

# The Crisis of Scripture in Southern Baptist Life: Reflections on the Past, Looking to the Future

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The Southern Baptist Convention is comprised of over 16 million church members in about 40,000 churches in all fifty states of the United States, making it the largest evangelical denomination. It is also often the most misunderstood Protestant group in America. The SBC has tended to exist separately from the rest of American Christianity because of its sectarianism, its inability to separate itself from Southern culture, its parochialism, and its self-sufficiency, though these indicators are beginning to show signs of change.

For roughly the past twenty-five years, the SBC has been embroiled in a heated controversy concerning both theological issues and denominational polity. As a result, many have become more intentionally self-conscious about the SBC's theological identity and its theological heritage. We will not, however, attempt to wrestle fully with matters of Southern Baptist identity and heritage. Instead, we will focus on the doctrine of Scripture in Southern Baptist life over the past 125 years, as well as think about the present and the future in light of our past. We will focus on the past fifty years in general and the last twenty-five years in particular. The time period of the last twenty-five years has been chosen for obvious reasons, having been selected because it represents the time period since the public beginning of the battle for the Bible in the SBC, which was launched

publicly at the famous 1979 Houston Convention. The fifty-year period represents the period since the death of W. T. Conner, the convention's last "shaping theologian" and generally the time period since the rise of programmatic emphases in the Convention's so-called "glory days" (such as the "million more in '54" campaign).

## The SBC Theological Matrix

During their first 160 years, Southern Baptists have changed in several obvious ways. What was once a small, Southern, predominately white denomination has become large, multi-regional, and multi-ethnic. Southern Baptists now worship and serve in dozens of languages throughout the United States.

The first hundred years were largely shaped by a handful of major theologians: J. P. Boyce (d. 1888), Basil Manly, Jr. (d. 1892), John A. Broadus (d. 1895), B. H. Carroll (d. 1914), E. Y. Mullins (d. 1928), A. T. Robertson (d. 1934), and W. T. Conner (d. 1952). From the early years of Boyce to the death of Conner, Southern Baptists witnessed the diminishing influence of Calvinism, the decline of postmillennialism, the rise of revivalism, and an advancement in the understanding of Baptist origins and identity. Also there was during this time the basic introduction into SBC life of such matters as historical criticism, theistic evolution, and experiential apologetics. We could say

that Southern Baptist theology moved from a hermeneutic of *divine sovereignty* with J. P. Boyce, John A. Broadus, and Basil Manly to one of *personal revelation and experience* with E. Y. Mullins, and to a lesser degree with W. T. Conner. From these changes a growing consensus emerged by the middle of the twentieth century around the moderate Calvinistic theologies of Mullins and Conner with additional programmatic, pragmatic, and revivalistic emphases. Shaped by these shifts and concerns, Southern Baptists navigated their way through the first century of their existence. But let us back up just a little because when the conservatives began to proclaim the importance of an inerrant Bible in 1979, many moderates claimed that this had never been the Baptist way of understanding the nature of Scripture.

### **James P. Boyce (1827-1888) and Basil Manly, Jr. (1825-1892)**

James P. Boyce and Basil Manly, Jr. formed half of the original faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary when it opened in 1859. Boyce previously taught at Furman University and Manly was principal of the Female Institute of Richmond, Virginia. Both were equally adept at administrative work as well as teaching theology. While each made important contributions in several areas, Boyce's major work was his *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (1887) and Manly's primary effort was his *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration* (1888). Both volumes were the results of their class lectures.

Manly's milestone volume was published as a response to the resignation of Old Testament professor, C. H. Toy. Though Manly was an original member of the faculty, he had departed in 1871 to

become president of Georgetown College. The fact that he returned following the Toy controversy again confirms Boyce's confidence in Manly's position on the subject.

The key to understanding these two giants is to recognize their common opposition and response to the work of Crawford Howell Toy. Boyce and Manly disagreed with Toy's adaptation of historical critical methods and the practical implications it had for the doctrine of inspiration. Manly's own work on the doctrine of inspiration defines their position.

Both Boyce and Manly built their understanding of Scripture on the work of their Princeton mentors, Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge, as well as Alvah Hovey, and J. L. Dagg, all of whom affirmed the inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture. In his *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, Boyce stated that the teachings of the Bible "are matters of pure revelation" and "infallible."<sup>1</sup> For Boyce, infallibility meant "without error" and there is nothing in his writings that would imply that he distinguished between infallibility and inerrancy.

The most important and informative work on the inspiration and authority of Scripture in the shaping early years of Southern Baptist life was certainly Manly's *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*. Manly argued that an uninspired Bible would furnish no infallible standard of thought, no authoritative rule for obedience, and no ground for confidence and everlasting hope.<sup>2</sup> Manly was careful to distinguish inspiration from revelation, which he defined as "that direct divine influence that secures the accurate transference of truth into human language by a speaker or writer, so as to be communi-

cated to another.”

While affirming plenary inspiration, he carefully refuted and rejected any theory of mechanical dictation because “it ignores any real human authorship whatever in the Scriptures.” He maintained that infallible truth and divine authority characterizes every part of scripture. With almost a pedantic thoroughness, Manly showed the strengths of his own position on biblical inspiration and refuted the challenges to his position.<sup>3</sup>

Inspiration, for Manly, was basically equated with infallibility, a description that could be employed interchangeably with inerrancy. In doing so, Boyce and Manly, where possible, emphasized the positive aspects of science and biblical criticism. They dealt seriously with both the human authorship and the divine origin of the Bible and kept this tension in balance. Perhaps with less scholarly erudition, but with equal or superior impact and persuasive power, B. H. Carroll trumpeted similar notes in the southwest as the twentieth century began.

#### **B. H. Carroll (1843-1914)<sup>4</sup>**

B. H. Carroll was the founder and first president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (1908-1914). Unlike Boyce and Manly, who were educated at Princeton, Carroll lacked formal training in theology. Both at Baylor, where Carroll taught prior to the founding of Southwestern Seminary, and at Southwestern, Carroll taught the entirety of the English Bible in four-year cycles. These lectures have been published in a multiple volume series entitled *An Interpretation of the English Bible*.

The Bible was the focal point of B. H. Carroll’s career. Carroll’s widespread reputation as a champion of Baptist

orthodoxy was closely associated with his doctrine of Scripture.

For Carroll the Bible was understood to be the written revelation of God. This affirmation undergirded Carroll’s entire theology and exegesis of Scripture. While noting the close relationship between revelation and inspiration, Carroll also went to great lengths to differentiate inspiration from both revelation and illumination.

