⁵⁸Winfred Moore, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, San Antonio, TX, June 13, 1988).

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Brian Harbour, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Las Vegas, NV, June 12, 1989).

¹⁶¹Gene Garrison, “Untitled Message” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, New Orleans, LA, June 11, 1990).

perceived of the controversy. It was no longer about winning or losing. It was about being faithful. Moderates felt that their vision for Baptist life was what it meant like to remain faithful.

A progressive faith. Another topic closely related to the fantasy themes of the controversy was that of a progressive faith. Though not nearly as common as some of the other fantasy themes, the idea of faith being something that advances over time was a direct response to the dominating conservative fantasy theme of defending the faith against change. Moderates often spoke about their faith in terms of growth, advancement, openness, and progress. Carlyle Marney did this in his sermon at the 1961 Pastors' Conference.¹⁶² Marney spoke of a “larger world,” “new light,” “new knowledge,” and “new brothers”—all of which were available to Southern Baptists through their more liberal wing.

In 1965, William Walter Adams wished that the average Southern Baptist could understand that the Christian faith must “go through periods of adjustment, discarding the partial in favor of a richer faith.”¹⁶³ Adams both celebrates the moderate posture toward doctrine—one of openness to change—and accuses conservatives of a lack of intelligence while blaming them for holding back the convention through their ignorance. Kirby Godsey, preaching at the 1984 Forum, urged his hearers to be open to new religious ideas and “even a fresh voice from God.”¹⁶⁴ Bill Leonard spoke at the 1988 Forum about improvising grace.¹⁶⁵ His main idea was that it takes more faith to be open-minded in the search for truth than it does to be close-minded in the defense of

¹⁶²Carlyle Marney, “Keeping the Unity of the Faith” (The Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, May 22, 1961).

¹⁶³Adams, “The Minister and a Decaying Society.”

¹⁶⁴Godsey, “The Spirit of Learning and Learning of the Spirit.”

¹⁶⁵Bill J. Leonard, “Improvising Grace” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, San Antonio, TX, June 12, 1988).

truth. Moderates responded to the conservative rhetoric that the faith needs to be protected from change by arguing that the nature of the faith was such that it changed over time for purposes of growth and improvement.

The fantasy of believing in “a progressive faith” was not the most prominent one among moderate speakers. It was, however, a very important one for the way it functioned as a legitimization of knowledge. Moderates were more comfortable with modern theological developments than conservatives were, because they shared in the fantasy that doctrine was supposed to change over time. It was supposed to improve—precisely because it was “a progressive faith.”

Faith can defend itself. Another way in which moderate speakers responded to the very common conservative theme that the faith must be defended was by contending that the Christian faith and the Bible were strong enough to defend themselves. In doing so, they dramatized their message by way of the personification of doctrine. Doctrine was not weak and in need of elaborate theories or apologies. Doctrine was strong enough to take care of itself. This response was not nearly as much a legitimate moderate fantasy theme as it was a direct response to a very regular conservative fantasy theme. For example, Herschel Hobbs declared at the 1966 Pastors’ Conference, “The Sword of the Spirit does not need defending. It needs to be unsheathed.”¹⁶⁶ Speaking at that same Pastors’ Conference, Carl Bates said similarly, “I believe it would be an utter waste of time for me to attempt some involved polemic concerning whether or not God speaks and, if so, whether or not we have an accurate record of that word.”¹⁶⁷ This was a very different message than the fantasy theme in which conservatives participated when they believed it was their duty to stand up for the

¹⁶⁶Hobbs, “Worthy of Our Vocation.”

¹⁶⁷Bates, “Is There Any Word from the Lord?”

Word of God against the forces of change. Hobbs' and Bates' comments portray moderates as understanding the nature of God's Word better than conservatives. William Self made a very similar claim when he preached at the 1985 Forum that he never learned in Southern Baptist seminaries that the Christian faith always had to be defended.¹⁶⁸ Self remarked, "Somewhere along the way I picked up that the God we serve was big enough to take care of Himself."¹⁶⁹ Conservatives believed the faith was under attack by the forces of modern, theological liberalism. Without necessarily acknowledging that the faith was under such an attack, moderates insisted that the faith could handle it.

Not different enough. Moderates rarely argued that there were no differences between themselves and conservatives. In fact, moderates supposedly conceded the differences by way of a celebration of diversity. In order to promote this ideology, moderates employed fantasy to minimize the differences between conservatives and moderates and encourage an appreciation of diversity. Admittedly this was not the most prominent fantasy theme within moderate rhetoric. It does, however, show up in their sermons from time to time. It represents the rhetorical function of simplification. That there were differences between the two groups was not really up for dispute. It was the significance of those differences that was in question. By arguing that the differences were not significant enough to justify fighting, moderates appeared to simplify an otherwise complex discussion regarding theology, intellectual, social, and cultural trends, and competing notions of Baptist identity.

Roy McClain, speaking at the 1962 Pastors' Conference, described two very different ways of perceiving of conservatives and liberals.¹⁷⁰ He wanted to show that

¹⁶⁸William L. Self, "What They Don't Teach You At a Baptist Preacher's School" (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Roy O. McClain, "Making Disciples" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, San Francisco, CA, June 4, 1962).

there was more than one way to look at each camp. He invited his hearers to share in a fantasy wherein both groups could continue to exist in the convention. McClain described conservatives and liberals with the following:

If you believe as a conservative that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, that Jesus Christ is the son of God, and that there is only one heaven and hell, then being a conservative is a resounding compliment. But if as a conservative you mean a man has ALL the answers revealed to him by the Spirit, or that everyone else is wrong if they disagree with him, then being a conservative is no compliment at all. If by liberal you mean a smart alec who begins with a premise of his own intellect to determine a theological question, or one who devotes himself to getting out of a theological jungle by his own reasoning power and leaves his followers with no faith at all, then being a liberal is not a compliment but a condemnation. If you mean a liberal is one who believes in fundamentalism but doesn't like the fundamentalist tag, one who is open minded in the search for truth, one who knows he doesn't have all the answers but wants to make a contribution through intellectual study and research, then being a liberal is a great compliment.

McClain minimized the differences between conservatism and liberalism by describing each group in the best possible way. This was a description that was quite amenable to the moderate cause. Moderates did not believe that the two groups were so different that more strident measures of accountability were required. McClain's description of moderate type of liberalism also fits well with one of the previous fantasy theme sub-headings—that of a progressive faith. Nonetheless, by portraying both groups in as positive a light as possible, it seems that McClain is mostly trying to convince his hearers that the two groups are not different enough to justify all the internecine fighting that had been going on.

Cecil Sherman, preaching at the Forum in 1985, cited an example of how conservatives and moderates use the Bible more similarly than conservatives perhaps cared to admit. Sherman quoted from a study Bible in which there were some rather liberal-sounding, naturalistic explanations regarding the plagues in the book of Exodus, specifically the plague by which God turned the Nile River into blood. Then, with the intonation and pace of a well-delivered punch line, Sherman cited the source of those comments—the *Criswell Study Bible*. Sherman's point in referencing Criswell's interpretation of the Nile River turning into blood was to be able to ask the question,

“Why am I a liberal if I do [that] and he’s an inerrantist if he does?”¹⁷¹ Sherman also responded to Criswell’s commentary by concluding, “W. A. Criswell and I use the Bible very much the same.”¹⁷² Perhaps Sherman desired for his audience to believe that the two groups were really not so different. An alternative explanation could be that he merely desired to have something of a “gotcha” moment on Criswell and the conservatives.

Moderate preachers used fantasy themes to draw clear lines between themselves and conservatives. Conservatives were controlling and oppressive. Moderates were not. Conservatives were oppressive. Moderates celebrated freedom. Conservatives were victorious but unrighteous. Moderates were faithful through trials and defeat. Conservatives believed in a dogmatic, outdated, unintelligent rendering of the faith. Moderates were more enlightened and viewed the Christian faith as progressive. Conservatives fought over the faith. Moderates believed the faith was powerful enough to defend itself. Conservatives believed there were differences substantial enough between the two groups to legitimize conflict. Moderates were more tolerant toward the diversity within the Southern Baptist Convention. In each of these scenarios, moderate fantasy themes served to identify the two different sides.

The Functions of Moderate Rhetoric

Moderates accomplished many important tasks through their participation in fantasy themes. For example, their fantasy themes helped to simplify what otherwise could become quite complex issues. They used the fantasy theme that conservatives are bad to present an uncomplicated interpretation of the controversy. According to this rhetoric, the resurgence was not about different interpretations of Baptist identity. The

¹⁷¹Cecil E. Sherman, “To Trust Again” (Southern Baptist Convention Forum, Dallas, TX, June 10, 1985).

¹⁷²Ibid.

conflict did not need to be settled in tedious theological discussion. It was as simple as the conservatives were doing bad things and moderates were trying to stop them.

Their fantasy themes both dramatized and magnified the whole ordeal. The conflict was not simple bickering among ornery religionists. The controversy was a dramatic struggle for freedom against the forces of oppression. Such a narrative renders the controversy more a story of struggle between good and the bad. The battle between good and evil invites participation and helps to distinguish between the two parties. In essentially all of their fantasy themes, moderates set up some sort of an “us vs. them” scenario, with moderates being the good, well-informed Baptists, and conservatives being the simple-minded, aggressive Baptists. This is divisive.

Moderate fantasy themes amplified the nature of the struggle. Moderates were fighting for freedom, because for them being Baptist meant being free. Further, the gospel itself—the heart of the Christian faith—was about freedom. Therefore, the controversy was about Baptist identity and gospel fidelity.

Moderate fantasy themes sought to provide moderates with the interpretive and emotional means to become engaged and remain engaged in the fight for Baptist identity. That freedom was a primary motivating factor for moderates and that it remained so even after the controversy ended can be seen in the emphasis moderate Baptists have continued to place upon freedom. When moderates stopped fighting for control of the Southern Baptist Convention it is unlikely that they did so because they were no longer motivated by a vision of freedom. It is much more likely that they stopped fighting because they believed they could pursue freedom elsewhere. Many became a part of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization founded upon and committed to a vision of freedom in Baptist life.¹⁷³

¹⁷³Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, “Core Values” (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship), accessed October 7, 2016, <http://www.cbf.net/core-values/>. In their statement of “Core Values,” the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship states, “Our understanding of Baptist faith and practice is expressed by our emphasis on freedom.” Each of their four core values contains the word “freedom”—soul freedom, Bible freedom,

The six fantasy themes of moderates provide an excellent overview of how moderates interpreted the Conservative Resurgence. Conservatives were bad because they sought to oppress and control others. Conservatives did not understand what the Baptist faith was all about—namely, freedom. Conservatives may have won the battle, but moderates really won by being faithful and being right. The Christian faith is not stuck in some creedal code of orthodoxy. The Christian faith is free. Therefore theology is to be perceived as progressive. The faith does not need to be codified and protected. It needs to be free to defend itself. There may have been meaningful differences between conservatives and moderates, but those differences did not justify the takeover efforts of conservatives. Diversity should be celebrated under the banner of cooperation.

The World of Moderate Fantasy

What was the rhetorical vision of moderates? The main fantasy themes—or scripts—of moderate rhetoric were, in order of frequency of appearance (1) conservatives are oppressive and controlling; (2) freedom and oppression; (3) faithful in defeat; (4) a progressive faith; (5) faith can defend itself; and (6) not different enough. These themes were presented and exemplified above.

The paramount idea that best explains why moderates shared in these fantasy themes, that is, the moderate rhetorical vision, was freedom. Moderates viewed the entire controversy as a struggle for freedom. They believed conservatives were bad primarily because they believed conservatives infringed upon their Baptist birth right of freedom. They were fighting for freedom against the forces of oppression, forces represented by conservatives and their actions in the controversy. Moderates figured out by the mid to late 1980s that they would not win the conflict. Their rhetoric changed to reflect this fact. Their new fantasy theme was that they could be faithful to their freedom-based

church freedom, and religious freedom.

convictions even in defeat. Moderates understood the Christian faith to be progressive in the sense that it could improve over time as God helped his people to understand it. Moderates understood freedom as that which allows room for faith to grow or progress. Accordingly, the Christian faith did not need to be defended because God could take care of his people's understanding of the faith. Further, freedom was what enabled moderates to believe that Southern Baptists could encompass a broad array of belief.

The rhetorical vision of moderates was a world of freedom. The sacred space was unhindered freedom—the right to interpret God and the Bible for one's self, without fear of correction. Profane space was anywhere where doctrinal accountability was strictly defined and enforced. Good people were those who understood and honored the Baptist principle of freedom. Bad people were those who tried to tell others what they were supposed to believe about God and the Bible. A righteous action was that which promoted, accepted, celebrated, understood, and applied freedom. An unrighteous action was that which pronounced what others were supposed to believe, or that which declared that what someone genuinely believed was wrong.

A Fundamentalist Takeover

The moderate rhetorical vision of freedom led moderates to interpret the Southern Baptist controversy not as a conservative resurgence, but as a fundamentalist takeover. Moderates interpreted the conflict as a hostile takeover performed by fighting fundamentalists who did not truly understand what it meant to be a Baptist. Norman Cavender, speaking at the 1985 Forum, said this quite directly when he explained that moderates were “*real* Baptists,” while conservatives were “non-Baptist.”¹⁷⁴

What the conflict meant to moderates was that the struggle was not primarily about honest disagreement between competing visions for Baptist identity, but that it was

¹⁷⁴Cavender, “The Bells of Liberty.”

a fight—an unfortunate, unnecessary, nasty fight—started by, maintained, and won by bullying, power-hungry Fundamentalists. According to moderate rhetoric wrapped in fantasy themes, Fundamentalists used a combination of political savvy and rhetorical skill to enforce their vision for the future of the convention. Moderates were left feeling as though their only options in defeat were to continue fighting a losing battle, to sit idly by and offer a sort of silent consent, or to leave the denomination they knew and loved in order to pursue the realization of their Baptists ideals elsewhere.

Evaluation of Fantasy Themes and Rhetorical Visions

Three standards of evaluation will be applied to the conservative rhetorical vision of orthodoxy and the moderate rhetorical visions of freedom. First, a truth standard of judgment will be applied. The primary concerns of the truth standard have to do with (1) how a group's vision legitimized knowledge; and (2) the extent to which a group's vision and fantasies constituted truth or reality for the audience; (3) how a group's vision accounts for the historical developments that have taken place since the vision came into fruition.¹⁷⁵ Second, an ethical standard of judgment will be employed in order to interpret the primary motives contained within each group's rhetorical vision.¹⁷⁶ Each group's fantasy themes will be compared with their respective motives in order to discern whether and to what extent they spoke in accordance with their motives. Third, an artistic standard of judgment will be used in order to evaluate the stability and viability of the competing visions. A sustainable vision must be coherent, consistent, and resistant to change.

¹⁷⁵Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 405. Bormann wrote, "When the authentic record of events is clear and widely understood the competing visions must take it into account."

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 397, 407. Bormann argued that dramas (read: fantasies) imply motives, that the "motives are in the messages," and are "thus available for direct interpretation."

An Evaluation of Conservative Vision

Truth standard. Within every rhetorical vision there are what Bormann refers to as certain “core fantasies” that provide for the “ultimate legitimization of knowledge.”¹⁷⁷ These fantasies supply arguments for how to justify a group’s beliefs and actions. The core fantasy theme of conservatives that served in this capacity was the “God’s perfect word” fantasy. Conservatives believed that knowledge had to accord with Scripture in order to be legitimate. If a belief was contradictory to something Scripture affirmed (e.g., antismaterialism), or if a belief was seen as detrimental to the primacy of God’s Word in validating knowledge (e.g., that there may be errors in the Bible), said belief was deemed to be illegitimate. The doctrine of inerrancy, therefore, was a very important component of the conservative authentication of truth. If God’s Word contained errors, it was deemed to be less trustworthy as the standard by which religious knowledge was to be validated. This facet of conservative rhetoric was essential to the controversy.

Conservatives supported their view of the legitimization of knowledge by appealing to both Scripture and Baptist history. It was not uncommon for conservative preachers to attempt the development of a sort of biblical theology of inerrancy. Often, they appeal to the way Jesus spoke of and utilized Scripture.¹⁷⁸ They also appealed to Baptist history as a source of argument for the defense of inerrancy, though these references were often unspecific in nature.¹⁷⁹ It should be noted that moderates also appealed to Scripture and Baptist history to support their view that inerrancy was not required for the legitimization of knowledge.

¹⁷⁷Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 17.

¹⁷⁸For examples of this, see Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura”; Miller, “The Emmanuel Factor in the Church.” Pinnock explained that Christ “bowed to the inviolable authority of Scripture.” Miller said outright, “Jesus is conservatively sound in his Doctrine! Regarding bibliology, He is an inerrantist.”

¹⁷⁹Though not from the preaching of the Pastors’ Conferences, L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles’ work on Baptist history and bibliology represents a substantial, well-documented presentation of the conservative case for a connection between Baptist history and the doctrine of inerrancy. See L. Russ Bush and Tom Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, rev. ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1999).

Conservative rhetors very much intended for their hearers to interpret their vision and fantasies as being truthful representations of reality. These were not at all intended to be mere stories to help hearers cope with the trials of controversy or the larger difficulties of life. The kernel of conservative fantasy themes was that liberalism had crept into the convention. If liberalism is defined as being more open and generous toward the findings of modern theological development, then indeed conservative concerns regarding liberalism in the convention were warranted.

Moderates responded that they also believed doctrine must be biblical in order to be valid. However, drawing upon the fact that the Bible's meaning must be interpreted, and further that there are innumerable methods and results of biblical interpretation, moderates insisted that conservatives legitimized knowledge not by what the Bible said, but by what conservatives interpreted the Bible to say. Conservatives relied upon a historical, grammatical method of interpretation that sought primarily to understand the Bible in a literal fashion—that is, taking words in their usual or most basic sense.

