

IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES: A REVOLUTION FOR THE SOUL OF THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

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The Inerrancy Controversy (1979-1990) in the Southern Baptist Convention provides an important case study to consider the relationship of religion and politics. Contextualizing this controversy vis-à-vis several preceding Southern Baptist skirmishes, it appears to have had theological roots extending to the early 1960s. By the early 1970s, a faction of disaffected Southern Baptists began to decry the denominational leaderships' ambiguous stances on abortion, women's rights, and biblical inerrancy. From the mid to late 1970s, this faction evolved into an organized coalition, forged relationships with important figures in the blossoming Religious Right, and prepared to launch a strategic campaign to oust Southern Baptist leaders. During the coup d'état of the 1980s, the coalition rallied around adherence to the error-free nature and unquestionable authority of the Bible, which allowed them to mute any opposition. Thus, while the resistance fought strenuously for the freedom of interpretation, they failed to muster sufficient resources and organization to repel the new coalition. In the end, the denominational leadership undercut the resistance with

two ill-fated proposals for peace. Consequently, the coalition seized power in 1990 and effectively redefined the denomination's theology, polity, and relationship to the surrounding culture. At its core, the Inerrancy Controversy was a battle over what it meant to be Southern Baptist.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgments.....	vi
Introduction: The Inerrancy Controversy	1
Chapter One: Origins and Interpretations	6
Chapter Two: Tremors, 1961-1978.....	22
Chapter Three: Schism, 1979-1990	44
Chapter Four: Tug of War, 1971-1990	70
Epilogue: Reconstructing Zion	96
References.....	103
Vita.....	111

Introduction: The Inerrancy Controversy

Jerry Falwell's statement in 1998 that "there is no reason at all for any Bible-believing independent conservative Baptist church not to become a part of the SBC" would have shocked his audience if he had uttered it twenty years earlier.¹ However, the Southern Baptist Convention had witnessed substantial changes since the tumultuous Inerrancy Controversy erupted in June of 1979. When Falwell inaugurated the Moral Majority during that same month, it had virtually nothing in common with the Convention. In fact, the Moral Majority stood firmly to the conservative right of the religio-political spectrum, whereas the SBC proudly embraced the ambiguous middle. It was taboo for the Convention to take strong stances for or against issues such as biblical inerrancy, abortion, and women's ordination. In stark contrast, the SBC took hardline stances against abortion and women's ordination a mere two decades later, justifying these stances via their adherence to biblical inerrancy. This erratic reversal gave reason to wonder: what had happened to the Southern Baptist Convention?

In his work *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance*, Roman historian H. A. Drake remarked that the scholars who most vociferously asserted Emperor Constantine's political ambitions also questioned his religious sincerity. Certainly, theology and politics can be studied independently of one another. When put into practice, however, theology "falls subject to the rules of politics." Since politics is simply "the art of winning agreement, of mobilizing support, of gaining consensus," Drake argued, "it has nothing to

¹ Charles C. McLaughlin, "Why Don't They Just Hand The SBC Over To Falwell?" Texas Baptists Committed, September 1998, accessed November 11, 2015, <http://www.txbc.org/1998Journals/September%201998/Sept98WhyDontThey.html>.

say about a given individual's religious sincerity or lack of same."² In other words, historians may scrutinize the manifestations of Constantine's theology in Roman politics without questioning the sincerity of his personal adherence to Christianity.

The SBC's presidential election at the 1979 annual convention in Houston, Texas, marked the formal beginning of a partisan campaign to alter the form and function of the Southern Baptist Convention. Inerrantists³, the organizers of this campaign, rallied around adherence to the error-free nature and unquestionable authority of the Bible. The moderates⁴ opposed inerrantist authoritarianism and claimed that all Southern Baptists had the freedom to interpret the Bible as they saw fit. Over the course of twelve years, the primary emphasis of the annual convention shifted largely from denominational business to presidential elections. Whichever party won the presidency was allotted two years to appoint their allies to key committees that in turn could influence who got hired to or fired from the many boards and agencies of the SBC. This was a complicated process, however, and several presidential victories would be necessary in order to accomplish significant changes in the Convention.

Although inerrantists claimed to be motivated by their zeal for biblical orthodoxy, moderates suspected that this was a political coup in religious guise. After inerrantist ringleader Paul Pressler publicly remarked in 1980 that his coalition sought control of the Convention's trustees, moderates began to organize a counter-campaign to keep the SBC out

² H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), xvi.

³ Although scholars have used the term *fundamentalist* to denote these controversial figures, inerrantists loathe the derogatory connotations of that term. Moreover, *conservative* might imply that none of their opponents were theologically conservative. *Inerrantist* captures the spirit of their campaign in that they saw themselves fighting a righteous campaign centered on the inerrancy of the Bible. Inerrantists tended to be laity activists and prominent pastors.

⁴ Although this group did not refer to themselves as moderates until the mid-1980s, *moderate* best captures the spirit of their opposition to inerrantists. Moderates tended to be professors and pastors.

of inerrantists' hands. Whereas elections at the annual conventions had previously been popularity contests between several candidates, they gradually transformed into competitions between inerrantist and moderate candidates. That inerrantists vocally decried abortion and lobbied for governmental legislation to prohibit it raised the ire of moderates, who had traditionally upheld a strict separation between church and state. Inerrantists' resemblance to Falwell and other leaders in the Religious Right convinced moderates that they were bringing hardball politics into the Convention. In 1984, after Pressler was named to the Executive Committee, one of the most powerful posts in the Convention, even a few agency heads⁵ joined the moderate resistance.

The overall ambivalence of agency heads, however, ultimately doomed moderates. In 1981, shortly after Cecil Sherman led moderates contesting the reelection of an inerrantist president, two high-ranking members of the Executive Committee chastised him and instructed him to step down. Rather than join Sherman's group in 1983, the director of the Christian Life Commission worked independently of them to oppose inerrantists at the 1984 convention. By late 1984, when inerrantists had already won six consecutive presidential victories, a few seminary presidents and the president of the Foreign Mission Board finally joined moderates. However, many agency heads still refused to get directly involved in the controversy. One agency head's proposal for a nonpartisan Peace Committee at the 1985 convention actually helped inerrantists achieve their goals. When seminary presidents presented the Glorieta Statement to the Peace Committee in 1986, this *de facto* surrender allowed inerrantists to exploit the committee. Containing the Glorieta Statement, the Peace

⁵ Agency heads were the prestigious members of power-holding posts in the SBC who historically bore most of the responsibility for building the bureaucratic structures of the Convention; these are also referred to as denominational leaders. Agency heads comprised seminary presidents, presidents of mission boards, and leaders of the Executive Committee, to name a few.

Committee's report at the 1987 convention vindicated inerrantists and substantially weakened the posture of moderates, who would fight an uphill battle until their final defeat in 1990.

Thesis and Layout

The Inerrancy Controversy was a battle over theology and political control. Deeper still, it was a battle over traditions. Agency heads and moderates most highly valued doctrinal liberty while inerrantists prized unwavering theological conservatism. Fittingly, the former boasted about the theological diversity in SBC seminaries and the latter loathed it. On another level, this controversy was fought over the relationship of the SBC to the surrounding culture. Inerrantists interpreted the separation of church and state differently than did agency heads and moderates, particularly with regard to social issues. Although the latter felt that Southern Baptists should allow for difference of opinion on these issues, inerrantists deeply resented anything other than explicit opposition to what they perceived as progressive trends. A multi-faceted chronological account of the controversy reveals that inerrantists' revolution for the soul of the SBC was theological, political, and cultural. Their rigid adherence to biblical inerrancy colored their perceptions of how SBC polity should function and how the Convention should respond to progressive cultural trends. In the end, the Inerrancy Controversy was a battle over what it meant to be Southern Baptist.

Chapter one provides a brief history of the Southern Baptist Convention, tracing the rise of a sophisticated bureaucracy, and summarizes the arguments of several notable scholars of the Inerrancy Controversy. Chapter two demonstrates that, over the duration of the 1960s and 1970s, Broadman Press, the SBC seminaries, and the agency heads' responses to the Elliott and Broadman Controversies took center stage in convincing inerrantists that

the leadership looked favorably upon theological diversity. In direct correlation to their concerns that agency heads would facilitate the theological downfall of the SBC for the sake of doctrinal liberty, inerrantists began to network with one another and organize the skeleton of a campaign to seize the Convention.

As chapter three establishes, from 1979 to 1990 inerrantists launched a cleverly devised offensive that replaced the leadership of the SBC with only those who espoused biblical inerrancy. Due to unprecedented grassroots support, moderates' lack of organization, and agency heads' penchant for compromise, inerrantists became the new leaders of the Convention. That it took inerrantists over ten years to secure their victory evidenced the extent of power traditionally held by agency heads. Chapter four reveals that the skirmishes over abortion and women's rights between 1971 and 1990 were divided along the same lines as the battle over biblical inerrancy. Leaders of the Christian Life Commission and Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs became inerrantists' primary targets due to their refusal to condemn progressive trends. Agency heads' judicious approaches to these controversies infuriated inerrantists. Thus, inerrantists proceeded to lobby social issues on the national stage, finding an alliance with Jerry Falwell and other influential evangelicals. These liaisons demonstrated that inerrantists were just one part of a burgeoning religious right.

Chapter One: Origins and Interpretations

Historiography

When Walter Shurden wrote *Not a Silent People: Controversies that Have Shaped Southern Baptists*, he did so in the midst of a sweeping current of discontented traditional conservatism which would soon usher in a *de facto* revolution in the Southern Baptist Convention. While working as a professor of religion at Carson-Newman College in 1972, Shurden published this book in an attempt to promote Baptists' denominational heritage as a source of pride. He saw Southern Baptists' propensity towards religious controversy as "an index of how much [they] care."⁶ By detailing several controversies between the founding of the SBC and a controversy surrounding Broadman Press in 1970, Shurden reminded and consoled Baptist readers that controversy was a Baptist tradition. He contended, however, that no decade in Southern Baptist history had seen such controversy as that of late. Between the Elliott Controversy of 1961 and the Broadman Controversy of 1970, both dealing with progressive interpretations of the book of Genesis, the SBC annual conventions experienced unprecedented chaos.⁷

Despite the exhausting theological tensions mounting in the annual conventions, Shurden maintained that the Elliott and Broadman Controversies were still disparate controversies. Presenting the bias that would characterize his place in the later Inerrancy Controversy, he begrudged inerrantists for their dogged insistence that "to deny the historicity of biblical events (or to refuse to take the Bible literally) is the same as denying

⁶ Walter Shurden, *Not a Silent People: Controversies that Have Shaped Southern Baptists* (Macon, Georgia: Smith & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 1995), ix.

⁷ Shurden, *Silent*, 69.

the Bible as the reliable Word of God.”⁸ Moderates and agency heads, on the other hand, rightly upheld that the importance of the Bible lay in its message, *not* its literary nature. Little did Shurden know that this very argument would comprise the nucleus of the impending schism. After teaching church history for several years at Southern Seminary, Shurden took a job teaching Christianity at Mercer University in Georgia and became a moderate activist in the Inerrancy Controversy. Throughout the controversy, he compiled a significant collection of primary materials, which he eventually published in 1996 as *Going for the Jugular: A Documentary History of the SBC Holy War*.⁹ In 1993, he published an invaluable collection of articles from moderates in the controversy, *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement*.¹⁰

By the time he republished *Not A Silent People* in 1995, with the addition of a chapter on the recent controversy, Shurden suggested that inerrantists had won the conflict because of five factors: they spoke with passion; their focus on biblical inerrancy was both concise and simple; they had many friends amongst the religious right; they possessed organizational unity; and their leaders had large followings.¹¹ In short, he argued that inerrantists were successful because they persuaded more messengers to attend the conventions and vote for their candidates than did moderates.¹² Yet, he also claimed that in all matters theological, ideological, ecclesiological, cultural, ecumenical, and denominational, inerrantists embodied the antithesis of traditional Southern Baptists.¹³

⁸ Shurden, *Silent*, 69, 79-80.

⁹ Walter Shurden, ed., *Going for the Jugular: A Documentary History of the SBC Holy War* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Walter Shurden, ed., *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement*, (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1993).

¹¹ Shurden, *Silent*, 103-107.

¹² Shurden, *Silent*, 102.

¹³ Shurden, *Silent*, 107-108.

Serving as a writer-in-residence at Hannibal LaGrange College in the mid to late 1980s, journalist James Hefley extensively chronicled both events of the Inerrancy Controversy and its precedents. Regardless of his attempt to portray the denominational conflict in an objective manner, his six-volume *Truth in Crisis* series became known as the inerrantist account. When Hefley released volume one in 1986, the Sunday School Board refused to publish it on the basis that it would further polarize the Convention. Paradoxically, the perceived banning of his book resulted in backyard sales at inerrantists' churches.¹⁴ In point of fact, virtually all of the big players on the inerrantist side of the controversy came to endorse Hefley's series, and for good reason. By tracing the origins of the controversy to the theological progressivism that blossomed in the SBC between the 1920s and 1970s, he validated inerrantists' claims that their goal to reclaim the SBC for traditional orthodoxy precipitated their campaign. In other words, as the title of his series suggested, the crisis in the Convention arose over what inerrantists perceived to be truth. Inerrantists thus received vindication from Hefley as crusaders for biblical truth.

Sociologist Nancy Ammerman of Emory University began researching the Inerrancy Controversy around the same time as Hefley. Unlike Hefley and Shurden, Ammerman did not have a clear stake in the controversy. This likely allowed for her *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention*, published in 1990, to become a relatively balanced account, giving both inerrantists and moderates a fair hearing. Ammerman compiled a socio-historical account of the Convention, in which she found that a sizeable majority of Southern Baptists indeed agreed with the inerrantists theologically, and substantiated their suspicions that agency heads had built a near-impregnable fortress, which

¹⁴ James Hefley, *The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Hannibal, Missouri: Hannibal Books, 1991), 343-344.

in turn left grassroots Baptists and inerrantists feeling alienated by their Convention. Moreover, she documented cultural and theological differences that existed between moderates and inerrantists.¹⁵

Bill Leonard, a professor of church history at Southern Seminary throughout the duration of the Inerrancy Controversy, published *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* in 1990. Like Shurden, Leonard stressed that the SBC had always existed on the precipice of division over doctrine and practice. However, an ethereal concept, called “grand compromise” by Leonard, purportedly protected the Convention from falling into the hands of “ideologues on the right or left.”¹⁶ A sense of adherence to southern identity, a dedication to missions, and loyalty to the SBC gave Southern Baptists the tools to avoid schism. According to Leonard, theology had been defined in such a way as to establish Baptist identity. Consequently, doctrinal liberty thrived in the SBC, becoming a core Baptist tradition. Although the grand compromise served as a denominational cohesive, it paradoxically came to foster theological disunity, which drove the Convention apart.¹⁷

Ralph Elliott, a former professor at Midwestern Seminary, whose 1961 book *The Message of Genesis* catalyzed a theological controversy, published his memoir in 1992.¹⁸ Entitled *The “Genesis Controversy” and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition*, his memoir provided some of the keenest insights as to the origins of the Inerrancy Controversy. In emphasizing that his controversial book represented a relatively

¹⁵ Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

¹⁶ Bill Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 8.

¹⁷ Leonard, 8-9.

¹⁸ Ralph Elliott, *The “Genesis Controversy” and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1992).

conservative interpretation of the biblical book of Genesis, Elliott illumined the secretive dealings within Southern Baptist seminaries. Seminary professors' usage of what he termed "double-speak," couching one's research in such a way that did not threaten the more traditional beliefs of readers, ultimately assumed the responsibility for the Elliott Controversy. Because he chose to reveal rather than conceal his research, Elliott lost his job and received a professorate outside of the SBC. Furthermore, he perceived something that escaped the notice of many moderates: continuity existed between the Elliott, Broadman, and Inerrancy Controversies. As the ultimate insider to the Elliott Controversy, Elliott discerned that each of the three controversies were slightly different manifestations of the same conflict.

The primary importance of Grady Cothen's *What Happened to the Southern Baptist Convention? A Memoir of the Controversy*, published in 1993, lay in the prestige of its author.¹⁹ Cothen was the epitome of a denominational statesman, serving as a pastor, state executive secretary, seminary president, university president, and president of the Sunday School Board. When moderates submitted Cothen's name for SBC president in 1984, his loss to inerrantist candidate Charles Stanley, perceived by many to be a denominational outsider, bewildered them. Being an insider *and* an agency head, Cothen's access to interviews, archives, and documents of the Inerrancy Controversy made this memoir extremely valuable. He also provided great insider detail as to how the SBC agencies and boards functioned. Cothen's lament over what happened to the Convention shed light upon the way that other agency heads likely saw the controversy. In addition, his 1995 sequel *The New SBC*:

¹⁹ Grady Cothen, *What Happened to the Southern Baptist Convention? A Memoir of the Controversy* (Macon, Georgia: Smith & Helwys, 1993).

Fundamentalism's Impact on the Southern Baptist Convention traced the recent events of the Convention, arguing that the SBC had taken on a completely alien identity.²⁰

Historian David Morgan of Montevallo University broke new ground in 1996 with the provocative study *The New Crusades, The New Holy Land: Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969-1991*. As his title suggested, Morgan argued that the controversy began in 1969, illumining key characters who contributed significantly to the inerrantist movement. Though many previous chroniclers and scholars of the controversy traditionally started their accounts with Adrian Rogers's election as SBC president in 1979, Morgan's research showed that inerrantist leaders Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson acquired their political platform and ten-year "take-over" strategy from M.O. Owens and William Powell; the latter two tried and failed to lead an inerrantist movement between 1969 and 1976. Morgan relied heavily on documents and tapes from the 1960s through the 1980s to argue that the controversy represented a battle for truth and a skillful use of politics. He also provided the framework with which future historians could analyze the intersection of the Inerrancy Controversy with the rise of the Religious Right.²¹

Gregory Wills challenged the existing dialogue with his meticulous study of Southern Baptist discipline. *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* offered Georgia Baptists as a microcosm for understanding the extent of doctrinal liberty in SBC tradition. Wills wrote this subsequently published dissertation in 1996 on the campus of Southern Seminary, just prior to joining its faculty. His findings suggested that before the twentieth century Southern Baptists enjoyed not individual

²⁰ Grady Cothen, *The New SBC: Fundamentalism's Impact on the Southern Baptist Convention* (Macon, Georgia: Smith & Helwys, 1995).

²¹ David Morgan, *The New Crusades, the New Holy Land: Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969-1991* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996).

but *communal* autonomy. In fact, churches and associations frequently used their authority to punish those who held doctrines that were deemed unorthodox. Wills contended therefore that the Inerrancy Controversy arose precisely because the Convention progressively abandoned its emphasis on discipline; that twentieth-century professors were allowed to teach the doctrines they did proved that the SBC had drastically shifted course.²² In 2009, Wills published what might be thought of as a complementary study to his dissertation, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: 1859-2009*.²³ In this study, he argued that Southern Seminary entered a period of progressive theology in the 1900s that put its students in spiritual danger. However, under the presidential leadership of inerrantist R. Albert Mohler Jr. in the 1990s, Southern returned to the traditional conservative mold of its first president.

David Stricklin, humanities professor at Lyon College, published *Genealogy of Dissent: Southern Baptist Protest in the Twentieth Century* in 1999. Stricklin successfully argued that the Inerrancy Controversy did not exist as a two-party struggle; to analyze it as an inerrantist versus moderate conflict did not allow a full understanding of all parties involved. By tracing the genealogy of moderates to the 1920s, Stricklin argued that agency heads had actually marginalized both moderate Southern Baptist dissenters and inerrantist Southern Baptist dissenters; because agency heads sought to promote peace between the two sides, they brought each side dangerously into conflict with each other. Whereas moderates desired to be at the forefront of changes in culture and theology, inerrantists wanted nothing more than to uphold traditional conservatism. When moderates' views were promoted by agency

²² Gregory Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

²³ Gregory Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: 1859-2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

heads in the name of doctrinal liberty, inerrantists felt alienated and sought control of the entire denomination.²⁴

Judge Herman Paul Pressler III, one of the two ringleaders of the inerrantist movement, published *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey* in 1999. Pressler's memoir, along with Cothen's and Elliott's, served as one of the three most important insider accounts of the Inerrancy Controversy. From the onset of the Elliott Controversy, the attorney-turned-judge became increasingly involved in Southern Baptist affairs. Concerned that progressive theology was eroding the traditionally conservative SBC, Pressler met with inerrantist co-leader Paige Patterson in 1967 and the two covenanted to organize a network of concerned Southern Baptists across the nation. By fall 1978, the duo possessed an alliance big enough to launch campaign efforts towards electing an inerrantist president the next summer. The most significant information in Pressler's well-researched memoir was actually featured in the appendix. In this section, he included a few documents substantiating his claims that progressive theology existed to a substantial degree in the SBC seminaries and Baptist colleges. Pressler's account in conjunction with Elliott's made it clear that Stricklin's moderates were seminary professors. That the agency heads did not dismiss professors' views as heretical incensed Pressler, leading him and other inerrantists to assume the establishment to be corrupt.²⁵

Participant-observer Jerry Sutton served as chair of the Resolutions Committee at the convention in 1988, and thus became responsible for writing the controversial resolution "On the Priesthood of the Believer." Inerrantists lauded this resolution, claiming that moderates

²⁴ David Stricklin, *A Genealogy of Dissent: Southern Baptist Protest in the Twentieth Century* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

²⁵ Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999).

and agency heads had used the priesthood doctrine to justify the rights of individuals to esteem and propagate heretical theologies. Sutton, having collected data from conventions he attended throughout the 1990s, published *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* in 2000. Like Hefley, though he claimed objectivity in his writing, Sutton made it abundantly clear that he supported and celebrated the inerrantists' successful campaign. Not surprisingly, his account received praise from virtually all inerrantist leaders in the SBC. In addition to providing crucial information concerning SBC conventions prior to and after the Inerrancy Controversy, he also delved into how the controversy affected the various seminaries and agencies. Given that most chroniclers charted the controversy no later than 1991, Sutton's account provided an important vantage point for the subsequent decade.²⁶

Baylor University historian Barry Hankins drew insightful conclusions based on his interviews with inerrantist leaders of the SBC. In *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptists and American Culture*, published in 2002, Hankins discovered that inerrantists organized themselves as culture warriors.²⁷ As a rule, they perceived the surrounding culture as much more threatening than did moderates. Indeed, tantamount to inerrantists' theology was an unwavering stance against abortion. By necessity then, the controversy represented a series of both theological and political battles. Furthermore, Hankins adopted Stricklin's argument that both inerrantists and moderates occupied the fringes of Convention life. Though both parties agreed on race, inerrantists resented moderates' stances on abortion and gender; when agency heads appeared to support the views of the latter, inerrantists rallied in opposition. In

²⁶ Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000).