Revelation is the divine disclosure of hidden things. Inspiration is that gift of the Holy Spirit which enables one to select and arrange material to a definite end and inerrantly record it. Illumination, another gift of the Spirit, enables one to understand a revelation or to interpret the facts of an inspired record.<sup>5</sup>

Carroll emphasized that inspiration insured a perfect standard of instruction, conviction, and a profitable work for correction and instruction in righteousness.<sup>6</sup>

Carroll believed that inspiration did not apply to the writers, but the writings. He carefully set his argument for biblical inspiration within a Baptist context. The beginning and concluding paragraphs of his work, *Inspiration of the Bible*, are little more than a word-for-word quotation from Article One of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (forerunner to all three versions of the *Baptist Faith and Message*).

Carroll, like Manly, but to an even greater degree, built his case by piling up evidence for the Bible’s inspiration from the Bible itself. Carroll vehemently defended the inspiration of every word in Scripture almost excessively, for in doing so he even defended the Hebrew vowel points. His defense followed both inductive and deductive lines as he argued for

the necessary relationship between words and ideas. The bottom line for Carroll was that the very words of the Bible were chosen by God.

The Southwestern theologian rejected all forms of partial or limited inspiration, saying that “when you hear the silly talk that the Bible *contains* the word of God and *is* not the word of God, you hear a fool’s talk.”<sup>7</sup> Because Carroll emphasized the product of inspiration, he was silent on the method of inspiration. His focus was on the result of inspiration, which is an infallible Bible. Carroll, in addition to the description *infallible*, also used the terms *inerrant*, *true*, *trustworthy*, *irrevocable*, and *irrefragable* to describe Scripture.<sup>8</sup> He applied this inerrant quality only to the autographs of the sixty-six books of the Protestant Bible.

Though at times Carroll seemed to work in a vacuum unaware of the changes in the worlds of science and philosophy of his day, he nevertheless was unrelenting in his attacks when he spoke about evolution and biblical criticism. He claimed that it was logically impossible for the so-called truth of science or philosophy to conflict with or contradict the truth of the Bible, contending that Darwinism is totally incompatible with Christianity.

While Boyce and Manly clearly stand as giants among Southern Baptists, it is impossible to measure how *enormous* the influence of B. H. Carroll has been on the life and thought of Southern Baptists. Carroll, perhaps more than any other Baptist leader, has served as a model and resource for hundreds of Southern Baptists pastors. Much of the motivation for change in the SBC over the past twenty-five years reflects Carroll’s beliefs that churches and schools rise or fall according to their understanding of inspiration.

### **E. Y. Mullins (1860-1928)**

E. Y. Mullins served as fourth president and professor of theology at Southern Seminary from 1899-1928. Mullins represents a paradigmatic shift in Southern Baptist theology. Nowhere is this better illustrated than his volume on systematic theology entitled *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (1917).<sup>9</sup> Not only was his book used as the major textbook at Southern and Southwestern for decades, but Mullins also powerfully influenced W. T. Conner, who served as professor of theology at Southwestern for 39 years. Mullins’s emphasis on the role of experience and his work on the relationship between science and Scripture paved the way for Baptists to raise new questions about the nature and interpretation of Scripture.

Mullins remained very much in the mainstream of conservative Baptist thought during his decades of leadership, while also engaging in wide intellectual interests and contemporary theological formulations. This conservatism became increasingly apparent during his latter years, and is especially evident in his handling of the “Fundamentalist-Modernist” debates of the early twentieth century. The release of his final major publication, *Christianity at the Crossroads* (1924),<sup>10</sup> testifies to this shift of emphasis, which moved in a different direction from some of his colleagues, at least according to the reflections of W. O. Carver, who himself seemed more willing to embrace the findings of historical criticism. This means that during the early years of Mullins’s ministry, when he employed Boyce’s theology book as a text for his classes, and the latter years, Mullins continued the united consensus regarding Scripture that existed in the SBC during its first 75 years.

Mullins represents a significant paradigm shift in methodology as well as change in emphasis in content largely shaped by his context. Some of these shifts included:

1. Mullins carefully nuanced statements that did not equate the Bible with revelation in exactly the same way it had been stated by Manly and Carroll.
2. For Mullins, the primary characteristic of the Bible is its authority, not its inspiration or inerrancy.
3. With regular emphasis, Mullins insisted that the authority of the Bible is limited to the religious life of the Christian believer, seemingly overemphasizing the characteristic affirmation regarding the Bible's authority in "faith and practice."
4. Mullins, following A. H. Strong, was more comfortable with a dynamic model of inspiration rather than a plenary view, though he quickly commended the plenary view's intent to "preserve and maintain the authority of the Scripture as the very Word of God." Mullins indicated in his 1913 work on "The Place of the Bible in Christianity" that there is *little if any difference* between the dynamic or inductive method of inspiration and the plenary or deductive view. The difference he claimed is only one of method.
5. Mullins nevertheless emphasized the truthfulness of the Bible. His description of the dynamic theory of inspiration including the affirmation "that men were enabled to declare truth unmixed with error," is indicative of Mullins's position. While on occasions he seemed uncomfortable with biblical inerrancy, he still rejected any charge of contradictions in the Bible since Holy Scripture cannot dispute what it is not intended to affirm.
6. Mullins indicated openness to modern science and biblical criticism, yet he unapologetically criticized "an unscientific use of critical methodology that sometimes rejects historical facts and majors on speculative reconstruction."<sup>11</sup>
7. The most significant shift that borrows both from the best of Pietism

and the experiential emphasis of F. D. E. Schleiermacher was Mullins's emphasis on experience. Mullins defended the Bible on the undeniable basis of religious experience as recorded in the Bible and confirmed by other believers.<sup>12</sup>

Though in some areas Mullins shifted the discussion to a new playing field, he still contended that the Bible is fully reliable and authoritative. Mullins's shift is more of a methodological development than a content development. He pioneered new ways to theologize in SBC life, though in essence he seems to restate, in different ways, traditional Southern Baptist tenets. Nowhere is this better seen than in his 1923 address to the SBC on "The Dangers and Duties of this Present Hour," where he concluded that "we pledge our support to all schools and teachers who are thus loyal to the facts of Christianity as revealed in the Scriptures."<sup>13</sup>

#### **W. T. Conner (1877-1952)**

The role E. Y. Mullins played for Southern Seminary was carried on by W. T. Conner in the Southwest. Conner did his basic work at Baylor University, his seminary work at Rochester, and additional study at the University of Chicago. Conner began his career at Southwestern Seminary in 1910 as professor of theoretical theology. While Conner taught almost everything in the curriculum, his interests rested primarily in New Testament theology and systematic theology, particularly Christology. Conner's contribution to the matter of biblical *inspiration* and *authority* is found in his discussions of the broader subject of revelation found in his works on *Revelation and God* (1936) and *Christian Doctrine* (1937).<sup>14</sup>

Conner's theology represented a conflation of his mentors: Calvin Goodspeed,

B. H. Carroll, A. H. Strong, and E. Y. Mullins. During his tenure, the influence of Carroll waned and that of Mullins increased; though both shaped his theological synthesis.