In the intervening years since the controversy ended, conservatives have seemingly remained faithful to their vision of a concern for orthodoxy. When the contest was won, conservatives did not relinquish their concern for orthodoxy. In fact, they steered each of the Southern Baptist seminaries toward the protection and promulgation of conservative doctrine. They also led the convention to update its confessional statement to reflect a more conservative emphasis.¹⁸⁰ In terms of a truth standard of judgment, then, the conservative vision of concern for orthodoxy has, in at least one meaningful sense, proven true to reality. What is meant by this truthfulness is not necessarily that conservatives were right, that liberalism had crept into the convention's institutions and was beginning to rear an unfortunate, faith-crippling influence upon

¹⁸⁰“Comparison of 1925, 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.”

unsuspecting Southern Baptists. Instead, what is meant is that, at the very least, conservatives have given reason to believe that they were genuine in their concern for orthodoxy. They really did believe liberalism was a problem. They really did engage in efforts to experience a resurgence of conservative doctrine in the convention.

Conservatives were right that beliefs had made their way into convention life, particularly at the college and seminary level, that were more liberal than those which they espoused. Moderates have not denied that their beliefs, on the whole, were more open towards what conservatives considered liberalism. In this sense, conservative motives are well taken in terms of the truth standard of judgment.

Ethical standard. An ethical standard of judgment can be applied to interpret motive in discourse. The motive contained within the conservative rhetorical vision was that of concern for orthodoxy. Conservatives were motivated by the idea that God was dishonored and people were harmed by unbiblical doctrine. Therefore conservatives were prompted to action by what they perceived as the presence of less than orthodox doctrine. By promoting inerrancy and conservative doctrine, conservatives believed they were promoting the error-free and unchanging quality of God, his Word (i.e., the Bible), and his truth. Therefore to ferret out less than orthodox doctrine was to engage in virtuous behavior.

Conservatives were so motivated by the pursuit of correct doctrine that they were willing to sacrifice denominational peace and perhaps even denominational witness in order to gain orthodoxy. They were even willing to engage in the religiously unbecoming practice of politicking in order to gain support. All of the conservative fantasy themes are consistent with the motive of promoting and protecting conservative orthodoxy. This is a good motive. Moderates frequently questioned the motives of conservatives, insisting that their supposed pursuit of purer doctrine was really a ruse, a

ploy concocted in order to takeover the leadership and direction of the convention.¹⁸¹ This would be a bad motive. It is true that conservatives have maintained in the intervening decades a concern for orthodoxy quite similar to that which they expressed during the years of the controversy. It is equally true, however, that they did take over the convention. Whether conservative rhetors were motivated more by their concern for orthodoxy (which they very consistently expressed), by the moderate accusation that they were trying to takeover the convention for personal gain, or by some admixture there between is not directly and conclusively accessible by way of a fantasy theme analysis of the Pastors' Conference and Forum sermons.

Artistic standard. Conservative rhetoric was remarkably consistent. In an internal sense, the rhetorical vision of concern for orthodoxy was consistent with each of the six main fantasy themes. The "defending the faith" fantasy theme was directly related to the overall concern for orthodoxy. The two ideas are virtually two different ways of expressing the same thing. The fantasy theme of "God's perfect Word" was also directly related to the vision of orthodoxy. Conservatives believed that any compromise regarding the inerrancy or perfection of God's Word was an endangerment to the Christian faith and the gospel itself.

The "false view of freedom" fantasy theme was also consistent with the rhetorical vision of concern for orthodoxy. Conservatives believed moderates were harboring theological liberalism under the cover of a contrived, self-serving view of Christian freedom. It was conservatives' concern for orthodoxy that motivated them to call out moderates for their supposed abuse of freedom. The fantasy theme of "right doctrine over wrong peace" also reported directly to the controlling concept of concern

¹⁸¹For an especially direct example of this line of moderate response to conservative rhetoric, see Reynolds, "Untitled Message," wherein conservative leaders are compared to mass movement leaders such as Adolph Hitler.

for orthodoxy. Conservatives were willing to sacrifice what they viewed as a justified disruption of peace for the sake of achieving and maintaining orthodoxy in the denomination.

The “conservative majority” fantasy theme was also directly tied to the concern for orthodoxy. Conservatives believed that most of the Southern Baptist Convention was conservative in their theology. They therefore justified their political activity on the basis of believing that not only was their conservative interpretation of the faith the right one, but it was also the one that best represented the constituency of the convention. Finally, the fantasy theme dubbed “the doctrine of doublespeak” was also closely connected to conservatives’ concern for orthodoxy. Conservatives believed that moderates spoke out of both sides of their mouths when discussing doctrine. Conservatives shared in the idea that moderates often said orthodox-sounding words, but meant less than orthodox things by those words. Each of the fantasy themes was directly associated with the overall vision of conservative rhetoric. Each of the fantasy themes worked well with the other fantasy themes. There were really no inconsistencies in the rhetorical vision and six main fantasy themes of the conservative movement.

In an external sense, the conservative rhetorical vision of concern for orthodoxy never really changed. It was consistent throughout the 1961 to 1991 time period. During these years, when a conservative preacher participated in one of the main conservative fantasy themes, he exhibited an overarching commitment to what he believed was the orthodox interpretation of the Christian faith.

The consistency with which conservatives presented their vision for the Southern Baptist Convention was very impressive. If conservatives were not as genuinely concerned for orthodoxy as their rhetorical vision implies, then either they pulled off one of the greatest ruses in the history of American religious controversies, or they were all completely self-deceived. The explanation that makes the most sense is that they were concerned about orthodoxy and they believed they could use the

convention's political structure to bring about a conservative resurgence.

An Evaluation of Moderate Vision

This section contains an evaluation of the moderate rhetorical vision of freedom according to a truth standard, an ethical standard, and an artistic standard of judgment.

Truth standard. The primary fantasy themes in which moderates participated that served to legitimize knowledge and provide arguments for the justification of beliefs and actions were: (1) freedom and oppression; and (2) a progressive faith. The freedom and oppression motif within moderate rhetoric expressed the belief that every Christian was free to interpret God, the Bible, and thus the Christian faith, for himself. Therefore, any genuinely held belief and/or interpretation was considered to be biblical and to be legitimate knowledge, so long as it fell within the moderate's broader reading of the *Baptist Faith and Message*—that is, broader than the way conservatives read the *Baptist Faith and Message*—and was held by someone or some group desirous of cooperating together with the Southern Baptist Convention for the purpose of missions. The question of how broadly the *Baptist Faith and Message* should be interpreted was not directly addressed by moderate rhetoric. Moderates appeared to take as a given that Southern Baptists were biblical, and therefore their knowledge was legitimate. Instead of defining how broad might be too broad, moderates spoke to how narrowly was too narrow—and they pointed to the conservative movement as being too narrow.

Therefore, the question for moderates was not so much whether something was biblical—again, that was something of a given according to moderate rhetoric—but whether someone sincerely interpreted it to be so. If the conviction was held freely and earnestly, then the knowledge was deemed legitimate. The “a progressive faith” fantasy theme supported this epistemology, for interpretations will vary from person to person, and from generation to generation. Therefore faith must be considered something that is

fluid rather than rigid. A rigid faith has distinguishable boundaries. A fluid faith has boundaries that expand and contract in response to the movements of the content of which it is comprised. Conservatives responded to these core moderate fantasies by saying that such expressions of freedom and faith quickly devolve into license.

To a quite meaningful extent, moderates have also remained true to their vision of freedom since the controversy subsided. The most lasting expression of the moderate faction of Southern Baptists is observable in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization that continues to uphold the moderate tradition of a commitment to freedom. Moderates do not appear to have been attempting to harbor blatant liberalism or to stifle conservatism. They were simply committed to freedom as the quintessential Baptist virtue. The discrepancy between conservative claims and moderate actions with regard to safeguarding liberalism is explained by the fact that the two groups disagreed over what constituted theological liberalism. Conservatives believed moderates were too open to liberalism. Moderates were comfortable acknowledging that they were more open. They did not, however, believe that such openness made them liberals.

There is at least one exception to moderate faithfulness to a vision of freedom—namely, the extension of that freedom to conservative Southern Baptists during the controversy. There is an inconsistency on the part of moderates in applying freedom to hold one's beliefs as it concerns the conservative-held belief that doctrine should be well-defined and Southern Baptist institutions should be held to a certain level of doctrinal accountability. According to moderates—who supposedly believed in freedom—conservatives were free to interpret their faith as they wished, just so long as they did not act in accordance with such an interpretation so as to impose their views on others.

Ethical standard. Upon applying an ethical standard of judgment to the moderate rhetorical vision, it can be interpreted that moderates were motivated primarily

by a concern for freedom. They believed that God had granted an inalienable religious freedom to every human being. This freedom provided for the individual both the right and ability to interpret God for himself, without the infringement of any external influence. Moderates believed that their understanding of the freedom of the individual soul represented the greatest achievement of Baptist thought and the greatest contribution of Baptists to the religious world. Therefore to do anything that was perceived as a violation of the freedom of the individual soul was to commit the greatest distinctively Baptist crime, as well as to act out against the very nature of the human soul and the image of God in which it was made.

The two most prominent fantasy themes of the moderate rhetorical vision were “conservatives are oppressive and controlling” and “freedom and oppression”—both of which speak directly to the motive of concern for freedom. The main reason moderates believed conservatives were bad, so to speak, was because they did not value freedom in the same way and to the same extent as moderates. In the drama of their fantasies, moderates perceived freedom promotion as the great good and freedom demotion as the great evil. Conservatives were thus viewed as the villains; and moderates were understood to be heroes for the way they stood strong and even were willing to suffer for freedom. For the moderate vision, the battle for the convention was not merely a battle to be right, or a battle to control and shape the future of the convention. It was a battle, first and foremost, for freedom.

Artistic standard. The rhetorical vision of moderates was that of freedom. The concept of freedom best explains the phenomena of the six main fantasy themes of moderates. However, freedom does not explain each of the moderate fantasy themes with the same measure of consistency.

The first, and by far the most frequently occurring, fantasy theme of moderate rhetoric was that “conservatives are oppressive and controlling.” Repeatedly, moderate

speakers invited their hearers to join them in thinking about how bad conservatives were and therefore why the conservative movement should be opposed. Moderates offered several different iterations of the “conservatives are oppressive and controlling” fantasy theme. One version was simply that conservatives were mean and conservative preachers preached mean sermons. This idea, in and of itself, is somewhat consistent with the vision of freedom in the sense that it focuses upon the players in the drama of the moderate pursuit of freedom. To be mean, as moderates insisted conservatives were, was to do something that inhibited or devalued freedom. There were some instances in which moderate preachers spelled out with clarity that conservatives were mean because they did not value freedom as much as moderates. There were other instances, however, where the meanness of conservatives was not related to freedom at all. In these instances, moderates engaged in inconsistent, and therefore less compelling, rhetoric.

Another way in which moderates participated in the fantasy theme of “conservatives are mean” was by portraying conservatives as prickly, and oftentimes ignorant, heresy hunters. In this instance, it is easier to make out the connection between the “conservatives are mean” motif and the overriding idea of freedom. By portraying conservatives as “self-appointed custodians of orthodoxy”—as did Earl Quinn in 1961—moderates sought to demonstrate that conservatives infringed upon the freedom of others to interpret God and Scripture without outside interference.¹⁸²

Moderates also shared in the fantasy theme of “conservatives are oppressive and controlling” by presenting at least three other variations on this theme: (1) that conservatives were really only fighting for power, not orthodoxy; (2) that conservatives were ruining the convention’s witness by bickering so much; and (3) that conservatives worshipped the Bible. In each of these three examples of the “conservatives are oppressive and controlling” fantasy theme, there is a less direct connection between the

¹⁸²Quinn, “Walking Worthy of the Vocation.”

fantasy theme and the overall vision of freedom. The fantasy theme is more of an *ad hominem* argument—whether warranted or not—against conservatives. Granted, conservatives were actors in the rhetorical drama of moderate rhetoric. Therefore to argue against their person rather than their ideas is not totally unrelated to the vision. This is not so much an inconsistency in moderate rhetoric as it is a weaker argument than if moderates had contended more directly against prominent conservative ideas. There are also possible ethical implications for the moderate use of *ad hominem* argumentation.¹⁸³

The second main fantasy theme of moderate rhetoric was “freedom and oppression.” This fantasy theme was consistent with the moderates’ vision of freedom. Though in most of the versions of this fantasy theme moderates still sought to besmirch the reputation of conservatives, there is not a substantial inconsistency.

The third fantasy theme of moderates was that, even though they would lose the battle for control of the convention, they could still be “faithful in defeat.” This fantasy theme is also consistent with the rhetorical vision of freedom. Moderates believed that their celebration of freedom was unique in the controversy. Even though they lost the battle, they felt they could still uphold the banner of freedom regardless of whether they remained in the convention or not.

Even though there is no inconsistency between the rhetorical vision of freedom and the fantasy theme of “faithful in defeat,” there was an inconsistency in the content of the moderate message. The fantasy that moderates could be “faithful in defeat” did not begin showing up in moderate rhetoric until the mid-to-late 1980s—in other words,

¹⁸³It is true that conservatives also engaged in the use of *ad hominem* argumentation. For example, the conservative fantasy themes regarding a false view of freedom and the practice of doublespeak both contain certain elements of argument against the person and/or behavior of moderates. It should be pointed out, however, that the most common fantasy theme in which moderates participated was that conservatives were bad—itsself an *ad hominem* argument. Compare this to the most common fantasy theme in which conservatives shared—namely, that of defending the faith against the modern forces of theological liberalism. Conservative fantasies typically wrapped their arguments against moderates in ideas that were less personal—that is, less personal in the sense of person-attacking rather than in the sense of concerning one’s private life, relationships, and emotions.

when the controversy was all but over. Moderates tailored their message in response to their awareness that they were losing the battle, an understandable and reasonable adjustment. This is not wrong. It is not necessarily inconsistent with their vision. It is just not as consistent as was the conservative message of concern for orthodoxy, a message that did not really change throughout the life of the controversy.

The fourth fantasy theme of moderates was that of “a progressive faith.” Moderate preachers often attempted to describe the Christian faith as something that changes over time in order to improve and retain contemporary relevance. This fantasy theme is consistent with the moderate vision of freedom. The moderate interpretation of freedom as the individual’s right to interpret God personally and without infringement is, in a sense, required for faith to progress. One must be free to interpret the faith in a different way in order for the faith to change. Moderate notions of freedom afforded faith the space to progress.

The fifth fantasy of moderates was that “faith can defend itself.” Moderates often complained that conservatives did not need to defend the faith or develop elaborate theories of biblical inspiration. They personified the Christian faith and the Bible as being perfectly capable of defending themselves. This is somewhat of an inconsistent rhetoric for two reasons. First, that “faith can defend itself” is not a message that is closely associated with freedom. Here again moderates employed a fantasy theme that did not directly support their rhetorical vision of freedom. Perhaps indirectly this fantasy theme connects with freedom. Maybe moderates meant that by defending the faith, or by participating in some sort of apology for orthodoxy, conservatives infringed upon the freedom of anyone whose beliefs did not line up with said defense or apology. It could also be that moderate believed the Christian faith was resilient enough to withstand any abuse that might occur in the exercise of freedom. Whatever the case, the connection between this fantasy theme and the vision of freedom is not clearly articulated in moderate rhetoric. That “faith can defend itself” was an idea that often exists

independent from freedom in moderate rhetoric. Second, the notion that the faith does not need to be defended is inconsistent when it is coming from a moderate rhetoric that often sought to defend its interpretation of the Baptist faith. In fact, saying that “faith can defend itself” is a defense of a view of faith that believes “faith can defend itself.” There is an inconsistency here.

The sixth and final fantasy theme of moderate rhetoric was that conservatives and moderates were “not different enough” to justify the controversy. This theme was not as prominent as the other themes, though it was demonstrative of moderate identity. In one sense, this theme is very consistent with the moderates’ rhetorical vision of freedom. Moderates believed that freedom allowed them not only to cooperate with a diversity of Southern Baptists, but also to celebrate that diversity. The ideas of freedom and diversity work very well together. However, moderates spent most of their rhetoric explaining how conservatives were bad, and the rest of their rhetoric highlighting the differences between themselves and conservatives. It is inconsistent to highlight differences with part of one’s rhetoric and minimize differences in another part of one’s rhetoric.

Conclusion

The “moderate” label was very suitable to the countermovement that materialized in response to the Conservative Resurgence. Moderates sought to avoid extremes. They wanted to be conservative, but not too conservative. They wanted to be liberal towards developing theological trends, but not too liberal. Moderates believed that they were quite theologically conservative when compared to the beliefs of Christian thinkers outside of the Southern Baptist Convention. Reflecting upon the controversy, Cecil Sherman described himself and the moderate movement by arguing, “By any reasonable standard of theological measurement, I am a fairly conservative Christian.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Cecil Sherman, “An Overview of the Moderate Movement,” in *Struggle for the Soul of the*

Nonetheless, when addressing whether moderates were liberal, Sherman could only surmise, “Moderates might be liberal.”¹⁸⁵ It almost sounds as though Sherman was speaking out of both sides of his mouth—but that is precisely what it looks like to take a moderating position between what one perceives to be two unhelpful extremes.

Therefore, the centrist nature of moderate identity almost guaranteed a certain measure of inconsistency regarding their rhetoric. Their inconsistency was not necessarily the result of dishonesty or a lack of rhetorical prowess, but more the result of who they were in their attempt to avoid being too far to the theological left or the theological right. To be moderate is to be somewhat inconsistent, certainly at least when compared to those on the far right or left of moderate. An important consideration for a group’s rhetoric is how consistent its fantasy themes were with one another. Moderates decreased their own persuasive power by simultaneously minimizing and highlighting their differences from conservatives.

