

**Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society
November 19, 2013
Baltimore, Maryland**

**DEBATING PAIGE PATTERSON: 1981 SOUTHERN BAPTIST INERRANCY
DEBATES WITH CECIL SHERMAN AND KENNETH CHAFIN**

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Baptist Studies Parallel Session A: Baptists and the Bible
Hilton (Peale A) 10:00 a.m. to 10:50 a.m.

Seven-score and ten years ago this very day, Abraham Lincoln arrived in a town not far from here to dedicate the cemetery and honor the men who had fallen at the Battle of Gettysburg. In his two-and-a-half-minute address, Lincoln remarked, “Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.” Gettysburg, says historian Alan C. Guelzo, was “the greatest and most violent collision the North American continent had ever seen,”² and thus the testing of the nation to which Lincoln alluded was “a kind of pass/fail examination to determine once and for all whether the American founding had indeed been misbegotten.”³

On a denominational level, for Southern Baptists, the Inerrancy Controversy of the late twentieth century was the greatest and most violent collision that denomination had ever seen. In the early years of the conflict there were several key battles that tested the Convention and determined whether or not it would go the way of other mainline Protestant denominations and perish from this earth. In 1981, two theological debates

¹ For the purposes of disclosure, I serve as Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Assistant Professor of Historical Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Paige Patterson has been the president at Southwestern since 2003, and I have worked for him since 2002.

² Allen C. Guelzo, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (New York: Knopf, 2013), 5.

³ *Ibid.*, 480.

took place that revealed the ideas at stake in this war over truth. These debates allowed the “people in the pew” to see the extent of theological disparity that existed between the average Southern Baptist and the existing Southern Baptist leadership. This paper will chronicle the 1981 events and issues of the two debates over biblical inerrancy between Paige Patterson, leader of the conservatives, and Cecil Sherman and then Kenneth Chafin, both theological moderates, in an effort to show the importance of the debates and their role in the conservative reformation of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Gatlinburg General and Paul Revere

By 1981, the Southern Baptist Convention had endured two explosive years of internecine conflict. The conservatives were riding a roll of successive political victories following the election of two presidential candidates, a slate of conservative appointees to the influential Committee on Committees and the Committee on Nominations, and a general mystifying of the moderate old-guard.⁴ However, in the months prior to the denomination’s annual June meeting in Los Angeles, Judge Paul Pressler had used the phrase “going for the jugular” to describe the efforts of conservatives to educate and organize Southern Baptists to place conservative appointees on trustee boards. At a September 1980 conference in Lynchburg, Virginia, Pressler said, “We have been fighting battles without knowing what the war is all about. We have not been effective because we have not gotten to the root of the problem... The lifeblood of the Southern

⁴ For a helpful and brief overview of this period see the memoir of religion journalist, Louis Moore, *Witness to the Truth* (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 2008), 182-184. See also Paige Patterson, *The Southern Baptist Conservative Resurgence* (Fort Worth: Seminary Hill Press, 2012) and Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die* (Nashville: B&H, 2002).

Baptist Convention is the trustees. We need to go for the jugular—we need to go for the trustees.”⁵ Paige Patterson (b. 1942),⁶ also present at the conference, addressed attendees on the importance of attending the annual meeting in Los Angeles as well as future meetings. Patterson stated, “There are eight more crucial ones. Don’t think the so-called moderate element will lie down and play dead.”⁷ Unknown to Pressler, present in the Lynchburg meeting was a *Baptist Press* employee who published Pressler’s “going for the jugular” comment as his lead.⁸ The statement then took on a life of its own and would continue to do so for years to come.⁹ However, as Pressler explained to journalist James Hefley, “I was not referring to an actual, literal jugular vein of anybody or anything. I wish I could teach Baptist newswriters the use of metaphorical expressions in the English language. I was only trying to show the source of strength and power, where the lifeblood of Southern Baptists lies.”¹⁰

⁵ James C. Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis*, Vol. 1 (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1986), 81.

⁶ Paige Patterson served as pastor of churches in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas before serving as the president of the Criswell College in Dallas, Texas (1975-1992), followed by presidencies at Southeastern Seminary (1992-2003) and currently Southwestern Seminary (2003-). Additionally, he served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (1998-2000) and on numerous boards and task forces. See “Our President - Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary,” accessed November 9, 2013, <http://www.swbts.edu/about/president/>. Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2002), 116, said, “Of all the conservative leaders, Paige Patterson may have been the most important during the controversy. He did his doctoral work at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with William Mueller, who studied with perhaps the twentieth century’s greatest Protestant theologian, Karl Barth. Ironically, therefore, it could be said that Patterson is Barth’s intellectual grandson. As offspring often do, Patterson rebelled against his own mentor’s generation, the moderate Mueller, and the neo-orthodox influence that came down from Barth.”

⁷ Tom Miller, “Pressler ‘goes for the jugular’ in fight to win convention,” *Baptist Press*, September 19, 1980.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ When historian Walter Shurden compiled his documentary history of the controversy, he selected Pressler’s phrase for the title. See Shurden and Randy Shepley, ed., *Going for the Jugular* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1996).

¹⁰ Hefley, *Truth in Crisis*, 1:81.

Motivated by the activities and the "jugular" comment of Judge Paul Pressler on the conservative side, Cecil Sherman (1927-2010)¹¹ organized a gathering of pastors, of which Ken Chafin (1926-2001)¹² was one, in Gatlinburg, Tennessee for September 1980.