²⁷ Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002).

addition, Hankins broke down inerrantists into three categories: populists, informed activists, and intellectuals. When he submitted a historiographical chapter to Keith Harper's 2012 edited collection *Through A Glass Darkly: Contested Notions of Baptist Identity*, Hankins noted that in order to move on to a depolarized understanding of the controversy, scholars ought to eschew the terms "fundamentalist" and "liberal."²⁸

Cecil Sherman organized a group of moderates in 1980, the first formal resistance to the inerrantist movement. His Gatlinburg group became the nucleus of the moderate movement. After leading this group for a few years, Sherman abandoned his leadership role in order to join the Peace Committee, a device that agency heads proposed for making peace between inerrantists and moderates. When he published his memoir *By My Own Reckoning* in 2008, Sherman detailed his troubling experience on the Peace Committee. He recalled that inerrantists had controlled this committee from the start. In addition to illuminating the agency heads' sizeable burden of responsibility for the outcome of the controversy, Sherman revealed the lack of unity and resources faced by moderates. For that reason, a comprehensive understanding of the Inerrancy Controversy cannot be gleaned without his account.²⁹

A Concise History of the SBC, 1845 to 1961

Sociologist Nancy Ammerman's respected history of the SBC demonstrated that, in a sense, politics existed in the SBC long before the Inerrancy Controversy. A few hundred delegates, representing nine Baptist state conventions, gathered together in May of 1845 to

²⁸ Barry Hankins, "Southern Baptists and the F-Word: A Historiography of the Southern Baptist Convention Controversy and What It Might Mean," in *Through a Glass Darkly: Contested Notions of Baptist Identity*, ed. Keith Harper (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012). See chapter 12.

²⁹ Cecil Sherman, *By My Own Reckoning* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2008).

establish the SBC.³⁰ Contentious fires of controversy over the rights of slaveholders to serve as missionaries brought these delegates to Augusta, Georgia, where they formally split from their northern brethren and created their own mission boards.³¹ This new denomination virtually encompassed the region that would soon become known as the Confederacy, comprising 4000 churches with an accumulated 350,000 members. By the 1970s, the SBC was the largest Protestant denomination in America. Then as now, the SBC existed on local, state, and national levels.

However, with the formidable obstacle of poverty, most Southern Baptists found themselves unable to take part in life beyond the local associations.³² The SBC consisted largely of small rural churches with untrained clergy, and that left the practical leadership of the Convention to well-educated pastors of the few affluent churches, a practice that continued well into the twentieth century. Convinced that northern schools did not provide theologically healthy education, Southern Baptists in 1859 launched their first seminary in Greenville, South Carolina: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary [Southern Seminary].³³ Many of Southern's faculty and graduates became an elite educated class, which enjoyed an inordinate amount of influence in Convention affairs at the national level.³⁴ Ammerman noted that the annual conventions of the SBC became stigmatized as "gentlemanly affairs." Well-to-do messengers at the conventions determined important business matters and learned pastors delivered eloquent sermons.³⁵

³⁰ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 32, 52-53.

³¹ These boards comprise the Domestic Mission Board, which was renamed the "Home Mission Board" in 1874, and the Foreign Mission Board.

³² Ammerman, *Baptist*, 32-33. These associations possessed the authority to settle doctrinal disputes and undertake proximal mission projects.

³³ In 1877, the seminary moved to its present home, Louisville, Kentucky.

³⁴ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 35.

³⁵ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 42.

Although Northern Baptists attempted to reunite with the SBC after the Civil War, Southern Baptists fought vigorously to protect their regional identity and authority. As part of this effort, some Southern Baptists thought it necessary to create their own publication board. Since the American Baptist Publication Society had distributed Sunday School lessons and materials throughout the duration of the Convention's life, not all Southern Baptists desired to break with tradition. Despite the opposition of many Southern Baptists, however, the SBC finally launched its Sunday School Board in 1891. When Northern Baptists criticized this decision, the new board received increasingly enthusiastic support from Southern Baptists.³⁶ The Sunday School Board, in Ammerman's words, played a significant part in "making the Southern Baptist Convention a strong and unified organization with an identity built ... on its shared use of common materials."³⁷

Despite the Convention's dramatic growth to 13,000 churches and more than one and a half million members by the late nineteenth century, its size and organization underwent unprecedented changes and challenges during the twentieth century.³⁸ In 1909, Fort Worth, Texas, became host to the SBC's second seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary [Southwestern Seminary]. Within a decade, the Convention planted its third, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary [New Orleans Seminary].³⁹ In addition, Southern Baptists organized the Executive Committee, a seven-member group that represented the many areas of the SBC's rapidly expanding territory. Enjoying funding from the Cooperative Program, a vehicle by which local churches financially supported the SBC, this new committee became the fiscal and coordinating capital of the Convention. Headquartered in

³⁶ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 39.

³⁷ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 40.

³⁸ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 32.

³⁹ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 40. New Orleans Seminary was established in 1918.

Nashville, Tennessee, the Executive Committee's duties included arranging for Convention meetings and acting on behalf of the Convention on general business matters, as well as fundraising and budgeting for the SBC's agencies. By 1925, the Convention comprised an astonishing 24,000 churches and 3.6 million members.⁴⁰

At this point, Southern Baptist leaders began to question the organization of the SBC and its annual conventions.⁴¹ First, who had the right to attend conventions? After deliberating for several years, they agreed that messengers to the conventions could only be from churches, not associations, mission societies, or other organizations. Moreover, each church received permission to send at least one messenger, regardless of the church's size. At maximum, a church could send ten messengers.⁴² Despite the tremendous growth of the SBC, a sizeable majority of Southern Baptist laity did not join the decision-making process at the annual convention, for lack either of money or desire to participate outside of the local association. Second, how much power could messengers yield? Rather than allow thousands of messengers in an open session to make decisions that would affect myriad agencies and schools, Southern Baptists at the 1931 convention decided to institute boards of trustees. These boards, featuring delegates from each state convention, represented a more efficacious method of determining policy decisions.⁴³

Between 1941 and 1961, the SBC grew increasingly less southern and more national in its orientation. In 1941, the Convention received a petition from the Southern Baptist General Convention of California to join the SBC. Southern Baptists terminated their previous agreement with Northern Baptists not to exceed the territorial limits of Texas and

⁴⁰ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 42-45.

⁴¹ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 42-45.

⁴² Ammerman, *Baptist*, 45-6.

⁴³ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 47.

formally admitted California into the Convention.⁴⁴ Shortly after its centennial, the Convention formalized its participation with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs [BJCPA] and officially launched its own Christian Life Commission [CLC]; the former sought to work towards religious liberty in national and international situations, while the latter addressed race relations and family problems. The SBC, in Ammerman's words, "was, for the first time, acting like a national body, placing itself squarely in the midst of the problems of the day."⁴⁵

Furthermore, though the Convention had established only three seminaries by its hundredth birthday, Southern Baptists doubled this number in the 1950s alone. With Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary [Southeastern Seminary] in Wake Forest, North Carolina, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in San Francisco, California, and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary [Midwestern Seminary] in Kansas City, Missouri, the SBC extended its borders from the Sun Belt to the Midwest.⁴⁶ Within just a few years of Midwestern Seminary's founding, the Convention claimed 32,000 churches and ten million members. Indeed, Southern Baptist membership nearly doubled between 1941 and 1961.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the decision-making processes of the burgeoning bureaucracy were concentrated in the hands of denominational elites. In 1950, Convention leaders set forth the following process for electing trustees: first, churches sent messengers to the convention; second, church messengers voted to elect a president; third, the elected president appointed a Committee on Committees, which in turn nominated a Committee on

⁴⁴ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 51-2, 56-7.

⁴⁵ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 57.

⁴⁶ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 56.

⁴⁷ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 52.

Nominations and finally, the Committee on Nominations nominated trustees.⁴⁸ In other words, the SBC functioned like a democratic republic in that the amount of influence Southern Baptist laity had was contingent not only upon their desire to participate in the annual convention but also their ability to afford traveling to the convention to elect a president.⁴⁹

Given agency heads' monopoly of Southern Baptist leadership and jurisdiction, they informally employed what moderate leader Cecil Sherman later referred to as a "good 'ole boy" system of politics. In essence, those who gave liberally to the Convention vis-à-vis the Cooperative Program were more likely to get denominational posts than those who did not. "The pastors who loved and supported the SBC plus the [agency heads] plus the editors made common cause to put before Southern Baptists the people who ... gave themselves to the SBC."⁵⁰ According to agency head Grady Cothen, those persons who became SBC presidents were generally hand-picked by denominational leaders for their leadership in a church that gave "generously" to the Convention. In addition, existing leaders often selected those whom they knew best to serve as trustees.⁵¹ Duke McCall was a patriarch of agency heads and a prime example of how the good 'ole boy system operated. His reputation as an exceptional pulpiteer at a wealthy church near Southern Seminary earned him the position of New Orleans Seminary's president. McCall's presidency there afforded him a highly prestigious post as president of the Executive Committee. Further, his services at New

⁴⁸ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 170.

⁴⁹ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 46-47.

⁵⁰ Cothen, *Memoir*, 72-73.

⁵¹ Cothen, *Memoir*, 72.

Orleans Seminary and the Executive Committee led to his tenure as president of Southern Seminary.⁵²

Agency heads enjoyed relatively untroubled times through the middle of the twentieth century. Following World War II, the SBC began to mirror the trend towards urbanization in the South. Between 1941 and 1961, the South's population declined from 63.3 percent rural to 41.5 percent rural. Likewise, between 1936 and 1961, the rural constituency of the SBC plummeted from 62.1 percent to 32.9 percent. Great numbers of Southern Baptists left for work in the cities and became middle-class.⁵³ This meant that more Baptists could afford to participate in denominational life beyond the local level. Although many inerrantists became prominent pastors of sizeable churches and some even became SBC presidents, these quasi-outsiders had little representation on denominational agencies. W. A. Criswell, a patriarch of inerrantists, duly served as an illustration of agency head politics. Although he held a doctorate from Southern Seminary and began preaching at the SBC's largest church⁵⁴ in 1944, Criswell did not receive nomination to serve in any denominational post aside from his presidency in the late 1960s.⁵⁵ Due to their exclusion from SBC affairs, inerrantists remained naïve about the process by which agency heads elected trustees until 1961, when the controversial book of a seminary professor polarized the Convention.⁵⁶

⁵² Wills, *Southern*, 352.

⁵³ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 52-54, 56.

⁵⁴ Criswell preached at First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas.

⁵⁵ "A Brief Timeline of W.A. Criswell's Life and Ministry," *Baptist Standard*, January 14, 2002, accessed March 14, 2016, http://assets.baptiststandard.com/archived/2002/1_14/pages/criswell_timeline.html; Hankins, 3.

⁵⁶ This controversy, known as the Elliott Controversy, is discussed at length in chapter two.

Chapter Two: Tremors, 1961-1978

Having constructed a well-oiled denominational machine with prestigious seminaries and sophisticated agencies, agency heads were convinced that all was well. Controversies had always existed in the SBC but never threatened its soul. Many Southern Baptists found pride and unity in missions, the local autonomy of the church, and shared resources via the Sunday School Board. Inerrantists, however, saw things differently. After the Elliott Controversy in 1961, Paul Pressler and Ross Edwards organized committees by which they could voice their outrage towards agency heads. Inerrantists could not believe that the SBC's publishing press would stamp their seal of approval on a book that directly threatened traditional conservative theology.

The son of the Baptist General Convention of Texas' executive director, Paige Patterson, joined ranks with Pressler in creating a network of likeminded Southern Baptists concerned about the direction of the SBC. Following the Broadman Controversy⁵⁷ in 1970, inerrantists interpreted agency heads' actions as direct attacks on their traditional beliefs. Denominational leaders' willingness to tolerate progressive approaches to Scripture convinced inerrantists that their Convention did not represent the interests of its constituents. M. O. Owens shared a list of inerrantist contacts with Pressler, created the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship [BFM Fellowship], and launched an unsuccessful campaign to seize the North Carolina Baptist Convention [NCBC]. Bill Powell worked with Owens on the BFM Fellowship, developed the "ten-year strategy" that would allow inerrantists to reclaim the SBC, and used the *Southern Baptist Journal* [*Journal*] to catalyze sympathetic Baptists to action against the Convention's leadership. Although Owens and Powell lost what David

⁵⁷ This was another controversy over the interpretation of the biblical book of Genesis.

Morgan called “the first crusade,” Pressler and Patterson stood poised to lead an insurrection. The resulting Inerrancy Controversy represented the twenty-year climax of gradually building theological tensions in the SBC.

At almost a hundred years of age, Southern Seminary had already ceased to be a source of pride to all parties in the Convention. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, it came under fire, accused of heresy. When a *Baptist Press* article on June 16, 1958, read “13 Southern Professors Dismissed By Trustees,” many Southern Baptists might not have been altogether surprised.⁵⁸ In response to Southern Seminary President Duke McCall’s balancing act to preserve the school’s reputation while allowing professors the liberty to teach as they saw fit, thirteen professors accused him of squelching their rights to pursue critical truth. As the leader of the SBC’s oldest seminary, McCall faced a precarious predicament.⁵⁹ How could he promote the spirit of progressive research methods without alienating the Convention’s core constituency? Accordingly, when professors outspokenly advanced ecumenism and the historical criticism of the Bible, in addition to denigrating evangelist Billy Graham and revered preacher W. A. Criswell, McCall cautioned them to refrain from making remarks that offended grassroots Baptists.⁶⁰ Since SBC laity helped fund Southern Seminary, he stressed, they also possessed the right to ensure that its teachings remained within the comfortable confines of theological conservatism.

Unfortunately, the president’s attempt at a balancing act turned into a tug of war between agency heads and moderates. Southern Seminary, according to its former professor Ralph Elliott, bred and encouraged the practice of “doublespeak.” In order to avoid ideas that

⁵⁸ C.R. Daley, “13 Southern Professors Dismissed By Trustees,” *Baptist Press*, June 16, 1958, accessed October 26, 2015, <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/718,16-Jun-1958.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Wills, *Southern*, 352.

⁶⁰ Wills, *Southern*, 380.

might threaten the beliefs of Baptist readers, students and professors learned to “couch their beliefs in acceptable terminology and holy jargon.”⁶¹ Ostensibly, McCall encouraged this practice in an effort to placate grassroots Baptists and professors.⁶² For what reason, then, did the professors oppose him? When Southern’s Trustees hired McCall in 1951, they did so with heavy opposition from the faculty, who desired to hire one of their own. In particular, they loathed his status as an agency head and his reputation as theologically conservative.⁶³ Thus, the thirteen professors’ bold submission of a list of grievances against McCall to a committee of Trustees in spring of 1958 was a long time coming.

Following interviews with the president, ten of the thirteen professors, and several other faculty, the committee charged the thirteen with contentious disobedience to the president. In retaliation, the thirteen professors took their protest above the committee to the Board of Trustees, seeking a more sympathetic ear from higher authorities. The Board of Trustees ultimately agreed with the committee, acquitting McCall of all charges and charging the thirteen with insubordination. As a result, the professors found themselves promptly dismissed from their posts at Southern Seminary.⁶⁴ Although this fiasco indicated a growing conflict between agency heads and moderates, most Southern Baptists interpreted it as “an overdue purge of liberal theology.”⁶⁵

To the chagrin of inerrantists, agency heads still prized the moderate voice in the SBC. In a stroke of irony, Ralph Elliott received an offer to teach at the infant Midwestern

⁶¹ Elliott, 33. Ralph Elliott taught as a professor at Southern Seminary until receiving an offer to join Midwestern seminary in the late 1950s.

⁶² Elliott’s knowledge of the encouragement of doublespeak at Southern and McCall’s cautioning Southern professors not to make public remarks that offend SBC laity suggest that the president likely encouraged the practice.

⁶³ Wills, *Southern*, 352-354.

⁶⁴ Wills, *Southern*, 394-395, 399.

⁶⁵ Wills, *Southern*, 400, 403.

Seminary, as did a few of the professors dismissed from Southern.⁶⁶ Elliott had actually begun research for his controversial *The Message of Genesis* while teaching at Southern. At the behest of the Convention's publishing arm, Broadman Press, he submitted what he felt to be a conservative effort to reconcile head and heart. Skirting the dangers of headless religion and heartless scholarship, he sought to downplay the historicity (or historical reliability) of the first eleven chapters of Genesis in favor of their deeper spiritual message.⁶⁷ While Elliott purportedly upheld the historicity of the patriarchs, he called into question the historical existence of Adam and Eve, a literal six-day creation, Noah's ark, and the Tower of Babel.⁶⁸ Regardless of his deliberating over common questions of the time, Elliott's book signified a growing disparity between the Convention and its broad constituency. In his own words, he erred only in that he refused to practice doublespeak. In revealing what his contemporaries chose to conceal, Elliott made no pretense to believe what laity readers believed.⁶⁹ Broadman Press published his manuscript in July of 1961.

Within several months of its publication, *The Message of Genesis* exposed the fault lines of the SBC, polarizing agency heads and inerrantists. Elliott's book elicited immediate backlash, pressuring Midwestern Seminary's Board of Trustees to examine him.⁷⁰ When they decided to uphold Elliott and his teachings, inerrantists grew incensed. By December, the book had received notoriety as one of the two most controversial matters of 1961.⁷¹ Texas pastor K. Owen White published a scathing article in the January 10, 1962, issue of *The*

⁶⁶ Bob Allen, "Panel Recalls Elliott Controversy," *Baptist News Global*, September 13, 2013, accessed February 6, 2016, <https://baptistnews.com/faith/history/item/8852-panel-recalls-elliott-controversy>; Elliott, 74. Elliott even played a small role in bringing dismissed Southern professors to Midwestern.

⁶⁷ Elliott, 10-12, 60; Shurden, *Silent*, 70.

⁶⁸ Elliott, 11; Hefley, 29.

⁶⁹ Elliott, 76-77.

⁷⁰ Elliott, 48. Although K. Owen White's later article received the most publicity, John Havlik, the director of *Evangelism for Kansas Baptists*, wrote and circulated a few articles which accused Elliott of not accepting the "Lordship of Jesus Christ in regard to the Old Testament."

⁷¹ Elliott, 41.

Baptist Standard and dispersed copies of it to all Baptist state papers. In his article entitled “Death in the Pot,” White declared that “the book in question is ‘poison.’ This sort of rationalistic criticism can lead only to further confusion, unbelief, deterioration, and ultimately disintegration ... [it is] liberalism, pure and simple.”⁷² Amid such virulent criticism, the Sunday School Board convened and issued a statement, emphasizing that “unanimity of acceptance was not a criteria for publication of a manuscript.”⁷³

Less than two months after the Sunday School Board issued their statement, a group of fifty people gathered in Oklahoma City to discuss what they perceived to be a theological crisis in the SBC. Their primary objective was to secure the election of inerrantists to the Trustees of Midwestern Seminary.⁷⁴ At the Oklahoma gathering, keynote speaker W. Ross Edwards warned attendees that “the time has arrived for us to plan a strong defense against the threat of frigid intellectualism and liberalism which lead to destruction. May we, therefore, plan wisely, and well.”⁷⁵ Following Edwards’ stirring address, the attendees, including K. Owen White, determined to appeal to the SBC Committee on Committees that inerrantists be placed on the seminary boards.⁷⁶ Following this decision, they prepared for the 1962 San Francisco convention, only a few months away.

Although, in Shurden’s words, “the messengers arrived in the Bay area expecting a showdown” over the “Elliott thing,” agency heads masterfully defused the bomb.⁷⁷ Before the four-day convention convened, no less than five resolutions were presented that pertained to Ralph Elliott. SBC President Herschel Hobbs and the Executive Secretary Treasurer of the

⁷² Shurden, *Silent*, 71; Elliott, 67-68. Elliott noted that White’s article was published and circulated in October of 1961. Shurden’s date of January 1962 has been accepted here, since he wrote his account a couple of decades before Elliott published his own.

⁷³ Shurden, *Silent*, 72.

⁷⁴ Elliott, 68, 70. Elliott wrote that this group comprised a lay person, denominational functionaries, and pastors.

⁷⁵ Elliott, 69.

⁷⁶ Elliott, 70.

⁷⁷ Shurden, *Silent*, 72-73.

Executive Committee tactfully called for the appointment of a committee, which would present a confessional statement to the 1963 annual convention; the significance of a confessional statement lay in its ability for conciliation.⁷⁸ That agency heads took this measure to ensure tranquility suggests that they feared a denominational split if peace remained elusive.⁷⁹ K. Owen White presented two subsequent motions, which the majority passed, relating to the Convention's commitment to biblical inerrancy and opposition to ahistorical theological positions in the seminaries.⁸⁰ In addition, two similar motions were made that the Sunday School Board cease publication of Elliott's book. These motions, however, did not receive a majority.⁸¹ Ultimately, agency heads did not ban Elliott's book, but they gave inerrantists just enough to feel that their concerns had been taken seriously.

Immediately following the San Francisco convention, Elliott's fate seemed ambiguous. On the one hand, two approved motions appeared to threaten his teaching post. On the other hand, an attempt to recall his book from all sales had failed. Upon subsequent deliberations between Elliott, Midwestern Seminary's administration, and the Board of Trustees, the Trustees concluded that Elliott should not republish his book. Elliott refused and was dismissed for insubordination. Although agency heads had assuaged inerrantists' desire to see Elliott leave, they did so indirectly. Many inerrantists consequently interpreted Elliott's firing as a victory against theological progressivism.⁸² Conversely, C. R. Daley of *Baptist Press* proclaimed, "If Elliott is a heretic ... he is one of many.... Professors in all our seminaries know that Elliott is in the same stream of thinking with most of them, and is more

⁷⁸ It is highly significant that this had only happened once before, in the 1920s.

⁷⁹ Hefley, 30.

⁸⁰ One wonders if the agency heads had not agreed ahead of time to pass these motions.

⁸¹ Shurden, *Silent*, 73-74.

⁸² Shurden, *Silent*, 74.

in the center than some of them.”⁸³ Indeed, many professors saw the punishment as a grave injustice.⁸⁴ Given Elliott’s initial favorability with agency heads and his praise from moderates, why would agency heads respond as they did? According to historian Samuel S. Hill, this controversy “might have been little more than a tempest in a teapot had a university or trade house published Elliott’s commentary.”⁸⁵ Perhaps agency heads made Elliott a casualty because he aroused inerrantists’ suspicions that the seminaries employed many other professors like him.