It is clear that moderates believed very strongly in the concept of freedom as their most important rhetorical vision. Moderates desired a convention where Southern Baptists could experience freedom over soul-infringing constraint. To the extent that moderate rhetoric was consistent, it was a strong rhetoric. To the extent that its inconsistencies have been demonstrated here, it was not as strong a rhetoric.

Conservative rhetoric helped the conservative movement obtain victory in the Southern Baptist civil war because their message was concise and consistent. The conservative rhetorical vision of orthodoxy was better synchronized with the respective fantasy themes of conservatives than was the rhetorical vision of freedom with the respective fantasy themes of moderates. Moderates, according to their vision and fantasy

SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement, ed. Walter B. Shurden (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994), 38.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

themes, tried to persuade the convention of too many, not-closely-related-enough things—all under the banner of freedom. The conservative rhetorical vision and fantasy themes really only sought one thing—namely, orthodoxy. Hart and Daughton explain the greater appeal of conservatives: “A small but powerful truth sustains a crusade best.”¹⁸⁶ The idea of a concern for orthodoxy as secured and protected by the doctrine of inerrancy was just such a small, powerful truth.

¹⁸⁶Hart and Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 255.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has sought to understand the Conservative Resurgence by way of a rhetorical analysis of the preaching of the Pastors' Conference and the SBC Forum. The Pastors' Conference sermons under review were limited to those preached from 1961 to 1991, believing that this time period represents the major developments of the controversy. All SBC Forum sermons preached during the event's eight-year history (1984-1991) were included in this study. Those sermons containing topics over which conservatives and moderates regularly divided were analyzed more closely than those that did not.

Baptist Identity and the Convergence of Doctrine and Denominationalism

This dissertation has contended that the pulpit rhetoric of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum reveals that the Conservative Resurgence was a competition between conservative and moderate visions for Baptist identity as differentiated by the mutually exclusive manner in which each group perceived of doctrine and the constitution of denominational fellowship. Conservatives pursued a vision of well-defined, well-defended Baptist orthodoxy, while moderates pursued a vision of freedom. The intersection where ideas about doctrine and denominational fellowship converged was precisely the place where conservatives and moderates diverged. At this intersection, conservatives went to the right, while moderates went to the left. These moves not only sent the two groups in quite different directions, but they also served as the most definitive source of the controversy. The conflict refined and forged each group's sense of identity. The more they learned about themselves, the more

they realized how different they were from one another. Conservatives and moderates were no longer merely two different kinds of Southern Baptists. They were different Baptists altogether. Many moderates left the Southern Baptist Convention in the wake of the Conservative Resurgence.

Key Insights

Four different types of analysis were applied to the sermons, the result of which was a discovery of the issues, the people, the setting, the values, and the visions contained in the preaching of the Southern Baptist holy war. First, a topical filter was applied in order to discern the most contested issues of the controversy. Second, various theories regarding social movements and social movement rhetoric were utilized in order to describe the different peoples engaged in the controversy as well as the volatile setting in which the controversy transpired. Third, Richard Weaver's concept of ultimate terms was implemented in order to distinguish the respective values of the feuding factions. Fourth, Ernest Bormann's theory of fantasy theme analysis was administered in order to discover and interpret the overall visions of the parties involved in the conflict.

The Issues

A topical study of conservative and moderate rhetoric revealed that the Conservative Resurgence was primarily a denominational conflict regarding the nature of the Bible and Baptist identity. The main lines of division had to do with whether the Bible was inerrant, and whether and to what extent Southern Baptist cooperation should be doctrinally and/or functionally based. One's views on those two issues determined, for the most part, whether one sympathized more with conservative or moderate Southern Baptists. Conservatives emphasized an orthodoxy obtained and secured by inerrancy as the determinative feature of their vision for Baptist identity. Moderates emphasized freedom as the determinative feature of their vision for Baptist identity, and thereby were more open to differing views on the nature of Scripture.

The tension between the two groups and their respective views of the Bible and Baptist identity was revealed in sermons that contained certain divisive topics. In addition to the Bible and Baptist identity, both groups treated the following contested topics: (1) denominational politics; (2) the relationship between religious freedom and religious authority; (3) the place of creeds and/or confessions in Baptist life; and (4) the priesthood of believers. Conservative rhetoric addressed an additional five debated topics: (1) doctrine; (2) liberalism; (3) seminaries; (4) inerrancy; and (5) creation. Moderate rhetoric contained six further topics over which the two groups divided: (1) the differences between conservatives and moderates; (2) women in ministry; (3) the oppressive, controlling nature of conservatives; (4) preaching; (5) soul competency; and (6) doctrinal accountability in Southern Baptist institutions.

The People

The application of social movement rhetorical theory proved quite useful in gaining perception of both the people and the setting of the controversy. Michael McGee's ideas about how rhetoric defines the people of a movement as they develop through the stages of coming-to-be, being, and ceasing-to-be were particularly helpful.¹ McGee's theory suggests that "the people" of a movement are contained in and revealed by the movement's rhetoric. Accordingly, "the people" of the Conservative Resurgence as contained in conservative and moderate rhetoric are as follows.

Conservatives. Conservative rhetoric revealed that conservatives were a distinct people in five different ways. First, they were a people that understood doctrine to be something that does not change. They viewed sound doctrine as that which accords with Scripture. With the completion of the New Testament canon, Scripture became

¹M. C. McGee, "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 235-49.

fixed. Therefore, doctrine became fixed. As a result, doctrine should be well defined to ensure its accuracy and well defended to promote its conservation. That they are widely known by the label “conservatives” mostly has to do with their stance toward doctrine.

Second, conservatives were a people who believed that the nature of Scripture was the most fundamental issue that drove the controversy. They believed that the Bible was a book given by God. As such, the Bible was believed to be perfect like God. The nature of the Bible—namely, that it is a book without errors—became the most regularly and passionately discussed topic of conservative pulpit rhetoric.

Third, conservatives were a people committed to exposing the presence and danger of theological liberalism in the Southern Baptist Convention. The conservative movement hinged upon whether its rhetor-leaders could convince a majority of the convention’s constituency that liberalism really was a great danger to the health of the church and that it had truly gained a foothold within the denomination’s agencies—most notably, Baptist institutions of higher learning. Conservatives most often pointed their fingers at college and seminary professors when they contended that liberalism had crept into the convention.

Fourth, the conservative people relied upon their own understanding of the nature of the denomination in order to begin and sustain their movement. They believed that it was within the purview of the convention to delineate a common statement of belief and exercise accountability regarding whether convention employees adhered to and taught in accordance with, and not contrary to, said statement of belief. They also justified causing disruptions in the convention, arguing that it was for the greater good of establishing and safeguarding orthodoxy. Furthermore, they emphasized the doctrinal unity of the convention over the functional unity of the convention. That is to say, conservatives believed that the more basic foundation of their cooperation with other Baptists was a common belief in conservative doctrine, not merely a common commitment to the task of local and foreign missions.

Fifth, conservatives openly politicked in the convention in order to advance their vision for the future of Southern Baptist identity. Their rhetoric reveals that they did this in at least two ways. First, they essentially ran a “get out the vote” campaign in order to encourage fellow Baptists to attend the convention’s annual meetings in order to be able to vote on important issues and participate in the election of officers. The goal of their political strategy was the consecutive election of conservative presidents who could accomplish long-term change by way of the president’s appointive powers within the denomination. Second, they also used the wide-reaching, influential pulpit of the Pastors’ Conference in order to campaign for their cause and candidates.

Lloyd Bitzer’s theory of rhetorical situation also illuminated the people of the conservative movement. His ideas about discourse speaking to, and thereby containing, a rhetorical audience helped further to establish conservative identity. The rhetorical audience of the movement, as revealed by the exemplary preaching of Clark Pinnock, demonstrated that conservatives were a people motivated to action by the following ideas: (1) that Southern Baptists were concerned for orthodoxy; (2) that Southern Baptists were divided doctrinally and needed to choose sides (i.e., an “us” vs. “them” mentality); (3) that conservatives were the better Baptists; and (4) that the Southern Baptist Convention was structured in such a way that the average messenger at an annual meeting could actually make a difference by way of his participation in the convention’s inherent democratic processes of governance.²

Moderates. Moderate rhetoric revealed that moderates were a unique people in at least three different ways. First, moderate preaching disclosed a more liberal view

²Clark Pinnock, “Our Source of Authority: The Bible” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Detroit, MI, May 23, 1966); Clark Pinnock, “The Evangelical Imperative” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 3, 1968); Clark Pinnock, “Sola Scriptura” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 4, 1968); Clark Pinnock, “The Fact of Christ” (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference, Houston, TX, June 4, 1968).

of doctrine than that which was demonstrated by conservative preaching. Both in terms of method and content, moderates were generally more open than conservatives to the contributions of modern theological development. They did believe in the Bible—that it was authoritative and that it was the standard for orthodoxy. Therefore they did not believe themselves to be liberals. In the moderate mind, simply to be more liberal than the conservative movement was not necessarily to be a “liberal.” Moderates did not take kindly to conservative accusations of liberalism. Perhaps this explains why they believed conservatives were more concerned about taking over control of the convention than they were about doctrine. They perceived charges of liberalism to be misguided at best and dishonest at worst. Furthermore, moderates did not believe that doctrine needed to be defended. Whereas conservatives believed their entire movement represented a valiant stand for God, the Bible, and the Christian faith, moderates believed that God was more than capable to defend himself and his truth.

Second, moderate rhetoric revealed a people that understood the Southern Baptist Convention as a denomination differently than conservatives. Their preaching emphasized a functional unity more than a doctrinal unity. This is a significant difference. They appeared willing to encompass a larger doctrinal diversity than conservatives for the purpose of cooperative missions. They believed that to overemphasize and over-scrutinize doctrinal agreement would unnecessarily stifle the purpose of working together with as many Baptists as possible to spread the gospel and do good in the world. They also insisted that conservative calls for tighter doctrinal accountability were nothing short of a transgression against the great Baptist principle of the freedom of every individual soul to interpret God personally without infringement from external authority. Furthermore, they did not believe theological liberalism was a present problem in the convention. Therefore, not only did they view conservative calls for theological inspection as unhelpful to the purpose of missions, but they also saw them as unneeded, because they believed the convention, on the whole, was quite conservative.

Relatedly, they decried the use of theological labels such as “liberal” and “conservative,” arguing that such labeling was superficial, divisive, and extraneous.

Third, moderate preaching contained a people who believed the overt use of politics was undesirable and uncouth. Moderates believed the conservative strategy to take advantage of the convention’s inherent democratic processes as a means of effecting denomination-wide change was simply foreign to their understanding of the Southern Baptist way of doing things. They seemed to believe that a person needed to earn the right to effect such change by paying the proper respects and by duly working their way up through the denominational bureaucracy. That conservatives would hoist a presidential candidate that had led his church to support missions or educational institutions outside of the convention was equated with having inadequate concern for the convention. As a result, moderates viewed the conservative movement as more concerned with gaining power and control over the convention than with preserving and protecting the convention’s proud heritage.

Understandably, moderates felt threatened by the conservative movement. They believed conservatives were fighting for power, not doctrine. They were convinced the convention’s problems were political in nature, not doctrinal. They recognized conservative concerns about liberalism as unfounded, contending that such concerns were the consequence of conservative ignorance and intolerance, not specious doctrine among Southern Baptists. With an apparent reluctance, they believed their hands were forced to respond in kind to the conservative political movement. The result was the moderate political movement. Though they had previously accused conservatives of misusing politics for denominational gain, they felt compelled to fight back against conservative politics by employing their own politics in order to prevent further denominational loss.

The Setting

Social movement rhetorical theory also illuminated the setting of the controversy, a setting rife with volatility and potential for change. Drawing heavily upon Lloyd Bitzer's theory of rhetorical situation, this work has identified three central historical components—i.e., the exigencies, audience, and constraints—of the rhetorical situation of the conservative movement.³ The controlling exigence contained in conservative rhetoric was a concern for orthodoxy, most especially as it related to the nature of Scripture as inerrant. The rhetorical audience was mentioned in a previous section of this chapter.

The rhetorical situation of the conservative movement also contained social, theological, and denominational constraints. Socially, the situation was constrained by the cultural upheaval that transpired in America in the 1950s and 1960s. The western world was changing, and Southern Baptists were not immune to the influence wrought by such changes. Theologically, there were numerous controversies in Southern Baptist life that demonstrate just how volatile was the doctrinal atmosphere in the convention. The Elliot controversy, the 1963 update to the *Baptist Faith and Message*, and the Broadman Bible Commentary controversy are examples of such controversies. Denominationally, two constraints were influential in the rhetorical situation. First, preaching provided the perfect opportunity for a movement to give voice to its vision for change because Southern Baptists greatly valued preaching and participated in it a great deal. Second, the structure of the denomination granted the popularly elected convention president powerful appointive authority, an authority conservatives believed could be acquired through pulpit appeal and a grassroots movement of voting messengers.

³Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1-14; see also Gerald J. Biesecker-Mast, "How to Read Social Movements Rhetorics as Discursive Events," *Iowa Journal of Communication* 28 (1996): 74-101.

The Values

This work has utilized Richard Weaver's concept of ultimate terms in order to discover the values within conservative and moderate preaching.⁴ The highest value of conservative pulpit rhetoric was the achievement and protection of orthodoxy. This is revealed by the conservative god term of "inerrancy" and devil term of "liberalism." Conservatives believed that adherence to and interpretive practice concomitant with the doctrine of inerrancy was the best way to defend orthodoxy from the dangers of theological liberalism. The highest value of moderate pulpit rhetoric was the achievement and protection of the freedom of the soul before God. This is revealed by the moderate god term of "freedom" and devil terms of "inerrancy," "Fundamentalism," and anything believed to be opposed to freedom. Moderates believed that freedom was *the* Baptist ideal, and therefore anything that promoted freedom was protected and anything that appeared to infringe upon freedom was held in suspicion.

The Visions

This work has also drawn upon the critical ideas of Ernest Bormann regarding fantasy themes and rhetorical vision in order to discern the primary ways in which conservatives and moderates interpreted the controversy and envisioned a solution to the conflict.⁵ Conservatives interpreted the controversy as a welcomed renewal of orthodoxy within the convention. They most often refer to it as the Conservative Resurgence. Moderates interpreted the controversy as an unwelcomed embezzlement of control of the convention by mean-spirited and simple-minded conservatives. They often refer to it as the Fundamentalist Takeover. The conservative rhetorical vision was that of concern to defend Christian orthodoxy from liberalism. The moderate rhetorical vision was that of

⁴Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Press, 1952).

⁵Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972): 396-407; Ernest Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy: Restoring the American Dream* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001).

concern to defend Baptist freedom from fundamentalism.

Ideas for Further Study

This work has concentrated on what can be learned about the Conservative Resurgence by looking at the sermons of the Pastors' Conference and Forum from 1961 to 1991 from the vantage point of various theories of rhetorical criticism. However, much remains to be learned from these sermons—both those containing divisive topics and those not containing divisive topics—as well as from the preaching of the Conservative Resurgence in general. Here are a few ideas for how other students interested in the fields of preaching, rhetorical criticism, Baptist history and identity, and theology might wish to do further research and writing.

Other Points of Controversy

There were a couple areas of controversy that were not included in this study, but that are indeed relevant. The first is the area of social issues and American politics. The socio-political lines that divided conservatives and moderates within the Southern Baptist Convention were generally the same socio-political lines that divided the left and the right within American politics. Nancy Ammerman concluded as much when she wrote, "Southern Baptists differed almost as much on political issues as on theological ones."⁶ Ammerman surveyed Southern Baptist conservatives and moderates to quantify their views on social and political topics such as the separation of church and state, the husband as the leader of the home, the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion, protection for the rights of homosexuals, and perceptions of the American military.⁷ Ammerman found that theological conservatives within the Convention tended to be more politically

⁶Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 106.

⁷*Ibid.*, see Ammerman's table 4.2. titled, "Positions on Social and Political Issues by Theological Parties," 102-103.

conservative on social and political issues, while theological moderates tended to be less politically conservative. Ammerman stated that abortion was the most volatile of these issues.⁸ There were a few preachers who, at the Pastors' Conference at least, addressed the abortion issue in terms of the conservative-moderate divide within the denomination.⁹

The second area of controversy not included in this study, but that has some relevance, is the question of how best to do missionary work. In the 1960s and early 1970s preachers at the Pastors' Conference expressed some disagreement over whether and the extent to which missions work should emphasize social improvement versus emphasizing personal evangelism. For example, in 1965 John Haggai told pastors that the chief purpose of the church was the saving of souls, not resolving social problems such as poverty and race relations.¹⁰ Similarly, in 1968 Ed Wilbanks exhorted pastors by saying the church needs the Holy Spirit, not a social gospel or social programs.¹¹

Further, there was tension between conservatives and moderates over what hinders missionary work the most. Moderates accused conservatives of hindering missionary work by unnecessarily fighting over doctrinal issues. Conservatives believed moderates hindered missionary work by watering down the gospel message with liberal theology.

⁸Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 100.

⁹See, for example, Zig Zigar, "Encouraging the Servant of God in His Moral Standards" (Kansas City, MO, June 11, 1984) in which Zigar charges that the Christian Life Commission did not take a strong and conservative enough stance on the issue of abortion. See also Franky Schaeffer, "On Christian Neutrality" (Kansas City, MO, June 10, 1984); Baptist Press journalist, Roy Jennings, described Schaeffer's message, saying the Schaeffer "encouraged demonstrations against abortion clinics and more court house picketing of what he called "secular zealots who seek to use the law to curb our religious liberties;" see Roy Jennings, "Roundup for Monday A.M.," *Baptist Press*, June 10, 1984.

