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The Southern Baptist Convention reformation, 1979–1990: A social drama

Stone, William Stanley, Jr., Ph.D.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1993

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THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION REFORMATION,
1979-1990:
A SOCIAL DRAMA

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
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Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech Communication

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ABSTRACT

From Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky's cultural theory perspective, the authoritarian and the individualistic ways of life have coexisted in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) for more than a century. In 1979, Southern Baptist fundamentalists began a concerted movement to reform the SBC according to authoritarian beliefs and social practices. From Victor Turner's dramaturgical perspective, the 1979–1990 Southern Baptist controversy was a social drama that transferred power and reshaped Southern Baptists' perception of the past, present, and future. Rhetorical strategies facilitated each stage of the fundamentalists' reformation movement and the moderate counter movement.

The present study symbolically explicates the rhetoric expressed in two rival events that preceded the yearly SBC meetings, the Pastors' Conferences (1979–1990) and the SBC Forums (1984–1990). The study focuses on the different meanings that participants constructed as speakers enacted conflicting definitions of the SBC. The study analyzes the polarized perceptions of the social drama and interprets the colliding epistemologies. The study offers a rhetorical and dramaturgical explanation of how the SBC Social Drama drove an ideological wedge between authoritarian and individualistic ways of life.

A prominent conclusion is that the rhetoric in the Pastors' Conferences and the SBC Forums displayed particular forms consisting of a breach (1979), a crisis (1980–1985), a redress (1986–1987), a recycled crisis (1988), and a mixed-result ending (1989–1990). The mixed-result ending suggests that the social drama resolved for some Baptists (i.e., as fundamentalists consolidated control of the SBC, and as some moderates formed schismatic organizations), but failed to resolve for other Southern Baptists. The failed social drama contributed to a growing social rift between some Baptists.

Another conclusion is that speakers portrayed evolving roles as their constituents gained and lost status in the SBC. The role of fundamentalist rhetors moved from crusading reformers
to management as their ideology gained ascendency, and the role of moderate rhetors moved from management to outsiders as their ideology lost support in the SBC.
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

This is a rhetorical study that adapts Victor Turner’s anthropological and
dramaturgical methodology to examine the fundamentalist reformation movement and the
moderate counter movement in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) from 1979 to 1990.1 The purpose of the study is (1) to propose a rhetorical method to investigate social “ways of life” as they clash in different stages of a religious movement, (2) to identify meanings that participants rhetorically construct as they enact a social drama, (3) to document movement processes in the Southern Baptist Social Drama from its initiation in 1979 to its mixed-result conclusions in 1990, and (4) to interpret the SBC conflict by looking at the experiences from the point of view of those who went through it and how they expressed it symbolically in the Pastors’ Conferences and the SBC Forums. The present study examines how the SBC Social Drama shaped experiences and sermonic rhetoric, and it interprets the evolution of movement messages from stage to stage. Throughout the present study, the examination of the SBC controversy operates from a social movement perspective to analyze the clash of different sets of values and beliefs.

From 1979 to 1990 Southern Baptists underwent their most significant conflict in nearly 150 years. The conflict politicized and polarized the denomination with bitter rhetoric. The contention of the present study is that the events that occurred in the SBC from 1979 to 1990 can be heuristically understood as a social drama. Chapter two provides a historical background for understanding the twelve-year controversy. Chapters three through six present evidence that many rhetors saw themselves as actors who played evolving roles in a compelling drama and the forms of the drama affected the actors’ speech and behavior. Chapter three argues that in 1979 fundamentalist leaders initiated four symbolic acts that challenged the SBC leadership. The chapter argues that movement initiators commonly employ unconventional

rhetoric to act out the frustration of their constituents. Chapter four examines the conflict of the social drama in which reformers and counter reformers competed for the approval of non-committed messengers (Southern Baptist term for delegates) to each year’s convention. This chapter argues that fundamentalist rhetors convincingly acted out heroic roles of crusaders who battled apostasy and defended biblical truths. Moderate leaders emerged as defenders of the Baptist ideal of freedom of belief. Moderates created a stage (the SBC Forum) to act out their perception of a “real” Baptist, after failed attempts to schedule moderate speakers for the Pastors’ Conferences. Chapter four shows how this phase of the social drama (1980-1985 and 1988) encouraged negative campaigning and polarizing rhetoric. Chapter five displays a shift in roles as rhetors in 1986 and 1987 attempted to play the part of a peacemaker and a cautious judge. Chapter five demonstrates how this phase constrained rhetors and dampened conflict and vilification rhetoric in 1986 and 1987. The redressive measures failed and conflict rhetoric intensified in 1988. Chapter six contends that fundamentalist rhetors in 1989 and 1990 portrayed the new leadership roles that would guide the reconstituted SBC. Moderate rhetors portrayed confusing roles; some actors pleaded for the end of the drama and some refused to end. The dramaturgical perspective permits students of the controversy to interpret the roles, symbols, acts, scripts, and experiences of the leading actors in SBC Social Drama.

The present study also incorporates a cultural theory perspective from Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky to describe the conflicting values and beliefs. It posits that social movements occur when environmental conditions undergo change, and the rhetoric undergirding a way of life gains ascendency or loses credibility with participants in a nation, culture, subculture, tribe, institution, and/or organization. Social movements occur when adherents of rival ways of life campaign for their values and beliefs and they threaten the dominant way of life. These conflicting rhetorical campaigns offer competing definitions of who is a “true” member of the larger group experiencing the conflict.

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3 Thompson, 4-5.
Chapter two weaves Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's cultural theory into Turner's understanding of a social drama.

Movements begin when rhetors and audiences challenge the status quo's political and institutional structures. According to Turner, movements are social dramas in which conflicting rhetorical campaigns and institutional challenges occur in a predictable pattern of ritual events (breach, conflict, redressive acts, resolution or recognition of permanent schism). If ritual processes in any stage fail, the social drama (movement) may revert to an earlier stage. A social drama is the accumulation, over time, of ritual events that enact new values and beliefs. Turner's dramaturgical model interprets a social movement as a social drama composed of acts, scenes, scripts, audiences, and actors. The SBC Social Drama processed through a pattern of breach, conflict, redress, recycled conflict, and a mixed-result conclusion.

Essentially the SBC Social Drama portrayed conflicting ways of life in a rhetorical war, a war of words about words. The twelve-year controversy enacted an ideological shift away from the world views of the old insiders who directed the denomination for many years. The current project examines the rhetoric and symbolism expressed from two highly visible platforms, those of fundamentalists (the Pastors' Conferences 1979–1990) and moderates (the SBC Forums 1984–1990). The SBC Social Drama redefined Southern Baptists, revised their history, remythologized their future, and reformed their values, beliefs, and social relationships.

Definitions

It is important to have a working definition of Southern Baptists. Southern Baptists have clung together since withdrawing in 1845 from the General Baptist Convention over the issue of slavery to become a consequential part of the American religious landscape. The sheer size of the SBC (fifteen million members, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States) argues for researchers' considerations. Their six seminaries, including the largest seminary in the world in the 1980s, supported more than 10,000 students. Their sixty-seven colleges enrolled more than 200,000. Assets greater than $20 billion testify to the potential
size of disturbances in what Martin Marty of the University of Chicago described as the Catholic Church of the South.5

Southern Baptists are woven into the warp and woof of the southern culture. Although there are Southern Baptists in all fifty states, seventy-five percent of their membership and eighty percent of the contributions to the SBC Cooperative Program came from the eleven states of the Old Confederacy.6 Just as the homogenous white South clung together to dominate politics in the “solid South” in the first half of this century, so the overwhelmingly white denomination clung together to spread a triumphant version of the gospel.7 Ellen Rosenberg postulates that Southern Baptists formed the largest institution of poor whites and became the vehicle of white solidarity in their phenomenal growth, and that changes in the South and other influences from without the denomination challenged their identity.8 Historians have explored the relationship between southern religions and southern culture.9

Southern Baptists in the 1980s were less likely to have college degrees and less likely to work in white collar professions than members of other denominations.10


5 As stated in Barnhart, 1.


8 Rosenberg, 3.


occupied the bottom rank of the status hierarchy of mainline denominations and less than six percent of Southern Baptists possessed a college degree.\(^{11}\) Of the 38,000 churches, in 1992 many are small (less than 300 members), rural, and have pastors possessing little formal education. Yet, there have always been large and politically important churches in the denomination that nurtured a vision of social responsibility. John Lee Eighmy and David Brian Whitlock show how Southern Baptists historically supported opposing interpretations of the mission of the church; one vision sought to preserve the culture, and the other sought to transform the culture.\(^{12}\) These churches dot the rural landscape of the South. Southern Baptist churches often are positioned on town squares near courthouses and near centers of political leadership, and they dominate major intersections of many southern metropolises. White-collar professionals possessing higher levels of education often comprise the memberships. Still most Southern Baptists exist in a low socio-economic class. Chapter two surveys southern history to illustrate how different ways of life contributed to southern culture and Southern Baptists, and how those ways of life competed in the SBC Reformation.

Throughout the current project the term "social movement" interchanges with the term "social drama." This is a rhetorical study using Turner's dramaturgical methodology; thus rhetorical terminology intermixes with dramaturgical terminology. Turner defines social drama as phased processes of social action, which retrospectively show structure. It is "units of aharmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations."\(^{13}\) Social dramas consist of successive phases of public action. These are: breach, crisis, redressive or remedial procedures, and either reintegration or recognition of an irreparable schism between the

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\(^{12}\) see Eighmy, x; and also David Brian Whitlock, *Southern Baptists and Southern Culture: Three Visions of a Christian America, 1890-1945*. (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, University Microfilms No. 8818531, 1988), 4-5.

\(^{13}\) Turner, *Anthropology of Performance* 74.
contending parties. Social dramas are fluid and composed of ritual events in process. The term “movement” also expresses fluid motion and process, and creates different connotations among rhetorical theorists. The differences stem from a historical orientation and a sociological orientation in understanding the term. Michael Calvin McGee denies that movements are a phenomenon and suggests that “the whole notion of ‘movement’ is mythical, a trick-of-the-mind that must be understood as an illusion and not as a fact.” He argues for a theory of meanings concerning “movements.” He sees “movements” as an interpretation controlled primarily by what people see in the real world. Stephen Lucas provides a summary definition of other rhetoricians.

The phrase “movement studies” has customarily been used to designate investigations of the persuasive efforts of a fairly large number of people working together to alter or supplant some portion of the existing culture or social order, usually by noninstitutionalized means.

This research project considers movements to be both phenomena and meaning. Objective conditions impact subjective reality. Social forces, events, and institutions exist with the meanings that surround and interpret these events. The current project interprets the meanings created and reflected in the rhetoric and symbols of the SBC Social Drama.

The present study often interchanges the phrase “ways of Life” and “world views.” A way of life is a combination of cultural biases and social relations. When the current project uses the terms “ways of Life” or “world views,” it employs Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky’s conception of ways of life. A way of life is a distinctive way of looking at the world that is generated by the practice of certain patterns of social relationships. In a cyclical way, patterns of relationships support shared values and beliefs and at the same time, values and beliefs support patterns of social relationships. Though humans come from widely varying


16 Thompson, 1.
backgrounds, Thompson and his associates assert that people perceive the world in a mixture of ways, but in general those ways reduce to five ways of life. The methodological section of this chapter and the second chapter explain this phrase in more detail.

The reformation movement (as fundamentalists refer to events since 1979) divided the denomination into roughly three camps: fundamentalists, moderates, and conservatives. In the present study, the lower-case term, "fundamentalists," refers to the right-wing, non-compromising faction within the denomination. The capitalized term, "Fundamentalists," refers to those who find their identity in separatist institutions, independent of the denomination. Jerry Falwell is a high-profile Fundamentalist, who does not officially participate in the denomination. George E. Marsden states, "a fundamentalist is an evangelical Protestant who is militantly opposed to modern liberal theologies and to some aspects of secularism in modern culture." Militancy is an important factor in this definition, since Fundamentalists not only believe fundamental evangelical tenets, but will fight for those beliefs. Southern Baptist fundamentalists share this uncompromising attitude with their nondenominational brothers. The lower-case term, "moderates," refers to Southern Baptists who convened against the fundamentalists' reformation movement and supported a counter movement. This group is theologically diverse, but unified in opposition to fundamentalist control. The term "conservative" refers to those who may believe fundamental tenets, but do not share the non-compromising attitudes. It is wrong to see this necessarily as a continuum, because conservatives may answer a theological test in many ways (e.g., Richard Jackson was theologically fundamental, yet ran as a moderate candidate for president of the SBC). Conservatives frequently voted with fundamentalists at each SBC meeting since 1979, but at times voted against fundamentalist leadership and expressed dismay with uncompromising tactics of the new leadership. Fundamentalists and moderates directed persuasive messages toward conservatives to enlist their support throughout the social drama.


18 Ammerman, 112–117.

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Fundamentalism began as a reaction against Darwinian evolution, the Social Gospel movement, historical critical methods of interpreting the Bible, and Modernism. It began as a Protestant evangelical movement in the late nineteenth-century. The term “fundamentalism” came into existence in 1920 at the height of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. Marsden sees the multifaceted 1920s movement as one rooted in millennialism, revivalism, moralism, and individualism.

The interdenominational Fundamentalist movement brought schism to the English Baptists, Canadian Baptists, American (northern) Baptists, and the Presbyterian (northern) Church in the U. S. A. But within Southern Baptist circles, J. Frank Norris (a charismatic orator, outspoken fundamentalist, and the center of many scandals) became an embarrassment to the denomination, yet most of the denomination shared his sentiments concerning the fundamental principles of the faith. The SBC adopted a “confession of faith” in 1925 and drafted a resolution opposing Darwinism in 1926. Arthur Farnsley concludes, “Therefore, while fundamentalist inerrancy ‘succeeded’ in the Convention insofar as it was a dominant theological view, fundamentalism as a militant, antimodern movement failed because, frankly, there were too few opponents to maintain widespread interests.” So, Fundamentalism outside the denomination was a separate entity that promoted a distinct identity. Fundamentalists within the Southern Baptist denomination shared many doctrinal beliefs with Fundamentalists outside the denomination, but generally Southern Baptist fundamentalists found their identity in the denomination.

A fundamentalist surrounds the conception of biblical inerrancy with a fortress mentality. Fundamentalists do not concede errors in the Bible nor question biblical


20 Arthur E. Farnsley, Ill., Majority Rules: The Politicization of the Southern Baptist Convention (Baptist Church) (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, University Microfilms No. 9027907, 1990), 36.

21 The term, “inerrancy,” was ambiguous. David S. Dockery, “Variations on Inerrancy,” SBC Today, May 1986: 10-11 distinguished seven variations in the usage of the term. However, fundamentalist preachers generally did not define “inerrancy” and expected their audiences to understand the term as the lack of errors in the Bible. See the overview section of chapter five for a more complete discussion of this problem.
teachings that strain moral sensibilities, because to do so pushes them down a “slippery slope” that questions all reality. For Fundamentalists, it is better to appear irrational on the question of evolution than to compromise the certainty found in their view of the Bible and Christianity. For example, when Southern Baptist fundamentalist tactics endangered Southeastern Seminary's accreditation, some fundamentalist leaders responded with a threat to pull all the seminaries out of accrediting agencies and to formulate plans for a Southern Baptist accrediting agency. With a justificational system of protective propositions, fundamentalists can justify their actions and avoid critical challenges to their morality, ethics, politics, and educational philosophies.

The term “moderates” came into use as Baptists voiced opposition to the fundamentalist reformation of the SBC. Both sides of the SBC labeled as reactionaries the first people to oppose fundamentalists in debates, editorials, and oratory. Many Southern Baptist leaders thought that the fundamentalist challenge would self-destruct in a short time. Many leaders apparently thought they knew Baptist history well enough to see this as another disturbance by a disgruntled faction that would ebb and flow, but not alter the denomination’s definition. Yet, some leaders and educators perceived the potency of the fundamentalist challenge and began calling for an organized response. Those who opposed fundamentalists gradually became labeled in the press as moderates. Moderates found it difficult to organize and unite around one cause. The agency and institutional heads did not join the fray until 1984. By 1984, moderates created the Forum to voice their concern for the SBC. Moderates began newspapers and newsletters to express their concerns and to vigorously oppose a fundamentalist takeover of the SBC.


Limitations of the Study

The current project concentrates on the rhetorical progression of a particular historical movement, by looking at the symbolic interactions among activists, counter-rhetors, and publics in the Pastors' Conferences and the Forums held in conjunction with the annual Southern Baptist Conventions from 1979 to 1990. Whereas many rhetorical projects focus intensely upon several rhetorical artifacts, this study encompasses more than 150 messages, and cannot focus intensely on particular sermons. This longitudinal focus interprets the progression of movement and counter movement rhetoric as one large social drama and proposes a rhetorical way of incorporating a dramaturgical interpretation of the controversy, that uses social movement theorems.

A consensus exists among scholars concerning when the active SBC controversy began. The 1979 SBC meeting in the Houston Astrodome was the time and place that fundamentalists actively campaigned and voted in a block. Thus 1979 is a logical time to begin analysis of the drama. The year 1990 is the ending period for this longitudinal examination. This was the year that many moderates in the denomination conceded that the struggle was over. Moderates declared an end to the Forum assemblies (1991 was the official last meeting, but there was an abbreviated program), and declared an end to the fighting. Moderates established what is now the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an autonomous body that supports its own mission plans, educational literature, a seminary, a lobbying group, and a national annual meeting that is completely separate from the annual SBC. In placing the year 1990 as the ending point, I am not claiming this to be the end of moderate participation in the denomination. The ties to the SBC are so strong that it will be years before many moderates support anything except the SBC. Also, the future of the SBC is far from certain. Still, 1990 was an important symbolic year in the social drama. Fundamentalists faced no opposition in the 1991 SBC. Attendance was down and reports of the SBC atmosphere described it as the calmest in twelve years.

The Pastors' Conference is an ideal place to examine fundamentalist actors during the processes of the social drama. The Pastors' Conference annually meets on the Sunday evening and Monday before the SBC's business sessions. Attracting thousands, it is a large event that
traditionally features Southern Baptists' most acclaimed orators. The Conference does not serve an official function in the SBC, yet it serves as the ideological centerpiece of the SBC. The Pastors' Conferences are generally worship extravaganzas, with choirs, orchestras, and big productions. The Conference typically features approximately thirteen messages. Prior to the Conference, speakers generally submit transcripts to be published in a packet and released to the public for purchase immediately after the Conference. Cassette tapes and videotapes are available through the SBC Historical Commission.

The SBC Forums were an ideal event to gather longitudinal rhetorical artifacts reflecting the moderate perspective. In 1983, moderates who were agitated with the right wing shift of the Pastors' Conference organized a drop-in reception during the Monday afternoon of the Pastors' Conference. The next year, they expanded into an afternoon program and an evening reception. In 1985, the Forum attracted between 5,000 and 7,000 moderates who heard five speakers. The Forums became the opposition assembly for moderates in the mid and late 1980s. Despite attempts by some moderate leaders to discourage the perception of the Forums as competition for the Pastors' Conferences, the Forums symbolized the anti-authoritarian challenge by many moderates. Like the Pastors' Conferences, the Forums featured worship and renowned speakers. Also like the Pastors' Conferences, many speakers provided transcripts to be collated into packets and released for purchase during the Convention. Audio and video tapes exist for much of the speaking at the Forum assemblies.

The relevant rhetorical artifacts that could be studied concerning the SBC Social Drama are legion. The SBC addresses, the newspaper coverage, letter-writing campaigns, fundamentalist, and moderate journals, television and radio campaigns, evangelism conferences, debates in the seminaries, and the Peace Committee's reports could all be included in a research project. But such a scope is far beyond the reach of the current project. The present study focuses on spoken addresses in the Pastors' Conferences from 1979 to 1990 and the spoken addresses in the Forum from 1984 to 1990.

24 The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 901 Commerce Street, Suite 400, Nashville, TN 37203-3630.
Significance

Current research literature has investigated the causes of the Southern Baptist controversy. The fundamentalist reformation movement served as a catalyst to researchers in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, and historical studies. Nancy Ammerman and Ellen Rosenberg explain the social sources of the controversy. Arthur Farnsley explores the controversy as a dynamic tension between democratic control, bureaucratic organization, pastoral authority, and scriptural legalism. Edward Queen illuminates the sources of the controversy by focusing on how Southern Baptists and southerners dealt with alterations in the world between 1930 and 1980. Bill Leonard explores the interrelationships of southern culture, Southern Baptist denominationalism, theology, and politics. John Baker demonstrates that the two sides hold logically incompatible positions and that the struggle is fundamentally epistemological.

Whereas prior studies have identified the causes and effects of the controversy, the present study interprets the controversy. It explicates the symbolic meanings that participants in the SBC Social Drama constructed and expressed in the rhetoric of the Pastors' Conferences and SBC Forums as they participated in the ritual events of the social drama. Ammerman has looked at a broad range of rhetoric in the controversy, but it was not her primary focus. Whereas sociologists and anthropologists have generated explanations, the current project identifies how the form of the social drama constrained actors in each phase of the drama and documents dramaturgical movement processes. The present study's focus is on the analysis of symbols as a ritual vehicle that actuated rhetorical content and tactics, expressed power, altered identities, rewrote history, and changed institutional directions. A dramaturgical explanation can develop an understanding of the importance of the social


27 See Ammerman, chapter 6 for the best rhetorical explanation for the SBC controversy.
drama to many Baptists. It can also explain the immense amount of resources that the SBC devoted to the conflict.

The present study examines how the social drama focused and distorted perceptions. It looks at sermonic rhetoric to gather clues as to how rhetors perceived their world and to see how the drama altered those perceptions. An advantage of this approach is that it analyzes how fundamentalist and moderate rhetors constructed and reinforced different social realities. The current project considers how both sides promoted beliefs and values that in turn rationalized specific social practices, that in turn supported specific beliefs and values. The current approach examines how fundamentalists and moderates identified with their central actors and interacted with fellow participants to reflect remarkably different histories, beliefs and interpretations.

Another advantage of this approach is that it analyzes what Southern Baptists consider to be a particularly important genre of oral discourse. It would be difficult to underestimate the important place that the sermon holds in Southern Baptist life. Most Southern Baptist meetings and conferences prominently feature sermons. The sermon is commonly considered the most important and longest element of Southern Baptist worship services. Southern Baptist ministers speak often, usually addressing their congregations in Sunday morning and evening and sometimes Wednesday evening services. Ministers who rise to prominence in the SBC normally exercise highly polished and influential pulpit skills. Congregations often extend or refuse to extend a ministry position after the prospective minister delivers a “trial” sermon. In the great majority of Southern Baptist churches, the pulpit is the most dominant interior furnishing. The central placement of the pulpit symbolizes to many Southern Baptists the importance of the Bible and the spiritual gift of the pastor to speak “a word from the Lord.” A dramaturgical analysis can examine much more than sermonic rhetoric, but that would unreasonably expand the research scope. Considering the importance that Southern Baptists place in sermons, the current project limits the analysis to rhetoric because not only is it the dominant form of expression in Southern Baptist life, but it is a form in which many Baptists place significant spiritual importance. A researcher who
wants to understand and interpret Southern Baptists, should in some ways deal with their sermons.

**Methodology**

Leland Griffin was one of the first advocates of the rhetorical study of social movements. His seminal 1952 article challenged public address scholars to isolate rhetorical movements, to determine their status as pro or anti movements, to denote periods of inception, to determine rhetorical crises and consummations, and to develop evaluative criteria. Many movement studies followed in communication journals, and in the 1970s different approaches developed as researchers examined movements and social upheaval of the previous decade. Movement theorists necessarily became familiar with forms from sociology, psychology, history, functionalism and literary criticism; and schools of social movement criticism championing each perspective grew in the 1970s. Bernard L. Brock summarized the distinctive approaches by categorizing the critics' understanding of rhetoric. The historical and functional understanding of rhetoric, according to Brock, generally envisions rhetoric as instrumental, whereas, the sociological and dramaturgical understanding of rhetoric generally views rhetoric as epistemic.

One community of theorists characterized social movements as large social dramas. This community drew heavily upon Ernest Bormann and Kenneth Burke. Some theorists parleyed

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the drama analogy into taxonomies. This tendency led Bruce Gronbeck to distinguish between two major sub-traditions, (1) dramatism and (2) dramaturgy. Dramatism is primarily a critical tool for analyzing verbal discourse and mental constructs. Edwin Black criticizes dramatistic theorists who borrowed from Bormann and Burke. Black states, “Both theories excited great interest by taking drama seriously as a modality of criticism. Both theories converted generative insights into taxonomical schemata and so did not take drama seriously enough.” Dramaturgy explicitly develops a theory of human communication and social system. The current project develops a dramaturgical perspective, but it is important to note advantages of the dramatistic perspective.

Fantasy Theme Analysis, a dramatistic approach, launched a number of articles in 1970s. Ernest G. Bormann combined perspectives from dramatism with Freudian psychology and Balesian social psychology to create a description of processes by which fantasy themes develop in groups and penetrate society. Fantasy Theme Analysis identifies and explains fantasies that assemblages develop when they recount mutually experienced events. It is primarily interested in “typing” themes of verbal discourse. Bormann argues that fantasies develop, evolve, and decay in a way that reflects the birth, growth, and death of their sponsoring groups. This method develops a set of questions for the researcher to identify the


34 Gronbeck, 324.


36 Gronbeck, 323.

content and the emotions carried in a fantasy chain in order to account for the attraction and repulsion of specific groups in society. It analyzes the patterns of characterizations of heroes and villains and sacred or profane settings. It notes the concreteness of the details, the motives, origins and destiny of the group, especially those espoused by its authority figures. It illuminates elements of the vision that not only bring a leader into prominence, but also limit his or her impact. Bormann maintains that his method allows researchers to critically analyze the emotions and motives of a group. He states,

Motives do not exist to be expressed in communication but rather arise in the expression itself and come to be embedded in the drama of the fantasy themes that generated and serve to sustain them. Motives are thus available for direct interpretation by a community of scholars engaged in rhetorical criticism.38

Bormann also argues that actors participating in a group adopt a vision that constrains and impels specific perceptions of the world and prescribes acceptable behaviors. Bormann’s chief contribution consists of a set of questions that locate emotions and motives that fuel a movement and predict its impact on the larger culture.

Some theorists used Kenneth Burke’s literary typology to develop theories of human communication and social systems (dramaturgy).39 In 1969, Leland Griffin built a theory of human communication in social movements based solely on Burke.40 Though Griffin used the term “dramatism,” according to Gronbeck’s distinction, Griffin developed “dramaturgical” theories.41 Burke developed a unique terminology for his method of analysis of rhetorical artifacts. His literary typology gave theorists a critical tool to interpret motives and relationships through inquiry that examined clusters or cycles of rhetor’s terminology. Burke described a process of symbolic transformation from guilt through purification to redemption,


39 Gronbeck, 324.


41 Gronbeck, 324.
and Griffin applied this perspective and terminology to movement rhetoric. A movement is a drama that moves toward transcendence, which is the achievement of salvation. Movements are dramas with acts, scenes, agents, agency, and purpose. Movements start by enacting a negative to the status quo. Initial movement rhetoric demonstrates injustice, creates a rhetoric of dissent, and provokes conflict in order to enact a guilt-purification-redemption cycle. Each side promotes conversion and catharsis toward a “good,” and purifies its followers who enact a “no” to the other side and a “yes” to their side. A period of consummation enacts a new order of harmony in which transcendence and salvation is grasped, and movement rhetoric consolidates its gains and promotes peace and dominion. A new stasis is achieved in which the leaders must resist other movements in order to remain in power. Griffin’s article proved heuristic to further articles and other movement researchers who sought to interpret motives and meanings created in movements.\textsuperscript{42}

Robert Cathcart argues that Burke’s procedures were better suited than historical and sociological approaches to understanding movements.\textsuperscript{43} He proposes that two Burkeian ratios—agency-scene and agency-act—are critical to understanding the origin of a movement.\textsuperscript{44} Movements are utopian yearnings that critique establishment and suggest a corrected system. When the established order reciprocates, Cathcart argues that “dialectical enjoinment” of two sides meets the rhetorical definition of movement and distinguishes movement rhetoric from other dramatistic forms. Thus he asserts that movements are rhetorical acts established by a particular rhetorical form.\textsuperscript{45} Cathcart states, “I will argue


\textsuperscript{44} See Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1945), Parts I and II.

that movements are a kind of ritual conflict whose most distinguishing form is confrontation."^[46] He distinguishes confrontational rhetoric, which questions an underlying epistemology and group ethic from managerial rhetorics which are almost all Aristotelian rhetorics that support the existing system.^[47]


Movements, rhetorically defined, are: Language strategies by which a significantly vocal part of an established society, experiencing together a sustained dialectical tension growing out of moral (ethical) conflict, agitate to induce cooperation in others, either directly or indirectly, thereby affecting the status quo.^[49]

Victor Turner's Dramaturgical Model

Alan Gross supplements Griffin's adaptation of Burke with Turner's dramaturgical perspective.^[50] Victor Turner contributed a methodology that theorists found well suited to movement studies.^[51] Turner's approach shows how societies work to contain conflict and prevent revolution, so that movements do not revolutionize society as Burke's approach would have it; but they reaffirm societal values or reorder existing values. Gross states,

For Turner, social drama is a movement, not from revolution to consummation, but from threat to resolution. In his model, whatever the outcome of a particular conflict, social cohesion has not as a rule been irreparably damaged: whoever has "won," society has not been the "loser." Turner also allows for a "failed" social drama.^[52]

46 Cathcart, "Confrontation as Rhetorical Form," 235.

47 Cathcart, "Confrontation as Rhetorical Form," 238.


49 Wilkinson, "Rhetorical Definition," 91.


52 Gross, 397.
Turner’s four phases (1) breach, (2) conflict, (3) redressive rhetoric, and (4) permanent schism or recognition of irreconcilable differences allow researchers to predict the distinctive characteristics of each phase. Gross argues that in the case of radical revolt, Burke’s model of inception, crisis, and consummation works well, but for less severe social dramas, Turner’s model better explains the societal forces that synthesize and incorporate warring groups and their ideologies. Turner also provides theoretical underpinnings for understanding failed social dramas in which a society becomes less cohesive and less viable. Permanent schisms and unpleasant stand-offs can emerge in a social drama and Turner provides an interpretative frame for understanding the fragmentation of a society by failed social dramas. Thus, the current project seeks to build on Gross’s discussion and to demonstrate ways in which Turner’s model provides needed refinements to prior dramaturgical models, especially in instances where public debate is a central feature in the conflict.

Turner was a pioneer in symbolic anthropology who exercised considerable influence across disciplines as a prolific author and editor of the Symbol, Myth, and Ritual series for Cornell University Press.\(^5\) Dwight Conquergood introduced performance theorists to Turner’s model that depicts discrete acts or phased processes of social action, which retrospectively show structure.\(^5\) Conquergood argues that Burke’s dramaturgical model is linguistically-centered and that Turner’s model is action-centered, thus the interpreter is given latitude to understand the rhetorical significance of actions in movements.\(^5\) Clifford Gertz claimed


that Turner and Kenneth Burke were the two preeminent theorists working with the dramaturgical movement.\textsuperscript{56}

Turner's dramaturgical model depicts discrete acts or phases of a controversy.\textsuperscript{57} The model defines a social drama as phased processes of social action, which retrospectively show structure. Within the framework of a dramatic model, rhetoric and ritual events build an assembly-like edifice. It sets out unfolding processes composed of acts, scenes, actors, scripts, and audiences. Genres of performance constitute and express the processual energies of culture.

"Life is no uniform uninterrupted march or flow. It is a thing of histories with its own plots, its own inceptions and movement toward its close."\textsuperscript{58} Social dramas incorporate cultural performances including histories, speeches, rituals, stage dramas, ceremonies, gossip, and stories. Each cultural performance exerts an influence on the entire cluster, subtly affecting the path of the total social drama.

Social dramas are processually structured so that progressive events may be grouped in "successive phases of public action."\textsuperscript{59} The four stages are (1) breach, (2) crisis, (3) redressive action, and (4) reintegration or recognition of permanent schism. Each stage has its own unique characteristics and rhetoric, as developed later in the current project. The stages do not progress uniformly in a linear fashion, but often in a circular fashion, sometimes returning to an earlier stage. For example, if redressive actions (i.e., a ritual peace plan) do not serve its function, the drama reverts to the crisis phase. The social drama may not complete the series of phases when it involves a momentous social change. In this scenario, the drama may revert to the conflict phase and escalate into a much larger conflict.\textsuperscript{60} When a drama occurs on such a large scale as the SBC, everyone does not progress together through the stages, therefore, it

\textsuperscript{56} Clifford Geertz, \textit{Interpretation of Culture} (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 172.

\textsuperscript{57} Turner, \textit{Anthropology of Performance} 34–35.

\textsuperscript{58} Quoted by Clifford Geertz, in the epilogue of Turner and Bruner, eds., \textit{The Anthropology of Experience} 380.

\textsuperscript{59} Turner, \textit{Anthropology of Performance} 34.

\textsuperscript{60} Turner, \textit{Anthropology of Performance} 35.
is important to document general trends of the whole denomination. Like Burke's redemption ritual of guilt-purification-rebirth, Turner sees conflict as a cyclical series of rituals that reflexively help us know ourselves.61

The performed self is socially formed, historically situated, culturally mediated, and dialogically constituted within a society. Humans, in this model, exist as self-performing creatures that socially construct reality. As the actors and audiences interact in the performances, they develop scripts of beliefs and interpretations.

Since social dramas suspend normal everyday roleplaying, they interrupt the flow of everyday social life and force a group to take cognizance of its own behavior in relation to its own values, even to question at times the value of those values. In other words, dramas induce and contain reflexive processes and generate cultural frames in which reflexivity can find a legitimate place.62

Meaning emerges from the interaction of central actors and audiences as they formulate positions or life-stances.63 Central actors progress through the phases as they construct a narrative by which they assign meanings to words and deeds. The stories, therefore, constitute meaning and history in the dramatic and narrative process.64

As humans construct meaning in social dramas, Turner's model concurs with Mary Douglas' argument that sociology of religion should use an active voice approach.65 Douglas contends that religious sociology must consider human intentions and individual beliefs, and she discredits passive voice theories that imply a passive human object influenced by impersonal forces. Society is not a thing or a system of beliefs and values, but rather a fluid


63 Turner, Anthropology of Performance 33.

64 Bruner, Anthropology of Experience 11.

flow of enabling and constraining energies that come into being through performance.

Conquergood maintains,

Social dramas enable human societies to inhabit the space between stability and dynamism, both necessary dimensions for the perseverance and liveliness of all cultures. Cultural performances make social life meaningful, they enable actors to interpret for themselves to themselves as well as to others, to become at once actor and audience.66

Turner posits that drama is rooted in social reality, not metaphorically imposed upon it.67 His theory of social dramas provides a way to interpret the processes of living societies.68 Dramaturgy offers an incomplete theory of society and social interaction, the current project accepts its limitations and tries to work within those parameters. Also it is not certain whether the current project is offering an analogy or hard description of “reality.” Turner may be overstating the case when he insists that drama is not metaphorically imposed on social reality. Gronbeck affirms that dramaturgy offers applicative utility in several ways. He states the advantages:

(a) The ideal of pre-existent scripts and accompanying standards-of-performance can help generic critics comprehend antecedent forms and explain public reactions to 4th of July oratory, inaugural addresses, sermons, etc.
(b) If audiences are conceptualized as participant-spectators rather than as targets, they then are viewed as co-rhetors, as meaning-builders in rhetorical transactions. “Audience-centeredness” takes on richer associations in dramaturgical than in many other rhetorical theories.
(c) Theatrical metaphors should aid in probing more systematically those rhetorical occasions characterized by multiple audiences.
(d) Perhaps the most important concept—at least for traditionally trained rhetorical critics—coming out of dramaturgy is “enactment.” Because the notion of enactment bids researchers to investigate “latent meanings” produced, not so much in what is said, as in the act of saying, it drives them into deep-structure or non-discursive rhetorical processes. . . . The enactment of core myths or ideological tenets binds people together in secular and sacred liturgies.69


67 Turner, Anthropology of Performance 37.

68 William G. Doty, Mythography (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1986) 83.

69 Gronbeck, 328–329.
A rhetorical analysis using a dramaturgical model, especially one that considers the collision of different ways of life from a social movement perspective, can explain the enormous energy that participants expend in religious conflicts. Many members of religious groups feel so strongly about the beliefs, values, norms, and symbols of the group’s culture that the social drama completely subsumes their identity. These ideas offer some reasons why so much energy pours into the Southern Baptist struggle. Turner reports from his field work with Afro-Brazilian cults that its constituents’ whole way of life in the cults “represents ways of portraying, talking about (that is using a metalanguage), and coming to an understanding of life in a rapidly changing, urbanizing, industrializing, ethnically, culturally, and religiously ‘plural’ society.” In the same way, the Southern Baptist controversy can provide a metalanguage for talking about changes in the environment. Social dramas can cause a subculture to reflect upon its identity, and so Turner’s model may explicate the powerful dynamic forces and the constraints that grip the SBC at each phase and may predict the rhetorical and ritual forms that work best. The first phase to consider is the breach.

**Breach**

A breach occurs when an individual or group breaks a rule of social relations. Normal social processes become, over time, symbolic of the correct way of conducting social actions. These norms express something about social relationships, such as the understanding that a speaker at the annual Pastors’ Conference should not use his position to attack members of the denomination. A breach (e.g., a conference speaker wields agitative and confrontational rhetoric to attack the leadership of the denomination) in that norm automatically challenges the social relationships (between members of the audience holding differing views about the leadership).

Goldzwig states that so-called demagogues fulfill a role that may not appear rational, because traditional methods of persuasion do not symbolically signal a break from the status

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70 Turner, *Anthropology of Performance* 46–70.

71 Turner, *Anthropology of Performance* 70.
 quo. To bring about symbolic realignment, a rhetor may employ unconventional terminology to establish conflict.72 According to Goldzwig,

A “rhetoric of symbolic realignment” uses extra-conventional or non-traditional languaging strategies that create and sustain ideological and/or moral conflict in the effort to induce symbolically cooperation in others, either directly or indirectly, for the expressed purposes of subverting salient aspects of the status quo; affirming other aspects of society; and ‘realigning’ political, social, or cultural meanings or realities.73

A rhetoric of symbolic alignment may be composed of an agitative style that enacts the perceived inequities and frustration of the oppressed.74 A rhetor and his or her audience may break consensus practices with polarization, vilification, and conspiracy rhetoric, for the purpose of establishing a new order that subverts the established order’s value system.75 A rhetoric of symbolic realignment seeks to articulate a moral superiority that justifies a break away from the established social norms and away from social relationships that established those norms. In 1979, fundamentalists enacted a symbolic realignment when a speaker used so-called demagogic rhetoric in the Pastors’ Conference and when fundamentalists broke the political norms and social norms of proper protocol of the SBC by overtly and directly campaigning for an ideological candidate. These symbolic actions challenged the social relationships between the “insiders” and “outsiders.” Chapter three analyzes the rhetorical and ritual aspects of this move.

Crisis

In the crisis phase of a social drama, the participants align with one side or the other, and each side contends for those in the middle to join with them. Negative campaigning, acrimonious language, name-calling, and battlefield terminology often characterize this act.


73 Goldzwig, 208.

74 Goldzwig, 209.

75 Goldzwig, 210.
Turner concludes, "Crisis rhetoric is contagious."\textsuperscript{76} The middle-of-the-road approach is practically impossible to maintain in the midst of the crisis phase.

Cathcart provides some rhetorical underpinnings for understanding "act two" of the social drama. He states, "The symbolic interactions among activists, counter-rhetors, and publics provide the ground wherein social movements become unique change collectives."\textsuperscript{77} A definition of a social movement, according to Cathcart, requires "dialectical enjoinement" between the change-seeking collective and the establishment.\textsuperscript{78} Turner’s "act two" establishes the setting for a movement in Cathcart’s definition. Cathcart argues that when a change-seeking collective threatens the establishment to such an extent that the establishment accepts that its beliefs, values, and social relationships are threatened, it labels the change-seeking collective as immoral and illegitimate; at that point the rhetorical clash can be understood as a social movement in which both sides offer competing values and beliefs. A change-seeking collective successfully enacts its role when it creates doubt about the legitimacy of the establishment and subverts its leadership. The establishment successfully enacts its role when it generates renewed support for the status quo. Chapter four analyzes the clash of two sides in the SBC Social Drama.

**Redress**

In the third phase of a social drama, factions symbolically struggle toward mutual agreement and conflict resolution. According to Gross, Burke’s guilt-purification-redemption cycle shows a progress from inception through crisis to consummation but fails to explain how social forces work to convert radical changes into incremental shifts.\textsuperscript{79} Turner’s model better

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76} Turner, \textit{Anthropology of Performance} 34.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Robert S. Cathcart, “Defining Social Movements by Their Rhetorical Form,” \textit{Central States Speech Journal} 31 (1980): 272.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Gross, 406.
\end{itemize}
explains in dramatic terms the conserving factors at work in societies. This stage, according to Turner, often includes public rituals, in which the religious community reflects upon itself, its struggle, and the validity of accusations against itself. When factions recognize each other's motivations, premises, and claims, they are able to extricate themselves momentarily from the conflict and observe the conflict as an outsider. Sometimes a sacrifice, such as a highly acclaimed theological educator being libeled by an overzealous trustee, effects the third stage, thus leading the two sides to settle some of their differences.

In order for a change-seeking collective to sustain its momentum, according to Turner, it must appear to be reasonable and just. In order for the losing faction to continue to exist within the religious community, it must adjust its stance. Stage three's rhetoric, according to Turner, enacts ritual compromises for both factions and permits progress from the conflict stage to the final stage. Though volleys of conflict rhetoric continued to be hurled, on a broad scale, signs of this third stage began appearing in 1985.

Phase three is not necessarily an adjudicated democratic process with both sides having an equal opportunity to present their cases. In fact, when one side clearly has the upper hand, it is only necessary that the social drama appear to be moving through a process of impartial stock-taking. Phase three provides, therefore, a cathartic vehicle for the superior side. The vanguard can demonstrate that they are fair and impartial through a facade of rationality, symbolically enacting redressive ritual activities. Chapter five analyzes redressive attempts in the SBC Social Drama.

**Reintegration and/or Schism**

Turner states, "The fourth phase of the social drama consists either of the reintegration of the disturbed social group, or of the recognition and legitimation of irreparable schism between the contending parties."80 The social drama runs its course when members happily or begrudgingly recognize the new norms of the community. However, the estrangement could revert to the crisis phase with an act of physical or symbolic violence. Gross argues that

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80 Turner, *Anthropology of Performance* 35.
Turner provides theoretical understanding for failed dramas in which both sides live with a permanent stand-off.\textsuperscript{81}

A critic can expect to find language that facilitates integration and/or separation. For the winners of the Southern Baptist reformation movement, the old outsiders are the new insiders maintaining the status quo. Breach and conflict rhetoric are no longer appropriate, and the leaders in the first two acts adapt their rhetoric to the new conditions and audience expectations. For the losers of the counter movement, the old insiders who are the new outsiders must choose accommodation rhetoric to remain in the SBC or breach rhetoric to begin a new movement or new institutions.

Other Methodological Assumptions

In the current project, a secondary theory is relevant to interpreting the preferences and motivating forces at work between differing camps of the Southern Baptist controversy. The cultural theory of Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky posits that a "way of life" combines two concepts: (1) "cultural biases" are shared values and beliefs, and (2) "social relations" are patterns of interpersonal relations. They introduce their theory by saying that:

We present a theory of sociocultural viability that explains how ways of life maintain (and fail to maintain) themselves . . . The viability of a way of life, we argue, depends upon mutually supportive relationship between a particular cultural bias and a particular pattern of social relations. These biases and relations cannot be mixed and matched. We call this the compatibility condition. A change in the way an individual perceives physical or human nature, for instance, changes the range of behavior an individual can justify engaging in and hence the type of social relations an individual can justify living in. Shared value and beliefs are thus not free to come together in any which way; they are always closely tied to the social relations they help legitimate.

Our aim is to show that across a wide range of phenomena—whether ways of attributing blame, interpreting apathy, or perceiving risk—social relations generate preferences and perceptions that in turn sustain those relations.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{81} Gross, 405.

\textsuperscript{82} Thompson, 1–2.
This theory emphasizes the interdependence of values, beliefs, and social relationships. Social relationships generate preferences for certain values and beliefs, and in turn those values and beliefs generate preferences for certain types of social relationships.

The second part of their theory claims that the need for consistency between social relations and cultural biases limits the number of ways of life to five and only five—hierarchy, egalitarianism, fatalism, individualism, and autonomy. They label this second part of their theory as the "impossibility theorem."\textsuperscript{83} Thompson and his associates conclude, "Although nations and neighborhoods, tribes, and races, have their distinctive sets of values, beliefs, and habits, their basic convictions about life are reducible to only a few cultural biases."\textsuperscript{84} Thompson, et. al. break societies into these five ways of life that rival each other in every society. Each competing way of life needs the others to distinguish itself from them, to manipulate the other ways of life, and to compensate for its deficiencies. They posit that "change occurs when successive events intervene in such a manner as to prevent a way of life from delivering on the expectations it has generated, thereby prompting individuals to seek more promising alternatives."\textsuperscript{85} Thus when the environment changes, each vying way of life competes to offer itself as the most persuasive in light of the changes in the environment.

Thompson and his associates use a grid-group typology to study the interaction of world views in different cultures and subcultures.\textsuperscript{86} The higher the grid dimension, the more a world view includes social prescription for life. The higher the group dimension, the more a world view includes social incorporation. Humans derive from divergent backgrounds, yet people perceive the world in a mixture of the grid-group dimensions that generally reduce to five ways of life. Hierarchy, egalitarianism, fatalism, and individualism are the four poles

\textsuperscript{83} Thompson, 3.
\textsuperscript{84} Thompson, 5.
\textsuperscript{85} Thompson, 4.
\textsuperscript{86} Thompson, 5–13.
of the grid-group typology. The fifth way describes a hermit who withdraws from all coercive social involvement. A way of life is an expression of a mixture of these four poles as a basic conviction about how human life is socially prescribed and socially incorporated. This basic conviction shapes and in turn is shaped by a mixture of beliefs, values, and social relationships.

Mel Hailey provides a case study that demonstrates how two evangelical political activity groups struggled to bring about social change in the United States in the decade of the 1980s.87 The Evangelicals for Social Action gained little media attention and never became widely known outside of some evangelical circles. Hailey demonstrates that the Evangelicals for Social Action developed a weak hierarchical and weak egalitarian world view. The Evangelicals for Social Action kept their evangelical religious tenets as they sought to influence the public, and these tenets were both critical and supportive of government and religious institutions and left them with neither clear stands nor clear constituencies. The Moral Majority began with a strong hierarchical world view from its foundations in Fundamentalism, and it embraced an individualistic world view when it marketed its message to political conservatives regardless of their faith. This mixture was supportive of certain institutions and also supportive of individualism, such as free enterprise, secular political action groups. It offered its constituencies clear positions and competitive marketing of their ideas through lobbying groups and political connections with the Republican Party.

Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's theorems offer social movement researchers bottom-up focus of groups and how they relate to a larger culture.

Although the SBC comprises people from many backgrounds, it is possible to apply Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's theorems to its constituencies. While it is presumably possible to find evidence of all five ways of life under the umbrella of the SBC, three patterns of life stand out: hierarchy in the form of fundamentalism, egalitarianism as expressed in

some moderates, and individualism as expressed in the past leadership of the SBC and in many moderate Southern Baptists.

Like many sociologists and dramaturgists, this researcher approaches rhetoric as primarily epistemic—both a way of doing and knowing. I acknowledge and use the contributions of those scholars (especially historians) who conceive of rhetoric as instrumental—a means for achieving an end. This does not mean that the current project perceives a hard distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, nor does it suggest a false dichotomy between phenomena and meaning, between objective conditions and subjective reality. Material conditions, attitudes, and values do not move independently of each other. As Robert Cathcart observes, "Rhetoric is both constitutive and regulative."\(^{88}\)

\(^{88}\) Cathcart, "A Confrontation Perspective," 70.
Chapter 2

UNITY AND PLURALITY IN THE SBC: THE HISTORICAL SETTING

The first section of the present chapter illustrates the cultural theory of Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky. Then it relates the theory to David Brian Whitlock’s dissertation that examines three prominent turn-of-the-century Southern Baptist rhetors who espoused divergent visions of a Christian America. The three visions compare to three ways of life espoused by Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky and give evidence that at least three notable world views coexisted in the denomination at the turn-of-the-century. Their cultural theory can assist critics in interpreting the clash of factions in a social drama.

The second half of the present chapter notes historical factors in the first part of the century that permitted the denomination to overlook its constituents’ competing world views. Some historical explanations are offered concerning how different world views coexisted within a denomination that served as a conserver of the southern culture. Southern Baptist numbers mushroomed in the isolation and the comparative homogeneity that the southern culture provided at the turn of the century. Chapter two also notes the national assimilation


of the South, the expansion of the SBC beyond its regional boundaries, and other factors that
sponsored conditions in which a plurality of world views could no longer be sanctioned in
prominent Southern Baptist rhetoric. Thus the second half of the chapter notes some
historical changes that facilitated the reformation movement.

Competing World Views in the SBC

The present chapter does not revise southern history nor present an inclusive history of
Southern Baptists; instead it surveys Southern Baptist history to see how competing ways of
life argued for dominance in the denomination. Historians such as Leon McBeth, Walter
Shurden and Bill J. Leonard offer comprehensive accounts of the struggles. Chapter two
incorporates Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's cultural theory that was described in chapter
one. Of the five ways of life defined by Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky (hierarchy,
egalitarianism, fatalism, individualism, and autonomy), this chapter contends that in broad
terms, hierarchists tend to be labeled fundamentalists, individualists tend to be labeled
conservatives and moderate-conservatives, and egalitarians tend to be labeled moderates.\footnote{This conclusion drawn from Ammerman’s extensive sociological surveys of social
attitudes, theology, and self identification of Southern Baptists. Her survey data,
methodology and analyses is found in chapter 4 and the appendices. Nancy Tatom
Ammerman, Baptist Battles (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990).}
Fatalism and autonomy influence Southern Baptists, but since neither way of life attempts to
persuade others of the rightness of its world view, their impact in the denomination is small.

Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky use a grid-group typology to study the interaction of
world views in different cultures and subcultures.\footnote{Thompson, 5-13.} The higher the grid dimension, the more
a world view includes social prescription for life. The higher the group dimension, the more a
world view includes social incorporation. Hierarchy, egalitarianism, fatalism, and
individualism are the four poles of the grid-group typology. The fifth way describes a hermit
who withdraws from all coercive social involvement. A way of life is an expression of a
mixture of these four poles as a basic conviction about how human life is socially prescribed and socially incorporated.

Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's theorems limit the number of ways of life to five and only five ways of life. The hierarchy pole on the grid-group schema perceives human life as being strongly socially prescribed and being strongly incorporated in groups. The egalitarian pole perceives human life as being weakly socially prescribed and being strongly incorporated in groups. The individualistic pole perceives human life as being weakly socially prescribed and being weakly incorporated in groups. The fatalistic pole perceives human life as being strongly socially prescribed and weakly incorporated in groups. Autonomy does not fit on the grid-group typology because the hermit may not care about social prescriptions nor seek social incorporation.

To illustrate Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's typology, the present chapter develops five fictional Southern Baptist characters whose basic convictions mirror the five ways of life. These characters are exaggerated to clarify the theorems. Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky qualify their typology by suggesting that most people incorporate a mixture of the ways of life, but prefer one over the others. To stay consistent, each character is male. The first character demonstrates a hierarchical way of life in his beliefs, values, and social relations.

Harry, a Southern Baptist hierarchist, matured in a home with strictly defined roles and in a congregational culture that supported those roles. His father financially provided for the family and approved all significant family decisions. His mother cared for the children and provided emotional support to the family. Harry's wife and children emulate his parent's family. Harry was nurtured in a church that provides reinforcement and intellectual arguments to deal with doubt. The congregational culture protects Harry from cultural diversity and competing values by offering his family sectarian schools, fundamentalist entertainment, fundamentalist media, and a fundamentalist network of friends.

The basic conviction of hierarchy is manifested in Harry's beliefs and values. Fundamentalism prescribes a clear and unchanging system for spiritual growth with absolute Truth communicated through the Bible. Harry believes that the Bible is incapable of error.
when it speaks of history, science, and religion. He believes Adam and Eve were literally the father and mother of humanity, that Noah and his family saved the animal species in an Ark, that Moses parted the Red Sea, that Jonah rode in the belly of a fish, that Jesus was born of a virgin and performed miracles, that Jesus was executed and resurrected, that Jesus ascended and will come back to earth to punish evil and reward good, that death is the beginning of eternal damnation for some and eternal bliss for others. Harry supports authoritative and conservative thinking in many areas of his life. He celebrates patriotism, supports the death penalty, opposes abortion, hates welfare, and is intolerant of anything that suggests modernism.

Social relationships reinforce order in Harry's world. Women and children occupy a subservient position in family and church life. Harry thinks that communists and gays should not be protected by the law. Harry respectfully listens to pastors and other authorities whom he deems credible. A fortress mentality protects him from doubt and permits a hierarchical order to permeate Harry's beliefs, values, and social relationships and this way of life filters his perceptions of the world.

A second character illustrates a Southern Baptist individualistic way of life. Whereas order is a basic conviction in Harry's perception, rugged individualism is a prominent factor of Irwin's way of life. Irwin subscribes to the idea that Southern Baptist Americans should follow their aspirations under God's leadership. In spite of calamities and misfortunes, Irwin's father prospered on his farm and thanked God that he lived in a country where he could prosper and worship. Irwin learned discipline at home, church, and public schools and views the world as a tough competitive place. Irwin's pragmatism helps him thrive in a market oriented society and it also shapes his faith. When Irwin was young, his church was led once a month by a bivocational preacher, and consequently the church was exhorted to read and study the Bible and to worship without a leader. This fostered independence in the congregation. Today, Irwin and his family attend the First Baptist Church in a county-seat town, and his church emphasizes personal salvation and private pietism. He does not approve of church members mixing religion and politics, because a person's beliefs should be
private. Irwin believes that each person should accept God's salvation and develop a personal relationship with God through prayer and Bible reading. Irwin accepts many propositions espoused in Harry's fundamentalist faith, because they seem to function well. However, Irwin resents anyone telling him what he must believe and does not approve of "witch hunts" or "heresy trials" in the denomination. If given adequate reasons, Irwin can modify some of his personal theology, but personal salvation, private pietism, and rugged individualism are *prima facie*, and this basic conviction shapes his beliefs, values, and social relationships and filters his perception of the world.

A third character illustrates a fatalistic way of life. Fred lives a life of quiet desperation and has learned to accept good events and bad events that occur in life. His faith and stoicism sees God's will foreordaining life. Fred's father tenant farmed eroded Appalachian foothills and planted whatever the seed-store-merchant required to obtain inflated credit to put in the following year's crops. Fred works for minimum wage in a furniture factory and perceives his situation as at the mercy of poor health, debt, ignorance, and four children. The local Southern Baptist church offers a welcome respite with songs of Zion and other-worldly sermons. Fred enjoys hearing of heaven and the reassurance that it is harder for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. He finds comfort in the God of the oppressed and lacks interest in the politics of his denomination. He reads the Bible daily and loves to read passages about the apocalypse that teach of God's final judgment. Fred's fatalistic faith accepts his circumstances and allows him to be an inspiration to friends who struggle with jealousy and anger because of their impoverished state. His fatalistic world view prevents him from seeing any possibility of improving his conditions at work by way of group action (i.e., union) or improving his denomination through a reformation movement. His environment does things to him, sometimes good and sometimes bad, but he has little or no control over it. His basic fatalistic conviction shapes his beliefs, values, and social relationships and provides a coping mechanism that permits him to survive as it filters his perception of the world.
The fourth character is Ethan, a Southern Baptist egalitarian. Ethan matured in an environment that resented coercion and hierarchies. Ethan's father was a Baptist university professor who was fired in a heresy hunt and later opened a private psychology practice. Ethan believes that institutional cowardice, ignorance, and financial threats conspired against his father. Despite this negative perception, Ethan's family actively participates in a Southern Baptist church that supports social ministries. Ethan volunteers time constructing homes for Habitat for Humanity, an organization that former President Jimmy Carter supports. Ethan's family donates time to a food bank and volunteers for mission projects. As a leading researcher in food-science, he could support his family in an affluent upper middle-class lifestyle, but he advocates a simple disciplined lifestyle, concern for the environment, and liberal Democratic values. His family owns a ten-year-old diesel-powered Volvo. Ethan thinks that synthetic clothes make people more reliant upon energy-consuming air conditioners, and that synthetic materials waste polluting fossil fuels, so he wears wrinkled cotton clothes. He believes that the ethics of Jesus Christ require Christians to advocate on the behalf of the oppressed and to live in such a manner that does not squander resources imported from less developed countries. Ethan participates in a Southern Baptist church of like believers who often see themselves at odds with the denomination. The church has a woman pastor, and it cannot understand the denomination's intolerance toward women ministers. Different races, including African-Americans, participate as members. A prominent doctrine of the church is the "priesthood of the believer" (the conception that everyone has equal access to God). Ethan's church is not well organized because a lack of hierarchy neutralizes the ability to exercise control and mediate intergroup differences. Sometimes Ethan's group is blinded by a "wall of virtue" that they construct as they criticize outsiders. Ethan's basic egalitarian conviction shapes his beliefs, values, and social relationships and filters his view of the world.

A last character, Hosea, plays a rare role as a hermit who withdraws from coercive social involvements. Hosea's autonomous lifestyle is relaxed in its self-sufficiency. Hosea was an undergraduate in the 1960s and lost friends in the Vietnam conflict. He participated in
anti-war protests and was jailed for participating in the racial sit-ins, but became cynical of left-wing ideology in the 1970s. His cynicism concerning institutions led him to drop out of society. Social conventions do not restrict Hosea, nor does competition or hierarchical convictions. When asked about his religion, Hosea states that he is Southern Baptist, because he was reared in the denomination and it will always be a part of him, though he has not participated in years. His insightful books compel ministers struggling with their beliefs to seek Hosea, but Hosea dislikes the role of a visionary, and generally refuses to meet the pilgrims. As a reclusive author, he writes successful books and screen plays, but frustrates publishers, because he will not heed deadlines, nor promote books, nor prize commissions. Critics acclaim Hosea’s insights as avant-garde, but Hosea rarely reads reviews, nor explains his work. This basic conviction of autonomy shapes his beliefs, values, and social relationships. The autonomous way of life is rare.

These five hypothetical characters illustrate how basic convictions concerning the world inform one’s belief, and values and how social relationships can reinforce one’s basic conviction. Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky’s social theorems assert that neither beliefs nor social relationships are basic. Instead both social institutions and cultural biases are a primary determinant of a world view. They claim, “Values and social relations are mutually interdependent and reinforcing: Institutions generate distinctive sets of preferences, and adherence to certain values legitimize corresponding institutional arrangements.”

Institutional arrangements constrain individual behavior, but also, individual actions hold together and modify institutional arrangements. Their theory suggests that people derive preferences from their involvement with others. Again they state, “Social relations are the great teachers of human life.” In the same way that social relations constrain individuals, ways of life constrain societies. In four of the five examples, the social situations promoted the way that character perceived the world. Each character (with the possible exception of Hosea) shaped and was shaped by their social institutions and their social relationships.

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6 Thompson, 21.

7 Thompson, 56.
The basic conviction of a way of life organizes perception of social life in a particular way. Each particular pattern of viewing life constrains society and generates preferences that in turn reproduce those ways of life. Each way of life is a dynamic process that constantly generates the behavior and the conviction that holds it together. Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky note, “In choosing how to relate to others, people unwittingly commit themselves to a number of other choices.” They argue that preferences are less rational choices than unintended and unrecognized reactions generated from social relations. They continue their argument:

These cultural biases—the shared meanings, the common convictions, the moral markers, the subtle rewards, penalties, and expectations common to a way of life—that become so much a part of us are constantly shaping our preferences in ways that even the brightest among us are only dimly aware of.  

Competing World Views in SBC History

Although it may be possible to find evidence of the five ways of life in Southern Baptist history, three distinct ways of life stand out in its history (hierarchy—fundamentalism, egalitarianism—some moderates, individualism—conservatives and moderate conservatives). David Brian Whitlock’s dissertation provides evidence of three prominent rhetors in the SBC from 1890–1945 who espoused three different visions of a Christian America. The three visions of America closely simulates the hierarchical, individualistic, and egalitarian world views. Whitlock documents the rhetoric espoused throughout the careers of Victor I. Masters, C. S. Gardner, and George W. Truett. Each historical rhetor championed a vision of a “Christian America” populated with a citizenry who would effectuate the values of Christianity. Though the three promulgated a vision of a “Christian America,” the essence of each vision differed substantially. The dissonance between the visions provides a historical precedence for theological friction and the clash of world views in the 1979–1990 Southern Baptist social drama.

8 Thompson, 57.

9 Thompson, 59.
Victor I. Masters' career encompassed pastoral ministry, editorial secretary for the Home Mission Board, author of seven books, and editor of several Baptist newspapers and journals. As editor of the Western Recorder (Baptist newspaper for Kentucky) from 1921 to 1942 he enjoyed his largest audience. Masters contended that the primary mission of Christianity was to advance correct doctrines in the United States that would protect it from delusory beliefs.

Masters promoted the religion of the “Lost Cause” in many articles and his book, The Call of the South. The religion of the Lost Cause proposed that God permitted the South to be defeated in the Civil War to strengthen the region so that it might (1) demonstrate a more virtuous, generous, and chivalrous lifestyle, (2) protect the United States against modernism and liberalism, and (3) lead the nation and the world to God’s salvation. Edward Queen states that for many southerners devastated by the loss of the Civil War, this myth provided a workable explanation for the mission of the South. In his book, Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920, Charles Wilson suggests ways that the myth of the Lost Cause rebuilt the South's spiritual and moral identity. He states,

But the dream of a separate Southern identity did not die in 1865. A Southern political nation was not to be, and the people with a separate cultural identity replaced the original longing. The cultural dream replaced the political dream: the South’s kingdom was to be of culture, not of politics. Religion was at the heart of this dream, and the history of the attitude known as the Lost Cause was the story of the use of the past as the basis for a Southern religious-moral identity, an identity as a chosen people.

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10 Victor I. Masters, The Call of the South (Atlanta: Publicity Department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1918).


14 Wilson, Baptized in Blood 1.
The phenomenal growth (365,346 in 1845 to 5,000,000 in 1940) of the SBC in the early part of this century reinforced the myth to many southerners. Masters promoted a vision of a Christian America in which Southern Baptists would evangelize the nation and promote conservative southern values and beliefs that would preserve and protect the United States of America.

Whitlock contends that Masters devoted many editorials to denounce anything that he called "modernism." Masters saw modernism lurking beneath everything evil in the country and in the SBC. He insisted that modernism undermined the essential doctrine of the authority of the Bible and that bad theology promoted immorality. To protect the belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, Masters suggested Christians should repudiate all forms of liberalism. During his tenure as editor of the Western Recorder, Masters vigorously promoted fundamentalism when northern Baptists experienced theological divisions that fragmented many churches. Among Southern Baptists in the 1920s, Masters endorsed heresy charges against some missionaries to China. He attacked "atheistic evolution" stating that it would destroy every doctrine in Bible. Masters promoted educational institutions as protective havens from irreligious philosophies and advocated doctrinal tests for all Baptist professors. Masters accused some professors of being liberals and applauded those who forced "liberal" professors to resign. Masters and other fundamentalists were suspicious of ecumenical efforts, the Baptist World Alliance, and the Social Gospel movements because of associations with modernism. In Whitlock's recapitulation of Master's visions of America,

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15 Leonard, God's Last & Only Hope 13.
16 Whitlock, 110-160.
17 Whitlock, 112.
18 Whitlock, 117-119.
19 Whitlock, 121-122.
20 Whitlock, 127.
21 Whitlock, 128.
he asserts that Masters represented many southern evangelicals who experienced cultural
shock in the twentieth century. Like many southerners, Masters was reared in a rural
community with a certain degree of order and predictability. Whitlock summarizes,

Several themes emerge throughout Masters' life. Masters is an example of a Southern
Baptist fundamentalist. While most Southern Baptists held conservative theological
views, Masters responded militantly to Modernism in theology and the cultural changes
that Modernism sanctioned. Masters saw his role as an editor to be that of warning his
constituency of the threats he believed Modernism posed to Christian faith and to the
Christian "way of life."^23

Masters contended for fundamentalist causes and militantly attacked anything that
reminded him of modernism. According to Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky, the hierarchical
world view perceives the ideal world as one in which everyone has an ordered place, and all
knowledge has an absolute foundation. Masters saw modernism as a threat to his hierarchical
conception of the world. His vision of America was one in which southerners led the nation
back to God, and citizens safeguarded God's principles. Masters vigorously attacked anything
that threatened his hierarchical epistemology when he castigated Baptist professors.
Masters' environment produced his ideology and he contributed to that environment and
promoted a hierarchical conception of Christianity. He contended that the Christian world
view should conquer or its constituents should extricate themselves from relationships that
might weaken their commitment.

A second historical figure, George W. Truett has been called "a spiritual leader of the
denomination."^4 Not only was he the pastor of the denomination's largest church from 1897
to 1944, but also he served as president of the SBC at thirty-two years of age, served as
president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1934–1939, and served on almost every
significant board of the denomination during his long career. He served Baylor University (as

^22 George E. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of

^23 Whitlock, 156.

^24 Whitlock, 286.
a student, he directed enormously successful fundraising efforts for the school) and Southwestern Seminary and was in great demand for academic addresses among Baptist institutions. As a rhetor, there was probably no one in the denomination with equal credibility.25 Truett primarily preached the value of individual spiritual conversion for everyone, and deemphasized other issues. His vision of a Christian America was one composed of a transformed culture with converted citizens who had experienced God's salvation.26

Truett warned America to turn from its sin to avert God's wrath, and turn to God. He suggested that the SBC should lead a great revival that would sweep the United States. A converted citizenry of America would then redeem the world to Christ, because it was the mission of America to evangelize every corner of the globe. Truett stated that America possessed this great mission because it protected the worth and freedom of the individual. This principle made it first among the nations.27

Truett stressed the worth of the individual. He taught that to change the world, one must convert the individual first, and thus he could not endorse the social gospel movement. True social reform could not occur without a person being "born again." He celebrated individual freedom in the United States of America. His emphasis on the freedom of the individual led him to fight heresy hunts in Baptist institutions. Although he held many conservative theological beliefs, his primary concern for individual choice restrained him from imposing his beliefs on Baptist institutions.

Truett held many conservative beliefs in common with Victor Masters. He opposed higher biblical criticism and maintained belief in the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and stated that when modern science came into conflict with the Scripture, science must be wrong.28 But Truett and Masters opposed each other concerning religious control.

25 Whitlock, 286.
26 Whitlock, 224.
27 Whitlock, 238.
28 Whitlock, 251.
Truett defended Baptist institutions against heresy hunts though the professor in question held theological beliefs that were often different from Truett. Masters expressed shock when Truett participated in the Baptist World Alliance, since he believed that working with unorthodox Baptists gave the impression of accepting their beliefs, but Truett expressed enthusiasm for working with divergent Baptist groups. Conservatives especially appreciated Truett's theological beliefs and his remarkable evangelistic record while theological moderates appreciated his openness in leadership.

In Whitlock's recapitulation of Truett's vision of America, he recognizes the shortcomings of Truett's individualistic approach. He deduces,

He (Truett) was not one to focus on potential problems which could cause conflict. His approach was to preach general principles and convictions. Thus, while his gospel had implications for social reform, he never developed a comprehensive strategy for dealing with social or economic problems. And, in his emphasis on the principle of cooperation for Southern Baptists, he did not fully address the issue of how much diversity the convention could tolerate and still fulfill its mission of world evangelism.

Truett's rhetoric gives evidence of an individualistic world view in Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's typology, although their description of an individualist does not purely mirror Truett's world view, because a pure individualist would discard religious claims and be cynical toward any forces outside oneself. Truett's vision is a religious adaptation of an individualistic world view, in that he concentrated on the individual in his religious rhetoric and allowed the convert to solve his or her social, economic, and theological difficulties. His unfailing support of the denominational agencies revealed his pragmatic view of the world, and market-oriented approach to the SBC. Truett promoted cooperation among divergent groups of Southern Baptists because together the SBC could sponsor more missionaries, support more schools, start more churches, and build more support agencies. His rhetoric supported the

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29 Whitlock, 132.

30 Whitlock, 259.


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enormous expansion of the denomination that occurred in the first half of this century and
provided a way to skirt theological and social dilemmas.

A third historical figure, C. S. Gardner was a prominent rhetor in the SBC who
promoted a vision of a Christian America that differed substantially from that of Masters or
Truett. Gardener was the pastor of one of the more prestigious churches, First Baptist Church,
Greenville, South Carolina, for six years before moving to Southern Seminary in Louisville
Kentucky as a professor teaching homiletics, ethics, and sociology. Gardner was a prolific
writer and spokesperson for progressive social movements. He addressed the SBC, the Baptist
World Congress, the World Social Progress Conference, and the Southern Sociological
Congress. Gardner taught a social interpretation of biblical truth that emphasized the ethics
of Christ and a redeeming community that would prepare the world for the kingdom of God.
These ideas differed substantially from the concepts promoted in Masters' or Truett's vision of
America.

Gardner promulgated a vision of a Christian America in which the Church promoted
social progress according to the ethics of Jesus. The kingdom of God was a primary emphasis in
his theological, social and economic views. He espoused personal regeneration like Masters
and Truett, but Gardner emphasized that the plan of Jesus included the transformation of the
social order.32 This primary idea required the Christian Church to enter many ministries for
socially oppressed people. Gardner's study of the South opened his eyes to many desperate
social needs in the South. He saw poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, and powerlessness; and he
saw injustice in the tenant-farm system, coal mine labor practices, mill-town ownership, and
elite-controlled railroad systems in the South. He attacked laissez-faire economics and the
economic concept of competition because these principles promoted social injustice. Thus
Gardner called upon Southern Baptists to pursue righteous (ethical) social conditions.

Gardner promoted a "strict constructionist" view of the Bible in which no one or no group
had the right to force their interpretation upon the Christian Church, and he advanced each
person's privilege to read the Bible for themselves to determine its message.33 He opposed

32 Whitlock, 179.
hard-line orthodoxy and maintained that its rigidity would destroy the faith's capacity to redeem the culture. He related the philosophical pragmatism of William James and Ferdinand Schiller in order to adjust a biblical faith to the needs of a modern culture. He taught that Christian Truth incorporated any scientific findings and thus perceived no epistemological problems when science and higher criticism critiqued the Bible.

In Whitlock's recapitulation of Gardner's vision of America, Whitlock expresses reservations concerning the tendency of Gardner's conception of the kingdom of God to be equated with an "ethical ideal based on the proper social ideal." Whitlock criticizes Gardner's discounting of the human depravity and his optimism concerning social transformation. Gardner consistently expressed confidence that the adoption of the kingdom of God would deliver the American society.

Gardner's rhetoric gives evidence of an egalitarian world view in Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's typology. Although their description of an egalitarian does not purely mirror Gardner's world view, because a pure egalitarian would discard the need for individual regeneration and Gardner never repudiated personal salvation. Gardner's vision is a Southern Baptist adaptation of an egalitarian world view, in that he concentrated on the kingdom of God in his rhetoric, instead of the individual as did George W. Truett, and instead of orthodoxy as did Victor Masters. Gardner's critique of economic competition and his advocacy for government sponsored social changes give evidence of an egalitarian world view. Gardner's critique of rigid orthodoxy and his conception of personal biblical interpretation militates against hierarchical conceptions of knowledge and social relationships. His emphasis on the kingdom of God in social, economic, and theological ideals reveals a basic egalitarian focus.

Three distinct world views were expressed by southerners who participated in a denomination that has been noted for its homogeneity and its conservation of a southern way of

33 Whitlock, 176.
34 Whitlock, 172.
35 Whitlock, 221.
life (see footnote # 3 in the present chapter). That prompts the question, How is it that these three different world views could have coexisted without denomination-splitting controversy?

**Triumphalism and Cultural Homogeneity**

Evangelical Protestantism dominated the South with little competition from Judaism, Catholicism, Sectarianism, or any other religion. Southern after the Civil War attended church more than any other region with the possible exception of the Mormons in the Salt Lake City area. Samuel Hill concludes,

> From our several perspectives, we join in underscoring (1) the distinctiveness of religious life in the South, (2) the domination of Christianity there by one of its families, Evangelical Protestantism, and (3) the role of religion as conservator and reinforcer of, as distinct from agent for change within, popular (white) southern culture.

The South after the Civil War was a seedbed of religious fervor in which the culture nurtured its flowers (Protestant Evangelicalism) and isolated it from distractions and competition. Some of the same impulses that unified southerners with a regional identity also unified Baptists in the South.

Denominations were a nineteenth-century American Protestant invention. Millennial expectations, revivalism, and the mission movement helped unite Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists into denominations. Before 1845 Baptists were very loosely connected. But the slavery issue brought the southern churches together under one banner. Farnsley concludes, "The problems which separated Baptists in the middle nineteenth century—usually involving, but never limited to, the practice of slavery—did not divide a unified denomination but created one."

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36 See David Edward Harrell, Jr., “Pluralism: Catholics, Jews, and Sectarians” in Religion in the South 79–82; Also see Marty, Protestantism in the U. S. 218.

37 Marty, Protestantism in the U. S. 218.

38 Hill, Religion and the Solid South 22.


40 Arthur E. Farnsley, II., Majority Rules: The Politicization of the Southern Baptist Convention (Baptist Church) (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, University Microfilms No.
During the secession and Civil War, Southern Baptist pulpits reflected the positions of each state. Baptist ministers throughout the Deep South proclaimed the divine cause and certain triumph of the South. Eighmy states, "Editors unsparingly praised southerners for their nobility, courage, and innocence while portraying men of the North as barbarians interested only in satisfying their lusts, greed, and love of plunder." As the war turned against the South, Southern Baptist rhetoric found spiritual victory in defeat. Southern churches began espousing that they were "baptized in blood" so that a remnant would be purified to lead the nation and the world to Christ. The South lost as a sacrifice so that God could build a denomination to win the world.

The South was the only region of the United States to experience military defeat. The defeat united southerners in memorial associations that erected statues throughout the South and in massive gatherings (some over 100,000) of the United Confederate Veterans. Before the war, many in the South identified with their state, but after the war, they identified with the region. The South as a whole experienced poverty and destitution following the Civil War and two and one-half million fled the South between 1865 and 1900. The South was isolated from the rest of the country because the population was predominantly rural, transportation systems were non-existent or in poor repair (roads, bridges, railroad systems, canals), phone systems came late in the twentieth century for many southerners, newspapers...

41 Eighmy, 21.
42 Eighmy, 24.
43 Wilson, Baptized in Blood 57.
were not prolific, and electrification and water systems slowly developed. In many practical ways the South was culturally, academically, emotionally, and communicatively isolated from the rest of the country. This provided an environment in which Southern Baptists flourished, unhampered by outside interferences. Nancy Ammerman concludes that only in the last twenty or thirty years has the South experienced enough challenges to conservative values in education, demography, and cultural pluralism for people to organize and identify with specifically conservative political and religious groups.47

In the decades following the war, Southern Baptists saw their phenomenal church growth as evidence for the belief that the SBC was God's last and only hope.48 The amazing accomplishments of the denomination provided for many a vindication for the southern degradation. Theological differences could be glossed over in support of the dominant southern denomination that had victoriously risen from ashes to lead in world missions. This powerful myth drove Southern Baptists to avoid at all costs any further schisms. For Southern Baptist churchmen and women, any other explanation for the Confederate loss was too painful to face because it involved questioning their religious ideology and adding more grief to their lives. With the South's economic base wrecked, its morale decimated, many of its population killed, maimed, and diseased, Baptist editors simply could not admit that the Southern Baptists were wrong about slavery. Nor could they admit that slavery had anything to do with the South losing the war.49 To admit that slavery was wrong would force Baptists to question a literal interpretation of the Bible (which did not specifically condemn slavery), to admit the immorality of the war, and to admit the error of the Baptist schism of 1845. As one scholar concludes,

By attributing defeat to the mysterious workings of an all-wise Providence, the Baptists could retain their belief in a personal deity without repudiating a single political conviction by which they had supported the Confederacy and without accepting any responsibility for the catastrophes of war.50

47 Ammerman, 64–71.

48 Leonard, God’s Last and Only Hope 13.

49 Leonard, God’s Last and Only Hope 21.
This powerful myth drove many who expressed divergent world views like Truett, Masters, and Gardner to support missions, evangelization, and a growing vital denomination. Theological skirmishes abounded, but the denomination was not wracked with the theological and political takeover until 1979.

After the Civil War, the majority of the SBC did not address the social problems that prompted the agrarian revolt, nor the cotton mill labor-union disputes, nor the Jim Crow system (Gardner was disappointing on this point), nor the policies of the Bourbons. Social conflict would have pitted the Southern Baptists against cultural myths and tarnished their position as a conserving force in the region. Instead the majority of Southern Baptists concerned themselves with individual pietistic matters such as drinking, gambling, card-playing, dancing, Blue laws, survival of its institutions, missionary expansion, and theological questions. A preponderance of Baptist rhetoric merged pietistic concerns with the populist triumphalism of the religion of the Lost Cause. The defeat of the South and the surrender at Appomattox is an important factor in understanding Southern Baptist rhetoric.51

Another factor that unified the South was that it split along racial lines with the whites banded together against the blacks. This factor also distinguished it from the rest of the country. Queen states, "To a great extent southern history can be seen as a constant struggle of white southerners to live with and dominate over black southerners, and to rationalize that domination."52 Most of the South's ancestors came from Great Britain. The massive influx of immigrants at the turn of the century did not move into the South because of its prejudice, poverty, and the black/white ratio, and those who immigrated from continental Europe melted into the Anglo-Saxon stock because the ethnic distinctions paled by comparison to the distinctions of black and white people.

50 Eighmy, 25.

51 Leonard, God's Last and Only Hope 13.

52 Queen, 51.
A distinct culture persisted in the South as compared to other regions, and it may have persisted into the 1960s.\textsuperscript{53} John Shelton Reed demonstrated from survey data gathered from 1938 to the mid 1960s that cultural differences existed between southerners and other Americans. He claims, “Southerners, we have seen, are more likely than non-southerners to be conventionally religious, to accept the private use of force (or the potential for it), and to be anchored in their homeplace.”\textsuperscript{54} This claim does not mean that southerners thought alike (e.g., bourbons and populists, Masters and Gardner), rather it means that as one looks back at the early 1900s, whites in the southern region were more unified than other regions of the country and it also means that white southerners shared some cultural distinctives.

The appeal of the religion of the Lost Cause, the somewhat homogenous isolated southern culture, the missionary zeal, and the calls for personal pietism conspired together to form a denomination with loosely defined beliefs where three divergent rhetors, Masters, Truett, and Gardner could coexist. The functionally unified culture allowed most Southern Baptists to maintain a kind of integrity and to think that they were doctrinally united, although as seen in the rhetoric of Masters, Truett, and Gardner, all Southern Baptists did not think alike. This allowed Baptists as a whole to exist without a doctrinal creed, although they did adopt in 1858 a broad and imprecise Abstract of Principles to serve as a guide for professors at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Shurden and Rosenberg show that Southern Baptists came from at least five different liturgical and educational traditions.\textsuperscript{55} These different traditions emphasized a wide disparity of theological positions: Landmarkism, Calvinism, modified Calvinism, Arminianism, modified Arminianism, Fundamentalism, Postmillennialism, Social Gospel, and others. Therefore, Southern Baptists have always battled internally over their differences, but denominational pragmatists and skilled denominational politicians were able until 1979 to settle the differences and call for

\textsuperscript{53} See the bibliography in Reed, 119–124; Also see chapter seven, 83–90.

\textsuperscript{54} Reed, 83.

peace to further God’s work. Shurden’s Not a Silent People chronicles the denomination’s most illustrative theological skirmishes; he concludes that these battles were painful but often profitable for the democratic denomination. Yet, Shurden warned that the recent controversy went beyond its historical predecessors. In the 1980–1981 Carver Barnes Lectures, Shurden began asking, The Southern Baptist Synthesis: Is it Cracking? Thus many subgroups compromised to coexist under the banner of the SBC for one-hundred-thirty-four years, but the compromise faltered in the late 1970s.

Farnsley demonstrates that the tension between bureaucracy and democracy was a factor in the recent controversy. Tension between bureaucracy and democracy has always been a part of the denomination’s history. At the formation of the SBC, the Landmark movement questioned the theological correctness of any decision-making body beyond the local church. Landmarkism vigorously defended the autonomy of each church in every area. They opposed institutional ties, because they posed a threat to their individual freedom. Farnsley states that the postwar scarcity of resources and the challenges of the northern missionary societies working in the South forced Southern Baptists to recognize the need for some central authority and the need to work together. The Landmark movement lost its influence by the end of the nineteenth-century, but there were always groups in the denomination that opposed the growing bureaucracy.

As the SBC grew, so did its institutions, and so did the need for a stable financial funding and central executive leadership. The SBC developed its agencies: the Foreign Mission Board, the Home Mission Board, the Sunday School Board, and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Later it would add five more seminaries and numerous agencies and affiliated bodies. In 1916 the SBC formed an Executive Committee to oversee its institutions, and in the 1920s Southern Baptists formed the Cooperative Program to be the overarching

57 Farnsley, chapter two, 46-86.
58 Farnsley, 25.
funding plan for all SBC responsibilities. As the SBC grew, it formed a growing bureaucracy, but it also struggled to develop a democratic system to check the power of the bureaucracy. By the 1930s, the SBC put into effect an extensive system of boards and committees to do its work. Generations of leaders committed to denominational unity and organizational success aided the SBC’s bureaucratic organization. There arose a group of denominational statesmen skilled in oratory and in political compromise. George W. Truett, E. Y. Mullins, and others were admired prominent leaders. Mullins combined theological scholarship and negotiation skills to become an effective leader.

The growth and success of the organization had a subtle yet powerful centralizing impact on Southern Baptist churches. The SBC developed a denominational calendar to emphasize programs. For example, most Southern Baptist churches emphasize foreign missions during the Christmas season. Convention Press materials (the Convention Press is the largest religious press in the world) reinforce the SBC’s programs. The schools and agencies reinforced loyalty by filling positions with Southern Baptist seminary graduates. Positions in the SBC were often honorary positions recognizing faithful service to the denomination. For many years, appointment to prestigious boards implicitly required that one’s home church enthusiastically support the Cooperative Program.

Farnsley demonstrates that the denominational bureaucracy became a thing unto itself. It grew into a multi-billion dollar empire. Important agencies and staff centralized in Nashville, so much so that many joked of it as the “Baptist Mecca.” Farnsley notes, “What developed, at least according to conservative critics of the denomination (both within and without), was a very large-scale bureaucracy staffed by institutional professionals.”


60 Farnsley, 46–54.


62 Rosenberg, 81.

63 Farnsley, 203.
make matters worse in the perception of the average Southern Baptists (they abide in the
bottom rank of the status hierarchy of mainline denominations and less than six percent of
Southern Baptists have a college degree65), denominational employees came from the
educated middle-class of Southern Baptists.66 A repeated accusation was that the “good ole
boys” attended and established friendships in the Baptist universities and seminaries staffed
the bureaucracies. Fundamentalists probably could have tolerated this dilemma except they
also perceived that the “insiders” held divergent social and theological positions incongruous
with the average southern church member.67 Also fundamentalists felt frustrated that their
views were neither taught in the seminaries, nor espoused in the denomination literature, nor
represented by Baptist lobbying groups. Fundamentalists voiced their feelings in SBC
resolutions and voted to request the Convention Press and seminaries to censure theologically
offensive books and professors. The agencies followed the letter of the law but not the spirit of
the law, because they did not feel compelled to follow SBC requests.68 Ammerman states
that this frustrating perception drove many conservatives into the fundamentalist camp in the
1960s and 1970s.69

C. Vann Woodward, as early as 1960, began questioning the usefulness of calling oneself a
southerner.70 The South has disappeared as the isolated homogeneous region and has
merged into the mainstream of the rest of the country. World War II and the Korean and

64 Farnsley, 51.

65 Wade Clark Roof, and William McKinney, The Mainline Denominations (New

66 Farnsley, 52.

67 Farnsley, 53.

68 Ammerman, 67–68.

69 Ammerman, 69.

70 C. Vann Woodward, The Burden of Southern History (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana
Vietnam conflicts altered the South as they did the rest of the nation. Greater mobility, access to communication, and the introduction of electrification, radio, television, and the telephone widened the South's awareness. The T.V.A. powerplants, the development of vibrant economies, and the urbanization of the South encouraged the migration of different ethnic and religious groups to the South. The rise of large culturally mixed southern universities, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Equal Rights Movement forced a plurality of world views into the southern marketplace of ideas. Essentially the larger American culture breached the walls of isolation in the southern region. These changes obliterated a distinctive southern identity and white solidarity that had been an essential unifying factor of the SBC.

From 1942 to 1972 the SBC more than doubled in size and this growth called the SBC's identity into question. The denomination grew outside its southern boundaries to include all fifty states. The term "Southern Baptists" no longer referred to the southern region. This expansion outside the southern region forced the denomination to define its distinctive values and beliefs. The definition of the denomination with its loosely-defined doctrines and cultural assumptions came into question.

Another aggravating factor in the denomination's growth was the clash of social values and social classes. There has always been a mix of divergent social groups that participated in the denomination. Still these differences became more pronounced in the last two decades as many urban churches grew with professional staffs, and as the southern culture modernized and pluralized. Southern Baptists, as a whole, are less likely to have a college degree and less likely to work in white collar professions than members of other denominations. Of the approximately 37,000 churches, sixty percent have less than three hundred members with fifty percent of the denomination's members living in rural areas and small towns, and attending churches staffed with pastors possessing little formal education. There have always been large politically important churches in the

71 Ammerman, chapter five "The Social Sources of Division," 127-167.

72 See William E. Hull, "Pluralism in the Southern Baptist Convention," Review and Expositor 79 (1982): 131-134; also see Ammerman, 128-129; Roof, 110-113; Rosenberg, 2.

73 Ammerman, 289.
denomination. These churches typically reside in the county-seat towns and cities throughout the South, frequently situated on the town square near the courthouse and near the center of political leadership. For many years these churches had the will and the means to send a slate of delegates to the annual SBC meetings. These churches would send educated members who often possessed negotiation skills, who were capable of contributing to the committees, and who were knowledgeable of the political subtleties of business meetings. Many middle-class messengers graduated from Baptist schools and understood Baptist history. Thus for many years educated middle-class messengers represented a far larger percentage than their actual numbers in the denomination. This was not a debilitating problem as long as the southern culture remained relatively homogenous.

Southern Baptists' doctrines struggled to protect each believer's and each church's autonomy, and yet unite various theological traditions under one banner to do evangelism. Tension existed between groups who desired an exclusive doctrinal definition of Southern Baptists and the seminaries and colleges who worked for an inclusive definition. Since the SBC's inception, various groups insisted that Southern Baptists should not be asked to support professors whose doctrines were contrary to those preached in their Baptist churches.\textsuperscript{74} Theological skirmishes proliferated, resulting in the firing or censuring of offending professors at colleges, universities, and seminaries.\textsuperscript{75} In 1958 one professor raised doubts about the biblical canon and one-third of the sympathetic Southern Seminary faculty lost their jobs.\textsuperscript{76}

Only in a functionally unified culture could Southern Baptists gather to evangelize without a historical touchstone. Other traditions approved sacred writings and approved commentaries for interpreting the writings. Other Protestants had the Bible and the Westminster or Augsburg Confessions or the Book of Common Prayer. But Baptists from their

\textsuperscript{74} Shurden, \textit{Not a Silent People} 28.

\textsuperscript{75} Shurden, \textit{Not a Silent People} 22.

\textsuperscript{76} Rosenberg, 139.
formation shed away from creeds, although an analysis of the twentieth-century Southern Baptist churches indicates a steady march toward a minimum creedal formula. The lack of a creedal formula did not mean that Baptists did not share many doctrinal conceptions. Lynn May summarized Baptist beliefs:

Distinctive Baptist beliefs and practices are: (1) the authority and sufficiency of the Scripture; (2) the priesthood of the believer; (3) salvation as God's gift of divine grace received by man through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ; (4) a regenerated church membership; (5) baptism, by immersion, of believers only; (6) two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, viewed primarily as symbols and reminders; (7) each church as an independent, self-governing body, the members possessing equal rights and privileges; (8) religious liberty for all; and (9) separation of church and state.77

This loose definition worked well for many years, but in the 1960s and 1970s fundamentalists increasingly blamed the loose definition for permitting modern theological ideas to infiltrate the SBC.

Literalist interpretations of the Scripture reflected many southern social relationships. The white/black and man/woman relationship was crucial to the literalist hermeneutic.

Before the Civil War, many southern pulpiteers reasoned that the institution of slavery was sanctioned by God, in fact the Apostle Paul advised a runaway slave to return to his master. The slavery regulations in the Old Testament, combined with the lack of condemnation of the institution in the New Testament, provided a basis for segregation and domination of the black race. In male/female social relationships, Southern preachers accepted that God created Adam first and Eve sinned first. This taken with the Apostle Paul's advice that women should remain silent in church reinforced their subservient roles in society and church.

The Interdenominational Fundamentalist movement and William Jennings Bryan made evolution the central issue of modernism. The issue split many denominations in the 1920s and led to heresy hunts in in church-related schools and publishing boards. But within Southern Baptist circles, J. Frank Norris (a charismatic orator, outspoken fundamentalist, and center of many scandals) became an embarrassment to the denomination; yet most of the denomination shared his sentiments concerning the fundamental principles of the faith. The SBC drafted a

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77 Lynn E. May, Jr., The Baptist Story one of ten pamphlets in The Baptist Heritage Series Nashville: Historical Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, 1979.
resolution opposing Darwinism in 1926 and adopted a “confession of faith” in 1925. Farnsley states that “fundamentalist inerrancy ‘succeeded’ in the Convention insofar as it was a dominant theological view, fundamentalism as a militant, antimodern movement failed because, frankly, there were too few opponents to maintain widespread interest.”

Consequently, Fundamentalism outside the denomination was a separate entity that promoted a distinct identity. Fundamentalists within the Southern Baptist denomination shared many doctrinal beliefs with Fundamentalists outside the denomination, but generally Southern Baptist fundamentalists found their identity in the SBC and not in the Fundamentalist movement. Independent Fundamentalists developed educational institutions, Bible institutes, presses, and revivalistic agencies in the 1940s and 1950s. Youth for Christ and many other fundamentalist campus organizations grew. Billy Graham was undoubtedly the most visible proponent of Fundamentalism.

In the 1960s and 1970s the theory of evolution and the interpretation of Genesis again rankled many Southern Baptists. Ammerman states that as Southern Baptists broke out of their isolation and into the mainstream of American religious culture in the 1950s and 1960s, SBC scholars began to apply methods and discuss ideas from the larger stream of American intellectual thought. Ralph Elliott, a professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, published The Message of Genesis in 1961 through the denomination’s Broadman press. Elliott used historical critical methods to understand the middle-eastern historical and literary context of the Hebrew writers. Elliott also compared oral traditions within the texts. Ammerman states that for Baptist fundamentalists fearing the changes of the period, Elliot’s book provided the basis to launch an attack to save the SBC from modernism. Thus in the 1962 SBC, many conservatives wanted Elliott fired. The SBC establishment resisted

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78 Farnsley, 36.
79 Ammerman, 63.
81 Ammerman, 64.
and the trustees of the seminary fired Elliott only when against their requests he sought to reprint the book with another publisher. Many fundamentalists expressed frustration that the trustees did not directly fire Elliott. The 1963 SBC adopted a revised Baptist Faith and Message that moved the denomination another step closer to adopting a creed. To fundamentalists, this document affirmed biblical inerrancy.

Again in 1969 furor unfolded around the interpretation of Genesis when G. Henton Davies adopted a nonliteral reading of the early Genesis stories in the Broadman Bible Commentaries. The SBC rejected the volume and asked the Sunday School Board not to distribute the text and to commission another writer. The Board of Trustees of the Sunday School Board did not, however, perceive that they were obligated to do exactly as the messengers instructed. The Sunday School Board sold all the remaining volumes in Great Britain and commissioned another writer who shared many of Davies' views, but expressed them in a somewhat more diplomatic fashion. This action angered fundamentalists and contributed to the perception that the SBC seminaries, agencies, and boards were not responsive to their desires though the conservative side prevailed in virtually all SBC votes. Conservative frustration mounted over against the way that moderates interpreted the Baptist Faith and Message. Ammerman states that this frustration coupled with the social turmoil of the 1960s and the apparent ineffectiveness of liberal denominations drove many conservatives into the fundamentalist camp.82

The 1970s became a period in which fundamentalists built their forces and solidified their constituents. Fundamentalist pastors established the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship to support each other. They began publishing books and establishing journals: the Southern Baptist Journal and the Southern Baptist Advocate. They also established schools to complement other fundamentalist schools: Mid-America Seminary, and Criswell Bible College. They consciously promoted each other at evangelism and Bible conferences throughout the nation. In the late 1970s Judge Paul Pressler realized that fundamentalists could use their voting strength to reshape the institutions and agencies through a series of

82 Ammerman, 69.
presidential victories in the SBC. And thus, a political tactic was developed to bring about
the SBC reformation.

Historical conditions important to Southern Baptists underwent changes in the 1960s and
1970s that challenged many fundamentalists, who were against gay rights, feminism,
secularization of public schools, affirmative action, legalization of abortion, welfare,
slackening of capital punishment, and cuts in military spending.Southern Baptist
fundamentalists charged “liberals” with subverting the denomination with neo-orthodoxy,
historical-critical interpretations of the Bible, lack of belief in the historical and scientific
accuracy of the Bible, and loss of evangelistic zeal.

Implications for the Reformation Movement

The present chapter began by describing fictional characters who reflected different
world views. The illustrations suggested ways that historical contexts and circumstances
impact (but not determine) world views. The chapter also summarized a study of three
prominent historical rhetors who exhibited competing world views that coexisted in the
Southern Baptist denomination from its inception. The world views expressed in the rhetoric
of the three historical rhetors provided a portent of the types of messages and symbols that
rhetors used in the Pastors’ Conferences and SBC Forums from 1979 to 1990. Then it examined
three historical figures and the world views they prescribed. An understanding of world
views should help determine the types of messages and symbols that motivate and threaten
the constituents of each world view. Like Bormann’s Fantasy Theme Analysis, if one can
determine the god and devil terms, then it is possible from a cultural theory standpoint to
predict rhetorical themes, symbols, and behaviors that emanate from a world view.

83 See Ammerman, chapter 4, 72-125; see also Martin M. Marty, “Fundamentalism as a

84 Paige Patterson, “Stalemate,” [The Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention,
a Special Issue] Theological Educator (1985): 3-10; Paul Pressler, “An Interview with
Judge Paul Pressler,” [The Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention, a Special Issue].
The present description suggests that the fundamentalist world view encourages control over beliefs, values, and social relationships. But this factor alone does not explain the reformation movement since fundamentalists participated in the SBC for more than 100 years. The chapter also noted that in the 1960s and 1970s there arose among fundamentalists a shared grievance. They felt that the culture's social values and beliefs had dramatically changed and were in need of correction. They also expressed the perception that the denomination had veered toward modernism and it was in need of correction. In response, fundamentalists developed organizations, publishers, and schools to support their world views. Several factors fueled a determined reformation movement: 1) a preexistent hierarchical world view, 2) the demythology of the idea of a unified and triumphant SBC, 3) an increase in identifiable threats (from the culture and from the SBC), and 4) a well-organized political mechanism.

Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's theory provides a useful frame of reference to see how different portions of society perceive the world and understand historical factors that threaten and motivate world views. The focus of the rest of the present study will turn to interpreting ritual enactment of the conflicting world views in the phases of the Southern Baptist Social Drama.
Chapter three analyzes the rhetorical and ritual aspects of the beginning phase of the SBC reformation movement. Each stage of a social drama possesses its own unique characteristics and rhetoric, and Turner offers a dramaturgical model to analyze the rhetorical forms and roles enacted in the symbolic breach at the 1979 Pastors' Conference.

**Breach Rhetoric from a Social Drama Perspective**

A breach, according to Turner, occurs when an individual or group breaks a rule of social relations. Normal social processes become, over time, symbolic of the correct way of conducting social actions. These norms express something about the social relationships. A breach (such as a conference speaker wields agitative and confrontational rhetoric to attack the leadership of the denomination) in that norm automatically challenges the social relationships (between members of the audience holding differing views about the leadership).

Another theorist, Robert Cathcart, argues that movements are utopian strivings that call attention to faults of the established order and suggest a corrected order. When the established order reciprocates, Cathcart argues that "dialectical enjoinement" of two sides meets the rhetorical definition of movement and distinguishes movement rhetoric from other dramatistic forms. He asserts that movements are rhetorical acts established by a particular rhetorical form.\(^1\) Cathcart states, "I will argue that movements are a kind of ritual conflict whose most distinguishing form is confrontation."\(^2\) He distinguishes confrontational rhetoric, which questions an underlying epistemology, and group ethic from managerial rhetorics which are almost all Aristotelian rhetorics that support the existing system.\(^3\)

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2 Cathcart, "Confrontation as Rhetorical Form," 235.
Cathcart’s theory is an attempt to provide a rhetorical definition of movement. Turner’s dramaturgical conception can offer a more thorough explanation of movements that expands the perception of rhetorical critics.

Whereas Cathcart’s theory is only interested in language, Turner’s model allows critics to also observe symbolic activities that often communicate values at their deepest levels. Ritual events pervade society with Fourth of July celebrations, weekly church services, inaugurations, funerals, Super Bowl victory celebrations, and many others. These events communicate messages about social relationships and social meanings. The Pastors’ Conferences communicate important messages about social relationships and create social meanings for many Baptists that attended the annual meetings. The symbolic actions typically reinforced existing beliefs about Southern Baptist values and social order. The Pastors’ Conferences showcase the most acclaimed orators and victorious crusaders. Characteristically dynamic speakers with successful records received invitations to the program, along with outstanding music evangelists and large and/or famous choirs. The event communicated unity in the denomination (before 1984) because other events offered little competition. Once the fundamentalist reformation movement encouraged moderate Baptists to form a counter movement, they created a competing event as an alternative to the Pastors’ Conference. Thus pre-reformation Pastors’ Conferences symbolized Southern Baptist unity and triumphalism.

The Pastors’ Conferences and the SBC meetings served for many years as an annual pilgrimage for thousands of Baptists. It was an event in which pilgrims could participate in large communal experiences with friends from all over the denomination whom they encountered once a year. Baptists from many different walks of life, social states, and levels of education participated in the communal events that symbolized shared beliefs, values, and social relationships. For many audience members, the events furnished re-acquaintance opportunity with friends with whom they attended Baptist universities and seminaries (the seminaries sponsor reunion functions in conjunction with the convention meetings). For many

3 Cathcart, “Confrontation as Rhetorical Form,” 238.
pastors and pastors' wives (only a few SBC women pastors in 1979) these worship experiences provided the only opportunity for them to worship without responsibilities, evaluation, or criticism. Therefore the ritual event also symbolized denominational brotherhood, renewed friendships, and retreat from everyday responsibilities.