The 1963 Kansas City convention’s adoption of a revised Baptist Faith and Message [BFM] statement demonstrated agency heads’ aptitude for compromise. The importance of this statement, in Hill’s words, “is that it was produced at all, that a need for it was perceived.”⁸⁶ When the BFM committee presented the revised statement of faith at the convention, it contained some rather conspicuous ambiguities. The section entitled “Education” read, “there should be a *proper* balance between academic freedom and academic *responsibility*. *Freedom* in any orderly relationship of human life is always *limited* and never absolute.”⁸⁷ Agency heads appeared to be reprimanding moderates. A professor’s freedom would not be removed *unless* they failed to exercise responsibility. This clause hinted at what Elliott called the “insidious disease” of double-speak.⁸⁸ In other words, seminary professors could still pursue whatever avenue of research they desired with the

⁸³ Hefley, 30.

⁸⁴ Shurden, *Silent*, 74.

⁸⁵ Samuel S. Hill, “Southern Baptists since World War II,” in *Southern Baptists Observed: Multiple Perspectives on a Changing Denomination*, ed. Nancy Ammerman (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.), 38; Allen, “Panel”; Shurden, *Silent*, 74. Historians Samuel Hill and Gregory Wills both agreed that the use of historical-critical method of biblical interpretation, deployed in *The Message of Genesis*, abounded throughout the SBC’s seminaries.

⁸⁶ Hill, “Southern,” 38.

⁸⁷ “Comparison of 1925, 1963, and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message,” Southern Baptist Convention, accessed October 27, 2015, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfmcomparison.asp>. The emphases added are mine.

⁸⁸ Elliott, 33.

exception that they proceed with extreme caution. Doubtless, inerrantist witnesses found encouragement in this clause, since it prima facie prohibited Elliott-esque professors from earning SBC wages.

A telling revision appeared in the section entitled “The Scriptures.” Whereas the 1925 BFM statement spoke of the Scriptures as “a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction” written by divinely inspired men, the BFM committee elaborated with the following phrase: “[the Bible] is the record of God’s revelation of himself to man.”⁸⁹ Arguably, these words vindicated Elliott’s controversial findings in Genesis. In fact, this very presupposition underscored Elliott’s self-professedly conservative approach to the Scriptures; because God’s intention for Genesis was to reveal his character to humanity, the historicity of the first eleven chapters could be downplayed in favor of its deeper meaning. Another novel clause presented itself in the same section: “the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.” This seemingly cryptic phrase suggested that the committee either favored progressive hermeneutics over biblical inerrancy, or explicitly favored doctrinal liberty. While the education clause placated inerrantists, the Scriptures clause legitimated progressive theology, representing, as James Hefley suggested, a “tip of the hat” to professors.⁹⁰ Paradoxically, agency heads solved the Elliott issue by implicitly encouraging doublespeak. President Hobbs’ reputation as theologically conservative likely smoothed out any lingering tensions at the convention. Thus, the new BFM statement received majority support and the Elliott Controversy could be laid to rest.⁹¹

⁸⁹ “Comparison.”

⁹⁰ Hefley, 30.

⁹¹ Hefley, 31. Cothen, *Memoir*, 68. Perhaps as a gesture of conciliation, K. Owen White even received election as SBC president in 1964.

The flames of controversy did not resurface until 1970, but neither did inerrantists slumber. Paul Pressler remained vigilant, acutely aware of the gaping disparity between inerrantists, moderates, and agency heads. When word of Elliott's book reached Paul Pressler in 1961, he immediately penned a letter to the president of Midwestern, requesting that Elliott be dismissed from his teaching post as due reprisal for his violation of a basic Baptist tenet, biblical inerrancy. Pressler also warned that, should the Cooperative Program of the SBC continue to fund Midwestern while it employed moderate professors, he would likely withdraw his financial support from SBC causes.⁹² Pressler soon learned that the pastor of his church supported *The Message of Genesis* and even went so far as to send a letter to Elliott, apologizing for Pressler's action, noting that "[he is] a dedicated and zealous young Christian ... sincerely interested in the work of the LORD."⁹³ When his pastor called the church into a business meeting for the purpose of electing messengers to the upcoming 1962 convention, Pressler moved that the messengers do everything they could to seek Elliott's dismissal from Midwestern. Even though his motion did not receive majority support, a fellow deacon suggested to Pressler that they form a special committee to study the Elliott matter.

Over the next year and a half, the committee interviewed the presidents of many Baptist seminaries. Pressler noted that his intentions for the use of the committee clashed with others, being that he sought to determine whether Elliott-esque progressivism existed outside of Midwestern Seminary. Since he designed his questions to elicit clear answers, as Pressler later recalled, his assertiveness tended to embarrass other committee members. As the time came in 1964 for the committee to write their reports to the deacons, Pressler did so

⁹² Elliott, 17-18.

⁹³ Elliott, 30; Pressler, 52.

in addition to circulating five thousand copies of his personal findings to other concerned Baptists. Entitled “Report to Second Baptist’s Deacons,” this report contained a key phrase that largely mirrored the inerrantist interpretation of biblical inerrancy. After demanding that SBC educational institutions uphold the authority of the Bible, Pressler exclaimed,

*If the bedrock of Scripture is eroded away, we have no basis for believing anything. To open the door for a minor doctrine which is inconsistent with Scripture today, is to open the door for greater variance from Scripture in the future.*⁹⁴

The majority of this fourteen page report dealt extensively with the threat posed by the Elliott Controversy. Pressler bolstered his argument with a statement of Billy Graham’s that suggested the SBC would falter if the inerrancy of the Bible continued to be rejected.⁹⁵ He also deduced that, regardless of Elliott’s dismissal, moderates could be found in each of the SBC’s six seminaries, not to mention other Baptist schools in Texas. To protect the reputation of the church, since Pressler included his church’s name in the report he circulated, his church leaders eventually fired him and his wife from teaching Sunday School.⁹⁶

Pressler’s experience serving on the committee did not prove to be in vain, however. As a result of the circulation of his report, the development director of New Orleans Seminary contacted him about making contributions to the school’s endowment fund. After consulting with a few partners, Pressler organized the Evangelical Christian Education Foundation [ECEF], a body that would offer finances to colleges and seminaries so long as they taught doctrines consistent with traditional conservative theology. New Orleans Seminary became the primary recipient of ECEF funds. At some point after the ECEF began funding New Orleans Seminary, one of the deacons at Second Baptist referred Pressler to a

⁹⁴ Pressler, 308-9.

⁹⁵ Pressler, 321.

⁹⁶ Pressler, 52-55.

family-friend, Paige Patterson; Pressler and Patterson apparently shared the same concerns and possessed the same drive to effect change in the Convention.⁹⁷ Thus, in the spring of 1967 Pressler and his wife came to New Orleans Seminary and met with Patterson and his wife. The two couples left the Pattersons' apartment for coffee and beignets at the Café du Monde.⁹⁸ As they deliberated that night, Pressler and Patterson agreed that a great number of Southern Baptists expressed concern about the direction of the Convention, SBC ecclesiastical polity could make possible a popular movement designed to ensure a "course correction," and previous attempts to correct the trajectory of the denomination had failed due to lack of sufficient resources.⁹⁹ Consequently, the two covenanted to discover the prospects of actually effecting theological renewal in the denomination.¹⁰⁰ Patterson later related that "we agreed that night that what we would do is make contacts across the Convention with those who held our same concerns.... It ended up being a ten-year track."¹⁰¹

If the Elliott Controversy failed to illustrate that doctrinal liberty and biblical inerrancy could not harmoniously coexist, the Broadman Controversy of 1970 succeeded. The idea of the *Broadman Bible Commentary* had been conceived in 1957 before Elliott's book ever hit the shelves. The Sunday School Board approved it in 1961, giving the editors several years in which to work. Volume one of the commentary was finally published in October of 1969, featuring an exposition of Genesis by G. Henton Davies and several other articles. In his exposition, Davies suggested that, contrary to what Genesis chapter 22 stated,

⁹⁷ Pressler, 57-59; Hefley, 32.

⁹⁸ Pressler, 60; Paige Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation: The Southern Baptist Convention, 1978-2004* (Fort Worth, Texas: Seminary Hill Press, 2004), 2-3; Paige Patterson, *The Southern Baptist Conservative Resurgence: The History. The Plan. The Assessment* (Fort Worth, Texas: Seminary Hill Press, 2012), 21. Some scholars have suspected that Pressler and Patterson first hatched their takeover plan at the Café du Monde. It should be noted that, though the deliberations of this night remain ambiguous, both Pressler and Patterson denied any definitive knowledge of an effective plan as of then.

⁹⁹ Patterson, *Anatomy*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Patterson, *Anatomy*, 3.

¹⁰¹ Hefley, 32.

Abraham did not receive the command from God to kill Isaac; rather, he likely experienced a psychotic breakdown, which led to the conviction that he should sacrifice his son.¹⁰² Like Elliott, Davies did not ask questions unfamiliar to seminarian audiences.

The SBC's publishing press once again put its stamp of approval on a progressive book considered repugnant by inerrantists. Ross Edwards became the first of a handful to criticize Davies' volume, claiming that it was too liberal to grow Southern Baptists spiritually. Conversely, editor C.R. Daley posited, "With Dr. Davies and his critics it is the same old story of literalism versus nonliteralism."¹⁰³ Sunday School Board Executive Secretary James Sullivan attempted to deflate the controversy, clarifying that the commentary was "designed for those who feel a need for a more thoughtful type of work, probing in depth into the truth of God's word."¹⁰⁴

By 1970, agency heads could do more to exacerbate than to abate the recurrent theological tensions. "We want Southern Baptist [moderates] to know that there is a limit to our patience," Ross Edwards declared at the "Affirming the Bible Conference" held just days before the 1970 convention in Denver, Colorado. Frustrated either by inerrantists' lack of retaliation or agency heads' refusal to anathematize moderates, he complained to a crowd of two hundred that a vocal minority had challenged Bible-believing Baptists ever since the 1962 convention.¹⁰⁵ This sentiment was evident in messenger Gwin Turner's motion at the Denver convention that the first volume of the *Broadman Bible Commentary* be withdrawn from publication and rewritten "with due consideration of the [inerrantist] viewpoint."¹⁰⁶ Sullivan defended the right of Broadman Press to publish books for various segments of

¹⁰² Shurden, *Silent*, 75-76.

¹⁰³ Shurden, *Silent*, 77; Hefley, 34.

¹⁰⁴ Shurden, *Silent*, 75.

¹⁰⁵ Shurden, *Silent*, 77; Cothen, *Memoir*, 69.

¹⁰⁶ Hefley, 35; Shurden, *Silent*, 77.

Southern Baptists, noting that it did not make endorsements for an official SBC position. To no avail, the editor of the *Broadman Commentary* pled with the messengers to “pass on to the next generation a heritage of the open mind and open Bible.” Turner’s motion passed with a majority vote.¹⁰⁷

Soon after the Denver convention, William E. Hull, dean of theology at Southern, preached a sermon entitled “Shall We Call the Bible Infallible?” which subsequently was published in the December 1970 issue of the Executive Committee’s monthly periodical *The Baptist Program*. Hull reasoned that the modern Bible, given its lack of access to extant original manuscripts, could not be considered infallible. Even if there did exist a “perfect text rendered in a perfect translation,” it would still be subject to the interpretation of fallible humans. Therefore, Hull concluded, it would not be wise to claim the Bible as inerrant.¹⁰⁸ Predictably, he received a “filing cabinet of hate mail” and requests that he be fired.¹⁰⁹

With Hull’s sermon becoming the third denominationally-approved publication in a decade to undermine traditional conservatism, the Convention’s leadership acted as though they were naïve to the theological demographics of their constituency. At the 1971 convention in St. Louis, M.O. Owens, in objection to Hull’s article, moved that the Executive Committee provide equal room in *The Baptist Program* for the “Convention viewpoint” of biblical inerrancy. After deliberating the article, the Executive Committee declared that the editors had presented “a balanced response to the article” and concluded that there was no need to continue the controversy over *The Baptist Program*.¹¹⁰ However, other messengers

¹⁰⁷ Shurden, *Silent*, 77-78. Specifically, Turner’s motion passed 5,394 to 2,170.

¹⁰⁸ Morgan, 22-3. When interviewed two decades later, Hull remarked that his sermon had been casual. He never imagined it might become so politicized.

¹⁰⁹ William Hull, “Foreword I” in Carl Kell, *Against the Wind: The Moderate Voice in Baptist Life* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2009), xxiii.

¹¹⁰ Morgan, 23.

felt frustrated that the 1970 motion had not been followed. The Sunday School Board apparently assumed that by getting Davies to revise the commentary, Turner's motion was being followed.¹¹¹ Consequently, clarification arrived when a slight majority passed a motion specifically to "obtain another writer" and proceed according to the 1970 motion.¹¹² The Sunday School Board selected Clyde Francisco, an Old Testament professor at Southern Seminary. Presumably, inerrantists remained unaware that Francisco had been Ralph Elliott's mentor at Southern and had chided him for not using double-speak in *The Message of Genesis*.¹¹³

Owens later opined that, had SBC leaders at the 1971 convention given inerrancy a fair hearing, the Inerrancy Controversy may have been averted.¹¹⁴ He and Pressler had corresponded as early as 1969 for the purpose of building a nationwide fellowship of inerrantist Baptists.¹¹⁵ Although Owens' prior actions consisted largely of correspondence with other like-minded inerrantists and the formation of an alliance of 400 pastors who desired to effect change in the North Carolina Baptist Convention [NCBC], 1971 marked the beginning of his public campaign.¹¹⁶ In order to defeat progressivism in the NCBC, Owens organized Baptists United for Spiritual Revival [Baptists United], which even boasted its own newspaper, *Baptists United News*. Baptists United launched an offensive against the NCBC, taking issue with Baptist churches' approval of members who did not receive baptism by immersion. Though seemingly trivial to non-Baptists, Owens saw this as a distinct threat to Baptist uniqueness. In addition, he clearly saw it as an inherently biblical

¹¹¹ Hefley, 35; Shurden, *Silent*, 78.

¹¹² Hefley, 35; Shurden, *Silent*, 79. This motion passed 2,672 to 2,290.

¹¹³ Elliott, 50, 76; Cothen, *Memoir*, 70.

¹¹⁴ Morgan, 23.

¹¹⁵ Morgan, 18. In particular, Pressler mentioned that the ECEF put out three to four newsletters per year, and he would love to get the names of Owens' fellow inerrantists in North Carolina to put on his list.

¹¹⁶ Morgan, 19, 22.

issue: “we must stop the inroads of [progressivism] here, or not at all.”¹¹⁷ Like Pressler’s “Report to Second Baptist’s Deacons,” Owens’s comment implied that questioning “small” issues in the Bible now would lead to questioning foundational issues later. An opponent of Baptists United accused Owens of turning the issue of Baptist immersion “into a vehicle for trying to gain ‘political power’ within the structure of the Baptist State Convention.”¹¹⁸ Owens’s amendment at the NCBC to decline support from churches who allowed members to become baptized by sprinkling received majority support but fell short of the required two-thirds majority vote.¹¹⁹

In 1972, Owens organized the core of what would become the first *de facto* mouthpiece for inerrantists in the SBC. At the 1972 convention, SBC President Carl Bates lamented, “If I have learned anything about us during the past two years, it is this: Our churches are in trouble!”¹²⁰ This likely came in response to a messenger’s motion that the entire *Broadman Commentary* be withdrawn from further sale, since it was “out of harmony with the spirit and letter of the *Baptist Faith and Message*.”¹²¹ Although the motion failed, inerrantists continued to make their dissatisfaction clear to the leadership. Per Owens’s request, inerrantists came to Charlotte, North Carolina, following the recent convention, to discuss what might be done to prevent the bureaucracy from destroying the Convention. At the next meeting, held a few months later at the church of future SBC president Charles Stanley, Owens enjoyed the company of twenty-five pastors from eleven states. Bill Powell, an employee from the SBC’s Home Mission Board, articulated to those present a ten-year strategy that could be implemented to wrest control of the Convention from agency heads.

¹¹⁷ Morgan, 23.

¹¹⁸ Morgan, 24.

¹¹⁹ Morgan, 24.

¹²⁰ Sutton, *Baptist*, 44. He also noted that “twice in the past ten years, we have fought the battle of Genesis.”

¹²¹ Sutton, *Baptist*, 45.

Consequently, the group voted to establish the BFM Fellowship in the following spring.¹²²

Under Owens' leadership, the Fellowship determined to swing the SBC back to "the Bible as the revealed, infallible, and authoritative Word of God."¹²³

Bill Powell epitomized the power of the pen. The BFM Fellowship, believing a media channel for the fellowship to be advantageous to their cause, instituted the *Journal* in 1973 under Powell's direction. Whereas Owens ultimately failed in his efforts to take over the NCBC, thereafter limiting his public campaigning activities, Powell continued to take his job as editor very seriously. He wrote professors and administrators, ascertaining their beliefs about the reliability of the Bible, and published his findings in the *Journal*. According to Hefley, Powell "printed every quotation he could find which he felt showed [moderate] influences in the SBC agencies and seminaries."¹²⁴ Regardless of Powell's proclivity for "scandal-mongering,"¹²⁵ the determined editor succeeded in motivating inerrantist activists. Indeed, inerrantists used the *Journal* as a forum for distributing powerful sermons and encouraging stories of inerrantist ministries. For those despairing of the progressivism propagated by SBC seminaries, inerrantists learned of alternative seminaries that produced safe scholarship.¹²⁶ On a few occasions, Powell even suggested that inerrantists not fund inerrancy-rejecting seminaries.¹²⁷

¹²² Pressler, 78. Morgan, 25-26, 30. Morgan claimed that Bill Powell, working at the Home Mission Board in Atlanta, Georgia, since 1962, studied the SBC constitution and its bylaws, eventually discovering the ten-year strategy.

¹²³ Morgan, 26-7.

¹²⁴ Hefley, 36.

¹²⁵ Hefley, 36.

¹²⁶ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 70. In addition to Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida, established in the 1960s by those who felt Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary was too progressive, inerrantists could attend Criswell Biblical Studies Center in Dallas, Texas, or the recently organized Mid-America Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas, which subsequently moved to Memphis, Tennessee.

¹²⁷ Morgan, 32; Leonard, 135.

Possibly the most jarring publication of the *Journal* was the master's thesis of Noel Wesley Hollyfield Jr. at Southern. The thesis, entitled "A Sociological Analysis of the Degrees of 'Christian Orthodoxy' Among Selected Students in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," revealed that first-year students were much more likely to believe in the deity of Jesus and the certainty of life after death than were students in their final year. In other words, Hollyfield discovered that "as higher education increased, orthodoxy decreased."¹²⁸ Without doubt, many inerrantists then felt the reverberation of Powell's cry in 1976 to "elect trustees who will fire the Bible-doubting teachers and hire teachers who do believe that the Bible is the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God."¹²⁹

By the mid to late 1970s, some moderates and agency heads appeared well aware of the threat inerrantists posed. The BFM Fellowship at that point had either developed relationships or shared the same theology with renowned super church pastors such as Homer Lindsay Jr., Jerry Vines, Adrian Rogers, and W.A. Criswell; each of these preachers carried with them an undisputed influence over large numbers of Southern Baptists.¹³⁰ In 1976, C. R. Daley cautioned moderates and agency heads that Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, represented "the most brilliant of this [inerrantist] group." In addition to pastoring the second largest church in the Convention, he shared the same inerrantist views as Paige Patterson, his former classmate at New Orleans Seminary. Fearing that Rogers might be elected as president of the SBC in 1976, Daley and several other editors wrote editorials that promoted the former Executive Secretary of the Sunday School Board, James Sullivan. With this impressive support, Sullivan was elected.

¹²⁸ Patterson, *Conservative*, 11; Hefley, 39; Cothen, *Memoir*, 123. Hollyfield deduced that this finding was consistent with similar studies all over the world. Conversely, the longer one remained a pastor, the more likely he or she was to increase in orthodoxy. Hollyfield's thesis was published by Powell without his permission.

¹²⁹ Morgan, 34.

¹³⁰ Morgan, 26, 33; Ammerman, *Baptist*, 71.

When Sullivan decided not to run for a second term in 1977, agency head Jimmy Allen broke standard protocol by engaging in a quasi-campaign effort against Rogers. Perhaps the appearance of Rogers' name on the list of those to speak at the Pastors' Conference made Allen nervous. Rogers withheld his name from consideration for SBC president, however, and Allen defeated candidate Jerry Vines.¹³¹ With fiery sermons from both Criswell and Rogers at the Pastors' Conference denouncing the pervasiveness of progressivism in the Convention, inerrantists made no less of a showing.¹³² Moreover, one messenger boldly moved that the Bible be respected as the inspired Word of God and "that its teachings be accepted as their criteria and defining lines by which educational policy, conduct codes, and administration decisions affecting the institution and its witness will be formed."¹³³ An agency head at the convention noted in his memoir that every convention since 1959 witnessed the "semantic debate about the inspiration of Scriptures."¹³⁴

This bureaucratic use of politicking proved to be only a slight hiccup for the growing inerrantist entourage. Pressler had known and corresponded with both Owens and Powell since the 1960s. By 1977, however, the time came for an intentional planning meeting in Atlanta.¹³⁵ At least one inerrantist pastor from every major state convention came to this meeting, where they discussed the rerouting of the Convention.¹³⁶ By persuading enough messengers to attend a convention and elect an inerrantist president, as long as the president appointed inerrantists to the Committee on Committees, they could begin to effect change in the Convention. Moreover, within six years of proper appointments, inerrantists would gain

¹³¹ Hefley, 37. Hefley wrote that Daley and other editors helped Allen to get elected as well.

¹³² Leonard, 135. It is important to note that Paige Patterson had served as president of Criswell's own Criswell College since the early 1970s.

¹³³ Sutton, *Baptist*, 45.

¹³⁴ Sutton, *Baptist*, 45. Sutton included several such memoir entries from the president of Southwestern seminary from 1958 to 1978, Robert Naylor.

¹³⁵ Morgan, 17.

¹³⁶ Hefley, 36; Pressler, 80.

ascendancy on the boards.¹³⁷ Since a 1977 issue of the *Journal* notified inerrantists that an International Council on Biblical Inerrancy had been formed, this likely factored into their deliberations as well. Given that the Council's founders included W.A. Criswell, Paige Patterson, and Robert Preus, inerrantists likely would have learned in specific detail how Preus's brother had wrested control of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod [LCMS] from non-inerrantists.¹³⁸ Attendees at this meeting decided not to launch their campaign until 1979 both to respect the customary two-year presidency and to allow time to gain more followers and resources. Patterson and Pressler would hold the next meeting in the fall of 1978.