¹⁰John E. Haggai, "Fellowship through Witnessing" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Dallas, TX, May 31, 1965).

¹¹Ed Wilbanks, "Pastor, I Need the Presence of the Holy Spirit" (Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, Houston, TX, June 3, 1968).

Preaching that Did Not Contain Divisive Topics

Much could also be learned from the sermons that were determined to be noncontroversial in the sense that they refrained from speaking to issues over which moderates and conservatives regularly divided. Those sermons contain further potential for learning about the Conservative Resurgence. If one could establish whether a given speaker identified with the conservative or moderate faction, one could potentially discover a relationship between denominational-political affiliation and important characteristics of preaching. For example, one could pursue whether a conservative or a moderate was more likely to preach topically based or textually based sermons. One could perhaps observe patterns in conservative and moderate preaching regarding sermon application, sermon illustration, sermon length, sermon pericope length, doctrines treated, persons quoted, etc. Another important line of inquiry could be whether and how one's view of the nature of Scripture affected one's preaching of Scripture. One might even be able to make a case, in general, for two separate theologies and practices of preaching: a conservative one and a moderate one.

Ernest Bormann suggested a connection between communication styles and fantasy theme participation.¹² Bormann explains, "Individual style and the style of the community are not unrelated. Individuals practice communication within the assumptions of a given rhetorical community."¹³ Bormann believed that communication style could reveal what was most important within a rhetorical group. Therefore it is not unreasonable to wonder the extent to which moderate and conservative styles of preaching could be interpreted in terms of the respective fantasy themes in which each group participated.

¹²Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy*, 20.

¹³*Ibid.*, 19.

Baptist History in the Preaching of the Resurgence

Students of Baptist history may also consider drawing parallels between significant streams of Baptist thought from the past and representative sermons of moderates and conservatives that took place during the controversy. Both moderates and conservatives claimed to be the better representatives of what Baptists had supposedly always been. Conservatives believed their doctrine aligned better with Baptists of the past. Moderates believed their emphasis upon freedom made them the truer, more traditional Baptists. Both groups could be right, depending upon how one interprets Baptist history and which historical figure and/or Baptist distinctive one chooses to highlight for purpose of comparison. Discerning the ways in which conservative and moderate preaching appealed to Baptist heritage would likely prove a fruitful endeavor.

A Call to Benevolence and Conviction in Disagreement

The Conservative Resurgence was a controversy in which many well-meaning people genuinely disagreed about what it meant to be a Baptist. It was a battle for Baptist identity. Baptists will inevitably and perennially face similar struggles. When those struggles lead to controversy—whether it is over doctrine, basis of fellowship, worship styles, speaking in tongues, Calvinism, qualifications for offices in the church, etc.—Baptists will always best serve themselves and the world to which they are called to share the gospel through benevolent, conviction-based disagreement. Benevolent, convictional disagreement means that opposing groups always strive to assume the best of one another and to make decisions based on well thought out and decided upon beliefs. It means that they give more preference to honesty, accuracy, and the ethics of rhetoric, than to blunt characterization, convenient presumption, and the populist and persuasive power of rhetoric. It does not mean that differences are glossed over for the sake of unity. That may appear benevolent, but it is not convictional.

Benevolent, convictional disagreement was sometimes, though not always, the

practice of conservatives and moderates during their internecine conflict. Both sides engaged in behavior that was perhaps less than becoming of Baptists, much less Christians. Benevolent, convictional disagreement means that conservatives do not have to be viewed simply as fighting Fundamentalists—as moderate interpretations of the controversy often portray them. Likewise, moderates do not have to be portrayed merely as unbelieving liberals—as conservative readings of the controversy often render them. Both groups sought to occupy the same place of Southern Baptist leadership at the same time. Both groups similarly sought to lead the convention based upon their convictions regarding orthodoxy and freedom. Therefore one group's gain was necessarily the other group's loss. They were Southern Baptists who viewed doctrine and the basis of denominational fellowship differently. The tension between the two groups represents what Southern Baptist identity was during some of the denomination's most formative years, the years of the Conservative Resurgence.

APPENDIX 1

TOPICAL ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON

Tables A1 through A9 contain greater detail regarding this work's topical analysis of the divisive preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum from 1961 to 1991. Sermons were considered divisive to the extent they either (1) directly referenced the Southern Baptist controversy; or (2) discussed a topic over which conservatives and moderates often divided. Comparisons between the divisive preaching of Pastors' Conference sermons and SBC Forum sermons have been made according to two gauges. First, the frequency with which Pastors' Conference preachers engaged in divisive preaching has been compared to the frequency with which SBC Forum preachers engaged in such preaching. Second, the divisive topics of Pastors' Conference sermons have been compared to the divisive topics of SBC Forum preaching.

Table A1: Similarities between Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum topics

| <i>Topic of Division</i> | <i>Pastors' Conference, 1961 – 1991</i> | | <i>SBC Forum, 1984 – 1991</i> | |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| | <i>Number of sermons in which topic appeared</i> | <i>Percentage of Divisive Sermons (%)</i> | <i>Number of sermons in which topic appeared</i> | <i>Percentage of Divisive Sermons (%)</i> |
| Controversy | 89 | 70.08 | 22 | 57.89 |
| Bible | 65 | 51.18 | 14 | 36.84 |
| Baptist Identity | 19 | 14.96 | 3 | 7.89 |
| Denominational Politics | 18 | 14.17 | 4 | 10.53 |
| Authority | 15 | 11.81 | 7 | 18.42 |
| Freedom | 11 | 8.66 | 6 | 15.79 |
| Creeds and Confessions | 3 | 2.36 | 4 | 10.53 |
| Priesthood of Believers | 2 | 1.57 | 4 | 10.53 |

Table A2: Pastors' Conference unique topics

| <i>Topic of Division</i> | <i>Number of sermons in which topic appeared</i> | <i>Percentage of Divisive Sermons (%)</i> |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Doctrine | 63 | 49.61 |
| Liberalism | 52 | 40.94 |
| Seminaries | 24 | 18.9 |
| Inerrancy | 24 | 18.9 |
| Creation | 5 | 3.94 |

Table A3: SBC Forum unique topics

| <i>Topic of Division</i> | <i>Number of sermons in which topic appeared</i> | <i>Percentage of Divisive Sermons (%)</i> |
|---|--|---|
| Differences between Conservatives and Moderates | 14 | 36.84 |
| Women in Ministry | 6 | 15.79 |
| Conservatives Are Mean | 5 | 13.16 |
| Preaching | 5 | 13.16 |
| Soul Competency | 2 | 5.26 |
| Doctrinal Accountability in Southern Baptist Institutions | 2 | 5.26 |

Table A4: Pastors' Conference sermons that were divisive by year

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Total Number of Sermons</i> | <i>Number of Divisive Sermons</i> | <i>Percentage of Sermons that Were Divisive (%)</i> | <i>Percentage Change in Divisive Sermons from Previous Year (%)</i> |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| 1961 | 14 | 3 | 21.43 | |
| 1962 | 25 | 11 | 44.0 | 22.57 |
| 1963 | 20 | 6 | 30.0 | -14.0 |
| 1964 | 19 | 6 | 31.58 | 1.58 |
| 1965 | 29 | 6 | 20.69 | -10.89 |
| 1966 | 18 | 6 | 33.33 | 12.64 |
| 1967 | 22 | 4 | 18.18 | -15.15 |
| 1968 | 37 | 10 | 27.03 | 8.85 |
| 1969 | 17 | 4 | 23.53 | -3.5 |
| 1970 | 19 | 3 | 15.79 | -7.74 |
| 1971 | 13 | 4 | 30.77 | 14.98 |
| 1972 | 11 | 4 | 36.36 | 5.59 |
| 1973 | 12 | 0 | 0.0 | -36.36 |
| 1974 | 16 | 2 | 12.5 | 12.5 |
| 1975 | 12 | 3 | 25.0 | 12.5 |
| 1976 | 11 | 0 | 0.0 | -25.0 |
| 1977 | 10 | 3 | 30.0 | 30.0 |
| 1978 | 13 | 3 | 23.08 | -6.92 |
| 1979 | 14 | 3 | 21.43 | -1.65 |
| 1980 | 15 | 5 | 33.33 | 11.9 |
| 1981 | 19 | 6 | 31.58 | -1.75 |
| 1982 | 12 | 2 | 16.67 | -14.91 |
| 1983 | 14 | 4 | 28.57 | 11.9 |
| 1984 | 11 | 3 | 27.27 | -1.3 |
| 1985 | 14 | 3 | 21.43 | -5.84 |
| 1986 | 14 | 3 | 21.43 | 0.0 |
| 1987 | 13 | 4 | 30.77 | 9.34 |
| 1988 | 13 | 6 | 46.15 | 15.38 |
| 1989 | 15 | 1 | 6.67 | -39.49 |
| 1990 | 14 | 6 | 42.86 | 36.19 |
| 1991 | 15 | 2 | 13.33 | -29.52 |
| <i>Totals</i> | <i>501</i> | <i>127</i> | <i>25.35</i> | <i>-0.27</i> |

Table A5: Pastors' Conference sermons that were divisive by topic

| | <i>Divisive Topic</i> | <i>Number of Sermons in Which Preachers Employ Divisive Topic</i> | <i>Percentage of Divisive Sermons (%)</i> | <i>Percentage of Total Sermons (%)</i> |
|----|-------------------------|---|---|--|
| 1 | Controversy | 89 | 70.08 | 17.76 |
| 2 | Bible | 65 | 51.18 | 12.97 |
| 3 | Doctrine | 63 | 49.61 | 12.57 |
| 4 | Liberalism | 52 | 40.94 | 10.38 |
| 5 | Seminaries | 24 | 18.9 | 4.79 |
| 6 | Inerrancy | 24 | 18.9 | 4.79 |
| 7 | Baptist Identity | 19 | 14.96 | 3.79 |
| 8 | Denominational Politics | 18 | 14.17 | 3.59 |
| 9 | Authority | 15 | 11.81 | 2.99 |
| 10 | Freedom | 11 | 8.66 | 2.2 |
| 11 | Creation | 5 | 3.94 | 1.0 |
| 12 | Creeds and Confessions | 3 | 2.36 | 0.6 |
| 13 | Priesthood of Believers | 2 | 1.57 | 0.4 |

Table A6: Political leaning of Pastors' Conference sermons

| Political Leaning | Conservative | Neutral | Moderate | Total |
|--|--------------|---------|----------|-------|
| Number of Pastors' Conference Sermons | 82 | 17 | 28 | 127 |
| Percentage of divisive Pastors' Conference sermons (%) | 65 | 13 | 22 | 100 |

Table A7: SBC Forum sermons that were divisive by year

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Total Number of Sermons</i> | <i>Number of Divisive Sermons</i> | <i>Percentage of Sermons that Were Divisive (%)</i> | <i>Percent Change in Divisive Sermons from Previous Year (%)</i> |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>1984</i> | 5 | 5 | 100.0 | – |
| <i>1985</i> | 5 | 5 | 100.0 | 0.0 |
| <i>1986</i> | 5 | 4 | 80.0 | -20.0 |
| <i>1987</i> | 9 | 6 | 66.67 | -13.33 |
| <i>1988</i> | 6 | 5 | 83.33 | 16.67 |
| <i>1989</i> | 5 | 5 | 100.0 | 16.67 |
| <i>1990</i> | 6 | 6 | 100.0 | 0.0 |
| <i>1991</i> | 2 | 2 | 100.0 | 0.0 |
| <i>Totals</i> | 43 | 38 | 88.37 | 0.0 |

Table A8: SBC Forum sermons that were divisive by topic

| | <i>Divisive Topic</i> | <i>Number of Sermons in Which Preachers Employ Divisive Topic</i> | <i>Percentage of Divisive Sermons (%)</i> | <i>Percentage of Total Sermons (%)</i> |
|----|--|---|---|--|
| 1 | Controversy | 22 | 57.89 | 51.16 |
| 2 | Bible | 14 | 36.84 | 32.56 |
| 3 | Differences between Conservatives and Moderates | 14 | 36.84 | 32.56 |
| 4 | Authority | 7 | 18.42 | 16.28 |
| 5 | Freedom | 6 | 15.79 | 13.95 |
| 6 | Women in Ministry | 6 | 15.79 | 13.95 |
| 7 | Conservatives Are Mean | 5 | 13.16 | 11.63 |
| 8 | Preaching | 5 | 13.16 | 11.63 |
| 9 | Denominational Politics | 4 | 10.53 | 9.3 |
| 10 | Priesthood of Believer(s) | 4 | 10.53 | 9.3 |
| 11 | Creeds and Confessions | 4 | 10.53 | 9.3 |
| 12 | Doctrinal Accountability in Baptist Institutions | 2 | 5.26 | 4.65 |
| 13 | Baptist Identity | 3 | 7.89 | 6.98 |
| 14 | Soul Competency | 2 | 5.26 | 4.65 |

Table A9: Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum sermons that were divisive

| | <i>SBC Pastors' Conference</i> | | <i>SBC Forum</i> | |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| | <i>Number of Sermons</i> | <i>Number of Divisive Sermons</i> | <i>Number of Sermons</i> | <i>Number of Divisive Sermons</i> |
| 1961 | 14 | 3 | <i>The SBC Forum did not begin until 1984.</i> | |
| 1962 | 25 | 11 | | |
| 1963 | 20 | 6 | | |
| 1964 | 19 | 6 | | |
| 1965 | 29 | 6 | | |
| 1966 | 18 | 6 | | |
| 1967 | 22 | 4 | | |
| 1968 | 37 | 10 | | |
| 1969 | 17 | 4 | | |
| 1970 | 19 | 3 | | |
| 1971 | 13 | 4 | | |
| 1972 | 12 | 4 | | |
| 1973 | 12 | 0 | | |
| 1974 | 16 | 2 | | |
| 1975 | 12 | 3 | | |
| 1976 | 11 | 0 | | |
| 1977 | 10 | 3 | | |
| 1978 | 13 | 3 | | |
| 1979 | 14 | 3 | | |
| 1980 | 15 | 5 | | |
| 1981 | 19 | 6 | | |
| 1982 | 12 | 2 | | |
| 1983 | 14 | 4 | | |
| 1984 | 11 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| 1985 | 14 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| 1986 | 14 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| 1987 | 13 | 4 | 9 | 6 |
| 1988 | 13 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| 1989 | 15 | 1 | 5 | 5 |
| 1990 | 14 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| 1991 | 15 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| <i>Totals</i> | 501 | 127 | 43 | 38 |
| <i>Percentage of divisive sermons (%)</i> | | 25.35 | | 88.37 |

APPENDIX 2
THE SERMONS OF THE PASTORS' CONFERENCE,
1961-1991

Tables A10 through A40 contain pertinent information for the sermons preached at the Pastors' Conference from 1961 to 1991. What follows is year-by-year, tabular presentation of the Pastors' Conference that includes the date, location, theme, and president of each Pastors' Conference, as well as the speaker, sermon title, sermon Scripture text, and main idea(s) for each sermon. Speakers delivered a total of 501 messages during this thirty-one year period of time.