Turner categorizes communal experiences like the Pastors' Conferences as periods of liminality. In periods of liminality, the mundane and the particular is transcended by concern for the humane and the universal. Liminality occurs in communal experiences when everyday roles are replaced by a perception of universal brotherhood, and normal social structures are temporarily abandoned.¹ Turner explains,

Liminality itself is a complex phase or condition. It is often the scene and time for the emergence of a society's deepest values in the form of sacred dramas and objects—sometimes the re-enactment periodically of cosmogonic narratives or deeds of saintly, godly, or heroic establishers of morality, basic institutions, or ways of approaching transcendent beings or powers. But it may also be the venue and occasion for the most radical scepticism—always relative, of course, to the given culture's repertoire of sceptical concepts and images—about cherished values and rules.⁵

During periods of liminality, group fantasies are created and expressed. These periods often reinforce a culture's values, but sometimes it can become a staging area for a challenge to a group's core values. Because liminal periods ritually separate the participants from their every day roles, social relationships and values, these liminal periods carry the capacity to reinforce or overthrow structures and relationships. Because the Pastors' Conferences created communal experiences that celebrated Southern Baptist triumphalism, unity, and brotherhood, they also held the potential to criticize and reevaluate previous standards and social relationships. Thus fundamentalists used a critical liminal event to challenge participants to create a new vision of the SBC.


⁵ Turner, Anthropology of Performance 102.
Chapter two noted several factors that combined to create a determined fundamentalist reformation movement of the SBC: The conditions were 1) a pre-existent hierarchical worldview, 2) the loss of the idea of a unified and triumphant SBC, 3) an increase in identifiable threats (from the culture and from the SBC), and 4) a well-organized political mechanism. Fundamentalists came to the 1979 SBC with a clear strategy to elect a series of presidents to the SBC who would appoint a series of fundamentalist committees who would in-turn select fundamentalist trustees to SBC institutions. Thus with a series of fundamentalist presidents who would agree to execute the plan, fundamentalists could control all SBC institutions. The fundamentalist scheme evolved from a decade of frustration and careful planning by skilled strategists.

During the 1970s, the fundamentalist paper, *The Southern Baptist Journal*, edited by William Powell, expounded fundamentalist ideals and vigorously attacked opponents. It highlighted statements with great shock value to Baptists. For example, it published the prayer of Randall Lolley (later the president of Southeastern Seminary) for a luncheon as a part of the opening ceremonies of a brewery. It published parts of a University of Richmond religion professor’s address to a Unitarian church that suggested the early church added the conception of the deity of Christ to the New Testament. Harold Lindsell, the former editor of the magazine *Christianity Today*, published *The Battle for the Bible* and its sequel, *The Bible in the Balance*, that attacked “liberal” SBC seminaries which were lax in teaching the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible. Lindsell lauded two Baptist fundamentalist schools begun in the 1970s: Criswell Center for Biblical Studies (later Criswell College) and Mid-America Baptist Seminary. Also in the late 1970s, fundamentalists dominated the Pastors’ Conferences and began using the opportunities to denounce modernism and theological liberalism. Bill Leonard reports,

At the 1977 Pastors’ Conference just prior to the annual SBC meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, W. A. Criswell and Adrian Rogers were among the speakers who denounced the growing influence of noninerrantists in the convention. In a sermon entitled “The Infallible Word of God,” Criswell declared that the Bible contained no scientific errors and those who said it did were “false teachers.”

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Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College, and Paul Pressler, a Houston Appeals Court Judge, canvassed the South (in at least fifteen states) prior to the 1979 SBC meeting, and developed an efficient precinct-style political organization. They encouraged fundamentalist churches to send their full slate of messengers (Southern Baptist term for voting delegates) to elect the inerrantist candidate. Throughout the 1970s, fundamentalists consolidated their constituents through television media, evangelism conferences, newspapers, journals, and meetings of fundamentalist pastors. Their frustration grew out of a common perception that their beliefs and values were not respected or expressed in the SBC. They felt ostracized from the leadership of the denomination, cut-off from the powers that shaped convention policies, and excluded from ideological currents in the seminaries.

Fundamentalists came to the 1979 Pastors’ Conference and SBC meetings prepared to act.

The Pastors’ Conference annually meets on the Sunday evening and Monday before each SBC that meets Tuesday through Thursday. It is a large event, attracting thousands, that traditionally features Southern Baptists’ most acclaimed orators, and the 1979 Conference reportedly attracted 10,000. The conference is not an official function of the SBC, yet it serves as the ideological centerpiece, and presidents of the Pastors’ Conferences often are elected later as presidents of the SBC. The Pastors’ Conferences are generally worship extravaganzas, with choirs, orchestras, and big productions, and typically feature approximately thirteen messages.

The 1979 Pastors’ Conference symbolically enacted what many Baptists expressed about the SBC leadership. In a metaphor of war (many writers use the metaphor),

6 Bill J. Leonard, God's Last and Only Hope (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 135.

7 Leonard, God’s Last and Only Hope 136.

8 See Paige Patterson, “Stalemate,” [The Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention, a Special Issue] The Theological Educator (1985): 4; Also see Arthur E. Farnsley, II., Majority Rules: The Politicization of the Southern Baptist Convention (Baptist Church). (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, University Microfilms No. 9027907, 1990), chapter 2.

fundamentalist leaders had sounded an alarm and gathered their forces for the first battle of the war. They had tested their strength in a decade of skirmishes, ran reconnaissance missions, and gathered intelligence reports. In the 1979 Pastors’ Conference, several leaders blew bugles to rally the troops and sound the battle charge.

At least four symbolic acts signalled the break from the political and social norms for the Pastors’ Conference and the SBC. The first act was overt and direct campaigning for an ideological candidate prior to and during the 1979 meetings. The second symbolic act was the direct endorsement in the Pastors’ Conference of Adrian Rogers by W. A. Criswell, a former president of the SBC. The third symbolic act was the use of unconventional, agitative, and so-called demagogic rhetoric by a popular fundamentalist speaker in the Pastors’ Conference. The fourth symbolic act was the suggestion of a national political agenda in the rhetoric of a prominent leader in the Pastors’ Conference.

**Symbolic Act: One**

The 1979 Pastors’ Conference and SBC witnessed fundamentalists actively campaigning and voting as a block. Prior to 1979, the established custom of the SBC stipulated as strictly taboo any active promotion or campaigning for candidates to office. The taboo supposedly symbolized trust, and the position of president was considered to be primarily an honorary position with little power. No one had expressed a desire for the position in order to change the personnel of the committees. Numerous candidates were typically nominated from the floor of the SBC meeting, and the nomination itself was considered a great honor, complimenting a life-time of service to the denomination. This custom served Southern Baptists for more than 125 years. Fundamentalists objected to the taboo, justifying their actions by arguing that the custom encouraged covert promotions of insiders.\(^1\) They contended that open campaigns reflected the will of common Baptist laypersons. Thus many


\(^{11}\) Farnsley, 51-52. see also Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis*: vol.1, chapter 4.
fundamentalists attended the 1979 Pastors’ Conference and SBC with the expressed purpose of breaking a tradition and reforming the denomination through elections.

**Symbolic Act: Two**

The overt and direct endorsement in the Pastors’ Conference of Adrian Rogers by W. A. Criswell, a former president of the SBC, broke an established custom for the conduct of a former SBC president. Criswell, the long-time (about forty years) pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas (the largest Southern Baptist Church), expressed staunch fundamentalism in sermons and a book entitled, *Why I Preach That the Bible Is Literally True.* Criswell followed Adrian Rogers on the program and welcomed everyone to Texas, stating, “We will have a great time here if for no other reason than to elect Adrian Rogers as our president.”

Sustained ovations revealed the audience’s approval. Ironically, Criswell then suggested that the Pastors’ Conference committee had asked him to speak on a spiritual subject (the blood of Jesus) in order not to be controversial. Leonard states,

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. Criswell’s action not only solidified popular support for Rogers but it also signaled that things had changed in the SBC.13

**Symbolic Act: Three**

The third symbolic act that signalled the break was the use of unconventional, agitative, and so-called demagogic rhetoric by a popular fundamentalist speaker. None of the speakers matched the vicious rhetoric of James Robison, a fiery controversial evangelist. Before turning to an analysis of his speech, it is useful to examine a social movement

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12 W. A. Criswell, *The Blood of Jesus* audiotape, rec. 10 June 1979, Pastors’ Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

13 Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope* 137.
perspective offered by Stephen Goldzwig that helps to understand Robison's breach role in the SBC social drama.\(^{14}\)

Goldzwig's Contribution to the Concept of Breach Rhetoric

Goldzwig offers a study of a so-called demagogue, Louis Farrakhan (a leader of the fundamentalist, separatist black Muslim Nation of Islam), that can augment Turner's description of a dramaturgical breach.\(^{15}\) So-called demagogues fulfill a role that may not appear rational, because traditional methods of persuasion do not symbolically signal a break from the status quo. Goldzwig demonstrates how critics can analyze the agitative rhetoric of Farrakhan using the large interpretive screen of a social movement perspective. To bring about symbolic realignment, a rhetor may employ unconventional terminology to create an epistemological conflict.\(^{16}\) According to Goldzwig,

A "rhetoric of symbolic realignment" uses extra-conventional or non-traditional languaging strategies that create and sustain ideological and/or moral conflict in the effort to induce symbolically cooperation in others, either directly or indirectly, for the expressed purposes of subverting salient aspects of the status quo; affirming other aspects of society; and 'realigning' political, social, or cultural meanings or realities.\(^{17}\)

A rhetoric of symbolic alignment may be composed of an agitative style that enacts the perceived inequities and frustration of the oppressed. The audience's perception of the situation may require the rhetor to break consensus practices with polarization, vilification, and conspiracy rhetoric in order to establish a new order that subverts the established order's value system.\(^{18}\) A rhetoric of symbolic realignment seeks to establish a moral superiority that justifies a break away from the established social norms and away from social


\(^{15}\) Goldzwig, “A Social Movement Perspective on Demagoguery,” 202-228.

\(^{16}\) Goldzwig, “A Social Movement Perspective on Demagoguery,” 208.

\(^{17}\) Goldzwig, “A Social Movement Perspective on Demagoguery,” 208.

relationships that established those norms. In 1979, fundamentalists enacted a symbolic realignment when a speaker used so-called demagogic rhetoric in the Pastors' Conference and the response from the audience expressed their approval of the symbolic realignment and the symbolic breach that challenged the social relationships between the “insiders” and “outsiders.”

James Robison's rhetorical strategies show a remarkable similarity to those used by Louis Farrakhan. Goldzwig illustrates how Farrakhan's rhetoric expressed the following tactics: The speaker 1) established himself as a heroic fundamentalist crusader, 2) fostered audience identification, 3) identified with historic religious prophets, 4) assumed a prophetic role of God's messenger, 5) warned of divine retribution, 6) bolstered a divine hierarchy, 7) provided a scapegoat, and 8) offered consensus breaking/creating statements. Robison's rhetoric expressed the same eight tactics in much the same manner. Both speakers perorated from different backgrounds (black Muslim and Southern Baptist) and addressed different audiences (black political rally and Southern Baptist pastors). Each speech contained different specifics, with Farrakhan scapegoating Jews and whites, and Robison scapegoating scholars, intellectuals, and Satan. Despite these differences, both speakers employed similar rhetorical forms. Robison's sermon used a rhetoric of symbolic alignment that closely resembles that of Farrakhan's.

In his first words Robison, established himself as a fundamentalist crusader and fostered audience identification through testifying that he would protect America from government bureaucratic censorship of religion. Robison gave an account of how a media station forced him from the air for being too political and how thousands rallied their support for him, with the result that his program was reinstated. He related,

And how I praise God for the men who joined us and the preachers from all denominational lines who came to stand for an important issue, of freedom of speech in this land. You'll be interested to know the attorneys of WFAA in Dallas and our attorneys will be meeting to talk about reinstating our program and putting us back on the air to preach the Bible as it is.


20 James Robison, Satan's Subtle Attacks audiotape, rec. 10 June 1979, Pastors' Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical
Robison explained that he would never stop pursuing his legal rights “to preach the Bible as it is to men as they are.” To applause, he stated,

We are going to go on to insure that the FCC and Congress removes all restrictions from the preachers of this land that proclaim the word of God. I will not stop until those restrictions have been removed. And so we will continue right on to the FCC and if necessary nationwide.

Robison consummately identified with the audience by showing his appreciation to two instrumental people. He noted,

I sincerely thank God for Southern Baptists. What I’m about to say, I mean from the bottom of my heart, as I will mean everything I say tonight from the bottom of my heart. I was led to Christ in a Southern Baptist church in this city, by a Southern Baptist pastor and his wife in this city, and they happen to be here tonight to hear me speak for a Southern Baptist meeting for I guess the first time. Because most of time where I speak is so far away, that they were unable to attend. I’d like you to meet the lady and the man that led me to Christ, Reverend and Mrs. Haile. Would you stand Mom and Pop Haile? 21

Robison identified with historic religious prophets, and he assumed a prophetic role of God’s messenger. Robison built his personal ethos and offered rhetorical “proof” for his prophetic message. Robison claimed,

Friend, I’m not here tonight representing my ministry. I’m not here in behalf of my ministry. I’m here representing the word of God, the Bible. I’m here representing Jesus Christ, my Lord and my Savior. I’m here representing God himself, God almighty. He gave his life for me. I must be willing to sacrifice my life, my ministry, and my reputation for the upholding and the building of his truth and his word. I’m not here in defense of my reputation. I’m here to proclaim the word of God. I’m not here to win a popularity contest, but to preach what God’s word says.

This statement closely resembled a quotation from Farrakhan. Farrakhan said, “Whether I lose my life is not important because my life should be constructed on the basis of truth, and I should live for the truth, and when I cannot live any longer, I should die on behalf of the truth.” 22 Robison inoculated his audience from criticism by anticipating those who might

Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

21 Robison, Satan’s Subtle Attacks audiotape, rec. 10 June 1979,

22 Goldzwig, “A Social Movement Perspective on Demagoguery,” 213.
call his message a “cheap shot” and by identifying with the suffering of Christ. He exclaimed,

I wonder if it was a cheap shot from Charles Spurgeon that cost his affiliation with his denomination? I wonder if it was a cheap shot that put the Wesley brothers out of the church and into the fields? Was it a cheap shot made the life of Roger Williams, a life of suffering and rejection? A cheap shot that brought great suffering to William Penn? Was it a cheap shot that severed the head of John the Baptist from his body? A cheap shot that led Peter to be crucified upside down? A cheap shot that exiled John the Beloved to Patmos agony? Was it a cheap shot that kept John Bunyan in prison for years, writer of Pilgrim’s Progress? Was it a cheap shot that crushed life’s blood out Stephen? Was it a cheap shot that caused Martin Luther to become an outcast, when he nailed his thesis to the door? Was it a cheap shot that finally ended the life of the Apostle Paul? Was it a cheap shot that sent Elijah running for his life? Was it a cheap shot that nailed Jesus Christ the Son of God to the Cross? Friend if those were cheap shots, then just let me join the ranks of the cheap shot artists.

Robison threatened his audience and warned of divine retribution if his message were not heeded. Robison warned,

I encourage you tonight to pledge allegiance to the Lord God, and to never be guilty of following a denomination, for the sake of following a denomination, nor following a preacher, for the sake of following a preacher. If we do that, then we are more foolish than those who followed Jim Jones to a suicidal death in the jungles of Guyana. My friends, if we as Southern Baptists forsake the truth of God’s word, and if we as a denomination tolerate liberalism in any form, and continue to support it, we will be guilty of the suicidal death of countless millions of people throughout the world. We must not tolerate anyone who does not teach and preach that the Bible is the word of the Almighty God. I pray that every person in this assembly will make up your mind that we are going to stand for the truth of God’s word without apology and without compromise.

Later in the message Robison implied that the Gay movement was the result of ignoring the Bible. He proclaimed,

The departure from God and the rejection of God, as God, leads to the second step in our rapid descent into destruction. And the second step God said is changing my truth into a lie. And then God said, “I will give you up to lust and to vile affections, and you’ll defile your bodies in lustful living and in unnatural vile affections.” And that is exactly what is happening in our land today. Because we have forsaken the word of truth. And God knows we must uphold truth as all costs. We must fight Satan if it costs us our life, and stand for the purity of the word of God.

Robison bolstered a divine hierarchy and suggested that it was a key component to Christian life. He repeated many times throughout the sermon an affirmation of the Bible. In one example he stated,

Just in case you don’t know it, without the Bible, you haven’t got a message. Without the Bible, you have no mission. Without the Bible, you have no evangelism. It’s not the

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Bible plus something, and it's not the Bible minus something. And it does make a
difference which Bible you read.

Robison clarified his hierarchical conception of the Bible. He postulated,

Listen closely, when we say the Bible is verbally inspired, we mean that God’s
supervision of what was written extended to the individual words in the original text,
as given in the scriptures. God did not give men ideas, and they were then permitted to
record in any way that pleased them. God’s inspiration extended to the individual
words. When we say the Bible is plenarily inspired, we mean that it is inspired in its
totality from Genesis right through Revelation. Some Scripture may seem to some to be
more important or valuable than others, but the scripture is inspired in its entirety. No
scripture is more or less inspired than any other scripture. All of the Bible is inspired. It
is infallible, inerrant in all of its content. Because God inspired the Bible, the scriptures
are without error. There is no geographical error, no historical error, no scientific error,
no religious error, nor doctrinal error to be found in the word of God, because God would
not be party to deception, by propagating error.

Robison suggested that a great conspiracy was undermining the true faith. He attacked
academic freedom, educators and scholarship throughout the message. He stated,

Please listen to me. When Satan wishes to destroy the thinking of a denom ination, he
will begin by influencing the thinking of those who teach the mind of others. He will
attack the places of learning, the places of instruction. He will seek to sow seeds of
doubt in the minds of those who are instructing others. He doesn’t ever want me to stand
up and say the Bible is not the word of God. He simply wants to create in the hearts and
minds of the hearers, and learners, a seed of scepticism. An attitude of scoffing about the
deeper truths of God’s holy word.

He employed dynamic oratorical skills to castigate seminary professors. He accused Baptist
educators of “deadness.” Referring to them, he said,

You have become walking corpses. Have you ever noticed how many of these instructors
of higher learning look like they’ve been embalmed with the fluid of higher education.
I don’t know why they think they have to come out and sit on the platform and look like
a God forsaken corpse. Pickled in intellectual skepticism, God forgive them.

Robison related how he and other fundamentalist speakers were black-listed from speaking to
chapel services at a Baptist university. He triumphantly proclaimed that he met university
students in a basement underneath the chapel. He stated, “Praise God, I’ll take the basement
any time, if I can just have the Bible in the basement, that’s all I care about.” He suggested
that the conspirators against the Bible would be, “suave, sophisticated, educated, smooth.”

He condemned academic freedom and said,

Much is taught in the name of academic freedom. Let me give you the definition of
academic freedom from the latest edition of American Political Dictionary. “Academic
freedom is the principle that teachers and students have the right and the duty to pursue the search for truth, wherever the inquiry may lead, free of political, religious or other restrictions except those of accepted standards of scholarship.” My friends I have an announcement to make tonight. The search for truth has ended. I hold truth in my hand. And it is the word of God. It is the Bible.

Robison called for a break from the SBC leadership and called for the creation of a new consensus of Biblical orthodoxy. He roused the audience to ovations and shouts of approval in condemnation of SBC leadership, and portrayed them as “liberals,” “snakes,” “termites,” “devils,” and “cancer.” Robison elaborated,

My friend, I wouldn’t tolerate a rattlesnake in my house. . . . I wouldn’t tolerate a cancer in my body. I want you to know that anyone who’d cast doubt on the word of God is worse than cancer and worse than snakes.

Later in the sermon Robison proposed to an applauding and cheering audience that Southern Baptists should throw liberal educators out of Baptist schools. He stated,

I believe far more than that. I believe we must not only elect a president who believes the Bible is the infallible, inerrant word of the living God, but we must elect a president who is totally committed to the removal from this denomination any teacher, any educator who does not believe the Bible is the infallible, inerrant word of the living God. If you tolerate any form of liberalism, any form of skepticism of the word of God, any belittling of the importance of the word of God and its doctrines; if you belittle the importance of biblical, New Testament evangelism, you are the enemy of God.

Robison maligned the leadership of the denomination and continued in anti-establishment rhetoric. He suggested,

Some of them are just like the government bureaucrats. Brother they’re ingrained and they’re worse than cancer. Now listen to what I’m saying. You want to know what the leadership wants, that tries to turn their back on the truth? They want somebody to stand up at these meetings and put another coat of paint on the house. They want us to make the house look as good as it can. But the truth is, friend, that the house has a foundation that’s eaten up with termites. . . . You’d better pray to God to send somebody to root those little devils out.

An audio tape recorded spontaneous applause numerous times during the sermon, and when Robison suggested that the convention should “root those little devils out,” the applause was tremendous. A witness reported that when Robison suggested that they elect a fundamentalist president, “the crowd went wild.”

23 Leonard, God’s Last and Only Hope 119.
According to Goldzwig’s description of a “so-called demagogue” and in terms of Turner’s model, Robison fluently expressed the frustrations and fears of those who believed themselves to be disenfranchised. His vitriolic style expressed the audience’s challenge to the dominant discourse. The response to Robison’s rhetoric suggests that the majority of participants in the Pastors’ Conference were predisposed toward his statements and ardently supported the breach with the moderate leadership of the SBC. The rhetor and the audience portrayed a break with the consensus, a collision of competing forces, and a creation of a new consensus. Robison enacted the archetypical hero battling an evil bureaucracy, defending the true faith, and the audience identified with its new hero (the envisioned fundamentalist crusader). As he vilified the enemy and acted-out the perceived conflict, Robison’s non-traditional language (according to the norms of the Pastors’ Conference) voiced the fundamentalists’ perception of an epistemological imbalance in the denomination’s leadership.

Robison also gave a clear expression of a strong hierarchical world view that bears an uncanny resemblance to the world view of Louis Farrakhan. Perhaps in the same manner that Farrakhan expressed the frustrations of a group that perceived themselves disadvantaged, Robison expressed the fears of a threatened group. Goldzwig offers advice concerning Farrakhan that is relevant to an analysis of Robison. He states,

> Those who would use a rationalist paradigm to point out the ethical dilemmas in Farrakhan’s use of suggestion, exaggeration, and innuendo in these statements may be overlooking his basic task. The need to establish a relationship with his particular audience is much more important than the “facts” at hand.²⁴

A critical function of Robison’s speech was not to argue logically, but to establish a rhetoric of symbolic realignment and to enact the breach phase of the Southern Baptist social drama. Farrakhan’s radical rhetoric made other black leaders appear statesman-like to members of the audience, simply because the other black leaders’ rhetoric was not as extreme. To those outside Farrakhan’s audience, his rhetoric indicted all those connected with the movement, leading other leaders, such as Jesse Jackson, to distance themselves from Farrakhan. Robison’s

²⁴ Goldzwig, “A Social Movement Perspective on Demagoguery,” 213.
use of suggestion, exaggeration, and innuendo favorably shaped the appearance of less radical fundamentalist leaders to fundamentalist and conservative audiences. However, for moderates and many in SBC leadership, Robison's attacks on scholars brought condemnation to the movement. Robison's rhetoric probably contributed to moderates underestimating the fundamentalist capability and skill to carry through with ten-year takeover scheme. Robison played a fringe role in the movement after sounding the symbolic charge with this speech. The fundamentalist breach, in part signalled by Robison, provided meaning to many Southern Baptists and convinced them that they were launching the second great reformation of the Christian Church.25

Symbolic Act: Four

The fourth symbolic act that signaled the break was the endorsement of the New Christian Right's agenda for national politics by a prominent fundamentalist speaker. Another Southern Baptist taboo was that Pastors' Conference speakers should not promote political slates. With the exception of the temperance movement, John Eighmy documents the careful reticence of the majority of Southern Baptist pastors to speak on social issues.26 Charles Stanley challenged this taboo and expressed a militant hierarchical world view. He did not use the unconventional rhetorical tactics of Robison, but clearly expressed a political agenda. He did not name any political action movements, such as Jerry Falwell's "Moral Majority," but he expressed the content of the positions adopted by the New Christian Right.27 Stanley clearly condemned conservative reservations concerning political endorsements. Many fundamentalists and conservatives respected Stanley and followed his widely distributed television programs. He would later be elected president of the SBC. His


sermon outlined many political stances that were approved in resolutions in succeeding conventions.

In his address to the 1979 Pastors' Conference, Stanley expressed fundamentalist demonic terms: humanism, socialism, communism, liberalism, abortion, the United Nations, the ERA, the ACLU, and the voluntary army, with the term "humanism" receiving the most condemnation. Humanism, he contended, caused the disintegration of the American way of life, and non-vigilant pastors allowed America to slide from its greatness. He attacked an individualist world view (which prefers to distance itself from social stances) and goaded pastors to promote conservative politics. He concluded that the most important key to saving America was that pastors must adopt a fundamentalist conception of the Bible and that would cause them to advocate conservative politics. He stated,

I believe in the light of what is happening in our country, it is time we wake up. It is time we cease to sit within the four walls of our churches and hide behind our programs, and claim that God has called us to preach and therefore that alleviates any responsibility we have to make the gospel known in the political realm. We hide behind our calling oftentimes, because we don't have the courage and the boldness to stand up, and speak up and say what needs to be said. . . . This is not a time for compromise, not a time for cowards, but this is a time for men to stand up and be counted for Jesus Christ. I believe that unless we do stand up, we are going to lose this republic. 28

Stanley suggested that humanists were behind the scenes conspiring against American freedom and plotting to weaken the United States. He began this tack by suggesting that government leaders were not in control. He insinuated,

It doesn't look like the President is running it. It doesn't seem that the Congress is running it. But I'm sure we're not just drifting along. Somebody is leading us. And more important than who is leading us, Where are we being led? And I want to show you where we are being led, I want to prove it. We're heading down the road to socialism just as fast as they can take us there without too much repercussion. Let me give you an example. Let's go back to the beginning of the United Nations. What has the United Nations ever done for the United States? Nothing, but to become a hotbed infiltrating our nation with spies, and being the source of things are beginning to come into our arena today, like the International Year of the Child. Like the International Year of Women. All of this was spawned back yonder years ago. And has its roots in socialism and communism and that is a fact.

28 Charles F. Stanley, Stand Up America audiotape, rec. 11 June 1979, Pastors' Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
Stanley identified humanism as the great evil behind activities that weakened American freedom. He stated,

And the basic problem today is another religion. It isn't the Buddhists, it isn't the Mohammedans, but rather it is humanism. In 1860 they changed their name in order to infiltrate the churches, and the institutions. Now they call themselves the humanists. Humanism, what is humanism but this. It is an outright denial of the lordship of Jesus Christ and of the sovereignty of God. Humanism denies God is the center of the earth, the center of life. Man is sufficient within himself. My friend, those who lead this nation have as their basic philosophy humanism.

Stanley suggested that a humanist plot weakened the American economy and American schools. He explained,

Up until the 60's, the U.S. was making progress upward. We were keeping up economically. We were doing so in our trade with other nations of the world. And we were still respected as a great and mighty nation. You check it out for yourself. You cannot, you cannot deny the correlation between the removal of the word of God from the schools, the removal of prayers and the beginning of the disintegration of our society. It cannot be denied. . . . Look at what is happening in our schools. Says what they may about Bible reading and prayer in the schools, but I'll tell you one thing as long as we pray and read the Bible, the teachers weren't being raped. They weren't being stabbed, they weren't being shot.

The humanist plot, according to Stanley included pornography, drugs, and alcohol. And he implied that Senator Edward Kennedy participated in the plot. He imputed,

Isn't it strange all the talk we give about drugs when some of those men who make decisions are drunkards. They're not alcoholics, they are drunkards. That's what God called them. Listen it's strange to me that a man is put in jail when he is caught driving drunk. But a man who makes the decisions that alter the course of human history for America can sit in the Congressional seat and not be put in jail.

Another conspiracy plot was the volunteer army. Stanley reasoned,

For example, Lenin said one of the steps to conquer a capitalistic society, one of them is to get them to have a voluntary army. What do you suppose we have? You know, you'd think that men in Congress, who have read those statements would have sense enough to say, "Wait a minute, that's what Lenin said." That's just one of the many things he said about what we're doing.

Stanley connected liberal theology with the conspiracy plot. He suggested,

But let me remind you of something, that socialism flourishes best against a background of a liberal theology. I believe what God wants, He wants godly men, who believe the truth.
Continuing this argument, Stanley reasoned that Germany fell under the control of Adolf Hitler because "the church in Germany was so riddled with liberal theology."

Of the 1979 Pastors’ Conference addresses, Stanley’s sermon most clearly articulated the fundamentalist hierarchical world view. Stanley expressed a belief in an evil conspiracy behind all non-fundamentalist controlled aspects of society. His rhetoric enacted a perception of evil lurking behind changes in public school policies, changes in the economy, changes in laws, changes in the army. He expressed a perception of evil manipulating the national leadership, liberal seminaries, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the Gay movement. Stanley’s audience heartily signalled their approval of his message with sustained applause, and shouts throughout the message. One conclusion offered is that many in the audience also perceived grave threats from many different sectors of society. Stanley expressed the fears of a representative group of Southern Baptist pastors. Stanley’s sermon also expressed a paranoia of the world and a desire to control those aspects which were within their power. He argued for the correctness of a hierarchical world view in many different realms of life. This was the only Pastors’ Conference sermon that specifically addressed United States politics, and its reception signalled a symbolic breach with the SBC leadership and a readiness to endorse the positions of the political New Christian Right. To complete the breach, a staunch fundamentalist would need to be elected president of the SBC.

**Other Breach Acts**

Adrian Rogers would be elected president of the SBC in two days. Rogers’ address to the Pastors’ Conference preceded Robison’s sermon and was not as unconventional as Robison’s. Fundamentalists saw him as the heir-apparent for the position, though he did not permit his name to be placed in nomination until the morning of the election. Rogers was well known for his articulate and poetic delivery, clever one-line arguments, and rich-sounding voice. Fundamentalists and conservatives admired his leadership as he pastored then the second largest SBC church (Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee), as he presided over the Pastors’ Conference, and as he provided leadership in founding the fundamentalist Mid-
America Baptist Seminary. In the present study, no other speaker offered as many addresses to the Pastors' Conferences and the SBC meetings. He would be elected president of the SBC three times. He played a leading role in the reformation movement.

The central idea of Rogers' sermon shared much in common with Robison's message. The title of his message, "The Great Deceiver," focused on the conspiracy of Satan in sponsoring small lies that ultimately cause great destruction. Like Robison, Rogers' rhetoric expressed the following tactics: The speaker 1) established himself as a heroic fundamentalist crusader, 2) fostered audience identification, 3) bolstered a divine hierarchy, 4) provided a scapegoat, and 5) offered consensus breaking/creating statements.

Roger's first statement accomplished several things in honoring a fellow fundamentalist pastor. Rogers lauded,

And we say tonight, Praise the Lord Dr. Lindsay for the music from the First Baptist Church Jacksonville, Florida. I don't know whether that will help me preach or it took all the preach out of me. But what a blessing tonight to hear that music tonight, and the statistics at the First Baptist Church Jacksonville, Florida are phenomenal. They just built a big auditorium that seats somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 people in downtown Jacksonville. Now you just can't have a church anymore in downtown, you know. And brother Homer told me the other day, "Adrian I don't know what I gone a do. It's filled up and running over, and we're praying about a brand new auditorium." Can you believe that! It's just amazing and a blessing.29

Rogers attributed success with Biblical orthodoxy, for Homer Lindsay possessed a well known reputation as a staunch fundamentalist. Rogers subtly reminded listeners of his own success and equated it with that of biblical orthodoxy, since audience members knew of his beliefs and his leadership of one of the largest churches in the country located in a downtown area of a southern city. To support this point, later in the sermon he offered rhetorical "proof" of the success of Biblical orthodoxy. He named a list of fundamentalist pastors of large churches. He asserted,

The churches that are reaching, and winning, and baptizing people in this day of sagging statistics. And everyone of them, I say everyone of them is a conservative, fundamental, Bible-believer. Everyone of them. Homer Lindsay believes the Bible, John Bisagno believes the Bible, Richard Jackson, Bailey Smith, they all believe the Bible. Dr. W. A. Criswell, I think he believes it. Stan Coffey believes the Word of God,

29 Adrian Rogers, The Great Deceiver audiotape, rec. 10 June 1979, Pastors' Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
Jerry Vines, Bobby Moore, Harrel O’Chester, Jim Henry, O. S. Hawkins, Tom Elliff, these boys say, “I believe the book, the Bible is the inerrant, infallible word of God.” And because they believe it, and because when they preach, their trumpet gives no uncertain sound, God is using those churches.

Rogers established himself as a crusader and dared the audience to join him. He challenged,

I tell you it is high time that we as God’s children open our mouths. The greatest sin in my estimation of the twentieth-century church is silence. I for one am going to refuse to be cowarded down and let somebody shut me up. It is Satan’s plan to silence good people in desperate days, and get us intimidated. I want to serve notice, to all those who would like to intimidate all those who believe the Bible. They can hang it on their feet.

The central idea of Rogers’ message developed a conspiracy theme with the suggestion that Satan primarily perverts truth through subtle distortions. He stated,

And because he (Satan) is the master liar, he tells the cleverest lies and the cleverest lies that sound the most like the truth. And every good lie has just a little truth in it. We had a clock that wouldn’t even run that was right twice-a-day. And any lie has some truth in it. But I want to say, dear friend, that a clock that is five minutes wrong, is more dangerous than a clock that is five hours wrong.

Rogers equated clever lies with compromising stances of some Southern Baptist leaders. He contended,

Now I went to meeting that was called by our Southern Baptist leaders to talk about evangelism. And the leader, whom I respect said this, he is a very fine man, and I love him, but these were his first statements, or this was his first statement, he said, “Now gentlemen, we are not here to discuss theology, we are here to discuss evangelism.” I said, “That’s your first mistake.” Right there. Friend, let me tell you something, your zeal is never any greater than your conviction. And your convictions come out of the word of God. Don’t let anybody tell you that what I’m saying is not true, because you mark it down. You look and you see. The churches that are reaching, and winning and baptizing people in this day of sagging statistics. And everyone of them, I say everyone of them is a conservative, fundamental, Bible-believer. Everyone of them.

Rogers bolstered a strong hierarchical world view, with an accompanying chain of consequences. He argued,

You see the Devil would rather have you believe a wrong thing, than do a wrong thing, because the thought is the father of the deed. The Bible says, “As a man thinketh, so is he.” You sow a thought, you reap a deed. You sow a deed, you reap a habit. You sow a habit, you reap a character. You sow a character, you reap a destiny. And it all begins with a thought. “As a man thinketh, so is he.” And so if the Devil can get lies planted in your mind, then he has you, and conversely. Dear friend, you are not going to do anything right, until you think right.
His hierarchical world view was apparent in the disapproval of the equal rights movement and in the expression of a paternalistic view of women. He stated,

And right here we see Satan’s fib about women’s lib. It started right at this point. Satan says to Eve, “Eve I’m going to liberate you. You see what God told you to do and not to do is cramping your style. You have not had the fulfillment, that you ought to have. And Eve listen, there are great vistas out there. There are marvelous things you can do. After all Eve, you only go through life once. Grab all the gusto you can.” And so Eve now is listening to the Devil, when she ought to have been rebuking the Devil. She is now about to get liberated. Now let me say something about women’s liberation, lest you think I’m a chauvinists, humph. Anybody knows that a woman is infinitely superior to a man at being a woman. And everybody knows that a man is infinitely superior to a woman at being a man. And God made us different, that he might make us one. Don’t ever forget that it was God that made them in the beginning, male and female. And God said, that is good. And this unisex movement has been belched out of hell. Brother listen, my wife, Joyce may be equal with me, but thank God, she’s not the same as me. It’s the difference that attracted me, and 

In several illustrations, Rogers expressed an anti-scholarship bias and insinuated that Baptist scholars participated in Satan’s deception. He illustrated,

Two demons were heard talking, someone says, and one says to the other one, “If those liberal theologians ever discover the power of the cross, hell help us all, heaven will break loose.”

He described heretical ideas expressed by a Baptist professor. He recounted,

I had a tape played to me from some boy who questioned his professor in one of our Baptist schools. And that professor said, “Of course I don’t believe it was necessary for Jesus to die for man to be forgiven.” You think I’m lying? You come to me and I’ll give you his name. But it’s not polite to call names in public. Now listen, if we speak in glittering generalities, they say don’t do that. You name his name or keep quiet. Or if you name his name, they say don’t do that, don’t pick on personalities, just deal with principles. You know. That’s right. Let me tell you something friend. Apart from the blood of Jesus, there is no overcoming. There is no power. And thank God the blood has never lost its power. They overcame him by the blood of lamb. Billy Graham said that when he first started preaching, a college professor from Cornell came to him and said, “Young man, you are a very good speaker, and you have the potentiality to go places, but your going to have to leave out that blood stuff.” Billy said, “I made up my mind right then to preach on the blood of Jesus more than ever.” They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. You might as well throw snowballs at the rock of Gibraltar than try removing Satan apart from pleading the blood.

Rogers called for commitment to truth, suggesting that listeners break from anything that compromised truth. His stand for purity of truth implied that the SBC leadership’s bureaucratic stance was a part of Satan’s deception. Rogers stated,

I want to tell you it’s time that we stop trying to save our ministries. It’s time we stop trying to save our reputations. It’s time we stop trying to save our organizations. It’s time we get out of the boat with both feet and let the Devil take the hind most, live or
die, sink or swim, every inch, every ounce, and go for God. I believe that. We've not yet resisted unto blood. Don't let Satan cause you to back up, let up, shut up until you're taken up. Brother it's time to love not our lives to the death. Now listen, I don't have to live. They've come out with a new statistic on death recently. One out of one people die. I don't have to live, I don't even have to be liked, I want to love everybody and I want to be loved. But the man who tries to please everybody will please the devil most of all. It's time that God's people stood up.

Adrian Rogers' rhetoric was not as vitriolic as Robison's speech, nor did it promote a national political agenda as did Stanley's address. Like Robison and Stanley his message blamed disintegration on liberal scholarship, and expressed a conspiracy theme concerning a subtle and dangerous enemy. The addresses of Robison, Stanley and Rogers stood apart in these themes from the other messages delivered in the Pastors' Conference.

With the exception of Robison, Stanley, and Rogers, all of the other speakers developed traditional Pastors' Conference themes such as the need for evangelism, personal piety, and pastoral leadership qualities. With the exception of his endorsement of Adrian Rogers in his introduction, W. A. Criswell spoke on the traditional and noncontroversial topic of the redemptive blood of Jesus. James Ponder spoke on the topic of spiritual power. Clark Hutchinson spoke on the topic of spiritual leadership. Ralph Stone spoke about the ideal personal characteristics of a pastor. Richard Jackson spoke of the divine call to leadership. Jackson proved to be an enigmatic person to fundamentalist leaders. He was an

30 James A. Ponder, “The Revival of the Cutting Edge,” duplicated manuscripts, 11 June 1979, Pastors' Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

31 Clark G. Hutchinson, “God's Men Leading God's Church to Win God's World,” duplicated manuscripts, 11 June 1979, Pastors' Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

32 Ralph W. Stone, “Seeds of Success,” duplicated manuscripts, 11 June 1979, Pastors' Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

33 Richard A. Jackson, “When God Appoints a Man,” duplicated manuscripts, 11 June 1979, Pastors' Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
enormously successful pastor, whose church often led the denomination in baptisms. His theology was unquestionably conservative, his pulpit style was dynamic and Pastors’ Conferences often featured him. Yet he became critical of the fundamentalist takeover and ran as the moderate candidate for president in 1988 against Charles Stanley. He represented the closest that moderates came to defeating the reformation movement in the 1980s. Jim Henry expressed a strong authoritarian stance concerning the leadership of the pastor.34 He suggested that the decline in baptisms in the denomination occurred because of the decline of pastoral authority. He stated,

There must be that man, that man as Oswald Sanders said, “When the church is most prosperous when her pastors are strong spiritual leaders, sensitive to the Holy Spirit and aware that God’s hand is upon them and living in a sense of expectancy of the supernatural.” Then we’ll have great and strong churches . . . There is a shortfall of leadership among us. And it is either one of two things, pastors are not willing to lead, or churches are not willing to follow their leadership.

Henry pointed out the friction between a hierarchical world view and an individualistic world view. He opined.

Our cultural democracy has rubbed against biblical theocracy with God the head and the pastor as the undershepherd of the Father. Now we’ve got to get back to being the pastor, and to being the leader. A church needs it, there has been a vacuum in the church’s calling for men to do that. Some churches want lap dogs, some churches want yap dogs, and some want lead dogs. God called us to be lead shepherds. It is not of our choosing, it is of God’s choosing to be leaders. And when that happens, the people will stop doing church work and do the work of the church.

Jimmy Jackson developed a personal piety theme.35 Eddie Martin spoke on the priority of evangelism.36 Jerry Vines concluded the Pastors’ Conference on an inspirational topic of

34 Jim Henry, The Pastor-Shepherd audiotape, rec. 11 June 1979, Pastors’ Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

35 Jimmy Jackson, “Quenching the Holy Spirit,” duplicated manuscripts, 11 June 1979, Pastors’ Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

36 Eddie Martin, audiotape, rec. 11 June 1979, Pastors’ Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
the glory of God. From a social movement and dramaturgical perspective only Robison, Stanley, and Rogers’ messages signalled the breach.

Conclusion

Key speakers employed the setting of the 1979 Pastors’ Conference to enact an agonistic ritual that would challenge the paradigms of the SBC leadership. The four symbolic breach acts together with the communal experience provided in the 1979 Pastors’ Conference solidified and launched a determined group to recreate the SBC with a new vision of the denomination.

At the 1979 SBC immediately following the fiery Pastors’ Conference, Patterson and Pressler carefully orchestrated the SBC proceedings through an elaborate communication network from their “sky-boxes high above the convention floor” much like a national political campaign. The SBC passed right wing resolutions and voted Adrian Rogers into the presidency. A new political era dawned on Southern Baptists and a successful first act of a reformation movement had been enacted.

These events initiated the struggle that embroiled the SBC from 1979 to 1990. During this time, fundamentalists won most elections by slim margins (sometimes by one per cent); and the participation at the SBC swelled to more than 45,000 delegates in 1985. The founders of the SBC did not anticipate that any faction would take advantage of SBC polity, and so they developed a system built upon trust. In the winner-take-all polity, however, fundamentalists exploited their successes and gained control of the agency boards, contributing to the controversy.

37 Jerry Vines, Glimpses of Glory audiotape, rec. 11 June 1979, Pastors’ Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

Chapter 4

ACT TWO: CRISIS

Chapter four analyzes the rhetorical and ritual aspects of the second phase of the SBC reformation movement and counter movement. Each stage of a social drama possesses its own unique characteristics and rhetoric. This chapter (1) describes crisis rhetoric from a social drama perspective, (2) overviews crisis rhetoric expressed in the SBC reformation movement and counter movement, and (3) analyzes crisis rhetoric and roles enacted in the Pastors' Conferences and the SBC Forums following the 1979 breach.

Crisis Rhetoric from a Social Drama Perspective

Crisis rhetoric, according to Turner, originates primarily from those who care deeply about the values of their group and actively participate in the group's performed rituals. Those who strongly identify with a group's values, beliefs, norms, and symbols will defend it from challenges, because challenges constitute a threat to their identity. Social groups of all kinds can become central to a person's identity, but religious groups readily offer individuals a set of group values, beliefs, norms, and symbols through enacted rituals. Turner claims,

"Religion, like art, lives in so far as it is performed, that is, in so far as its rituals are "going concerns." If you wish to spay or geld religion first remove its rituals, its generative and regenerative processes. For religion is not a cognitive system, a set of dogmas alone, it is meaningful experience and experienced meaning."

Turner emphasizes that group rituals create and sustain group identity, and religious groups offer binding group rituals that provide meaning to its constituents. The processes of social


dramas generate an evolution of values, and hence rituals, as rival groups challenge each other. For values are not static but evolving from ritual actions and group participation.

As conflict intensifies in a social drama, it forces everyone involved to take sides. It is difficult for active group members to remain neutral bystanders or to ignore the crisis actions, because often the second phase of a social drama acts out rival groups’ core values and exposes key elements of groups’ identity to the conflict. In the crisis phase of a social drama, the participants align with one side or the other, and each side contends for those in the middle to join with them. Negative campaigning, acrimonious language, name-calling, and battlefield terminology often characterize this phase of the drama. Turner concludes, “Crisis rhetoric is contagious.”³ The middle-of-the-road approach is practically impossible to maintain in the midst of the crisis phase.

Rival groups will support different metaphors. Turner asserts that when a social group is divided by a social drama into two groups, that one group will contend for the metaphor of rationality, while the other group will contend for the claim of moral superiority. Turner states, “When a social field is divided into two camps or factions, one will proceed under the ostensible banner of rationality, while the other will manifest in its words and deeds the more romantic qualities of willing and feeling.”⁴ As emotionally charged ideals are forged and refined, emotional and nonrational elements characterize the scene. According to Turner, when conflict breaks the norms of a culture, it can release unconscious fears as well as unnatural boldness. Conflict can liberate puerile dislikes, desires, and aggressions, as well as encourage conscious envy and jealousy.⁵ The rhetorician can likely document emotionally charged metaphors that rally supporters and win converts.

Rival group members’ commitment shape the perception of things that are “really true,” things that have “really happened,” and things that are “really important.” That which stands for one group’s cultural truth may be another group’s cultural fantasies.

³ Turner, Anthropology of Performance 34.

⁴ Turner, Anthropology of Performance 91.

⁵ Turner, Anthropology of Performance 34.
Cathcart's Contribution to Turner

Robert Cathcart's definition of movements is primarily concerned with the linguistic phenomenon occurring in phase two of Turner's conception of a social drama. As distinguished in chapter three, Cathcart's rhetorical definition of movement deals with "dialectical enjoinment" of conflicting sides, whereas Turner's dramaturgical definition deals with symbolic enactment of four stages of a movement.

Cathcart provides rhetorical underpinnings for understanding the symbolic use of language in "act two" of the social drama. He states, "The symbolic interactions among activists, counter-rhetors, and publics provide the ground wherein social movements become unique change collectives."^6 A definition of a social movement, according to Cathcart, requires "dialectical enjoinment" between the change-seeking collective and the establishment.7 Turner's "act two" establishes the setting for a movement in Cathcart's definition. Cathcart argues that when a change-seeking collective threatens the status quo to such an extent that the establishment perceives a danger to its values, then the establishment labels the change-seeking collective as immoral and illegitimate. At that point the rhetorical clash can be understood as a social movement in which both sides offer competing values and beliefs. A change-seeking collective successfully enacts its role when it creates doubt about the legitimacy of the establishment and subverts its leadership. The establishment successfully enacts its role when it generates renewed support for the status quo.

Cathcart defines movements as an agonistic ritual in which two sides reject each other and distance themselves from the other. He states,

Confrontation demands a response that goes beyond the actions of the confrontation itself. It is a dramatization created by the forced juxtaposing of two agents, one standing for the evil, erroneous system and the other upholds the new or "perfect" order. These two agents must be brought into conflict through confrontation in order for both to recognize that what is called for is a moral response appropriate to the moral accusation communicated by the act of confrontation.8


The manner in which the establishment responds to the act of confrontation determines whether a movement begins or fails. If the establishment recognizes the legitimacy of the dissatisfaction or grievance, then according to Cathcart a movement does not occur.\(^8\) However, if the establishment labels the act of confrontation as a ploy to seize power and mislead its constituency, then a movement begins. In a movement, each side challenges the legitimacy of the other. When the establishment pins an anarchist label on the confronters, it fuels the movement into a “true moral battle for power and for the legitimate right to define the true order.”\(^9\) Thus Cathcart sees the response of the establishment as critical to distinguishing between a rhetorical prod to address grievances and a rhetorical form creating a movement.

According to Cathcart, when a movement begins, a new level of commitment is required of participants.\(^10\) More is required of the participants than a simple agreement with the goals of the movement or recognition of past grievances. The movement requires conversion and a moral stand to the truth of the reformers. Acts of commitments allow reformers to identify their true believers, to organize campaigns, and to develop strategies.

In the SBC reformation movement, the rhetorical and dramaturgical critic should expect to find some of the following elements in the conflict phase: (1) Rival ideological stances and paradigms will develop and promote accompanying “good” and “evil” slogans. (2) Rival paradigms will express competing world views in metaphors and symbols. (3) Rival groups will conduct negative campaigns, and express acrimonious language, name-calling, and battlefield terminology. (4) Rival groups will express appreciation of heroes and heroines of their respective sides. (5) Rival groups will lay claim to the role of the true protector of the culture's heritage. Conflicting stories will emerge concerning events and what “really

\(^8\) Cathcart, “Movements: Confrontation as Rhetorical Form,” 246.

\(^9\) Cathcart, “Movements: Confrontation as Rhetorical Form,” 246.

\(^10\) Cathcart, “Movements: Confrontation as Rhetorical Form,” 246.

happened.” Each side will compete to write “authentic” versions of history. (6) Rival groups will express doubt about the motives of the other side and express some jealousy, snobbery, and contempt for the other side as they express their moral rightness.

**An Overview of the Crisis Rhetoric**

Following the symbolically important 1979 Pastors’ Conference and SBC meeting, Southern Baptists expressed and debated disparate reactions. In the April 23, 1980 Baptist Standard (the Texas Baptist newspaper), the front page title read, “Group Seeks Control of the SBC Trustees.” In an editorial, Dr. Presnall Wood challenged fundamentalists to make their charges specific. He also expressed concerns about a fundamentalist resurgence in the denomination. In a reply to this article, Paige Patterson provided extensive quotes from seven seminary professors and pastors that he claimed demonstrated a shift away from historic Baptist beliefs. Patterson also stated that fundamentalists were not interested in taking over the SBC, but were interested in expressing grievances. Patterson requested that SBC seminaries and agencies resist the influence of liberalism that would weaken the Southern Baptist denomination as it weakened other mainline denominations. Patterson welcomed SBC leaders that would return the denomination to doctrinal integrity. He also stated that political parties would only exist if “concerned believers in a trustworthy Bible are continually ignored or even subject to attack due to the exercise of their Baptist liberty.” Patterson, in this statement, denied the existence of a reformation movement, and expressed that his friends were only interested in expressing grievances. He warned that strong opposition to his suggestions might initiate a movement.