Conner wrote a great deal on revelation and authority, but little on the issue of inspiration. He seems to have followed Mullins's lead on many of the matters related to the Bible, though unlike Mullins he did not technically affirm a particular view of the inspiration of the Bible (here and at other points we see overtures of Barth's growing influence on Conner).

The key point for Conner, as expressed in a 1918 article in a Southwestern Seminary publication on "The Nature of the Authority of the Bible," is the *authoritative* character of Scripture.<sup>15</sup> "The only way to realize true freedom," he said, "is by submission to rightful authority. The Bible then is the medium through which God's authority is made known." Conner did affirm the underlying fact of the Bible's inspiration. The Scriptures are God's word and God's work, yet Conner was careful to allow for human agency. As to whether the Bible is a divine book or a human book, Conner helpfully and rightly answered, "It is both."<sup>16</sup>

Did Conner continue the B. H. Carroll tradition at Southwestern regarding biblical inspiration and infallibility? Conner's published works on theology contain no discussion of either "inerrancy" or "infallibility." Though Conner could perhaps be described as a functional inerrantist, he was less comfortable with the term than even Mullins. This functional inerrancy for Conner did not in any way produce a partially inspired Bible. Following Mullins, though, he did stress that authority is focused on the spiritual dimensions of life.

Less concerned with ontology than function, Conner maintained that the Bible's authority derives not from its status as an inspired collection of inerrant truths but from its success in leading believers toward freedom in Christ. James Leo Garrett, Conner's premier student and interpreter, has suggested that Conner's focus on the function of the Bible coincided with the Reformation emphasis on the witness of the Holy Spirit in establishing the inspiration and authority of Scripture.<sup>17</sup>

Much more so than Carroll and Manly, and like Mullins, Conner continually attempted to engage the issues of the modern world of theology. Conner's work thus took place on two fronts as he confronted fundamentalism on the one hand and liberalism on the other. He sought a middle road course in his discussions of divine revelation and the relationship of science and the Bible. Yet, Conner maintained that the "religious teachings of the Bible are not invalidated by a change in scientific views."<sup>18</sup> Conner differed from Mullins when he clearly rejected the concept of scientific evolution, even in its theistic form. In *Christian Doctrine* he specifically stated, "We cannot for a moment admit the view of evolution that leaves God out and holds that without God's creative power or superintending guidance the universe came uncaused out of nothing and has kept on evolving until it produced man."<sup>19</sup>

Conner again articulated his views on evolution in his response to the first advocate of evolution in Southern Baptist life, William L. Poteat, professor of biology and president at Wake Forest College. Poteat sought to bring together science and Scripture. In a series of lectures from 1900-1923, Poteat attempted to articulate an apologetic for the essence of Christian-

ity in light of a modern scientific worldview. The lectures included “Laboratory and Pulpit” (J. B. Gay Lectures at Southern Seminary, 1900); “The New Peace” (Hamilton Theological Seminary/Colgate University, 1905); and “Christianity and Its Baggage” (University of North Carolina, 1923). Portions of these lectures were published in his volume *Can a Man Be a Christian Today?* (1925). Conner responded to Poteat with a strongly worded negative review in the *Southwestern Evangel* that same year.<sup>20</sup>

While Conner seemingly relegated discussions regarding theories of inspiration to dogmatic obscurity, he unhesitatingly confessed the Bible as a product of God’s revelation, with redemption its central interest and Jesus Christ as its center and key to its unity. Though Conner did not use the term inerrancy,<sup>21</sup> he retreated from discussing any errors in the Bible, while emphasizing the Bible’s divine origin and absolute authority in all matters spiritual.<sup>22</sup>

### 1954 - Present

Two historic changes were initiated in the 1950s in Southern Baptist life. The first, and most important for our discussions, was the open practice of historical-critical studies in the curriculums of Baptist seminaries and colleges. Historical criticism had been employed with faith affirming presuppositions by John A. Broadus and A. T. Robertson—so that both still affirmed the inerrancy of the Bible—but that began to change in the middle of the twentieth century. The other more wide-ranging shift was the movement to a program-oriented approach to ministry. This shift brought about a generation of leaders committed to programmatic expansion. Nothing typifies

this organizational and programmatic growth more than the “Million More in ‘54” campaign, which resulted in almost 750,000 new Sunday School members in Southern Baptist churches.

With this and other similar successful programs, a movement away from theological commitments to pragmatic ones, consciously or unconsciously began to take place. I do not for one minute think it was a malicious attempt to undermine the orthodox theological consensus developed during the convention’s first century. The pragmatic outlook was what was central for growing a successful denomination in the post World War II era. Orthodoxy was understood in terms of “doing the right program” rather than articulating the right belief system. What resulted was not so much a heterodox people but an “a-theological” generation.

Thus when controversies over the nature of Scripture entered the public arena in 1961, 1969, and 1979, a theological understanding was lacking to examine and evaluate such issues.<sup>23</sup> Even men and women who never questioned the reliability of the biblical message nor ever doubted the miraculous claims of the Bible were confused by terms like “inerrant” and “infallibility,” which had been widely employed in previous generations. The programmatic and pragmatic emphases of the 1950s help us understand how the paradigm shifted in the SBC from the early 1950s to the late 1970s.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, even during the 1950s there were ongoing examples that were in basic continuity with the doctrinal affirmations of previous generations. Works such as those by W. R. White, “The Authoritative Criterion” in *Baptist Distinctives* (1950); J. B. Lawrence, “The Word and Words of God” and “The Bible, Our Creed” in *Southern*

*Baptist Home Missions* (1952, 1957); and J. Clyde Turner, "That Wonderful Book" in *Things We Believe* (1956) indicate the ongoing commitments to the trustworthiness and authority of Scripture at this time.<sup>25</sup> These more popular works echoed the commitment to an inerrant Bible found in J. M. Frost and other Baptist leaders at the turn of the twentieth century in the influential volume, *Baptist Why and Why Not*. Yet, things were changing all around.