Table A10. 1961 Pastors' Conference

| May 22-23, 1961; St. Louis, MO; Theme: "Christian Maturity;" President: Roy McClain | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | H. Franklin Paschall | "Christian Maturity According to the Power That Works In Us" (Eph 3:14-21) | Christian Maturity |
| 2 | Glenn L. Archer | "The Cure for Clericalism" (n/a) | Religious freedom; Catholicism |
| 3 | J. A. Avary, Jr. | "Through the Eyes of a Layman" (n/a) | Problems in the church, country, and world |
| 4 | Carlyle Marney | "The Unity of the Faith" (Eph 4:3, 13) | Unity in Christ, not dogmatic distinctives |
| 5 | A. Harold Cole | "Christian Maturity" (Eph 5:1) | Reaching young people |
| 6 | Gordan Clinard | "Be Angry and Sin Not" (Eph 4:26-27) | Passionate, loving witness |
| 7 | L. D. Johnson | "Grow Up . . . In Christ's Likeness" (Eph 4:15) | Christian Maturity |
| 8 | Dale Moody | "The Winds of Doctrine" (Eph 4:14) | Internal problems in the SBC |
| 9 | J. B. Witherspoon | "Speaking the Truth in Love" (Eph 4:15-16) | Maturity in speech |
| 10 | Herschel H. Hobbs | "Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church" (Matt 16:18) | Ecclesiology and mission |
| 11 | G. Earl Quinn | "The Worthy Walk" (Eph 4:1-2, 17) | New life in Christ |
| 12 | Harold W. Seever | "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ" (n/a) | Preached against too much emphasis upon church programs and facilities |
| 13 | D. J. Evans | "Alienated from the Life of God Through Ignorance" (Eph 4:16) | -- |
| 14 | William Hull | "Sealed Unto the Day of Redemption" (Eph 4:30) | The ministry of the Holy Spirit as the cure for modern anxiety |

Table A11. 1962 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 4-5, 1962; San Francisco, CA;</i> | | | |
|---|--------------------|--|--|
| <i>Theme: "Missions: Our Mission;" President: K. Owen White</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | J. Sidlow Baxter | "Pentecost and the Present Hour" (n/a) | The Holy Spirit and the new life of the Christian |
| 2 | J. Sidlow Baxter | "Pentecost and the Local Church" (Acts 5:12-18) | The Holy Spirit's power in the local church |
| 3 | J. Sidlow Baxter | "Pentecost and the Pulpit Today" (1 Cor 2:1-5) | Anointed preaching |
| 4 | J. Sidlow Baxter | "Pentecost and Personal Witness" (Acts 1:8) | The Holy Spirit and personal evangelism |
| 5 | J. Sidlow Baxter | "Pentecost and Inner Experience" (n/a) | A warning against theological drift into liberalism. |
| 6 | Kyle M. Yates, Jr. | "Christianity in Its Relation to World Christianity" (Various) | Where Christianity stands in the historical process |
| 7 | Landrum P. Leavell | "Evangelize—Now!" (Various) | Mission will solve denominational ills |
| 8 | Herschel H. Hobbs | "The Lordship of Christ" (Various) | Living the Lordship will solve all our problems |
| 9 | James L. Pleitz | "What a Fellowship" (Phil 1:1-11) | Christian fellowship in action |
| 10 | R. Cal. Guy | "Christian Missions Facing Today's World" (n/a) | Topical treatment of the missionary task |
| 11 | John Scott Trent | "Power From the Pulpit" (Various) | The Holy Spirit's power in preaching |
| 12 | Charles G. Fuller | "The Roar of the Lion" (Jer 1:1-10) | The call and power of God on the preacher |
| 13 | Allen W. Graves | "Christianity Redefining Its Function" (Various) | Topical treatment of problems in SBC |
| 14 | Paul E. Roberts | "Need of Church Revival" (Ps 86) | Topical message on revival |

Table A11 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|---------------------|---|--|
| 15 | C. C. Warren | "The Pastor—The Key" (Various) | The importance of the pastor |
| 16 | J. T. Ford | "The Servant Image" (Matt 20:25-28) | The pastor as servant |
| 17 | Charles A. Trentham | "The Church and the Kingdom of God" (Various) | The dangers of division |
| 18 | Dan H. Kong | "Our Evangelistic Harvest" (Various) | Truths about evangelism |
| 19 | C. E. Autry | "Such a Time as This" (Esth 4:13-14) | The importance of evangelism |
| 20 | William D. Wyatt | "'In' the World, But Not 'Of It" (John 17:6-24) | The Church must be different for Christ |
| 21 | B. Elmo Scoggin | "The Gospel for a Pagan World" (Various) | The challenge of reaching the world for Christ |
| 22 | Ray E. Roberts | "Look Unto the Rock" Isa 51:1-2) | The problems within the SBC |
| 23 | Robert Greene Lee | "I Am With You" (Matt 28:18-20) | The Great Commission |
| 24 | Roy O. McClain | "Making Disciples" (n/a) | A warning about the labels of conservative and liberal |

Table A12. 1963 Pastors' Conference

| <i>May 6-7, 1963; Kansas City, MO;</i> | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|---|
| <i>Theme: "Simple Gospel for Simple Times;" President: W. Herschel Ford</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Vance Havner | "Time to Wake Up!" (Various) | One what is wrong with the SBC |
| 2 | Vance Havner | "A Message to Bewildered Baruchs" (Jer 45) | Preachers must take their stand |
| 3 | Vance Havner | "Faithful Few on Fire" (Various) | The problems of the SBC's size |
| 4 | John W. Salzman | "Salvation By Grace" (Eph 2:8-9) | The doctrine of grace |
| 5 | T. Earl Ogg | "The Precious Blood of Christ" (Various) | On the blood of Christ |
| 6 | Warren C. Hultgren | "The Love of God" (1 John 4:8-9) | The love of God |
| 7 | Brooks Ramsey | "The Holy Spirit in a Sinful World" (Various) | The Holy Spirit in the Christian for the world |
| 8 | Phillip B. Harris | "New Church Member Orientation" (Various) | The need for strengthened church membership |
| 9 | William M. Jones | "Bringing Men to Jesus" (John 1:35-42) | Personal Evangelism |
| 10 | Charles B. Howard | "The Minister and the Master" (Various) | One being the best minister one can be |
| 11 | John E. Huss | "The Church that Jesus Built" (Matt 16:18-21) | Jesus, Peter, and Paul on the church |
| 12 | K. Owen White | "The New Birth" (Various) | The new birth |
| 13 | Jess C. Moody | "The Home" (Various) | The importance of godly homes |
| 14 | W. A. Criswell | "The Preaching of the Cross" (1 Cor 1:18-24) | The importance of preaching the cross |
| 15 | J. Conally Evans | "The Land of No Tears" (Rev 7:13-17) | Heaven |
| 16 | R. G. Lee | "Second Coming of Christ" (Various) | The second coming of Christ |
| 17 | E. S. James | "The Promised Messiah" (Isa 53:1-9) | On Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy |
| 18 | Kenneth Chafin | "Sunday School Witnessing Program" (n/a) | An evangelistic, practical message on Sunday School campaigns |

Table A12 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|-----------------|--|---|
| 19 | Ramsey Pollard | "Hell" (Luke 16:19-31) | A topical message on hell |
| 20 | H. Leo Eddleman | "The Preacher and His Message" (1 Cor 2:2) | On what the preacher should and should not preach |

Table A13. 1964 Pastors' Conference

| <i>May 18-19, 1964; Atlantic City, NJ; Theme: "What Mean These Stones?" President: Wayne Dehoney</i> | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---|---|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | John D. Laida | "Baptists and the Bible" (Various) | The doctrine of Scripture |
| 2 | C. Penrose St. Amant | "The Genius of Our Ecclesiastical Heritage" (Various) | The doctrine of the Church |
| 3 | Robert G. Lee | "The Word of God Not Broken and Not Bound" (Various) | The doctrine of Scripture |
| 4 | Kenneth Chafin | "The Preacher, His Calling and Task" (Various) | Preachers are too concerned with conversions and not concerned enough with maturation |
| 5 | Tilford L. Junkins | "The Power of the Gospel" (Various) | What is the gospel? |
| 6 | Floyd F. Roebuck | "At Ease in Zion" (Amos 6:1-14) | America is in trouble |
| 7 | Jess C. Moody | "Great Moments in Baptist History" (n/a) | Baptists should not join the ecumenical movement |
| 8 | G. Earl Guinn | "Contemporary Threats to Freedom" (n/a) | Dangers of communism, Catholicism, and secularism |
| 9 | Emmett C. Johnson | "The Sweet Mystery of Grace" (2 Cor 12:1-9) | God's grace for ministers |
| 10 | Wayne E. Ward | "The Security of the Believer" (Various) | The danger of "once save—always saved" |
| 11 | Charles C. Bowles | "Baptists and the Ordinances" (Various) | Baptism and the Lord's Supper |
| 12 | Lawrence V. Bradley, Jr. | "Doubling Our Outreach—in Four Years!" (Various) | Encouragement for evangelism |
| 13 | James L. Sullivan | "The Pastor as a Teacher" (Various) | The pastor must by "apt to teach" |
| 14 | W. A. Criswell | "Christ's Answer to World Need" (n/a) | The world needs a church with a Savior |
| 15 | Gregory Walcott | "The Lordship of Jesus Christ in Social and Personal Affairs" (Various) | The role of laymen in being a witness to the world |
| 16 | Herschel H. Hobbs | "The Lordship of Christ in All of Life" (Acts 22:6-10a) | The Lordship of Christ |

Table A13 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|--------------------|--|---|
| 17 | George Schweitzer | "The Lordship of Jesus Christ in Reason and Science" (n/a) | On living out the gospel as the solution to modern problems in world and church |
| 18 | Ramsey Pollard | "The Primacy of Preaching" (n/a) | Preachers must not be afraid to say what they truly believe |
| 19 | Perry F. Webb, Sr. | "The Truth that Makes Men Free" (n/a) | -- |

Table A14. 1965 Pastors' Conference

| <i>May 31-June 1, 1965; Dallas, TX;</i> | | | |
|---|----------------------|--|--|
| <i>Theme: "Destiny or Decay?" President: Jess Moody</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Browning W. Ware | "The Minister Looks In a Mirror" (Various) | The minister's identity |
| 2 | Vander Warner, Jr. | "The Minister as a Status Seeker" (Various) | What a minister should and shouldn't be |
| 3 | Donald L. Anderson | "The Minister Looks at Neuroticism" (n/a) | Different types of neuroticism ministers face |
| 4 | Harper Shannon | "The Minister and His Fears" (1 Pet 2:17) | Fear God, flee temptations, and honor all persons |
| 5 | William Walter Adams | "The Minister and a Decaying Society" (n/a) | The world and the SBC are decaying; we need the Bible |
| 6 | Dale Moody | "Fellowship Through Preaching the Word" (2 Tim 4:1-8) | Bible preaching leads to deeper fellowship |
| 7 | Ronald Prince | "Fellowship Through Happiness" (Various) | Psychological, political, and pharisaical joy stealers |
| 8 | John P. Newport | "Fellowship Through Church Discipline" (Various) | On the value of and need for church discipline |
| 9 | C. A. Roberts | "Fellowship Through Courage" (Various) | On the need for courage in the pulpit |
| 10 | Buckner Fanning | "Fellowship Through Contemporary Thinking" (Various) | Our faith needs relevance without compromise |
| 11 | John E. Haggai | "Fellowship Through Witnessing" (Acts 1:8) | Witnessing to save souls is the mission of the church |
| 12 | James E. Coggin | "The Recovery of Fellowship Among Pastors" (Luke 15:25-32) | Hindrances to fellowship in the prodigal's older brother |
| 13 | Donald E. Warren | "Recovery of Inner Composure" (n/a) | Medical helps for the stress of the ministry |
| 14 | James W. Hatley | "The Recovery of Denominational Adaptability" (n/a) | Openness to change and creativity is what we need |
| 15 | Robert L. Smith | "The Recovery of Denominational Heroism" (n/a) | Baptists need to get serious about their ministry again. |

Table A14 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|---------------------|--|---|
| 16 | William M. Hinson | "The Rediscovery of Personhood" (Luke 15) | The principle of sin is the key to rediscovering personhood |
| 17 | Robert S. Denny | "Come to the Alliance" (n/a) | A report concerning the Baptist World Alliance |
| 18 | Ralph H. Langley | "The Rediscovery of Character" (n/a) | Jesus must work his life and character into us. |
| 19 | Richard S. Brannon | "The Rediscovery of Human Freedom" (n/a) | Human freedom is a religious concern |
| 20 | Phillip B. Harris | "Destiny Through Mature Leadership" (n/a) | Maturity comes through responses to God's grace |
| 21 | Porter Routh | "Destiny Through Cooperation" (Acts 2:41-43) | Our destiny is reached through working together |
| 22 | Arthur B. Rutledge | "Destiny Through Planning for the Future" (n/a) | Southern Baptists must be strategic and intentional to win the lost |
| 23 | C. E. Autry | "Evangelism Outside the Church House" (Various) | Evangelism must take place both outside and inside the Church |
| 24 | Paul M. Stevens | "Destiny in the Dust" (Various) | Man is at his best when he realizes he is God-created dust |
| 25 | R. G. Lee | "This I Remember" (Various) | -- |
| 26 | John H. Glenn | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the friendly relationship between faith and science |
| 27 | Howard E. Butt, Jr. | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 28 | Baker Cauthen | "Destiny Through Honesty About Missions" (n/a) | -- |
| 29 | Leo Eddleman | "Destiny through Understanding Our Contemporary Society" (n/a) | -- |

Table A15. 1966 Pastors' Conference

| <i>May 23-24, 1966; Detroit, MI; Theme: n/a; President: James Coggin</i> | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | C. A. Roberts | "Practicing the New Birth We Preach" (Various) | On the freshness of the minister's spiritual life |
| 2 | W. Fred Swank | "The Eternal Security of the Believer" (Various) | Topical treatment of the doctrine of eternal security |
| 3 | Porter Barrington | "Shouts in the Night" (Judg 6-7) | God called Gideon to defeat the Midianites |
| 4 | Clark H. Pinnock | "Our Source of Authority: The Bible" (Various) | The Church goes the way of its doctrine of Scripture |
| 5 | Herschel H. Hobbs | "Worthy of the Vocation" (Various) | On how to walk worthy of the calling to minister |
| 6 | Carl E. Bates | "Is There Any Word from the Lord?" (Matt 28:18-20) | On understanding and fulfilling the Great Commission |
| 7 | J. D. Grey | "Preach the Preaching that I Bid Thee" (Jonah 1-4) | What preachers can learn from Jonah |
| 8 | Charles A. Trentham | "The New Testament Teaching Concerning Speaking in Tongues" (Various) | Topical teaching on tongues |
| 9 | Gerald Martin | "I Beheld Satan Fall" (Various) | Satan is a real person |
| 10 | W. A. Criswell | "Preaching Behind the Iron Curtain" (n/a) | The desperate plight of freedom and religion in Russia |
| 11 | Jess C. Moody | "Riding the Pulpit" (Various) | On the importance of preaching God's Word |
| 12 | Roy J. Fish | "Blood On Our Hands" (Ezek 33:7-9) | The importance of discipling new converts |
| 13 | Robert Greene Lee | "By Love Compelled" (2 Cor 5:14) | A primer on the minister's task from the example of Paul |
| 14 | Jimmy R. Allen | "The Recovery of Self-Discipline" (n/a) | n/a |
| 15 | C. Wade Freeman | "Divinely Disturbed" (n/a) | n/a |
| 16 | Ramsey Pollard | "Where Is Elijah's God?" (n/a) | n/a |
| 17 | Paul Harvey | "The Mop, the Broom and the Hoe" (n/a) | n/a |
| 18 | Roy O. McClain | "Conformity or Commitment?" (n/a) | n/a |

Table A16. 1967 Pastors' Conference

| <i>May 29-30, 1967; Miami Beach, FL; Theme: "Mandate to Minister;" President: C. A. Robert</i> | | | |
|--|------------------|---|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | C. A. Roberts | "President's Message" (n/a) | Southern Baptists need a strategy to reach the world |
| 2 | John Wood | "The Minister Addresses Himself . . . To the Many Worlds About Us" (Matt 28:18) | The church must penetrate the world |
| 3 | W. Fred Swank | "The Minister Addresses Himself . . . To the World of His Church" (n/a) | -- |
| 4 | Gert Behanna | "God Isn't Dead" (n/a) | Personal testimony |
| 5 | Gene Garrison | "Multiplication Vs. Addition" (n/a) | The whole church must be on mission to reach the world |
| 6 | Benny M. Bray | "The Minister Addresses Himself . . . To the World of the Working Man" (n/a) | A personal testimony |
| 7 | Jackie Fain | "The Minister Addresses Himself . . . to the World of the Student" (n/a) | On the need for revival on school campuses |
| 8 | Jess C. Moody | "The Minister Faces a World on the Move" (n/a) | On what ails the Convention |
| 9 | Buckner Fanning | "The Strategy of Penetration" (Various) | The church needs to minister to the world, not just have meetings in the world |
| 10 | Howard Butt, Jr. | "The Minister Addresses Himself . . . To the World of Religion" (n/a) | Personal testimony |
| 11 | Anita Bryant | "The Minister Addresses Himself . . . To the World of Entertainment" (n/a) | Personal testimony |
| 12 | James Jeffrey | "The Minister Addresses Himself to the World of Athletics" (Various) | A testimony about the Fellowship of Christian Athletes |
| 13 | Ed Crow | "It's All for Evangelism" (Luke 19:1-10) | Zacchaeus and evangelism |

Table A16 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|---|---|--|
| 14 | George Schweitzer | "Christianity and World Issues" (n/a) | Don't avoid confrontation with difficult world issues |
| 15 | William L. Hendricks | "The Pastor Speaks to the World of Religious Authority" (n/a) | Warnings about authority, experience, and Scripture |
| 16 | Mallory Horne | "The Minister Addresses Himself . . . To the World of Government" (n/a) | -- |
| 17 | Samuel Dewitt Procter | "Religious Leadership in Human Relations" (n/a) | The Church as a cure for society's ills |
| 18 | Phillip Harris | "The Training of the Witness" (n/a) | -- |
| 19 | W. Wayne Dehoney | "The Crusade of the Americas" (n/a) | On the need for planning, compassion, preaching, and expectancy. |
| 20 | R. Paul Bellington | "The Minister Addresses Himself . . . To the World of Foreign Missions" (n/a) | Stories from missionary life |
| 21 | W. A. Criswell | "A Heart to Care and a Spirit to Try" (n/a) | -- |
| 22 | George Schweitzer, Foy Valentine, J. Keith Miller | Dinner-Dialogue (n/a) | The Church—its present status and future prospect |

Table A17. 1968 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 3-4, 1968; Houston, TX;</i> | | | |
|---|--------------------|--|---|
| <i>Theme: "God's World;" President: Gerald Martin</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Jimmy Nelson | "Good News to Missions America" (n/a) | Testimony of missions to Navajo Indians |
| 2 | Clay Frazier | "Evangelistic Opportunity in the North" (n/a) | Testimony of missions to the North |
| 3 | Charles L. McKay | "The Challenge of Western Missions" (Various) | Testimony of Missions to the West |
| 4 | Milt Collum | "Pastor, I Need Your Help" (Various) | Church members need their pastors to boldly preach the Word |
| 5 | C. L. Culpepper | "The Shantung Revival And How To Have One In Our Day" (Various) | Testimony and challenge regarding a Chinese revival |
| 6 | H. F. Scott | "Participating Personally Motivates Me" (Various) | Testimony of missions to Japan |
| 7 | Henry Earl Peacock | "Good News for the Americas" (n/a) | Testimony and history of missions to the Americas |
| 8 | Herschel H. Hobbs | "Good News to All the World" (Various) | America is in bad shape and the Gospel is our only hope |
| 9 | Alvin Brackett | "The Indwelling Holy Spirit" (Rom 8:9-11) | On the ministry of the Holy Spirit |
| 10 | Ed Wilbanks | "Pastor I Need the Presence of the Holy Spirit" (n/a) | We need the Holy Spirit, not a social gospel. |
| 11 | Ernest S. Waite | "The Pentecostal-like Power of the Holy Spirit in the Republic of South Africa" (Acts 1:8) | Testimony of a crusade in South Africa |
| 12 | Wm. Eugene Grubbs | "The Pentecostal-Like Power of the Holy Spirit In California" (n/a) | Testimony of evangelistic work in California |
| 13 | W. LeRay Fowler | "The Pentacostal-Like Power of the Holy Spirit In Indonesia" (n/a) | Testimony of missions to Indonesia |
| 14 | Hutson S. Green | "Sirs, I Would Se Jesus In Your Preaching" (n/a) | A layperson shares what he hopes to get out of pastors' sermons |
| 15 | John Tierney | "Pastor, You Can Count On Me" (Rom 1:12) | Personal testimony |