At approximately the same time a close companion of Patterson, Judge Paul Pressler, was remarkably candid about a ten-year plan to reform the denomination and to elect a series of presidents who would, through a decade of strategic appointments, change the board of

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trustees of each SBC agency. In 1980, Pressler clarified his intentions in an interview concerning fundamentalist plans. Concerning the appointive powers of the president, he stated, "We are going for the jugular. We are going for ... trustees of all our institutions, who are not going to sit there like a bunch of dummies and rubber stamp everything that's presented to them." This statement evidenced the beginning of a fundamentalist reformation movement.

Crisis rhetoric slowly expanded from 1979 to approximately 1985, primarily because reform efforts deceived many Southern Baptists who thought the controversy would fade. Many thought that the grievances would be acknowledged and the denomination would continue relatively unaffected. A long history of denominational conflicts led many to believe that this was another minor conflict that would ebb and flow, but not significantly impact Southern Baptists. Pressler and Patterson continuously stumped the South encouraging conservatives to join the fundamentalists' reformation movement. The denominational press reported their statements and also reported counter replies. Southern Baptists labeled those who quickly perceived the seriousness of the fundamentalists' challenge as reactionaries. When an opposition group began organizing in 1980, they found it difficult to unite around one cause, since agency and institutional heads did not join the rivalry until 1984. Ken Chafin (a prominent pastor and Southern Seminary professor) campaigned diligently for an opposition movement from 1980 to 1983, but quit in frustration when agency leaders refrained from confrontation. Ammerman states that the hesitancy of the agency leaders allowed their moral and symbolic power to be undermined. She adds, "Once the fundamentalists had taken that, efforts to defend their institutions appeared motivated only by self-preservation, not by high and holy principles."


In the 1980s, church messengers saw conflict rhetoric characterize the annual convention meetings. In 1981, some moderates and fundamentalists expressed conflict rhetoric in public debates. Secular and religious news teams covered Paige Patterson and Ken Chafin in a debate prior to the 1981 SBC. Arguments and partisanship began dominating the scene of the conventions. Denominational newspapers described the 1981 SBC in the following terms: "blood-letting," "shootout," "angry, knock-down battle."18 Delegates reported that the SBC was no longer a hopeful, inspirational pilgrimage. Debates and arguments in the early 1980s conventions escalated the intensity of the rhetoric of the crisis phase and adversely affected the denomination. Hefley reports,

The conflict was now a full-fledged political contest. Both sides were doing no more than what Democratic and Republican political activists did before an election—calling influential (pastors), speaking to rallies, copying and distributing letters and newspaper clippings, talking to reporters. It was a battle for the minds and hearts of the numbers of Southern Baptists who had not taken sides, especially those who had not been in the habit of attending national conventions.19

Some moderate educators contributed to conflict rhetoric in 1982 when Southern Seminary offered a critique of the fundamentalists’ agenda in a special issue of the Review and Expositor.20 The issue explored fundamentalism’s origin, character, sociology, theology, and sectarianism. Some scholars outside the denomination (i.e., Martin Marty, a Lutheran at the University of Chicago) contributed to the journal, but none of the articles sided with fundamentalism. The special edition offered a scholarly, but one-sided assessment of fundamentalism.

Much conflict rhetoric centered around the role of Baptist seminaries and universities. Adrian Rogers, a three-time SBC fundamentalist president, asserted the right of Baptists to dictate what seminary professors taught. He said, "If we (Baptists) say that pickles have

17 Ammerman, 177.

18 Hefley, The Truth in Crisis: vol. 1, 83.


souls, and we are paying them to teach, they are to teach that pickles have souls."\(^{21}\) Rogers further clarified the fundamentalist position regarding seminaries. He stated,

I do not believe it is the place of the seminary to "stretch us" and lead us into areas where we have never been before. Our theology needs to rise from our lay and pastor theologians, and this needs to be reflected in our seminaries. . . . A seminary is not a university in quest for truth. Southern Baptists are a missionary organization spreading the truth that we hold in common.\(^{22}\)

Educators defended their institutions and contributed to conflict rhetoric in 1984. Russell Dilday, the president of Southwestern Seminary, in a convention sermon promoted “rugged individualism” and implied that many Baptists following the inerrancy crowd were not thinking for themselves. He stated,

Unfortunately, in contradiction to these biblical verses, there are some among us in this convention, fearful of standing alone, determined to get ahead in denominational life, surrender so easily that sacred privilege of individualism. They go along with the crowd accepting the canned thinking of the majority, swayed by public opinion and glibly mouthing popular cliches of the day. They’re so quick to espouse the cause of the majority, the party in power. Whatever is in vogue, they cater to the powerful and to the rich, they play to the galleries. They flow with the tides. Leadership to them is finding a parade and then rushing to get in front of it.\(^{23}\)

Dilday offered experiences as examples of conformity to the new majority, and he warned of conformity to “Big Brother.” He stated,

As incredible as it sounds, in June 1984, in this convention, there is emerging in this denomination we love, founded on the basis of rugged individualism, an incipient Orwellian mentality. It threatens to drag us down from the high ground to the low ground of suspicion, rumor, criticism, innuendos, guilt by association, and that entire demonic family of forced uniformity. I shudder when I see a coterie of the orthodox standing ready to catch a brother in a statement that sounds heretical, carelessly categorizing churches as liberal or fundamentalist, unmindful of what that criticism may do.\(^{24}\)


\(^{22}\) Adrian Rogers, as quoted in Leonard, \textit{God’s Last and Only Hope} 121.

\(^{23}\) Russell Dilday, \textit{On Higher Ground} audiotape, rec. 12 June 1984, the Southern Baptist Convention, Kansas City, KS, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

\(^{24}\) Dilday,
Dilday concluded his critical assessment of the politicization of the SBC and the politics of the conflict. He chastised,

When shrewd brokers of power, manipulate the democratic processes of the convention in order to promote themselves, they have slipped from God's high ground to the barren plains of selfish ambition and conceit.

President Honeycutt, also in 1984, in his convocation address to Southern Seminary, called for "holy war" against "the unholy forces" who are "seeking to hijack" the denomination and "take control."\(^\text{25}\) Randall Lolley, president of Southeastern Seminary, compared fundamentalists to the Moonies and the cult leader Jim Jones.\(^\text{26}\) Herbert Reynolds, president of Baylor University, and Kirby Godsey, president of Mercer University, also launched crusades against fundamentalist control of Baptist education. The issue of the role of seminaries and universities exposed rival paradigms at conflict in the SBC.

The newly appointed fundamentalist trustees to each seminary did not yet (1984) hold a majority of seats on the seminary boards, but they voiced strong warnings to the presidents of the seminaries against political campaigning. Fundamentalist leaders and constituencies also reacted to the seminary presidents' remarks. W. A. Criswell opined, "It isn't right for them to take our (Cooperative Program) money and damn us."\(^\text{27}\) Another agency head, Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board, was severely criticized when he sent a letter to all foreign missionaries stating that he could not support the fundamentalist president of the SBC, Charles Stanley. The administrators and agency heads that spoke out against fundamentalism found that they had little power to change the SBC, and these actions brought critical scrutiny to their work and to the agencies they served.

Conflict rhetoric raised the level of participation and the level of emotion that accompanied the conventions in 1984, 1985, and 1988. Attendance swelled and tactics by each side became more political and calculated. In 1985, 45,404 registered church messengers


\(^{26}\) Hefley, "The Miracle Continues," 84.

\(^{27}\) as quoted in Hefley, \textit{The Truth in Crisis}; vol. 1, 112.
attended the SBC, setting a record for the largest parliamentary church business meeting in American history. Hefley describes the 1985 convention as a huge political campaign. He reports,

The 1985 SBC convention and related activities would be the biggest media event in Dallas since the Republican National Convention met in the same convention center the previous fall. Over 625 writers and broadcasters—well over twice the registered messengers for the first meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention—received accreditation in the press room, including crews from the major TV stations, along with reporters and editors from the national newsmagazines, most major American newspapers, the leading non-SBC religious journals of the country, and the usual spread of denominational periodicals.

Political endorsements became a prominent factor in convention meetings as the conflict raged. In 1982, Vice President George Bush addressed the SBC and championed the Religious Right’s influence in politics. When Charles Stanley (fundamentalist pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta) ran for SBC president in 1985, more that 1,000 Atlanta Baptists signed a full page ad in the Atlanta Constitution expressing their opposition to his reelection. On the Tuesday morning of the presidential election in the 1985 convention, newspapers broke the story that the famous evangelist, Billy Graham endorsed Charles Stanley for president. In the following year’s convention, Charles Stanley read a letter of approval from President Ronald Reagan for the SBC upholding fundamental, conservative values.

The conflict rhetoric colored virtually every aspect of the three-day business meetings. Often, hundreds would line up at the many microphones to oppose, support, and question every proposal. The rhetoric expressed at the microphones (these were placed throughout the auditoriums for messengers to introduce and discuss motions) to the SBC sometimes expressed the tension between factions. One messenger shouted into a microphone, “Baptists have been


29 Hefley, The Truth in Crisis: vol. 1, 122.


31 Ammerman, 184.
Parliamentary procedures became closely scrutinized after an expensive lawsuit was lodged against the SBC because of alleged parliamentary moves against moderates. Before the conflict, mistakes in parliamentary procedures were overlooked, but the conflict forced the leadership to guardedly follow strict adherence to Robert's Rules of Order (an expensive parliamentary consultant became a central figure on the platform during business sessions). SBC participants expressed frustration and elation by booing, cheering, whistling, whoops, yells, amens, clapping, and "quacking" (one group of moderates quacked in unison at the 1988 SBC each time Adrian Rogers used the term "fairness").

The conflict focused attention on the presidential addresses and other convention sermons delivered at the SBC, which had primarily been ceremonial before 1980. As fundamentalists successfully won presidential elections, the presidential addresses became rhetorical centerpieces of conventions. Some presidents chose to down-play the conflict (Jimmy Draper in 1983, 1984) and some chose to promote the fundamentalist agenda. Adrian Rogers in 1980 defended the concept of the inerrancy of the scripture, attacked "destructive higher criticism," recounted a Baptist hero's admonishment against heresy, and blamed humanism and liberalism for spiritual destruction. Bailey Smith in 1981 reaffirmed the perfection of every verse of the Bible. In 1982, Smith warned that Baptists must affirm the priority of evangelism and the "authority of the infallible, inerrant Word of God" or face a decline similar to other mainline denominations. He ridiculed, "No one in hell is glad that he went to a liberal church." He set aside past presidential politeness in the following statement:

32 Hefley, The Truth in Crisis: vol. 2, 73.


34 Adrian Rogers, The Decade of Decision and the Doors of Destiny videotape, rec. 10 June 1980, presidential address to the Southern Baptist Convention, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

35 Bailey Smith, The Worth of the Work videotape, rec. 9 June 1981, presidential address to the Southern Baptist Convention, Los Angeles, CA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

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It is inexcusable for a Southern Baptist to say he is a humanist and proud of it. It is inexcusable for a Southern Baptist to pray for the opening of a brewery. It is inexcusable for a Southern Baptist to say Genesis is political rhetoric and not historical fact. It is inexcusable for a Southern Baptist to teach evolution in our schools. It is inexcusable that any Southern Baptist would social drink and have no shame about it.

In 1985, Charles Stanley expressed sensitivity to both factions and urged messengers to allow God to heal the hurts of the denomination. However in 1986, Stanley pled for the denomination not to change from its philosophy of fundamentalist leadership. He urged messengers to support the fundamentalist leadership that would not compromise the "living Word of God." Adrian Rogers, in 1987, asserted that the Bible was inerrant in every area of reality, including scientific claims, and this was the intention of the writers of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message. He also argued that Baptist should be functionally diverse, but doctrinally unified on basic beliefs. Jerry Vines, in 1987, in a convention sermon (1988 and 1989 president of the SBC) stridently promoted the fundamentalist agenda. He voiced the belief that though the Bible is not a scientific or historical book, it is accurate when it speaks on those subjects. He stated, "If I can't believe what it says about history, how can I believe what it says about eternity." He rebuked liberal theologians in this statement: "If the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is not biological and historical fact, then it is theological fiction." He personified "destructive criticism" as an old thief that came to the United States after destroying the faith of German Christians. This thief had destroyed northern Christianity.

36 Bailey Smith, Southern Baptists' Most Serious Question videotape, rec. 15 June 1982, presidential address to the Southern Baptist Convention, New Orleans, LA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

37 Charles Stanley, Healing Hurts in the Family of God videotape, rec. 11 June 1985, presidential address to the Southern Baptist Convention, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

38 Charles Stanley, On the Brink of Blessing videotape, rec. 10 June 1986, presidential address to the Southern Baptist Convention, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

39 Adrian Rogers, Doctrinal Unity, Functional Diversity videotape, rec. 16 June 1987, presidential address to the Southern Baptist Convention, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

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and slowly worked its way down the eastern seaboard of the United States, and now it was trying to destroy Southern Baptists. Vines asserted, "His (the thief, destructive criticism) intended goal was to take the Bible away from the hands of common people. He appealed to the innate pride and sense of desire to be considered intellectual on the part of scholarly men." Vines asserted his belief in the literal account of Jonah being swallowed by the whale, Daniel in the lion’s den, and Genesis’ creation story. He derided modernism, "I'd rather hear Balaam’s donkey talk, than some modernistic preachers preach." The majority of the audience at the conventions vociferously expressed its appreciation of fundamentalist preachers. Often the speakers paused to allow waves of applause to die down before continuing in their addresses.

Various kinds of media carried conflict rhetoric. The Women in Ministry support group in 1983 created a newsletter, Folio. Also in 1983, the newspaper SBC Today (now Baptists Today) came into existence with the purpose of expressing the frustration, humor, and hope of many disappointed moderates. Fundamentalists supported a strident Southern Baptist Journal, which began in 1973, and a less strident paper, The Southern Baptist Advocate, which began in 1980. Periodically both the SBC Today and the Advocate were mailed to every pastor in the denomination. Several publications were short-lived and were published before SBC meetings in the 1980s. Moderates produced The Baptist Laity Journal and The Call, and fundamentalists produced The Cause. W. A. Criswell, fundamentalist pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, the largest Southern Baptist church, sent letters to 36,000 pastors urging them to defeat the moderate candidate in the 1985 SBC. Fundamentalists promulgated their views in books, The Battle for the Bible and its sequel The Bible in the Balance. Authority: The Critical Issue for Southern Baptists, by SBC president Jimmy Draper, presented an anti-liberal view and became a key text for the reformation movement.41

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40 Jerry Vines, A Baptist and His Bible videotape, rec. 16–18 June 1987, convention sermon to the Southern Baptist Convention, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

41 See Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976); Lindsell, The Bible in the Balance (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979); James T. Draper, Jr., Authority: The Critical Issue for Southern Baptists (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell,
Crisis, a multi-volume journalistic history of the conflict, became the center of conflict when
the Baptist Bookstore refused to sell the volume from the 1986 bookstore exhibit at the SBC.
Conflict rhetoric exponentially expanded the creation and distribution of letters, newsletters,
newspapers, journals, and books.

The controversy rose to an ever higher pitch when fundamentalist-controlled agency
boards refused to employ ordained women and the SBC passed resolutions that suggested that
women were subservient to men in both family and church life. Bailey Smith, a president
of the SBC, aired fundamentalist sentiments on the role of women in this statement: “I believe
the highest calling possible for a Christian woman is to marry a good Christian man, have his
children, help him build a Christian home, and hear God speak to her through her
husband.” Many moderates found this attitude repulsive. In response, some moderate
Baptists formed in 1983 the Southern Baptist Women in Ministry and The Center for Women in
Ministry. Women began publishing in 1983 a newsletter, Folio, that advocated gender equity
in the ministry. The group assailed the 1984 SBC resolution opposing the ordination of
women and the Home Mission Board’s decision to withhold funds from churches with ordained
women pastors. In the mid 1980s, Southern and Southeastern seminaries added women to their
faculties and both seminaries sponsored a conference on the role of women in church and
society. The February, 1985, issue of The Student, a Southern Baptist magazine for college
students, devoted the entire issue to women in ministry. Ammerman opines that this issue
caused the editor of The Student to lose his position. In 1987, a much publicized incident

42 See Joe Edward Barnhart, The Southern Baptist Holy War (Austin, TX: Texas
Monthly Press, 1986), 141–161; also see Leonard, God’s Last and Only Hope 151–154;
Ammeman, 89–99.

43 Terry Mattingly, “Old Baptists, New Baptist: A Reporter Looks at the Battle to

44 Sarah Francis Anders, “Pilgrimage Toward Equity in Ministry,” Folio vol.1 no. 1,

45 See Ammerman, 93.
occurred when Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis called Nancy Sehested as pastor. The local Baptist association voted to “disfellowship” the church from the association. According to Bill Leonard, these incidents, and especially the Home Mission Board action, caused many moderate churches to rethink continued financial support of the agency. Leonard states, “It contributed to the first real signs of fragmentation of the denomination.” The issue of the role of women exposed rival paradigms in the conflict phase of the SBC social drama.

Thus debates, persuasive books, biased newspapers, slanted media coverage, letter-writing campaigns, and political sermons characterized the crisis stage of the Southern Baptist struggle. The debate exposed rival paradigms of fundamentalists and moderates and successfully fragmented the denomination on many issues. Though the factions found themselves to be at odds with one another on many social, ethical, theological, and political issues, the conflict clarified the issues and polarized fundamentalists and moderates. The clash of issues in this stage of the Southern Baptist controversy fits Cathcart’s definition of “dialectical enjoinment.” As negative rhetoric polarized and politicized the SBC, it became impossible for delegates not to take sides. Essentially every resolution and election contained moderate and conservative interpretations. With the yearly appointments of fundamentalist trustees to each SBC agency board, Fundamentalists gained an apparent victory over modernism in the conflict phase.

Crisis Rhetoric in the Pastors’ Conferences

After 1979, the Pastors’ Conferences continued to be a platform from which fundamentalists promoted their vision of Southern Baptists. As the conflict attracted larger crowds to convention meetings, it also brought higher attendance to Pastors’ Conferences. During the 1980s, the attendance grew from approximately 10,000 in 1979 to 25,000 in 1985.

46 Leonard, God’s Last and Only Hope 153.

47 See Ammerman, chapter 4, 72-125.
conferences were staged in huge auditoriums and arenas. Cameras and bright lights were focused on the speakers and their images were projected on large screens. Later in the 1980s, the SBC Radio and Television Commission began broadcasting coverage of Pastors' Conferences and convention meetings. The Baptist Television Network broadcast to subscribers (i.e., Baptist churches with satellite hookups), thus expanding potential audiences. Also during the 1980s, denominational and secular newspapers reported the most notable aspects of messages. The reports expanded potential impact of speakers on wider audiences. For example, W. A. Criswell stated to the 1988 Pastors' Conference, "Liberals today call themselves moderates. However, a skunk by any other name still stinks." This statement made front page news for San Antonio's The Express-News on the following day and was also widely reported in denominational news. The Pastors' Conferences were an important platform for fundamentalists to express their world view to their supporters and to uncommitted Baptists. Ammerman's surveys in 1985, 1986, and 1987 indicated that a broad spectrum of Baptists attended the Pastors' Conferences. Many uncommitted moderates and conservatives attended the conferences, whereas only committed moderates attended the SBC Forums. Thus Pastors' Conferences provided fundamentalists with divergent audiences to persuade Baptists of the legitimacy of the reformation movement.

A small group of fundamentalists governed the initiation of the reformation movement in the 1979 Pastors' Conference. That year's conference signaled the domination of the following decade's conferences by a relatively small group. A group of approximately twelve fundamentalist leaders spoke many times in the 1980s. The programs listed W. A. Criswell, Adrian Rogers, Charles Stanley, and Bailey Smith twenty times in the twelve year period of this study. In addition to delivering addresses, these leaders also introduced speakers, delivered welcomes, expressed benedictions, and served as presiding officers in visible platform positions. Their visibility at Pastors' Conferences, SBC meetings, evangelism and Bible conferences, and television ministries (23 percent of Southern Baptists in Ammerman's

48 Hefley, The Truth in Crisis: vol. 4, 45.
49 Ammerman, 183.
1985 survey regularly watched Charles Stanley's television program\(^{50}\) meant that Baptists heard fundamentalist SBC presidential candidates more than moderate candidates.

In the 1980 Pastors' Conference, many of the speakers developed traditional themes that were not political, such as the need for evangelism, personal piety, and pastoral leadership qualities. Those speeches are excluded from the study. Of the twelve speakers on the program, six produced statements that are important to this study.

John Bisagno delivered the first address. He expounded the topic of the second coming of Christ, a familiar fundamentalist theme that asserts Jesus will physically come back to redeem the church, and dominate the political powers of the world. He offered rhetorical "proof" of his message by pointing to his success and encouraged identification with him as a fundamentalist success. He stated,

> I began to preach and our people have been coming 6,000 and 7,000 every Sunday morning. We have ten policeman that direct the traffic just to come hear for a year on Sundays, word by word, verse by verse, what God has to say about what's happening at the end of time.\(^{51}\)

Bisagno associated success with Biblical orthodoxy and evangelistic zeal and implied that if listeners believed and acted like him, then God would bless them with successful ministries. He asserted, "I want to tell you something, the men, the teachers, the pastors that are winning today, that are baptizing hundreds, that are winning men to Christ, are men that believe the word of God and evangelism and missions are the heartbeat of their life."\(^{52}\) Bisagno described liberalism as one of the twin perils of the age that polluted the gospel. Bisagno's message did not promote an overt political agenda, but it contributed to the fundamentalist paradigm. The paradigm's "good" vocabulary included: "winning men," "believe the word of God and evangelism," and "purity of the gospel." "Bad" vocabulary included "liberalism."

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\(^{50}\) Ammerman, 183.

\(^{51}\) John Bisagno, The Second Coming audiotape, rec. 8 June 1980, Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

\(^{52}\) Bisagno, The Second Coming.
Jack Taylor recounted major revivals that swept the country in the past two hundred years. He contributed to the fundamentalist paradigm in his description of the evils facing churches in the 1980s. He described,

Is it not due time again? When the heart of the church in many quarters has turned to stone; the pulpit, a dispensary of human philosophies; our education systems, citadels of unprincipled corruption, shameless atheism, and blatant humanism . . . is it not time again to pray . . . Lord, do it again as in times of old . . . do it again! Is it not time for the people of God to barrage heaven with cries for revival? When the Bible has been laid aside as error-filled and rated with worn-out books of antiquity and humanistic philosophies are being taught instead, is not our only hope genuine revival?53

Taylor contributed to the “evil” terminology of the fundamentalist paradigm. He blamed the problems of the age on “human philosophies,” “shameless atheism and blatant humanism.” He implied that the conception of the inerrancy of the Bible would contribute to a revival of the church.

Richard Jackson directly confronted the crisis rhetoric expressed in the denomination and changed the topic from the printed manuscript of his sermon. He preached against the anger generated by each side for the other as a poor witness to the world. Jackson espoused unquestionable fundamentalist beliefs and held enormous credibility among Southern Baptists. The church he pastored, North Phoenix Baptist Church, was at times the fastest growing Baptist church with over 1,000 baptisms per year. Jackson scolded those involved in the conflict. He stated,

You know I find it extremely strange that Christians don’t seem to have any enemies except each other. We adopt those who disagree with us as our enemies. And what you and I need to learn, friend, is that I refuse to have an enemy. I will not have it, and if there is a problem between me and another person, I want to make sure it is their problem not my problem.54

53 Jack Taylor, “Prayer and Awakening,” duplicated manuscripts, 8 June 1980, Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

54 Richard Jackson, audiotape, rec. 9 June 1980, Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
Jackson condemned those involved in “labeling” the other side and exhorted the audience to cease fighting each other. He urged,

We ought not judge the heart of anybody that stands on any issue. And brother if you’re standing on one side or the other, then don’t judge the other man as being something that deserves a label. . . Let’s don’t give the secular press a heyday branding each other with labels that don’t mean anything. Who are Southern Baptists? We are Bible believing, Bible preaching, Christ honoring, evangelistic, missionary children of God. That’s the only label we need.55

Jackson was one of the few fundamentalists spokespersons in the Pastors’ Conference in the early 1980s who condemned conflict rhetoric in the denomination. Later Jackson ran unsuccessfully as the moderate candidate for president of the SBC.

Another speaker was notable for his reluctance to condemn fundamentalists. Grady Cothen was one of the few moderates to address the Pastors’ Conference in the decade of the 1980s. He was known as an outspoken person of moderate ideals. He served the denomination in a number of top positions, including president of the Sunday School Board. He was an “insider” that fundamentalist wanted to replace. In his address, Cothen avoided the conflict, and focused upon lessons from a near-fatal bout with stomach cancer.56 His reluctance to address the conflict testified of a neutral stance that agency leaders took in the early days of the conflict, and possibly the naive belief that the conflict would not bring significant changes. Later in the decade, after his retirement, Cothen devoted much energy toward voluntarily administering the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (an organization of moderates that supported moderate missions and education ventures).

Stan Coffey reinforced a hierarchical conception of the world in a message that revered the “Word.” He said,

The Word has priority. There is only one priority for the New Testament church and that is evangelism. There is but one purpose for the church and that is evangelism. According to the Word, there is one reason for our existence and that is to win men and women and boys and girls to the Lord Jesus Christ.57

55 Jackson, audiotape, rec. 9 June 1980

56 Grady Cothen, Victory is Ours audiotape, rec. 9 June 1980, Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

57 Stan Coffey, “Revival Through the Word,” duplicated manuscripts, 9 June 1980,
He proclaimed the truthfulness of the Bible, no matter what it claimed. He testified that he was like the old country preacher who was reading about Noah and a page was missing, and he thought it read that Noah's wife was thirty cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. The country preacher said, "I don't understand it, but I believe it." carrofey's argument that the Bible should be adored and proclaimed, though not necessarily understood implied that the Bible contained special qualities that brought blessings. Coffey de-emphasized individual responsibility in interpreting the Bible and emphasized obedience. Like many other fundamentalist speakers, Coffey blamed the demise of other denominations on the loss of "a proper dedication to the word of God." This implied that God blessed denominations that elevated the Bible to a lofty status. Fundamentalists called this "the high view of scripture."

Bailey Smith clearly and unreservedly expressed the fundamentalist paradigm. Smith possessed enormous credibility, since he served as pastor of a fast-growing "superchurch." His sermon provided clear examples of a "good" and "evil" terminology. He described America as being surrounded by communist conspirators that were weakening Americans with moral degradation. The evil plot to weaken America involved creating doubt in the "word of God." Smith developed a conspiracy theme concerning a liberal film director who slandered conservatives and challenged the role of women. He stated, "Don't you ever doubt that there is a conspiracy in this country against the cause of Christ—there is. Can you imagine what they are doing to woman kind? The ERA—the ERA, Extremely Ridiculous Activity." In this sermon, Smith revealed how social conservatism linked with fundamentalist theology. Smith cited commercials that substituted the term "person" for "women" as "rhetorical" proof of an evil conspiracy in the country. Smith ridiculed intellectuals, "Oh, but some guys want to go off to Princeton for further study. Some of you do further study—you go so fer (sic) the Bible

Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

58 Coffey, "Revival Through the Word,"

59 Coffey, "Revival Through the Word,"

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hasn't gone that fer (sic).” The problems in America could be attributed to preachers that did not believe “that the Bible was God's Holy Word.” He urged pastors, “to preach the unmitigated, unadulterated, unvarnished, pure, word of God.” Smith clearly defined hierarchical social roles and a prescriptive ideology. On the following day, he was elected president of the SBC.

W. A. Criswell preached the last sermon of the 1980 Pastors' Conference. He ridiculed preachers who promoted liberal theology, social and economic justice, pacifism, racial discrimination, sociology, civic improvement, and world peace. He decried these preachers as promoters of cultural religion. He stated, “Our humanists, idealists, pacifists, perfectionists think they will be able to keep the lasting values of Christian civilization apart from the life-giving, soul-saving Spirit.” He preached that Christianity was a heartfelt love for the lost. He emphasized the importance of the preacher's duty to save the lost individual, not society.

In the 1981 Pastors' Conference, many of the speakers developed traditional themes that were not political, such as the need for evangelism, personal piety, and pastoral leadership qualities. Those speeches are excluded from the study. Of the thirteen speakers listed on the program, five produced statements important to this study.

Bill Bennett gave the first address in the 1981 Pastors' Conference. Bennett reinforced the fundamentalist hierarchy of strong pastoral leadership. The first words of his manuscript read, "A recurring problem is now plaguing many of our local churches. The question is, will the local church be led by God's appointed Pastor-Shepherd, or will it be led by a group of men?" His proof consisted of a study showing that the fastest growing churches possessed

60 The spelling and language taken directly from duplicated manuscript, Bailey Smith, “Stand Firm in Jordan,” 9 June 1980, Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

61 W. A. Criswell, "Heartfelt Religion," duplicated manuscripts, 9 June 1980, Pastors' Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

62 Bill Bennett, “Message,” duplicated manuscripts, 7 June 1981, Pastors' Conference, Los Angeles, CA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
strong pastoral leadership. Bennett invigorated the hierarchical conception of strong leadership (called by God) and obedient followers. Bennett concluded his message with a citation from W. A. Criswell that refuted the possibility of an effective church led by a small group of laymen. Bennett espoused a belief in strong pastoral authority in the church that came from God's call, from his personal character and from his commission.

Calvin Miller admonished pastors to cherish their wives and did not mention the possibility that pastors should cherish their husbands. He reinforced a conception of gender differences and chivalrous appreciation of pastor's wives.63

Adrian Rogers, three-time president of the SBC, delivered perhaps the clearest example of the fundamentalist conception of gender roles. Rogers developed "Sister Sarah's simple secrets" for keeping a long and happy marriage. Sister Sarah's first secret was an attitude of submission toward her husband. Rogers stated, "But God almighty knows that in a home there must be a head. I want to tell you ladies and gentlemen anything with two heads is a freak. And anything with no head is dead. And so God when he made the home, gave a chain of command."64 Speaking to women, Rogers asserted that "you're never more like Jesus Christ when you're submissive, you're never more like the devil when you're not." Rogers espoused the values of a strong hierarchical social order in which everyone knows their roles and their places in society. Rogers attacked those who blurred gender roles and proclaimed that the Bible was firmly set against the blurring. He asserted, "But now listen, the devil is very clever, and it's the devil's attempt to make man and woman alike under the guise of making them equal."65 Sister Sarah's second secret was an adornment of serenity that

63 Calvin Miller, "The Parson and His Mrs. The Love Affair in the Parsonage," duplicated manuscripts, 7 June 1981, Pastors' Conference, Los Angeles, CA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

64 Adrian Rogers, Til Death Do Us Part audiotape, rec. 7 June 1981, Pastors' Conference, Los Angeles, CA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

65 Rogers, Til Death Do Us Part
encouraged women to develop inward beauty of a meek and a quiet spirit. Sister Sarah's third secret was an activity of service that encouraged wives to give full attention to the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of her husband. Rogers also advised men on how to love and honor their wives. Rogers concluded that message with the affirmation that, “the foundation for the family is God’s inerrant, infallible word.” Rogers' prescription for men and women developed clear lines of authority that emanated from the highest authority, the “word of God.”

Many Baptists in the early years of the conflict believed that the conflict could simply be laid aside if the extremists would calm down. Richard Jackson attacked the conflict the prior year, and Jes Moody pursued the same goal in 1981. Moody condemned the SBC controversy and denounced polar positions in the denomination. He stated,

> Controversy between two Christian groups is contrary to the mood of Jesus. The only difference between the liberals and the fundamentalists is that they deny different verses. They are both fear peddlers selling the thing—just from different bottles. I have noticed that some of you preachers have been getting on different sides. When people get on different sides, you know nobody is on the main road. Brothers, God didn’t call a one of you to go about loosening up the fundamentalists and tightening up the liberals.

In this statement, Moody refused to endorse the rightness of a side, and affirmed a middle position. He represented many in the denomination who expressed the naive belief that the differences between the groups were not substantial and that if Baptists practiced restraint and emphasized the commonalities, the strife would die.

Richard Jackson in the previous year spoke strongly against the conflict. In 1981, he did not attack the conflict, but spoke about the shepherd-model that Jesus exemplified for pastors. He emphasized that pastors “must not give forth an uncertain sound.” He emphasized that the pastor’s authority came only from the written world of God.

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66 Rogers, *Til Death Do Us Part*


68 Richard A. Jackson, “The Savior Shown in the Shepherd,” duplicated manuscripts, 8 June 1981, Pastors’ Conference, Los Angeles, CA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
A featured part of the 1981 Pastors' Conference was testimonies from the presidents of the seminaries. None of the presidents addressed the conflict in their presentations. Each spoke about personal spiritual experiences.

A surprise in the 1981 Pastors' Conference was that W. A. Criswell's sermon yielded no overt political statements. Criswell was loved and respected by many Southern Baptists. He often expressed his fundamentalist beliefs and castigated "liberals." In this year, he spoke about "The Great Mystery of the Church."69

Arthur Blessitt concluded the 1981 conference with an evangelistic emphasis. He commented on the much publicized debate between Paige Patterson and Ken Chafin saying, "Los Angeles doesn't need a theological debate. Los Angeles needs Jesus."70

The 1982 conference and convention was notable for two reasons: 1) it was held in the cavernous New Orleans Superdome, and 2) the evangelist, Billy Graham, and music director, Cliff Barrows, eclipsed the first night's activities. As the featured speaker, Graham attracted a larger crowd than normally would attend Pastors' Conferences. Since the Superdome easily managed large crowds, many churches within driving distance suspended Sunday evening services and bussed crowds to the conference. Rather than featuring three sermons, as did other Sunday evenings of Pastors' Conferences, the Sunday evening of the 1982 Pastors' Conference featured only Graham's sermon. The combination of these factors created a scene similar to an evangelistic crusade. Graham urged spiritual renewal and directed his message toward the larger audience of church members. Monday of the 1982 Pastors' Conference featured twelve speakers illuminating the theme of the great passages of the Bible. Of the twelve speakers listed on Monday's program, only two produced statements that are important to this study. In 1982, the rhetoric of the Pastors' Conference was calmer than

69 W. A. Criswell, "The Great Mystery of the Church," duplicated manuscripts, 8 June 1981, Pastors' Conference, Los Angeles, CA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

70 Arthur Blessitt, audiotape, rec., 8 June 1981, Pastors' Conference, Los Angeles, CA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
that of the SBC meeting. As mentioned earlier, Bailey Smith aggressively promoted the fundamentalists agenda in his presidential sermon on the day after the Pastors' Conference. Whether by consensus or because of the relatively calm emotional climate of the denomination in 1982, most of the speakers judiciously avoided political or inflammatory rhetoric.

Adrian Rogers condemned the dichotomy that the conflict was producing. He stated, "Some how the word has gotten out, somehow the idea has gotten out that either we have to be denominational slaves or rebels. We ought not be either. We ought to be men of God."  
Humor at the expense of seminary professors is an element frequently found in Rogers' Pastors' Conference sermons. In this sermon, he showed a political awareness of this humor and carefully qualified it. He said,

One more suave seminary man, not one of our seminaries lest you think I'm picking, was, as a matter of fact the story was probably apocryphal anyway; but he was lecturing his class and telling his class in social ethics that the man of God, the preacher ought to learn to get along with everybody. And he was using for his example, the Lord Jesus, and how Jesus was so conciliatory, and how Jesus was a peacemaker. And a student raised his hand in that class and said yes teacher that's all well and good, but I want to ask you a question, if Jesus was such a peacemaker, and if Jesus was so conciliatory, how did he manage to get himself crucified? Now I want to tell you something, friend, there are some people that you can have a peaceful attitude toward, but they are not going to have a peaceful attitude toward you. But oh how we need to wage not war, but wage peace. Now I want to tell you something, listen to me, a peacemaker is a soulwinner.  

In that statement, Rogers interpreted "blessed are the peacemakers," as soulwinners, not social advocates. Social advocacy falls within the "evil" terminology of the fundamentalist paradigm, and this interpretation revealed the fundamentalist screen through which he viewed biblical passages. The joke at the expense of a professor also revealed a consistent anti-intellectual bias in the fundamentalist paradigm. Rogers concluded his message with a poignant story about the death of an unyielding crusader of the Bible, R. G. Lee. He stated, "Dr. Lee believed this Bible. He believed this Bible. I want to tell you he believed it was the inerrant, infallible, impeccable, unimpeachable word of God. And he did not let-up, buck-up, 

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72 Rogers, The Great Sermon
or shut-up until he was taken-up.” In this statement, Rogers reinforced the fundamentalist conception of the Bible was non-negotiable.

Zig Ziglar was one of the few laymen to address the Pastors’ Conference in the 1980s. He was a popular motivational speaker, writer, and Sunday School teacher at the First Baptist Church of Dallas (W. A. Criswell was pastor). He testified of a simple biblical literalism. He stated, “I believe this beautiful Bible. I believe it from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21. I believe as Dr. Ed Hill says, I believe the axe-head floated and the jackass talked. And I believe every single bit of what this Bible has to say.”73 This statement buttressed “biblical literalism” as “good” terminology in the fundamentalist paradigm. Ziglar, in 1984, was elected first vice president of the SBC.

In the 1983 Pastors’ Conference, many of the speakers developed traditional themes that were not political, such as the need for evangelism, personal piety, and pastoral leadership qualities. Those speeches are excluded from the study. Of the fourteen speakers on the program, four produced statements important to this study.

Ronald Burke Long instructed the audience to preach the “word of God” from Genesis to Revelation. He reaffirmed the oft-cited success formula of churches whose pastors preach the “word.” He stated that soul-winning churches in the denomination had “pastors who preach the Bible, the word of God.”74 Long expressed an anti-intellectual bias in the following statement:

Those who come into our churches do not come to hear the theological trends of today. They do not come to hear some pseudo-intellectual express his personal doubts about the credibility of God’s word. Sinful man does not need to hear your humanistic pep talks that have a form of Godliness but deny the power thereof. He needs to hear a word from God.75


75 Long, “Sermon for the Pastors’ Conference,”
“Preach the word” was a familiar slogan oft repeated by fundamentalist speakers. The slogan contributed to the fundamentalist lexicon that emphasized an authoritarian way of life.

Ron Herrod, pastor of First Baptist Church, Kenner, Louisiana, described the world as full of chaos and instability. He decried the fragmentation of the denomination. He asserted that the world was in political, economic, religious, and moral upheaval because a personal devil created havoc, the Lord was not worshiped, and the church yielded little influence in the world. The solution to the world’s problem was the “person of Jesus Christ.” Herrod called the church to get back to the “book.” He stated, “We don’t need more theories about the Bible. We just need the Bible, to believe it, to teach it, to live it.”

He proclaimed the fundamentalist determination to establish doctrinal boundaries concerning the Bible. He stated, “One of the basics that must bind Baptists is the belief in the infallible, inerrant Word of God; otherwise, we have not authoritative word, just theological jello.” Herrod further stated,

Friend, I would no more believe a Bible with one bad verse than I would take one capsule from a cyanide-laced bottle of Tylenol. But I am convinced that our problem is not one of liberalism. Our problem is one of neglect. It is the problem of preachers, churches, those who are at the seminaries, colleges, and agencies, setting policy and endorsing personnel with little regard for the word of God.

Herrod proclaimed the view that if one organized life around a proper hierarchy, that the problems in the world would cease.

Len Turner developed an anti-intellectual point in his address. He told a story about a fearful preacher addressing a college town church in which professors were a part of the congregation. The young preacher received advice to “Just preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. They probably know very little about that!”

Turner then stated, “Even though we are


77 Herrod, “The Basics that Bind Us,”

living in a day of specialization, of the intellectual, of the cultured, and of the pseudo-sophisticated, the average person knows the least about what they need the most.” He implied that one who is “truly” intellectual and sophisticated understands the “word of God.”

He warned of “doubt” as a force that weakened preaching. He stated,

Brethren, if you are not convinced by the Holy Spirit that everything that you believe and preach about Jesus Christ is the truth, that those who listen to you are sinners, and that Jesus is whom they need, then you’re not ready to preach. If there’s any doubt, then you’re not ready and you need to get with God.\(^\text{79}\)

Turner also cautioned the audience to stop categorizing Baptists as “liberals, moderates, conservatives, informed-conservatives, ultra-conservatives, fundamentalists, neo-fundamentalists, inerrantists, and mainstream denominationalists.” This labelling process, according to Turner, took away from the priority of the evangelism and “maintaining the integrity of the word of God.”

Once again Adrian Rogers addressed the conference in 1983. He warned of compromising beliefs. He cautioned, “Now there are those who tell us that somehow we can sit around and negotiate with that Russian Bear or there are those who tell we can sit around and negotiate with liberalism, but sirs, we cannot. We must not. We dare not.”\(^\text{80}\) He also expressed exasperation, “I’m sick up to here with the name-calling, the innuendoes, the slurs, the slanders, the bickering so many times before those ungodly people who know not our Lord. The good fight is going to be fought on your knees. The good fight is going to be fought with integrity.” Despite his professed weariness of the conflict, Rogers fueled the conflict with strong opinions. He stated,

I make no apology for believing this book and standing by it. I’m going to keep the faith. And friend if it is not absolute it is obsolete. I am grateful for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. Norman Lear has his organization today, called People for the American Way. I think they’ve got it the label P. A. W., three letters. I think we ought to start a new organization called N. A. U. S. E. A., nausea. That stands for national apostates uniting socialists ecumaniacs (sic) and agnostics. The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.\(^\text{81}\)

\(^{79}\) Turner, Are You Ready to Preach?

\(^{80}\) Adrian Rogers, audiotape, rec. 13 June 1983, Pastors’ Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
The 1984 Pastors' Conference featured the theme, "Encouraging the Servant of God." Many of the speakers developed the theme and encouraged pastors in the need for evangelism, personal piety, church growth, establishing goals, stress management, and pastoral leadership qualities. Those speeches are excluded from the study. Of the eleven speakers on the program, four produced statements important to this study.

Ed Young reinforced a patriarchal social order in family relationships. His message exhorted men to love and lead their families. Pastors had the responsibility to lead their family in righteousness. He concluded,

Let me assure you, by the authority of the Word of God, that if you keep the first commandment and love Him with all you've got, it will be well with you as a person. Let me also assure you, that if you become that leader and lover God intends for you to be in your home—it will be well with you as a partner. Also, on the authority of this Book, if you train up that child in the way he or she should go—and that means God's way for that child—it will be well with you as a parent.82

O. S. Hawkins did not directly contribute to the conflict, but showed his support for fundamentalist ideology. In relating Dr. B. H. Carroll's (founding president of Southwestern Seminary) blessing upon Dr. Scarborough (the following president of the seminary), Hawkins tells of the deathbed charge.

And he (Dr. Carroll) looked into my face (Dr. Scarborough) and said, "I want to deliver you a charge and I do it in the blood of Jesus Christ." And incidentally Spurgeon said the true test that a man is preaching the gospel is the emphasis he makes on the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the true test that a man teaches the gospel is the emphasis he makes on the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Carroll went on to say, "You'll be elected president of the seminary. I charge you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to keep it lashed to the old gospel of Jesus Christ and stand by the old book." Our founding fathers had a dream about what we were to be from God and followed those God-given dreams. Make sure your goal is from God, and then follow that God-given dream.83

81 Rogers, audiotape, 13 June 1983

82 Edwin Young, "Family Relationships? (Is It Well?)," duplicated manuscripts, 11 June 1984, Pastors' Conference, Kansas City, KS, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

83 O. S. Hawkins, Reaching God's Goals audiotape, rec. 10 June 1984, Pastors' Conference, Kansas City, KS, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
Franky Schaeffer delivered an ideologically strident message. Schaeffer, a member of a nondenominational church, built a reputation from his books and films that reportedly exposed secular humanism's conspiracy against Christianity. Schaeffer developed a persecution theme in which he asserted that secularists controlled the judicial system to oppress orthodox religions. He stated,

*It is also a tacit admission that many of the secularist elite who inhabit such desolate regions as the A. C. L. U. and the abortion industry have come to regard the judicial system as an arm of their coercive activist movement, and automatically expect the courts to be on their side when it comes to curbing freedom of religious expression, particularly by orthodox or fundamentalist citizens.*

He described Ralph Nader and Jane Fonda as radical secularists who systematically labored to crush religious freedom. He described a political scene that invited anti-religious prejudice. He attacked secular thinking and Pro-choice advocates as encouraging the "slaughter of 1,500,000 unborn children a year through abortion." He urged the audience to read his book list in order to learn of the tactics of "an aggressively secularist state, manipulated by a small, crusading, coercive elite."

Schaeffer implied that orthodox Christian values monolithically stood against secularist values. He urged, "It is important that we, as orthodox Christians today, have an agenda for which we will struggle consistently." He suggested that the audience test public officials to determine if they supported prayer in public schools, supported tax credit for sending children to parochial and other religious institutions, supported freedom from state interference in education, and fought abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia. He argued that all morality was an expression of religion and belief and that a secular religion was operating under the guise of neutrality. He urged, "Christians must courageously confront this myth of neutrality and act."

Schaeffer defiantly expressed a juxtaposition in the world. Those things unsuitable to his hierarchical world view, he labelled "evil." Schaeffer disclosed an evil conspiracy of socialism, communism, and secular humanism that engineered social changes. Schaeffer's

84 Franky Schaeffer, "On Christian Neutrality," duplicated manuscripts, 10 June 1984, Pastors' Conference, Kansas City, KS, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

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message, it seems, expressed a paranoia for anything that might pollute his “orthodox” Christianity. Schaeffer formulated a social agenda and portrayed views of the political New Christian Right. He also fueled the accusation of the SBC reformation movement’s close connection with the national conservative political movement. Schaeffer’s message expressed a militant and intolerant attitude toward everything outside of fundamentalism. He stated, “If someone says to you, ‘Do you mean to impose your values on this nation?’ I have an answer to that, and it is ‘Yes!’” Schaeffer’s message injected a step-up in the intensity of the conflict rhetoric from the Pastors’ Conferences.

Zig Ziglar, a motivational speaker who addressed the conference two years before, also intensified Pastors’ Conference rhetoric. He criticized “liberals” in the SBC seminaries and colleges. In criticizing Baylor university, he said,

In the last 48 hours I have had two of the most outstanding ministers in our Southern Baptist Convention, one of them said to me, Zig I sent my daughter off to an outstanding Southern Baptist School, but when she got ready to go I said, “Now sweetheart take as few of the religion courses as you can and still get your degree. And every time one the professors gets up to speak, you take what he has to say with a grain of salt.” What a tragedy. What a tragedy. I had another one come to me, an outstanding man, as a matter of fact he overheard that first conversation, and he came to me and said, “I am taking my son out of the dormitory on the campus. I want to get him off in an apartment where he will be safe from all the influence from all the environment around him.” I am talking about one of our Baptist universities. Now please don’t misunderstand what I am going to say. I am not questioning the sincerity of these people. That’s not the motive. But I am questioning and wondering if they are reading the same Bible I’m reading. For example when we have a Mormon who is tenured at one of our universities, then I really wonder where our thinking is. And I wonder how many Southern Baptists they got at Brigham Young University. I can tell you as a layman, it absolutely blew my mind, and it was beyond comprehension when I learned this particular thing. Then I learned there was another professor there who was, ‘comfortable with Darwin.’ I got news for that professor, I don’t believe Darwin is very comfortable right now. Then the president of the university had this to say, it is alright for the boys to put up the centerfold of Playboy magazine there. In case you think its alright, let me ask you fathers a question. How would you like for your teenage daughter to go out this evening with a young man who has been looking at Playboy magazine all afternoon.

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85 as quoted from Hefley, The Truth in Crisis: vol. 1 103.

86 Zig Ziglar, audiotape, 10 June 1984, Pastors’ Conference, Kansas City, KS, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
Ziglar criticized the SBC Christian Life Commission and sympathized with those who wanted to cut Cooperative Program funds from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. He parodied the BJCPA, 

We've got to look at that entire operation at the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. The executive director as you know has been affiliated with "People for the American Way." I'm talking about Ed Asner, Jane Fonda, Norman Lear and that group. They even had a program on patriotism with Ed Asner, Jane Fonda, Norman Lear. Now to have those three on a program with patriotism is the theological equivalent of having Madlyn Murray O'Hair and Hugh Hefner serve the Lord's Supper down at a Southern Baptist Church.  

These comments and those of Schaeffer reflected a growing intensity of conflict rhetoric.

Ziglar, on the following day, won first vice presidency of the SBC.

The 1985 Pastors' Conference in Dallas featured the theme, "Tracing the Rainbow Through the Rain." A large United States flag stretched across the speaker's podium and a welcome letter from President Reagan and Mrs. Reagan was read. Many of the speakers developed traditional themes that were not political, such as the need for evangelism, personal piety, and pastoral leadership qualities. Those speeches are excluded from the study. Of the twelve speakers on the program, six produced statements important to this study.

Thomas D. Elliff reinforced the inerrancy position held by fundamentalists. In his sermon, "Settled in Heaven," he quoted an admired preacher. He recounted,

There were three things of which "Preacher" Hallock was thoroughly convinced: (1) That the word of God was absolutely true; (2) that the absolutely true word of God was sufficient to settle every issue of life, and; (3) that every true believer should immerse himself in the word of God.  

The speaker reaffirmed the Bible as an absolute foundation and guidebook for life. He also asserted that a thorough noncritical obedience to the Bible is all that is necessary for making serious choices. Elliff defended his absolute foundationalism with a set of questions.

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87 Zig Ziglar, audiotape, 10 June 1984

88 Thomas D. Elliff, "Settled in Heaven," duplicated manuscripts, 10 June 1985, Pastors' Conference, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
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 as sure a word from him as did Abraham or Daniel, Peter or Paul.  

Ed Young described how liberalism seduced seminarians. Young served as pastor of the huge superchurch, Second Baptist Church of Houston, and his testimony of deliverance from liberalism carried much “rhetorical weight” with this audience. He asserted that many seminarians graduated with no spiritual life because liberalism drained them of vitality. He insisted that liberalism destroyed European Christians, and other denominations, and now threatened Southern Baptists. He recounted how scholars had weakened his faith.