### **Theological Development: 1952-1979**

Theology in the post-Mullins/Conner era introduced an innovative and exciting time in a denomination coming of age. During this period southern society began to take on a new shape. After World War II the New South started to emerge from its previous isolation. The agricultural economy and culture of the Old South gave way to urban and suburban structures. Populations grew and became more pluralistic, employment trends destabilized, and racial tension soared. Old South values were being visibly disturbed.

Southern Baptists struggled to deal with these challenges, as well as urbanization, growing denominational bureaucracies, territorial expansion, and new emphases in theology. New tensions were created. New questions were raised in this context. In the mid-twentieth century, SBC academics wrestled with these questions, particularly focused on the rise of biblical criticism.<sup>26</sup> The practitioners of this new art sought somehow to combine a belief in biblical inspiration with biblical criticism. Scholars struggled with the appropriate use of biblical criticism, as publicly evidenced in the debates surrounding the publication of *The Message of Genesis* (1961),

by Ralph Elliott, as well as the first volume of *The Broadman Commentary* (1969).<sup>27</sup> Both of these works openly challenged the historical reliability of the Bible. Many of the public issues dealt with historical matters of the Old Testament, but the influence of form criticism was beginning to be seen on the New Testament side as well. Many of these struggles in particular dealt not only with the use of historical criticism, but with the place of Darwinism in the theological arena. This issue became a major concern for two theological leaders in this period. Both Dale Moody (1915-1991) and Eric Rust (1910-1991) pioneered new explorations in the area of the relationship between theology and science. Together with others, such as Frank Stagg (1911-2001), a new theological paradigm was being forged. This paradigm had little use for traditional Calvinistic or popular Dispensational systems of thought. Nowhere was the "arminianizing" of the SBC better exemplified than in the writings of Moody and Stagg. Moody's concerns focused on issues of predestination and perseverance,<sup>28</sup> ultimately rejecting both; while Stagg endeavored to redefine the meaning of the cross in terms other than vicarious or substitutionary atonement.<sup>29</sup>

Frank Stagg, in the eyes of many, was the leading and most influential Southern Baptist theologian during this period, having placed his stamp on two theological institutions: New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (1945-64) and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1964-77). Stagg's commentaries and books, including his major work on *New Testament Theology*,<sup>30</sup> all reject the traditional orthodox understanding of God's purposes in salvation. Stagg's understanding of the cross of Jesus Christ



represents what could be called an exemplary theory of the atonement. For Stagg, the cross represents the revelation of the divine self-denial that was always at the very heart of God and thus demands that humans find their authentic existence as God's creatures. In addition to his treatment of the cross, Stagg reinterpreted the concept of atonement, election, and predestination so as to stand diametrically opposed to the heart of the theological commitments evident in Boyce, Manly, and Carroll. The only thing God has predetermined, maintained Stagg, is that "whoever is in Christ will be saved."<sup>31</sup>

Though Moody and Stagg greatly influenced the academic theology of the Convention, more traditional theological movements held sway in numerous pulpits across the Convention. The legendary pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, W. A. Criswell (1909-2002), personified this popular grass roots traditional theology.<sup>32</sup>

The SBC thus entered the second half of the twentieth century divided between the progressivism that characterized the moderate leadership in denominational agencies and seminaries and the popular traditionalism in the pulpits. As most major denominational leadership posts were claimed by the progressive or moderate wing of the Convention, the traditionalists or conservatives became defensive, and separatistic, focusing on their local churches instead of the denomination-at-large.

The conservatives tended to retreat to this position in opposition to a changing American culture. They saw the American culture of the 1960s heading toward an age of insanity. Living in a time of presidential assassinations, racial unrest, civil rights protests, rock and roll celebrations,

"love-ins," "sit-ins," and Vietnam war protests, the traditionalists lambasted these crazy trends and found their own emphasis on a completely truthful Bible to be extremely useful for bringing sense out of this chaos. Nowhere was this better illustrated than in the classic volume by W. A. Criswell, published while he was president of the convention and titled *Why I Preach the Bible is Literally True*<sup>33</sup> (though it needs to be known that the moderate leadership at Broadman at that time did not want to publish the book and did so with a publisher's caveat on the opening pages). For it was the hope among conservatives that the truth eventually would be victorious, after the instability of that present age had passed, that spurred them onward. The way to protect the truth in the meantime was through a form of separatism, consistent with either their popular "deeper life" and/or "dispensational" theology, though they remained somewhat active in the denomination and generally faithful to denominational programs.<sup>34</sup>

The progressives, however, marched into the 1960s and 1970s seeking to avoid the negative reaction of the traditionalists and hoping to gain respect in the larger cultural context. Further changes in American culture in a post-Watergate and post-Vietnam era created an anti-authoritarian mood among progressives. Thus another shift away from earlier SBC theology can be seen in a movement away from authority. For as W. T. Conner maintained, "If God is not a God of authority, he is not God at all. If God does not reveal himself, religion is impossible. Therefore, if God reveals himself to man, it must be in an authoritative way."<sup>35</sup> The new generation of progressive leadership was open to dialogue and interaction with

other traditions, while evidencing more interest in the social aspects of the gospel than evangelism, as well as concerns for contemporary, existential, or reader-oriented hermeneutics, and a new involvement in the ecumenical nature of the church. They basically rejected all forms of fundamentalism and sought to embrace mainline Protestantism, accompanied by the resounding theme that "Baptist means freedom."<sup>36</sup>

During the decade of the 1970s the progressive leadership of the denomination moved in directions that forged larger gaps between the moderates and the conservatives. However, two popular heroes, who were greatly admired by both groups, helped both groups to maintain some common ground with each other within the Convention itself, as well as in the larger sphere of American Christianity. One of these was Herschel Hobbs; the other was Billy Graham. Herschel H. Hobbs<sup>37</sup> (1907-1995; often called "Mr. Southern Baptist") preached for eighteen years on the "Baptist Hour," was president of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1961-1963, and chaired the 1963 Committee of the *Baptist Faith and Message*. Hobbs held to a high view of biblical inspiration, while embracing the classical Arminian interpretation of the doctrine of God, so as to affirm complete divine knowledge of every free human choice, yet in such a way that the choices are not predetermined. Still, Hobbs maintained the security of the believer. In addition to his Arminian tendencies, Hobbs moved away from being a pre-millennialist without a program toward a thorough-going amillennialism. The Arminian and amillennialist positions were welcomed by those espousing the progressive perspective. In some ways Hobbs's many theological pub-

lications, like those of his good friend W. A. Criswell, represent the best of Baptist pastoral theology, which is theology by the church and for the church.