The LCMS schism in many ways foreshadowed the Inerrancy Controversy. Like the Convention's seminaries, the Synod's Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, had developed a reputation for producing theology widely out of sync with grassroots inerrantists. Indeed, Concordia came under heavy criticism in the 1960s for some of its professors' progressive views. Even Concordia Seminary President John Tietjen outspokenly espoused his reliance upon historical critical methods of interpreting the Bible. Elliott had actually maintained frequent correspondence with one of Concordia's professors throughout the Elliott Controversy, until he received the following message from him: "Ralph, you won't be hearing from me anymore; it isn't safe to be in conversation."¹³⁹ When Jacob Preus became president of the LCMS in 1969, he sought to eradicate the progressivism his constituents loathed, promising to return the Synod to "the proper understanding of and

¹³⁷ Patterson, *Conservative*, 22; Patterson, *Anatomy*, 6.

¹³⁸ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 70; Cothen, *Memoir*, 84-85. Hefley, 35-36. Hefley claimed that inerrantists of the BFM Fellowship, led by Owens and Powell, were encouraged to hear of the happenings in the LCMS.

¹³⁹ Elliott, 27. Elliott noted that his friend was under attack for his work on the New Testament and faced synodical reprimand at roughly the same time that *The Message of Genesis* came under torrents of criticism. After his friend's message, Elliott suspected that he compromised his theological views in order to avoid being sacked.

adherence to the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.”¹⁴⁰ One of his primary goals was to remove Tietjen from his post. In 1973, Preus convinced the church to condemn the theological positions of Concordia’s president in addition to forty-five of its fifty faculty members. 1974 then saw the suspension of Tietjen and the subsequent mass flight of students and faculty. Roughly 80 percent of the 400 students and forty-five faculty left Concordia to establish their own seminary, which they called Seminex (Seminary in Exile).¹⁴¹

The events of the 1978 convention, in Sutton’s words, served as a foretaste of the pivotal 1979 convention. The Pastors’ Conference featured Criswell and James Robison. As he had the previous year, Criswell emphasized the unequivocal inerrancy of the Bible, declaring, “This Word [the Bible] that we hold in our hand is but a copy of the perfect and fixed, and unchanging Word of God [Jesus] in Heaven ... kept inviolate and inerrant by the sovereign God.”¹⁴² Robison continued, “All true Southern Baptists believe the Bible is the infallible, inspired, inerrant Word of the Holy God ... [those who doubt this] are more deadly than cancer and more hideous than snakes.”¹⁴³ In addition, representing one more attempt in a pattern of such attempts dating back to 1959, a messenger moved that the Convention adopt a clear SBC affirmation of biblical inerrancy. Specifically, he proposed that the Bible be specified as “the infallible, inerrant, verbally inspired Word of God as recorded in its original manuscripts.”¹⁴⁴ In response, President Reelect Jimmy Allen cautioned that “the basic position of Baptists is a *middle-of-the-road* belief in the infallibility of the Bible,” and the

¹⁴⁰ Bryan V. Hillis, *Can Two Walk Together Unless They Be Agreed* (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1991), 48-51.

¹⁴¹ Albert A. Bell Jr., “Seminex,” in *Encyclopedia of Religious Controversies in the United States*, ed. Bill J. Leonard (Denver, Colorado: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 719-20; Cothen, *Memoir*, 85. Cothen noted that the committees used, the charges mounted, and the issues fought over seemed to be a “Southern Baptist rehearsal.”

¹⁴² Sutton, *Baptist*, 90.

¹⁴³ Sutton, *Baptist*, 90.

¹⁴⁴ Sutton, *Baptist*, 89.

motion failed.¹⁴⁵ His statement only bought a little more time for agency heads to hold sway over the Convention.

In the fall of 1978, the Atlanta Airport Ramada Inn hosted an anonymous crowd of inerrantists who would set the SBC ablaze with controversy over the course of the next decade. Patterson identified the attendees of this epic meeting as a coterie of pastors and laity who had organized themselves in retaliation to the Convention's perceived drift from orthodoxy and evangelism. To preserve Southern Baptists from the fate of American Baptists, British Baptists, and United Methodists, inerrantist attendees finally elected to take large-scale political action.¹⁴⁶ Specifically, they determined to raise awareness among Southern Baptists in each state to the dangers of the Convention and its progressive seminaries. Participants in the Atlanta meeting would attempt to secure commitments from Southern Baptists to attend the annual convention in 1979 for the express purpose of electing an inerrantist as president of the SBC. In exchange, Patterson and Pressler agreed to draw public scrutiny towards themselves, allowing other inerrantists to remain anonymous.¹⁴⁷ They determined to use biblical inerrancy as their platform.

This, Patterson later mused, signified the most strategic choice made by inerrantists. Since most Southern Baptists believed the Bible to be inerrant and, consequently, issues such as the resurrection of Christ, abortion, and the sanctity of marriage resolved themselves in that presupposition, moderates and agency heads would ultimately be forced to argue with the Bible.¹⁴⁸ It became crucial then for the inerrantist movement to nominate only candidates who endorsed biblical inerrancy *and* agreed to comply with their plan. The Atlanta group

¹⁴⁵ Sutton, *Baptist*, 89. The emphases are mine.

¹⁴⁶ Patterson contended that each of these groups had drifted substantially from their inerrantist foundations.

¹⁴⁷ Patterson, *Anatomy*, 3-4; Hefley, 37.

¹⁴⁸ Patterson, *Conservative*, 22-3.

decided upon Adrian Rogers as their first inerrantist candidate for president.¹⁴⁹ In order to protect him, however, Patterson and Pressler kept Rogers at arm's length. If it became known that he enjoyed any sort of affiliation with Patterson and Pressler, his chances of election might lessen dramatically.¹⁵⁰ Having a concrete strategy, a presidential candidate, and a growing entourage, inerrantists could now execute a revolutionary effort to seize the Convention.

¹⁴⁹ Albert Mohler Jr., "The Southern Baptist Reformation-A First-Hand Account," *AlbertMohler.com*, June 21, 2005, accessed November 2, 2015, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/06/21/the-southern-baptist-reformation-a-first-hand-account-2/>.

¹⁵⁰ Patterson, *Anatomy*, 4; David Roach, "Adrian Rogers, 'Rising Star of Memphis,' Elected 35 Years Ago," *Baptist Press*, May 21, 2014, accessed February 6, 2016, <http://www.bpnews.net/42612/adrian-rogers-rising-star-of-memphis-elected-35-years-ago>.

Chapter Three: Schism, 1979-1990

The theological tremors of 1961 to 1978 produced a full-blown political schism in the SBC. Inerrantists procured substantial resources, devised an astute campaign, and influenced record numbers of Southern Baptist messengers to attend the annual conventions. In short, inerrantists were well prepared to reroute the course of the Convention. Conversely, moderates experienced a sluggish start to their counter-campaign. Even though Cecil Sherman and his Gatlinburg group challenged inerrantists' climb to power as early as 1981, moderates would not become fully united until 1984. By the time that several agency heads joined the moderate coalition, inerrantists had already won six consecutive presidencies. Moderates and agency heads simply could not agree what to do about the inerrantist crisis. Although the results of the presidential elections at the 1985 and 1986 conventions signified that moderates were gaining traction in their struggle with inerrantists, agency heads cut the heart out of the moderate movement with their ill-fated peace proposals, the Peace Committee in 1985 and the Glorieta Statement in 1986.

Moderates continued to challenge inerrantists until the New Orleans convention in 1990, but in vain. That it took the highly organized inerrantist movement over ten years to secure the Convention and that moderates fell short in their efforts to repel them revealed that the SBC's power lay in the hands of neither party. Since agency heads' instincts were largely to protect the Convention via compromise and inerrantists' aspiration was to seize the Convention without compromise, moderates were doomed from the start. Agency heads' and moderates' love for doctrinal democracy collided violently with inerrantists' desire for theological autocracy, causing a political revolution for the soul of the SBC.

When the inerrantist campaign first drew the critical eye of the media in the early summer of 1980, Pressler's and Patterson's strategy seemed well underway. Although the list of those appointed to speak at the 1979 Pastors' Conference, featuring several prominent inerrantists, had been published by the *Christian Index* in February, it failed to evoke anxiety among moderates and agency heads.¹⁵¹ By May 9th, slightly over a month before the Houston convention, the *Baptist Press* caught wind that "meetings have been held in at least 15 states in recent months to encourage messengers to attend the ... convention in Houston ... to elect a president committed to biblical inerrancy."¹⁵² *Baptist Press*'s Toby Druin further revealed that Patterson admitted to encouraging and attending many of these meetings. In keeping with the inerrantist strategy, Patterson protected Rogers by mentioning Jerry Vines, Bailey Smith, and a handful of others as great prospective inerrantist presidents. He offhandedly mentioned that Rogers might be "draftable." Both Vines and Smith, presumably in on the 1978 Atlanta meeting, implied to *Baptist Standard* that they would consider the presidency.¹⁵³

Moreover, a May 24th issue of the *Christian Index* confirmed that Harold Lindsell, president of the inerrantist BFM Fellowship, intended to campaign in several cities across the nation before the 1979 convention in mid-June. When interviewed, he declared that "it [was] time for Southern Baptists to face the issue of inerrancy even if it meant the loss of 500,000 members."¹⁵⁴ Lindsell also happened to be promoting his recent book, *The Bible in the Balance*, which identified the current battles of biblical inerrancy to be a watershed for the

¹⁵¹ Shurden, *Going*, 9; Cothen, *Memoir*, 14. These names included Homer Lindsay Jr., James Draper, Adrian Rogers, W.A. Criswell, Jerry Vines, James Robison, and Charles Stanley.

¹⁵² Toby Druin, "Groups Meet in 15 States to Push SBC President," in Shurden, *Going*, 11.

¹⁵³ Druin, "Groups," 12.

¹⁵⁴ Shurden, *Going*, 9. Considering that the SBC comprised over twelve million members, Lindsell's statement implies that he felt, as did Patterson and Pressler, that moderates were a minority in the Convention.

future of orthodoxy. In a chapter on the SBC, he republished Hollyfield's controversial thesis, which indicated a "decline in orthodoxy as students progressed through studies there [at Southern Seminary]." ¹⁵⁵ By noting that Southern Baptists felt it was necessary to organize and fund inerrantist institutions like Criswell College and Mid-America Baptist Seminary, Lindsell argued that the SBC had failed to give its students a healthy education. ¹⁵⁶ In essence, he posed the question to Southern Baptists and other evangelical readers: "Will you stand under the authority of Scripture or will you stand in judgment over Scripture?" ¹⁵⁷ By denying his involvement with Patterson and Pressler, in addition to simplifying and polarizing the issue of biblical inerrancy, Lindsell implicitly encouraged grassroots Baptists to vote for Rogers in the upcoming election.

If not before, the Pastors' Conference surely morphed into an inerrantist pep rally by 1979. ¹⁵⁸ Rogers turned up the heat with a bold declaration that the devil hated the books of Genesis and Revelation and preferred that believers view them respectively as myth and mystery. ¹⁵⁹ He then proceeded to denounce the Baptist media for supporting the progressive seminaries and agencies of the SBC. Following Rogers' sermon, W.A. Criswell proclaimed, "We will have a great time here, if for no other reason than to elect Adrian Rogers as president of the Southern Baptist Convention." Although it elicited a roaring applause, this endorsement broke protocol; never before had a former SBC president openly endorsed a candidate. ¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, Criswell's distinction of pastoring the Convention's largest

¹⁵⁵ Hefley, 39; Patterson, *Conservative*, 11.

¹⁵⁶ Leonard, 135.

¹⁵⁷ Shurden, *Going*, 9.

¹⁵⁸ Leonard, 135-136; Cothen, *Memoir*, 17. This tradition would continue for the next twelve years. Notably, many of the future SBC presidents would have previously preached and gained exposure to grassroots Baptists at the Pastors' Conferences.

¹⁵⁹ Adrian Rogers, "The Great Deceiver," in Shurden, *Going*, 16. In this, he subtly referenced the earlier Genesis controversies of the 1960s and 1970s.

¹⁶⁰ Leonard, 137.

church gave his endorsement extra weight.¹⁶¹ James Robison followed suit, denigrating moderates and agency heads as devils and endorsing “a president who is totally committed to the removal from this denomination any teacher, any educator, who does not believe that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible word of the living God.” He went further and accused agency heads of being “worse than cancer” for allowing progressivism to erode the foundation of the SBC.¹⁶²

The 1979 convention dumbfounded moderates and agency heads and foreshadowed the vitriol and contention that would characterize the next eleven consecutive conventions. On the convention’s opening day, outgoing President Jimmy Allen remarked that “good and sincere people” were pressing the Convention to alter its noble focus from missions and evangelism, and urged messengers to resist division over doctrine.¹⁶³ Rogers was one of six candidates on the ballot, including agency heads Robert Naylor and Porter Routh. Routh, as Executive Secretary Treasurer of the Executive Committee, was the highest-ranking administrator in the SBC.¹⁶⁴ Understandably, moderates and agency heads were astounded when Rogers received an unprecedented 51.4 percent vote on the first ballot; a first-ballot presidential election in the SBC was rare to say the least.¹⁶⁵ Not only had the inerrantist movement organized a successful campaign, but their candidate took over half the vote on a ballot with five other candidates. Unfortunately for inerrantists, many messengers left the convention immediately after Rogers assumed the presidency.¹⁶⁶ Thus, an inerrantist’s later

¹⁶¹ Cothen, *Memoir*, 13. He served as pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas.

¹⁶² James Robison, “Satan’s Subtle Attacks,” in Shurden, *Going*, 31; Leonard, 118.

¹⁶³ Cothen, *Memoir*, 14, 17. Undoubtedly, Allen was responding to the claims made by inerrantists at the Pastors’ Conference.

¹⁶⁴ Sherman, 135.

¹⁶⁵ Shurden, *Going*, xii.

¹⁶⁶ Leonard, 138.

motion that doctrinal positions of SBC officials be ascertained did not receive enough support to pass.

When messenger Larry Lewis presented a resolution that would require all SBC agencies to employ only teachers who believed in the inerrancy of the Bible, agency head Wayne Dehoney tactfully proposed that messengers reaffirm the 1963 BFM statement. After President Rogers conferred privately with Dehoney, this motion received support from Lewis and agency head Herschel Hobbs. Consequently, messengers voted overwhelmingly in support of it.¹⁶⁷ Most importantly, Dehoney submitted a resolution decrying political activity in the SBC. Following a messenger's accusation that Dehoney himself had engaged in overt political activity during past conventions and Pressler's self-defense that he had done nothing wrong in encouraging more participation of laity in the convention, outgoing President Allen said he was "grieved by the spirit that is now moving in this room." Routh acknowledged his disappointment that Southern Baptists would resort to secular politics and the resolution subsequently passed: "Be it therefore Resolved, that this Convention go on record as disavowing overt political activity and organization as a method of selection of its officers."¹⁶⁸ In a post-convention interview, President Rogers declared his unequivocal commitment to biblical inerrancy and denied any involvement with Pressler and Patterson.¹⁶⁹ The inerrantist strategy was working.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Hefley, 39; "Wayne Dehoney's Motion to Defuse Controversy" in Shurden, *Going*, 39-40.

¹⁶⁸ "Resolution Decrying Political Activity" in Shurden, *Going*, 41; "Baptist Press News Wrapup of 1979 Convention" in Shurden, *Going*, 43; Cothen, *Memoir*, 8, 15-16. Dehoney had allegedly engaged in political activity in past conventions, particularly during the years of his presidency, 1965-1967.

¹⁶⁹ Cothen, *Memoir*, 14, 16; Hefley, 40. Rogers admitted to the press that he would support an investigation of denominational institutions and the replacement of any seminary professor who did not believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

¹⁷⁰ As discussed at the Atlanta meeting in 1978, Patterson and Pressler agreed to take the brunt of criticism from inerrantists' opponents. Inerrantist presidents would deny being part of any organized party, in order to discreetly advance inerrantists' goals.

After the Houston convention, agency heads had varied reactions. Many agreed to allow Rogers the customary two-year presidency, doubting inerrantists' ability to make any significant changes. Others either assumed that this sudden shift of behavior would gradually taper off or that discerning Baptists would see through the smokescreen of biblical inerrancy.¹⁷¹ The Sunday School Board's President Grady Cothen later mused that "no one was aware that this was the beginning of a major [inerrantist] movement."¹⁷² One agency head likely spoke for many when he deduced that inerrantists would be unable to bring a substantial number of supporters to the 1981 convention in Los Angeles since "institutional people are on expense accounts and will be there in force."¹⁷³ Agency heads felt sure they could handily repossess the SBC presidency by 1981. Presuming that inerrantists would not challenge them in 1982, agency heads would again have home-field advantage at the 1983 Pittsburgh convention. In other words, whatever damage President Rogers did in two years would be reversed by agency heads in the next four.

Inerrantists, aware of the prospective difficulty in securing consecutive presidential victories, deftly crafted a strategy that would put agency heads at a major disadvantage. In order to keep the momentum in inerrantists' favor, President Rogers needed to appoint inerrantists to the Committee on Committees. By doing so, inerrantists would move one step closer to effecting change in the Convention's plethora of agencies. According to a later statement by Pressler, the inerrantist president appointed an "absolutely superb" Committee on Committees.¹⁷⁴ However, what would inerrantists do to raise the monetary support necessary to elect a president for the 1981 convention?

¹⁷¹ Hefley, 45.

¹⁷² Cothen, *Memoir*, 9.

¹⁷³ Hefley, 45.

¹⁷⁴ Hefley, 47; Shurden, *Going*, 46; Morgan, 50.

President Rogers' public announcement in May of 1980 that he did not wish to be reelected, just one month before the St. Louis convention, suggests that inerrantists had made preparations in advance. By waiting so late to withdraw his name from consideration for the election he would surely have won without opposition, given the customary reelection, outgoing President Rogers stunned agency heads. They had only a month if they wished to defeat the next inerrantist nominee. Moreover, if inerrantists won this election, they might well possess the presidency for an extra two years. Since inerrantists boasted an abundance of support in St. Louis and New Orleans, the location of the 1982 convention, the election of an inerrantist in 1980 might help ensure that they remained in power until at least 1984. Patterson admitted in a May interview with *Baptist Standard* that the LCMS's own Concordia Seminary would offer rooms for grassroots Baptists who pledged to elect an inerrantist candidate.¹⁷⁵ Consequently, Rogers afforded inerrantists five years of power if unopposed for the customary two year runs.¹⁷⁶

The St. Louis convention in 1980 revealed two things: agency heads would experience an uphill struggle in maintaining order and inerrantists were well organized. Key moderate leader Cecil Sherman recalled that he and his wife felt out of place at the 1980 convention. Having missed the pivotal Houston election, he was surprised to find himself at what seemed to be "more like a political convention than a religious gathering."¹⁷⁷ Rumors surfaced at the convention that agency heads nominated candidate Richard Jackson, a self-

¹⁷⁵ Toby Druin, "Patterson Group Seeks Long Range Control of SBC," in Shurden, *Going*, 48-50. Notably, Concordia became the center of the previously discussed LCMS schism, in which two Preus brothers who took the synod from moderates in the name of biblical inerrancy.

¹⁷⁶ Tom Miller, "Committee Appointments the Key," in Shurden, *Going*, 57. Pressler later mentioned that Kansas City, where the 1984 convention would take place, was also an inerrantist stronghold. If successful each year in reelecting their presidents, inerrantists would enjoy at least seven years in power, more than enough time to make significant changes in the Convention.

¹⁷⁷ Sherman, 135.

professed inerrantist, to head off inerrantist candidate Bailey Smith.¹⁷⁸ In an election remarkably reminiscent of the previous year, Smith received 51.67 percent of the vote, easily routing the five other candidates.¹⁷⁹ Like former President Rogers, he also pastored a large church and had gained exposure at the Pastors' Conference.¹⁸⁰ Perhaps having learned from their mistake the previous year, enough messengers remained present after Smith's election to adopt a resolution that, in Shurden's words, foretold much of what would happen in the next decade.¹⁸¹

Resolution sixteen read like an inerrantist manifesto, exhorting trustees of seminaries and other SBC-affiliated agencies to ensure the employment of only "faculty members and professional staff who believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible, infallibility of the original manuscripts, and that the Bible is truth without any error."¹⁸² Thus, the motion that agency heads derailed in 1979 came back with a vengeance in 1980. When agency head Hobbs asked for the resolution to be softened, his amendment failed to garner majority support.¹⁸³ According to Hefley, this signified "that the time had passed when a denominational 'statesman' ... could bend the Convention his way on the Bible."¹⁸⁴ Like his predecessor, President Smith declared in a post-convention interview that he supported biblical inerrancy but took no part in the political schemes of Pressler and Patterson.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁸ Hefley, 47. Regardless of whether this was true or not, Jackson contributed substantially more money to the Convention than did Smith, leading many to put stock in this rumor. Those who contributed more via the Cooperative Program to the SBC tended to be moderates and agency heads.

¹⁷⁹ Cothen, *Memoir*, 79; Sherman, 135. Cothen claimed that these candidates were some of the "most gifted leaders in the convention." Sherman noted that future moderate candidate Richard Jackson, James Pleitz, and Frank Pollard were on the ballot.

¹⁸⁰ Hefley, 47.

¹⁸¹ Shurden, *Going*, 46.

¹⁸² "Resolution No. 16—On Doctrinal Integrity," in Shurden, *Going*, 55.

¹⁸³ Hefley, 48.

¹⁸⁴ Hefley, 48.

¹⁸⁵ Cothen, *Memoir*, 80.

Inerrantist rhetoric reached an alarming new pitch in September of 1980, when Pressler uttered unfortunate words that would further polarize the Convention. A couple of months after the St. Louis convention, he and Patterson attended a conference at Old Forest Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. When invited to speak, Pressler outlined the key to inerrantists' campaign: "The lifeblood of the Southern Baptist Convention is the trustees. We need to go for the jugular—we need to go for the trustees."¹⁸⁶ Rather than keep trustees that "sit there like a bunch of dummies and rubber stamp everything that's presented to them," inerrantists would appoint trustees who prized biblical inerrancy. Although Patterson had informed the media back in April of inerrantists' intent to secure the trustees, even spelling out this plan in resolution sixteen, Pressler's "violent" language immediately made headlines in several Baptist news agencies.¹⁸⁷ The jugular report was shortly covered by virtually every Baptist paper from Virginia to California. However, while inerrantists received much denigration for wickedly bringing "hardball politics into the Convention,"¹⁸⁸ Baptist editors largely agreed that the strategy would never work.