I was in seminary over twenty years ago in that particular class taught by a professor in one of our seminaries who was a thorough-going Bultmannian. And Bultmann is even to the left of Barth and Brunner and neo-orthodoxy. And he stood up in class and he said, “Look don’t worry about the bodily resurrection, it was a spiritual resurrection, and out of that grave didn’t come a body but it came the church.” And that dog won’t hunt brethren.

Young testified of his seduction into liberalism and his salvation from it. He related,

I graduated from seminary and I went out with power and unction, prayer and all the spiritual things, and I started to scatter there in the fields, those pebbles in my hand, those rocks that I had been handed. And nothing came up. The people shouted for bread and in that little textile church, I just threw rocks, and shouted louder and more emotional stories and quoted scholars and nothing happened. But even something more critical than that took place in my life. When you march out into this arena, you lose the fear of God. Oh do some of you know what it is like to lose the fear of God? I had to go back and wrestle with the word, pray and seek godly men who would share. And for the first time, I began to read intelligent, articulate, warm-hearted scholars who could bow down to no one, who believed every syllable of the Bible, and they believe that God’s word was totally dependable. And I didn’t have to put my scholarship, or any degree of intellect I might have on the shelf. I could stand up and say its true. And the words became bread and I threw the stones away, and I began to scatter the seed of the word and miraculous things happened, I couldn’t understand it, but hearts and lives were changed. And the harvest came back in my life.

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89 Elliff, “Settled in Heaven,”

90 Edwin Young, audiotape, rec. 10 June 1985, Pastors’ Conference, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

91 Young, audiotape, rec. 10 June 1985
D. James Kennedy served as pastor of the famous Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale. Kennedy began preaching twenty years before in that church with only forty-five members that dwindled to seventeen members. Kennedy developed a method of sharing his faith in one-on-one encounters that became known as Evangelism Explosion. The church grew to more than 7,000 members, and Evangelism Explosion expanded to more than fifty countries. He also served as an expert witness in an Alabama legal case concerning prayer in the public school that won at the state level, but was overturned by the Supreme Court. He asserted that Christians must aggressively promote their beliefs in the nation. He stated,

We still have that original mandate to subdue the earth, to have dominion over it, and to glorify God through it. That means that every sphere of life is to be brought into subjection of God, and that God is to have glory in all things. In the early days of this country, that's the way it was. The first 126 colleges and universities founded in this nation were founded some such purpose as the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith. The charter of Harvard University says their young men and women were to receive a godly education in order to advance the kingdom of Jesus Christ.92

Kennedy taught that Christian ideology once guided American education, art, media, sciences, business, literature, and government. He asserted that Christians in this century relinquished their responsibility to delineate biblical principles for every realm of society, and that conservative Evangelicals must reassert Christian ideology. He stated that conservative Evangelicals, in the last five to ten years, finally awakened to their charge of applying the word of God to every sphere of society. Kennedy attacked the idea that the United States was founded as a secular country and argued that the country's founders established a religious conception of the United States. This address evidenced the fundamentalists' desire to establish social prescriptions in every realm.

Morris Chapman became a rising star in the fundamentalist circles, and pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas. He would later be elected to two terms as president of the SBC and then become the president of the SBC Sunday School Board (one of the most prestigious positions in Southern Baptist life). He reaffirmed his conviction of the inerrancy

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92 D. James Kennedy, Righteousness Exalteth a Nation audiotape, 10 June 1985, Pastors' Conference, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
of the Bible. He professed, "I will never change my conviction about the word of God, but as I stand for what I believe, may I stand in such a manner people will see Jesus in me."  

Chapman promoted premillennialism. He stated,

Now let me tell you, when God's word says it, it is settled in heaven and it ought to be settled on this earth. In Revelation chapter 20, Jesus settled the millennial question. He said, we shall reign with him on earth for a thousand years. Now that's what Jesus said, and I just believe what Jesus said. That's all the sense I've got. Somebody would say that's narrow. I want to be as broadminded as Jesus. Some would say, "Well the millennium is spoken about only in Revelation chapter 20." But you know this isn't the revelation of St. John the divine, this is the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the spokesman, John is simply the postman, and Jesus says there is going to be a thousand year reign, when we shall be with him on this earth.  

Charles Stanley, the SBC president, gave the next to last address to the 1985 Pastors' Conference. Stanley urged the audience to continue its support of the fundamentalist leadership of the SBC. He said the vote on the following morning would send "a very certain signal to the world that we still are bound to the word of God as the revelation of God." He also urged messengers to be forgiving and loving toward one another.  

W. A. Criswell passionately delivered his sermon entitled, "Whether We Live or Die." Further building a credibility that actually needed no reinforcement, he began,

Not in all of my life have I ever prepared an address as minutely and meticulously as I have this one tonight. I have been a pastor 58 years. I began preaching at this Pastors' Conference at the invitation of Dr. M. E. Dodd when he founded it something like 50 years ago. And I would think more than thirty times have I spoken to this assembly of God's anointed undershepherds. But I have never, ever approached a moment like this.  

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93 Morris Chapman, When the Trumpet Sounds audiotape, rec. 10 June 1985, Pastors' Conference, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.  

94 Chapman, When the Trumpet Sounds audiotape, rec. 10 June 1985  

95 as quoted from Hefley, The Truth in Crisis: vol. 1, 120.  

96 W. A. Criswell, Whether We Live or Die audiotape, rec. 10 June 1985, Pastors' Conference, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
In his address, Criswell outlined how other denominations died when they succumbed to the ideas of Darwin and German higher criticism. He recounted the struggles of the famous fundamentalist crusader, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in defending evangelical tenets of the Christian faith. British Baptists, according to Criswell, spiritually and institutionally died when they rejected Spurgeon's appeal. Criswell continued, "My brother, if the higher critical approach to scriptures dominates our institutions and our denomination, there will be no missionaries to hurt. They will cease." Ammerman reports that the audience responded to that claim with "raucous applause." Criswell continued, "As with the Baptists of Great Britain, whether we continue to live or ultimately die lies in our dedication to the infallible word of God." Criswell recited the loss of evangelistic zeal of universities that were begun with the purpose of becoming an evangelical witness. He related how Baptist churches collected funds to establish the University of Chicago to train preachers and spread the gospel. Criswell read writings that represented work being done at the divinity school and proclaimed them to be a "massacre of Christian orthodoxy." To rounds of applause and shouted "Amen," Criswell described neo-orthodoxy as a parasite to Baptist institutions.

He stated, "No minister who has embraced the higher critical approach to the gospel has ever built a great church, ever held a mighty revival, or ever won a city to the Lord. The message they preach and think is modern is as old as the first lie." Ammerman reports that the audience was "revelling in his condemnation of their enemies." Then Criswell recounted an article in the Review and Expositor of Southern Seminary that lauded a past professor who was forced from the seminary because he was "ahead of his time."

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97 Criswell, Whether We Live or Die audiotape, rec. 10 June 1985
98 Ammerman, 81.
99 Criswell, Whether We Live or Die audiotape, rec. 10 June 1985
100 Criswell, Whether We Live or Die audiotape, rec. 10 June 1985
101 Criswell, Whether We Live or Die audiotape, rec. 10 June 1985
102 Ammerman, 81.

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urged the audience to realize that it was not too late to turn back the influence of liberalism and higher destructive criticism. Ammerman describes Criswell’s delivery, his persuasiveness, and his perceived impact on the audience. She states,

Few could match Criswell’s eloquence or passion or his single-minded devotion to the dangers of “higher criticism.” He influenced and trained many of the leaders of the Convention’s fundamentalist wing, and his power in the pulpit was awesome. Those who listened became convinced (if they were not already) that the Bible must be either completely accurate or completely wrong; and without the Bible, all other beliefs were in danger. Denying it is starting down the “slippery slope” toward liberalism.  

Criswell’s climactic sermon before the largest and most heated convention meetings (25,000 heard Criswell, 45,000 attended the 1985 SBC), perhaps symbolized a ideological settlement by a majority of Baptists involved in the controversy. Fundamentalists successfully presented the biblical inerrancy issue to uncommitted Baptists as the central issue that differentiated the conflicting factions. They skillfully focused attention on this ideological consideration as the foundation of evangelism, spirituality, and institutional soundness. And they successfully established a biblical consensus model in the minds of the majority of Baptists, and Criswell served as a chief spokesman.

The 1986 Pastors’ Conference in Atlanta featured the theme, “Jesus, Author and Finisher.” This conference exhibited far less inflammatory rhetoric than the past year. One observer noted that the speakers in the 1986 Pastors’ Conference hardly mentioned the conflict. A reason for the peacefulness was that the 1985 convention established a peace committee, who had in turn called for a halt in name-calling and political rhetoric. Many of the 1986 Pastors’ Conference speakers developed traditional themes that were not political, such as the need for evangelism, personal piety, and pastoral leadership qualities. Those speeches are excluded. Of the fourteen speakers on the program, only one produced statements important to the present chapter.

Adrian Rogers attacked liberal theology, and displayed an example of a crucial “slippery slope” argument. The “slippery slope” argument asserted that orthodox Christian

103 Ammerman, 82.

104 Hefley, The Truth in Crisis; vol. 2, 62.
theology contains a set of unassailable propositions that must be unquestionably believed. To question any of the foundational doctrines, this argument asserted, caused one to begin a pattern that questions all of Christianity. Rogers asserted that the virgin-birth of Jesus is one of those foundational doctrines critical to orthodox Christians.

Rogers began by citing a number of liberal historical preachers who denied the virgin birth. He cited a Redbook survey of Protestant seminarians that cited that 56% percent of the students and preachers believed in the virgin birth of Christ. He said, “that ladies and gentlemen is the legacy of modern liberalism. Only 56 percent of the students of Protestant seminaries believe in the virgin birth of Christ.” Rogers questioned one’s salvation if he or she denied the virgin birth. He asserted,

But I’m going to tell you something else mister, if you don’t believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ not only do you have difficulty with the character of Mary, not only do you have difficulty with the character of Jesus, not only do you have difficulty with the word of God, but you’ve got a big difficulty in your own character. I’m going to tell you something else, I wouldn’t give you half a hallelujah for your chance of heaven, if you don’t believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. You take the virgin birth of Jesus Christ out of the Bible and there is no hope for humanity. You take the virgin birth out and the house of Christianity will collapse like a house of cards.

Rogers reasoned that through Adam’s sin, all mankind sinned. This belief required a belief in a literal Adam and Eve. He stated,

The Bible teaches there was one man named Adam, and the Bible teaches there was one woman named Eve. I reject with all the unction, function, and emotion of my soul that monkey mythology that tells us that man evolved. I believe in the direct creation of Adam and Eve.

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106 Adrian Rogers, The Cradle that Rocked the World, audiotape, rec. 9 June 1986, Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

107 Rogers, The Cradle that Rocked the World, audiotape, rec. 9 June 1986

108 Rogers, The Cradle that Rocked the World, audiotape, rec. 9 June 1986
Only a sinless man born outside the bloodline of Adam could redeem mankind. Rogers argued that the bloodline of a person was determined by the father. "The blood that was in Jesus Christ," asserted Rogers, "was the blood of God." He continued, "As in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. And listen and listen well. If Genesis 3 is a myth, John 3 is a farce." Rogers' theology consisted of a set of unavoidable propositions. He argued, "Why was Jesus born of a virgin? He came as he did, virgin-born to be what he was, the God-man. He was what he was, the God-man to do what he did, to die as a substitute. He did what he did to change what I was." Then Rogers provided a litany that became popular in fundamentalist ideology, because it distilled their conception of truth. He stated, "No virgin birth, no deity. No deity, no sinlessness. No sinlessness, no atonement. No atonement, no hope." Rogers' sermon offered a good example of how the fundamentalist hierarchical world view protected essential propositions. In the same way that the hierarchical world view expressed a consistent "chain of command" (a term that Rogers used in an earlier sermon) in social relations, it also expressed a consistent chain of arguments in their theology. Fundamentalist rhetoric manifested a desire to enforce a "right" order in the world.

The 1987 Pastors' Conference in St. Louis featured the theme, "The Emmanuel Factor." As in the previous year, many of the speakers heeded the peace committee's plea and developed traditional themes that were not political, such as the need for evangelism, personal piety and pastoral leadership qualities. Those speeches are excluded. Of the twelve speakers on the program, two produced statements important to this chapter. Two speakers called for forgiveness and redressive actions, and chapter five examines those sermons.

David Miller espoused that a proper understanding of Jesus necessarily included inerrancy of the scripture. He asserted,

Jesus is conservatively sound in His doctrine! Regarding bibliology, He is an inerrantist. He gave ample evidence that He believed in the historicity of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. As a matter of fact, He gave clear evidence that He believed the entire book. He believed in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. He spoke of the literalness of the book of Jonah and even used it as a prophetic reference to His own death, burial and resurrection! There is a statement in the "Baptist Faith and Message" which says, "The

\[109\] Rogers, The Cradle that Rocked the World, audiotape, rec. 9 June 1986

\[110\] Rogers, The Cradle that Rocked the World, audiotape, rec. 9 June 1986
criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.” We appreciate the recent “Glorieta Statement” in which the Seminary Presidents declared their belief in the inerrancy of scripture; however, I want to remind you that we already have a definitive word from the church’s prophet. Jesus said, “not one jot or title shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled.”

Bailey Smith dauntlessly asserted the fundamentalist conception of the Bible. He concluded,

There must be a new bold declaration of respect for the Bible. There are those who say, “We’ve got to quit worrying about the Bible and get busy about evangelism and missions.” My friend, no soldier ever wanted to go into battle with a defective weapon. Can you imagine soldiers on a ship trying to fire those big guns from that vessel and somebody saying, “Sir, we’ve got a big hole in the ship, and we’re sinking.” Would the captain say, “Forget the sinking, and keep firing!” 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.

Smith, in the same way as earlier fundamentalist leaders, presented biblical inerrancy as the central issue of the SBC conflict. He used rhetorical skill to focus attention on this ideological consideration as the foundation of evangelism, spirituality and institutional soundness. The inerrancy argument expressed the strong hierarchical world view of fundamentalists. The inerrancy argument emphasized authority, social prescription, and distinct group beliefs. It de-emphasized personal experiences, personal interpretations, and individual situational ethics.

The 1988 Pastors’ Conference brought back scathing denouncements from Bailey Smith and W. A. Criswell as fundamentalists rhetorically fought back a moderate resurgence. The 1988 SBC meeting represented the nearest that moderates came to recapturing the presidential election. In 1988, Richard Jackson, the moderate presidential candidate, received 15,112 votes and Jerry Vines, the fundamentalist candidate received 15,804 votes.

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111 David Miller, “The Emmanuel Factor in the Church,” duplicated manuscripts, 15 June 1987, Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

112 Bailey Smith, “The Emmanuel Factor in the Compassion for Souls,” duplicated manuscripts, 14 June 1987, Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

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The 1988 Pastors' Conference in San Antonio featured the theme, "Building the Greatest Churches Since Pentecost." An unannounced but evident secondary theme of loyalty to the Bible worked its way into messages. Of the fourteen speakers on the program, nine produced statements important to the study.

Bailey Smith stridently contended for fundamentalist ideology. He congratulated Southern Baptists for rejecting liberalism. He stated,

I'm glad I'm a member of a denomination that has learned that any denomination that goes liberal, goes down. I don't know why we debate which is better anyway, liberalism or truth. It's like debating which is better cancer or health. What has liberalism done politically? It's given communism to Vietnam and Nicaragua. It's ruled that a mother can murder her little baby while still in their womb. It has told teenagers they can look at lewd pictures and drink, and now 18 teenagers a day commit suicide.113

Smith continued his accusations against liberalism. Scornfully he claimed that,

Liberalism says that homosexuality is an alternate lifestyle. And the sin of sodomy has so spread in this world in your lifetime and mine, 200,000 will die of AIDS. It's encouraged women to leave their husbands and children to claim their equal rights. Liberalism, politically has been a joke. What has it done educationally? It has taken prayer out of the schools and put in secular humanism. It has taken the ten commandments off the walls, and put policemen in the halls. What's it done religiously? It's destroyed every church that it ever touched. It has choked the life out of every denomination where its found control. And the worst thing that I know that liberalism has ever done is taken a young fiery seminarian with a breath of God upon his soul, and aflame for the word and aflame for men, and aflame for God in his heart and it snuffed out that flame and made him a dead lifeless professional clergyman to go out and kill another church. I'm telling you ladies and gentlemen, if all these things are true, and indeed they are, I've got one great question for us tonight, why does the debate continue? We don't want it.114

A common element of fundamentalist sermons was humor at the expense of liberal professors. Smith told of a pit-bull dog attack on two liberal professors and a beautiful coed. The dog-owner reasoned that the dog bit the coed after the two liberals in order to, "to get the taste out of his mouth."

113 Bailey E. Smith, There's Victory in the Pea Patch audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988, Pastors' Conference, San Antonio, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

114 Smith, There's Victory in the Pea Patch audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988
Smith accused many churches as being, “cold, dead, lifeless, formal, lethargical churches.” He stated, “Churches all over America are dying of worship.” He encouraged preachers to preach the Bible with authority and conviction. He stated, “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.” Encouraging the audience to become, if necessary, fundamentalist martyrs, he pleaded,

Sometimes what a man has got to do to be a man is to stand. He must say, “God, if there is one man that’s going to stand on the blood, the second coming, and the body resurrection and the infallibility of your word, God I’m willing to be that man. God, if everybody else leaves you, I’m going to stand with you. God, I’m just going to promise you that I’m going to stand.”

Smith argued that one must stand for loyalty to the Bible. He told a story of a lady in World War II who came out swinging her broom at enemy troops and saying that she would let them know on whose side she belonged. In the story, Smith legitimized the polarization of the denomination. Then he expressed his dislike of three seminary professors that he believed were purposely obscure, stating that,

I was on a committee some time ago that interviewed some professors of a school that was accused of saying some things that were not in the Bible. As we interviewed these men, I was amazed when three of them at one time said the same thing. They said it in unison and here is what they said, “What this committee needs to understand is that students misunderstand what we say.” Now people I’ve been preaching thirty years and nobody has every misunderstood what I’ve thought about Jesus. Nobody has ever misunderstood me on the virgin birth. Nobody has ever misunderstood me on the body resurrection or the second coming. I think that if you want to be understood, you can be understood.

Ed Young also accused moderates of obscurity and misleading others concerning their beliefs. He stated,

I think our first problem is theological. We have pastors who will endorse every aspect of the Baptist Faith and Message if you will let them explain what they mean by every statement. In truth one of our problems is we have so many pastors who would say, “I am conservative.” But conservative is a relative word. Conservative, compared to what?

115 Smith, There’s Victory in the Pea Patch audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988

116 Smith, There’s Victory in the Pea Patch audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988

117 Smith, There’s Victory in the Pea Patch audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988
The truth is a lot of our pastors are functional universalists. And by that I mean they do not really believe that a man without Jesus Christ who dies will spend eternity in hell. So a part of our problem, a big part of our problem, is indeed theological.\textsuperscript{118}

Morris Chapman championed the word of God and lambasted those who detracted from it. He illustrated this point with a story about a university professor:

I read somewhere, a university professor didn't believe in the inerrancy and the infallibility of scripture. He believed that parts of the Bible were not inspired. And when his daughter grew into her later teens, she came home one day, and she said, “Dad, I'm moving in with my boyfriend.” He said, "You can't do that." She said, "Why not." He said, "Because the Bible says that it is sin." And this daughter said, "But you have always said, some parts of the Bible are inspired and others are not, and I do not believe the part about fornication is the inspired word of God.” How tragic.\textsuperscript{119}

In reflecting on the SBC crisis, Chapman related his weariness, but urged the audience not to compromise their beliefs. He said,

Our denomination is in the crisis of controversy. I love my denomination. I'm weary of the war of words. My spirit weeps when I see brother bitter against brother. Listen very carefully, and I'll soon be finished. God wants us to hold firmly and everlastingly to our convictions and to be a great church of missions and evangelism. We must keep his word, and not deny his name. But there is a spirit with which we must stand upon our convictions. My heart breaks when I hear of the wall rhetoric. My heart breaks when I read the sensational headlines. My heart breaks when I listen to the character assassinations. And oh how I believe the Holy Spirit of God must be grieved. And Ephesian chapter four, God led me to the passage. And I pray that as we hold fast to the word of God as our full and ultimate authority, that we will understand Jesus has included us, that our hearts may be filled with love to overflowing. Disagreeing, yes, but with spirits that are like Jesus.\textsuperscript{120}

Paige Patterson, considered by many to be an initiator of the reformation movement, only addressed the Pastors' Conference one time during the period of this study. He and Judge Paul Pressler were the most visible leaders of the reformation in its early days (Pressler did not address the Pastors' Conference). Ammerman says that “Patterson and Pressler became the visible ‘bad guy.’”\textsuperscript{121} In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Patterson (president of Criswell

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\textsuperscript{118} Edwin Young, audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988, Pastors’ Conference, San Antonio, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

\textsuperscript{119} Morris Chapman, The Lord’s Last Word on Loyalty audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988, Pastors’ Conference, San Antonio, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

\textsuperscript{120} Chapman, The Lord’s Last Word on Loyalty audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988
College) and Pressler travelled continuously, encouraging conservative Baptists to join the fundamentalist reformation movement. By the late 1980s, Ammerman says, "Patterson and Pressler were less often needed as public scapegoats."\textsuperscript{122} Patterson was an articulate spokesman and able debater for fundamentalists. He wrote editorials and gave many interviews concerning the conflict. He was given a minor position in the conference with only time for little more than a devotion. Patterson did not address the conflict and delivered a short lecture on the topic of Jesus as the foundation for the greatest churches since Pentecost. He said that a proper recognition of Jesus would help protect one from "aberrant theology." He stated,

If we are clear today about the foundation upon which church building must be done, it will guard us first of all from aberrant theology. Aberrant theology most often occurs when a doctrine that is true is preached to the exclusion of others until it becomes an untruth. But the center of the church's preaching must always be the person and the work of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{123}

Tom Elliff announced in his sermon that he stopped submitting sermons for publication because it offered the devil an opportunity to attack him. He stated that in prior conferences when he submitted his sermon, the devil used it as an opportunity to attack his message. He did not elaborate on the meaning of that statement. Elliff argued for the necessity of the literal, physical, blood sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of mankind. He reinforced another plank in fundamentalist ideology, the substitutionary blood atonement of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{124} The doctrine asserts that the holiness of God necessitated a sinless sacrifice. The sins of the world, according to this doctrine, were laid upon Christ while on the cross, so that mankind could be

\textsuperscript{121} Ammerman, 173.

\textsuperscript{122} Ammerman, 173.

\textsuperscript{123} Paige Patterson, The Foundation of the Greatest Churches Since Pentecost audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988, Pastors' Conference, San Antonio, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

\textsuperscript{124} Thomas Elliff, Jesus' Blood, the Cost of True Salvation audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988, Pastors' Conference, San Antonio, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
reconciled to God. This literal exchange theory became a prominent proposition in fundamentalist ideology.

Ron Herrod also reinforced fundamentalist ideology. He maligned moderates' emphases on the priesthood of the believer (individual responsibility of each believer to read the Bible and determine God's guidance). He stated,

I continue to hear a cry from those who want us to pay the salaries of people who believe almost anything. They talk about the priesthood of the believer. Gentlemen, it's time we begin to emphasize the beliefs of the priesthood. We are all individuals and every church is autonomous. We are not credalistic but there are some things that are not negotiable. We've always been a people believing that God took on human flesh in the person of the virgin-born Savior who lived a perfect life and shed His blood that still saves from sin, who arose from the dead and ascended back to the Father, and He's coming again. We learn that from a Bible that is totally and completely the word of God. Beloved, the integrity, authority, reliability, and infallibility of the word of God is worth the fight!  

Herrod emphasized an “us against them” scenario, implying that the majority of Baptists were employing liberals in Baptist agencies. He also used familiar slogans concerning the Bible that reinforced a set of “good” terms in the fundamentalist paradigm. He urged the audience to adopt nostalgic values. He advocated,

I know it sounds old-fashioned, folks, but there was a time when there was a call from our pulpits to holy, pure, righteous, and godly living. It is time to return to some old-fashioned honesty and holiness in our pulpits and in our pews. Folks, it will not happen in the pews until it happens in the pulpits.

Herrod applauded changes in the Interfaith Witness of the SBC that emphasized the exclusivity of Evangelical Protestantism. He noted approvingly, “We do not need professors in our schools, men or women, who believe there is any other way to escape a literal hell than through faith in Christ.” Herrod expressed a familiar fundamentalist success formula. He said, “I'm going to be honest with you, folks; a church that doesn't believe this is entirely the

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125 Ron Herrod, “Christ's Counsel for a Confused Church,” duplicated manuscripts, 13 June 1988, Pastors' Conference, San Antonio, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

126 Herrod, Christ's Counsel for a Confused Church

127 Herrod, Christ's Counsel for a Confused Church
word of God is not winning souls, is not changing the community around, it is a dead church. That church doesn’t need reformation—it needs resurrection."\textsuperscript{128}

Richard Lee also espoused the fundamentalist success formula in blaming poor growth on lack of conviction and lack of belief in the Bible. He concluded, "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."\textsuperscript{129}

W. A. Criswell spoke Monday evening before the beginning of the SBC meeting on Tuesday and announced that he would preach another sermon than the published manuscript. In past Pastors’ Conferences, Criswell was a regular speaker who consistently provided full manuscripts that accurately reflected his oral communication. Criswell’s substitute sermon vigorously attacked liberalism in schools and churches. He stated, "We have not only lost our nation to the liberal, the secularists, and the humanist, but in great areas of our Baptist life we have lost our... institutions, our colleges, and universities."\textsuperscript{130} Criswell cited Brown University, McMasters University, and University of Chicago as schools that Baptists began with the intent of training ministers and extending the Baptist witness. He claimed that they were lost to liberalism under the guise of academic freedom and the priesthood of the believer. Criswell railed against heresies that the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer permitted. What we have done is to make “the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer... to cover every damnable heresy that man could imagine. It’s a tragedy, it’s a tragedy!”\textsuperscript{131} Criswell recounted the decline of other mainline denominations as proof of the effects of liberalism. He then raised a bulletin from Jerry Vines’ First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida. (Vines, the fundamentalist candidate for that year’s SBC president, would be elected on the following day.) Criswell explained that the bulletin announced 152 baptisms for the week. Criswell

\textsuperscript{128} Herrod, Christ’s Counsel for a Confused Church
\textsuperscript{129} as quoted from Hefley, The Truth in Crisis; vol. 4, 44.
\textsuperscript{130} as quoted from Hefley, The Truth in Crisis; vol. 4, 44.
\textsuperscript{131} as quoted from Hefley, The Truth in Crisis; vol. 4, 45.
said, "The cause (for the decline in baptisms) is not in our conservative fellowship churches." 132 Then he furnished a statement that created headlines in San Antonio and denominational newspapers. He said, "Liberals today call themselves moderates. However a skunk by any other name still stinks." 133 Hefley reports, "Most of his audience cheered and clapped, with many rising to their feet. But a few looked pained and uncomfortable." 134 This observation indicates that some probably desired less inflammatory rhetoric.

Jerry Vines followed W. A. Criswell and Ed Young and gave the last address of the 1988 conference. He defended his beliefs in the recorded miracles of the Bible and challenged those who demythologized the Bible.

There are some people who mutilate language to rob the Bible of the elements of the supernatural. Some people say, "Well to believe in the miracles of the Bible is intellectual suicide." Well for most of us that wouldn't be a major disaster. I take you to Genesis 1 verse 1, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. If you can swallow that verse, brother, you will not have any trouble with any other verse in all of the word of God. A miracle is a supernatural intervention of God in the natural course of things. 135

Crisis Rhetoric in the SBC Forums

After the 1979 Pastors' Conference and SBC meeting, progressive pastors voiced their opposition to fundamentalist ideology and opposition to the stated goal of reforming the denomination. These pastors in the early 1980s met considerable apathy among like groups and had difficulty persuading many that a significant problem existed in the denomination. Many Baptists doubted fundamentalists had either the organizational capability or the appeal to sustain a majority for a decade of SBC elections. But some pastors attempted to build a moderate coalition after the 1981 SBC meeting. Ammerman states,

A group of a dozen or so leaders gathered in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, to assess the situation. They were mostly pastors recognized as leaders of the denomination's

132 as quoted from Hefley, The Truth in Crisis; vol. 4, 45.

133 as quoted from Hefley, The Truth in Crisis; vol. 4, 45.

134 Hefley, The Truth in Crisis; vol. 4, 45.

135 Jerry Vines, audiotape, rec. 12 June 1988, Pastors' Conference, San Antonio, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

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progressive wing, and they became known as the “Gatlinburg Gang.” They decided to go on the offensive to try to ensure that the fundamentalist movement would be stopped.\textsuperscript{136}

Across the denomination, anti-fundamentalists were poorly organized, were doctrinally diverse, and possessed no leadership structure.

After failed attempts to get anyone except fundamentalists on Pastors’ Conference programs, some moderates in 1983 discussed beginning an alternative event.\textsuperscript{137} In conjunction with the 1984 Kansas City SBC meeting, the SBC Forum began with the expressed purpose of airing views of alienated moderates. The 1984 Forum began on Monday afternoon and evening prior to convention meetings. The scheduling of the Forum during the Pastors’ Conference symbolized an ideological polarization with the Pastors’ Conference (Although in 1984, there were seven pre-convention events, but none of the others competed for Baptist Pastors, with the possible exception of Women in Ministry). The SBC Forums never attracted audiences as large as the Pastors’ Conferences, nor featured as many speakers, nor planned as elaborate programs (celebrity music and multi-media presentations). In the 1984 SBC Forum in Kansas City, five speakers addressed an audience of approximately 2,000.

Not all of the speakers addressed the SBC conflict. However each speaker in the 1984 SBC Forum represented different sections of those who vigorously opposed the fundamentalist reformation. Duke McCall acted as president of the Baptist World Alliance and chancellor of Southern Seminary. In past years, progressive Baptists nominated McCall for president of the SBC on several occasions. He served Baptists for most of his life in many institutional and voluntary positions. He had the best education that Baptists offered and supported Baptist scholarship. At over fifty years of age, McCall represented prominent characteristics of many who opposed fundamentalist ideology.\textsuperscript{138} McCall spoke on the theme of God’s love and

\textsuperscript{136} Ammerman, 174.

\textsuperscript{137} This claim stated by Cecil Sherman, audiotape, rec. 11 June 1985, SBC Forum, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

\textsuperscript{138} Ammerman’s surveys indicate that moderate laity were more likely to have experienced a lifetime of socialization. Baptist Battles 158. Compared to fundamentalist laity, moderate laity often were educated in Baptist colleges, held professional positions, and
differentiated between love and criticism. He advocated love for others to be a necessary ingredient in loving God.\textsuperscript{139}

Sarah Ann Hobbs represented the prominent role that women played in the moderate counter movement. Hobbs served as the director of the missions division for the North Carolina Baptist Convention and the only woman holding a division-level position among the thirty-seven state conventions.\textsuperscript{140} From the beginning, women participated in more visible roles in the moderate counter movement than in the fundamentalist movement. In this twelve year study, no woman addressed a Pastors' Conference. Women possessed few visible roles in SBC meetings. Women gave the Women's Missionary Union report to the SBC and some women missionaries addressed the convention meetings, but the meetings were overwhelming male dominated. By contrast, in many moderate meetings, women held prominent and visible leadership positions. There were few Baptist churches (moderates or otherwise) with female ministers, but moderates promoted female participation in the leadership.\textsuperscript{141} Hobbs asserted that women would heed the call of God despite efforts by fundamentalists to discourage women in ministry. If Southern Baptists refused women, she predicted, they would serve somewhere else.\textsuperscript{142} Hobbs demonstrated that fewer positions were available to women, though more women were attending seminaries. She forecast that, as more women earned prominent positions in society, women ministers would also become more common. She invited ministers to encourage women to answer God's call to the ministry, and she invited ministers to recommend women to staff positions.\textsuperscript{143} Hobbs' proposal stood in direct violation of attended large urban churches.


\textsuperscript{140} Walker L. Knight, "Program Set; No Debate of Women's Ministry Role," \textit{SBC Today}, May 1984: 1.

\textsuperscript{141} In a two-day Cooperative Baptist Fellowship conference in Atlanta 1991, This researcher saw as many men as women leading all aspects of the program.

\textsuperscript{142} "Forum Start 'Biggest Baby Ever,'" \textit{SBC Today}, July 1984: 4.

fundamentalist social prescriptions. God, according to fundamentalists, could not call women as pastors without violating his own inerrant, infallible New Testament instructions. At best, according to fundamentalists, women mistook God's call into the ministry for a call to greater commitment. At worst, the feminist movement conspired to undermine the churches' social fabric by encouraging women to pursue the ministry. Though Hobbs did not directly contribute to conflict rhetoric, the ideas that she espoused, and that the Forums symbolically endorsed, presented a challenge to the fundamentalists' social prescriptions and the literal hermeneutics that grounded their ideology.

David Matthews served as pastor of First Baptist Church of Greenville, South Carolina. In some ways, Matthews symbolized the greatest concentration of moderate pastors in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Baptists in the South planted their first church in Charleston in 1699 and founded universities, (Wake Forest, Furman, Mercer, and others) and a seminary along the Southeastern seaboard. Southern Baptists created their first seminary in Greenville in 1859 (Southern Seminary relocated to Louisville, Kentucky in 1877). C. S. Gardner, the prominent progressive rhetor detailed in chapter two, acted as pastor of First Baptist Church of Greenville before the turn of the century. In general, Baptists from these states conveyed pride in their historic roots and often expressed more progressive Baptist beliefs, values and behaviors than Baptists from Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama. Matthews aired progressive Baptist theology by challenging the implications of biblical inerrancy. He stated, "The Bible is not synonymous with God, and therefore should not be elevated to the sovereignty that belongs only to him." He added, "If the Bible were God, or even the totality of God's revelation, we would not need preaching. We would only need Bible reading." Matthews emphasized God's Spirit in guiding people as they studied the Bible. He warned that an overemphasis on the Bible or God's Spirit would result in a cult

145 Ammerman, 145.
Matthews directly confronted a fundamentalist proposition concerning the divine perfection of the Bible.

Kenneth Chafin also symbolized years of denominational service and progressive Baptist education. He taught preaching at Southern Seminary and had previously been a professor of evangelism at Southwestern Seminary. In prior years, Chafin served as the dean of the Billy Graham schools of evangelism and director of evangelism for the SBC. He also had been pastor to the 7,000 member South Main Baptist Church of Houston, Texas. In the early years of the conflict, he candidly criticized fundamentalism. He debated Paige Patterson and gave enormous energy to countering the reformation movement. He scathingly reproved fundamentalists and, in turn, received fierce denouncements. His position at Southern Seminary made him a target of fundamentalists who argued that denominational employees should not attack Baptists who payed their salaries. Chafin embodied a visible challenge to fundamentalist assertions that progressives could not be evangelistic, and could not lead large successful churches. Though Chafin symbolized a significant challenge to fundamentalists, he did not attack fundamentalists in this message. In fact, Chafin urged the audience not to fan the flames of conflict, but to encourage their churches with non controversial aspects of the denomination.148

Kirby Godsey, president of Mercer University, symbolically portrayed some Baptist universities that refused fundamentalist control and weathered strong scrutiny and criticism. There were fifty-one Southern Baptist affiliated colleges and universities in 1986.149 Some Baptist universities (Stetson, Wake Forest, Furman, University of Richmond) sustained with generous alumni donations and endowments, had loose affiliations and/or cut financial purse strings with state conventions. Other Baptist universities waged enormous public relations


campaigns to resist fundamentalist control (Furman, Mercer, Baylor) that resulted in statewide ideological maelstroms. Some colleges and universities firmly committed their institutions to conservative ideologies (Hannibal-LaGrange, Missouri Baptist, Southwest Baptist, Grand Canyon Baptist, Dallas Baptist). The majority of Southern Baptist affiliated schools could not afford to alienate their states’ constituencies, regardless of their ideologies. The state conventions supplied students and finances to many schools, with the result that schools often quickly instituted many suggestions from fundamentalists and moderates (Louisiana College instituted several fundamentalist suggestions). The SBC conflict encouraged fundamentalists to voice objections to university practices, textbooks, and professors that undermined the faith of students (i.e., university sponsored R rated films, texts that questioned historicity of portions of the Bible, biology professors who taught human evolution).

Whereas Chafin’s message decreased rhetorical intensity, Godsey intensified conflict rhetoric with statements that press releases broadly reported. The specific words most often reported were as follows: “We are quite willing for our children to be slaves of their ignorance and victims of narrow-minded bigotry if we can just get them to recite the right religious words.” He warned that the new denominational emphases weakened the spirit of learning and threatened the SBC’s health. Godsey urged the audience, “to make a basic commitment to submit to the spirit of learning.” He warned that the SBC conflict highlighted an inherent conflict. He stated,

The contradiction is this: if we already know the truth, we certainly don’t need and cannot tolerate its investigation because raising questions will only uncover our doubt. So, we either want our schools to become protectors of our denominational purity or to represent the intellectual colonization of our ignorance.


152 Godsey, “The Spirit of Learning and Learning of the Spirit,”
Godsey accused some of censoring the search for truth in Baptist colleges. He described how the conflict diverted energies toward political maneuvering and "self-righteous blasphemy," and urged the audience to not become entangled in controversy, but to put their energies into worship. Godsey proposed that the spirit of learning and the learning of the spirit come together in worship. He warned,

I am saying that our denomination is in decay and that we are not likely to reverse our slide unless we engage the resources of Christian education. Instead we are doing just the opposite. We are trying to convert our seminaries and our colleges into serving as the intellectual props for our decay.153

Godsey reasoned that self-criticism and openness to new ideas would encourage the denomination to remain alive and relevant. He advocated, "God's truth is never threatened by human inquiry." He pleaded, "For heaven's sake, let us not offer God empty-headedness and call that laying our lives on the altar." Godsey argued that simplistic slogans such as "Jesus saves" could not solve the world's complexities. Godsey challenged fundamentalists by asserting that correct theological propositions would not save the world. He offered,

But in the Baptist University, we need to make clear that life is more than knowledge, that life is more than work, and life is more than reciting the right doctrines. We have people at this Convention who believe that the world will be alright if we can get people to sign the right version of the Baptist Faith and Message. That is utter nonsense. You and I are living in a world and in a time that is crying aloud for moral leadership and moral clarity. I am convinced that the church will not provide that leadership without the Christian university.154

Godsey advocated that Christian universities encourage people to sympathetically listen to one another and value the opinions of others. He said, "If our beliefs cannot withstand listening to the beliefs of another, our own confession will fall on ears made deaf by our narrowness and insecurity."

In the 1985 SBC Forum in Dallas, five speakers addressed approximately 4,500 people. Of the five speakers only one speaker, Randall Lolley, the president of Southeastern seminary, avoided conflict rhetoric, but his presence on the program symbolized resistance to

153 Godsey, "The Spirit of Learning and Learning of the Spirit,"

154 Godsey, "The Spirit of Learning and Learning of the Spirit,"

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the fundamentalist reformation movement. Lolley, on past occasions, drew intense criticism when he leveled an attack on fundamentalists. When he compared fundamentalists to the Moonies and the cult leader Jim Jones, news releases broadly reported the description.

Under his leadership, in the months prior to this speech, Southeastern sponsored a conference on women in ministry and added a woman to the faculty. During the two years following the speech, Lolley became the center of a widely reported confrontation. As Southeastern trustees metamorphosed each year with successive fundamentalist appointments, it set in motion a fiery confrontation in 1987 when Lolley refused directives to appoint fundamentalists to the faculty. Students, alumni, and faculty rallied with banners, vigils, arm-bands, ribbons, and press conferences in support of Lolley's position, but the trustees took control of all the hiring practices. In response, Lolley, Morris Ashcraft, the academic dean, and four other faculty resigned. Lolley became a moderate martyr, demonstrating what would happen to denominational employees who challenged fundamentalists. In the 1985 Forum, Lolley symbolized the ideological trials occurring in the seminaries. Later he symbolized the seminaries' futile resistance to the reformation.

Walter Shurden first recognized and warned of the reformation's significance. In 1980, he warned of a fundamentalist "fire" and emerged as a chief moderate spokesman. As an articulate Southern Seminary church historian and writer, Shurden possessed credibility as a scholar and a courageous speaker.

In this unique speech, Shurden anthropomorphically described the concept of "the priesthood of the believer" using the first person pronoun "I" to refer to the principle throughout the speech. He began,

I am your bedrock Baptist principle. I am the competency of the soul in religion. I am also known by other names, soul freedom, religious liberty, freedom of conscious, and even

155 Randall Lolley, audiotape, rec. 9 June 1985 SBC Forum, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

156 Hefley, "The Miracle Continues," 84.

157 Hefley, The Truth in Crisis: vol. 1, 75.
the priesthood of every believer. John Clifford, the greatest British Baptist to see the
dawn of the twentieth century, dubbed me sanctified individualism.\footnote{Walter B. Shurden, audiotape, rec., 9 June 1985 SBC Forum, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.}

This principle, according to Shurden, stood as the “Baptist Statue of Liberty.” He continued, “I am the single most important contribution of Baptists to the religious thought of the world. And I am because I assert the inalienable right and responsibility of every person to deal with God herself or himself.”\footnote{Shurden, audiotape, rec., 9 June 1985} Shurden developed the theological significance of soul competency and its historical significance to the famous Baptist icon, George W. Truett. Shurden appealed to Baptist history to argue that Baptists have always been anti-creedal because that view violated this basic principle. He argued that President Jimmy Carter’s human rights record extended from this Baptist principle. He stated,

> It was not accidental that the United States President in the twentieth century who has stood most forthrightly for human rights cut his spiritual teeth and nurtured his soul in a local Southern Baptist church in Georgia. He knew what every Southern Baptists must know, and if they do not know it, they must learn it. There is no meaning in life apart from freedom. There is no meaning in life for you as an individual apart from your freedom to make voluntary uncoerced choices for your life under almighty God.\footnote{Shurden, audiotape, rec., 9 June 1985}

Shurden argued for an individualistic world view that emphasized individual volition over rigid social prescriptions. This world view, argued Shurden, was the historic Baptist contribution to the religious world. Then Shurden referred to the same example that the fundamentalist, Charles Stanley, referred to in 1979. Shurden stated,

> Martin Niemoeller is one of the great names in twentieth century European Christianity. A Lutheran pastor during Hitler’s infamous reign. When freedom was denied, Niemoeller opposed Hitler, and they came and got him, and they threw him in prison. After the war, someone asked him why Hitler put him behind bars. He answered, “When they came for the labor unionists, I didn’t speak up. When they came for the Jews, I didn’t speak up. And when they came for all the others who refused to be controlled, I didn’t speak up. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak up.”\footnote{Shurden, audiotape, rec., 9 June 1985}
Shurden illustrated what happened when Germany failed to protect individual liberty, whereas Stanley used the identical example to illustrate what happened when Germany abandoned its moral and social prescriptions. The use of this example by two speakers with different ideologies illustrates how world views shaped their perception of history and their perception of different major premises in contention.

Cecil Sherman, a member of “the Gatlinburg Gang,” became known for his frank opposition to the fundamentalist reformation. In 1992, Sherman became the first director of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate Baptist group that sponsored denominational-type activities. Sherman read a quotation from the Criswell Study Bible that suggested a reported miracle of Moses was not necessarily a literal event. Sherman admonished,

Who is this liberal commentator who would suggest that the water didn’t turn to blood. I just quoted from the footnotes found on pages 81 and 82 of the Criswell Study Bible. Here me carefully. I do not criticize W. A. Criswell for this interpretation. Every interpreter has the right to make these judgments. But why am I liberal if I do it and he’s an inerrantist if he does? This is the man who would dismiss a seminary president for quoting another on the floating of an axe head. And he questions whether the water became blood. Tell the truth. Tell the truth.

Sherman argued that both fundamentalists and moderates interpreted the Bible, and the Bible forced both to make judgments concerning figurative and literal language. Sherman said, “You see W. A. Criswell and I use the Bible very much the same.” This statement implied that those who claimed to preach literal truth failed to grasp the hermeneutical process, or they understood the process and dishonestly represented their interpretative choices.

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162 Charles F. Stanley, Stand Up America audiotape, rec. 11 June 1979, Pastors’ Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

163 Cecil Sherman, Integrity audiotape, rec., 9 June 1985 SBC Forum, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

164 The title of a best seller by W. A. Criswell was Why I Preach the Bible Is Literally True (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1969).
Sherman urged moderates to fully support the denomination, even though fundamentalists controlled leadership positions. He argued that moderates would be like fundamentalists if they diminished support to the denomination when it failed their expectations. On many occasions, moderates accused fundamentalists of weakly supporting the Cooperative Program (i.e., giving a relatively small percentage of their church's undesignated gifts to the Cooperative Program). He urged the audience "to practice denominational due process." He expressed hope, "sanity is going to return." This statement revealed moderate optimism that Ammerman's surveys found still evident in 1985.165

Catherine Allen urged enthusiastic support for the denomination's mission programs. She recognized the symbolic importance of her address to the Forum. She greeted the audience,

I thank you men who organized this meeting and invited me to speak. We are indeed making history. Because I believe this is the first time that a Women Missionary Union official has ever been invited to the platform of a pastor-led meeting held in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention week. Thank you for inviting me.166

Allen jokingly suggested that if the denomination split, take the side that accepted the Women's Missionary Union because, "there is no more infallible test of congeniality than opinion about WMU." Criticizing fundamentalist support of missions, she observed,

But I know enough about the history of fundamentalism to know that after four or five basic beliefs, a factor other than doctrine comes into play, and then conservatism is no longer enough. Then we have contentiousness and coercion, and the doctrine of last things becomes a test to fine tune the fellowship. And then truth is out. The debaters would rather fuss than function. They would rather achieve honor inside the camp, than to go to him outside the camp bearing his reproach.167

She claimed that the conflict concerned social relationships more than doctrinal concerns. And then she argued that women never possessed leadership positions in the denomination and yet

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165 moderate optimism declined between 1985 to 1988, see her interpretation of surveys, Ammerman 266-267.

166 Catherine Allen, The Doctrine of First Things audiotape, rec. 9 June 1985 SBC Forum, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

167 Allen,
they effectively accomplished their goals. She suggested this as a model for moderates, stating,

Our so called doctrinal disputes claim to be about article one scripture, but I propose that the real disagreement is about article thirteen, stewardship and article fourteen, cooperation. So stay with the women. Learn a lesson from us. You don't have to be in charge of this convention to be in control. We women have been pretty effective at achieving our objective through the years. And we have certainly not been given the positions of honor on the convention platforms. Come with us, win through loyalty to the organization and through cooperation.

Allen symbolized many Baptists who devoted their lives to missionary successes, and who seethed when anything drew attention from missions. Mission work comprised the denomination's raison d'être, according to many Baptists, and anything that jeopardized that priority received condemnation. These Baptists resented the politicizing of the denomination, and resisted politicking in their churches, and ignored the conflict as much as possible. 168 Those Baptists resented theological crusaders in the Pastors’ Conferences as well as the biting criticism of William Self's Forum sermon.

William Self satirized fundamentalists in his sermon, “What They Don't Teach You at a Baptist Preacher School.” His dire predictions and “tongue-in-cheek” approach vented the anger and frustration of many moderates. Self became a nationally known speaker and served as pastor of the 5,500 member Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Atlanta. He developed a reputation as a bold, unconventional speaker. Fundamentalists called him “the most dangerous Baptist in Georgia.” 169 Self heard this description and said, “I'd have liked 'most dangerous Baptist in America'.“ 170

The first point scorned fundamentalists' emphasis on defending the faith. He stated, Somewhere along the line I picked up the idea that God was big enough to take care of himself. Somewhere I got the idea that our faith was not a porcelain vase that we have to throw our bodies around and protect. Somewhere along the way I got the idea that the faith was oak tree with deep roots. But have you noticed that certain expressions of the Christian faith that have more to say about how to defend the faith than how to

168 This author witnessed a reluctance by many Baptists to discuss the controversy.
proclaim the faith. I don't pick up a book any more that someone isn't telling me how the faith must be defended.\textsuperscript{171}

Self ridiculed those who emphasized style over substance. He recounted a preacher who disliked the translation and print of his large "floppy" Bible but preferred its image. He jokingly suggested key ingredients for successful pastors: (1) stop reading (instead rely on cassette tapes of famous preachers), (2) speak dynamically (content makes no difference) and (3) use hair spray to hold their hair over their ears. He ridiculed fundamentalists' political ties. He stated, "I was taught that God was not a Republican. I know that bothers some of you, because you probably thought you had found him over there."\textsuperscript{172} Self recounted his astonishment when a person recently accused him of being liberal because he espoused a distinct separation between the church and state. He warned,

\begin{quote}
We're not dealing in this convention with who's going to be our presiding officer. We're dealing, and I have never been one who can see a conspiracy behind every bush. But I want you to know that we're dealing with bigger, larger issues than that. I strongly have a conviction that we are dealing with some kind of coalition between certain political opinions and certain religious opinions that want to come together, and they want the heart and resources of this convention so that their political ends can be accomplished.\textsuperscript{173}
\end{quote}

Self offered a frightening scenario to moderate pastors who invested their life savings in the denomination's annuity program. He suggested that the two billion dollars deposited in the annuity board might be used to finance fundamentalists' political aspirations. He said,

\begin{quote}
We may not have any retirement funds if we do not continue in the same way we have been continuing historically. In the Atlanta paper there was a write up about the coalition between Ted Turner, Jesse Helms, Jerry Falwell and the purchase of CBS. When I read that, chills went up my spine. We are being manipulated and the stakes are high. Now that's opinion. You need to understand another thing. History tells us clearly and surely that when church and state go to bed together, they do not make love, they do not produce offspring. History makes it crystal clear, one always rapes the other.\textsuperscript{174}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{171} William L. Self, \textit{What They Don't Teach You at a Baptist Preacher School} audiotape, rec. 9 June 1985, SBC Forum, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

\textsuperscript{172} Self,

\textsuperscript{173} Self,

\textsuperscript{174} Self,

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This dire warning made denominational news stories and drew intense criticism. Following this sermon, the SBC Annuity Board produced a public relations campaign, reassuring its constituents that deposits were safe and not involved in the political struggles of the denomination.