On the other hand, Billy Graham (1918- ),<sup>38</sup> the most well known international evangelist of our time, a graduate of Wheaton College, and a member of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, proclaimed his simple gospel message to thousands. This message was undergirded by the evangelist's commitment to a completely truthful Bible and augmented by a "deeper life" approach to the Christian life and an apocalyptic eschatology, both of which were widely accepted and repeated in thousands of churches throughout the SBC. The nation as a whole during this time of unsettling transition was looking for stability and authority. Many were ready to hear the word of God announced with authority as demonstrated with Graham's now famous words, "the Bible says." Into this vacuum the traditionalists moved, appealing to a fully truthful and authoritative Bible and contending that this was the message needed to address these turbulent times. While the denomination seemingly appeared strong, healthy, and poised for "Bold Mission" endeavors, the conservatives charged that liberalism had entered the seminaries and colleges and that the moderate leadership had moved too far from the "orthodox" theology of the grass roots people and the heritage of Baptist giants from previous generations. Based on these concerns, the SBC entered the decade of the 1980s a very diverse movement with a multi-faceted history, faced with its own version of the "modernist-fundamentalist" controversy. Now we turn to these most recent developments.

### Recent Developments: 1979-2004

During the summer of 1979 in Houston, Texas, the Southern Baptist Convention took a major, and at that time unexpected, theological turn. With the election of Reverend Adrian Rogers, pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, as convention president, the conservatives began a move out of their separatist mentality accompanied by a clarion call for a commitment to the inerrancy of Holy Scripture. From where did this movement come and why did this development take place?

The traditionalist's concern regarding the full truthfulness and trustworthiness of Scripture and their corresponding distrust of the progressives can be traced back to the controversies surrounding the works on Genesis by Ralph Elliott (1961) and *The Broadman Commentary* (1969), and the widely circulated article by Bill Hull entitled "Shall We Call the Bible Infallible?"<sup>39</sup> (akin to Harry Emerson Fosdick's famous "Shall the Fundamentals Win?") in which he implied "no" to his question. The traditionalist's approach to Scripture had been articulated by W. A. Criswell in his *Why I Preach the Bible is Literally True* (1969), but the gauntlet had been laid down by Harold Lindsell's *Battle for the Bible* in 1976.<sup>40</sup>

But with the rise of historical criticism, new approaches to biblical interpretation and new ways of describing the Bible's nature were articulated.<sup>41</sup> Many progressives were no longer comfortable describing the Bible in the tradition of A. T. Robertson, J. M. Frost, B. H. Carroll, John Broadus, or Basil Manly. As a matter of fact the doctrine of inerrancy was virtually absent in SBC academic circles from the late 1940s to the 1980s, usually being relegated to obscurantist thought

and wrongly equated with a mechanical dictation view of inspiration. It was not unusual in some circles for evangelicals, neo-evangelicals, and fundamentalists to all be lumped together, and quickly dismissed by labeling them as people who held to the dictation theory of inspiration. But now conservatives were calling for a return to the position of Manly and Carroll, though now in a more sophisticated dress enabled by two decades of discussion regarding Scripture in the broader evangelical world, culminating in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978) and the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (1982).<sup>42</sup> Jimmy Draper, SBC president in 1982-83 had called for a meeting between the two parties seeking reconciliation around a handful of basic theological agreements, including biblical inerrancy, but this proposal was rejected.

The Baptist Sunday School Board attempted to address the issue of biblical inerrancy by choosing the doctrine of Scripture as the convention's doctrine study for 1983. Russell Dilday, then president of Southwestern Baptist Seminary, was invited to write the doctrine book (*The Doctrine of Biblical Authority*),<sup>43</sup> which was published in 1982. Dilday carefully affirmed the inspiration and authority of the Bible, while pointing out the weaknesses of the inerrancy position. This, however, fueled the fires even further, supporting perceptions that leaders in the seminaries and those writing for the Baptist Sunday School Board publications were not supportive of biblical inerrancy. The book—instead of helping—propelled the controversy to a new level.

During the 1970s and 1980s a number of significant works were penned either challenging or upholding the inerrancy of

Scripture. An important work by conservatives during this time was *Baptists and the Bible* by Russ Bush and Tom Nettles, which attempted to show that biblical inerrancy had been a representative, if not dominant, view in the Baptist tradition.<sup>44</sup> The book met with mixed reviews and was countered by a series of essays edited by Rob James, entitled *The Unfettered Word*, which attempted to show that both the biblical position and historical interpretation in Baptist life differed from the Bush-Nettles proposal.<sup>45</sup>

Several presentations at the annual meetings of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, seemingly year after year, tried to show that Baptists had affirmed biblical inspiration, but had not advocated inerrancy. But as we have seen, this could *only* be done by selective readings of Mullins and Conner as normative for all that went on before and after their time. Some tried to differentiate between infallibility and inerrancy, accepting the former and rejecting the latter. A carefully worded article representing this position was written in the *Review and Expositor* in 1986 by Roy L. Honeycutt (who served as President of Southern Seminary from 1982-93), entitled "Biblical Authority: A Treasured Baptist Heritage."<sup>46</sup> Here he rejected inerrancy, suggesting that it was not a position consistent with Baptist tradition, while claiming that the Bible was authoritative and binding in "all matters of faith and practice."

For the next decade, it would not be unfair to say that more heat than light was generated by both sides; though steadily the inerrancy position gained a hearing and convention-wide predominance. Many thought inerrancy to be only a political position, but conservatives, building

on works of peripherally-related or former Southern Baptists like Clark Pinnock's *A New Reformation and Biblical Revelation*<sup>47</sup> and Carl F. H. Henry's six-volume set, *God, Revelation and Authority*,<sup>48</sup> pressed on to re-establish the doctrinal consensus of previous generations. Ironically, when viewed from today's perspective, it is impossible to calculate the influence Clark Pinnock had on the conservative resurgence in the SBC in the 1970s and early 1980s.

In 1986 the Glorieta Statement by the six seminary presidents recognized the theological imbalance in their faculties and made two declarations: That the Bible does not err in any area of reality and that they would begin to hire biblical inerrantists to begin to bring balance to their faculties. From this came the famous "Covenant Agreement" at Southern Seminary in 1991 that resulted in the initial changes at that institution prior to the naming of R. Albert Mohler, Jr. as president in 1993.