After the 1980 convention, Southern Seminary President Duke McCall encouraged Cecil Sherman to organize a resistance. If inerrantists had not appeared to be a threat before, Pressler's speech convinced them otherwise. Thus, Sherman sent letters to twenty-five pastors and invited them to a meeting at the Holiday Inn in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Within two weeks of the jugular speech, sixteen of the twenty-five arrived in Gatlinburg to determine what sort of response they should give to inerrantists.¹⁸⁹ Sherman defined these men as "products of the denominational educational system" who cheerfully helped to fund

¹⁸⁶ Cecil Sherman, "An Overview of the Moderate Movement" in Shurden, *Struggle*, 20.

¹⁸⁷ Druin, "Patterson," 48-50; Miller, "Committee," 57; Hefley, 48; Shurden, *Struggle*, xi.

¹⁸⁸ Sherman, 136.

¹⁸⁹ Sherman, 150, 153.

the denomination. They did not agree with inerrantists that the SBC had drifted into progressivism and suspected that inerrantists would endanger the Convention.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, Sherman's group of moderates sketched a list of potential allies and agreed to choose a candidate to oppose Bailey Smith's reelection in 1981. They concluded that in order to save their Convention from falling into inerrantists' hands, they too must commit themselves "to do Baptist politics." In an interview with *Baptist Press* after the Gatlinburg meeting, Sherman claimed that the real issue in the SBC was "not theology or the Bible," but an overt power grab.¹⁹¹

If agency heads possessed the same sense of urgency as did Sherman's group, they certainly responded differently. In October, the Executive Committee met and debated at length how it should react to resolution sixteen, ultimately concluding that "though the resolution of doctrinal integrity was not referred to the Executive Committee by the SBC, the Committee acknowledges the resolution as adopted by the Convention." That statement continued, "and [the Executive Committee] assures the Convention that the professional staff of the Executive Committee over the years has accepted the Baptist Faith and Message as adopted in 1963."¹⁹² This suggested two things: First, the Executive Committee held the power to refute the resolution, even while it garnered enough of a vote to pass. Moreover, they did not strike down the resolution out of fear that inerrantists' accusations that agency heads did not represent the interests of grassroots Baptists may have been vindicated. Second, they apparently felt the need to defend themselves doctrinally to the Convention.

¹⁹⁰ Sherman, "Overview," 21-22.

¹⁹¹ Dan Martin, "'Concerned Pastors Discuss Future; Deny Forming Faction,'" in Shurden, *Going*, 62; Sherman, 154.

¹⁹² Cothen, *Memoir*, 111.

With less than two years in power, inerrantists proved themselves already able to put pressure on the denominational leadership.

In January, Walter Shurden delivered a weighty address to the agency heads. Alarmed by the jugular speech, he warned them that Pressler was “one of the first persons in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention to know what the jugular of the Convention is.” As such, Pressler and his allies would not stop until their “well-funded political party” obtained authority over all the Convention’s institutions.¹⁹³ Shurden’s plea fell on deaf ears, for President Smith soon delivered a statement that defused tensions in the Convention. Claiming that he would do his best to bring harmony and peace to the SBC, the president’s conciliatory manner assuaged the concerns of the Executive Committee and other agency heads.¹⁹⁴ Specifically, President Smith promised to appoint a Committee on Committees that represented “all kinds of Baptists.” Moderate Jim Slatton, after conversing with a few agency heads, was expressly forbidden to oppose the incumbent president, since he would be “invincible” at the 1981 convention.¹⁹⁵ Since Sherman’s group wanted to thwart Pressler’s and Patterson’s agenda more than they wanted to beat President Smith, they decided to lie low until April.¹⁹⁶ When the president’s appointments became public in April, Sherman’s group called his bluff and chose Baylor University’s President Abner McCall as their first candidate.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Cothen, *Memoir*, 113. This language reflects the relative secrecy that shrouded the Convention’s proceedings.

¹⁹⁴ Cothen, *Memoir*, 114. James Slatton, “The History of the Political Network of the Moderate Movement,” in Shurden, *Struggle*, 50. President Smith even promised to sit down with both Pressler and Sherman to determine what appointments he should make for the Committee on Committees.

¹⁹⁵ Slatton, “History,” 50-51. Slatton also mentioned that two other agency heads advised Sherman’s group not to oppose President Smith at the 1981 convention.

¹⁹⁶ Cothen, *Memoir*, 115.

¹⁹⁷ Cothen, *Memoir*, 117-118; Slatton, “History,” 51.

The Los Angeles convention in 1981 illustrated the depth of discord between agency heads and moderates. Sherman's group arrived expecting to lose. They simply desired to make a statement by attaining 4,500 votes, enough to show inerrantists that their efforts would not continue unopposed. To their shock, Sherman's group realized that even their opposition would not go unopposed. Prior to the start of the convention, Porter Routh found Sherman and reprimanded him. "You people need to stand down. We have one troublesome group stirring the water, and now you people have formed another. We can take care of these people. We don't need your help." Shortly thereafter, another member of the Executive Committee sought him out and relayed the same warning, noting that Sherman's group would fail miserably and make fools of themselves if they followed through with their nomination of Abner McCall.¹⁹⁸

Ultimately, the moderates' candidate received 39 percent of the vote compared to the 60 percent acquired by incumbent President Smith. However, they succeeded in attaining their goal of 4,500 votes and certainly made a statement, prompting one moderate to say "I've never lost in such great numbers before."¹⁹⁹ Indeed, moderates proved to agency heads that they could organize. However, President Smith and other inerrantists at the convention muted the perceived necessity of a counter offensive with their pious language. They spoke so convincingly of good intentions and their desire for inclusivity in the Convention that agency heads decided to "get the controversy behind them and get on with the work of the

¹⁹⁸ Sherman, 154-7; Slatton, "History," 52. Given the customary two-year terms, Sherman's group was "bucking tradition" by opposing President Smith. This undoubtedly generated some of the agency heads' irritation.

¹⁹⁹ Slatton, "History," 50-51.

Convention.”²⁰⁰ This likely explains why a proposal to dilute the president’s appointive power failed.²⁰¹

The aftermath of the Los Angeles convention did not bode well for the mobilization of a united opposition. When Sherman accused the Executive Committee of helping get President Smith reelected, he received a letter from the Executive Committee’s chair, saying “His reelection was in the best interest of the SBC. He is not anti-denomination nor in the pocket of any particular group.”²⁰² This statement likely revealed the success of President Smith in distancing himself from Pressler and Patterson. The president convinced agency heads that he had no stake in the Inerrancy Controversy; rather, he felt that God placed him in his position of authority for the healing of the Convention. With one month remaining before the 1982 convention in New Orleans, President Smith claimed in an interview with *Baptist Standard* that his greatest contribution in the past two years was the “new peace” in the SBC. He even went so far as to say that he did not take offense at moderates’ opposition to his reelection. His “language of Zion,” as Sherman called it, obfuscated moderates’ decision whether or not to run a candidate in New Orleans. With just a month to campaign, Sherman’s group finally found a candidate willing to oppose inerrantists, Southern Seminary’s retiring President Duke McCall.²⁰³

At the New Orleans convention in 1982, inerrantists played their part so well that they created a temporary peace. Seeing how receptive agency heads were to President Smith’s language of Zion, inerrantists nominated James Draper for the presidency. Draper

²⁰⁰ Sherman, 158.

²⁰¹ Cothen, *Memoir*, 116. Interestingly, Cothen noted that this proposal was approved by the Executive Committee back in February. The failure of said proposal either indicates that the Executive Committee was quickly losing power or that they decided at the convention not to push it through.

²⁰² Sherman, 156-160.

²⁰³ Sherman, 162-164. It deserves mention that Duke McCall was the first agency head to cast his lot with moderates.

had a broad appeal as a *prima facie* centrist and had already gained a favorable hearing among grassroots Baptists in previous Pastors' Conferences. His church even gave strong monetary support to the Convention, likely increasing his favorability among agency heads. Perhaps due to agency heads' assumption that the Convention was returning to its traditional election procedures, two candidates were nominated in addition to inerrantist Draper and moderate McCall.²⁰⁴ On the first ballot, Draper received 8,081 votes to McCall's 6,124. Since the other two candidates accrued a combined 3,000 votes, Draper and McCall entered a runoff. Draper won with 57 percent of the vote, leaving McCall 43 percent.²⁰⁵ In a post-annual conference, President Draper denied any affiliation with Pressler and Patterson, and gave assurances that his presidency would be one of "healing and bringing [Southern Baptists] together."²⁰⁶

President Draper's attempts to bring Southern Baptists together for discussion had the effect of removing Sherman's group from political action for two years. The new president was considered by many to be less partisan than his two inerrantist predecessors.²⁰⁷ Despite having voted for McCall against Draper, Cothen recalled, "[President Draper] debunked the idea that he and I were adversaries," when he addressed the Trustees of the Sunday School Board in August.²⁰⁸ President Draper also bolstered his centrist appeal by calling for an SBC Leadership Discussion Meeting in late 1982, drawing leaders from virtually every arena of Southern Baptist life, including Sherman. President Draper made a painstaking effort to assuage the fears of moderates and agency heads, gently contending that inerrantists simply

²⁰⁴ Sherman, 164; Slatton, "History," 152. Sherman related that one of the moderates earlier dropped out of their alliance to endorse John Sullivan, one of the two nonpartisan candidates.

²⁰⁵ Sherman, 162-5. Once again, moderates succeeded in meeting their target number of votes.

²⁰⁶ Dan Martin, "New Orleans SBC Viewed by Editors," in Shurden, *Going*, 78; Cothen, *Memoir*, 169.

²⁰⁷ Leonard, 139; Sherman, 165.

²⁰⁸ Cothen, *Memoir*, 170.

desired parity in the Convention. The seminaries presented a case in point for his argument; inerrantists comprised an unquestionable minority of SBC-employed professors. Even Sherman admitted that the new president said things “that any fair person could not reject.” When Sherman and his group gathered together in May of 1983, they voted 19 to 6 not to oppose President Draper’s reelection. Given his reputation as a peacemaker, it would be “impossible to mount a campaign to defeat him in Pittsburgh.”²⁰⁹

However, once the incumbent president was reelected without opposition at the 1983 convention, the ostensible surrender of Sherman’s group drew the scorn of Christian Life Commission director Foy Valentine. He and a handful of other agency heads judged Sherman’s group to be ineffective and thought that a different approach might work better. In effect, Valentine told Sherman not to bother gearing up for the Kansas City convention in 1984 because he and a few allies already had a plan to win.²¹⁰ The Pittsburgh convention signified the only unopposed reelection during the entire Inerrancy Controversy. More importantly, it culminated a series of elections that had afforded inerrantists five whole years in power. By March of 1984, Pressler could comfortably say, “the direction of the Convention is irrevocably set. I do not think there will be any reversing of the direction that is now set.”²¹¹

The results of the 1984 convention indefinitely ensured that whatever resources and organization moderates mustered in their opposition to inerrantists’ ascendancy, it would be too little, too late. Valentine and his group arrived with their candidate, Grady Cothen, who had recently retired from his post as president of the Sunday School Board. Complicating

²⁰⁹ Sherman, 165-6; Cothen, *Memoir*, 177-178.

²¹⁰ Sherman, 167.

²¹¹ Dan Martin, “Progress Pleases Inerrantists; Say SBC Course Irrevocably Set,” in Shurden, *Going*, 102; Sutton, *Baptist*, 132.

matters, Cothen had to face off against John Sullivan and inerrantist candidate Charles Stanley, a prominent televangelist.²¹² While Cothen earned a reputable standing as a denominational statesman who had served in several posts, Sullivan appeared to many as a “middle-of-the-road candidate.”²¹³ Regardless of their respective attractiveness to voters, the two gained a combined 48 percent to Stanley’s 52 percent.²¹⁴ Further disquieting moderates and agency heads, the Committee on Nominations nominated Paul Pressler to a position on the Executive Committee. Although Winfred Moore moved that Pressler be replaced with another candidate, the inerrantist was allowed to assume his new post.²¹⁵ In the manner of his immediate predecessors, President Stanley denied his involvement with Pressler and Patterson.²¹⁶ Patterson later noted that “coming off the victory in Kansas City we had more confidence than ever before.”²¹⁷ With inerrantists’ sixth consecutive victory, the Kansas City convention, in Shurden’s words, was the “momentum swing ... that pushed [inerrantists] to eventual victory.”²¹⁸

Between the Kansas City convention and the subsequent convention in Dallas, the birth of a vocal formalized coalition of moderates precipitated escalated vitriol in the Inerrancy Controversy. In the wake of Stanley’s election, Southwestern Seminary’s President Russell Dilday and Duke McCall’s successor at Southern, President Roy Honeycutt, deliberated with other seminary presidents about what actions they might take, ultimately deciding to enlist the support of Sherman and his group to work together as a unified front.

²¹² Cothen, *Memoir*, 186. Cothen related that his supporters and Sullivan’s had discussed the possibility of one of them dropping out of the presidential race. Cothen felt that Sullivan could not win and Sullivan, likewise, felt that Cothen could not win. Thus, both candidates ran. Notably, this was one of the two candidates who ran along with Draper and McCall in 1982.

²¹³ Sherman, 167; Shurden, *Going*, 92-93.

²¹⁴ Sherman, 167. Specifically, Cothen got 26 percent and Sullivan got 21.5 percent.

²¹⁵ Shurden, *Going*, 93; Hefley, 52; Cothen, *Memoir*, 186-187.

²¹⁶ Cothen, *Memoir*, 186. Stanley also had previous exposure to grassroots Baptists at Pastors’ Conferences.

²¹⁷ Shurden, *Going*, 95.

²¹⁸ Shurden, *Going*, 92.

They determined to meet in October. Meanwhile, Presidents Dilday and Honeycutt began to vocally denounce inerrantists. Southwestern's president led the charge, criticizing Pressler's and Patterson's faction as a powerful machine that sought violently to replace the "spirit of Southern Baptist cooperation" with "the spirit of independent fundamentalism."²¹⁹ In a fall convocation on the campus of Southern Seminary, President Honeycutt declared unambiguously that "'unholy forces' are now at work—which, if left unchecked, will destroy essential qualities of both our Convention and this seminary." Reacting to inerrantists' recent efforts to gather intelligence concerning the theological positions of seminary presidents and professors, he declared "holy war."²²⁰

President Honeycutt's remarks soon drew a torrent of inerrantist criticism, particularly from SBC President Stanley, W.A. Criswell, and Patterson. Criswell and President Stanley demanded that he resign. Patterson decried the Southern president's comments and challenged him to a public debate.²²¹ On the heels of the escalating tensions in the Convention, moderates gathered at the Atlanta Hartsfield Airport and came together for the first time as a united front of moderates. Immediately, they chose president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Winfred Moore as their candidate to oppose President Stanley's reelection, and began campaigning. Moderates had roughly eight months to prepare for the battle at the Dallas convention in 1985. Taking into consideration the average convention of 30,000, they concluded that 16,000 votes would afford them a victory.²²²

The "shootout in Dallas," as it would soon be called, likely stood out as the most pivotal convention in the Inerrancy Controversy. Itching for a seventh successive victory,

²¹⁹ Cothen, *Memoir*, 187.

²²⁰ Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr., "To Your Tents O Israel," in Shurden, *Going*, 124, 132-3.

²²¹ Leonard, 141; Cothen, *Memoir*, 190.

²²² Sherman, 172-3.

Patterson and former President Draper warned grassroots Baptists that the Convention would be in danger if Stanley was not reelected.²²³ Criswell sent letters to thousands of ministers in the SBC, urging them to reelect “God’s prophet” at the Dallas convention.²²⁴ Vocal opposition from the seminary presidents and recently from the president of the Foreign Mission Board, according to Hefley, backfired by inspiring thousands of grassroots Baptists to come to the 1985 convention in support of President Stanley’s reelection. An unprecedented 45,000 messengers registered for the 1985 convention, the largest convention gathering in Southern Baptist history.²²⁵ This nearly doubled the record number of messengers at a convention before the Inerrancy Controversy.²²⁶ Moderate candidate Moore presented a real challenge to inerrantists. His “impeccable conservative credentials,” in Leonard’s words, undermined inerrantists’ representation of moderates as the “liberal fringe” of the Convention.²²⁷

On the other hand, Baptists who watched the *Dallas Morning News* on election day learned that Billy Graham relayed the following message to Stanley via an associate: “Tell [President Stanley] that I will be praying for him, during the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas. Tell him that if I could be there I would vote for him.”²²⁸ An endorsement from the typically non-partisan Graham, held in high regard by countless Southern Baptists, did not bode well for moderates. Whatever the extent that the renowned evangelist’s prayer played

²²³ Cothen, *Memoir*, 195, 198.

²²⁴ Cothen, *Memoir*, 203.

²²⁵ Hefley, 53; Ammerman, *Baptist*, 183. Ammerman said that nearly one fourth of her 1985 respondents at the convention reported watching Charles Stanley’s nationally syndicated TV program “In Touch.”

²²⁶ Cothen, *Memoir*, 204; Ammerman, *Baptist*, 3. Cothen claimed that this was the 1978 convention in Atlanta, where close to 23,000 messengers showed up. Then again, inerrantists had already done a significant amount of organizing by 1978. Consequently, Cothen’s claim seems to imply that before inerrantists were involved, significantly fewer numbers of messengers attended the conventions. Ammerman confirmed that “in all the history of the Southern Baptist Convention, barely more than 22,000 people had ever come to one of these annual meetings.”

²²⁷ Sherman, 171, 173; Leonard, 142.

²²⁸ Sherman, 173; Thomas Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists in America: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 234.

into the election, President Stanley proceeded to garner 55.3 percent of the vote, leaving Moore with only 44.7.²²⁹ Though moderates lost the election, they surpassed their goal of 16,000 votes by 4,000; taking the 1982 and 1984 conventions into consideration, however, this did not resemble much progress.²³⁰ In a conciliatory gesture, Stanley offered Moore the vice-presidency. Observer Nancy Ammerman wrote that messengers passionately applauded, sensing “a potential reconciliation in the air.”²³¹ Moderates and inerrantists knew better; the vice-president was little more than a figurehead.²³²

In the midst of “holy war,” a proposal for peace tugged at the heart strings of messengers, agency heads, inerrantists, and moderates alike.²³³ Agency heads Frank Paschall and Charles Pickering had initiated separate efforts to make peace between moderates and inerrantists. Shortly before the convention, Pickering consulted with several state Baptist presidents and determined to establish a Peace Committee, whose twenty members would be elected at the Dallas convention.²³⁴ With the blessing of the president, vice-president, Criswell, and Paschall, this committee, comprising leaders of inerrantists, moderates, and agency heads, was to study the origins of the present controversy in order to recommend possible solutions.²³⁵ Consequently, Paschall and agency head Bill Hickem’s motion that the Peace Committee be formally established received majority support. Although much of the committee consisted of “bridge-builders” and “middle-of-the-road” Baptists, former

²²⁹ Sherman, 173. Sherman claimed that Graham’s support for President Stanley “tipped the scales for anyone who was undecided, for Graham is held in high regard in the Southwest.”

²³⁰ In 1982, candidate Duke McCall accrued 43 percent of the vote, without the extra help that Sherman’s group now had. Furthermore, had John Sullivan and Grady Cothen come to an accord that only one should oppose Stanley in 1984, he likely would have fared the same as McCall, if not better.

²³¹ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 9.

²³² Hefley, 53; Sherman, 173-4.

²³³ Granted, each of these groups had different reasons for desiring peace in the Convention.

²³⁴ Leonard, 143; Cothen, *Memoir*, 202; Sherman, 180-181. Twenty-two served on the Peace Committee, when counting President Stanley and Vice-President Moore.

²³⁵ Sherman noted that the Peace Committee had the blessing of the agency heads.

President Rogers and inerrantist Jerry Vines, moderates Cecil Sherman and William Hull, and agency heads Herschel Hobbs and Albert McClellan served as the most prominent members of the committee.²³⁶

The coalition of moderates experienced the most debilitating events of its history in 1986.²³⁷ Given Sherman's position on the Peace Committee, moderates elected James Slatton to take charge of the moderate movement in his stead.²³⁸ At this point, the moderate movement finally had enough unity to create committees, distribute assignments, and employ a professional to manage the overall campaign. In short, moderates began to do what inerrantists had done since the outbreak of the Inerrancy Controversy.²³⁹ When the time came for the 1986 convention in Atlanta, the second largest in SBC history, moderates nominated Winfred Moore again.²⁴⁰ In what probably seemed like *déjà vu* to moderates, inerrantists nominated former President Rogers, who subsequently beat Moore 54 percent to 46.²⁴¹

Shortly after the gut-wrenching defeat in Atlanta, Sherman warned three of the seminary presidents involved in the moderates' group via letter that deliberations within the Peace Committee had taken a dangerous turn. He spelled out the following concerns: first, inerrantists had no intention of settling for less than complete control of the SBC and all its agencies; second, agency heads wanted moderates to cease political activities and often sided with inerrantists when the committee voted on issues; third, the Peace Committee would

²³⁶ Leonard, 143; "Motion to Establish SBC 'Peace Committee'" in Shurden, *Going*, 176; Sherman, 177, 180; Ammerman, *Baptist*, 9.

²³⁷ Although it may be argued that the 1988 and 1990 conventions were more debilitating, the events of 1986 mattered more since moderates possessed more hope of thwarting and reversing the inerrantist movement.

²³⁸ Sherman, "Overview," 27; Slatton, "History," 60. Sherman related that, although inerrantists on the committee did not abide by this rule, those on the Peace Committee were supposed to withdraw from political activity.

²³⁹ Slatton, "History," 63.

²⁴⁰ Sutton, *Baptist*, 161. Sutton wrote that almost 41,000 messengers attended this convention.

²⁴¹ Shurden, *Going*, 178. Contrasting with his 1979 election, President Rogers split the vote with only Moore, rather than four other candidates. Regrettably, most of the primary and secondary sources provide little information about this convention, even though it was the second largest in SBC history.

allow inerrantists to put pressure on the faculties of seminaries to teach only doctrines that harmonized with biblical inerrancy.²⁴² Likely reflecting upon Sherman's recent tidings, dismayed moderates gathered together at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, for a meeting in August. Whereas some moderates possessed the drive and enthusiasm to organize another campaign for the 1987 convention, others expressed their unwillingness to continue engaging in politics. As a result, efforts to create the Southern Baptist Alliance took place among the latter. Those belonging to this new proto-denomination agreed to continue voting for moderates in the conventions; however, they would cease overtly political efforts, believing that the time for stopping the inerrantist movement had already passed.²⁴³ After a mere two years of politicking, moderates took a severe blow to their momentum.