Table A17 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|------------------------|--|---|
| 16 | K. Owen White | "The Grieving of the Holy Spirit" (Various) | On different ways ministers grieve the Holy Spirit |
| 17 | W. A. Criswell | "The Command To Be Filled With the Spirit" (Eph 5:18) | On what it means to be Spirit-filled |
| 18 | J. Everett Sneed | "An Association of Churches Bound Together For Witnessing" (n/a) | A history and theology of Baptist association |
| 19 | Robert E. Thompson, II | "Pastor, I Need Your Example" (Matt 5:18) | Churches need for their pastors to model soul-winning |
| 20 | Tom Lester | "My Testimony" (n/a) | Personal testimony |
| 21 | Clark H. Pinnock | "The Evangelical Imperative" (n/a) | The modern church must stand strong upon the Bible |
| 22 | Clark H. Pinnock | "Sola Scriptura" (Various) | On the doctrine of Scripture and its authority |
| 23 | Clark H. Pinnock | "The Fact of Christ" (Various) | The Christ of the Bible vs. the Christ of modern theology |
| 24 | F. Stanley Hardee | "The New Birth" (Various) | Topical study of the doctrine of the new birth |
| 25 | Jerry Lee Glisson | "The New Man" (Various) | The effects of salvation on an individual |
| 26 | J. B. Flowers | "A Free Church In A Free State" (n/a) | On the voluntary principle in religious liberty |
| 27 | Elwin L. Skiles | "Free Institutions" (n/a) | On the freedom of institutions from government restrictions |
| 28 | Joe T. Odle | "The Denomination Is Free" (n/a) | On the freedom of the denomination from ecumenical restrictions |
| 29 | Carl E. Bates | "Our New Hope" (Various) | Christ is our hope in these hopeless times |
| 30 | J. Norris Palmer | "The Bodily Resurrection of Christ" (Various) | On the necessity of the bodily resurrection for the Christian faith |
| 31 | W. Clyde Martin | "Pastors Are Encouraged" (n/a) | How R. G. Lee has encouraged other ministers |
| 32 | C. Michael Warr | "Your Native State, South Carolina, Appreciates You" (n/a) | Gratitude for R. G. Lee |
| 33 | R. G. Lee | "Jesus—And We" (Various) | A primer on the gospel and the Christian faith |

Table A17 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|-----------------|------------------------------|--|
| 33 | R. G. Lee | "Jesus—And We" (Various) | A primer on the gospel and the Christian faith |
| 34 | Ramsey Pollard | "Persuasive Preaching" (n/a) | On the continued need for powerful preaching |
| 35 | Landrum Leavell | "The Old Dangers" (n/a) | -- |
| 36 | J. D. Grey | "The New Promise" (n/a) | -- |
| 37 | James Coggin | "The Virgin Birth" (n/a) | -- |

Table A18. 1969 Pastors' Conference

| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>June 9-10, 1969; New Orleans, LA;</i> <i>Theme: "The Living Word Confronting Today's World;"</i> <i>President: Harper Shannon</i></p> | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Landrum P. Leavell | "Born Free" (Acts 22:25-28) | On soul freedom in the United States |
| 2 | Wayne E. Ward | "Birth Control and the Bible" (Various) | A biblical-theological justification of birth control |
| 3 | H. Franklin Paschall | "Christ and Wholeness" (Various) | The Christian faith makes people whole |
| 4 | Jess C. Moody | "The Christian and War" (Jer 6-7) | An attempt to temper any war-mongering spirit |
| 5 | John W. Drakeford | "Situation Ethics, the New Morality, and the Christian Faith" (Various) | A biblical ethic of sex in a modern world |
| 6 | Eddie Lieberman | "What Is Jesus Doing Now?" (Heb 7:25) | On Jesus as intercessor |
| 7 | Manuel L. Scott | "The Gospel of a Radical Pulpit" (Various) | The Christian minister should be radical and different |
| 8 | Manuel L. Scott | "Redemption Through the Blood" (1 Pet 1:18-19) | On redemption through the blood of Christ |
| 9 | Alastair C. Walker | "Ecumenical Evangelism" (Various) | On harnessing evangelical ecumenism for mass evangelism |
| 10 | John Edmund Haggai | "Unlit Paths" (Various) | A plea for missions to those who walk the "unlit paths" of lostness |
| 11 | H. Ray Wood | "Saved to the Uttermost Means Saved Forever" (Various) | On the doctrine of eternal security |
| 12 | John Bob Riddle | "Jesus Is Able to Save" (Various) | On the person and work of Christ |
| 13 | Warren C. Hulgren | "Biblical Preaching and Social Issues" (Various) | On the relationship between personal evangelism and personal ethics |
| 14 | Hudson Baggett | "Learning by Experience" (Various) | Testimonies relate the importance of learning from personal experience |
| 15 | Vander Warner, Jr. | "Jesus and the Poor" (Various) | Christians, like Jesus, are supposed to help the poor |
| 16 | Charles T. Carter | "Christ, the Only Way to God" (Various) | On the exclusivity of Christ and the Christian faith |

Table A18 continued

| | | | |
|----|-----------|---|--------------------------------|
| 17 | R. G. Lee | "The Second Coming of Christ" (1 Thess 4:13-18) | On the second coming of Christ |
|----|-----------|---|--------------------------------|

Table A19. 1970 Pastors' Conference

| <i>May 31-June 1, 1970; Denver, CO;</i> | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|--|
| <i>Theme: "Minister, Christ-Man for the '70s;" President: Don Berry</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Bill Glass | "The Christian Witness In Our Crisis" (Various) | A testimony about witness in a fallen world |
| 2 | Glenn E. Braswell | "A Meditation for Churches" (Various) | An encouraging word about God at work in churches |
| 3 | James Robison | "Christ's Presence" (Various) | Christ's power and presence in the Christian life |
| 4 | John R. Claypool | "An Appraisal: A Man of All Seasons" (Various) | The minister's liberation from ego |
| 5 | James W. Middleton | "A Man's Finest Hour—The Minister As A Man" (Acts 5:14-15) | On the privilege and responsibility of the ministry |
| 6 | Richard A. Jackson | "Our Invitation from Christ—A Call to the Impossible" (Various) | The ministry is impossible apart from faith in Christ |
| 7 | Larry Rohrman | "Our Fellowship with God" (n/a) | Victory in battle is through faith in God, not size or power |
| 8 | Herschel H. Hobbs | "The Indispensable Lord" (Various) | The Lordship of Christ in the ministry |
| 9 | John P. Newport | "The World: A Tangled Web and a Scarlet Thread" (Various) | On the kingdom of God |
| 10 | Wallace R. Rogers | "The Word: Pastor, Prophet, Priest?" (Various) | Knowing the Word, loving the world, and leading the church |
| 11 | James L. Pleitz | "A Man for All Seasons" (2 Tim 4:1-8) | Conviction and confidence in difficult times of ministry |
| 12 | James L. Sullivan | "The Changing Times: Chaos or Conviction" (n/a) | Helpful words about change |
| 13 | John W. Nichol | "Who Shall We Be?—The Struggle for Integrity" (Various) | The need to affirm our identity in Christ |
| 14 | Larry Walker | "Where Shall We Go? The Church in the City" (n/a) | On being on mission in the big cities |
| 15 | Freddie Gage | "Where Shall We Go? The Church in the Streets" (Various) | Encouragement to go and make disciples |
| 16 | R. G. Lee | "Hope—Evidence of Unseen" (Various) | Jesus is the hope of the world |

Table A19 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|----------------|--|---|
| 17 | Thomas Field | "The Witness: Following Christ Into the World" (n/a) | -- |
| 18 | William Lawson | "What Shall We Do?—The Struggle for Identity" (n/a) | On the importance of finding out who you are and where you're going |
| 19 | Gerald Martin | "Healing—A Balm in Gilead" (n/a) | -- |

Table A20. 1971 Pastors' Conference

| <i>May 31, 1971; St. Louis, MO;</i> | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|---|
| <i>Theme: "God's Preacher, a Flame of Fire;" President: Landrum P. Leavell, III</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Eddie S. Lieberman | "Not Guilty" (Rom 3:23-25) | On the topic of justification |
| 2 | Howard H. Aultman | "The Master and the Minister" (Various) | On hearing and heeding the call to ministry |
| 3 | James E. Coggin | "God's Prophet and His Methods" (n/a) | Factors of change and church growth |
| 4 | Leandro Castro | "He Touched Me" (Various) | Personal testimony |
| 5 | J. D. Grey | "God's Prophet and His Message" (Various) | What preachers can learn from the prophets |
| 6 | Grady C. Cothen | "God's Men" (n/a) | On common temptations ministers must face |
| 7 | John F. Gibson | "God's Preacher and His Money" (Various) | A word about the financial practices of ministers |
| 8 | H. Franklin Paschall | "The Pastor and His Mate" (Various) | On marriage in the ministry |
| 9 | Jon F. Meek, Jr. | "God's Minister in the Metropolis" (Luke 19:41) | On the need and difficulty of ministry in large cities |
| 10 | Walter K. Ayers | "The Story of My Conversion" (n/a) | Personal testimony |
| 11 | W. A. Criswell | "God's Preacher and His Mandate" (n/a) | An affirmation of the inerrant and infallible word of God |
| 12 | W. Fred Swank | "God's Preacher and His Manners" (n/a) | On the unnecessary tension in relationships between ministers |
| 13 | James Hester | "God's Preacher and Missions" (n/a) | On the importance of foreign missions |

Table A21. 1972 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 5, 1972; Philadelphia, PA;</i> | | | |
|--|--------------------|--|---|
| <i>Theme: "New Faces;" President: John Bisagno</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Carey J. Miller | "Doctrines that Make the Difference" (Various) | Christ, Salvation, the Spirit, and Praise |
| 2 | Frank D. Minton | "Ministering to the Whole Man" (n/a) | The priority of evangelism |
| 3 | Vander Warner, Jr. | "God's Man Surviving the 70's" (Various) | On the need for integrity |
| 4 | Jess Moody | "The Jesus People" (n/a) | Topical presentation on the Jesus People movement |
| 5 | Jarry Autrey | "Six Essentials" (Eph 4:1-15) | On spiritual maturity versus Satanic deception |
| 6 | Charles D. Graves | "A Good Thing to Say About a Fella" (Various) | Biographical message on John the Baptist |
| 7 | James E. Coggin | "Be Filled with the Spirit" (Various) | The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the minister |
| 8 | Doug Tipps | "God in Control" (Various) | A biblical theology that God is in control |
| 9 | R. G. Lee | "Highways to Havoc" (Various) | The gospel and salvation is the solution to all that ails society |
| 10 | Richard Hogue | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the traits of and missionary success among America's youth |
| 11 | Adrian Rogers | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | n/a |

Table A22. 1973 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 11, 1973; Portland, OR;</i> | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|--|
| <i>Theme: "Equipping the Man of God;" President: Vander Warner</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | John C. Mitchell | "Believing God in the Desert" (Exod 17:1-6) | Faith in God, not people or programs |
| 2 | Charles G. Fuller | "The Pastor's Other Family" (Various) | On the pastor's relationship with home and church family |
| 3 | Jack R. Taylor | "The Must of the Filling" (Various) | Topical message on the filling of the Spirit |
| 4 | W. Clyde Martin | "Call of God to the City" (n/a) | On the need for missions and ministry in big cities |
| 5 | Jaroy Weber | "Preaching to the Brokenhearted" (Various) | On ministering to people who are hurting |
| 6 | John R. Bisgano | "Equipped As An Evangelist" (1 Cor 1:21-27) | A word of encouragement regarding evangelism |
| 7 | S. Franklin Logsdon | "Today's Challenge and Survival Techniques" (Various) | Broad message about ministry difficulties and encouragement |
| 8 | Robert G. Lee | "When Do Preachers Preach?" (Various) | Examples of good preaching from the Bible and church history |
| 9 | Joseph B. Underwood | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | An urging for involvement in the world reconciliation movement |
| 10 | Padgett C. Cope | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | The obligation for personal witnessing |
| 11 | Harper Shannon | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | The pastor's personal equipment |
| 12 | E. V. Hill | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On preaching the gospel and providing real-life opportunities for response |

Table A23. 1974 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 9-10, 1974; Dallas, TX;</i> | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Theme: "There Is Hope for Your Church;" President: Jaroy Weber</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | W. A. Criswell | "The Old-Time Religion" (Various) | Defense of doctrines that may offend modern sensibilities |
| 2 | Bailey E. Smith | "The Church's Prophet" (2 Cor 4) | On the characteristics of a true preacher |
| 3 | Ronald W. Prince | "The Church is Here to Stay" (Various) | Reasons why the church will not die and should be encouraged |
| 4 | J. D. Grey | "The Pastor—Undershepherd of the Flock" (Various) | A biblical theology of pastoral calling and ministry |
| 5 | Harold L. Fickett, Jr. | "The Priority of Evangelism" (Various) | On the fundamental importance of evangelism |
| 6 | James L. Pleitz | "The Power Crisis" (Various) | On the need for and sources of power in the ministry |
| 7 | Warren C. Hultgren | "Where Preachers Often Fail" or "Missing Our Magnificent Obsession" (Num 20:7-12) | Learning from Moses' mistakes as a leader |
| 8 | Andrew W. Tampling | "The Preacher and His Message" (Various) | Four qualities which must characterize the preacher and his preaching |
| 9 | H. Edwin Young | "The Pastor's Authority" (Various) | On the nature of pastoral authority—what it is and is not |
| 10 | Cliff Barrows | "The King Is Coming" (Various) | On the second coming of Christ |
| 11 | Henry Brandt | "The Pastor and His Resources" (n/a) | -- |
| 12 | Henry Brandt | "The Pastor and His Tools" (n/a) | -- |
| 13 | Henry Brandt | "The Pastor and His Family" (n/a) | -- |
| 14 | Dolph Briscoe | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Justice and the government |
| 15 | S. M. Lockridge | "Lordship of Christ" (n/a) | -- |
| 16 | Eddie Lieberman | "The Preacher's Paradox" (n/a) | -- |

Table A24. 1975 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 8-9, 1975; Miami Beach, FL;</i> | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Theme: "The High Calling of God;" President: James Pleitz</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | William L. Self | "The Call to the Ministry" (Various) | On the call to the ministry and its necessity for faithfulness |
| 2 | Charles G. Fuller | "The Preacher's Preparation for Service (Various) | Topical message on preparedness for ministry |
| 3 | Russell Dilday | "The Pastor . . . A Teacher Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Tim 2:1-26) | On how to handle the Word of God |
| 4 | Ralph M. Smith | "The Pastor As an Evangelist" (Matt 9:35-38) | The pastor should be an evangelist and evangelism facilitator |
| 5 | Carl E. Bates | "The Pastor: A Man Under Command" (Mark 10:17-22) | On ministers living for God rather than self |
| 6 | W. A. Criswell | "The Pastor—A Proclaimer of God's Word (Various) | Three foundational observations concerning the Bible |
| 7 | John R. Claypool | "The Minister's Involvement in the Community" (Various) | On the need for the pastor to be involved in his community |
| 8 | James Lester Monroe | "The Joys of Being a Pastor"(Various) | On the multi-faceted duties and joys of the ministry |
| 9 | R. G. Lee | "Pastor, Faithfulness, Rewards" (Various) | A primer on pastoral ministry |
| 10 | Mrs. Norman Vincent Peale | "The Pastor As A Father and Husband" (n/a) | On the family as priority in the pastor's life |
| 11 | Steve Davis | "In All Thy Ways Acknowledge Him" (n/a) | Personal testimony of a college football player |
| 12 | Charles Colson | "A New Man in Christ" (n/a) | Personal testimony of former Nixon aide |

Table A25. 1976 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 13-14, 1976; Norfolk, VA;</i> | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|--|
| <i>Theme: "Faith of Our Fathers;" President: Adrian Rogers</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Russell J. Clearman | "Which Way, America" (Various) | God and country |
| 2 | Ronald Dunn | "When the Church Prays" (Acts 4:22-23) | Prayer is the secret to revival |
| 3 | Peter M. Lord | "The Importance of Having the Right Purpose" (Various) | On finding and fulfilling God's purpose for the church |
| 4 | Jack R. Taylor | "Jabez" (1 Chr 4:9-10) | The place of prayer in the life of Jabez |
| 5 | Richard A. Jackson | "God's Reluctant Runaway" (Jer 9:1-6) | The humanity and faithfulness of Jeremiah |
| 6 | W. A. Criswell | "Will There Be An American Tricentennial?" (n/a) | The church must lead America in repentance |
| 7 | R. G. Lee | "Paths for Preachers" (Various) | On how preachers can avoid mediocrity and failure |
| 8 | Homer Lindsay, Jr. | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | People are dying for love and need the gospel |
| 9 | Walter Judd | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | An encouragement for pastors to take an interest in government |
| 10 | Jerry Vines | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 11 | Charles Stanley | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |

Table A26. 1977 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 12-13, 1977; Kansas City, MO; Theme: n/a; President: Jerry Vines</i> | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Stephen F. Olford | "The Vision of Our Vocation" (Ez 37:1-14) | The valley of dry bones as a prototype for pastoral ministry |
| 2 | Stephen F. Olford | "Authority from Heaven" (Luke 20:1-8) | On the need for authority in the pulpit |
| 3 | John T. Tippett, Jr. | [No Message Title Given] (Various) | On what God is doing in the world |
| 4 | Carliss Odom | [No Message Title Given] (Various) | Personal testimony |
| 5 | Adrian Rogers | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 6 | W. A. Criswell | "The Infallible Word of God" (2 Pet 1:15-20) | Articulation of a conservative doctrine of Scripture |
| 7 | Warren Wiersbe | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Something on ministering in the cities. |
| 8 | Sam Cathey | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | About the Holy Spirit and the Charismatic Movement |
| 9 | Clyde Narramore | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | A message on depression in the parsonage |
| 10 | Homer Lindsay, Jr. | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | A message about the problem of sin in America |

Table A27. 1978 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 11-12, 1978; Atlanta, GA</i> | | | |
|---|----------------------|--|---|
| <i>Theme: "The Urgent Need for Christ Today;" President: Bailey Smith</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | John R. Bisgano | "We Can Win the World Now" (n/a) | Four reasons why we can win the world for Jesus |
| 2 | Don Moore | "Authority in the Arena" (Various) | The need for authority in the pastorate |
| 3 | Bill Weber | "How to Rejoice on Monday Morning" (Various) | On having joy in the ministry |
| 4 | Jim Henry | "The Uncommon Message for the Common Man" (Various) | The unique message of Christianity for a lost world |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 5 | James T. Draper, Jr. | "The Spirit of the Evangel" (Various) | On a Spirit-filled ministry |
| 6 | W. A. Criswell | "Preaching the Word of God" (Various) | The perseverance and purity of God's Word |
| 7 | Thomas D. Eliff | "Sitters, Getters, Goers, and Tellers" (2 Kgs 7:4-9) | Different responses to the call to evangelism |
| 8 | James Robison | "Where Are the Prophets" (1 Cor 2:1-5) | On the need for men to stand up and preach the Word |
| 9 | Fred W. Sampson | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 10 | Sam Cathey | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 11 | Fred W. Sampson | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 12 | Adrian Rogers | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 13 | Baker J. Cauthen | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |

Table A28. 1979 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 9-10, 1979; Houston, TX;</i> | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|---|
| <i>Theme: n/a; President: Homer Lindsay, Jr.</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Adrian Rogers | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 2 | James Robison | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 3 | Bobby Welch | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | The person, program, and power of Jesus Christ |
| 4 | William H. Ricketts | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Ministers get discouraged when they don't believe and practice what they preach |
| 5 | Eddie Martin | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 6 | W. A. Criswell | "The Blood of Jesus" (Heb 9:11-22) | Topical message on the blood of Christ |
| 7 | James A. Ponder | "The Revival of the Cutting Edge" (2 Kgs 6:1-7) | How spiritual power can be restored |
| 8 | Clark G. Hutchinson | "God's Men Leading God's Church to Win God's World" (Acts 13:1-12) | The Church needs men who stand on the Word and follow the Spirit |
| 9 | Ralph W. Stone | "Seeds of Success" (Various) | On how to be successful for God |
| 10 | Richard A. Jackson | "When God Appoints a Man" (Num 16:1-40) | Moses as a model of the God-appointed man |
| 11 | Jim Henry | "The Pastor-Shepherd" (Various) | The characteristics of the effective pastor-shepherd |
| 12 | Jimmy Jackson | "Quenching the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19) | On submitted to and following the Holy Spirit |
| 13 | Charles F. Stanley | "Stand Up America" (Various) | On America's problems and what it will take to make her great again |
| 14 | Jerry Vines | "Glimpses of Glory" (Various) | A biblical theology of God's glory |

Table A29. 1980 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 8-9, 1980; St. Louis, MO;</i> | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|--|
| <i>Theme: "Bold Preaching of a Bold Gospel;" President: Jimmy Draper</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Jack Taylor | "Prayer and Awakening" (Various) | The relationship between prayer and revival |
| 2 | Jerry Barrett | "The Anatomy of One Call Experience" (n/a) | Personal testimony and topical treatment of calling |
| 3 | [No name given] | "Lord, Do It Again!" (Various) | History of revivals |
| 4 | Ralph Langley | "On Being Priested Well with Christ my Priest" (Various) | Study of Christ's role as priest to us |
| 5 | Joel C. Gregory | "When Faithfulness Brings Problems" (Exod 5) | On faithfulness and the problems it often brings |
| 6 | Stan Coffey | "Revival Through the Word" (Neh 8) | On the Word and revival |
| 7 | H. Bailey Stone | "A New Testament Strategy for Reaching People" (Acts 8:26-35) | Phillip and the eunuch as a pattern for evangelism |
| 8 | Roy J. Fish | "The High Cost of Effective Evangelism" (1 Cor 9:1-27) | Evangelism is costly but worthwhile |
| 9 | William G. Tanner | "Your Life: A Vessel Unto Honor" (2 Tim 2:19-21) | On serving God as a vessel unto honor |
| 10 | Bailey E. Smith | "Stand Firm in Jordan" (Josh 3-4) | On what we need to stand firm in these difficult times |
| 11 | W. A. Criswell | "Heartfelt Religion" (Various) | Christianity is more than the intellect |
| 12 | John Bisagno | "The Second Coming" (Rev) | A premillennial view of the Revelation |
| 13 | George H. Harris | "What God Wants In Us" (n/a) | The love that binds the SBC is stronger than the things dividing the SBC |
| 14 | Richard Jackson | "In the Meantime" (n/a) | A denouncement of disunity and judgmentalism |
| 15 | Grady Cothen | "Victory Is Ours" (n/a) | A personal testimony about a recent bout with cancer and the unimportance of position, prestige, and honor in the face of eternity |

Table A30. 1981 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 7-8, 1981; Los Angeles, CA;</i> | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Theme: "We Would See Jesus;" President: Jim Henry</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Bill Bennett | [No Message Title Given] (Various) | On the leadership and authority of the pastor |
| 2 | Calvin Miller | "The Parson and His Mrs.: The Love Affair in the Parsonage" (Gen 24:14-67) | On the humanity of the pastor and the sanctity of the home |
| 3 | Ras Robinson | "A World Waiting to Hear" (2 Cor 2:1-9) | There are people everywhere waiting to hear the gospel |
| 4 | Junior Hill | "God's Route to Stardom" (Various) | John the Baptist as a model for humble service |
| 5 | Jess Moody | "The Mood of Jesus in the Man of God" (Various) | The mood of the minister sets the tone for the church |
| 6 | Sam T. Cathey | "Spiritual Warfare" Various) | Topical message on the pastor's work of spiritual warfare |
| 7 | Richard A. Jackson | "The Savior Shown in the Shepherd" (John 10:1-18) | Pastors should lead from personal integrity and intensity for evangelism |
| 8 | Russell H. Dilday, Jr. | "Testimony" (n/a) | A story about revival at Southwestern Seminary |
| 9 | Landrum P. Leavell | "Testimony" (n/a) | A story about his life and ministry |
| 10 | Duke K. McCall | "Testimony" (n/a) | A story about how God led him to seminary and his life's calling |
| 11 | William M. Pinson, Jr. | "Testimony" (n/a) | A testimony emphasizing the role of Jesus and the Church in salvation and calling |
| 12 | Fred H. Wolfe | "Seeing Jesus Through the Fullness of the Spirit" (Various) | The role of the Holy Spirit in revealing Jesus in and through the Church |
| 13 | Elvis Marcum | "Testimony" (n/a) | A testimony about revival |
| 14 | Vance Havner | [No Message Title Given] (Various) | On the need for repentance and revival |
| 15 | W. A. Criswell | "The Great Mystery of the Church" (Various) | On the mystery that is Christ and His Church |
| 16 | Harold E. O'Chester | "To Be Like Jesus" (Various) | To be like Jesus is to care for the lost |

Table A30 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|----------------|---|--|
| 17 | Adrian Rogers | "Sister Sarah's Simple Secrets and Aged Abraham's Able Advice" (Various) | Suggestions for husbands and wives from the example of Abraham and Sarah |
| 18 | John Bisagno | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Urged pastors to go to the mission field personally |
| 19 | Arthur Blessit | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Blessit was a Jesus Movement minister. He claimed that Los Angeles needs Jesus, not a theological debate |

Table A31. 1982 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 13-14, 1982; New Orleans, LA; Theme: "Preaching the Great Texts;" President: Edwin Young</i> | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Barry Landrum | "The Great Beginning" (Various) | On the Bible's creation account |
| 2 | Charles T. Carter | "The Great Invitation" (John 3:16) | On the salvation invitation of John 3:16 |
| 3 | James T. Draper | "The Great Presence" (Acts 2) | On the ministry of the Holy Spirit |
| 4 | William B. Tolar | "The Great Promise" (Acts 1:9-11) | On the second coming of Christ |
| 5 | Bob Werner | "The Greatest Gift" (1 Cor 13) | Love is the greatest gift of all |
| 6 | Tal D. Bonham | "The Great Confession" (Matt 16:13-20) | On the foundation, founder, and future of Christ's church |
| 7 | H. Franklin Paschall | "The Great Sacrifice" (Isa 53) | Jesus, the Suffering Servant |
| 8 | Ron Dunn | "The Great Standard: Lord, Teach Us to Pray" (Matt 6:5-13) | On Jesus' model prayer |
| 9 | Stephen F. Olford | "The Great Commission" (Matt 28:16-20) | On the aggressive call to evangelism of the Great Commission |
| 10 | O. S. Hawkins | "The Great Commandment" (Exod 2) | -- |
| 11 | Adrian Rogers | "The Great Sermon" (Matt 5) | If you're not winning souls, you're not right with God. |
| 12 | Zig Ziglar | "The Great Fellowship" (Eph 4) | -- |

Table A32. 1983 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 12-13, 1983; Pittsburgh, PA;</i> | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|---|
| <i>Theme: "Spirit Anointed Preaching;" President: Fred Wolfe</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Mark W. Stone | "Tried by Fire: A Personal Testimony" (Various) | Personal testimony from a burn victim |
| 2 | Charles F. Stanley | "The Priority of the Servant of God" (2 Sam 7:18-29) | Tips for ministry from David |
| 3 | Fred Lowery | "Spirit Anointed Preaching Begins at Home" (Eph 5:25-31) | The importance of marriage in the ministry |
| 4 | Ronald Burke Long | [No Message Title Given] (Various) | The importance of preaching and preaching with power |
| 5 | Morris H. Chapman | "A Run for the Finisher" (Heb 12:1-2) | On running well the race that is the Christian life |
| 6 | Jim Hylton | "The Anointing for Revival Today" (Luke 4:18-19) | The Spirit anointed Jesus and the Spirit anoints preachers |
| 7 | Charles W. Campbell | "Love Lessons: Mandate for Missions" (Luke 7:36-50) | On Spirit-filled preachers answering the call to missions |
| 8 | Ron Herrod | "The Basics That Bind Us" (Various) | On everything that churches need to get back to |
| 9 | Len B. Turner | "Are You Ready to Preach?" (Rom 1:14-17) | On Paul as an exemplary preacher |
| 10 | Arthur Blessit | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | A warning against fighting and an encouragement to evangelism |
| 11 | Mike Gilchrist | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 12 | Adrian Rogers | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Urged commitment to the inerrant Bible |
| 13 | Edward V. Hill | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the preacher's calling; and against prosperity theology |
| 14 | Stephen F. Olford | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the Lordship of Christ |

Table A33. 1984 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 10-11, 1984; Kansas City, MO;</i> | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|--|
| <i>Theme: "Encouraging the Servant of God;" President: Charles Stanley</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Bailey Smith | "Echoes of Encouragement" (Exod 15:23-27) | How to have hope in difficult times |
| 2 | Franky Schaeffer | "On Christian Neutrality" (n/a) | On the restriction of religious freedoms in America |
| 3 | Charles Lowery | "Handling Stress" (Various) | Thinking biblically about stress |
| 4 | Larry Burkett | "Encouraging the Servant of God in His Finances" (Various) | Topical study on wealth, stewardship, the church, and ministerial finances |
| 5 | David A. Seamands | "Encouraging the Servant of God in His Inner Healing" (Various) | Ministers need to experience inner healing |
| 6 | H. Edwin Young | "Family Relationships? Is It Well?" (2 Kgs 4:8-37) | On the well-being of the personal life, the marriage, and the children of the minister |
| 7 | Roy Fish | "Encouraging the Servant of God in Personal Evangelism" (n/a) | Pastors need to set a personal example in evangelism and make it their top priority |
| 8 | Ron Lewis | "Encouraging the Servant of God in Church Growth" (n/a) | On winning the world for Christ through evangelism and church growth |
| 9 | O. S. Hawkins | "Encouraging the Servant of God to Reach His Goals" (n/a) | A challenge to pastors to overcome discouragement, diversion, and doubt in seeking to meet their goals in ministry |
| 10 | Stephen F. Olford | "Encouraging the Servant of God in His Personal Disciplines" (n/a) | On personal discipline in the personal, social, and spiritual lives of pastors |
| 11 | Zig Ziglar | "Encouraging the Servant of God in His Moral Standards"(n/a) | On morality and the lack thereof in liberals |

Table A34. 1985 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 9-10, 1985; Dallas, TX;</i> | | | |
|--|--------------------|---|---|
| <i>Theme: "Tracing the Rainbow through the Rain;" President: O. S. Hawkins</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Bill Weber | "Who Paid for the Roof?" (Mark 2:1-12) | Great sermon about being creative to do God's will. |
| 2 | Thomas D. Eliff | "Settled In Heaven" (Ps 119:89) | The doctrine of Scripture |
| 3 | John A. Wood | "The Promise of Faithfulness" (Gen 6, 9) | Noah is held out as a model of ministerial faithfulness |
| 4 | D. James Kennedy | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On what religious liberty is and is not |
| 5 | Adrian Rogers | "Seven Principles for Pastors" (n/a) | Preparation, perspective, purpose, progression, protection, power, and praise |
| 6 | David Walker | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Standing on the promises of God in order to get through a spiritual wilderness |
| 7 | Jack Graham | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the importance of faithfulness in small things |
| 8 | Arthur Blessitt | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | A message of inspiration regarding revival, Spirit-led speech, and evangelism |
| 9 | Morris Chapman | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 10 | Edwin Young | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On praying through the SBC controversy |
| 11 | Jack R. Taylor | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | -- |
| 12 | Richard A. Jackson | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On revival |
| 13 | W. A. Criswell | "Why Not America? Why Not Now?" (n/a) | On the pattern of death and resurrection in a denomination, an institution, a preacher, and a professor |
| 14 | R. T. Kendall | "The Family Secret" (Rom 8:28) | Kendall develops a theodicy |

Table A35. 1986 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 8-9, 1986; Atlanta, GA;</i> | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--|--|
| <i>Theme: "Jesus . . . Author and Finisher;" President: Morris Chapman</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | H. Edwin Young | "Worthy Is the Lamb" (Rev 5:1-12) | The doctrine of the Lamb as a proof of Scripture's factual truth |
| 2 | Harold A. Carter | "Who Jesus Is" (Titus 1:4) | Exposition about the identity and purpose of Christ |
| 3 | Jay Strack | "Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever" (Heb 12:1-4) | Encouragement to endure for Christ |
| 4 | Harry B. Garvin | "Looking to Jesus at All Times" (Heb 12:1-2) | Great missionary testimony/sermon about Jesus' help in times of need. |
| 5 | William Bert Tolar | "The Atonement: Man's Greatest Need and Christ's Gracious Provision" (Various) | On the doctrine of the atonement |
| 6 | Bailey Smith | "The Secret of Ultimate Living" (Luke 23:46) | On how to live the ultimate life in Christ |
| 7 | Nelson Lynn Price | "The Name of Jesus" (Matt 1:21-23) | On the saving, the sustaining, and the superior name of Jesus Christ |
| 8 | James Reimer | "Is There Any Hope?" (1 Pet 1:3) | Hope in weeping, worrying, and wandering |
| 9 | Eugene Ridley | "Crown Him Lord" (Col 1:14-22) | Crowning Jesus Lord of your life because of redemption, revelation, and reconciliation |
| 10 | Adrian Rogers | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the necessity of believing in the virgin birth of Christ |
| 11 | Dwight "Ike" Reighard | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the subject and effects of anointed preaching |
| 12 | Joel Gregory | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | The power of the resurrected, ascended, and advocating Christ to change lives |
| 13 | Jerry Vines | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the literal return of the person of Christ |
| 14 | David Ring | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Challenged pastors to make themselves available to Christ, regardless of the abilities they may or may not possess |

Table A36. 1987 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 14-15, 1987; St. Louis, MO;</i> | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Theme: "The Emmanuel Factor;" President: Nelson L. Price</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Thomas D. Eliff | "How to Forgive" (Matt 18:23-25) | Good sermon on what forgiveness is and how to be forgiving |
| 2 | Richard F. Vera | "The Emmanuel Factor: In Conquering Contemporary Crisis" (1 Sam 13-14) | God wants to help us overcome the crises of our time and ministries. |
| 3 | Bailey E. Smith | "The Emmanuel Factor in the Compassion for Souls" (Matt 28:16-20) | Exhortation to evangelism |
| 4 | Jack Boyce Millwood, Jr. | "The Emmanuel Factor in a Life of Self-Denial" (Phil 2:5-11) | On Christology and humility |
| 5 | Landrum Pinson Leveall, II | "The Emmanuel Factor in Resurrection" (1 Cor 15:12-15) | On the importance and effects of affirming the resurrection |
| 6 | E. Wilbert McCall, Sr. | "The Emmanuel Factor in Salvation" (John 3:16) | On what God did for us in Christ |
| 7 | Carl F. H. Henry | "Messianism and the Neo-Pagans" (Eccl 12:1-7) | The point of life is serving God |
| 8 | Ralph M. Smith | "The Spirit-Filled Life" (Various) | On the believer's relationship with and need for the Holy Spirit |
| 9 | David Miller | "The Emmanuel Factor in the Church" (Matt 16:13-18) | On the nature and founder of the Christian church |
| 10 | James T. Draper, Jr. | "In Search of Integrity" (Ps 120) | Integrity in our lives and in what we say |
| 11 | Richard Lee | "The Emmanuel Factor . . . When We Need Him" (n/a) | -- |
| 12 | Jerry Johnston | "The Emmanuel Factor . . . In Evangelism" (n/a) | Evangelism is about showing, and not just preaching, a sermon |
| 13 | T. Jerrell Sutton | "The Emmanuel Factor and Contending for the Faith" (Jude 3) | On the biblical responsibility to contend for the faith; with extended discussion of Spurgeon's downgrade controversy |