The convention again chose the doctrine of Scripture for its annual doctrine study in 1992 as it had just a decade earlier. A comparison of the 1992 convention doctrine study book with the book published a decade earlier by Russell Dilday is indicative of these changes. This work, entitled *The Doctrine of the Bible*,<sup>49</sup> while somewhat interactive with modern thought as appropriate for a predominantly lay readership, solidly reaffirmed the inerrancy of Scripture, echoing the consensus viewpoint reflective of earlier Baptist theologians. Yet, the study was not just a restatement of Manly and Carroll.

The 1992 doctrine book maintained that the Bible attests to its own inspiration which can be characterized as plenary and concursive. While affirming plenary

inspiration, there was an awareness of contemporary linguistic theory that suggests that meaning is best understood at the sentence level and beyond.

Based on a plenary view of inspiration of Scripture, this view maintained the inerrancy of Scripture and stressed that what the Bible affirms is completely true. Because the Bible is a divine-human book, the 1992 study recognizes that the interpretive tools of literary and historical criticism can be employed with care and faith-oriented presuppositions carrying on the best of the Broadus-Robertson tradition in Baptist life. Consistent with the Chicago Statements of 1978 and 1982, this view of Scripture served as the foundation for the publication of the forty-volume *New American Commentary* series.<sup>50</sup> This position was argued by the conservatives in *Beyond the Impasse?* (1992) and expounded and expanded in *Christian Scripture* (1995). These volumes provided the theological underpinnings for the conservative resurgence during the period.

Such a view of Scripture, which now generally characterizes the leadership in the SBC, places Southern Baptists squarely within the evangelical world. This certainly distances the SBC at the beginning of the twenty-first century from the famous 1976 statement by then Christian Life Commission executive, Foy Valentine: "Southern Baptists are not evangelicals. That's a Yankee word."<sup>51</sup> As we enter the twenty-first century, the ten percent of leftward learning progressives in the SBC have left the convention. Approximately ten percent or more of the membership of the SBC continue to want to wage a battle (primarily at the state convention level) that has seemingly been decided. But now is the time for a large majority of Southern

Baptists to forge a new consensus for a new century—a consensus grounded in a fully truthful and authoritative Bible. Before concluding it should be helpful to summarize this view of Scripture—to move from historical description to theological prescription.

### **Toward a Model of Biblical Inspiration for Baptist Life**

If the words of Scripture are God-breathed, it is almost blasphemy to deny that the Bible is free from error in that which it is intended to teach and infallible in the guidance it gives. Our attitude toward the doctrine of biblical inspiration is one of accepting God's testimony. When faced by difficulties in and objections to biblical inspiration, we will infer that the problem is our failure to comprehend God's testimony to make truth plain, and will be driven back to a closer rethinking of the matter in light of a closer study of the biblical evidence. Thus in our dealings with the doctrine of Scripture or the doctrine of God it is the sifting and weighing of Scripture in light of the history of doctrine that shapes our convictions. Certainly we learn from the debates between Arius and Athanasius and between Pelegius and Augustine, all of whom appealed to Scripture, that our goal is the careful and faithful reading of Scripture that has ultimately shaped the consensus of faith through the ages. This is how all doctrinal advance has been made throughout the history of the church. This is also how a more true and full understanding of the theological challenges for the twenty-first century can be reached as well.

A confession of biblical inerrancy is an important safeguard, a necessary but insufficient statement for the church to

maintain consistent evangelical instruction and theological method, which is needed for an orthodox statement, in the essential matters of salvation, Christology, and the doctrine of God. We recognize that inerrancy, as a corollary of inspiration, is a foundational issue on which other theological building blocks are laid. Recognizing the importance of the issues we can suggest the following definition of inerrancy:

When all the facts are known, the Bible (in its autographs) properly interpreted in light of which culture and communication means had developed by the time of its composition will be shown to be completely true (and therefore not false) in all that it affirms, to the degree of precision intended by the author, in all matters relating to God and his creation.

The definition is complex, but it seeks simultaneously to be faithful to the phenomena of Scripture as well as the theological affirmations in Scripture about the veracity and holiness of God.

While affirming the Bible's full authority, which means that its full message speaks prescriptively and normatively to us today, we still recognize the temporal and cultural distances that separate us from Scripture and understand that certain teaching may be contextually limited (e.g., 1 Tim 5:23; 1 Cor 16:20; Eph 6:5). Yet, because the Bible is divinely inspired, the underlying principles are normative and applicable for the church today as they were in the first century.

We affirm that canonical Scripture should always be interpreted on the basis that it is infallible and inerrant. In determining what the biblical author is asserting in each passage, we must pay the most careful attention to its claims and character as a human production. It is

frequently maintained that in inspiration, God utilized the culture and conventions of His penman's milieu, a milieu that God controls in His sovereign providence; it is a misinterpretation to imagine otherwise.

Thus we must interpret Scripture in our confessional setting recognizing that it is, indeed, the inspired and inerrant word of God. We must affirm the real possibility that the entire biblical text in its canonical context contains a theological meaning that is not unlike what has been called *sensus plenior*. Though we must certainly focus on the original historical meaning of the text intended by the Spirit-directed author, yet because of the canonical shape and divine nature of the biblical text, a passage may have a depth of meaning beyond the human author's intention or the understanding of the original readers. Thus we need to read the Bible literally, historically, christologically, and ecclesiologically.

The pressures from the academy and a postmodern culture will continue to create significant challenges in our efforts to rediscover an evangelical consensus. A model of dynamic orthodoxy must be reclaimed. The orthodox tradition must be recovered in conversation with Nicea, Chalcedon, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, the Pietists, and the Confessionals. In sum, our Baptist identity must be rooted in the *consensus fidei* of the Christian church.

Our Baptist identity must be characterized by a clear and balanced affirmation of the Bible's truthfulness and trustworthiness. Those who find the term inerrancy problematic must find a way to address adequately the issue of the Bible's complete truthfulness. Underlying this commitment is a hermeneutic of acceptance

over against a hermeneutic of suspicion.

Baptists have historically reflected considerable diversity. While we do not hold our doctrinal uniformity as a goal, as a result of the past twenty-five years, we do call for renewed parameters regarding the inspiration, truthfulness, and authority of Scripture as well as a reestablishment and reaffirmation of the Baptist theological center as we look to the next twenty-five years.