Self offered a “tongue-in-cheek” solution. Many preachers, according to Self, received conflicting and chaotic theological instructions from fundamentalist preachers. Baptists, he suggested, should install a theological 800 number for pastors to call every Saturday evening to receive current pronouncements on orthodoxy. Self proposed that the 800 number be located in Lynchburg, so that Jerry Falwell could direct Southern Baptist preachers’ theology. (This expressed a moderate claim that independent Baptists directed the SBC reformation agenda.)

Self’s sermon expressed moderate frustration in the crisis. His “style but no substance” accusation expressed a cultural “snobbery.” The satirical manner of Self’s message expressed some moderates’ prejudice. Self’s derisive style discouraged dialogue between sides as opposed to a rationally argued style. He implied that fundamentalist demagogues created the conflict and led simple Baptist constituents. Sociologist Nancy Ammerman, notes the attitudes of moderates and fundamentalists. She states, “Among fundamentalists there was a sense of resentment at the privilege and ‘snobbery’ of the other side. Among moderates there was condescension that varied between snickering and compassion.”

Evidence from surveys, interviews, and observations led Ammerman to conclude: “Status cannot explain all the differences between the Southern Baptist Convention’s left and right wings, but it does appear to explain a good deal.” Self’s message expressed an elitist attitude and directly accused Baptists of being manipulated by political opportunists.

In the 1986 SBC Forum in Atlanta, five speakers addressed approximately 5,000 people. Two speakers did not contribute to conflict rhetoric. Observers reported that Forum speakers appealed for freedom of biblical interpretation as the “Baptist hallmark.”

175 Ammerman, 131.

176 Ammerman, 133.
Norman Cavender, a layman, gave an address entitled, "The Bells of Liberty." Cavender expressed a popular moderate sentiment that fundamentalists denied Baptist liberty. He expressed a historical interpretation of Baptists as a freedom-loving denomination. Referring to the Constitution of the United States, he stated, "Madison's amendments reflected the Baptist passion for liberty. They were guarantees of freedom: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom for the rights of conscience of all people." He added, "Find a Baptist ... a real Baptist ... and you will find a believer in liberty" (his emphases in manuscript). Cavender decried the status of the denomination and said, "Yet today, in 1986, in Atlanta, we Southern Baptists, in the most tragic irony of our history, are struggling for the very existence of liberty within our own fellowship." "We're drifting," claimed Cavender, "toward authoritarianism over the total of the Southern Baptist Faith." He announced, "You hear no convention message ringing out authentic freedom of education and inquiry in Baptist colleges and Baptist seminaries. Instead, you hear noisy demands for the removal of professors who do not adopt rigid fundamentalist positions." He also expressed the alienation of many moderates, That is why we are drawn together in this hall today. Your views have been made unwelcome in current Convention leadership. Your conscience has been pronounced banned and banished, evicted, and exiled. If you have not given allegiance to fundamentalist party line, then your kind of Baptist faith has been judged unwanted in the Baptist family. Cavender expressed his determination. He declared, "The militant fundamentalist spirit sweeping our Southern Baptist Convention will fail in the end." He proclaimed that


179 Cavender, "The Bells of Liberty,"

180 Cavender, "The Bells of Liberty,"

181 Cavender, "The Bells of Liberty,"
fundamentalism could not rule the true Baptist spirit, nor quench the discovery of truth.
Cavender’s speech received wide coverage and editorial comment, especially after SBC Today
published the complete text.\textsuperscript{182}

Carolyn Weatherford, the executive director of the Woman’s Missionary Union, gave an
address entitled “Women in Our Southern Baptist Heritage.” Her appearance marked the
third year since the formation of the Forum that a woman from a missionary background
addressed the group.

Weatherford expounded contradictory ways that Southern Baptist treated women. She
recounted a story from the 1800s,

Adoniram Judson was asked if he could use single women in mission work in Burma, and
he replied, “Yes, a shipload.” The shipload did not come, for though some single women
had asked to be sent, they were gently refused. The expressed feeling was that if “God
wants you on the mission fields He will send you a husband who will take you as a
helpmate.”\textsuperscript{183}

Weatherford explained how women were silenced and refused seats in the 1885 SBC. The
constitution was amended from “members” to “brethren” in order to reinforce the male role. In
1918, the SBC reversed the 1885 male qualification to be a messenger. Summarizing the
struggles of contemporary women, she said,

If we dare say something in support of women we are branded as flaming liberals,
feminists who are lobbying for women preachers. If people don’t like one direction in
which we are moving, they penalize all our teachings. It takes great courage to be a
Southern Baptist woman today, but no more courage than it has ever taken to be God’s
person.\textsuperscript{184}

Weatherford lamented the Home Mission Board’s decision against supporting churches with
women ministers. She stated,

Why should it be debated today? Should the Home Mission Board be reprimanded for
allowing women to plant churches? Or the Foreign Mission Board for daring to appoint

\textsuperscript{182} Norman Cavender, “The Bells of Liberty,” SBC Today, July 1986: 5.

\textsuperscript{183} Carolyn Weatherford, “Women in Our Southern Baptist Heritage,” duplicated
manuscripts, 9 June 1986, SBC Forum, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of
the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

\textsuperscript{184} Weatherford,
women who are ordained? Why quibble over titles? I dare say that ordination is not the real question after all. It certainly is not the biblical question, since it did not become a part of church ritual until the third century. 185

She summarized ways that women's roles evolved and concluded that women must continue to grow and serve, and never go back to past roles.

Weatherford's sermon symbolized an ideological struggle with women's roles. Fundamentalists encouraged men to cherish their wives. Their opinions of women differed little from their nineteenth century brethren. Bailey Smith, a past president of the SBC said, "I believe the highest calling possible for a Christian woman is to marry a good Christian man, have his children, help him build a Christian home, and hear God speak to her through her husband." 186 Smith's statement coincided with those who refused past women missionaries. In general, moderates welcomed changing roles of women, but tentatively instituted changes. Many moderates belonged to churches that in some ways indicated openness to the changing roles of women, (i.e., appointed women deacons) but hired no women ministers.

In the concluding message, James Flaming endorsed freedom of interpretation of scriptures. Flaming exhorted the audience "Not to make claims about the Bible that the Bible does not claim for itself." 187 In describing the Baptist denomination, he said, Baptist have become, "divided over words never found in the Bible. Our attitudes do not mirror the attitudes of our Lord. We give little indication that we will return to the basic biblical principles of repentance, forgiveness, trust, and love." 188 He attacked the certainty that fundamentalists claimed for the truth. He stated, "Anyone who insists they see through a


188 Wilkinson and Stanley, 4.
glass clearly about all truth had better realize that they are in obvious violation of scripture."\(^{189}\) He warned that the narrow fundamentalist conception of truth might separate Baptists from the Bible that they wanted to protect. During the first three years of the Forum, speakers galvanized the moderate slogan of freedom of interpretation.

Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board, did not contribute to the conflict rhetoric. However his presence symbolized the missionary commitment of moderates and their appreciation of his moderate stance on many issues.

In the following year’s Forum speakers did not add to the conflict, but turned toward redressive rhetoric. The theme, “Uniting All Things in Christ,” reflected the desire to work toward some kind of settlement. The following chapter examines this year’s messages.

The 1988 Forum in San Antonio featured the theme, “Contending for the Faith.” The Forum attracted nearly 3,500 moderates (Ammerman’s surveys found that only already-converted moderates attended the Forum\(^{190}\)). Ten speakers gave addresses and four of the speeches yielded remarks included in this study. The Forum leaders presented two awards that symbolized their best hope and their futile struggle against fundamentalists. North Phoenix Baptist Church received the Forum’s church of the year award. Richard Jackson served as pastor of the 18,500 member North Phoenix Baptist Church. It led the SBC in baptisms and Cooperative Program giving. Jackson espoused unquestionably conservative theology and individual freedom of interpretation. He represented moderates’ greatest hope for recapturing the SBC presidency in 1988. Randall Lolley received the Denominational Statesman Award. In protest to trustee demands, he resigned the presidency of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Many moderates approved the principles that he embodied in the struggle. Lolley ministered as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Raleigh, North Carolina.

Allen Neely also resigned as a professor at Southeastern as a result of trustee actions. He served as the interim executive director of the Southern Baptist Alliance (later it became


\(^{190}\) Ammerman, 183.
the Alliance of Baptists and supported moderate denomination-like programs). He also announced plans to teach at Princeton Theological Seminary. In his address, Neely advocated a passive policy in which moderates withdrew from active conflict. He stated, "We have learned nobody wins a fight with belligerent, hostile fundamentalists." He added, "There is a time to confront evil face to face, but there is a time to put that aside and go about doing what our Lord did, (time to) go about doing good." Neely described the SBC leadership as follows:

fundamentalist in theology, arrogant, and imperious in polity, cultic in leadership, creedal and reactionary in doctrine, literalistic in hermeneutic, legalistic in ethics, theatrical and— at times— tawdry in corporate worship, and reductionist in that they sometimes tell God whom he or she can save or will save."

Then, Neely injected sarcastic humor with the following challenge: "For those who don’t like to be so characterized, if it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it’s not a bald eagle. If it weren’t so unseemly, I would like for us, whenever these off-the-wall statements are made, to quack in unison." He predicted that fundamentalists would begin in-fighting once moderates left the SBC scene. He stated, "The only way to deal with militant fundamentalists is to leave them to fight among themselves. The most devastating blow that we could inflict upon them is to cease to be their identified enemy."

Neely called for an end to the struggle, since the struggle absorbed energy away from more serious world problems. He urged moderates to continue in the SBC, despite the changes. He stated, "I have never been anything but a Southern Baptist. It never occurred to me the time would come when I would be disinherited, disenfranchised by my own family." 

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191 Michael Tutterow, "Moderates Challenged by Forum Speakers to Greater Faithfulness," SBC Today, July 1988: 4

192 Hefley, The Truth in Crisis: vol. 4, 43.

193 Hefley, The Truth in Crisis: vol. 4, 43.


Winfred Moore served as pastor of First Baptist Church Amarillo, Texas and leader of the moderates. He ran as the moderate SBC presidential candidate in 1986. He encouraged the audience to continue to support the Convention. Moore stated, "We're not dead, and I've got news for all of you—I'm not leaving. I'm not going away. No good cause will take care of itself if we leave it to itself." He declared that Southern Baptists must take sides in the conflict. He said,

There isn't anything in the middle of the road but a yellow line and dead possums. Know which side of the road you're on. I intend to continue to contend for the faith and for the right of my brethren to differ with me so long as they continue to contend for the faith.

Moore charged inerrantists of fallaciousness. "I have found some people have a high view of scripture but a low view of truth," accused Moore; and he added, "I'm tired of hearing people say we don't intend to pay the salaries of people who don't teach what we want them to teach. And then I discover they haven't been paying much of the salary in the first place." Moore acknowledged that fundamentalists changed the denomination and defined loyalty to SBC in a more narrow way. He denounced fundamentalists for excluding moderates from trustee appointments of SBC agencies, and he solicited the new leadership to begin serious reconciliation efforts within the denomination (this expressed a moderate evaluation of the Peace Committee's work). Moore countered other speakers who expressed the perception that they were being pushed out of the SBC. He urged the audience to continue fighting for their beliefs. Moore admonished, "We are to attack evil, but let us never be guilty of trying to do it by making the Bible say something it doesn't say." Thus while Neely urged moderates to cease fighting, Moore advocated the opposite proposal. Other speakers began voicing a sense of futility with the conflict.

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Libby Bellinger served as an assistant director of Inner City Ministries of Waco, Texas. She acted as president of the Southern Baptist Women in Ministry, and symbolized the active role of women in the moderate countermovement. In her message, “Going Home by a Different Way” she hinted that the SBC was not the only place that moderate Baptists could belong. Describing how the conflict changed the convention, she observed:

For the last eleven years, the SBC has seemed less and less like home. Convention faces are not familiar anymore, and certainly not welcoming. Suspicious stares are met with suspicious stares; words are guarded and conversations contrived. We feel like unwelcome guests in our own home.199

Bellinger compared the fundamentalist leadership to the title character of the movie, “Wizard of Oz.” She referred to Pressler, Criswell, Rogers, and Stanley in this statement:

Did you know we have wizards in our midst? There is the Wizard of Houston, the Wizard of Dallas, the Wizard of Memphis, the Wizard of Atlanta. We give power to these wizards. We have our wizards here in Southern Baptist Oz. But one of the problems is that they are not good wizards, not wizards of blessing, and empowerment. They have taken the color picture and painted it black and white.200

Bellinger directly countered Neely and Moore who both remarked that they would not know how to be anything but Southern Baptist. Up until this speech, no one suggested that moderates might find a spiritual home somewhere else. She declared, “However, make no mistake about it; God’s presence can be experienced in other conventions and other denominations.” She noted how the fundamentalist movement had given women the opportunity to speak out in the moderate counter movement that might not have occurred without the conflict. She concluded the message, “But the age of change is blowing through our convention. A spirit that I hope will change us into more Christ-like people of faith. It is a spirit of change that is going to require us to go home by a different way.”201

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199 Libby S. Bellinger, “Going Home by a Different Way,” duplicated manuscripts, 12 June 1988, SBC Forum, San Antonio, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

200 Bellinger,

201 Bellinger,
Neely and Bellinger symbolized a moderate change of heart. Moderates were growing tired of the conflict, tired of losing, and tired of trying to rouse moderate messenger attendance to the SBC. Many moderates were beginning to think of alternatives to the traditional SBC. Bellinger signalled a growing disenchantment and a growing concern for future moderate work.

Anthony Campolo commented on the SBC conflict. Campolo, an American Baptist who taught sociology at Eastern College, wrote prolifically and received many speaking opportunities. Campolo reproved the audience, saying, "I don't know what you're arguing about down here in Dixieland but somewhere along the way you forgot the question: Are you going to love people that everybody else hates?" He depicted the drain on mission and ministry exacted by the conflict. He concluded that the conflict's negative image posed a more serious problem to Southern Baptists. "You're creating a church that no one will want to join," scolded Campolo, "(People) want a church that does more than bicker." He questioned the cost of the theological war. The conflict drained many moderates and they welcomed speakers who expressed a desire to cease fighting. As Bellinger stated, "the age of change is blowing through our convention," and many moderates embraced a change from conflict rhetoric. Moderate attendance to the following two year's conventions and Forum meetings dropped and 1988 represented the high-water of the moderate counter movement.

Conclusion

The crisis phase of the SBC Social Drama drove an ideological wedge between many Southern Baptists. It became virtually impossible for convention-goers to remain neutral as fundamentalist and moderate speakers condemned neutrality. The conflict phase enacted rival world views that coexisted in the denomination from its inception. Conflict language contained polarizing elements such as name-calling, battlefield terminology, and campaign slogans. Rival metaphors developed as the two sides waged rhetorical and symbolic war. Moderates and fundamentalists rhetorically moved farther apart, as the speakers explicated

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rival sets of "good" and "evil" vocabularies. The conflict rhetoric of the Pastors' Conferences and the SBC Forums juxtaposed competing vocabularies and competing persuasive tactics.

In the Pastors' Conferences from 1979 to 1985, and in 1988 many speakers amplified "good" and "evil" terms. The most common slogan, "the inerrant, infallible word of God," capsulized fundamentalists' "good" terminology. The speakers' lexicon also included the following phrases: "Bible believing, Bible preaching, Christ honoring, evangelistic, missionary children of God," "win men and women and boys and girls to the Lord Jesus Christ," "bible-believing soul-winning churches," "by the authority of the word of God," "God's appointed Pastor-Shepherd," "personal evangelism," "heart-felt conviction," "old-time religion," "old-fashioned holiness," "old-fashioned revivals," "personal devil," "literal hell," "literal Adam and Eve," "rock-solid conservatism," "theological boundaries," "doctrinal soundness," "the second-coming of Jesus," "public school prayer," "the wrath of God," "virgin-birth of Christ," "the blood of Jesus," "on fire for Jesus," "substitutionary blood atonement," "bodily resurrection," and "the chain of command." Fundamentalists also developed an "evil" terminology, of which the term, "liberal," carried a stigma of contempt. The big "L" (as referred to by a Forum speaker) condemned and damaged Baptist pastors, agency personnel, and professors' professional status in the denomination. The "evil" jargon also included the following terms: "blatant secular humanism," "atheistic scholarship," "shameless atheism," "pseudo-intellectual," "theological jello," "doctrinal compromise," "cold formalism," "academic freedom," "the sin of sodomy," "communism," "socialism," "abortion industry," "denominational bureaucracy," "the A. C. L. U.," "Jane Fonda, Norman Lear, and Ed Asner," "the ERA—Extremely Ridiculous Activity," "German higher criticism," "purity of the gospel," and "Darwin's monkey mythology." These terms expressed a strong hierarchy of social and ideological prescriptions.

In the SBC Forums in 1984, 1985, 1986, and 1988 many speakers developed a moderate paradigm with a "good" terminology. The most common slogan, "the priesthood of the believer," capsulized moderates' "good" terminology. Their lexicon also included the following phrases: "academic freedom," "theological diversity," "equality,"
"denominational stewardship," "denominational compromise," "women ministers," "personal God," and "inspired witness of the Bible." The Forum speakers hesitated in expressing "evil" phrases in their speeches. Only a few of the "evil" phrases noted below came from Forum messages. However, moderates developed castigating descriptions of their denominational rivals in newspapers, interpersonal discourses, cartoons, and other media. The moderate paradigm developed an "evil" terminology, of which, the term, "credalist," provoked a heated response. The list also included the following phrases: "the intellectual colonization of our ignorance," "fun-damn-mentalists," "demagogues," "pawns of the political right," "power brokers," "church and state go to bed together," "autocrats," "authoritarians," "uncooperative," "clones," "the Holy Order of the Inquisition," "belligerent, hostile fundamentalist," "narrow-minded bigots," "racists," "low view of truth," "simpletons," "wizards," and "doctrinal boundaries." These terms expressed a strong individual world view.


The SBC Forum's conflict rhetoric peaked in William Self's 1985 sermon and again in 1988. The Forum did not begin until 1984. The Forums' programs offered a smaller number of speakers. Therefore, the SBC Forums did not offer as great an opportunity as the Pastors' Conferences for the speakers to express conflict rhetoric. In 1987, the Forum speakers addressed reconciliation and in 1988, the speakers sharply divided over future moderate involvement in the denomination.

204 This list was gleaned from Hefley's four volume account of the conflict.
Fundamentalists successfully used conflict rhetoric to promote their candidates and their policies through mass media channels. Ammerman's surveys found that when the SBC voted in 1986, more than twice as many Southern Baptists had previously heard Adrian Rogers as Winfred Moore.205 Fundamentalists skillfully employed various kinds of media. Ammerman reports, "Charles Stanley actually had a nationally syndicated TV program, and nearly one fourth (23 percent) of our 1985 respondents said that they 'regularly' watched his 'In Touch' ministry."206 Fundamentalists dominated evangelistic crusades, Bible conferences, evangelism conferences, radio, and television ministries. Fundamentalists controlled the Pastors' Conferences which outdrew the Forums by four or five times. The Pastors' Conferences also drew an audience from a broader spectrum of Baptists than the Forums. Non-denominational Fundamentalists supported the reformation movement in various media. Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell gave television time to Southern Baptist fundamentalist causes. The magazines Moody Monthly and Christianity Today supported the movement. The SBC presidential sermon became an effective tool for propagating the fundamentalist world view. The leadership scheduled the presidential sermon at the peak attendance time on the first day of the conventions (moderates contested the schedule because the speech directly preceded the presidential elections). Denominational newspapers and sometimes secular newspapers and religious magazines reported the presidential addresses. Moderates utilized media sources, but not as effectively as fundamentalists. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, a purpose of conflict rhetoric is to convince the non-committed to rally behind one of the rival forces. Fundamentalists demonstrated skill in their use of media.

Fundamentalists demonstrated considerable skill in communicating their world view. From the beginning of the controversy, their speakers successfully captured the Bible as symbolic of a strong theological and social hierarchy. An overwhelming majority of Pastors' Conference speakers venerated the "inerrant, infallible word of God." Speakers successfully

205 Ammerman, 182.
206 Ammerman, 183.
charged some professors and pastors with biblical unbelief, with the results that moderates, SBC agencies, and seminaries spent great energy defending their beliefs and answering fundamentalist claims. Fundamentalist speakers often joked about shrewd “Bible-believing” seminary students who stumped their learned professors. Speakers successfully denounced and fundamentalists pressured professors to such an extent that during the late 1980s and early 1990s many professors exited the six SBC seminaries. Many times fundamentalists blamed “evil” social conditions and denominational failures on the biblical unbelief. Chapter one outlined social changes in the 1960s and 1970s that threatened Southern Baptists. Fundamentalists successfully capitalized on these fears by blaming the United States’ moral degradation on an insidious liberal conspiracy that undermined biblical principles and biblical faith. Ammerman concluded that most Southern Baptists defended the concepts of cooperation and priesthood of the believer, but not against beliefs which they considered unbiblical.207

Fundamentalist speakers demonstrated considerable skill in communicating a unified platform. Ammerman summarized the fundamentalist platform as follows:

- lack of confidence in the “doctrinal soundness” of convention agencies;
- lack of confidence in the responsiveness of convention agencies to ordinary Baptists;
- willingness to censure agencies that promote women’s ordination;
- willingness to disfellowship churches that ordain women; and
- willingness to leave the convention if it is not “brought back to biblical soundness.”208

The fundamentalist leaders W. A. Criswell, Adrian Rogers, Charles Stanley, and Bailey Smith systematically built a unified platform in their Pastors’ Conference addresses and convention sermons. Many other key speakers consistently promoted this platform in Pastors’ Conference addresses, SBC addresses, Bible conference addresses, and sermons. In this study, fundamentalist leaders endorsed only one loyal candidate each year. In turn, each SBC president nominated only loyal committee members. The committee on committees nominated loyal trustees to the SBC agency boards. The decade of appointments reinforced an ideological

207 Ammerman, 179.

208 Ammerman, 180.
conformity and clearly communicated a unified platform. Fundamentalists presented unquestioned authorities with impressive oratorical skills, with a unified platform and a consistent institutional plan. This impressive combination communicated certainty, vision, and courage to many Southern Baptists.

Moderates possessed no unified platform, no unquestioned leaders, and no consistent institutional plans. Forum speakers expressed a wide range of theological parameters and a wide range of solutions to the crisis. The plurality of beliefs communicated ambivalences and uncertainties. For example some moderates espoused literal conservative biblical beliefs and some espoused classically liberal beliefs. Some moderate churches did not ordain women as ministers or deacons and some fully supported women ministers. It was not until 1985 that moderates could agree to support only one candidate in the presidential elections (Before 1985 they nominated several moderates to the presidency). Even as late as 1988, moderates promoted opposite solutions to the crisis (Moore urged further contention, Neely suggested a cease-fire in contention). The 1985 Forum speakers demonstrated careful critical restraint and deliberate sarcastic provocations. The lack of a unified platform blunted the moderate counter movement.

The present chapter highlighted conflict rhetoric employed in the Pastors' Conferences and SBC Forums as evidenced in rival ideological paradigms with rival slogans, metaphors, and symbols. The speakers utilized negative campaigns, acrimonious language, name-calling, and battlefield terminology. The Pastors' Conference and Forum speakers called for greater commitment and recognized heroes and heroines of the struggle. Speakers from both sides claimed to be protecting Southern Baptist heritage and offering “authentic” versions of history.

For moderates, act two brought disillusionment, because they could not turn back the reformation movement. The conflict rhetoric reinforced moderates' fear that the new orthodoxy would smother the freedom of doctrinal interpretation and expression in the reconstituted SBC. Fundamentalist and moderate actors in the crisis phase dramatized the differences before their constituencies and portrayed competing values and beliefs. The
breakdown in harmony of factions exacted an immense price from the SBC and many began seeking a resolution of the crisis.
Chapter five analyzes the rhetorical and ritual aspects of the repressive phase of the SBC reformation movement and counter movement. Each stage of a social drama possesses its own unique characteristics and rhetoric, and Turner offers a dramaturgical model to analyze the rhetorical forms and enacted roles.

Redressive Rhetoric from a Social Drama Perspective

In the third phase of a social drama, the factions symbolically struggle toward mutual agreement and conflict resolution. According to Alan Gross, Turner's most notable contribution to movement studies consists of the concept of redressive dramatic forces.\(^1\) Revolutions infrequently topple communities, because the communities engage redressive mechanisms that moderate destructive polarization. Gross compares Leland Griffin's adaptation of Kenneth Burke's pentad to Turner's dramatism.\(^2\) Gross begins by stating the similarities:

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\(^2\) Leland M. Griffin built a theory of human communication of social movement based solely on Burke. "A Dramatistic Theory of the Rhetoric of Movements," Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke ed., William H. Rueckert (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), 456-478. Burke's literary-dramatistic perspective gave theorists a critical tool to interpret motives and relationships through inquiry of clusters or cycles of rhetor's terminology. Burke described a process of symbolic transformation from guilt through purification to redemption, and Griffin applied this perspective and terminology to movement rhetoric. A movement is a drama that moves toward transcendence, which is the achievement of salvation. Movements are dramas with acts, scenes, agents, agency and purpose. Movements start by enacting a negative to the status quo. Initial movement rhetoric demonstrates injustice, creates a rhetoric of dissent, and provokes conflict in order to enact a guilt-purification-redemption cycle. Each side promotes conversion and catharsis toward a "good," and purifies its followers that enact a "no" to the other side and a "yes" to their side. A period of consummation enacts a new order of harmony in which transcendence and salvation is grasped, and movement rhetoric consolidates its gains and promotes peace and dominion. A new stasis is achieved in which the leaders must resist other movements in order to remain in power. Griffin's article proved heuristic to further articles and other movement researchers who sought to interpret motives and meanings created in movements.
According to Griffin, social change is divided into three stages: inception, crisis, consummation. In inception, people unite to subvert an existing social order from which they have become alienated; in crisis, they destroy this old order, ushering in the new; in consummation, they perfect the new order they have created. Turner’s dramatism differs from Griffin’s: Turner’s concept best elucidates the ways in which societies attempt to contain conflict, to see to it that public controversy leads not to revolution, but to a reaffirmation or a reordering of existing values. Accordingly, Turner’s first two stages of social drama are roughly parallel with Griffin’s, but his last two stages depart from Griffin’s last stage. For Turner, social drama is a movement, not from revolution to consummation, but from threat to resolution.3

Burke’s guilt-purification-redemption cycle shows a progress from inception, to crisis, and to consummation, but disregards how social forces often convert radical changes into incremental shifts. Established communities possess social mechanisms that moderate revolutions. Gross argues that dramaturgical theorists should account for the revolution-to-reformation devolution that frequently occurs in movements before the final phase. Turner’s model better explains in dramatic terms these conserving factors in societies.

This stage of a social drama, according to Turner, often includes public rituals in which the community reflects upon itself and the struggle.4 When factions recognize each other’s motivations, premises, and claims, they are able to extricate themselves momentarily from the conflict and observe the conflict as an outsider. Conquergood describes this stage,

The redressive phase is by nature reflexive, it is that stage of the inexorable drama when stock must be taken of the immediate events which led up to and constituted crisis, an interpretation must be constructed which makes sense out of and gives order to the turbulence and chaos which threaten collective life.5

In this phase, the factions construct histories and stories about prior events to understand the conflict. As the actors in the drama collaboratively build scripts and participate in cultural performances with their audiences, they distort, extend, and exaggerate perceptions. Each side carefully constructs its “spin” of events. Sometimes a sacrifice, such as an overzealous

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3 Gross, 406.


trustee libeling a highly-acclaimed theological educator, effects the third stage, thus leading
the two sides to settle some of their differences.

Act three’s redressive action is not necessarily an adjudicated democratic process with
both sides having an equal opportunity to present their cases. When one side clearly has the
upper hand, the social drama may only give the impression of moving through the process of
impartial stock-taking. Act three provides cathartic action for the stronger faction in which
it can demonstrate its objectivity and equitableness. Through redressive activities the stronger
faction can provide a facade for its rationality. Conquergood states, “The winners of a social
drama require cultural performances to continue to legitimize their success.”

The successful change-seeking collective must appear reasonable and just to sustain its
momentum, and the losing faction must adjust its stance to continue to exist within the religious
community. Stage three’s rhetoric enacts ritual compromises for both factions, and permits
progress from the conflict stage to the final stage. Though volleys of conflict rhetoric
continued to be hurled on a broad scale, signs of this third stage began appearing in 1985.

An Overview of Redressive Rhetoric

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1985 launched the first redressive
attempt among theological educators. They published a special edition of the journal, The
Theological Educator, featuring position statements and interviews from both sides of the
controversy, and seeking balanced presentations and histories. This redressive act summoned
readers to listen to the concerns of both sides. Educators staged another redressive attempt
in May 4–7, 1987, when the six Southern Baptist seminaries sponsored a conference on Biblical
Inerrancy to encourage fundamentalists to present their case for inerrancy in an academic
setting. The results were that some respected fundamentalist scholars, invited from outside
institutions, qualified their stances to such an extent that they made little distinction between


7 Fisher Humphreys, ed., The Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention, a
Special Issue The Theological Educator (1985).
their view and the non-inerrantist positions. Some fundamentalists distanced themselves from these qualified opinions. The tentative positions of conservative scholars effectively undermined the hard-line perspective of fundamentalists.

The conference revealed the ideological gulf between Southern Baptists and the struggle concerning what would be taught in the seminaries. Pastors’ Conference speakers rallied around the inerrancy of the Bible with phrases such as “the inerrant, infallible word of God.” Fundamentalists insisted on no compromise and roundly criticized SBC seminaries for not teaching inerrancy. Conversely, SBC Forum speakers rallied around the concept of freedom of interpretation and academic freedom. While SBC seminary professors taught the divine inspiration of the Bible, many did not teach the doctrine of inerrancy. Fisher Humphreys summarized what non-inerrantists generally affirmed:

God created a world which reveals him; God acts in history, and especially in Jesus, to reveal himself; people such as Moses and Isaiah have experiences in which God is revealed to them; a community (Israel or the church) remembers these acts and experiences, and tells these stories; these stories (and many other things) are written down; the community collects these texts and canonizes them; these texts are studied, interpreted, taught, and preached; Christ is the criterion by which the texts are to be interpreted; the Spirit guides in all these processes; God uses the Bible—makes it function—to carry out his work; his work is to save and transform people into a community of faithful disciples; the Bible is sufficient for the purpose which God has for it and which he uses it to carry out, namely, to make men wise unto salvation.

Inerrantists believed these things and much more. Many inerrantists taught that the Bible provided cognitive and propositional truth in every subject that it touched. The Bible revealed truth in social relations, history, and science; self-help for psychology, counseling, and finances; and how-to information for business and education. For example, fundamentalist Ed Young stated (1992 SBC president), “On the authority of this Book, if you train up that child in the way he or she should go—and that means God’s way for that child—it will be

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well with you as a parent."¹⁰ Young stated in another sermon, "This progressive revelation of biblical doctrine of the Lamb is yet another irrefutable example of supernatural inspiration of God's word and it confirms the unwavering and unfolding fact of divine truth throughout Scripture."¹¹ Ron Herrod said, "Friend, I would no more believe a Bible with one bad verse than I would take one capsule from a cyanide-laced bottle of Tylenol."¹² Zig Ziglar stated, "I believe this beautiful Bible. I believe it from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21. I believe as Dr. Ed Hill says, I believe the axe-head floated and the jackass talked. And I believe every single bit of what this Bible has to say."¹³ The two sides approached the Bible with rival epistemologies.¹⁴

Though the two sides approached the Bible in different ways, it was difficult for fundamentalists to develop specific evidence of the evils of moderate scholarship. Sophisticated inerrantists (as opposed to populist Pastors' Conference speakers) offered many qualifications. These advocates claimed that only the original Hebrew and Greek autographs were inerrant (though none exist). They admitted that the Bible contained different genres with figurative speech, literary forms, imprecise, inexact common cultural expressions.¹⁵

¹⁰ Edwin Young, "Family Relationships? (Is It Well?)," duplicated manuscripts, 11 June 1984, Pastors' Conference, Kansas City, KS, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

¹¹ Edwin Young, "Worthy Is the Lamb," duplicated manuscripts, 8 June 1986, Pastors' Conference, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.


¹³ Zig Ziglar, The Great Fellowship audiotape, rec. 14 June 1982, Pastors' Conference, New Orleans, LA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.


Many admitted that biblical writers mistakenly quoted other biblical writers. Some sophisticated inerrantists admitted that biblical historiography was difficult to reconcile. They admitted problems and apparent discrepancies in the text. They affirmed progressive revelation from the Old Testament to the New. Sophisticated inerrantists advocated many variations of inerrancy. David Dockery, a conservative professor, described seven kinds of inerrancy positions. These qualifications and the lack of uniformity by sophisticated inerrantists erased many specific functional differences between inerrantists and non-inerrantists. The non-inerrantist professor who devoted his or her life to studying divinely inspired scriptures was not functionally different from the sophisticated inerrantist who carefully admitted many qualifications and variations of the position.

Clark Pinnock, a sophisticated inerrantist at the 1987 Inerrancy Conference, had vigorously advocated for fundamentalist tenets at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in the 1960s, and had attacked what he termed "a few liberal leaders." Paige Patterson, one of the architects of the SBC reformation movement, described Pinnock as a mentor who had been committed to "driving liberals from the denomination." Pinnock left the denomination and served as professor of systematic theology at McMasters Divinity College. Pinnock expressed amazing reservations about the SBC fundamentalist reformation. Some fundamentalists viewed his reservations as scandalous. Pinnock perceived the SBC controversy as a fight between evangelicals and fundamentalists, not liberals and conservatives. He questioned the prudence of requiring Southern Baptists to hold a strict and

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16 Preus, 54.


20 Paige Patterson in his response to Pinnock stated, “Last of all I must grieve over my professor who has forsaken the prophetic pulpit of Luther for the indecisive desk of Erasmus and the certainty of Paul for the vacillation of the Athenians who must always ‘her some new thing.’”
elaborate view of inerrancy when Baptists historically espoused a simple biblicism. Pinnock testified of the difficulties of defending an elaborate inerrancy and questioned its relevancy for nurturing a vibrant Christianity. He stated, "Strict inerrancy guarantees neither orthodoxy or spiritual life and power. Let us not fool ourselves about that. Inerrancy is not a cure-all. It is not historically true that liberalism always grew out of slippage on the doctrine of Scripture." The respected inerrantist scholars from outside the denomination did not bring damning denunciations of Baptist scholarship. Instead they offered careful qualifications and introduced many variations and problematic features of inerrancy. Mark Noll, a conservative church historian affirmed that Baptists were simple biblicists. Many fundamentalists hoped that the Biblical Inerrancy Conference would endorse their arguments, justify their cause and validate their call for theological orthodoxy.

The following year, the Southern Baptist seminaries sponsored a Biblical Interpretation Conference that fostered broad agreements on Biblical issues, and a recognition of resolvable differences and mutual respect. Jerry Draper, a former fundamentalist SBC president, derailed the redressive acts of this conference when he flew in, ignored his speaking assignment, pronounced what Christians should believe about the atonement of Christ and then quickly left the conference. The seminary sponsored conferences did not succeed in part because they highlighted basic epistemological differences while demonstrating many functional similarities, but fundamentalists were not rebuffed in attempts to enact symbolic justice in populist rhetoric.

A populist redressive attempt began when the 1985 SBC established the Peace Committee. It became ensnared in political wrangling from 1985–1987 as fundamentalists pressured it to produce a clear, bold statement of beliefs; and moderates singled out the faults

21 Pinnock, 75.

22 Pinnock, 80.


of the fundamentalist leadership. In the 1987 SBC, the Peace Committee presented an ambiguous declaration concerning the need for a confessional statement, and insisted that trustees build professional staffs and faculties that reflected the dominant beliefs of Southern Baptists. Neither side received the Peace Committee's report with enthusiasm. Moderates rejected the substance but found the wording sufficiently ambiguous to continue in their beliefs, and fundamentalists liked the substance but despised the ambiguous language. Rosenberg concludes, "the Peace Committee was dissolved, having done its turn as a lightning rod."

Landrum Leavell, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, described the work of the Peace Committee as "a colossal $300,000 failure." While Leavell expressed his dismay in the results of the Peace Committee's work, Rosenberg expressed an understanding of its symbolic function. The actions of Peace Committee symbolized the controversy's attempt to redress the contending factions. When a question of fairness arose, fundamentalists could point to Peace Committee findings and justify overturning the established leaders and policies. When a question of continued existence of moderates in the denomination arose, moderates could point to the Peace Committee findings and justify their right to continued participation. Both factions disliked the compromises in the Peace Committee report, but fundamentalists could not afford to bar moderates from the SBC and moderates did not desire to leave the denomination.

The Peace Committee report reinforced fundamentalist assertions that some seminaries taught unorthodox theology. Once the committee verified this claim, it justified the


27 Claude L. Howe, Jr., "From Dallas to New Orleans: The Controversy Continues," The Theological Educator (Spring 1990): 112.

28 Rosenberg, 198.
fundamentalists' reformation movement and validated the importance of theological orthodoxy. The peace committee acted out the struggle of social forces in the denomination as it held center stage in the redressive phase of the social drama. The SBC never gave enough power to the committee to institute significant changes; instead the committee highlighted substantial differences in moderate and fundamentalist values. An unpleasant stand-off developed as redressive attempts failed to persuade fundamentalists to mitigate their view on inerrancy or compromise their stance with moderates or with conservative scholars.

Redressive Rhetoric in Pastors' Conferences

The 1986 and 1987 Pastors' Conference symbolized redressive action more by what the speakers avoided (conflict rhetoric) than by what the speakers said (infrequent redressive directives). The speakers complied with the Peace Committee requests for a "cooling down" of the rhetoric in Southern Baptist meetings. With the call to peace, the Pastors' Conference speakers reverted to pre-controversy-like language. The scene at the Pastors' Conference changed dramatically from the first and second phase in which some speakers acted the role of a zealous crusader to the third phase in which only one sermonizer aggressively confronted moderates. As a whole, the 1986–1987 Pastors' Conference speakers did not feature scathing denouncements of "liberals." The cautious rhetoric of the speakers expressed a desire of many Baptists to shift from accusatory and polarizing rhetoric to a redressive rhetoric. One observer of the 1986 conference noted, "the sermons centered on the work of Christ and the conflict was hardly mentioned. But the awareness was there as outgoing SBC president Charles Stanley urged fellow pastors 'to be present for every vote.'" 29

The Pastors' Conference speakers had little to gain through attacking moderates and much to gain through appearing reasonable. Many Pastors' Conference speakers formed the new leadership and filled the vacancies on the agency boards. The reformation movement had systematically attained its objectives within the projected time-span. Fundamentalists had

successfully rallied support for new propositions and leadership; now they needed to build trust in the new management.

The breach and conflict rhetoric from 1979–1985 interrupted some traditions of the 50-year-old conference. For many years the Pastors' Conferences provided spiritual liminality for participants. As outlined in chapter three, the conference and convention served as an annual pilgrimage to thousands of Baptists. The annual pilgrims participated in large communal experiences with friends from all over the denomination. But the SBC conflict injured the spirit of harmony and brotherhood. The ritual event symbolized shared beliefs, values, and social relationships, but the conflict effectively silenced moderate participation in the ritual. For many pastors and pastors' wives these worship experiences provided an annual opportunity to worship without responsibilities, evaluation or criticism. For fundamentalists the event remained rewarding, but moderates found that conflict shattered the symbolic pilgrimage of the Pastors' Conference and the SBC. Thus, for many participants, the ritual event symbolized denominational brotherhood, renewed friendships, and retreat from everyday responsibilities, but for others the event become a painful reminder of the division in the denomination.

The focus of the 1986–1987 Pastors' Conferences turned away from the conflict and turned back toward its chief function of providing inspiration and a shared sense of purpose. The conference featured persuasive orators who knew how to speak the language of Southern Baptists. They expounded from a heritage of sermonizers that once shaped southern opinions. Samuel Hill summarized the authoritative legacy of Southern Baptist preachers. He stated,

\[\text{The exalted status enjoyed by the clergy throughout much of southern history—in some respects, they have been like an untouchable caste—was partly deserved, owing to the quantity and quality of their services to the people. In many a community, the minister was one of a very few persons, perhaps the only person, from whom any sort of stable leadership could be expected . . . the figure of the local preacher incarnated what was ultimate for an uncritical society. Small wonder that such a society should vest him with an authoritative role.}\]

emotional appeals, asserted literal biblical truisms, and sprinkled personal illustrations that provided narrative authority. They often established ethos by relating their successes and by relating stories of revered men of faith such as Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Charles G. Finney, Martin Luther, and many others. The enthusiastic personal charisma of the speakers demanded full attention. The literal interpretations of selected biblical passages apparently filled a need for specific spiritual instructions. In exchange for the speaker’s domination and patronizing, the speaker offered the listeners a chance to vicariously bask in triumphant revivals, gigantic crusades, and enormous church growth. The speakers often concluded the Pastors’ Conferences with a public call to recommitment to the ministry in which many thousands would leave their seats and move toward the speaker and kneel in prayer. The rituals of the Pastors’ Conference reinforced traditional Southern Baptist values and showcased Southern Baptists’ most acclaimed preachers. These powerful public rituals expressed and shaped world views of many Southern Baptists.

Ritual activities such as the Pastors’ Conferences profoundly communicate values, portray social relationships, and create social cohesion. The ritual of the Pastors’ Conferences displayed social structure and inculcated basic premises of social conduct and action. Dwight Conquergood argues that a community’s rituals dynamically shape its constituents. Concerning a community ritual, he states, “[A ritual] both displays and sustains, perhaps intensifies, an ethos and world view that provide the bedrock foundational premises upon which more specific lines of argument and persuasion are erected.”

David Kertzer defines ritual as “a symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive.” Public rituals are symbolic means of expressing and shaping political power


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relationships within communities. Public rituals not only express social relationships, but they evoke emotional identification. Kertzer states,

Through ritual the individual's subjective experience interacts with and is molded by social forces. Most often, people participate in ritual forms that they had nothing to do with creating. Even where individuals invent new rituals, they create them largely out of a stockpile of preexisting symbols, and the rituals become established not because of the psychic processes of the inventor but because of the social circumstances of the people who participate in the new rite.

The power of ritual, then, stems not just from its social matrix, but also from its psychological underpinnings. Indeed, these two dimensions are inextricably linked. Participation in ritual involves physiological stimuli, the arousal of emotions; ritual works through the senses to structure our sense of reality and our understanding of the world around us.³⁴

As a ritual event, the Pastors' Conferences provided psychological stimuli besides the social benefits of denominational brotherhood, renewed friendships, and retreat from everyday responsibilities. The long-lived event offered both emotional arousal and emotional stability. The conference offered inspiration and emotional identification that bound the participants with a vision of Southern Baptist traditions.

Turner describes communal experiences like that the Pastors' Conferences offered as periods of liminality. In the ritual experience of the Pastors' Conferences, concern for the humane and the universal transcends the mundane and the particular. Liminality occurs in communal experiences when the perception of universal kinship replaces everyday roles and one temporarily abandons normal social structures.³⁵ During periods of liminality, group fantasies are created and expressed. Ernest G. Bormann's Fantasy Theme Analysis identifies and explains fantasies that assemblages develop when they recount mutually experienced events. Though his analysis is primarily interested in "typing" themes of verbal discourse, Bormann emphasizes the dramatic importance of communal ritual experiences.³⁶ He states,

³⁴ Kertzer, 10.


Motives do not exist to be expressed in communication but rather arise in the expression itself and come to be embedded in the drama of the fantasy themes that generated and serve to sustain them. Motives are thus available for direct interpretation by a community of scholars engaged in rhetorical criticism.  

Bormann also argues that actors participating in a group adopt a vision that constrains and impels specific perceptions of the world and prescribes acceptable behaviors. Thus the Pastors' Conferences held the potential of creating powerful communal experiences (outside everyday structures) that bolstered a world view for many Southern Baptists.

The 1986 Pastors' Conference in Atlanta attracted an audience of approximately 20,000. The speakers exhibited far less inflammatory rhetoric than the past year. Of the fourteen speakers on the program, Adrian Rogers produced statements that perpetuated conflict rhetoric and the last chapter outlined his statements. None of the speakers produced specific redressive statements.

The 1986 Pastors' Conference featured the theme, "Jesus, Author and Finisher." The traditional theme emphasized the deity of Jesus (supernatural power over death, sin, and creation) and by contrast deemphasized the humanness of Jesus (those things Jesus had in common with humans). The theological theme underscored an authoritative world view and featured Jesus' special place in and above creation. Each sermon argued for the superiority of Jesus and a specific spiritual order. The "secret to ultimate living," according to Bailey Smith's sermon, was the spiritual relationship offered by Jesus Christ. An example can illustrate a continuum between Baptist world views in the account of the devil's temptation of Christ at the beginning of his ministry. A fundamentalist and authoritative world view would likely interpret this as a literal event in which the devil (a supernatural being) transported Jesus to different locations and tempted him to use his inherent supernatural


37 Bormann, "Fantasy, Rhetoric and Social Reality," 406.

powers in a greedy fashion. Jesus refused the temptation and triumphed over his supernatural foe. Although all Southern Baptists would proclaim “Jesus is Lord” (which proclaims a hierarchy), some moderates might lean toward an individualist world view that downplays the supernatural in this passage. They might perceive this as an allegory concerning Jesus’ mental struggle in deciding how he would conduct his ministry. The end result was that Jesus repudiated sensationalism and chose a path involving sacrifice. This interpretation would emphasize Jesus’ humanity in decision-making. The emphasis of the 1986 Pastors’ Conference reinforced fundamentalist world views.


39 H. Edwin Young, “Worthy Is the Lamb,” duplicated manuscripts, 8 June 1986, Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.


41 Jay Strack, “Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday, Today and Forever,” duplicated manuscripts, 9 June 1986, Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

42 Harry B. Garvin, “Looking to Jesus at All Times,” duplicated manuscripts, 9 June 1986, Pastors’ Conference, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.


The 1987 Pastors' Conference in St. Louis drew approximately 10,000 and featured the theme, "The Emmanuel Factor." Of the twelve speakers, two of the speakers indirectly contributed to the conflict and the prior chapter outlined their remarks. Two speakers offered redressive remarks. Again in 1987, the lack of conflict rhetoric symbolized redressive rhetoric more than specific calls for peace. One observer described the 1987 Pastors' Conference as one with a "warm, loving spirit."

The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

44 Bailey Smith, "The Secret of Ultimate Living."


46 James Reimer, "Is There Any Hope?" duplicated manuscripts, 9 June 1986, Pastors' Conference, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.


48 Jerry Vines, The Return of Our Lord Jesus Christ audiotape, rec. 9 June 1986, Pastors' Conference, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

Thomas D. Elliff pleaded for the audience to exercise forgiveness. Though Elliff did not specifically talk about the conflict, the implications were obvious. His message urged the audience to handle the SBC conflict and other kinds of conflict with forgiveness. He concluded his message, “What are you waiting for? Forgive! Forgive! Forgive!” His message reflected the Peace Committee’s request that all parties not exacerbate SBC problems with accusatory rhetoric.

Jerrell Sutton delivered perhaps the most scholarly message of the decade in the 1987 Pastors’ Conference. Sutton addressed the Pastors’ Conference once during this study unlike some of the speakers who regularly addressed the Conference. Probably the program committee invited Sutton to offer conservative solutions to the controversy. His message, “The Emmanuel Factor and Contending for the Faith,” derived from his Ph.D. dissertation. It concerned Charles H. Spurgeon and the Down Grade Controversy of nineteenth-century British Baptists. A large portion of the message historically documented the nineteenth century controversy and illuminated similarities with the 1980s SBC controversy. According to Sutton, the leadership of the British Baptist Union sided with advocates of theological diversity thus permitting Universalism (a doctrine that God redeems all humans). Sutton argued that Spurgeon correctly recognized the importance of biblical inerrancy to evangelism and vitality of the Baptist Union. He concluded,

Spurgeon knew that if the Down Grade (downhill slide) were not stopped, it would eventually mean the demise of the Baptist Union with respect to making any effective impact for the Gospel. Spurgeon feared the loss of a “conversion theology.” It should be pointed out that in the last decade of the nineteenth century the Baptist Union began to decline numerically and never sufficiently recovered. It is now a shadow of its former self. Perhaps history would have been different if more Baptists had followed Spurgeon’s lead in contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints!

50 Thomas D. Elliff, “How to Forgive,” duplicated manuscripts, 14 June 1987, Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

Sutton drew a list of conclusions from the Down Grade controversy. The first conclusion argued that Southern Baptists espoused a wide spectrum of theology and the polarizing effect of the conflict skewed perceptions of the SBC membership. He concluded that factions falsely promoted an “us against them” mentality. He concluded that Baptists must stick to issues and not become mired in personal attacks, thus promoting a dialogue over critical issues. He advised, “We must discern the difference between essentials and nonessentials.” Another conclusion, according to Sutton, was that contending for essentials of the faith was more important than unity. Unity was important, but not at the expense of critical issues. Sutton also concluded that politics involved a choice-making process. He reasoned,

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? To call politics unchristian and accuse our brothers and sisters of “playing politics” is naive at best and dishonest at worst.

Sutton pleaded for the sides to work within the system and not withdraw from the SBC. He also argued that Baptists should learn from mistakes of the British Baptist Union to avoid their mistakes. He ended the message with the story of visiting a crumbling, vacant, once vibrant church near Oxford University. He concluded, “Gentlemen, do not say that cannot happen to us! Under God, let’s contend for the faith!”