Agency heads met with the Peace Committee for a prayer retreat at the Glorieta Baptist Conference Center in Glorieta, New Mexico, in late October of 1986. More than fifty people gathered there to enjoy worship, testimonies, and discussion. The trappings of this retreat, however, did not negate business matters that needed to be discussed. According to Sherman, agency heads such as Midwestern Seminary's President Milton Ferguson, Southeastern Seminary's President Randall Lolley, and Southern Seminary's President Roy Honeycutt attended out of necessity. The Peace Committee had placed each of them under special observation due to allegations that their seminaries propagated progressive theology.²⁴⁴

²⁴² Sherman, 200-205. Sherman admitted he broke protocol by writing this letter, but sensed that the Peace Committee had been pointless (for moderates) from the start. The three presidents he sent his letters to were Russell Dilday, Roy Honeycutt, and Southeastern Seminary's Randall Lolley.

²⁴³ Sherman, "Overview," 27; Slatton, "History," 65.

²⁴⁴ Sherman, 206; Leonard, 145. Members of the committee had interviewed faculty and seminary heads in order to discern whether or not they were working "outside the bounds" of the Baptist Faith & Message statement with specific regards to the inerrancy of Scripture.

On October 22, 1986, President Ferguson presented a statement to the Peace Committee, thereafter known as the Glorieta Statement. Signed by the presidents of each of the SBC's six seminaries, it read, "We believe the Bible is fully inspired; it is 'God-breathed,' utterly unique. No other book or collection of books can justify that claim. The sixty-six books of the Bible are not errant in any area of reality."²⁴⁵ Moreover, the seminary presidents told the Peace Committee that they would do their best to maintain equity in the seminaries, allowing biblical inerrancy to be taught and encouraged as a valid Baptist doctrine. This statement represented the antithesis of the traditional Baptist spirit they claimed to defend. When an outraged Sherman confronted Southwestern Seminary President Dilday, he replied, "Cecil, you are more trouble to us than those people are," nodding to inerrantists. After berating President Lolley at breakfast the next morning, Sherman promptly resigned from the Peace Committee. In his eyes, the seminary presidents capitulated to inerrantists in order to save their schools. The most powerful moderates cut the heart out of the moderate movement: "The people we set out to save would not own us ... [they] no longer wanted our help."²⁴⁶

The Peace Committee had a death blow yet to deliver to the moderates at the St. Louis convention in 1987. Moderates chose Richard Jackson, a former ally of inerrantists, to oppose President Rogers' reelection, supposing that he might be able to slow inerrantists' momentum.²⁴⁷ At the remarkably slighter convention of 25,600 messengers, Jackson

²⁴⁵ "The Glorieta Statement of the Seminary Presidents," in Shurden, *Going*, 195; Sherman, 206-207.

²⁴⁶ Sherman, "Overview," 39, 42; Sherman, 207-208.

²⁴⁷ "Richard Jackson Shares His Heart," *Texas Baptists Committed*, May 2000, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://www.txbc.org/2000Journals/00May.pdf>; Slatton, "History," 68. At this point, Slatton resigned and former Vice-President Moore assumed moderate leadership. Slatton did not note why he resigned. In addition, Jackson related that he left the inerrantist movement because the movement was political "from the beginning." He became particularly disaffected towards their cause after they called some of his mentors and friends liberal.

managed only 40 percent of the vote, markedly less than Moore did the previous year.²⁴⁸ If that did not dampen moderate spirits enough, the Peace Committee submitted its final report to the Convention, noting its agreement that “all organized political factions [should] discontinue the organized political activity in which they are now engaged.” The report basically vindicated inerrantists:

The controversy of the last decade began as a theological concern. When *people of good intention* became frustrated because they felt their convictions on Scripture were not seriously dealt with, they organized politically to make themselves heard. Soon, another group formed to counter the first and the political process intensified.²⁴⁹

By claiming inerrantists had good intentions and purely theological concerns, the committee effectively placed the blame on moderates for intensifying the conflict. In addition, the committee deduced that peace within the SBC could be ascertained only if trustees and administrators of all SBC agencies and seminaries affirmed the Bible as “not errant in any area of reality.” With the subsequent adoption of this report, inerrantists defended themselves as victims who did what they needed to do to protect their beliefs. Moreover, they expressly forbade any future political activities and strongly encouraged all SBC employees to adhere to biblical inerrancy.²⁵⁰

No other election since 1979 had been fought as fiercely as that of 1988.²⁵¹ Given inerrantists’ nine consecutive victories and success in forcing the resignation of Southeastern President Randall Lolley in 1987, moderates campaigned vigorously to win at San Antonio.²⁵² Still holding out hope that their victory could even the playing field, they once

²⁴⁸ Sutton, *Baptist*, 178.

²⁴⁹ “Special Reports: Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee,” in Shurden, *Going*, 212. The emphases are mine.

²⁵⁰ “Special Reports,” 212-213.

²⁵¹ Morgan, 92.

²⁵² Hefley, 59, 65; Shurden, *Going*, 231-233. Inerrantists now dominated Southeastern seminary’s board of trustees. In the next few years, Southeastern would witness a dramatic turnover in students and professors. If

again selected Richard Jackson as their candidate. Although Jerry Vines had previous exposure at Pastors' Conferences like his predecessors, he had nowhere near the same popularity. In contrast, Jackson had supporters among both moderates and inerrantists.²⁵³ When Jackson and Vines squared away at the San Antonio convention, they were also joined by two other candidates.

Although attendance significantly dipped between the 1986 and 1987 conventions, the 1988 convention witnessed a spike. From a pool of 31,000 messengers, Vines took 50.5 percent of the vote, leaving 48.3 to Jackson. According to Slatton, this represented the peak of the moderate networking effort.²⁵⁴ Further asserting their control, inerrantists adopted a controversial resolution at the 1988 San Antonio convention, which denigrated the way in which moderates and agency heads used the doctrine of “the priesthood of the believer” to “justify wrongly the attitude that a Christian may believe whatever he so chooses and still be considered a loyal Southern Baptist.” Resolution Five therefore concluded that the proper interpretation of the priesthood of the believer did not license Southern Baptists to question the inerrancy of the Bible.²⁵⁵

Encouraged by their narrow margin of defeat, moderates restyled themselves as “centrists” and determinedly campaigned for the 1989 convention in Las Vegas. They launched “Baptists Committed to the Southern Baptist Convention” and chose self-professed

moderates did not muster a victory soon, they knew they would see the same results in all SBC seminaries. If unchecked, nothing would be impossible for inerrantists.

²⁵³ Morgan, 93. Presumably, they assumed that Jackson only lost the year before due to President Rogers' insurmountable influence and favorability.

²⁵⁴ Slatton, “History,” 69; Sutton, *Baptist*, 186-197; Morgan, 93. The two other candidates apparently managed less than 400 votes combined. Slatton remarked that “many suspect that moderates actually had more people there than the [inerrantists].” Sutton claimed that there were so many extra people at the convention because Moore sent a mass mailing out to Baptists that accused inerrantists of dividing the SBC. However, Sutton also maintained that Randal Lolley's endorsement of Jackson was what ultimately ensured his defeat.

²⁵⁵ “Resolution No. 5—On The Priesthood of the Believer” in Shurden, *Going*, 237.

inerrantist Daniel Vestal to oppose President Vines's reelection.²⁵⁶ Declaring that inerrantists' theology was not the issue so much as their exclusivist appointments, former Peace Committee member Vestal appeared to be a strong candidate. Empathizing with inerrantists, he contended "I do have theological concerns but am also committed to openness and freedom ... There cannot be real unity in the SBC as long as you disenfranchise large groups of people."²⁵⁷ Incumbent President Vines, however, strategically shifted the focus from denominational turmoil towards missions and evangelism.²⁵⁸ On election day, Vestal succeeded in raising only 43 percent of the vote from roughly 20,000 messengers, leaving President Vines with 57 percent.²⁵⁹ Within a few months, agency head Jimmy Allen took over leadership of Baptists Committed from previous leader Moore.²⁶⁰

The last ditch effort of Baptists Committed to turn the tide precipitated the formal fragmentation of the SBC. Thirty-seven thousand messengers showed up at the New Orleans convention in 1990 to see if Vestal could defeat inerrantist candidate Morris Chapman. Although agency heads had never opposed an incumbent president during the Inerrancy Controversy, they now refused to offer a candidate during a regular election year. When the votes were tallied, Chapman received 58 percent of the vote to Vestal's 42.²⁶¹ In ecstasy over their victory, inerrantists then descended upon the Café du Monde singing "Victory in Jesus." Presenting Pressler and Patterson with tokens of appreciation, they commemorated the legendary meeting of their two ringleaders back in 1967, when they first discussed their concerns over the future of the Convention.²⁶² After twelve successive victories, inerrantists

²⁵⁶ Slatton, "History," 70.

²⁵⁷ Hefley, 80.

²⁵⁸ Hefley, 78.

²⁵⁹ Hefley, 83.

²⁶⁰ Jimmy Allen, "The History of Baptists Committed," in Shurden, *Struggle*, 96-97.

²⁶¹ Hefley, 207.

²⁶² Patterson, *Conservative*, 5-6; Morgan, 104.

now held enough sway over the Convention to effect whatever changes they saw necessary. Moderates never again opposed inerrantists for the presidential elections nor did they attend conventions *en masse*. Although some stayed in the Convention, many joined quasi-denominations such as the Southern Baptist Alliance or the newly formed Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.²⁶³ Citing irreconcilable differences, moderates and inerrantists legally divorced. Agency heads who refused to politick found themselves powerless to resist inerrantists, resigning to uncomfortable lives of conformity under the new guard.²⁶⁴ The SBC would surely continue to experience conflicts in the next decade. However, the Inerrancy Controversy was officially over.

²⁶³ Shurden, *Going*, 249.

²⁶⁴ Cothen, *Memoir*, 103.

Chapter Four: Tug of War, 1971-1990

Southern Baptists fought over more than theology and politics; they fought about the SBC's relationship to the surrounding culture. Agency heads had no qualms about responding judiciously to the Equal Rights Amendment and the *Roe v. Wade* decision, since moderates tended to lean towards the progressive side on these issues and inerrantists stood firmly on the conservative side. However, inerrantists interpreted agency heads' stances as heretical, ambiguous, or too soft. While conservative religious activists like Phyllis Schlafly, Beverly LaHaye, and Anita Bryant waged war against women's liberation, the SBC's own Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and Christian Life Commission seemed to be encouraging the movement. By the mid to late 1970s, Jerry Falwell took part in the conservative counter-movement. Between the late 1970s and the late 1980s, inerrantists also became heavily involved in the culture wars, resembling the response of evangelicals outside of the SBC much more than that of moderates and agency heads.

When inerrantists served on organizations like the Moral Majority, Religious Roundtable, and American Coalition for Traditional Values with Falwell, moderates and agency heads lambasted them. How could inerrantists fight to enforce their interpretations of cultural issues on all Americans, much less Southern Baptists? Being proponents of a strict separation between church and state, Foy Valentine and James Dunn became consistent targets for inerrantists' attacks. How could moderates and agency heads maintain a separatist view of church and state when the state was issuing such overt threats to the church? Accordingly, the battle lines drawn around social issues in the 1970s and 1980s mirrored those drawn around biblical inerrancy. In effect, the Inerrancy Controversy represented

moderates' contestation to inerrantists' campaign for the right to interpret authoritatively the SBC's theology, polity, and cultural engagement.

Perhaps the clearest indicator of disparity between the SBC's leadership and inerrantists was the chasm between their stances on abortion. Whether agency heads' statements represented their own interpretations or those of the moderates they desired to protect, the Convention fervently fought over this issue. As early as 1971, Southern Baptists were divided as to whether they should oppose any legal abortion or allow it to be a "purely private matter between a woman and her doctor."²⁶⁵ At the 1971 convention in St. Louis, they resolved that Southern Baptists should work for legislation that allowed the possibility of an abortion under the circumstances of "rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother."²⁶⁵ On the other hand, this did not appease those who expressed their views that all abortion was tantamount to murder.²⁶⁶ Carl F. H. Henry, an outspoken evangelical critic of abortion and ideological godfather of many inerrantists, had already maintained that abortion was a three party issue, affecting mother, father, and child. Consequently, he reasoned, it could not be a private issue between a woman and her doctor.²⁶⁷

In the immediate wake of *Roe v. Wade*, moderates and agency heads clearly controlled the terms of the debate on abortion. On January 31, 1973, W. Barry Garrett of

²⁶⁵ "Resolution on Abortion," *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1971, accessed February 23, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/13/resolution-on-abortion>; Morgan, 23. For those who opposed legal abortion, an exception was made only if the life of the mother was threatened.

²⁶⁶ "Resolution on Abortion and the Sanctity of Life," *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1974, accessed February 23, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/14/resolution-on-abortion-and-sanctity-of-human-life>. At the 1974 convention, messengers interpreted the 1971 resolution as a balance "between the extreme of abortion on demand and the opposite extreme of all abortion as murder."

²⁶⁷ Carl F. H. Henry, "Abortion: An Evangelical View" in *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Matthew Avery Sutton (Boston, Massachusetts: Bedford, 2013), 95-96.

Baptist Press maintained that the *Roe v. Wade* decision “advanced the cause of religious liberty, human equality, and justice.” In contrast to the Roman Catholic hierarchy, which vehemently opposed the decision, Garrett continued, “there is no official Southern Baptist position on abortion.” This was simply a matter of conscience.²⁶⁸ Garrett’s opinion fit quite cohesively with the St. Louis convention’s 1971 resolution. Surprisingly, inerrantist W. A. Criswell responded that since the child only became an individual person after birth, the rights and health of the mother ought to be prioritized.²⁶⁹ However, this likely illustrated how little inerrantists had thought about abortion, as historian Barry Hankins suggested.²⁷⁰ After Senator James Buckley introduced a constitutional amendment that would overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs’ [BJCPA] executive director James Wood Jr. immediately opposed it. Wood argued that the state “should not embody into law one particular religious or moral viewpoint on which differing views are held by substantial sections of the religious and nonreligious communities.”²⁷¹ Nonetheless, the 1974 convention in Dallas saw the abortion issue resurface, suggesting that inerrantists were displeased with the 1971 resolution. No doubt, the resolution “On Abortion and Sanctity of Human Life” further angered inerrantists. When Dallas messengers reaffirmed the 1971 resolution and

²⁶⁸ W. Barry Garrett, “High Court Holds Abortion to be ‘A Right of Privacy,’” *Baptist Press*, January 23, 1973, accessed February 24, 2016, <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/3521,31-Jan-1973.pdf>. He continued that “among 12 million Southern Baptists, there are probably 12 million different opinions.”

²⁶⁹ Hankins, 169.

²⁷⁰ Hankins, 169; Randall Balmer, “The Real Origins of the Religious Right,” *Politico Magazine*, May 27, 2014, accessed February 24, 2016, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/05/religious-right-real-origins-107133>. Professor Balmer of Dartmouth College cited the 1971, 1974, and 1976 SBC resolutions as well as W. A. Criswell’s statement in order to suggest that abortion was only a cover issue for evangelicals to get involved in politics. The real issue, he claimed, was the protection of segregated schools. That six years existed between *Roe v. Wade* and the inception of the Moral Majority in 1979 led Balmer to doubt the veracity of evangelicals’ deep concern over abortion.

²⁷¹ Hankins, 174. He went on to say that the BJCPA determined this because of “its long tradition for upholding liberty of conscience and the separation of church and state.”

defended it as having been dealt with “responsibly from a Christian perspective,” they implied that to oppose said resolution was irresponsible.²⁷²

Inerrantists made their dissatisfaction with the denominational leadership much more visible in the mid to late 1970s. A resolution passed by messengers at the 1976 convention in Norfolk, Virginia, bore a few traces of the rising escalation over the abortion issue. Interestingly, agency heads made some concessions for inerrantists. First, they noted that “the practice of abortion for selfish non-therapeutic reasons wantonly destroys fetal life.” Second, agency heads agreed that each abortion, no matter the circumstances, spelled the termination of an innocent life. Third, they admonished Southern Baptists to work to change the attitudes and conditions that encouraged people to resort to abortion as a means of birth control. That agency heads felt the need to make these statements rather than reaffirm the 1971 resolution confirmed that inerrantists had put pressure on them. This resolution revealed what inerrantists felt was problematic about the legalization of abortion: that the unborn signified a third party, in Carl F. H. Henry’s words, and that most people who sought abortion did so for selfish reasons. Conceding these concerns, agency heads went on to “support the right of expectant mothers to the *full* range of medical services and personal counseling for the preservation of life and health.” In addition, they affirmed that the government deserved no more than a limited role in dealing with matters related to abortion.²⁷³

This did not bring any semblance of closure to the matter, however. In 1977, CLC director Foy Valentine drew the ire of inerrantists when he signed the “Call to Concern,” a statement issued by the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights. Responding to *Roe v. Wade*

²⁷² “Resolution,” 1974.

²⁷³ “Resolution on Abortion,” *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1976, accessed February 24, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/15/resolution-on-abortion>.

opposition, Valentine and the other four Southern Baptist signers articulated their desire to protect the rights of impoverished women and called upon “the leaders of religious groups supporting abortion rights to speak out more clearly and publicly in response to the dangerously increasing influence of the absolutist position.”²⁷⁴ When the abortion issue resurfaced at the 1977 convention in Kansas City, agency heads were at pains to express that the 1976 resolution represented a “strong stand against abortion.”²⁷⁵ Thus, the Convention voted to reaffirm the previous resolution. The issue did not dissipate. In 1978, Valentine accepted an invitation from the chairperson of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights to become one of their national sponsors.²⁷⁶ When abortion again received the limelight at the Atlanta convention in 1978, agency heads attempted to quell the issue by maintaining that they had already spoken “clearly and forthrightly” about it at the previous convention.²⁷⁷ Clearly, inerrantists and agency heads did not agree. Hankins rightly interpreted the successive resolutions of the past five years as a sign that pro-life forces were gaining momentum.²⁷⁸

When Southern Baptists fought about women’s rights, they did not fight each other about the Equal Rights Amendment so much as its perceived implication for women’s ordination and feminism. When the ERA was ratified in 1972 by twenty-two out of the necessary thirty-eight states, the SBC exhibited mixed response.²⁷⁹ In 1973, Southern Seminary students publicly professed their support for women in virtually all areas of

²⁷⁴ Sutton, *Baptist*, 310. One signer was a professor at Southeastern, another was a professor at Southwestern, and the last two were professors at Southern.

²⁷⁵ “Resolution on Abortion,” *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1977, accessed February 24, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/16/resolution-on-abortion>.

²⁷⁶ Sutton, *Baptist*, 310.

²⁷⁷ “Resolution on Abortion,” *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1978, accessed February 24, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/17/resolution-on-abortion>.

²⁷⁸ Hankins, 183.

²⁷⁹ Elizabeth Flowers, *Into the Pulpit: Southern Baptist Women and Power since World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 53.

ministry. This was followed by President Duke McCall's statement that "most Baptists have long since explained [the Apostle Paul's] admonitions to women to keep silent in the church as being rooted in a local situation."²⁸⁰ However, at the 1973 convention in Portland, Oregon, messenger Jessie Sappington moved that the Convention address the harmful effects of the women's liberation movement on Christian women. Although a couple of women opposed her motion, Joyce Rogers wholeheartedly endorsed it, claiming that women are "liberated in Christ" without assuming positions of authority.²⁸¹ Messengers subsequently passed the resolution that acknowledged feminists' "great attack" upon Christian women and exhorted Southern Baptists to remember "God's order of authority for his church and the Christian home: (1) Christ the head of every man; (2) man the head of the woman; (3) children in subjection to their parents—in the Lord."²⁸²

The 1973 resolution plainly did not represent the voice of all Southern Baptists. In fact, between the time that Congress passed the ERA in March, 1972, and the convention in 1974, eleven Southern Baptist women received ordination. In addition, women in SBC seminaries increasingly began to express their desire for ordination.²⁸³ Thus, the CLC took it upon themselves to act as the Southern Baptist vehicle for women's liberation. At the 1974 convention in Dallas, the CLC's Herbert Howard proposed the adoption of its report, "Freedom for Women." In this report, the CLC exhorted SBC churches and agencies to reject discrimination against women in job placement, provide equal pay for equal work, and elect women to positions of leadership. Sappington immediately moved that the Convention table

²⁸⁰ Hankins, 203.

²⁸¹ Flowers, 51-52. She was the wife of Bellevue Baptist Church's pastor, Adrian Rogers. The other woman, Anne Roser, argued that Scripture was not clear on the issue of women's ordination.

²⁸² "Resolution on the Place of Women in Christian Service," *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1973, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1090/resolution-on-the-place-of-women-in-christian-service>.

²⁸³ Flowers, 58-59.

the report, criticizing its support for women's ordination. Messengers overwhelmingly obliged Sappington's request.²⁸⁴ Following the convention, *Western Recorder's* C. R. Daley commended SBC leaders for "refusing to endorse the ultra-conservative view or the ultra-progressive view on theology and social issues."²⁸⁵ Refusing to accept their recent defeat, the CLC hosted a Christian Liberation for Contemporary Women conference in Glorieta, New Mexico. Likely based on the desire to present multiple Southern Baptist views on abortion and women's rights, Broadman Press published the fourteen lectures given at the conference.²⁸⁶

Over the next few years, the women's rights issue became more polarized and complex. As with the abortion issue, a Catholic activist sounded the first trumpet call against the ERA. After Congress passed the ERA in 1972, Phyllis Schafly immediately formed STOP ERA in order to counter what she perceived to be a threat to the American family.²⁸⁷ Before the 1974 convention, Joyce Rogers published a pamphlet that defended wives' submission to their husbands as God's plan rather than patriarchal chauvinism.²⁸⁸ Between 1974 and 1978, while ordained Southern Baptist women more than tripled in number, Baptist women Anita Bryant and Beverly LaHaye publicly launched an anti-feminist campaign.²⁸⁹ Moreover, they laid the framework for the Christian Right's family values campaign by linking feminism to abortion, divorce, and homosexuality. When the issue of homosexuality came before the 1976 convention in Norfolk, Virginia, messengers overwhelmingly supported the motion that urged churches and agencies "not to afford the practice of

²⁸⁴ Flowers, 59.

²⁸⁵ Flowers, 59. This was the same convention that reaffirmed the cautious 1971 resolution on abortion.

²⁸⁶ Flowers, 60. Flowers noted that a handful of those who would become moderates were at this conference.

²⁸⁷ Flowers, 52-53. Schafly specifically lamented that women who desired to be homemakers would lose wife-care benefits under Social Security and exemption from the armed services.