To describe Baptist life as *biblical* means we confess the full inspiration of Scripture; thus we can contend for the gospel as *truth* because it has been revealed to us in Holy Scripture. It is in this sense that Baptists in the past, and hopefully in the future, can be called “the people of the Book.”

Southern Baptists cannot give up the affirmation that the Bible is totally true and trustworthy because this foundational commitment serves all other essential affirmations of the Christian faith. A commitment to a completely truthful and fully authoritative Bible is the first *step* toward healing the deadly sickness in today’s theological and ethical trends that threaten the very heart of the Christian faith and message. This commitment is grounded in Holy Scripture itself, which is the *norma normans non normata*.

Though not a Baptist, J. I. Packer has identified four problems linked with some models of inerrancy that we must not ignore. His years in a leading role in similar discussions in the broader evangelical world in America and England make his voice a credible one worthy of our attention. He suggests inerrancy is often misunderstood because of

1. *Bad Apologetics*—It is sometimes built on faulty rationalistic apologetics.

2. *Bad Harmonizations*—It often forces the Bible to say what it does not say with bad harmonizations.

3. *Bad Interpretation*—It often is preoccupied with what are actually minor aspects of the Bible, and a failure to focus on its central message.

4. *Bad Theology*—The Bible is often treated as merely a source of information; thus its Christocentric dimension is missed.

Still Packer maintains the need to affirm inerrancy because when rightly understood it affirms biblical inspiration, determines interpretative method, and safeguards biblical authority—and like him—we also affirm the necessity of such a confession for our future together.<sup>52</sup>

### Conclusion/Future Agendas

Our brief survey of the doctrine of Scripture in Southern Baptist life has focused on developments and shifts during the twentieth century. A paradigm shift that has come almost full circle has taken place regarding the doctrine of Scripture. A shift demonstrating considerable continuity with the views that Boyce, Manly, Frost, and Carroll maintained in the early years of the SBC reflects an obvious discontinuity from the progressive trajectories adopted and advocated in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Thus it is important for us not to lose sight of our heritage. Knowing the family history is certainly one way of avoiding past errors and preparing to face the future. Woody Allen claims that history repeats itself because “nobody listens the first time around.” While there are several nuanced approaches to Scripture in the SBC, which I have discussed in several other places, generally it can be observed that the large, large majority of Southern Baptists today believe the Bible is God’s truthful, written word. Likewise, they believe it can and

should be trusted in all matters. What does this say about our theological identity?

The past twenty-five years of controversy have been fueled by political and personal differences, this cannot be denied, but the *focal* point of the controversy has been theological, emphasizing either the *affirmation* or denial of the truthfulness and authority of the Bible with attention focused on the seminaries, and to a lesser degree on the colleges and universities, based on B. H. Carroll's exhortation that churches and schools rise or fall based on their view of biblical inspiration. The SBC of the twenty-first century has clearly decided that the truthfulness of the Bible cannot be ignored, de-emphasized, or eliminated, as seen in the third edition of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, which was overwhelmingly approved at the annual convention in Orlando in June of 2000. This position on the Bible is the *focus* of the developing new theological center in the SBC. It has now been heartily affirmed, but it must continue to be carefully clarified since the issue remains an emotional one, sometimes still misunderstood and often still misrepresented.

Theology in the SBC continues in transition, moving toward a more conservative and (I would say) evangelical orthodox consensus. The issues that now must be addressed are theological as we reaffirm a full-orbed historical orthodoxy that will serve the church and a biblically informed apologetic that can engage a shifting postmodern culture. In order for this to happen we need to reaffirm

our commitment to the truthfulness of Scripture. While recognizing that this commitment is necessary, it must be observed to be insufficient by itself to accomplish these theological and apologetic priorities. While holding fast to the divine inspiration and full authority of God's written word we need now to prioritize primary doctrines around which a new consensus can be built.

Together we can help churches enable and educate church members and enhance worship in order to bring about theological renewal for the church of Jesus Christ, so that believers can grow and live in obedience to the command of our Lord who has commissioned us to evangelize, disciple, baptize, and teach. The same Lord who 2000 years ago commissioned us still calls us and gifts us to teach and equip his people for service, and move them to maturity and unity. That must remain the primary task and mission of the Southern Baptist Convention in general, and Southern Baptist theological education in particular, both now and in the future. As we build upon this new and shaping consensus and the broadly recognized and re-established commitment to the inspiration, truthfulness, and authority of Scripture, we enter a new century needing to join hands with like-minded believers both within and outside of Southern Baptist life so that with heads, hearts, and hands, we can seek to obey and follow the divinely inspired, completely truthful, and fully authoritative written word of God.<sup>53</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>J. P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), 48, 137. A helpful introduction to the early formation of Southern Baptist thought can be found in W. Wiley Richards, *Winds of Doctrine: The Origins and Development of Southern Baptist Theology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991).

<sup>2</sup>Basil Manly, Jr., *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Sons, 1888), 15.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>4</sup>See James Spivey, "B. H. Carroll," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 163-80.

<sup>5</sup>B. H. Carroll, *An Interpretation of the English Bible* (New York: Revell, 1913), X, 43.

<sup>6</sup>B. H. Carroll, *Inspiration of the Bible* (New York: Revell, 1930), 42.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 25-54.

<sup>9</sup>E. Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1917).

<sup>10</sup>E. Y. Mullins, *Christianity at the Crossroads* (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1924).

<sup>11</sup>Mullins, *Christianity at the Crossroads*, 176.

<sup>12</sup>I am appreciative of the analysis of E. Y. Mullins in the Ph.D. dissertation by Dwight Moody, "Doctrines of Inspiration in the Southern Baptist Theological Tradition" (Ph. D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982).