This message expressed a desire of many Baptists for a more judicial way of perceiving and talking about the conflict. Hefley reports that Sutton received “resounding applause,” indicating that the audience welcomed an approach to the conflict that emphasized reasoning rather than blaming. Sutton espoused a strong support for the reformation movement and urged the audience to stick to issues, whereas in 1985, W. A. Criswell employed accusatory and vilification rhetoric in describing the demise of the British Baptist Union. Sutton rejected

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52 Sutton, “The Emmanuel Factor and Contending for the Faith,”

53 Sutton, “The Emmanuel Factor and Contending for the Faith,”

54 Sutton, “The Emmanuel Factor and Contending for the Faith,”

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vilification rhetoric and favored judicial rhetoric. Criswell utilized considerable oratorical skills in arousing emotions and blaming the weaknesses of the denomination on an evil liberal conspiracy. Sutton advocated a democratic system in which Baptists chose their identity, direction, and purpose after both sides contended for their ideological conceptions of the faith, whereas Criswell denounced the opposition having any voice in the Baptist system. Criswell's message polarized Baptists, whereas Sutton's message described that division as a false dichotomy, with Baptists possessing a wide spectrum of beliefs. Sutton expressed the desire of many Baptists to settle the controversy in a judicial fashion.

Sutton's message became the last Pastors' Conference sermon in the two-year "cooling-down" period of this study. Sutton espoused an optimistic belief that Southern Baptists could contend for their beliefs and remain functionally unified. He argued that Southern Baptists could work toward a solution (an argument that SBC leadership had used for a century). But Sutton's argument failed to consider the ways that the SBC controversy had magnified a division that already existed in the denomination. He denounced the division as a false dichotomy of the denomination's membership. Though he rightly observed that Southern Baptists held a wide spectrum of beliefs; his argument failed to explain how the conflict had underscored incompatible world views, and how the conflict had broken the illusion of unity that sustained the denomination since 1845. The rhetorical gloves came off again in the following year with the moderate counter movement. These two years represented the calmest years in the study.

Ammerman's survey findings show that in 1988 many lost hope that the differences in the SBC could be healed. Her study reports that in 1985 many Southern Baptists from a broad spectrum of beliefs expressed confidence that the controversy would end, and the denomination would return to regular business. But with the resurgence of moderates, the 1988 SBC became the scene of a duel of closely matched forces, and the hope of a peaceful settlement became dashed in the renewed conflict. Many of the 1988 Pastors' Conference

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speakers advocated neither compromise on the issue of scriptural inerrancy nor compromise to other theological and biblical parameters.56

The 1988 Pastors' Conference speakers expressed frustration that the controversy continued to plague the convention meetings. Vilification and accusatory rhetoric was especially apparent as the social drama cycled back to conflict. As outlined in the last chapter, a greater percentage of the speakers directly contributed to conflict rhetoric than any other year. The new leadership turned back the moderate resurgence by a tiny margin (one percent). With the hope of peace shattered, many Southern Baptist leaders in both factions recognized an irreparable schism. The fight was not over, but many began turning their energies to ventures other than the SBC controversy.

Redressive Rhetoric in the SBC Forums

Though the 1986 Pastors Conference speakers complied with the Peace Committee requests for a "cooling down" of the rhetoric in Southern Baptist meetings, some 1986 Forum speakers vigorously accused fundamentalists of derailing the denomination. In 1986, the Pastors' Conference speakers turned away from accusatory rhetoric, but some Forum speakers failed to heed the warnings of the Peace Committee. The last chapter outlined some 1986 Forum sermons that contributed to the conflict.

The 1987 SBC Forum in St. Louis featured the theme, "Uniting All Things in Christ." Yet, it featured conflicting messages. Some speakers did not comment on the conflict (Rosalynn Carter, Fisher Humphreys, Don Aderhold, Lavonn D. Brown). Some speakers called for peace and reconciliation, and some urged the audience to hold to their beliefs. Ten speakers addressed a crowd that fluctuated between 600 and 2,000 people. Two contributed redressive statements. The Forum extended the conference with sessions on Sunday evening and Monday morning and afternoon. Women again addressed the Forum with former First Lady Rosalynn Carter and pastor Nancy Hastings Sehested.

56 Fundamentalist speakers often employed the term "parameter."
Roy Honeycutt, the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, expressed desperation and despair concerning the SBC. He conveyed no hope in the political processes of the denomination. He stated, "We [moderates] are in Chapter 11—we are totally bankrupt... We have no voice, no participation, little representation, and no power... Our hope," he declared, "must be in Him who is the hope of the world. For exiles, there is no hope but this." Honeycutt, a veteran of many skirmishes, saw little chance of a resolution to the crisis that would suit moderates.

James Slatton also sounded the theme of exile and faint hope. He told the audience that the SBC had "disenfranchised" moderates. He encouraged moderates to continue to be themselves and to remain faithful to their beliefs though they did not have the safety of a crowd. He also challenged them to work with him "to save this great Christian community from passing into the long night of sterile conformity."

John Hewett offered redressive statements in his message, "Devising (sic) the Indivisible." He described the divisive denominational conflict. He stated, "This afternoon 'they' are at the Pastors' Conference and 'we' are at the Forum speaking languages foreign to one another, under threat of denominational fratricide from theological and political weapons aimed at the heart." He underlined the importance of redressive actions. He stated, "What we have here, said the warden in the latter day morality play, 'Cool Hand Luke,' is a failure to communicate. It will come as some shock but no surprise if God makes us stay here until we all get our minds right." Hewett predicted either doom or redemption for the denomination according to whether it continued or ceased fighting. He stated.

Now we are in St. Louis again. Tomorrow we will gather to write another chapter in the story of our certain schism and hasten the death of our 142-year old cooperative missionary enterprise, or we will celebrate the advent of a new, transcendent, all-inclusive approach to reaching the world with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

57 Hefley, The Truth in Crisis: vol. 3, 64.


59 John H. Hewett, "Devising the Indivisible," duplicated manuscripts, 15 June 1987, SBC Forum, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
Hewett suggested several ways for the denomination to experience reconciliation. He proposed that Southern Baptists acknowledge diversity within Christianity. In strong terms, he said, “We must resist those who would cooperate with Satan by describing this family quarrel as one between ‘believers’ and ‘apostates’ quarreling, not over inerrancy, but lordship.” He also proposed that Southern Baptists distinguish between traditions and the gospel. He said, “These days we talk past each other much in the same way. Each cluster of Southern Baptists cherishes traditions and customs which help them identify their faith and practice.” He also proposed that Southern Baptist compromise in order to work with each other. He warned, “The scandal which will break tomorrow if we turn our backs on decency, fidelity and unity will make Heritage Village USA look like Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood.”

He called for peace. “Some have publicly called for a ‘divorce,’ an end to this embarrassing, sensationalized domestic dispute. Others await, and openly advocate, a fight to the finish. Let me tell you something: if anyone ‘wins’ this family fight, we all lose.” Hewett proposed that Southern Baptists reunite around the common goal of cooperative mission work. He said, “Now is not the time to insist on uniformity. Uniformity is essentially non-missionary. It mistakes indoctrination for evangelization. Our task is not to convert people to our personal Christologies but to introduce them to Jesus Christ.” He called for Southern Baptists to overlook their differences and to work toward the greater good of cooperative missions.

Hewett’s message expressed solutions to the Southern Baptist conflict from an individualistic world view. The individualistic world view values choice, pragmatism, personal responsibility, and compromise in the pursuit of goals. Whereas the authoritative world view values personal devotion to absolute premises and disdains compromise. Hewett’s message expressed redressive solutions exclusively from an individualistic perspective and denigrated the authoritative world view that held power in the denomination. The solutions that he proposed could only appeal to those with an individualistic world view. While Hewett proposed exclusively individualistic redressive solutions, another speaker expressed a third world view.
Nancy Hastings Sehested's address expressed an egalitarian world view in the tradition of a historically small minority of Southern Baptists. Chapter two outlined the world view of a similar historical rhetor, C. S. Gardner, who taught at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at the turn of the century. He advanced a social interpretation of biblical truth that emphasized the ethics of Christ and a redeeming community that would prepare the world for the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God was a primary emphasis in his theological, social, and economic views. He concentrated on the kingdom of God in his rhetoric, instead of the individual as did George W. Truett, and instead of orthodoxy as did Victor Masters. As John Lee Eighmy and Wayne Flynt document, there have always been groups in the denomination that promoted labor reform, abolition, women's suffrage, and the social gospel. As Rosenberg documents, a contemporary egalitarian following exists that promotes a Southern Baptist Peace Movement, the abolition of capital punishment, and other social-gospel-type emphases. Southern Baptist egalitarians in the 1970s saw the church taking great strides in male/female and black/white relationships. Some Baptist churches began accepting females as ministers, chaplains, theological professors, and deacons in the church. Southern Baptists began admitting African-Americans into membership of their churches. During the 1970s, the Christian Life Commission of the SBC expressed many "enlightened" social views in their publications and drew criticism. Baptists began journals and a denominational emphasis on world hunger. Other Baptist organizations promoted housing, pacifism, and frugal lifestyles. Thus Sehested spoke from a vibrant though small tradition in the denomination.

Nancy Sehested's appearance on the Forum program registered a protest against fundamentalists. When Sehested accepted the call to become the pastor of Prescott Memorial Baptist church in Memphis Tennessee, the Shelby County Baptist Association (Adrian Rogers'...
Belleview Baptist church is a member) withdrew fellowship from the church (since women cannot be pastors). Her appointment generated many news stories in Baptist papers.

Sehested's message, “Will the Real Minister Please Stand Up?” critiqued Southern Baptist authoritarian world views, and admonished Southern Baptist moderates holding individualistic world views. She began the message with an egalitarian emphasis. She stated, “Greetings to you sisters and brothers —in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. —in the name of our Lord, who no longer calls us servants, but friends.”

She described race relations and social divisions,

In race relations, becoming “one” too often means minorities becoming assimilated into the white majorities’ ways of doing things. In this country, oppressed people are often asked to deny who they are for the sake of “unity” and “oneness.” For church types like us, who are to be ministers of reconciliation in an age of widening divisions between rich and poor, black and white, Third World nations and First World nations—the question of oneness is a crucial concern.

Sehested explained how the Apostle Paul dampened the churches’ enthusiasm and fascination with the super-apostles. She stated,

In this passage Paul finds himself explaining the very nature of ministry to a church that is running after the super-ministers, who performed miracles,—and dressed in the latest dress-for-success styles—and who excited the people by their skill as orators—and who were committed to building a mega-church with their name on every church pew.

She described the authority problem in the denomination. She said,

In our culture, most male clergy no longer have to ask the question of authority. The power of tradition and the authority of the institution legitimates their ministry.

For some Southern Baptist ministers, power and authority seem to be bestowed on those who baptize dozens every week, who pastor First Big Deal Baptist Church, who run after the helium-filled balloons of abstraction, like inerrancy of scripture, who have built a church or plan to build a church a city block long, who dictate for the people what they should feel and believe, who have a TV ministry, who are building a church budget in the millions.

For other Southern Baptist ministers, power and authority seems to be bestowed on those who are seminary trained, who have degrees and letters of recommendation, who maintain the status quo, who are benevolent dictators in their kind and gentle way of telling the people how to live and act.

For yet other Southern Baptist ministers, power and authority seems to be bestowed on those who are seminary trained with a post-graduate degree, who keep up with the

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62 Nancy Hastings Sehested, “Will the Real Minister Please Stand Up?” duplicated manuscripts, 15 June 1987, SBC Forum, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
latest statistics on unemployment and hunger in the world, who perpetuate the myth that they can have it all and do it all if they just take a time management course.

Sehested concluded her message by suggesting that the real minister is the community of faith.

Our unity comes from our common mission as God’s co-laborers. Our unity comes about by our medals of commendation on the road as Christ’s reconcilers. Our unity will be checked out while we pass out soup in the soup kitchens, and stand before the judge against nuclear war—and we’ll pull out our unifying badges and show our wounds from unity standing within earshot and hands reach of the suffering of this world.

Sehested promoted an egalitarian world view that placed the “people of God” at the top of her ideological hierarchy. Rather than emphasizing the familiar SBC Forum themes of individual freedom, Sehested emphasized communal ethics. Her solution to the crisis involved ignoring theological abstractions and becoming deeply involved in the redemptive community that challenged the world. Whereas the individualistic world view values choice, pragmatism, personal responsibility, and compromise in the pursuit of goals. The egalitarian world view sees the individual only in the context of a redemptive community. The authoritative world view values personal devotion to absolute premises and disdains compromise. The egalitarian disdains personal authorities, authoritative absolutes yet approves the authoritarian’s stand against worldly wisdom and standards. Sehested’s message expressed redressive solutions exclusively from an egalitarian perspective and denigrated the authoritative world view that held power in the denomination. The solutions that she proposed could only appeal to those with an egalitarian world view.

Conclusion

The redressive phase of the SBC Social Drama was a reflexive stage that forced participants to see themselves. It allowed both sides to perceive the ideological gulf that existed between the two sides. It was a period when many constructed histories for Southern Baptists. Many research projects flowered during this period serving a redressive function. Hefley in 1986–1989 published a four-volume journalistic history of the conflict. His effort involved an enormous investigation and reflected a conservative view. Rosenberg, Leonard, and Ammerman published their works in 1989 and 1990. These works were more favorably
received by moderates. Many others published in magazines, journals, and papers their opinions and histories of the conflict and future of the SBC. The Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum speakers actively contributed in the second stage of the SBC Social Drama, yet they did not as actively reflect the third phase. Perhaps the Pastor's Conferences and Forums provided ideal scenes for confrontation, but less than ideal setting for reflection.

The 1986 and 1987 Pastors' Conference symbolized redressive action more by what the speakers avoided (conflict rhetoric) than by what the speakers said (infrequent redressive directives). The speakers complied with the Peace Committee requests for a "cooling down" of the rhetoric in Southern Baptist meetings. The Pastors' Conference speakers had little to gain through attacking moderates and much to gain through appearing reasonable. Many Pastors' Conference speakers formed the new leadership and filled the vacancies on the agency boards. With the call to peace, the Pastors' Conference speakers reverted to pre-controversy-like language.

The ritual of the Pastors' Conferences displayed social structure and inculcated basic premises of social conduct and action. Though the Pastors' Conference did not offer redressive language, it symbolically reinforced a fundamentalist world view and expressed authoritative themes. These messages avoided political conflict and avoided social prescriptions, yet they reinforced a strong hierarchical world view.

The Forum speakers were reticent to engage in redressive rhetoric. Some 1986 and 1987 speakers continued to berate the fundamentalists and some expressed despair and desperation. They risked the scorn of the denomination for not heeding the Peace Committee's request to abstain from accusatory rhetoric. The speakers who attempted redressive rhetoric spoke exclusively from their world views and did not acknowledge the legitimacy of the fundamentalist authoritative world view. John Hewett's message expressed redressive solutions exclusively from an individualistic perspective and denigrated the authoritative world view. Nancy Sehested's message expressed redressive solutions exclusively from an egalitarian perspective and denigrated the authoritative world view.
Southern Baptists attempted to reconcile differences through dialogues in journals and newspapers, through the seminary sponsored conferences and through the Peace Committee. The redressive vehicles illustrated how social forces within the SBC moderated the fundamentalist reformation. The Southern Baptist redressive vehicles did not offer an adjudicated democratic process with both sides having an equal opportunity to present their cases. When one side clearly had the upper hand, (i.e., the Peace Committee) the social drama gave the impression of moving through the process of impartial stock-taking. The Peace Committee report reinforced fundamentalist assertions that some seminaries taught unorthodox theology.\(^63\) Once the committee verified this claim, it justified the fundamentalists' reformation movement and validated the importance of theological orthodoxy. The peace committee acted-out the struggle of social forces in the denomination as it held center stage in the redressive phase of the social drama. The redressive activities that held center stage reinforced the legitimacy of the new leadership.

Arthur Farnsley argues that the new leaders wished to evade further conflict and consolidate their control under the “new biblical consensus.”\(^64\) He also argues that by necessity the new establishment turned to managerial rhetoric. An example of the rhetorical turn is that in the 1970s many fundamentalist leaders advocated greater support for independent agencies and institutions and lesser support to the SBC Cooperative Program; but as the new leadership took control of the denomination, they began advocating full support of the denomination. Farnsley argues that the built-in values of the massive institutions of the SBC began democratizing the new leadership.\(^65\) The new leadership's change in roles (from reformer to manager) forced them to argue that their past reformation actions were necessary, and that the newly instituted reforms were reasonable, and to call a halt to further

\(^{63}\) Rosenberg, 198.

\(^{64}\) See Arthur Emery Farnsley, Majority Rules: The Politicization of the Southern Baptist Convention (Baptist Church). (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, University Microfilms No. 9027907, 1990) Chapter six.

\(^{65}\) See chapter seven of Farnsley.
reformation. The fundamentalists embraced managerial rhetoric and supported Turner’s claim that Act three provides cathartic action for the stronger faction in which it can demonstrate objectivity and equitableness. Through redressive activities, fundamentalists provided their justifications.

The new leadership came close to being ousted in 1988 by the moderate counter movement. The threat of losing their hard-fought gains robbed the new leadership of the luxury of managerial rhetoric. The Pastors’ Conference and SBC Forum speakers acted out the roles of crusading reformers. Vilification rhetoric characterized the scene of the 1988 SBC. With the renewed conflict, many Baptists lost hope that the two sides would reunite. Ammerman’s survey findings show that in 1985 many Southern Baptists from a broad spectrum of beliefs expressed confidence that the controversy would end, and the denomination would return to business as usual, but in 1988 many lost hope that the differences would be bridged. The social drama recycled to the conflict stage. The renewed conflict brought about the realization that permanent stalemate was emerging in the denomination, and that some moderates would leave the denomination.

66 Ammerman, 263.
Chapter 6

ACT FOUR: REINTEGRATION AND SCHISM

Chapter six analyzes the rhetorical and ritual aspects of the concluding phase of the SBC reformation movement and counter movement. Each stage of a social drama possesses its own unique characteristics and rhetoric. This chapter (1) describes reintegrative rhetoric from a social drama perspective, (2) overviews reintegrative rhetoric expressed in the SBC reformation movement and counter movement, and (3) analyzes reintegrative rhetoric and roles enacted in the Pastors’ Conferences and the SBC Forums following the redressive rhetoric expressed in 1986 and 1987 and the recycled conflict rhetoric in 1988.

Reintegrative Rhetoric from a Social Drama Perspective

The concluding phase of a successful social drama ushers in peace and the return of regular daily social interaction in the social group. A successful social drama deals with the controversy that initiated the drama and the social group moves toward reintegration or permanent schism. Either one of these two scenarios resolves and strengthens the social fabric of the community. The process of breach, conflict, and redress does not resolve in a failed social drama. A failed social drama weakens the social fabric of the community, because the community fails to solve their problems, and factions compete for control at the expense of social cohesion. A completed though failed social drama fosters an uneasy cease-fire that can easily re-ignite into a larger arena (e.g., a local conflict that flares into a national civil war). The concluding phase of the SBC social drama resolved matters for some Southern Baptists. But for others, the SBC controversy presented a failed social drama that weakened the social fabric of the denomination and instituted an uneasy stand-off.

Turner states, “The fourth phase of the social drama consists either of the reintegration of the disturbed social group, or of the recognition and legitimation of irreparable schism between the contending parties.”¹ Turner’s theory suggests that the fourth phase of a social

¹ Victor W. Turner, The Anthropology of Performance (New York: PAJ Publications,

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drama accomplishes two possibilities. In the first possibility, the fourth stage incorporates
the contending groups and their antipathetic ideologies and produces a new social synthesis.
In the second possibility of the fourth stage, the fractured social group accepts irreconcilable
differences. The social drama runs its course when members happily or begrudgingly recognize
the new norms of the community. Turner states,

In the final stage, the restoration of peace, which entails either a reestablishment of
viable relations between the contending parties or a public recognition of irreparable
schism, cognitive criteria tend to come uppermost again, if only in the sense of a rational
acceptance of the reality of change. Every social drama alters, in however miniscule a
fashion, the structure (by which term I do not mean a permanent ordering of social
relations but merely a temporary mutual accommodation of interests) of the relevant
social field. For example, oppositions may have become alliances, and vice versa. High
status may have become low status and the reverse. New power may have been
channelled into new authority and old authority lost its legitimacy.\(^2\)

In both scenarios of the reintegration or the recognition of irreparable schism, the social
mechanisms of a community resolve the social drama. A controversy strengthens a society’s
cohesiveness as it solves problems. Though the bitter struggle between opposing forces brings
fierce competition among ideologies, conflict helps societies respond to dangerous changes and
to challenges in the social order. But sometimes societies and communities are not able to
resolve conflict.

Turner describes the failed social drama in which society loses cohesiveness and
viability. The failed social drama does not resolve and it weakens social structure and the
efficacy of redressive social mechanisms. In this scenario, movements and counter movements
exhaust their energies and cease fighting without recognition of a permanent schism. Turner
states,

But social dramas, especially under conditions of major social change, may not complete
the course indicated here. Where consensus over key values no longer exists, the
redressive machinery premised on such a consensus loses its legitimacy, with the result
that there is a reversion to crisis, with less likelihood of crisis number two being
resolved by redressive machinery number one. . . . In many societies, social dramas may
escalate from limited or local crises to a general national crisis, as the redressive
machinery available at each hierarchical level of social control fails to function. . . .

\(^{1987}\) 35.

\(^2\) Turner, The Anthropology of Performance 92.
Here there is not clear cut, overt resolution of crisis that may, at least temporarily, free the social atmosphere of suspicion.  

Alan Gross used Turner’s model to study the public debates concerning the recombinant DNA controversy. He concluded that the recombinant DNA controversy became mired and unresolved. Gross argued that Turner provided theoretical understanding for failed dramas in which both sides tired of fighting but could not reach an agreement concerning the status of the community. In describing the recombinant DNA controversy, Gross stated, “Instead of reintegration, there was a seemingly permanent clash of purposes, an uneasy truce that left open the question whether this particular conflict was settled without permanently damaging the invisible bonds of community, the ultimate binding forces of a society, which Turner calls ‘communitas.’” Gross concluded that the DNA debates ceased in such a way that it contributed to a growing dangerous rift in United States society. He stated, “On this analysis, which side wins a particular debate is immaterial; whoever wins, society is the loser, becoming thereby less cohesive, less viable.” He also concluded that conflicting societal assumptions and polarized views of the role of technology in society contributed to the failed social dramas. Society did not mediate a consensual answer through social, ethical, and political means. Gross’s study offers a useful analogy for examining the fourth phase of the SBC social drama.

**An Overview of Reintegrative Rhetoric**

Fundamentalists won elections from 1979 to 1992, despite intense efforts by moderates in 1988. Fundamentalists systematically changed the boards of every agency, installed new leadership in SBC agencies, forced the seminaries to accept fundamentalist professors, and

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3 Turner, The Anthropology of Performance 35.


5 Gross, 405.

established a new fundamentalist commentary series on the Bible. Ten years of leadership allowed fundamentalists to place new leaders through attrition in the Home Mission Board, the Christian Life Commission, the Sunday School Board, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Fundamentalists and moderates renewed conflict rhetoric in the 1988 SBC. Both sides expressed adversarial campaign narratives and gathered forces for the 1988 SBC. Although moderates campaigned in 1989 and 1990, many Southern Baptists realized after the 1988 SBC that fundamentalists would retain the SBC leadership.

In 1990, the denomination manifested both reintegration and schism. Moderates did not leave the denomination, and there was little evidence of outright secessionist rhetoric in 1990, as few churches severed ties with the SBC. Yet the controversy created schismatic moderate groups, the Southern Baptist Alliance (now Alliance of Baptists), and the United Baptist Fellowship (now Cooperative Baptist Fellowship). The alternative groups cautiously stressed in 1990 and 1991 that they were not beginning new denominations, but were starting institutions that expressed their beliefs and values to complement the SBC. The Alliance of Baptists and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship supported male and female ministers forced from their positions by SBC changes, supported programs and agencies that were traditionally supported by Southern Baptists but defunded by fundamentalists, provided alternative literature, served as matchmakers for moderate pastors and churches, and supported new centers of theological education. Evidence indicates that 1990 became a major turning point for many moderates. The rhetoric surrounding the 1990 SBC was as controversial and innuendo-filled as all the 1980s meetings, and moderates lost the elections. Following the SBC in August of 1990, 3,000 moderates met together to form a strategy for the future, and the meeting’s rhetoric reflected hope and expectation. This rhetorical shift signalled a challenge to build new institutions and agencies that moderates could enthusiastically support. Moderates disbanded the SBC Forum (although a small number formally ended it in 1991 SBC with an abbreviated program and a vote to disband). The 1991 SBC held the most passive meeting in decades, and reflected the decision by many moderates to cease fighting fundamentalists. Many moderates did not attend the 1991 SBC, and the ones who did attend did not sponsor a
presidential candidate. In an Atlanta meeting in May 9-11, more than 6,000 participants, representing 1,555 churches, named themselves the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship 1991, reflecting a turning point in the SBC. The attendees expressed enormous enthusiasm in rousing applause and standing ovations as speakers proclaimed messages focusing on the convocation’s theme, “Behold, I do a new thing.” Walter Shurden, distinguished Southern Baptist church historian, expressed the rhetorical turn of moderates attending the meeting. He concluded his address with a plea,

That we may give our energies to the advancement of the Kingdom of God rather than in divisive, destructive politics . . . For these reasons we form the United Baptist Fellowship [now Cooperative Baptist Fellowship]. This does not require that we sever ties with the old Southern Baptist Convention. It does give us another mission delivery system, one more like our understanding of what it means to be Baptist and what it means to do gospel. Therefore, we create a new instrument to further the Kingdom and enlarge the Body of Christ.7

A rhetoric of accommodation and silence characterized many moderates in the denomination who chose not to participate in schismatic groups or involve themselves in denominational politics. The reconstituted SBC offered few opportunities for moderates who were open about their beliefs and values. For Southern Baptists who disapproved of the ideological shift in the denomination and who also disapproved of the schismatic moderate groups, the controversy represented a failed social drama. The social drama did not incorporate the conflicting ideologies into a new social synthesis. The denomination’s polity offered no place for a minority voice. With no checks and balances within the system, and a winner-take-all structure, a minority opinion possessed no weight in the SBC. The social drama also did not recognize and legitimize an irreparable schism (for those who did not participate in the schismatic groups). For this group, the social drama exacerbated the differences among Southern Baptists rather than resolved them.

For fundamentalists, 1990 signalled the triumph of the reformation movement. It was the last year that they ran against ideological opposition. By 1991, moderates ceded the SBC meeting to fundamentalists. They successfully controlled the institutions and imposed their

7 Walter B. Shurden, An address to the Public from the Interim Steering Committee duplicated manuscripts, 10 May 1991, Marietta, GA: The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.
values and beliefs. Lynn Clayton, editor of the Baptist Message, state Baptist newspaper of Louisiana, reflected on the new phase in the denominational life. He concluded,

The change that has occurred through the past 13 years was reflected not just in the content of resolutions and motions and officers elected; it was obvious in the style of the convention program as well. Revival singing, choruses, large musical productions, pageants and sermons strong on emotions and traditional revival themes were the order of the day. And the majority of the people present at the convention were enthusiastic in their positive responses.8

Fundamentalists reconstituted the SBC to represent and express their values and beliefs. The new leaders avoided further conflict and consolidated their control under the fundamentalist vision, promoting a period of renewed denominational unity. The leadership proclaimed a new era of peace, cooperation, and revived mission.9

Reintegrative Rhetoric in the Pastors' Conferences

The 1989 Pastors' Conference featured the theme, "Facing Our Challenge with Confidence." The 1989 Pastors' Conference in Las Vegas drew approximately 9,000 audience members. Many of the speakers developed traditional themes that were not political, such as the need for evangelism, personal piety, and pastoral leadership qualities. Those speeches are excluded from the study. Of the fifteen speakers on the program, five produced statements included in this study.

Ideologically, Adrian Rogers stood as the most important spokesman of the SBC fundamentalist movement. He spoke virtually every year of this study in the Pastors' Conferences and Southern Baptist Conventions. The SBC and Pastors' Conference often scheduled his addresses at momentous points of the meetings (frequently he delivered concluding addresses of the Pastors' Conferences). The SBC elected him president three times during the period covered by this study. From the 1979 breach, he consistently expressed


ideologically strident concepts. He refused to "pull punches" in that during the redressive phase of this study when other fundamentalist speakers expressed less vitriolic statements, Rogers continued attacking liberal theology. As a chief spokesman of the movement, Rogers expressed the fundamentalist norms of the new denominational leadership.

Adrian Rogers delivered a sermon entitled "Snake Eggs, Spider's Webs, and Traffic Jams" as the concluding address of the 1989 Pastors' Conference. He argued for a theocracy in the United States and presented the traditional American jeremiad.

He began, "Ladies and Gentlemen I must confess tonight that America is in serious trouble. I believe that our days as the home of the free and the land of the brave are definitely numbered lest we have a miracle from heaven." He proclaimed that the corporate sin of the nation erected a barrier between God and country. He stated, "My friend the hands of modern America are stained and flooded with the blood of 20 million free born babies who have been slaughtered since 1972 by the infamous Roe versus Wade ruling." Rogers ridiculed those who encouraged the church to stay out of the abortion argument and equated their sentiment with the Germans who allowed Nazis to gas the Jews.

How does this sound? "Oh I'm personally against abortion. But I would not force my morals against somebody else." Let's try this on for size. I personally would never gas a Jew. But I have no right to impose my moral judgement on the Nazis. I don't think the courts have the right to reach into somebody's private gas chamber and legislate morality. We dear friends have bloody hands, we have lying lips.

Rogers offered examples and testimonies of social critics who warned that the United States suffered from a problem of basic honesty. He stated,

We're living in a day of moral fogginess. Young people don't know what is right and what is wrong. No longer are they asked, is it right? No longer do we ask is it true, but

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10 See a brief discussion in chapter four of Adrian Rogers, The Cradle that Rocked the World audiotape, rec. 9 June 1986, Pastors' Conference, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

11 Since the Puritans, preachers such as Jonathan Edwards have warned that if the nation did not turn toward righteous behaviors, it would perish. See Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy, Rhetoric and Social Reality," Quarterly Journal of Speech 58 (1972): 396-407.

12 Adrian Rogers, Snake Eggs, Spider's Webs and Traffic Jams audiotape, 12 June 1989, Pastors' Conference, Las Vegas, NV, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
simply does it work? I am appalled to know that if you crush the egg of a bald eagle, you can be imprisoned for one year, and be fined five thousand dollars. Is a baby eagle worth more than a human being?

Rogers attacked humanism and atheism and blamed many woes of the country on liberal academics. He said,

Snake eggs are theories and philosophies and lies of the devil. The hellish incubators of humanism and new ageism have hatched out a diet of snake eggs for America's youth. They are poisonous philosophies, and they have been spawned by the father of all lies, that old serpent himself. And they are his eggs, and he has put these eggs in the hatchery of men's hearts.

Rogers derided Georg Hegel's dialectical theory, Ludwig Feuerbach's idea of God, Karl Marx's concepts of social history and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. He stated, "They asked us to believe that monkey mythology. They say they are looking for the missing link, but you well know that the entire chain is missing." Rogers asserted that these liberal concepts led to German Nazism. He avowed that this progression from liberal ideology to national destruction was analogous to American liberal ideologies and the destruction of the United States. Rogers derided John Dewey's ideas about progressive education. He stated, "Dewey was one of the original signers of the original humanist manifesto and he was one of the ones that helped to found the ACLU." He alleged that when educators accepted Dewey's ideas "objective truth went out the window." A world view that accepted no absolutes led to disastrous consequences such as the cancellation of voluntary prayer, of Bible reading, of posting the Ten Commandments, and of teaching Biblical Creation in the public classrooms.

Rogers warned of an un-American conspiracy that undermined the moral fabric and caused increased promiscuity, suicide, teenager problems, and violent crimes. He warned that these ideologies led to the trap of pornography, the trap of alcohol, and the sticky web of amorality. Rogers said,

Truth has been kicked down by some doctors of philosophy. Truth has been tripped up by some dishonest politicians. And truth has been chloroformed by liberal and spiritless preachers. Our job, my responsibility, and your responsibility and the most important job on this earth is to lift truth to her feet.

Rogers urged the audience to militantly assert fundamentalist truths into the social life of the United States. Only absolute biblical truth could rescue the nation from certain doom.
Rogers expressed an understanding of an authoritarian world view (a world view with absolutes) and a “pure” individualist world view (a world view with no absolutes). Rogers polarized world views as extreme opposites, refusing to admit a moderate position (one that accepts an absolute God, but also accepts a high degree of human freedom). In blaming liberal ideologists (probably few in the audience knew personally a liberal ideologue) for the nation’s woes, Rogers erected a straw man for the audience to vent righteous indignation. In creating the spectre of an un-American conspiracy, Rogers played on the audience’s fear of an unseen plot to subvert their children. In a denomination whose constituents possessed little status, power, or education, Rogers played on the audience’s fear of an educated and powerful elite. Most of Rogers’ address developed the nature and extent of an evil plot, and very little of the sermon suggested solutions. The strategy leads to a speculative question: Did Rogers really expect the audience to change the nation, or was he asking the audience to act in one realm where they had real power—in the election of SBC leadership?

Larry Lewis symbolized the ideological shift in the denomination’s agencies. As president of the Home Mission Board (HMB), Lewis became the first major agency head that fundamentalists installed. He contributed as a loyal participant to the fundamentalist reformation movement. Soon after taking control, Lewis told HMB employees that those who were not responsive to doctrinal integrity would be replaced, but later Lewis realized that he could not change the terms of employment by which employees were hired. In 1988, he reorganized the HMB to meet the central objectives of evangelism and establishment of new churches. Under Lewis’s leadership, new candidates for employment had to prove their

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15 Ammerman, 226.
doctrinal integrity and answer questions about their beliefs. As Lewis addressed the 1989 Pastors’ Conference, he represented new agency leaders that would institute fundamentalists’ values and beliefs.

Lewis challenged pastors to make soul winning a top priority of their ministries. He made certain that the audience understood his doctrinal position. Lewis stipulated that the Apostle Paul taught the plenary verbal inspiration of the scripture. He accused some of attacking and compromising the scriptures and derided moderate positions. He stated,

"I don't think that Paul subscribed in any way to the halitosis view (that God breathed it, but God had some kind of bad breath, that into that scripture he breathed part truth and part error, part that we may believe and know is the word of God, and part which may be Babylonian myth or Egyptian superstition, or Chaldean folklore, or some copyist's interpolation or error)."

Lewis further criticized the moderates' concept of the Bible, calling it the Dalmatian view. He said,

"He (Dr. Sampey) would not subscribe to the Dalmatian view that the Bible is inspired in spots, and we have to pick out and spot the spots. He would know full well that a perfect God inspired a perfect book. And when we stand before a congregation of people to declare the eternal truths of God, we can do so with authority, and know without question this word of God is not only authority, but it is authentic and its veracity is beyond question."

Lewis reinforced a strict authoritarian world view and clearly stated his position. He also enunciated a position that he expected new employees to share, and informed the audience of his intention to direct the HMB according to fundamentalist tenets. Lewis symbolized the new leadership's ideology in the reconstituted SBC.

Tom Elliff urged the audience to follow God's leadership and to "get with God." He attacked higher biblical criticism by comparing it to the spies who brought a negative report to the Israelites after a reconnaissence mission into the promised land. During the message he spoke admiringly of Oliver North's understanding of authority.

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16 Larry Lewis, audiotape, rec. 12 June 1989, Pastors’ Conference, Las Vegas, NV, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

17 Tom Elliff, Harden Not Your Heart audiotape, 12 June 1989, Pastors’ Conference, Las Vegas, NV, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
Charles Stanley (former president of the SBC) gave personal advice on the subject of dealing with personal conflict. He underscored an authoritarian world view when he said, “When church members sense your fear or see you compromise, you begin to lose your place of leadership and when you lose your place of leadership, you lose respect as a leader.”  

The 1990 Pastors' Conference featured the theme, “The Pathway to God's Presence.” Many of the speakers developed traditional themes that were not political, such as the need for evangelism, personal piety and pastoral leadership qualities. Those speeches are excluded from the study. Of the fourteen speakers on the program, six produced statements included in this study. The 1990 Pastors' Conference convened in the spacious Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans with approximately 20,000 in attendance.

Bailey Smith (two-time president of the SBC) railed against an ungodly nation that persecuted Christians. He described an anti-Christian sentiment in society and told of police brutality toward Christians at abortion clinics. “It is time for those who love Jesus” he urged, “to say, enough is enough. Christians founded this land and it has been the preaching of Jesus Christ that has made America great.” He ridiculed those who doubted the virgin birth of Christ. “I would not walk across the street to hear a man preach,” he said, “that denied the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Smith extolled the virtues of Jesus and contrasted that with statistics that he cited to support his claims of moral decay in America. He reported,

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Every day in America 17 teenagers commit suicide, 1,282 illegitimate babies are born, 2,740 children run away from home, 1,986 divorces take place, 68,493 teenagers contract venereal disease, 2,900 teenagers get pregnant, 3,231 abortions take place, 90 million cans of beer are consumed, and 1.6 billion cigarettes are smoked.
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Smith concluded the message with a litany of evils that would be vanquished by a powerful Christ. Referring to a returning Christ, he stated,

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Not the milk toast Nazarene some sissy preachers make him out to be, but the powerful monarch who will make his enemies his footstool.
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19 Bailey Smith, “I Find No Fault In Him,” duplicated manuscripts, 10 June 1990, Pastors' Conference, New Orleans, LA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
ACLU, get your licks in now. Planned Parenthood, promote your abortion clinics now. Madelyn Murray O'Hare, shake your fuzzy head of atheism at Him now. Homosexuals, glory in your shame now. Mr. Scrosese make your movie The Last Temptation of Christ now. Supreme Court, vote Him out of the schools now. Bewildered theologians, cloud Him in your befuddled thinking now. Spineless preacher, sell Him out to feather your own nest now.

Because one day he won't be pushed around anymore. He's coming with glory, might, power and the kingdoms of this world shall become Kingdoms of God and His Christ.

Avery Willis also reproved an ungodly United States that God had turned his back upon. He stated,

I have come to the conclusion that about 1963 God took away the hedge from around this county. Up until that time the norms of American society had remained basically the same for decades. If you will look at the statistics since then, the graphs look like they have fallen off the table. Up until then our society was based on Judeo-Christian values. The home was the bedrock of our societal structure and religious values were taught and respected by the majority. Since then America leads the world in divorce, and our homes have fallen apart and our society is adrift. As a nation we have forsaken God and His commandments.

To a greater extent than Bailey Smith, Willis enumerated a lengthy list of proofs of societal destruction and moral decline, including declining SAT scores and poor student performance in math and science. He proclaimed God's judgment on the nation, claiming that the proof could be seen in hurricane Hugo and the San Francisco earthquake. "Who is at fault for the mess we are in? We are!" said Willis. He warned that the sin of God's people in failing to inspire righteousness brought the wrath of God upon the entire nation. With this rationale he urged the audience to repent, pray in solemn assemblies, and renew commitment to obedient discipleship.

Willis, Smith, and Rogers (the year before) affirmed in unison a conviction that the United States bore God's punishment because it had rejected core Judeo-Christian beliefs. All three expressed a vision of America that upheld fundamental Judeo-Christian tenets, that taught public school children to pray, read the Bible, and obey the ten commandments. All three denounced liberalism as an unseen force lurking beneath cultural changes that undermined the essential plan of God for society. They asserted the conviction that bad

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ideology promoted immorality and injured the vitality of a nation. To save the United States, they suggested that Christians should repudiate all forms of liberalism. Like Victor Masters, the fundamentalist editor at the first part of the century discussed in chapter two of this study, these speakers expressed a militant response to cultural changes and to any theological liberalism.

John MacArthur echoed the idea that pastors should aggressively confront others and contend for their world view. In lucid terms, MacArthur recommended a militant pastoral role. He stated,

I am convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that the literature of the New Testament supports the fact that a man of God who speaks for God is to see himself as a fighter. We are polemics. We are usually on the attack. We are fighters, contenders, battlers, soldiers and protagonists. We must understand that ministry is war and we are warring with the truth against error.  

MacArthur recalled how he had been misunderstood, yet he fought on. He added,

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, in spite of the intensity and the danger in the fight, beloved, it’s a good fight.

Adrian Rogers also encouraged the audience to fight. “It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error” he stated. “Unity is a wonderful thing, good, and pleasant. But, beloved, it must be the unity of the spirit. Your task is to say what the Lord says; it is not your job to make it palatable.” Rogers emphasized the importance of ideology above social pragmatism. “It is better to ultimately succeed with truth,” he asserted, “than to temporarily win with a lie. God’s word cannot fail; God’s truth cannot fail and sin cannot win. Be careful to line up with the truth. Be men of courage.”


John Bisagno expressed a strong authoritarian stance in advocating for the inerrancy of the Bible. He stated "There is no way to overstate the disdain God has for the person who tampers with integrity of the word of God." This statement coupled with Rogers' statement about "God’s truth" revealed a certainty that they spoke inerrantly for God, typical of the fundamentalist ideology. Bisagno implied that God’s opinions were one and the same with his opinions. These speakers asserted that they fought for God’s truth and that those who attacked them were attacking God. Those who questioned the ideas of the speakers questioned God. These fundamentalist assertions blurred the distinction between God and the role of pastor.

Nelson Price's sermon lacked the militancy of the previously characterized messages, but it provided examples of a fundamentalist's use of evidence. His sermon, "The Path Is a Person" offered reasons that Jesus is the way to God, and extended rhetorical proofs of a supernatural Bible and Christ. Price described divine Old Testament prophecies that foretold Jesus. He said,

"The chances of an Old Testament prophet writing eight prophecies and having them come true in one person is one to the seventeenth power; that is 1000 quadrillion. Consider an even more remarkable scenario.
Imagine that over a period of 1500 years approximately 332 sculptors were asked to sculpture a human body part. Neither of them is told of the works of the other and what scale or material to use. After 1500 years these unrelated works are brought together. Each part is found to be to the exact scale of the other and to be of the same material. Each part fits exactly and contributes to make the whole figure. Amazingly the figure is an exact likeness to Jesus Christ.
There are 332 prophecies related to Christ that have been fulfilled. That not only is mathematical impossibility and physically inconceivable; it is a supernatural reality."

Price's message offered a good example of the way fundamentalists perceived the Bible and how they perceived truth.

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Fundamentalist speakers asserted that God's truth came through revelation and through human religious belief. They asserted the primacy of this truth over truth that emerged through scientific analysis, empirical study, intersubjective agreement, or dialectic.

Reintegrative Rhetoric in the SBC Forums

The 1989 SBC Forum in Las Vegas featured the theme, "The Priesthood of the Believer and the Preaching of the Gospel." The Forum drew audiences that grew from about 500 to 700 people. Five speakers gave addresses and three of the speeches yielded remarks included in this study. The Forum leaders presented two awards. Chicago's Uptown Baptist Church received the Forum's church of the year award, because it sponsored many social ministries in a needy area of the city. Carolyn Weatherford received the Denominational Statesman Award. She addressed the SBC Forum in a previous year, as the executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union. She was taking early retirement that year. As reported by the Baptist Press, "The Forum commended her for playing a key role in keeping the agency above the denominational fray."25

Molly Marshall-Green, the associate dean of the school of theology and professor of theology at Southern seminary, symbolized past moderate changes that many fundamentalists were reversing. She had been a Baptist pastor before joining the faculty of Southern Seminary. Many fundamentalists objected to her appointment to the seminary, and some objected to her place of authority in the seminary classroom above male seminary students. She had written articles for numerous publications and earned rapid promotion in spite of objections from some fundamentalist trustees.26 Additionally she had been accused of espousing heresy and universalism in her doctoral dissertation.27


Marshall-Green developed the concept of the priesthood of the believer. She enumerated,

First, resistance to authoritarian pastoral leadership is crucial.
Second, freedom of biblical interpretation must be maintained.
Third, we must declare an openness to God's calling of persons according to Spirit-giftedness, not according to gender.
Fourth, liberty of conscience about moral/political issues is at the center of Baptist life.
Fifth, confidence that you as an individual (coran deo) before God can receive direction from God gives proper dignity to all the baptized.
Sixth, we must affirm shared ministry in the church; church staff members cannot possibly be priests to all members of the congregation that need their care.

Her concept of the priesthood of the believer rejected the fundamentalist authoritarian worldview and asserted a moderate individualist worldview in which individuals carried the responsibility of determining right and wrong. Articulating that principle she stated, "I firmly believe that Baptists trust one another enough to believe that each can hear the voice of God calling—one is not disqualified by gender!" This statement directly challenged fundamentalist hierarchical beliefs concerning male authoritarian pastors.

Brian Harbour comforted moderates for being faithful during persecution and reminded them that Christians were called to be faithful.

Faithfulness means that you are committed to what is right and not just to what is convenient. It means that you have integrity. We are living in a day in the Southern Baptist Convention when the end justifies the means. But faithfulness means refusing to sacrifice your integrity for personal advancement. It means staying true.

While fundamentalist speakers in the Pastors' Conference encouraged each other to remain faithful to the truth, so also did moderate speakers in the Forum. The contradictory claims to truth emphasized the clash of world views. Harbour concluded with an illustration of Clarence Jordan, the founder of Koinonia Farms and author of the Cotton Patch translations of

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the New Testament. The Ku Klux Klan in Georgia burned Koinonia Farms and ran most of the people away from the commune. A reporter (who had participated in the burning) came to the farm the following day expecting to report its closing, but found Jordon planting new crops. The reporter asked Jordon, "Well, Dr. Jordan, you got two of them PhDs and you've put fourteen years into this farm and there's nothing left of it at all. Just how successful do you think you've been?" Harbour reported that Jordon replied that Christians were called to be faithful. Harbour concluded the message,

We are living a day in the Southern Baptist Convention when we seem to be more concerned with success than with faithfulness. Some who are in difficult situations are getting discouraged. Some who do not experience the success others do are dropping out. But I want to say to you today, we are not about success. We are about faithfulness. And faithfulness means being you, and staying true, and seeing it through.

Harbour indirectly equated fundamentalists with the Ku Klux Klan.

Clyde Fant commented on the SBC and said, "SBC is a rare bird. The fact that it has no left wing may be why we tend to go around in circles." He warned, "If we are led by the pulpit popes, then the priesthood of the believer is dead and there is no room for fresh interpretation of the scriptures." Fant preached on the topic of God's grace and warned of political maneuvering and seeking fame in grand churches. He described a determined faith that endured hardships and sacrifice. He said,

And many a preacher cannot pass up the very temptations that Jesus refused in the wilderness, to give the people what they want: For wants, bread! For proof, spectacle! For frustration, power! And then when hundreds stream into their preaching palaces, they cry, "See! Look at the response! Look at the size of our churches! The greatest since Pentecost! God must be in it!" Careful, careful; hear again the words of the Lord to Samuel about Eliab, the rejected son of Jesse: "Stop deciding whether the Lord is in it on the basis of size and appearance! (But I'll give you three or four thousand years to work on that, because you'll need it!)


31 "Baptist Forum Upholds Priesthood of the Believer,"

In this illustration, Fant countered fundamentalist preachers who cited enormous growth and super churches as evidence for the truth of their messages. He disputed a “pep-rally” model touted by some pastors and televangelists. He chided,

Now today super-apostles seem to be on every channel, if not on every corner. Churches—and denominations—crave a return to success, wealth, power, “excitement.” (There is so much talk about “excitement” in our churches that first and great commandment must be, “Be excited!” And the Great Commission must have been changed to, “Go into all the world and get them excited.”) And what is exciting is to get what you want: to prosper in life, and to have certainty for every decision of life. The Bible is turned into a pack of spiritualists’ Tarot cards to direct the future. One leader said he decided to leave the mission field and take a position at home because he opened his Bible and saw the verse, “Look not on the former things,” and he knew God was telling him to end his work there. The preaching of such certainty always produces excitement.

Fant emphasized that a ministerial model was not one of basking in the adulations of multitudes, but rather was one of service.

It was ironic that Robert Schuller spoke on the same SBC Forum program as speakers who denounced pastors with Schuller’s reputation. Schuller was pastor of California’s Garden Grove Crystal Cathedral and he developed one of the nation’s largest television ministries. Schuller led televised services that used sophisticated media techniques, and often he talked about “possibility thinking.” He emphasized optimism and excitement in worship. As an outsider to the denomination, Schuller praised two famous Southern Baptists, George W. Truett and Billy Graham. He did not talk about the SBC controversy, but he represented an enigma within the moderate leadership. Moderate leaders generally came from “sophisticated” and “successful” pastorates. Ammerman’s surveys found that pastors of large

33 On numerous occasions, fundamentalist speakers in the Pastors’ Conferences cited the success of their churches as evidence of God's blessing their orthodoxy and evangelism. See Adrian Rogers, The Great Deceiver audiotape, rec. 10 June 1979, Pastors’ Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN. A notable example, John Bisagno in three Pastors’ Conference messages, cited the growth of his church, First Baptist Church of Houston as a result of Biblical orthodoxy and evangelistic zeal. See John Bisagno, The Second Coming audiotape, rec. 8 June 1980, Pastors’ Conference, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN; Bisagno, audiotape, rec. 8 June 1981, Pastors’ Conference, Los Angeles, NV, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN; Also see Bisagno, Taking God for Granted, and the Need for Revival audiotape, rec. 12 June 1989, Las Vegas, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
Southern Baptist Churches (more than 1,000 resident members) were more than five times as likely to be self-identified moderates.\textsuperscript{34} Despite fundamentalist led "superchurches" with many thousands of members in the large cities, most fundamentalist pastors served small churches. While Forum speakers urged moderate pastors to strive toward faithfulness and not success, moderate pastors often embraced the success. Perhaps the awkward scheduling symbolized some dynamic tensions felt by moderate pastors.