²⁸⁸ Flowers, 56-57.

²⁸⁹ Flowers, 55, 58. The number of ordained women increased from thirteen to fifty.

homosexuality any degree of approval through ordination, employment, or other designations of normal lifestyle.”²⁹⁰ In addition, messengers at the 1977 convention in Kansas City voted overwhelmingly to pass a resolution commending Bryant for her “courageous stand against the evils inherent in homosexuality.”²⁹¹

In the years leading up to the outbreak of the Inerrancy Controversy, agency heads viewed the prospect of women ministers with cautious optimism. In 1977, Baptist historian H. Leon McBeth observed the rising percentage of women seminarians preparing to be ministers, noting that the new factor in the Southern Baptist debate over women’s ordination was the presence of “a cadre of female teachers and scholars.” He predicted that Southern Baptists would likely follow suit as their host culture granted more rights to women.²⁹² Although messengers at the 1978 convention in Atlanta passed a resolution decrying Congress’s proposal that the time period for the ratification of the ERA be extended, the mood of the Convention seemed to be gradually swinging toward the ordination of women.²⁹³ In September of 1978 the SBC Inter-Agency Council hosted a Consultation on Women in Church-Related Vocations conference at the Sunday School Board’s headquarters, attracting a crowd of nearly three hundred. Nearly every significant denominational post was represented at this conference.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ “Resolution on Homosexuality,” *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1976, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/606/resolution-on-homosexuality>. This was the same convention that provided a relatively ambiguous resolution on abortion.

²⁹¹ Flowers, 55, 57-58. “Resolution on Homosexuality,” *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1977, accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/607/resolution-on-homosexuality>.

²⁹² Hankins, 200, 204.

²⁹³ “Resolution on Preserving the United States Constitution and the Amending Process,” *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1978, accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/search/results.asp?query=equal+rights+amendment>.

²⁹⁴ Flowers, 61. Specifically, “Eleven SBC agencies, commissions, committees, and educational institutions formally sponsored the event ... Practically every SBC agency head, commission chair, and seminary president was present.”

The unofficial purpose of this conference, wrote historian Elizabeth Flowers, was to discuss the status of women's ordination. Two professors from Southern Seminary and a handful of women of various occupations put pressure on agency heads to create an environment in the SBC that cultivated equal opportunities for women.²⁹⁵ In response, Roy Honeycutt, provost of Southern Seminary, advised women not to seek ordination if they desired marketability. Too few churches welcomed the ordination of women. On the other hand, SBC President Jimmy Allen affirmed women's ordination. After likening this issue to the Civil Rights movement and revealing that he had voted for the ERA, President Allen encouraged all those present to "as a family work to remove artificial barricades for service from all the family members." In bureaucratic fashion, he nevertheless cautioned women to seek a balance between persistence and patience.²⁹⁶

Moderates seemed most likely to support the ERA, women's ordination, and abortion. Agency heads certainly exhibited caution in their approval of these matters. However, the response of a local pastor from Lynchburg, Virginia, most closely resembled the utter revulsion felt by inerrantists. After enjoying a religious upbringing and a short period of adolescent rebellion, Jerry Falwell left his hometown of Lynchburg, Virginia, to attend an independent Baptist seminary in the Midwest. When he completed his theological education, he returned and became pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church. Between 1956 and 1971, Falwell launched his own successful radio and television ministry, founded Liberty Christian Academy, and established Liberty University.²⁹⁷ Before the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling, he had abstained from secular politicking, thinking it inappropriate for religious ministers.

²⁹⁵ Flowers, 62-64.

²⁹⁶ Flowers, 61, 65-66.

²⁹⁷ He founded Liberty Christian Academy (originally called Lynchburg Christian Academy) in 1967 and Liberty University (originally called Lynchburg Baptist College) in 1971.

Although he had passionately followed the abortion debate for some time, he let well enough alone by simply preaching against it to his congregation and through his radio and television ministry.²⁹⁸ Upon reading the January 23, 1973, edition of the *Lynchburg News*, however, the same Falwell who denigrated preachers for taking political action in his fiery “Ministers and Marches” sermon in 1965 now proclaimed the government untrustworthy to “correct its own ills.”²⁹⁹ Initially, he involved himself in politics the only way he knew how, exhorting his congregation and the listeners of his media ministry towards “all-out political involvement.”³⁰⁰

As the 1970s progressed, Falwell’s distaste for *Roe v. Wade* and reverence for theologian Francis Schaeffer catapulted him into his first de facto campaign. In 1976, Schaeffer published the book and complementary film *How Shall We Then Live?*, in which he laid out his solid stance against abortion and called on Christians to “stem the tide of ‘secular humanism.’”³⁰¹ Schaeffer’s writings profoundly influenced the Lynchburg reverend, particularly challenging him that to work with those of different religious backgrounds for a common good did not necessitate “compromise of theological integrity.”³⁰² It was not coincidental that Falwell organized his *I Love America* tour the same year that Schaeffer published his influential book and spoke to college campuses around the nation. The *I Love America* tour was a musical program that boasted seventy students from Liberty University. Visiting over 140 cities, Falwell used this tour as a platform to address what he termed

²⁹⁸ Jerry Falwell, *Falwell, An Autobiography* (Lynchburg, Virginia: Liberty House Publishers, 1997), 357-359. Importantly, he noted that he had followed Francis Schaeffer’s writings on abortion.

²⁹⁹ Falwell, *Falwell*, 360.

³⁰⁰ Falwell, *Falwell*, 365.

³⁰¹ Sutton, *Falwell*, 16.

³⁰² Falwell, *Falwell*, 386. Falwell recalled Schaeffer’s argument that “there is no Biblical mandate against evangelical Christians joining hands for political and social causes as long as there was no compromise of theological integrity ... the Bible is filled with stories of the yoking together of persons from various philosophical backgrounds for the purpose of carrying out a cause that was good for humanity and pleasing to God.”

America's "national sin," abortion.³⁰³ At the end of each musical program, he exhorted pastors and laity to take political action against abortion "and the other social trends that menaced the nation's future."³⁰⁴

As the Inerrancy Controversy drew near, Falwell's campaign began to emulate that of Beverly LaHaye and Anita Bryant. In 1978, Falwell published *How You Can Help Clean Up America*. In this book, he defended Bryant's firm stance against homosexuality, claiming that such a practice was contrary to the Bible and "the divine order of the home."³⁰⁵ During the same year, Falwell and his musical team from Liberty created a multi-media presentation called *America, You're Too Young to Die!* He concluded each performance with the solemn admonition that God gave the Israelites in the biblical book of Second Chronicles: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."³⁰⁶ Falwell's programs awarded him favor with equally concerned religious conservatives across the country. Indeed, by January of 1979, he had discussed the possibility of organizing a political group of concerned conservatives with Ed McAteer, a well-traveled Southern Baptist businessman and member of Adrian Rogers's church.³⁰⁷ McAteer, in David Morgan's words, represented the most direct link between the SBC and the Religious Right.³⁰⁸

The climax of Falwell's politicking efforts came in the spring of 1979. In April, he and his musical crew took their *I Love America* presentations to forty-four state capitals. At

³⁰³ Falwell, *Falwell*, 359.

³⁰⁴ Falwell, *Falwell*, 368-369.

³⁰⁵ Jerry Falwell, "Homosexuality: Is It An Acceptable Lifestyle?" in Sutton, *Falwell*, 108-109.

³⁰⁶ Falwell, *Falwell*, 381-383. The specific verse is 2 Chronicles 7:14.

³⁰⁷ Daniel Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 174.

³⁰⁸ Morgan, 164.

each capital, he intentionally met with like-minded pastors and lay leaders, resulting in a substantial network of contacts. Along with the rallies held by Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson, as well as Harold Lindsell's timely tract propagating the dangers of progressivism³⁰⁹, Falwell's musical presentations likely played a role in inspiring grassroots Baptists to vote for an inerrantist president at the 1979 convention in June. When Falwell hosted a meeting with a group of religious leaders in May, his friend and Catholic political activist Paul Weyrich said, "Jerry, there is in America a moral majority that agrees about the basic issues. But they aren't organized. They don't have a platform. The media ignore them. Somebody's got to get that moral majority together."³¹⁰ Another Catholic activist, Richard Viguerie, discussed with Weyrich and Falwell the necessity of organizing the growing number of grassroots Christian activists into a "consistent voting bloc that would bolster the power of the conservative wing of the GOP."³¹¹ Their deliberations resulted in the incorporation of the Moral Majority on June 1, 1979, ten days before the controversial election of SBC President Adrian Rogers; its board of directors conspicuously featured inerrantist Charles Stanley and Tim LaHaye.³¹²

Shortly after President Rogers' election, zealous inerrantists formally began their political involvement with Falwell.³¹³ At the 1979 convention, inerrantists had failed to pass an amendment preventing ordained women from serving in domestic or foreign mission fields. Moreover, their amendment to "call upon [Southern Baptists] to work on all levels of government ... to protect the personhood of all human life at all stages of development

³⁰⁹ This was Lindsell's *Bible in the Balance*.

³¹⁰ Falwell, *Falwell*, 382-384.

³¹¹ Sutton, *Falwell*, 20.

³¹² Falwell, *Falwell*, 387-388. "Jerry Falwell," C-Span, accessed February 29, 2016, <http://www.c-span.org/person/?jerryfalwell>. Falwell wrote that the Moral Majority consisted of both a political lobbying organization and an educational foundation that utilized media to further the lobby's agenda.

³¹³ Of course they celebrated winning the presidential election at the convention. However, they were unable to accomplish a couple of their goals.

whether born or unborn,” was also unsuccessful.³¹⁴ Messengers voted to reaffirm the previous resolutions on abortion.³¹⁵ However, inerrantists took matters into their own hands after the convention. In late 1979, McAteer formed the Religious Roundtable, an organization of pastors, businessmen, and politicians designed to help other Religious Right groups strategize and implement “biblical responsibility in government.”³¹⁶ By biblical responsibility, he specified that America needed to get back to family values and away from its national sin. One of its chief aims was to “reach into the Southern Baptist Convention ... as well as other conservative denominations.” The board of directors featured Paige Patterson, James Robison, Charles Stanley, and Adrian Rogers. Moreover, W.A. Criswell, Bill Powell, Tim LaHaye, North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, and Jerry Falwell served on the Roundtable’s Council of 56.³¹⁷

A few events in October demonstrated that inerrantists were not the only ones politically inclined. Having caught wind of Valentine’s affiliation with the National Coalition of Abortion Rights, one inerrantist wrote to the editor of *Indiana Baptist*, questioning the posture of the CLC’s director as representing all Southern Baptists. Valentine soon wrote the editor and advised him not to respond. Any response from him might dignify the inerrantist’s complaint.³¹⁸ In addition, the BJCPA’s James Wood joined two professors from Southern in endorsing “A Religious Statement on Abortion: A Call to Commitment.” Whatever they argued, once *Baptist Press* published the statement, inerrantists interpreted it as advocacy for

³¹⁴ Hankins, 183, 184.

³¹⁵ “Resolution on Abortion,” *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1979, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/18/resolution-on-abortion>. This convention marked the last in which messengers who voted for an inerrantist president left after the election, thus missing the subsequent proceedings.

³¹⁶ Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 384, 386.

³¹⁷ Morgan, 164; Ellen Rosenberg, *The Southern Baptists: A Subculture in Transition* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 190-191.

³¹⁸ Sutton, *Baptist*, 311.

abortion. Furthermore, the National Abortion Rights Action League released a list of numerous religious organizations that supported the right to choose abortion. Inerrantists' jaws dropped in horror when both the BJCPA and the SBC itself appeared on the list.³¹⁹

In January of 1980, Falwell published *Listen, America!*, a book explaining the de facto mission of the Moral Majority. To change America, he proclaimed, moral Americans needed to become registered voters, get informed about moral issues, and involve themselves in the political process. He laid out three primary concerns: abortion, homosexuality, and the decline of the biblically defined family.³²⁰ Falwell cited Schafly's statement that "the women's liberation movement is antifamily." Since feminists supported the ERA and homosexuality, she argued, they would ultimately "use legislation to eliminate the eternal differences and the roles that God has ordained between men and women."³²¹ Moreover, their advocacy for women's rights denigrated motherhood as a task "that is unrewarding, unfulfilling, and boring," precipitating a sharp increase in support for abortion.³²² Echoing Schafly's arguments, Falwell enthusiastically described a woman's calling to be a wife and mother as "the highest calling in the world."³²³ The specter of women flooding the workplace and abandoning these "special rights" spelled the death of the institution of the family. He reasoned that, since women in Bible-believing homes already boasted more-than-equal rights, the ERA in fact promised the removal of rights from women.³²⁴ In response to these societal ills, the silent majority must become the moral majority, exclaimed Falwell.³²⁵

³¹⁹ Sutton, *Baptist*, 311.

³²⁰ Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1980), 252-254, 257-258, 261.

³²¹ Falwell, *Listen*, 151-152. Falwell noted that Schafly made these comments at his church.

³²² Falwell, *Listen*, 124.

³²³ Falwell, *Listen*, 124.

³²⁴ Falwell, *Listen*, 124, 150-1.

³²⁵ Falwell, *Listen*, 266.

Within a year of the Roundtable's founding, inerrantists and Falwell had already made significant headway in their aspiration to work towards biblical responsibility in the government. Inerrantists began to use Schaeffer's pro-life film *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* as a teaching tool in their churches.³²⁶ Following the publishing of *Listen America!*, President Rogers, Charles Stanley, and Patterson joined Falwell in urging removal of the issue of prayer in schools from the jurisdiction of federal courts.³²⁷ Moreover, the SBC president enjoyed the role of featured speaker at the "Washington for Jesus" rally in April, an event coordinated by Falwell. President Rogers used as his text the passage of Second Chronicles that Falwell himself had used countless times before.³²⁸ Thus, inerrantists arrived at the 1980 convention in St. Louis ready to contend with the establishment over the issue of abortion.

After failing on five separate occasions to overturn the 1971 resolution in favor of an explicitly pro-life resolution, inerrantists finally tasted victory. St. Louis messengers passed a remarkably strident resolution, which condemned policies that allowed "abortion on demand," denigrated the use of taxes for "selfish, non-therapeutic abortion," and favored legislation that prohibited abortion "except to save the life of the mother."³²⁹ Responding to a recent spike in political activists' attempts to give legal recognition and benefits to homosexual couples, messengers also felt the need to reiterate the basic position taken in the 1976 resolution and to reaffirm the "traditional position of Southern Baptists" that homosexuality was condemned by the Bible.³³⁰ Although inerrantists had not yet gained the

³²⁶ Kidd, 241.

³²⁷ Shurden, *Going*, 46.

³²⁸ Rosenberg, 191.

³²⁹ "Resolution on Abortion," *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1980, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/19/resolution-on-abortion>.

³³⁰ "Resolution on Homosexuality," *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1980, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/608/resolution-on-homosexuality>. That inerrantists desired to make the

momentum to push through a strong statement against women's ordination, they evidently persuaded enough messengers to stress "the equal worth but not always the sameness of function of women" and agree not to endorse the ERA.³³¹

In August of 1980, Falwell and inerrantists appeared at a Public Affairs Briefing in Dallas, Texas, organized by the Roundtable's vice-president James Robison. McAteer had sent invitations to all three of the prominent presidential candidates, current President Jimmy Carter, John Anderson, and Ronald Reagan. In a stroke of fate, only Reagan accepted the invitation. Former SBC President Rogers, SBC President Bailey Smith, Phyllis Schafly, Jesse Helms, Paige Patterson, Paul Pressler, televangelist Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell attended this pivotal convention. Responding to recent claims that the separation of church and state should keep religious activists out of the government, Robison thundered, "Neither our founding fathers nor Jesus Christ initiated the godless interpretation of separation of church and state as it is presently presented to so many American people."³³² If the religious do not have any part in policy making or political activity, he asked, who will? After W.A. Criswell introduced Reagan, the presidential candidate boldly said to his audience, "Now I know this is a non-partisan gathering and so I know that you can't endorse me but ... I want you to know that I endorse you and what you are doing."³³³ Moreover, he encouraged attendees that "the First Amendment was not written to protect the people and their laws

statement that this was the "traditional" SBC response to homosexuality may suggest that they expected disagreement from moderates.

³³¹ "Resolution on Women," *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1980, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1091/resolution-on-women>.

³³² "James Robison: National Affairs Briefing," YouTube, accessed March 2, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH1e0xxRRbk>.

³³³ Sutton, *Falwell*, 1.

from religious values, but to protect those values from government tyranny.”³³⁴ In conclusion, Falwell urged the audience to “vote for the Reagan of their choice.”³³⁵

As inerrantists became friendlier with denominational outsiders and politicians, moderates became their staunchest opponents. Wood wrote that “extreme, far right groups that are very militant and strident” dominated the 1980 convention.³³⁶ Moreover, Foy Valentine of the CLC issued a pamphlet the following year that undermined inerrantists’ pro-life resolution. While he agreed that the unborn fetus had a right to live, Valentine claimed that Christian love and justice were not served by “extremely restrictive laws which do not give conscientious people ... the opportunity to choose when they are faced with very grave moral dilemmas related to abortion.” The CLC director lamented with inerrantists that *Roe v. Wade* allowed citizens to use abortion as birth control. However, he cautioned, that did not necessitate the whole nation’s adherence to the “Roman Catholic dogma related to abortion.” This statement was tantamount to calling inerrantists extremists.³³⁷ When messengers passed a resolution at the 1981 convention that praised the BJCPA and the CLC for their leadership in problems regarding religious liberty and the separation of church and state, inerrantists learned that they still had an uphill battle.³³⁸ In years to come, both agencies would come under a hailstorm of criticism from inerrantists.³³⁹

The more inerrantists pushed the Convention towards the right, the harder moderates fought to pull it back. To the chagrin of moderates, Falwell appeared by personal invitation from President Bailey Smith to a CLC conference in 1982. Making matters worse, he joined

³³⁴ “James.”

³³⁵ Rosenberg, 192.

³³⁶ Hankins, 186.

³³⁷ Hankins, 171-172.

³³⁸ “Traditional SBC Resolution on Religious Liberty and Church and State,” in Shurden, *Going*, 67.

³³⁹ Shurden, *Going*, 65.

a gathering of 42,000 in the New Orleans Superdome shortly before the start of the 1982 convention.³⁴⁰ To this crowd, Vice-President George Bush proclaimed that the political mobilization of evangelicals was a healthy development: “I embrace the constructive contributions it can make to strengthening the United States as one nation under God.”³⁴¹ Although Falwell was not present at the convention itself, he met with President Smith, former President Rogers, McAteer, and Stanley.³⁴²

Consequently, messengers at the convention passed a bold resolution on abortion. Whereas the 1980 resolution favored legislation that would restrict abortion, the 1982 resolution exhorted Southern Baptists to work for legislation “and/or a constitutional amendment which will prohibit abortions except to save the physical life of the mother.”³⁴³ This explicit endorsement of political activity clearly resembled Falwell’s perception of church and state relations more than that of agency heads or moderates. Several editors of Baptist news agencies subsequently suspected that the Religious Right orchestrated the resolution.³⁴⁴ One editor reflected, “It is now evident that our Convention has evolved into two political parties.”³⁴⁵ James Dunn, James Wood’s successor, subjected the BJCPA into further scrutiny when he accused inerrantists of forsaking their identity as “church-state separationists” who had embraced “medieval doctrines that we have so long resisted.”³⁴⁶

³⁴⁰ Ellen Rosenberg, “The Southern Baptist Response to the Newest South,” in Ammerman, *Southern*, 150.

³⁴¹ Cothen, *Memoir*, 168.

³⁴² Rosenberg, 193.

³⁴³ “Resolution on Abortion and Infanticide,” *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1982, accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/20/resolution-on-abortion-and-infanticide>.

³⁴⁴ Martin, “New Orleans,” 78. See footnote 206. There were more issues that came up for debate at the convention. However, abortion took front and center.

³⁴⁵ Cothen, *Memoir*, 169.

³⁴⁶ Cothen, *Memoir*, 170.

Despite inerrantists' growing opposition to the ERA and its implications, women's ordination rose sharply from less than twenty in 1974 to two hundred in 1983.³⁴⁷ Obviously, the 1980 statement did not settle the women's issue. It came up at both the 1981 and 1983 conventions. However, the former simply reaffirmed the 1980 statement and the latter managed only to add the clause, "For women who serve the Lord as homemakers, we affirm their special calling, honor them for their unique contributions to church and society, and support their rights to financial security."³⁴⁸ While certainly hinting to the role in society that inerrantists thought women should play, they still lacked enough support to pass an explicit denunciation of women's ordination and the ERA.

The resolution "on ordination and the role of women in ministry" passed at the 1984 convention, in Elizabeth Flowers's words, "pointed to [inerrantists'] crucial link with that outside evangelical world."³⁴⁹ To the euphoria of inerrantists and the dismay of moderates, Carl F. H. Henry presented the resolution. After emphasizing that women ought not to assume a role of authority over men, he concluded that women should serve "in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination." Citing the Apostle Paul, women were excluded from pastoral leadership "to preserve a submission God requires because the man was first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall." In contrast, women were admonished to build godly homes.³⁵⁰ Agency head Wayne Dehoney immediately declared the resolution unconstitutional since it interfered with local church autonomy. In other words, he declared that each church held the jurisdiction to

³⁴⁷ Kidd, 242; Flowers, 106.

³⁴⁸ "Resolution on Women," *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1983, accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1093/resolution-on-women>.

³⁴⁹ Flowers, 102.

³⁵⁰ "Resolution on Ordination and the Role of Women in Ministry," *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1984, accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1088/resolution-on-ordination-and-the-role-of-women-in-ministry>.

ordain women, according to its respective interpretation of the Bible. In spite of many messengers' frustrations, the resolution passed by a 58 percent vote.³⁵¹

The 1984 convention witnessed animosity over much more than women's ordination. James Dunn proved more of an irritation to inerrantists than his predecessor. The new director of the BJCPA had received criticism for his ties to the controversial organization People for the American Way [PAW]. Headed by Norman Lear, PAW used television to counter those who ostensibly threatened the First Amendment.³⁵² However, Dunn likely also came under attack due to a comment he had given to an editor from *USA Today* the year before. Following the Senate's defeat of legislation that would have severely limited abortion, he quipped, "Most people have the inherent good sense not to be forever misled by religious or political demagoguery." Previously, he had fought in the Baptist General Convention of Texas for support of the "use of public funds for abortion."³⁵³

Unsurprisingly, motions concerning both the BJCPA and abortion surfaced in Kansas City. One inerrantist proposed that the Convention eliminate its funding of the BJCPA. It ultimately failed.³⁵⁴ However, this motion would come up several more times in the near future. Moreover, inerrantists successfully inched the Convention further away from any position that could be even remotely deemed pro-choice. In the 1984 resolution, abortion was identified as a national sin, the very term Falwell had used. Conspicuously, inerrantists called on SBC agencies and institutions to prepare "literature to take a clear and strong stand against abortion, and to inform and motivate our members to action to eliminate abortion on

³⁵¹ Flowers, 103.