<sup>13</sup>See R. Albert Mohler, Jr., compiler, *E. Y. Mullins: The Axioms of Religion*



- (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 19-20.
- <sup>14</sup>W. T. Conner, *Revelation and God* (Nashville: Broadman, 1936); and idem, *Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Broadman, 1937).
- <sup>15</sup>W. T. Conner, "The Nature of the Authority of the Bible," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 2 (October 1918): 11-17.
- <sup>16</sup>Conner, *Christian Doctrine*, 40.
- <sup>17</sup>See James Leo Garrett, "W. T. Conner" in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 201-15.
- <sup>18</sup>W. T. Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of The Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), 116.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., 300.
- <sup>20</sup>W. T. Conner, Review of *Can a Man Be A Christian Today?* by William L. Poteat in *Southwestern Evangel* 9 (1925): 13-24.
- <sup>21</sup>See his review of *Fundamentals of Christianity*, by F. C. Patton in *Southwestern Evangel* 10 (May 1926): 45.
- <sup>22</sup>I am largely dependent for the understanding of Conner's works on James Leo Garrett, Jr., "Theology of Walter Thomas Conner" (Th.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1954). Also, see L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999); and Dwight A. Moody, "The Bible," in *Has Our Theology Changed?*, ed. Paul Basden (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 7-40.
- <sup>23</sup>The 1961 controversy was over Ralph Elliott's *Message of Genesis* (Nashville: Broadman, 1961). The 1969 controversy focused on volume one of *The Broadman Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman, 1969). The 1979 Southern Baptist Convention initiated the conservative resurgence in the SBC and has been referred to as the "inerrancy controversy." See the response in Ralph H. Elliott, *The "Genesis Controversy" and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1993).
- <sup>24</sup>This is not to find fault with the programmatic emphases in themselves, for they helped to create the strong church programs that gave identity to Southern Baptists as a people and provided a framework for effective outreach.
- <sup>25</sup>W. R. White, "The Authoritative Criterion," in *Baptist Distinctives* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1950), 11-20; J. B. Lawrence, "The Word and Words of God," *Southern Baptist Home Missions* 24 (May 1953) 3-4, 15; idem, "The Bible, Our Creed," *Home Missions* 28 (March 1957) 8-9; and J. Clyde Turner, "That Wonderful Book," in *Things We Believe* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1956) 1-15.
- <sup>26</sup>I have profited from the social analysis in James Spivey, "The Millennium," in *Has Our Theology Changed?*, 230-262.
- <sup>27</sup>The controversy surrounding *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, edited by Clifton J. Allen, should not detract from the recognition that Southern Baptists had now produced a major work of biblical scholarship that provided exegetical help for many pastors, students, and Bible teachers. The contributions of Roy Lee Honeycutt, Frank Stagg, William Hull, Jack MacGorman, Marvin Tate, and Ray Summers were of especially high quality, though their critical conclusions at times detracted from their overall positive contributions.
- <sup>28</sup>See Dan Stiver, "Dale Moody," in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 539-66.
- <sup>29</sup>See the penetrating analysis of Stagg's theology in Robert Sloan, "Frank Stagg," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 257-78.
- <sup>30</sup>See Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology* (Nashville: Broadman, 1962).
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., 88; see the discussion in Paul A. Basden, "Predestination," in *Has Our Theology Changed?*, 62-65.
- <sup>32</sup>See Paige Patterson, "W. A. Criswell," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 233-56.
- <sup>33</sup>W. A. Criswell, *Why I Preach that the Bible is Literally True* (Nashville: Broadman, 1969).
- <sup>34</sup>See Helen Lee Turner, "Fundamentalism in the Southern Baptist Convention: The Crystallization of a Millennialist Vision," (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1990).
- <sup>35</sup>See Conner, *Revelation and God*.
- <sup>36</sup>See Walter B. Shurden, *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1992).
- <sup>37</sup>See Herschel Hobbs, *My Faith and Message* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993).
- <sup>38</sup>See J. D. Woodbridge, "William (Billy) Graham" in *Dictionary of Baptists in America*, ed. Bill Leonard (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 135-137.
- <sup>39</sup>See William Hull, "Shall We Call the Bible Infallible?" *The Baptist Program* (December 1970): 5-6, 17-18, 20.
- <sup>40</sup>See Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for*

*the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976).

<sup>41</sup>The use of historical criticism in and of itself can be very positive. However, some methodological approaches initially carried with them anti-supernatural biases that resulted in denying the veracity of Holy Scripture. Such was the case with the *Message of Genesis*. Positive employment of critical approaches can be found in David A. Black and David S. Dockery, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001).

<sup>42</sup>Both statements were produced and signed by over one hundred evangelical scholars. The product of the 1978 conference can be found in the volume edited by Norman Geisler, *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979). The second conference resulted in the work edited by Earl Radmacher and Robert Preuss, *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984). Southern Baptists who signed the "Inerrancy" (1978) statement included L. Russ Bush, Larry Walker, and L. Paige Patterson. Southern Baptists who signed the "Interpretation" (1982) statement included Bush, Walker, and David S. Dockery.

<sup>43</sup>Russell Dilday, *The Doctrine of Biblical Authority* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1982).

<sup>44</sup>L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1980; rev. ed., Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999).

<sup>45</sup>See Rob James, ed., *The Unfettered Word* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987).

<sup>46</sup>See Roy L. Honeycutt, "Biblical

Authority: A Treasured Baptist Heritage," *Review and Expositor* 83 (1986): 605-622.

<sup>47</sup>See Clark Pinnock, *A New Reformation* (Tigerville, SC: Jewell, 1968); and idem, *Biblical Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971; repr., Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1985).

<sup>48</sup>See Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (6 vols.; Waco, TX: Word, 1976-83; repr., Wheaton: Crossway, 1999).

<sup>49</sup>See David S. Dockery, *The Doctrine of the Bible* (Nashville: Convention, 1991). This work articulated a view of inerrancy faithful to the work of Manly, Carroll, Broadus, and Robertson, and influenced by the more recent theological constructions of Millard Erickson and Carl F. H. Henry. This work has been amplified and expanded in David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995).

<sup>50</sup>*New American Commentary*, eds. David S. Dockery and E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman, 1991-). About thirty of a projected forty volumes have been published, and have been greeted by warm reviews and honors, demonstrating both the quality of scholarship and depth of commitment. Each writer agreed to write in accord with the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy (see editorial preface to each volume). The volumes by John B. Polhill (Acts), Robert Stein (Luke), and Duane A. Garrett (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs) have been nominated for Gold Medallion Awards by the Evangelical Press Association.

<sup>51</sup>See Foy Valentine, quoted in Ken-

neth L. Woodward, et al., "Born Again! The Year of the Evangelicals," *Newsweek*, 25 October 1976, 76.

<sup>52</sup>J. I. Packer, "Notes on Biblical Inerrancy," Lecture 12 (Regent College, 1978); also see idem, *The Evangelical Identity Problem*, Latimer Study 1 (Oxford Latimer House, 1978), 5; and *God Has Spoken* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).

<sup>53</sup>Much of the discussion in this address is taken from and expanded in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* and also an address on biblical authority given at the inaugural conference of the Carl F. H. Henry Center for Christian Leadership of Union University in 2002.