The 1990 SBC Forum in New Orleans featured the theme, "Recapturing the Future." The Forum drew an audience that almost filled the 3,000 seat Saenger Theatre for the afternoon sessions. Six speakers gave addresses, and five of the speeches yielded remarks included in this study. The Forum leaders presented two awards. First Baptist Church of Jackson, Mississippi received the Forum's church of the year award. Cecil Sherman received the Prophet of the Year Award for early being an outspoken critic of the fundamentalist reformation movement. In 1992, he became the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's first executive director.

Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler had received the Forum's Denominational Statesman Award in the previous year. Warning of the destruction caused by the SBC controversy, she stated,

\begin{quote}
The controversy that has shredded our convention in the past eleven years was a risk we took when we organized in 1845. The results of the controversy are clearly seen in the decline in missionary appointments and the net loss in missionary personnel, home and foreign, in 1989. Financial support has declined, regardless of what we read about our giving increasing. Churches average giving eight percent beyond themselves through cooperative missions. We have not reached the mission offering goals in years. We are paying the price, and the price is unbelievably high.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

The central thrust of her message was that God's people were entrusted to carry out God's plan for the world. She asserted the genius of the SBC's cooperative mission program and how well

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\textsuperscript{34} Ammerman, 132.
\textsuperscript{35} Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, "A Trustee Worthy of Trust," duplicated manuscripts, 11 June 1990, SBC Forum, New Orleans, LA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
\end{flushright}
it had worked before the controversy. According to Crumpler, the controversy derailed God's work and destroyed the SBC's credibility in society.

The theme of Frank Pollard's address was similar to Crumpler's message. He represented conservatives with whom moderates desired association. First Baptist Church of Jackson, Mississippi, where Pollard served as pastor, received the Forum's church of the year award. Pollard had also functioned as president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological seminary. He asserted that the denomination was self-destructing over things of little significance. The struggle, according to Pollard, distracted the denomination from its purpose. Revealing his ideological conservatism, Pollard stated, "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." He argued that the fundamentalist reformation had drawn the denomination's attention away from its purpose to the world and destroyed its witness. He warned that the denominational conflict had undermined many in their commitment to Christ.

John Killinger's accomplishments established his credibility when he addressed the Forum audience. He had served as pastor of a Congregational Church, a Presbyterian church, and a Southern Baptist church. He had served on the faculties of Vanderbilt Divinity School, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Kentucky Southern College, and had written more than forty books. As a distinguished professor of religion and culture at Samford University (an Alabama Baptist school), Killinger symbolized moderate Baptist ecumenism, the capacity for moderate Baptists to incorporate some societal changes, and the ability to communicate contributions of the church to society.

Killinger depicted some fundamentalists as persons of ill will and satirized their leaders. He described one at prayer,

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This old P.I.W. (person of ill will) is on his knees in his hotel room. “Lord, help us to gain control of this great convention meeting in New Orleans.”

The Lord says, “What for?”

“Why, for your glory, Lord, and the glory of your Kingdom.”

“Hog Wash.”

“What’s that, Lord?”

“I said, ‘Hog Wash.’ Or if it makes you feel better, ‘Holy Hog Wash.’ You don’t want me to have control of anything. You’re the one with control needs. I never need to control anything.”

Killinger related the trouble that he brought on himself when he dared question the integrity of Jerry Falwell and other televangelists who took money from widows and orphans to build religious empires. He also reported how the SBC Sunday School Board reacted to his comments that the institution did not promote freedom of thought. It had censured him by suggesting that Baptist colleges not invite him to speak, nor Sunday School Board employees to speak to him. Killinger claimed that a Christian’s role was one like Jesus that caused trouble with institutions and society.

Randall Lolley, the former president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, predicted that a “new breed of leaders” would appear with the demise of some fundamentalist tenets (biblical and pastoral authority) and the extinction of the fundamentalist’s conception of the role of women. He stated,

Our leaders recently have been elected, and they have led us with a dinosaur rhetoric. And their rhetoric is soon to die out in three crucial areas (biblical authority, pastoral authority, and Christian femaleness) as the fresh winds of a recovered biblical free church rhetoric displaces the very forces which have fueled the past.

Lolley argued that fundamentalists in a political tactic had shrewdly shifted from the term “inerrancy” to the phrase “perfect Bible.” He stated that the term, “perfect” was a good New Testament word that referred to its function, not its nature as fundamentalist asserted. Lolley said,


They twist to their own destruction perfect words from a perfect Bible because everyone of them is an imperfect interpreter. And they have used our Bible to bludgeon persons into submission to their imperfect interpretations. That is the dinosaur way; and its days are numbered. That which fuels it is fast becoming fossil.

Lolley accused many fundamentalist pastors of being macho “cowboys” instead of “shepherds.”

He stated,

Have you noticed that many pastors who use the dinosaur rhetoric wear cowboy boots? Now there is nothing wrong with cowboy boots, unless you lose your towel while looking for your lariat. Bolstered by their holsters, the cowboys run roughshod throughout the flock of God. They rule from their saddle. Never expect a cowboy to do a shepherd’s job.

Lolley charged that the 1984 SBC resolution denying recognition of women ministers was part of an agenda that attacked womanhood. He attacked the reasoning of the resolution and asserted that women played surprisingly active roles in the male dominated religion portrayed in the Old Testament and New Testament. He accused fundamentalist leaders of selecting proof texts in a manner similar to the Moonies, the Mormons, Jim Jones in Guyana, or Father Divine in New York.

Lolley employed an unusual rhetorical tactic in this speech. Rather than encouraging the audience to actively restore the denomination, he predicted that truth and good sense would prevail as a result of the certain demise of fundamentalist rhetoric. In order for this rhetorical tactic to work, the audience would need to transfer to the speaker the authority to make these declarations. In all probability, the SBC Forum audience extended special credibility to Lolley. He had boldly expressed moderate beliefs and become a martyr in his futile battles with fundamentalist trustees at Southeastern, and in 1988 the Forum presented him the Denominational Statesman Award. Lolley ministered as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Raleigh, North Carolina. To many in the audience, he had earned the ethos of an academician, of a crusader for moderate beliefs, and of a successful pastor.

Lolley’s message was distinctively deterministic. He maintained throughout the sermon the certainty of the end of dinosaur rhetoric and the future as an accomplished fact. In a closing illustration, Lolley told a story of how a woman killed Abimelech, an Old Testament
male chauvinist. He concluded, "Thus ended the career of the consummate male chauvinist. You know what, the future does not belong to Abimelech Baptists! Amen."

Lolley’s rhetorical strategy may have signalled an acknowledgement that moderates could not effect immediate changes in the denomination. Rather than advocating an active program of change, he avowed a passive strategy. Lolley expressed a belief that inevitably Baptists would change their view on women’s roles. The speaker and many in his audience knew that they did not have enough support to unseat the fundamentalist leadership. Yet, he confidently expressed a common belief among moderates that the Southern Baptist fundamentalist reformation represented a brief mutiny against social changes.

Herbert Reynolds probably delivered the strongest condemnation of the fundamentalist movement in his sermon, “Anatomy of an Illness: The SBC Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.” As president of Baylor University, he had been and would continue to be at the center of controversy. Fundamentalists fought for control of the institution, because it was the largest Baptist school and it represented moderate ideal of education. Fundamentalist speakers in the Pastors’ Conferences had repeatedly condemned policies, practices, and professors of Baylor. Reynolds described the fundamentalist reformation as sociopathy. He described the reformation movement as one in which truth was irrelevant and compared it to Hitler’s transformation of Germany. He stated,

Joseph Goebbels, he made it clear that if the Jew had not existed, they would have had to invent him. And they also understood all too well that “Any lie, frequently repeated, will gradually gain acceptance,” e.g., the “liberals” have infested our SBC institutions and agencies and are ruining the unsuspecting with heretical teachings. You see the Hitler and Goebbels of all time eras know that “the big lie” will work because most people are innately trusting and therefore have a limited capacity to fathom deception on a grand scale.

Reynolds recounted his perception of the history of the fundamentalist reformation and described the fundamentalist leaders as skilled mass manipulators. Describing psychological flaws of fundamentalists, he said, “They are motivated by a blemished self which manifests


40 Reynolds, “Anatomy of an Illness:”

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itself in bibliolatry and hot pursuit of the worthy adversary. The personality structure involves the proclivities and behavior indigenous to a frustrated mind.” He predicted that innocent people continue to be sacrificed by the movement; that doctrinal purification would continue; and that fundamentalist leaders would ultimately capitulate.

Conclusion

The rhetoric in the 1989–1990 Pastors’ Conferences and SBC Forums did not denote the fourth phase of the social drama, with the same clarity as the speakers reflected the breach, conflict, and redressive phases from 1979 to 1987. Several reasons could explain the lack of clear demarcation in the rhetoric of the Pastors’ Conferences and Forums. (1) The rhetoric in the 1989 and 1990 Conferences and Forums reflected a continuation of the recycled conflict phase rather than a conclusion to the drama. (2) The conflict rhetoric in the 1989 and 1990 Conferences and Forums displayed a justification for a permanent schism. (3) The rhetoric in the 1989 and 1990 Conferences and Forums suggested a failed social drama in which both sides reduced fighting without reaching an agreement concerning the status of the denomination. (4) The rhetoric in the 1989 and 1990 Conferences and Forums offered justifications for schisms for some Baptists, and the rhetoric reflected a failed social drama for other Baptists.

The conflict-continuation argument contends that the rhetoric in the 1989 and 1990 Conferences and Forums extended continuation of the recycled 1988 conflict phase. The 1988 SBC featured the most hotly contested meeting in the study, and more Pastors’ Conference speakers than any other year contributed conflict rhetoric. The 1989 and 1990 meetings continued 1988’s conflict rhetoric. In the Pastors’ Conferences, Rogers, Willis, Lewis, Smith, and MacArthur urged audience members to contend for the faith and aggressively promote an authoritarian version of Christianity. In the Forums, Marshall-Green, Fant, Killinger, Lolley, and Reynolds urged audience members to resist the fundamentalist conception of pastoral authority. Using Turner’s dramaturgical model, the conflict-continuation argument would conclude that the SBC social drama returned to the conflict phase from 1988 through 1990, and that the redressive and reintegrative stages for the recycled drama occurred after
moderates ceased fighting in 1990. The concluding phase of a social drama ushers in peace and the return of regular daily social interaction, and 1991 was the first year in more than a decade that the controversy did not overshadow the SBC proceedings. A weakness of this argument is that after 1990 fundamentalists had virtually no moderates at the SBC meetings to whom they could negotiate redressive activities, nor did they have an identifiable group at the meetings with whom they could extend reintegrative rhetoric. Morris Chapman, the fundamentalist president of the SBC in 1991, declared the successful finale to the reformation movement in the opening presidential address to the convention meeting.41 This statement can be seen as evidence of the leadership's perception of the conclusion to the social drama prior to the 1991 SBC.

A stronger argument (mixed-results argument) acknowledges the conflict rhetoric but understands it as having effects other than contributing to the recycled conflict phase of the social drama. The conflict phase of a social drama, according to Turner, features symbolic actions of two sides as they compete for control of a community. Conflict rhetoric contributed to the conflict phase of the social drama from 1980-1985 and again in 1988 when both sides actively competed for control of the SBC leadership. But Ammerman's survey findings show that in 1988 many lost hope that the differences in the SBC could be healed.42 Her study reports that in 1985 many Southern Baptists from a broad spectrum of beliefs expressed confidence that the controversy would amicably conclude, and the denomination would return to regular business. But with the resurgence of moderates, the 1988 SBC became the scene of a duel of closely matched forces, and the hope of a peaceful settlement became dashed in the renewed conflict. Many moderates realized after 1988 that their best efforts could not unseat fundamentalists. This argument suggests that an effect of the conflict rhetoric displayed in


42 Nancy Tatom Ammerman, Baptist Battles (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 263.
the 1989–1990 Conferences and the Forums contributed to a growing justification of schisms, and also contributed to an unresolved and failed social drama.

The mixed-results argument contends that conflict rhetoric in the 1989 and 1990 Conferences and Forums functioned in two ways. (1) For some moderates and fundamentalists the controversy resolved with the growing recognition that the two world views were incompatible and that schisms of some kinds were inevitable. (2) For some moderates and conservatives the controversy widened a social rift of a seemingly permanent clash that would likely reappear on many fronts within the denomination. Evidence of the perception of an irreparable schism can be seen in the lack of proposals for peace and social synthesis of the two sides. Both the Pastors' Conferences and the Forums prior to 1989 featured speakers who proposed redressive plans. Jerrell Sutton, in the 1987 Pastors' Conference, espoused an optimistic belief that Southern Baptists could contend for their beliefs and remain functionally unified. He argued that Southern Baptists could work toward a solution. John Hewett, in the 1987 Forum, suggested several ways for the denomination to experience reconciliation. Carolyn Weatherford-Crumpler and Franklin Pollard, in the 1990 Forum, bemoaned the costs of the controversy, but did not offer redressive solutions. The lack of redressive proposals suggests that both sides recognized the futility of reconciling the factions, and also the two sides recognized the high costs of continued conflict.

The mixed-results argument contends that the conflict rhetoric in the Pastors' Conferences and Forums justified the formation of schismatic groups. Both factions clarified their epistemological differences in the Conferences and Forums. Rogers, Willis, Lewis, Smith, and MacArthur, in the 1989–1990 Pastors' Conferences, called for pastors to contend for the faith and aggressively promote an authoritarian version of Christianity. In the Forums, Marshall-Green, Fant, Killinger, Lolley, and Reynolds called for moderates to resist the

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44 John H. Hewett, “Devising the Indivisible,” duplicated manuscripts, 15 June 1987, SBC Forum, St. Louis, MO, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.
fundamentalist conception of pastoral authority. Both sides clearly distinguished the incompatibility of the fundamentalist authoritarian world view and the moderate individualist world view. The views were also clearly distinguished in news stories. Baptist newspapers that covered the SBC typically placed reports of the Forums and Conferences in two articles on the same page. The conflicting ideologies and the format highlighted the contrasts. The SBC Alliance (now Alliance of Baptists) began in 1987, and other schismatic groups formed in the following years. None of the Forum speakers called for a mass exit from the denomination, but they highlighted the epistemological differences that justified beginning schismatic groups. Those who expressed a yearning for an end to the conflict also contributed to the formation of schismatic groups, in that schismatic groups offered a positive alternative to the perception of futile self-destructive fighting. Schismatic groups offered constructive projects that reflected moderate beliefs and values.

The mixed-results argument contends that many fundamentalists recognized the incompatibility of the world views and welcomed (privately, managerial responsibility muted public pronouncements) a schism of "liberals." In a press conference following his 1990 election to the SBC presidency, Morris Chapman vowed to hold to the biblical inerrancy course. In a politically astute style with careful language, Chapman explained his confidence that ninety percent of Baptists agreed with the effects of the reformation of the SBC and invited all Baptists to stay in the denomination. When asked about what the SBC could extend to moderates who were considering exiting, Chapman said, "the decision must be theirs." He also said that he did not advocate an immediate removal of agency workers who did not accept inerrancy of the scriptures, but said that he advocated that they be replaced as they retired and resigned.

The conflict rhetoric in the 1989–1990 Pastors' Conferences enacted the fundamentalists' passion for order in the reconstituted SBC. The mixed-results argument suggests that the fierce determination that drove fundamentalists to reform the SBC enacted a central value of

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fundamentalists to control the beliefs, values, and social relationships. Fundamentalist rhetoric espoused an order in truth (e.g., biblical inerrancy), and an order in social relationships (e.g., male pastoral authority). Without this passion for order, the reformation movement would never have occurred.

From the fundamentalist perspective, the ballet box validated the reformation movement and confirmed their perspective of the beliefs of the majority of Southern Baptists. Their confidence and resolve grew as they assumed control over many aspects of the SBC. The purpose of the conflict rhetoric espoused in the 1989–1990 Pastors' Conference was not necessarily to attack moderates (though it can certainly be seen that way) as much as it expressed the regular norms of fundamentalist leadership. According to George Marsden, fundamentalists are militant. The conflict rhetoric expressed in the Pastors' Conferences can be more accurately interpreted as fundamentalist frustration with and desire to control society. The social drama was slowly winding down under pressure of many Southern Baptists to return to regular daily social interaction. Fundamentalist speakers expressed the new norms of SBC leadership under which the SBC would conduct its institutional life.

The mixed-results argument also contends that conflict rhetoric in the Pastors' Conferences and Forums symbolized (and perhaps highlighted) for some moderates and conservatives a failed social drama that widened a social rift of a seemingly permanent clash between world views within the denomination. The unresolved clash of beliefs and values demonstrated how the denomination could not produce solutions nor provide a social synthesis of its constituents' values and beliefs. For many Southern Baptists, the controversy brought considerable frustration. The Baptist newspapers informed Baptists of the conflict, but those who disagreed with fundamentalist leadership would not entertain the idea of leaving the denomination. The "Baptist Committed to the SBC" formed in 1988 with the expressed purpose of overthrowing fundamentalist leadership. They described themselves as centrists who would continue to express "loyal opposition" to fundamentalists. They stated their

complete devotion to the SBC and their resolve to continue the conflict. This group had invested their lives in the denomination and were not willing to consider alternatives. For them, the conflict rhetoric highlighted their frustration and inability to have any impact in the governance of the SBC.

Though moderates quit fighting at the SBC, they did not cease fighting in the state conventions, Baptist schools, associations, and churches. The continuing struggle in different settings can be seen as evidence that the SBC failed to effectively resolve the social drama. Many state conventions became the scene of reformation and counter reformation movements. Control of the Baptist state newspapers and colleges became the focus of conflicts. Newspaper editors were typically viewed as conservative or moderate and thus became the target of state convention delegates who disagreed with them. Some colleges and universities sought to get out from under control of the state conventions (Baylor, Stetson, Mercer, Furman) while others renewed ties (Louisiana College). The controversy became a divisive issue in Baptist associations. Many associations staunchly supported the fundamentalist movement, and some associations actively supported the moderate counter movement, while some associations were divided because they could not afford to alienate large moderate churches that historically provided a large percentage of the funding of local projects. Many churches experienced struggles as individual members formed coalitions to support the cooperative program and/or the Southern Baptist Alliance and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The SBC dealt with its problems at the ballot box. In the unbroken elections of fundamentalist presidents, the denomination validated the reformation movement and approved fundamentalist ideology and social prescriptions. The Pastors' Conference speakers confidently prescribed fundamentalist ideology and social practices. As the denomination moved away from the disturbance of the social drama (at the SBC level) and returned to regular social interaction, they did so with a new set of espoused norms for the leadership of the denomination. Though the social drama cycled through the four acts, it did not return the SBC to its pre-controversy status. The social drama enacted a theological shift that institutionalized fundamentalist values and beliefs at the national convention level.
Chapter 7

CONCLUSION: THE RECONSTITUTED SBC

The last chapter offers conclusions drawn from the SBC Social Drama. It suggests ways that the social drama reconstituted the meanings of the SBC to its constituents. A longitudinal perspective interprets the rituals, roles, and scripts in the progression of reformation movement and counter movement. Finally, the chapter suggests ways that the combination of Turner's methodology and Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's cultural theories can be applied to look at other social events and public debates.

Conclusions

An important contribution of this study is that it offers a rhetorical and dramaturgical explanation of how the SBC Social Drama drove an ideological wedge between authoritative and individualistic world views that had coexisted in the denomination for more than a century. Another related contribution is that the study shows the different meanings that participants constructed as speakers enacted conflicting roles. Many SBC events received a fundamentalists interpretation and an opposite moderate interpretation. The Pastors' Conferences and SBC Forums provided highly visible stages for fundamentalist and moderate rhetors to portray conflicting definitions of Southern Baptists. The roles changed as the social drama progressed to reflect the changing statuses of the actors. Fundamentalist rhetors moved from crusading reformers to management, and moderate rhetors moved from management to outsiders.

Fundamentalists appeared to have strategically staged events and controlled the scripts of the Pastors' Conference speakers. Fundamentalist leaders initiated the SBC Social Drama in 1979 after years of rehearsal and used four symbolic acts to signal the breach from the status quo. Few speakers criticized the purpose of the reformation or its tactics, and most speakers expressed support. Moderate speakers apparently were not invited to address the
Pastors' Conferences. Richard Jackson (a very successful, conservative pastor who later ran as a moderate candidate for the SBC presidency) regularly addressed the Conferences, until he voiced objections to reformation tactics. The leadership of the Pastors' Conferences assigned prominent spots on the programs to highly visible fundamentalist pastors (pastors of churches with multiple thousand memberships with large television ministries). The Pastors' Conferences became a staging area for the presidency of the SBC. The speakers who often addressed the Pastors' Conferences would regularly be nominated and elected SBC president (W. A. Criswell, Adrian Rogers, Bailey Smith, Jimmy Draper, Jerry Vines, Charles Stanley, Morris Chapman, and Ed Young). The ones who spoke most often also expressed more ideologically strident messages, with the exception of non-Baptist speakers who were invited to speak on specific issues (e.g., Franky Schaeffer and James Kennedy). It appears that only speakers with important roles (those who spoke often or who had specific assignments) were allowed to make unconventional ideological pronouncements. Whereas those who seldom spoke to the Conference appeared to be relegated to support roles (conventional topics that usually were not included in the study). During the redressive phase, the Pastors' Conference speakers in 1986-1987 refrained from conflict rhetoric, and Jerrel Sutton presented fundamentalist suggestions for redress. Apparently the Pastors' Conference planners invited Sutton, because of his dissertation research, to offer a fundamentalist account of Baptist history in order to justify the reformation and set out the terms for dialogue. In 1988, the Pastors' Conference speakers apparently knew that the social drama had recycled to the crisis phase and that it was acceptable to re-employ agitative rhetoric, as more speakers than any other year contributed conflict rhetoric. Events suggest that the Pastors' Conference speakers appeared to be carefully staged to fulfill certain roles (such as to become SBC president) and followed consistent scripts that reflected the phases of the social drama.

During the social drama, the presidential sermons became an important “staged” political event of the SBC. The sermon was scheduled (over the objections of many moderates) before the election of the SBC president. On several occasions, when presidents stood for reelection, they gave ideologically mild sermons (such as a sermon topic of forgiveness), but when they did not stand for reelection, they gave ideologically strident messages. In 1986,
Charles Stanley broke a taboo in promoting the election of Adrian Rogers. Stanley's sermon preceded the election. Many moderates felt Stanley's endorsement was unfair because they did not have equal access to the audience.

Moderate actors and actresses played out their values in the counter reformation movement. Women spoke in every SBC Forum, a role denied to women at the Pastors' Conferences. Many of the SBC Forum speakers played the role of defenders of "true Baptists" and of the Baptist ideal of freedom of belief. Walter Shurden literally played this role in his 1985 sermon in which he anthropomorphically described the concept of "the priesthood of the believer" by using the first person pronoun "I" to refer to the principle throughout the message.¹ Many Forum speakers stated that they were defending "real" Baptists. Norman Cavender said, "Find a Baptist . . . a real Baptist . . . and you will find a believer in liberty."² Some speakers played the role of anti-authoritarian characters. Randall Lolley, the former president of Southeastern Seminary, addressed the Forum two times and was presented a denominational statesmanship award. He was well known and respected by moderates for his rebellion against the fundamentalist board of trustees. Nancy Sehested addressed the Forum, and was also well known for accepting a pastorate and drawing harsh criticism from the local Baptist association. The Forums presented awards to churches and individuals who to a high degree acted out moderate values. The Forum messages were not consistently scripted as speakers on the same program suggested disparate proposals, offered awkward critiques of other ministries, and dissimilar evaluations of the social drama. Some speakers offered pleas for calm language on the same program with those who employed sarcasm, wit, and irony to depict fundamentalists. The SBC Forum lived up to its name as it

¹ Walter B. Shurden, audiotape, rec., 9 June 1985 SBC Forum, Dallas, TX, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN.

² Norman Cavender, "The Bells of Liberty," duplicated manuscripts, 9 June 1986, SBC Forum, Atlanta, GA, Archives of The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN. The emphasis on "real" is his.
provided a stage to air divergent moderate viewpoints, whereas the Pastors’ Conferences followed stricter scripts.

Moderates also chose leading actors, based in part on their popularity. Richard Jackson accepted the moderate nomination for SBC president, though he articulated much more conservative beliefs than self-identified moderates. Jackson espoused many of the same beliefs and values as did speakers at the Pastors’ Conferences (indeed he had been a favorite speaker of the Conference). He was an inerrantist and an evangelist whose church grew from 200 to 23,000 members while he was pastor. However he disagreed with the fundamentalist reformation tactics.

Moderates also staged symbolic protests. Sometimes they wore arm bands or buttons to express protest sentiments. In 1988 when the SBC met in San Antonio, a group of moderates walked to the historic Alamo and burned a SBC resolution that re-defined and severely limited the concept of the Priesthood of the Believer. Photographers and journalists reported the event in many newspapers. This event coincided with the closest and most hard fought election of president of the SBC. Moderates signalled the end of the social drama when approximately 3,000 moderates met in 1990 after the SBC and laid the foundation for what would become the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Many events occurring from 1979 to 1990 in the Pastors’ Conferences and the SBC Forums can be understood as staged events in which characters consciously portrayed roles that created and reflected meanings to their constituents. These events can be conceptualized under the term, “social drama.” Speakers often portrayed roles that signalled the progress of the social drama to the next phase (or to the preceding phase).

If competing world views coexisted in the denomination for more than a century, then what prompted fundamentalists to assert control over the denomination in 1979? Several motivating factors help explain the meanings that fundamentalists perceived in the breach. Fundamentalists experienced shared grievances in the 1960s and 1970s from cultural changes in the United States. Many fundamentalists also concluded that the denomination had veered toward modernism, and had developed a bureaucracy isolated from grassroot Southern Baptists. At the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, many fundamentalists were
encouraged by the support of established institutional backing (Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Criswell Bible College, numerous publishing houses, newsletters, evangelism and Bible conferences, radio ministries, and the advent of Christian Cable programs). They also received encouragement from the American culture. The successful ... “Reagan Revolution” rode a wave of conservative political aspirations. Jerry Falwell and other televangelists launched the “Clean-Up-America” campaign, and the “Moral Majority” came into being as a political force. Although it failed to live up to its billing, at the time Falwell’s movement caught the attention of many Americans. The ministries of many televangelists (for example, James Robison, Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggert, Pat Robertson, Jim and Tammy Baker, and Charles Stanley) blossomed, encouraging the perception that fundamentalism was sweeping the nation. Fundamentalists launched the reformation movement with enormous enthusiasm and confidence that they could control the SBC (a central tenet of their world view) and reverse the slide toward liberalism. The social drama’s breach galvanized fundamentalists and many conservatives to believe that they were launching the second great reformation of the Church in the tradition of Martin Luther. They prescribed control in beliefs (inerrancy of the scripture, dispensational premillennial eschatology, substitutionary atonement, and the virgin birth of Christ), of denominational polity (willingness to change the agencies’ leadership and seminary professors), of social roles (male pastoral authority) and of strict authoritarian family values. The successful breach bolstered many Southern Baptists in the belief that they could institute these values in their denomination.

Many speakers in the Pastors’ Conferences expressed the following perceptions that created and reflected the world views of their constituencies: 1) a top-down leadership focus (similar to a military model), chain-of-authority theories (male pastoral authority), paternalism; 2) divine laws, formulas (such as, if you pray correctly, God will answer), propositional theology (such as the four laws of salvation), and domino theories (such as, if Bible is errant in any detail, then it is untrustworthy throughout); 3) God’s holiness, (i.e., God is difficult to approach and exceedingly superior to humans); 4) human depravity (i.e.,
humanity's sorry state without God); 5) justificational and foundational models (i.e., biblical teaching supersedes all other ways of knowing); and 6) a literal hermeneutic (e.g., Adam and Eve were the parents of all humans, a literal devil, a burning hell, and a historical Noah and the flood). Fundamentalists promoted authoritarian beliefs that in turn rationalized authoritarian social practices, that in turn appreciated authoritarian values. The SBC Social Drama played a role in the social formation of fundamentalists. As fundamentalists identified with their central actors and interacted with fellow participants, they constructed and reinforced a social reality. As fundamentalists understood and created histories, they developed scripts of beliefs and interpretations.

Many speakers in the SBC Forums expressed the following perceptions that created and reflected the world views of their constituencies: individual freedom, organizational pragmatism, bureaucratic, and democratic systems, ideological tolerance, theological plurality (within the confines of Protestant Christianity), institutional compromise, and coalition building (or denominational statesmanship as phrased in the yearly award given at the Forums). Moderates believed that the successes of the SBC existed because of those principles. Furthermore, they proudly touted the most extensive Protestant mission force, six large seminaries, more than fifty colleges, and the largest religious publishing house in the world. To many Southern Baptists, the successful Cooperative Program manifested their world view. The triumphalism that cemented the denomination in the first half of the century continued to bond many Southern Baptists. These attitudes were reflected by many moderates in the slow, disorganized, and ineffective response to the social drama's breach, because their institutional beliefs valued theological diversity and functional unity. The breach produced confusing responses in moderates, who valued competition, plurality of beliefs, and a democratic system. Thus many moderates maintained that fundamentalists were entitled to express their beliefs and participate in the election process. Moderates were slow to recognize that fundamentalists were mounting a significant challenge to their identity as Southern Baptists. Moderate spokespersons who quickly understood the implications of the challenge were not supported and were often criticized as troublemakers.
Conflict rhetoric in the Pastors’ Conferences (1980–1985, 1988) justified the reformation to non-committed delegates and rallied new converts to further commitment. Conflict rhetoric in the SBC Forums could only rally adherents to greater commitment since it attracted few non-committed Baptists. The crisis phase of the SBC Social Drama drove an ideological wedge between many Southern Baptists and it became virtually impossible for convention-goers to remain neutral as fundamentalist and moderate speakers expressed rival world views. Conflict language contained polarizing elements such as name-calling, battlefield terminology, negative narratives, and campaign slogans. Rival metaphors developed as the two sides waged rhetorical and symbolic war. Moderates and fundamentalists rhetorically moved farther apart, as the speakers explicated rival sets of “good” and “evil” vocabularies. The conflict rhetoric of the Pastors’ Conferences and the SBC Forums juxtaposed competing vocabularies and competing persuasive tactics that reflected and constructed meanings for their constituents. The conflict phase of the social drama forced conservative Southern Baptists to choose between two factions. Conservatives (as opposed to fundamentalists) appreciated a mixture of the authoritarian and individualistic world views. Like George W. Truett, many held theologically conservative beliefs as well as pragmatic, democratic values. Conservatives typically accepted theological diversity, though they might embrace the same doctrines as fundamentalists. Many conservatives respected the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer as well as the doctrine of inerrancy. The conflict phase forced this large group of Southern Baptists to pit one set of values against another set of values. In pre-controversy times, conservatives (as opposed to fundamentalists) were reticent to challenge SBC leadership.

Fundamentalists skillfully established control of the premises of public debates. They adeptly created distrust toward many of the SBC seminary professors, agency leaders, and prominent moderate pastors. Fundamentalist speakers charged certain professors and pastors with unbelief in Scripture, with the result that moderates, SBC agency leaders, and seminary officials spent great energy defending their beliefs and answering fundamentalist claims. Fundamentalist speakers often joked about shrewd “Bible-believing” seminary students who
stumped their learned professors. By the late 1980s and early 1990s many professors exited the six SBC seminaries. Fundamentalists often blamed “evil” social conditions and denominational failures on the biblical unbelief. The same group successfully portrayed the United States’ moral degradation as an insidious liberal conspiracy that undermined biblical principles and biblical faith.

During the period covered by the present study, fundamentalist leaders endorsed only one loyal candidate each year for the SBC presidency. The decade of appointments reinforced an ideological conformity and clearly communicated a unified platform. Fundamentalists presented themselves as unquestioned authorities with impressive oratorical skills, with a unified platform, and with a consistent institutional plan. The combination communicated certainty, vision, and courage to many Southern Baptists.

Moderates offered few doctrinal certainties, few unquestioned leaders, and non-coordinated strategies for dealing with the struggle. To many non-committed Baptists, moderates appeared to be bureaucratic bunglers with the same efficiency as is commonly ascribed to another large bureaucracy, the United States Congress. Their plurality of beliefs communicated ambivalences and uncertainties to non-committed Southern Baptists. It was not until 1985 that moderates agreed to support only one candidate in the presidential elections; before 1985 they nominated several moderates to the presidency each year. Even as late as 1988, moderates promoted opposite solutions to the crisis, with Winfred Moore urging further contention, and Allen Neely suggesting a cease-fire. The 1985 Forum speakers demonstrated a mixture of careful critical restraint and deliberate sarcastic provocations. The lack of a unified platform blunted the moderate counter movement and made them appear weak and ineffective.

For moderates, the conflict phase brought disillusionment because the SBC rejected their vision of the denomination and their definition of Christianity in favor of a fundamentalist world view. Moderates witnessed the fall of some cherished leaders and professors and the beginning changes of the institutions. They felt alienated from the SBC, though many of them
had devoted their lives and significant portions of their wealth to the denomination's programs and institutions.

The Pastors' Conferences and Forums provided ideal scenes for confrontation, but less than ideal setting for reflection. Speakers from both sides suggested redressive means to end the struggle, but the suggestions reflected their own world views. The 1986 and 1987 Pastors' Conference speakers symbolized redressive action more by what they avoided (conflict rhetoric) than by what the speakers said (infrequent redressive directives). The speakers complied with the Peace Committee requests for a "cooling down" of the rhetoric in Southern Baptist meetings. Some Forum speakers in 1986 and 1987 continued to berate fundamentalists, and some expressed despair and desperation, reflecting moderate mistrust and cynicism. The speakers who attempted redressive rhetoric spoke exclusively from their world views. The Conference and Forum speakers reflected what each side considered reasonable terms for redress of the controversy. Fundamentalists invited dialogue on the issues as long as everyone agreed to biblical inerrancy. Moderates invited dialogue on the issues as long as everyone was not constrained to biblical inerrancy. Both sides believed they were fair, and both sides believed they could not compromise on the issue of inerrancy.

For some moderates and fundamentalists the controversy resolved with the growing recognition that the two world views were incompatible and that schisms of some kinds were inevitable. Schismatic groups offered constructive projects that reflected moderate beliefs and values and offered fundamentalists the opportunity to have peaceful convention meetings with no competition. Many fundamentalists recognized the incompatibility of the world views and welcomed privately a schism between themselves and "liberals;" managerial responsibility muted public pronouncements. For some moderates and conservatives the controversy widened a social rift of a seemingly permanent clash that would likely re-appear on many fronts within the SBC.

Fundamentalist rhetoric acted-out a passion for order. The fierce determination that drove fundamentalists to reform the SBC was reflected in a central tenet of fundamentalism which was to control beliefs, values, and social relationships. Fundamentalist rhetoric
proclaimed an order in truth (e.g., biblical inerrancy), and an order in social relationships (e.g., male pastoral authority). The passion for order is an important interpretive concept for understanding the meanings that fundamentalists constructed. The fundamentalists were elated that they could mold the denomination according to their authoritarian world view.

The SBC elections validated the fundamentalist reformation movement and confirmed their perspective of the beliefs of the majority of Southern Baptists. Their confidence and resolve grew as they assumed control over many aspects of the SBC. According to George Marsden, fundamentalists are by definition militant.\(^3\) The rhetoric expressed in the 1989–1990 Pastors' Conferences can be more accurately interpreted as fundamentalist frustration with and desire to control society and the new norms of SBC leadership under which the SBC would conduct its institutional life. The rhetoric of 1989–1990 reflected the ideological shift that the SBC instituted in the twelve-year struggle. Fundamentalists professed to believe that biblical orthodoxy and commitment to authoritarian values would renew the denomination, encourage growth, and evangelism. They also expressed the belief that God would bless the SBC as it adhered to His divine plan.

For many, the failed social drama fractured the denomination and muted their enthusiasm toward the denomination. The unresolved clash of beliefs and values demonstrated how the denomination could not produce satisfactory solutions nor provide a social synthesis of its constituents' values and beliefs. For many Southern Baptists, the controversy brought considerable frustration. Many did not agree with the militancy of fundamentalists, but also disliked the ineptitude of moderates; they were not enthusiastic about either faction. They had invested their lives in the denomination and would not consider alternatives. For many conservatives and moderates the social drama reflected their frustration and their conflicting values.

In the consecutive elections of fundamentalist presidents, the denomination validated the reformation movement and approved fundamentalist ideology and social prescriptions. The Pastors' Conference speakers confidently prescribed fundamentalist ideology and social

practices. As the denomination moved away from the disturbance of the social drama (at the SBC level) and returned to regular social interaction, they did so with a new set of norms for the denominational leadership. Though the social drama cycled through the four acts, it did not return the SBC to its pre-controversy status. The social drama enacted a theological shift that institutionalized fundamentalist values and beliefs at the national convention level.

What about the future? Patterns over the past twelve years suggest possible future developments. Many social dramas challenge our society's ability to balance world views and deal with constant change and upheaval. The viability of our society, in part, depends on its ability to successfully resolve public debates. A surface examination of the SBC Social Drama could lead interpreters to conclude that the SBC Social Drama involved isolated issues with little relevance to the larger society. But many of the Pastors' Conference speakers and Forum speakers dealt with issues debated in the larger society. Pastors' Conference speakers dealt with issues such as abortion, prayer in public schools, pornography, Reconstructionism (that the United States was founded on and should promote Judeo-Christian precepts; and a strict interpretation of the United States Constitution), little regulation of church schools, a volunteer army, the Equal Rights Amendment, and feminism. Some speakers offered interpretations of the 1960s and 1970s and scathing pronouncements toward liberals, humanists, and Senator Edward Kennedy. Some speakers denounced President Jimmy Carter and praised Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush. Some Forum speakers praised the Human Rights policies of Jimmy Carter and the Forum heard an address from Rosalynn Carter. Some Forum speakers denounced the close association of fundamentalists and the Republican party, and the close ties between the church and state. The conflicting social attitudes expressed in the SBC Social Drama paralleled views debated by the larger society (especially by the far right). The model and some of the findings could be applied to social dramas in the larger society.

The study can allow some speculation concerning the future of Southern Baptists. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship will likely continue to move away from the SBC as it constructs competing institutions, agencies, literature, alliances, and support groups. As the
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship develops, it will directly compete with the SBC for financial support. The crucible of the decade of conflict will probably help these Baptists clarify and espouse moderate beliefs, values, and social practices. These Baptists will presumptively be energized and challenged with the prospect of building a new vision of "true" Baptists. They could perceive themselves as the ideological descendents of their Baptist forefathers and proponents of the best Baptists ideals. They could also view themselves as a remnant who were called out of the SBC to preserve true Baptists. For these Baptists the SBC Social Drama resolved with the conclusion that they were no longer welcome in the denomination. These Baptists have likely accepted the new reality and will construct organizations that reflect their world views.

It is reasonable to assume that fundamentalists will prosper in the reconstituted SBC. They believe that they participated in a great reformation and protected a huge denomination from certain destruction. Fundamentalist educators will probably enjoy many opportunities that would not have been available before 1979. Seminary professorships have always been prized among Baptist pastors. All indications seem to show that fundamentalists with the proper credentials will continue to be invited into seminary positions, will continue to become commentary writers and editors, to assume leadership positions in SBC agencies, will continue to fill prestigious pastorates, and will continue joining some Baptist college faculties. For example, Paige Patterson served as the dean of Criswell Bible College. Later he became the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and invited five faculty members from the small Criswell Bible College to join him as professors of the seminary. Some Criswell Bible College faculty members were invited to prestigious positions in the SBC. Fundamentalists will prosper as long as the reconstituted SBC continues to reward supporters. For these Baptists the SBC Social Drama resolved favoring their vision of "true" Baptists. These Baptists greet the new reality.

For moderates who continued to support the denomination, the SBC Social Drama did not resolve. The SBC Social Drama continues and probably will continue to be fought on different stages, such as state conventions, associations, churches, schools, and State Baptist
institutions. Social dramas will cycle through the processes of breach, conflict, redress, and reintegation. Because the SBC Social Drama did not resolve, it is likely that many of the same roles, scripts, and rhetorical tactics will be re-enacted on other stages. Moderates will probably continue losing skirmishes, because the moderate models of democratic and bureaucratic systems, theological and ideological pluralism, institutional compromise, and coalition-building that helped build the SBC will also prevent moderates from quickly counter attacking the fundamentalist-initiated breach. Moderate models do not serve them well in political gamesmanship. Political analysts after the failed 1988 Democratic presidential bid determined that Democrats had not effectively countered Republican attacks. Republicans effectively used negative narratives to undermine the credibility of the democratic candidates in much the same way that fundamentalists speakers attacked the credibility of denominational leaders, seminary professors, and moderate pastors. If moderates want to favorably present their perspectives in social dramas, then they must learn effective counter tactics. Fundamentalists in the SBC Social Drama effectively charged moderate leaders with theological liberalism, and effectively employed humor to undermine their opponents' credibility with the results that moderates wasted considerable energy and resources defending themselves. Moderate values have built many strong churches, institutions, and a denomination, but those same values handicap moderates when they engage authoritarians in social dramas.

Moderate churches who continue to support the SBC will almost certainly face these struggles with increasing intensity. Moderates will presumably concede to conservative beliefs or become increasingly frustrated with the SBC. Moderate clergy will probably find it increasingly difficult to enter the mission fields, enter church pastorates, to write the denomination's literature, to respect seminary professors, and to be acknowledged by the denominational bureaucracy. All indications are that moderate laity will increasingly find that the missionaries whom they support do not share many of their values, the

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denomination's literature will be less acceptable, the seminary graduates will be less acceptable, and they will find it less enjoyable to participate in large Baptist meetings and programs.

The effects of the SBC Social Drama will likely be felt for many years. The shift in the leadership's world view will impact Southern Baptists in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Organizations and societies must find ways to successfully resolve competing authoritarian and individualistic world views or face an increasingly fragmented and less viable system in which the social dramas continually re-occur.

**Implications**

Arthur Farnsley argues that the new leaders wished to evade further conflict in order to consolidate their gains under the "new biblical consensus" and to promote a period of renewed denominational unity. The new *status quo* aired establishment rhetoric as the responsibilities of leadership encouraged managerial and conciliatory rhetoric. An example of the rhetorical turn is that in the 1970s many fundamentalist leaders advocated greater support for independent agencies and institutions and lesser support to the SBC Cooperative Program; but as the new leadership took control of the denomination, they began advocating full support of the SBC agencies and institutions. It is ironic, but evidence of the denomination's shift toward fundamentalism, that leaders urged moderates to remain loyal. After the social drama, many of the new leaders confidently predicted that the denomination would begin to grow at an unprecedented pace, and the denomination's programs and agencies would also rapidly grow. Farnsley suggests that institutional leadership would have a liberalizing influence upon the new management. From a dramaturgical perspective, Farnsley suggests that the social drama successfully resolved, and the denomination's shift in institutional life better reflects the values of most Baptists.

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5 Arthur Emery Farnsley, *Majority Rules: The Politicization of the Southern Baptist Convention (Baptist Church)* (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, University Microfilms No. 9027907, 1990), Chapter six.
Farnsley argues that the politicization of the SBC would force the establishment to recognize the moderate minority’s opinions, that the exclusive rhetoric that swept fundamentalists into office would be muted by democratic and bureaucratic concerns. He insists that, “If the current bureaucracy is unresponsive to the wishes of the messengers, or if the members of the new leadership elite are perceived as unfair, the Convention will not find it nearly so difficult to make changes the second time.” If his argument proves true, then the social drama forced the new SBC establishment to be responsive to the majority of the people and adopt a polity that recognizes minority views. Though he offers careful qualifications, he favors a view that leadership necessitates establishment rhetoric and facilitates healing.

The perspective adopted in the present study recognizes the strength of negative fundamentalist symbols that exclude other perspectives. Fundamentalist rhetoric is profoundly negative, and it expresses control over ideology, theology, and social practices. Though the social drama cycled through the four phases, it did not return the SBC to its pre-controversy status. The social drama enacted a shift that instituted fundamentalist values and beliefs. Farnsley argues that the inherent values of the massive institutions of the SBC would democratize the new leadership. That may occur, but the present study suggests that the fierce determination that drove fundamentalists to reform the SBC enacts a central value of fundamentalists to control the beliefs, values, and social relationships within their religious community. The fundamentalist passion for order convinced the majority of Baptists of the necessity of the reformation. The current project suggests that control is so central to the fundamentalist world view that it would be extremely difficult for fundamentalist leaders to participate in institutional compromise or a power sharing arrangement such as Farnsley suggests. Though the new leadership exercises managerial rhetoric, they also institute fundamentalist beliefs, values, and social practices. Farnsley’s conclusions may be accurate for another generation of Baptists who may challenge fundamentalists from within the system, but this study does not foresee that in the immediate future.

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6 Farnsley, 226.
As Southern Baptists competed in the social drama, they rhetorically constructed and clarified their epistemology. The social drama clarified the idea that the majority of Baptists (if the delegates represented the values of the SBC) were more authoritarian than individualist in their world views. As for moderates, the social drama embarrassed them. Before the controversy, many moderates were proud of their schools, seminaries, agencies, and programs, and believed the denomination was becoming a progressive element of society; but the controversy profoundly confounded that perception.

The dramaturgical process reconstituted Baptists' perception of their denomination's history. Not only did fundamentalists and moderates give conflicting histories and justifications of the twelve year struggle, but both sides offered conflicting accounts of the SBC's one-hundred-fifty year old history. History books became the subject of censorship. Fundamentalists produced historical documents to argue that many of the early Baptist leaders were staunch fundamentalists and that concern for biblical purity and truth was the foremost attribute of Baptists. Moderates perceived the historical cooperation of many different kinds of Baptists within the denomination as evidence that the priesthood of the believer was the foremost attribute of Baptists.

The study of the SBC Social Drama can help interpreters understand the experiences and meanings encountered in other social dramas. Turner's dramaturgical model can be heuristic to rhetoricians studying public debates. Alan Gross's study has shown that Turner's progression of breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration is well suited for examining public debates and social dramas that do not involve radical controversy. The combination of Turner's model and Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's cultural theory model is ideally suited for the examination of public debates involving competing world views.

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two models encourages thought about other debates in which authoritarian and
individualistic world views vigorously debate.

The implications of this study could be applied to other public debates. For example, in
the 1992 Republican Party Convention there were reportedly a number of rumors of the
beginnings of a reformation movement by members of the far right and the Christian Right.
Patrick Buchanan's televised speech to the Republican Party on August 17, 1992, contained
striking similarities to Pastors' Conference sermons by Charles Stanley (1979), Franky
Schaeffer (1984), James Kennedy (1985), and Avery Willis (1990). Buchanan stated, "George
Bush is a defender of right-to-life, and lifelong champion of the Judeo-Christian values and
beliefs upon which this nation was built." This statement's appeal to the Christian Right
was heightened when the camera focused on an approving audience member, Jerry Falwell, as
Buchanan asserted his theocratic understanding of the United States. Buchanan's speech
resembled certain Pastors' Conference sermons when it attacked pro-lesbian, pro-gay, pro-
feminism stances. Buchanan rejected discrimination against religious schools, women-in-
combat, pornography, and Supreme Court Justices who reinterpreted the Constitution. He said,
"There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war...
." Buchanan quoted scripture and ended with the familiar saying, "God bless you, and God
bless America." If the Christian Right initiates a reformation movement in the Republican
Party, the model and the analysis could be extended to understand the dramaturgical symbols,
rhetorical tactics, and meanings experienced and enacted during the social drama.

The model proposed in this study could be used to examine reformation movements
occurring in the African-American community in which Islamic fundamentalists challenge
social values, beliefs, and social practices. Islamic fundamentalists (in the African-American
community and in other cultures) prescribe an authoritative world view that shares many
features in common with Christian fundamentalism. The urge to control seems to be an
important shared characteristic. The model could help interpreters understand how other
groups experience fundamentalist (Islamic and Christian) reformation movements.
The model proposed in the present study could be applied to an examination of colliding world views in the public debates concerning creationism. Charles Alan Taylor has contributed an analysis of expertise and authority in the creationism debate. The model proposed in this study could examine the progression of the debate in an isolated series of debates to understand the dramaturgical symbols, rhetorical tactics, and meanings experienced by participants during a social drama.

The model proposed in the current project could be applied to public debates concerning the political correctness argument. This public debate involves competing world views in universities. According to Judith D. Hoover and Leigh Anne Howard, former Secretary of Education, William Bennett, and other traditionalists argued for an authoritative canon for higher education. Their report described how the National Association of Scholars accused higher education of caving in to feminists, to minority-group members, and to anti-rational thought. The public debates seem to argue the merits of authoritative world views against individualist world views. The dramaturgical model could systematically interpret the perceptions of the participants in the debate.

The model proposed in this study could be used to examine censorship debates in school districts. The library and information science journals regularly report censorship debates that occur in many school libraries. Frequently these debates pit authoritarian world views against individualistic world views.

One of the most divisive public debates in this country involves the abortion issue. Probably no series of public debates more clearly distinguishes authoritarian and individualistic world views, or more actively employs dramatic symbols, follows carefully crafted scripts, and strives harder for the approval of their audiences. The proposed model

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could be employed to examine enacted meanings, the roles, and the scripts in the social struggle.

The actors in social dramas portray the triumphs, agonies, and frustrations of their constituents. Public debates and social dramas challenge world views, produce intense experiences, and challenge the participants' identities. Participants experience progressively emerging roles as they identify with leaders of movements and emerge with many different meanings.
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Newspapers


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William S. Stone Jr. graduated in 1974 from Tupelo High School, Tupelo, Mississippi. He attended Northeast Mississippi Community College in Booneville, Mississippi and earned a B.A. degree in Religion and Greek in 1979 from Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. He earned a M.Div. degree in 1981 from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and went back for further studies in 1982. He earned a Ph.D. degree in 1993 in Speech Communication from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. William has worked as a Baptist minister and as a training and communication specialist in industry. He has instructed a variety of communication courses and has published journal articles in the areas of computer technology in organizational dynamics and religious communication.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

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Major Field: Speech Communication

Title of Dissertation: The Southern Baptist Convention Reformation, 1979-1990: A Social Drama

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Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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Date of Examination:

November 17, 1992