³⁵² "News Release: James Dunn's Description of BJC," in Shurden, *Going*, 106.

³⁵³ Pressler, 257.

³⁵⁴ Shurden, *Going*, 100.

demand.”³⁵⁵ They also renewed their commitment to work for legislation that prohibited abortion.

In addition to witnessing a turbulent SBC convention, 1984 saw a further solidification of inerrantists, Falwell, and the Religious Right. In the spring, Moral Majority member Tim LaHaye founded the American Coalition for Traditional Values [ACTV]. Serving on its board of governors were SBC President James Draper, Former President Adrian Rogers, Charles Stanley, Jerry Falwell, and televangelist Jimmy Swaggart. The ACTV aspired to catalyze a massive voter registration at churches with the end goal of securing incumbent President Reagan’s reelection. Moreover, the new organization identified the prohibition of abortion and opposition to homosexual rights as two of its chief concerns.³⁵⁶ In August, inerrantists gathered at the Republican National Convention [RNC] in Dallas, Texas, a spectacle reminiscent of the Roundtable’s 1980 briefing. According to scholar Ellen Rosenberg, former SBC President James Draper appeared before the Republican Platform Committee on behalf of the ACTV, lamenting that the SBC would not give him “an equal opportunity to take strong positions” on issues like religious liberty and homosexuality.³⁵⁷ James Robison gave the invocation on the opening day and W. A. Criswell delivered the benediction on the final day. Jerry Falwell also merited the opportunity to speak before the convention, thanking God for a political party dedicated to the “liberation of the unborn.”³⁵⁸ Although Falwell and inerrantists had endorsed President Reagan in 1980, this occasion marked the formal wedding of the Religious Right to the Republican Party.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁵ “Resolution on Abortion,” *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1984, accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/about/abortion>.

³⁵⁶ Morgan, 165; Williams, 206; Rosenburg, 195; Cothen, *Memoir*, 188.

³⁵⁷ Rosenberg, 195.

³⁵⁸ “Republican National Convention, Day 3,” C-Span, accessed March 7, 2016, <http://www.c-span.org/video/?124549-1/republican-national-convention-day-3>.

³⁵⁹ Williams, 205-206.

The heated 1985 convention represented the first fruits of inerrantists' interdenominational liaisons. At the beginning of the year, former President Bailey Smith instituted "Real Evangelism," an organization that would host annual three-day conferences pertaining to matters of religious significance. Falwell appeared at the premier conference in January to discuss the moral issues threatening Christians.³⁶⁰ In February, he received an invitation to speak on abortion to Criswell's own First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, where Falwell predicted that abortion would soon be outlawed in America as a result of President Reagan's reelection.³⁶¹ He also declared that the SBC would split if President Stanley was not reelected in June.³⁶² Following Falwell's remarks, the director of the CLC cautioned Southern Baptists "to act with discernment, judgment, compassion, wisdom, and courage" in dealing with the issue of abortion. In order to deal with it properly, "[we] must support the prevention of unwanted pregnancies."³⁶³ When televangelist Pat Robertson hosted former SBC Presidents Rogers, Smith, and Draper on his "700 Club" in April, each of the inerrantists reiterated the dire necessity of reelecting President Stanley. Robertson subsequently urged churches to respond to the crisis in the SBC by sending messengers to the convention to support the incumbent president.³⁶⁴ With public endorsements from Falwell, Robertson, and Billy Graham, President Stanley earned enough votes for reelection.

In 1986, signs of a denominational schism became increasingly visible. Although Valentine was on a contract to retire from the CLC at sixty-five years of age, he undercut inerrantists' ascendancy by retiring early. Probably foreseeing that inerrantists would soon

³⁶⁰ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 153; David Ray Norsworthy, "Rationalization and Reaction," in Ammerman, *Southern*, 82-83.

³⁶¹ Cothen, *Memoir*, 147. Specifically, Falwell said "our beloved president' will appoint two to four new justices of the Supreme Court, and the issue will come before the Court."

³⁶² Cothen, *Memoir*, 195. Cothen did not specify when Falwell said this. It is only certain that *Baptist Press* covered this statement on February 21st.

³⁶³ Cothen, *Memoir*, 147, 197. Valentine gave these remarks in March.

³⁶⁴ Cothen, *Memoir*, 199.

possess enough power to elect and terminate virtually whoever they wanted, the director made known his concerns to the CLC's chairman and retired the next month. The chairman in turn set up a search committee in April in order to secure the hiring of a non-inerrantist director. They would not make their choice public until the 1987 convention.³⁶⁵ At the 1986 convention, inerrantists again moved that the BJCPA be defunded. The question of to what extent the commission represented the views of the majority of the SBC concerned inerrantists most. For a second time, this motion fell short of the necessary majority vote. However, the Executive Committee agreed to appoint a study committee for the purposes of investigating the BJCPA and its relationship with the Convention.³⁶⁶

Following the convention, Patterson announced inerrantists' expectations to tie the hiring of denominational employees to their positions on social issues: "We want an open, pro-life position in all of our institutions and agencies dealing with both abortion and euthanasia. We want to be pro-family, pro-prayer anywhere." He emphasized that the actual posture of the Convention "is far more conservative than most of its leadership on social and moral issues."³⁶⁷ The CLC responded by organizing a conference comprised of pastors, laity, and denominational workers to discuss a compromise on the abortion issue. Its chairman hoped that if they produced a statement, they might pass it as a resolution at the 1987 convention, allowing for inerrantists and moderates to "stop fighting each other over exceptions and start fighting together against abortion."³⁶⁸

Valentine's early retirement certainly preserved a portion of the CLC's autonomy, albeit only for a couple of years. In January of 1987, the CLC elected the academic vice

³⁶⁵ Sutton, *Baptist*, 312.

³⁶⁶ Sutton, *Baptist*, 317.

³⁶⁷ Cothen, *Memoir*, 148. Employees would include seminary professors, members of the CLC, Sunday School Board members, and employees of denominational hospitals.

³⁶⁸ Cothen, *Memoir*, 149.

president of Midwestern Seminary, Larry Baker, as their new executive director by a 16 to 13 vote. Given Baker's support of women's ordination and his refusal to endorse explicit pro-life legislation, inerrantists did not give the new director an enthusiastic welcome. In fact, they immediately gathered together to discuss his dismissal, warning that he might only enjoy a six-month tenure.³⁶⁹ When the CLC presented its statement on abortion, inerrantists likely interpreted it as a step towards the pro-choice position. Rather than adopt the statement, messengers voted for a resolution that encouraged the CLC to "actively lobby for legislation to protect the lives of the unborn; and ... continue to make the abortion issue a priority on its agenda."³⁷⁰ Perhaps in response to the CLC's hiring of a director who supported women's ordination, messengers adopted a resolution that honored full-time wives and mothers for their honoring of God's purposes in their lives each day.³⁷¹

As a result of the 1987 convention, inerrantists acquired a few seats on the CLC. According to plan, they attempted to unseat Baker at a CLC Trustee meeting in September. After attacking the director for his positions on abortion and women's ordination, inerrantists only garnered fifteen of thirty votes. However, they did succeed in passing a motion that declared abortion to be only justifiable "when the developing child represents a clear and present danger to the physical life of the mother."³⁷² In spite of inerrantists' failure to fire Baker, he recognized that his time was short. Thus, he resigned from the CLC and accepted a pastorate in Louisiana in May of 1988.³⁷³ A year after inerrantists' attempt to remove Baker, they secured the election of Richard Land, the academic vice president of Criswell College.

³⁶⁹ Sutton, *Baptist*, 312, 314; Cothen, *Memoir*, 349.

³⁷⁰ "Resolution on Abortion," *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1987, accessed March 9, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/22/resolution-on-abortion>.

³⁷¹ "Resolution on Honor for Full-Time Homemakers," *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1987, accessed March 9, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/533/resolution-on-honor-for-fulltime-homemakers>.

³⁷² Cothen, *Memoir*, 349-350.

³⁷³ Sutton, *Baptist*, 314-315.

Unlike Valentine and Baker, Land felt that the CLC needed to be “on the cutting edge of the prolife movement of Southern Baptists and in our society.”³⁷⁴ He also represented inerrantists’ own stances on virtually every issue. As Land later recalled, “When I was elected as the executive director, the Christian Life Commission shifted 180 degrees.”³⁷⁵

Inaugurated just prior to the Inerrancy Controversy, the Moral Majority concluded its work a year before inerrantists sealed their victory. Jerry Falwell had joined hands with inerrantists in the Religious Right for roughly a decade, serving on the same organizations, speaking publicly about the same issues, and using his media savvy to endorse the inerrantist movement in the SBC.³⁷⁶ At a conference held in June of 1989, Falwell formally announced the dissolution of the Moral Majority, explaining that “we’ve accomplished everything we set out to do.” Responding to speculation about his involvement in the Inerrancy Controversy, he claimed that he had not struck a deal with inerrantists to help them take over the SBC. Falwell further stated that he had no intention in joining the Convention since his church already possessed its own school and mission board.³⁷⁷ Of course, he proclaimed, the SBC “is the hope of Bible-believing Christians everywhere.”³⁷⁸ The reverend saw the transformation of the nation’s largest Protestant denomination as a microcosm of what he dreamed America might look like.

The fate of the BJCPA resembled that of the CLC. In 1989, after inerrantists had made a handful of unsuccessful attempts to defund the BJCPA, the Executive Committee proposed the creation of a Religious Liberty Commission, a commission that would represent

³⁷⁴ Sutton, *Baptist*, 315.

³⁷⁵ Sutton, *Baptist*, 316.

³⁷⁶ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 361. Falwell used his *Fundamentalist Journal* to endorse SBC President Jerry Vines and former Presidents Draper and Rogers.

³⁷⁷ Hefley, 81.

³⁷⁸ Ammerman, *Baptist*, 106.

the views and interests of inerrantists in Washington, D.C. This would prevent the BJCPA from continuing to speak on behalf of the SBC. President Jerry Vines, however, persuaded inerrantists to delay this issue until after the 1989 convention. When they moved once more to defund the BJCPA at the 1989 convention, they failed by a narrow margin. On the other hand, the Executive Committee designated extra funding to the CLC for its office in Washington; since inerrantists could not defund the BJCPA, rather than establish a Religious Liberty Commission, they changed the function of the CLC to include political action on church-state issues. At the 1990 convention, inerrantists finally succeeded in reducing the BJCPA's funding from \$391,000 to \$50,000.³⁷⁹ Although the committee was not entirely defunded, moderates knew that the fight was over. Within another year, the SBC formally severed ties with the BJCPA. The following decade would see the further consolidation of inerrantists' stances on social issues throughout the Convention, its seminaries, and its agencies.

³⁷⁹ Sutton, *Baptist*, 318-319; Ammerman, *Baptist*, 242.

Epilogue: Reconstructing Zion

After their glorious victory at the New Orleans convention, four significant events further consolidated inerrantists' leadership of the SBC, beginning with R. Albert Mohler Jr.'s inauguration as president of Southern Seminary in 1993. President Mohler's first couple of years at Southern represented a microcosm of the Inerrancy Controversy.³⁸⁰ He had completed both his M.Div. and Ph.D. at Southern, even serving as chief assistant to former President Roy Honeycutt. This likely explains why only half of the faculty had voted against Mohler's nomination.³⁸¹ However, he also was heavily influenced by his mentor Carl F. H. Henry and eventually self-identified with the inerrantist camp.³⁸² Regardless, it likely came as a shock to Southern professors when he demanded that each faculty member subscribe to a four-pronged litmus test: "the inerrancy of Scripture, opposition to women's ordination, a pro-life position on abortion ... and opposition to homosexuality."³⁸³

In his first year, President Mohler charged theology professor Molly Marshall with violating her mandate to teach according to Southern Baptist doctrine. She had previously been accused numerous times of teaching inclusivism, a doctrine that inerrantists felt denied the inerrancy of the Bible. Thus, the young president informed Marshall that an SBC-employed professor must adhere to doctrines consistent with those of the denomination.³⁸⁴ He gave her a chance to resign and offered a monetary settlement, which she accepted. The president's action provoked the contempt of students and professors alike; the former held demonstrations and prayer vigils in sympathy with Marshall and the latter passed a resolution

³⁸⁰ Kidd, 237.

³⁸¹ Wills, *Southern*, 512, 518.

³⁸² Kidd, 238.

³⁸³ Kidd, 238.

³⁸⁴ Sutton, *Baptist*, 356.

censuring President Mohler by a vote of 44 to 8.³⁸⁵ Inerrantists, on the other hand, celebrated the president's courage for committing to Southern Baptist principles.³⁸⁶

In 1995, Southern's president again drew the scorn of faculty and students. Shortly before his instatement as president, Diana Garland, the dean of the Carver School of Church Social Work, had listed a faculty opening and selected a candidate for nomination. Since the candidate professed his adherence to biblical inerrancy and his opposition to both abortion and homosexuality, Garland felt sure that he would be a shoo-in for the position. However, President Mohler ultimately blocked his nomination due to his support for women's ordination.³⁸⁷ Following this decision, the dean distributed a four-page document to the media outlining the disaster she felt the president's restrictive faculty selection criteria spelled for Carver and the seminary at large. Moreover, she organized a public demonstration against President Mohler for his "abuse of power."³⁸⁸ Southern's Trustees and Mohler felt that it was inappropriate for her to take this matter directly to the public. Thus, Garland's release of "private and privileged information" precipitated her dismissal as dean.³⁸⁹ Many professors subsequently accepted early retirement and the seminary experienced a massive turnover in faculty, giving President Mohler the opportunity to remold the seminary into a staunchly inerrantist institution.³⁹⁰ Inerrantists lauded the president's boldness and praised his restoration of Southern Seminary back into its original image.³⁹¹

After moderates retreated from SBC affairs, Falwell paraded in. Before he joined the Convention in 1996, the Lynchburg pastor received two invitations to speak at the Pastors'

³⁸⁵ Wills, *Southern*, 519-521.

³⁸⁶ Sutton, *Baptist*, 357.

³⁸⁷ Wills, *Southern*, 522-523, 527. Ironically, as a student Mohler had signed a statement with several other students decrying the SBC resolution against women's ordination passed at the 1984 convention.

³⁸⁸ Wills, *Southern*, 524; Sutton, *Baptist*, 357.

³⁸⁹ Sutton, *Baptist*, 357.

³⁹⁰ Kidd, 239; Wills, *Southern*, 541-543.

³⁹¹ Sutton, *Baptist*, 360-2; Wills, *Southern*, 548.

Conferences, recruited inerrantists including former SBC Presidents Bailey Smith and Jerry Vines to serve as Trustees of Liberty University, and even invited Paige Patterson to become president of Liberty's seminary.³⁹² Falwell's church began making monthly contributions to the Convention in 1996, which effectively made Thomas Road Baptist Church a Southern Baptist church.³⁹³ Two years later, the Lynchburg pastor appeared with seven fellow church members as first-time official SBC messengers. When asked about his sudden enthusiastic support for the SBC, Falwell responded, "Now there is no reason at all for any Bible-believing independent conservative Baptist church not to become a part of the SBC."³⁹⁴ He saw the inerrantist movement in the SBC as the Convention's return to historical orthodox Christianity. Indeed, Southern Baptists now comprised more than half of Liberty's Trustees, roughly half of its students, and over seven hundred of its graduates. Thus, it made perfect sense when Falwell committed Liberty University to the SBC in 1999.³⁹⁵

When Paul Kenley of *Texas Baptists Committed* remarked that the events of the 1998 convention solidified the SBC's "steadfast course to the right," he was not referring only to Falwell's SBC membership.³⁹⁶ Messengers voted in favor of appending what became known as the "family amendment" to the 1963 BFM statement.³⁹⁷ The framers of the amendment defined marriage as "the uniting of *one man and one woman* in covenant commitment for a lifetime." This statement clearly signified inerrantists' official denunciation and prohibition

³⁹² "Political Baptist Offered New Post\ Rev. Jerry Falwell Asks Paige Patterson To Head His Fundamentalist Seminary," The Associated Press, November 27, 1991, accessed November 10, 2015, http://www.greensboro.com/political-baptist-offered-new-post-rev-jerry-falwell-asks-paige/article_11630f09-96c6-5fe0-86ea-33ae20399b59.html; Morgan, 178; "How Much Influence Does Jerry Falwell Have In The SBC?" Texas Baptists Committed, May 1994, accessed November 11, 2015, <http://www.txbc.org/1994Journals/May%201994/May94HowMuch.html>.

³⁹³ Sutton, *Baptist*, 238.

³⁹⁴ McLaughlin, "Why." See footnote 1.

³⁹⁵ "Liberty University now linked to SBC," *Baptist Standard*, December 1, 1999, accessed November 11, 2015, http://assets.baptiststandard.com/archived/1999/12_1/pages/liberty.html.

³⁹⁶ Paul Kenley, "A Summary of the SBC Controversy: 1995 to 2000," *Texas Baptists Committed*, May 2000, accessed November 11, 2015, <http://www.txbc.org/2000Journals/00May.pdf>.

³⁹⁷ Kenley, "Summary."

of homosexuality. Further, that the woman should serve as her husband's "helper in managing *the household* and *nurturing the next generation*" precluded her ability to be ordained as a pastor. In effect, the statement's crafters maintained that a woman's purpose lay in the household; if a wife served as church pastor, she would in turn be neglecting her duties to her husband and her kids. Moreover, as Barry Hankins noted, another clause suggested an explicit pro-life stance: "Children, *from the moment of conception*, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord." Any thought of abortion, therefore, would be out of the question.³⁹⁸ Lastly, since SBC inerrantists backed up each of the aforementioned positions with Scripture, they ensured that to argue with them would be to argue with the Bible.³⁹⁹ Inerrantists constructed an impenetrable fortress. Anyone who disagreed with them about these three issues could enjoy no place in the Convention; opponents would be judged as denying biblical inerrancy.

Whereas the 1963 BFM statement revealed agency heads' penchant for doctrinal liberty, the 2000 statement explicitly outlined inerrantists' affinity for biblical inerrancy and its nonnegotiable political implications. At the 1999 convention, messengers approved the motion that President Paige Patterson appoint a committee for the purpose of revising the 1963 BFM statement. He subsequently appointed former SBC Presidents Vines and Rogers, Southern's President Mohler, and Richard Land to the committee. When the committee brought its recommendations to the 2000 convention, messengers overwhelmingly adopted the revised BFM statement.⁴⁰⁰ In addition to enshrining the family amendment in the 2000 statement, the 1999 committee eliminated the 1963 BFM's ambiguities about the inerrancy of the Bible. They unabashedly claimed that "*all* Scripture is totally true and trustworthy"

³⁹⁸ Hankins, 196. The emphases are mine.

³⁹⁹ "Comparison."

⁴⁰⁰ Patterson, *Anatomy*, 15; "Comparison."

and “all Scripture is testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”⁴⁰¹ Strengthening the statement already made in the family amendment, the committee left virtually no room for differing interpretations over women’s ordination. “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as *qualified by Scripture*.” The bitter contestation over gendered roles in the Southern Baptist church that had reached a peak in the 1980s was now dealt a decisive death blow. Moreover, in the article entitled “The Christian and the Social Order,” the committee exhorted Southern Baptists to oppose homosexuality and “speak on the behalf of the unborn.”⁴⁰² Inerrantists had completed their mission.

From the early 1960s to 1990, the subgroups of the SBC plainly prized different traditions. Since agency heads prized doctrinal liberty, inerrantists and moderates could cling to their respective traditions all under the Southern Baptist umbrella. Once inerrantists could financially afford to pay more attention to the affairs of the Convention, they quickly perceived that their beloved traditional conservatism was not given a favorable hearing in the seminaries. They were disgusted that a portion of their tithes went to the Cooperative Program, which funded the seminaries. Even though doublespeak had been employed for decades by Southern Baptist professors, inerrantists finally caught on in the 1940s and 1950s. By the outbreak of the Elliott Controversy, they had begun networking with other inerrantists. The onset of the Broadman Controversy, however, marked the real turning point. From there on out, inerrantists began networking, campaigning, and building organizations with evangelicals outside of the Convention.

⁴⁰¹ Patterson, *Anatomy*, 15. Patterson actually highlighted the differences between the 1925, 1963, and 2000 BFM statements in the Scriptures article. In particular, he emphasized the language of compromise, which agency heads used in the 1963 statement.

⁴⁰² “Comparison.”

It is not coincidental that conventions throughout the 1970s and 1980s generally featured heated debates about biblical inerrancy and abortion, homosexuality, or women's ordination. This clearly indicated that inerrantists believed that the seemingly disparate issues were intertwined. Although the leaders of the BJCPA and CLC fought passionately for their traditional views of church and state, arguing that social issues belonged within the realm of the state, inerrantists interpreted these issues as church issues. It infuriated them that agency heads worded resolutions in such a way as to appease all parties, since these were issues that inerrantists perceived as state-supported threats to the church. Consequently, agency heads made the situation worse by allowing an ongoing dialogue about these issues. Since inerrantists interpreted abortion, the ERA, and homosexuality as societal ills, the establishment's refusal to firmly stand against *all* of them signaled weakness; inerrantists could not bear the thought of their Convention conforming to the image of the surrounding culture.

Inerrantists' work with Jerry Falwell signaled the most direct link to the outside evangelical world. Their service on the same committees and support for the Republican Party revealed that this was not a distinctively Southern Baptist phenomenon. The Inerrancy Controversy mimicked the move to political activity by evangelicals around the nation. While moderates and agency heads fought to save the traditions of the SBC, inerrantists labored to transform the Convention into a vehicle that could protect the church and simultaneously save the culture. Again, that inerrantists thought the culture needed saving was another stark difference between them and their opponents. The evidence for traditional claims that inerrantists' motives were purely political can just as likely be used to suggest the alternative; they engaged in politics out of theological concerns. Once they sealed their

victory in 1990, inerrantists did not abandon their emphasis on biblical inerrancy. On the contrary, they permanently enshrined it in SBC legislation alongside their firm stances on social issues. The Inerrancy Controversy in the SBC represented one important piece of a burgeoning and encompassing Religious Right, a movement that wed religion and politics together.

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