Table A37. 1988 Pastors' Conference

| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>June 12-13, 1988; San Antonio, TX;</i> <i>Theme: "Building the Greatest Churches Since Pentecost;"</i> <i>President: Stan Coffey</i></p> | | | |
|--|-----------------|---|---|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Freddie Gage | "Tears for Souls" (Various) | Sermon on the need for evangelism |
| 2 | Bailey E. Smith | "There's Victory in the Pea Patch" (2 Sam 23:11-13) | On standing strong and winning a victory for the Lord |
| 3 | Ron Herrod | "Christ's Counsel for a Confused Church" (Rev 2-3) | On what can be learned from the letters to the seven churches of Revelation |
| 4 | Ronnie W. Floyd | "How to Be God's Man for the Hour" (Various) | What ministers need to do to help their churches |
| 5 | Bobby Boyles | "Love Not Your Life Unto Death" (Rev 12:11) | Testimony about salvation for an alcoholic father |
| 6 | Jay H. Strack | "A New You" (2 Cor 5:17-21) | Help for pastors through new commitment |
| 7 | W. A. Criswell | "The Infallible Word of God" (2 Pet 1:21) | Forthright and conservative doctrine of Scripture |
| 8 | Charles Stanley | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Pastors need accountability to God, biblically-authoritative preaching, discipline, endurance, and evangelism |
| 9 | Paige Patterson | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On peace through the preaching of the atonement of Jesus Christ |
| 10 | Morris Chapman | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the need for a Christ-like spirit in maintaining convictions about the word of God |
| 11 | Richard Lee | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Baptisms are down because preachers don't believe and preach the Bible |
| 12 | Ed Young | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | An address concerning lower baptism rates and problems in local churches |
| 13 | Jerry Vines | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Standing against the pressures of modern society |

Table A38. 1989 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 11-12, 1989; Las Vegas, NV;</i> | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|--|
| <i>Theme: "Facing Our Challenges with Confidence;" President: Ralph Smith</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Johnny Jackson | "Pictures of the Pastor" (Ps 37:3) | The faith, obedience, lifestyle, and blessing of the pastor |
| 2 | John C. Click | "Last Will and Testament" (2 Tim 1:6-14) | Paul's parting words to the young pastor, Timothy |
| 3 | Neal T. Jones | "The Pastor and His Ministry" (Acts 2:42-47) | The model of the early church applied to a struggling congregation |
| 4 | Darrell L. Gilyard | "The Unveiling of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:1) | On the subject and significance of John's revelation |
| 5 | Gordon C. Graham | "The Cross Is the Crux" (1 Cor 2:1-5) | Our preaching, the cross, and missions, tithing, forgiveness, and hope |
| 6 | Rick Warren | "Dealing with Discouragement in Your Ministry" (Neh 4:6-14) | Four reasons and three cures for discouragement |
| 7 | Howard L. Gates | "Living for Jesus" (1 Tim 1:11-17) | Four reasons why I can live for Jesus |
| 8 | J. Harold Smith | "Sounding the Trumpet" (1 Cor 14:6-9) | Help for God's ministers to sound the trumpet in their preaching |
| 9 | Haward Gates | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On serving Jesus because He will trust us, help us, use us, and reward us |
| 10 | Charles Stanley | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On dealing with conflict |
| 11 | Larry Lewis | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | A challenge to make soul-winning a top priority of pastoral ministry |
| 12 | John Bisagno | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | America and the SBC need to put God first, restore broken relationships, confess sins, and pray |
| 13 | Tom Elliff | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Don't harden your heart, but instead come to God on His terms |
| 14 | Joel Gregory | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Pastors must preach that Jesus appeared, was vindicated, was seen, preached, was believed upon, and was taken up to be with the Father |

Table A38 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|----------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 15 | Adrian Rogers | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | A call for pastors to mount a campaign against all forms of sin and degradation in the US by holding higher faith in Jesus Christ |

Table A39. 1990 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 9-10, 1990; New Orleans, LA;</i> | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Theme: "Pathway to God's Presence;" President: Tom Elliff</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Bailey Smith | "I Find No Fault in Him" (Various) | On the supernatural and unique quality of Jesus' life and ministry |
| 2 | Nelson L. Price | "The Path Is A Person" (John 14:1-6) | Jesus is the only way to God |
| 3 | Avery T. Willis, Jr. | "The Pathway of God's Presence" (2 Chr 7:14) | Prayer, repentance, and obedience are keys to revival |
| 4 | Manley Beasley | "What Is Victory?" (John 19) | On Jesus' example of pouring himself out before the Lord |
| 5 | John F. MacArthur, Jr. | "The Man of God" (1 Tim 6:11-14) | On the person and work of the man of God |
| 6 | Adrian Rogers | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error |
| 7 | Stan Coffey | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Battling against sin, Satan, and for souls |
| 8 | Dwight "Ike" Reighard | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On dealing with adversity and discovering the treasures to be gained from adversity |
| 9 | Paige Patterson | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the eternity and loving-kindness of God |
| 10 | Richard Lee | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On how men fail God |
| 11 | O. S. Hawkins | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | A warning against those in the SBC who pollute and pervert the pathway to Christ's presence |
| 12 | John Bisagno | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | An urging to defend the veracity of the word of God |
| 13 | Morris Chapman | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the whole world's need to hear the message of John 3:16 |
| 14 | Charles Stanley | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On fighting discouragement in the ministry |

Table A40. 1991 Pastors' Conference

| <i>June 2-3, 1991; Atlanta, GA;</i> | | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Theme: "Lord, Send Revival;" President: Richard Lee</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Jerry Vines | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the various ways for God's glory to be manifest in your life |
| 2 | Ed Young | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On being open to changing the way one does church in order to maximize evangelistic effectiveness |
| 3 | Adrian Rogers | "The Playboy's Payday" (n/a) | On the evils of immorality |
| 4 | Bill Stafford | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Rekindling the fire of one's calling |
| 5 | Paige Patterson | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the doctrine of God's holiness |
| 6 | Jimmy Draper | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the role of Christian martyrs in advancing the kingdom of God |
| 7 | Darrell L. Gilyard | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Evangelistic zeal and reaching children with the gospel |
| 8 | Oliver North | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Christians need to be involved in government |
| 9 | Jack Graham | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Pastors need to share their faith |
| 10 | Tim LaHaye | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the need for Christians to be involved in government |
| 11 | Chuck Colson | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Churches need to reject worldly cultural values such as bigger is better and the gospel makes people happy rather than holy |
| 12 | Tony Evans | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | A call for Christian involvement in the political process from a biblio-centric frame of reference |
| 13 | Bailey Smith | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On moderate preaching, lethargic congregations, and lethal compromise as the source of plateaued and dying churches |
| 14 | W. A. Criswell | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Great churches require great pastors |

Table A40 continued

| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
|----|----------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 15 | Jerry Falwell | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | A brief address concerning the moral dangers of the 1990s vs. the 1950s |

APPENDIX 3

THE SERMONS OF THE SBC FORUM, 1984-1991

Tables A41 through A48 contain pertinent information for the sermons preached at the SBC Forum from 1984 to 1991. What follows is year-by-year, tabular presentation of the SBC Forum that includes the date, location, theme, and president of each Pastors' Conference, as well as the speaker, sermon title, sermon Scripture text, and main idea(s) for each sermon. Speakers delivered a total of 43 messages during this eight-year period of time.

Table A41. 1984 SBC Forum

| <i>June 11, 1984; Kansas City, MO; Theme: n/a; President: Gene Garrison</i> | | | |
|---|----------------|---|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | David Matthews | "Preaching and the Sovereignty of God" (Various) | If we make too much out of the Bible, we make too little out of God. |
| 2 | Kirby Godsey | "The Spirit of Learning and Learning of the Spirit" (n/a) | On the value of academic freedom over doctrinal policing |
| 3 | Sara Ann Hobbs | "Women As Ministers" (Various) | A justification for women as ministers |
| 4 | Duke McCall | "The Revelation We Proclaim" (Various) | On the loving nature of God and his revelation we proclaim |
| 5 | Kenneth Chafin | "An Encouraging Word" (Acts 11:23) | People don't need "mean" preaching. They need an encouraging word. |

Table A42. 1985 SBC Forum

| <i>June 10, 1985; Dallas, TX;</i> | | | |
|---|-------------------|--|---|
| <i>Theme: n/a; President: Gene Garrison</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Walter Shurden | "I Am Soul Competency" (n/a) | A dramatic, first-person presentation on the meaning and important of soul competency |
| 2 | Catherine Allen | "The Doctrine of First Things" (n/a) | The importance of women, WMU, and cooperation. Women get it right so stick with us. |
| 3 | Cecil E. Sherman | "To Trust Again" (Various) | Biblical principles for repairing the breach in the SBC |
| 4 | W. Randall Lolley | "Integrity in Proclaiming the Gospel" (Titus 2:7-8) | Integrity preaching focuses on Jesus and is consistent with the Bible. |
| 5 | William L. Self | "What They Don't Teach You At a Baptist Preacher's School" (Various) | Against defending God, parachurch organizations, and style over substance |

Table A43. 1986 SBC Forum

| <i>June 9, 1986; Atlanta, GA;</i> | | | |
|---|---------------------|--|---|
| <i>Theme: "The Hallmarks of Baptist Heritage;" President: Gene Garrison</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Norman Cavender | "The Bells of Liberty" (n/a) | Liberty and freedom as key Baptist identity markers |
| 2 | Carolyn Weatherford | "Women in Our Southern Baptist Heritage" (n/a) | Survey of the importance of women in Southern Baptist history |
| 3 | Bill Sherman | "The Greatness of God" (Various) | On the greatness of God |
| 4 | R. Keith Parks | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the authority of Scripture |
| 5 | Peter James Flaming | "Orthodoxy of Love" (n/a) | What it really means to be a "people of the book" |

Table A44. 1987 SBC Forum

| <i>June 14-15, 1987; St. Louis, MO; Theme: "Uniting All Things in Christ;" President: Gene Garrison</i> | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Roy Honeycutt | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Finding hope in God in desperate times |
| 2 | J. Don Aderhold | "A Church Is Transformed" (n/a) | A moderate pastor/church is revitalized and held up as exemplary |
| 3 | Rosalyn Smith Carter | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Personal testimony |
| 4 | James Slatton | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | [Hitting all the right moderate notes: fundamentalists are bad, SBC needs to make decisions, creeds aren't everything, etc.] |
| 5 | Nancy Hastings Sehested | "Will the Real Minister Please Stand Up?" (2 Cor 5:16-6:10) | True authority comes from faithfulness through trials |
| 6 | Dan Yeary | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On commitment for reconciliation |
| 7 | Fisher Humphreys | "Loving God" (Mark 12:28-31) | On the role of love in the Christian life |
| 8 | Lavonn D. Brown | "The Journey from Faith to Faith" (Rom 1:17) | A presentation of various stages of spiritual maturity |
| 9 | John H. Hewett | "Devising the Indivisible" (Various) | A speech given to try and convince SBC to stop fighting and work together |

Table A45. 1988 SBC Forum

| <i>June 12-13, 1988; San Antonio, TX;</i> | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|--|
| <i>Theme: "Contending for An Authentic Faith;" President: Gene Garrison</i> | | | |
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Bill J. Leonard | "Improvising Grace" (Matt 10:5-22) | We shouldn't be too dogmatic, but ready to learn and improvise as God leads |
| 2 | Libby S. Bellinger | "Going Home by a Different Way" (Matt 1:1-12) | Moderates don't have to abide by Conservative rules. |
| 3 | Anthony Campolo | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Love, not fighting, will win the next generation |
| 4 | Alan Neely | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | I didn't leave Southern Baptists; Southern Baptists left me. |
| 5 | Mildred McWhorter | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Not sure, but maybe a testimony of work with Hispanics (she did that at WMU meeting too) |
| 6 | Winfred Moore | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Take a side and fight with integrity for what is right. |

Table A46. 1989 SBC Forum

| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>June 12, 1989; Las Vegas, NV;</i> <i>Theme: "The Priesthood of the Believer, the Preaching of the Gospel;"</i> <i>President: Peter Rhea Jones</i></p> | | | |
|---|----------------------|--|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Brian Harbour | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On faithfulness in difficult times |
| 2 | Fred Craddock | "The Freedom of the Pulpit" (Various) | A warning against giving away freedom in the pulpit |
| 3 | Molly Marshall-Green | [No Message Title Given] (Various) | A theological interpretation of what it means to be priests to each other: we are all priests to one another |
| 4 | Clyde Fant | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Against pulpit popes who think their interpretation is the only correct interpretation |
| 5 | Robert Schuller | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Everyone needs relief from shame |

Table A47. 1990 SBC Forum

| <i>June 11, 1990; New Orleans, LA; Theme: "Recapturing the Future;" President: Jon Stubblefield</i> | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Gene Garrison | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Christ calls us to be faithful, not necessarily to win |
| 2 | John Killinger | "Living With a Trouble Maker" (Gal 2:19-20) | Misc. thoughts on the SBC and living for Christ |
| 3 | Herbert Reynolds | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | On the historic and psychological context of the Conservative movement |
| 4 | W. Randall Lolley | "Lest A Bramble Rule Over Us" (Judg 9:7-15) | Jotham's parable of the bramble bush has played out in the SBC |
| 5 | Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler | "A Trustee Worthy of Trust" (Various) | Mainly about missions history/biography among Baptists, but also speaks to Controversy |
| 6 | Franklin D. Pollard | "Entrusted With The Gospel" (1 Thess 2:5-8) | On the difference between a relationship and a creed |

Table A48. 1991 SBC Forum

| <i>June 3, 1991; Atlanta, GA; Theme: n/a; President: n/a</i> | | | |
|--|----------------|--------------------------------|--|
| | <i>Speaker</i> | <i>Title (Text)</i> | <i>Main Idea(s)</i> |
| 1 | Dan Martin | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Testimony about being dismissed by Executive Committee as news editor of Baptist Press |
| 2 | John H. Hewett | [No Message Title Given] (n/a) | Overview of the birth of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship |

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ABSTRACT

COMPETING VISIONS: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION PASTORS' CONFERENCE AND SBC FORUM, 1961-1991

Brian Steven Dubberly, Jr., Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
Chair: Dr. Robert A. Vogel

This dissertation argues that the pulpit rhetoric of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum portrays the Conservative Resurgence as a competition between conservative and moderate visions for Baptist identity as differentiated by the mutually exclusive manner in which each group perceived of doctrine and the constitution of denominational fellowship. That conservatives and moderates both construed of the conflict in this way is revealed with remarkable consistency by their respective preaching at the annual pre-convention gatherings. Regardless of what conservatives and moderates may have said during the battle or since, their preaching revealed that they both viewed the Resurgence as a competition of visions for Baptist identity. Conservatives pursued the vision of a well-defined and well defended Baptist orthodoxy, while moderates pursued a vision of Baptist freedom.

Chapter 1 presents the primary research problem and main argument of this work. Chapter 2 introduces the preaching of the Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum, giving special attention to those sermons that best exemplified the disagreements that fueled the controversy. Chapter 3 analyzes the preaching of the events using a variety of complementary theories from within the field of social movement rhetorical criticism. Chapter 4 applies Richard Weaver's theory of ultimate terms to the discourse of the two preaching meetings, revealing what were the most rhetorically potent words and/or

phrases among competing conservative and moderate rhetorics. Chapter 5 administers Ernest Bormann's theory of fantasy theme analysis to the most relevant sermons in order to determine the dramatic motifs to which conservative and moderate rhetor-leaders most often appealed when they invited their hearers to support their vision for Southern Baptists. Chapter 6 provides a synopsis of the main discoveries of this work by describing the issues, the people, the setting, the values, and the visions contained in the pulpit rhetoric of the Conservative Resurgence. The differences between conservative and moderate Southern Baptists as revealed by the rhetorical analysis contained in this work were so profound that a conflict of the nature and significance of the Resurgence was essentially inevitable.

VITA

Brian Steven Dubberly, Jr.

EDUCATION

A.A., South Georgia College, 2003
B.S., Liberty University, 2005
M.A.R., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007
M.Div., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011
Th.M., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012

ORGANIZATIONS

Evangelical Homiletics Society, 2011
Evangelical Theological Society, 2011

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Garrett Fellow, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012-2015

MINISTERIAL

Ministry Intern, Eastside Baptist Church, Douglas, Georgia, 2004
Children's Pastor, Forest Baptist Church, Forest, Virginia, 2004-2005
Youth Pastor, Eastside Baptist Church, Douglas, Georgia, 2005-2009
Pastor, Eastwood Baptist Church, Bay Minette, Alabama, 2009-2011
Pastor, Milton Baptist Church, Milton, Kentucky, 2012-2015
Pastor, Southside Baptist Church, Hazlehurst, Georgia, 2015-