¹¹ Cecil Sherman a native of Fort Worth, Texas, served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Chamblee, Georgia (1956-1960); First Baptist Church, College Station, Texas (1960-1962); First Baptist Church, Asheville, North Carolina (1964-1984); and Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth (1985-1992). Additionally he served at the Baptist General Convention of Texas, helped organize the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and was visiting professor at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. During his final days in the hospital in Houston, Texas, Patterson had faculty and staff from Southwestern Seminary regularly visit and minister to him. See seminary notice, "Well-known Baptist, Cecil Sherman, Remembered - Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary," accessed November 9, 2013, <http://www.swbts.edu/campus-news/quicktakes/well-known-baptist-cecil-sherman-remembered/>. See also, "Founding CBF Coordinator Cecil Sherman Passes Away after Massive Heart Attack." Accessed November 6, 2013. <http://www.thefellowship.info/News/Archive/Founding-CBF-Coordinator-Cecil-Sherman-passes-away>.

Sherman had known Patterson's parents during the time he served with the Baptist General Convention of Texas in the early 1960s. In his autobiography, Sherman recalls of Patterson's mother, "I saw her often. By now her son, Paige, was a graduate student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Sometimes she talked with me about Paige and her dreams and concerns for him. She said he went to Hardin Simmons University so he would avoid the liberalism he might find at Baylor. He had chosen New Orleans seminary instead of Southwestern for the same reason. But I still recall her comment. "But Cecil, do you know what?" she asked. "He found liberalism at New Orleans." Then I said an intemperate thing: "Mrs. Patterson, that took skill." Later, Sherman recalled going to a luncheon arranged by Patterson's father to organize conservative support in light of the Ralph Elliott controversy at Midwestern Seminary. Sherman observed, "These people were not only out to 'save the Bible'; they were out to get anyone who was not of their opinion. The comments of Mrs. Patterson about Paige and the luncheon pulled together by Dr. Patterson informed me fifteen years later. I would not have acted as I did in 1980 without the experiences I've described that took place in 1963-1964. I was becoming uncomfortable; I was not sure I belonged with these people." Cecil Sherman, *By My Own Reckoning* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 49-50. See Paige Patterson's review of Sherman's work at <http://www.baptisttheology.org/book-reviews/by-my-own-reckoning/>. See R. Albert Mohler, Jr.'s review at <http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/04/23/this-man-was-no-moderate-the-legacy-of-cecil-sherman/>

¹² Kenneth Chafin served as professor at Southwestern Seminary (1957-1965); director of evangelism for the SBC's Home Mission Board (1969-1972); professor at Southern Seminary (1965-1969; 1984-1987); pastor of South Main Baptist Church, Houston, Texas (1972-1984); and pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky (1988-1992). Additionally, he served with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, as a trustee at Southwestern Seminary, and helped found the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. See "Leukemia claims Kenneth Chafin, former seminary prof & pastor," *Baptist Press*, January 5, 2001, accessed November 6, 2013, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=10090>, and "Baptist Luminary Chafin Dies," *Associated Baptist Press*, January 8, 2001, accessed November 6, 2013, http://assets.baptiststandard.com/archived/2001/1_8/pages/chafin.html.

Sherman, *By My Own Reckoning*, 52, had known Chafin since their days as students at Southwestern Seminary. They maintained that friendship in the 1960s during the time Sherman worked in Dallas at the BGCT and Chafin taught at the seminary in Fort Worth. Sherman recounted how then they had their "first discussion about the difference between one who is conservative theologically and one who is a Fundamentalist. Both of us saw ourselves as conservative; both of us were discovering

As chairman of the Board of Trustees at Southwestern Seminary, Chafin particularly was upset by the comments of Judge Paul Pressler regarding the seminary trustee boards as those who "sit there like a bunch of dummies and rubber stamp everything that is presented to them."¹³ Sherman presented his assessment of Patterson and Pressler stating that he thought these men should be taken seriously and summarized, "We are going to divide. The important thing is how we divide." Sherman then put forward a plan for how to "turn the Convention around" over the next five years in response to the fact that the "Fundamentalists had a three-year head start." It was at this meeting that they selected the "Moderate" nomenclature for their position and committed themselves to "do Baptist politics."¹⁴ In an October 3, 1980 story that ran in *Baptist Press*, Sherman said, "We are just people who think the stated objectives of Judge Pressler and Dr. (Paige) Patterson mean harm to the convention. ... We reluctantly assembled to work to change the leadership of the convention. We did not turn this corner, we were jerked around it by

Fundamentalism and not liking what we saw." Further, Sherman said that "it was in those years that Ken and I learned one could support evangelism and still not feel 'at home' with most of the people who were doing evangelism."

¹³ Dan Martin, "Houston pastor questions motives of those who attack seminaries," *Baptist Press*, October 1, 1980.

¹⁴ Sherman, *By My Own Reckoning*, 150-155. Sherman also provides this insight from a conversation with his wife prior to the meeting of the Gatlinburg Gang. She said, 150-151, "You know this meeting is likely to become public property, and when it becomes known, it is going to change the way Baptists see you. Are you sure you are right?" Sherman wrote, "I didn't give a quick answer; I pondered what she had said for a time. Then I said, 'I believe I'm right about those people [Fundamentalists] and what they intended to do. Fundamentalism misrepresents my understanding of the spirit of Jesus. Somebody has got to oppose them or they are going to accomplish what they have set out to do' ... Dot by nature was and is a conservative. Making the distinction between a Fundamentalist and conservative was hard for her. Both use the same language. They have the same agenda. I am a conservative. Dot knew that; she had been through the Princeton experience. She knew a real liberal when she met one. She wanted to be sure I was sure in my reading of the people who were leading the charge for Southern Baptist Fundamentalism. Dot had reason to ask the question. What happened in the next ten years did change my life ... and hers."

events in Houston and St. Louis (the 1979 and 1980 meetings of the SBC).”¹⁵ Ken Chafin remarked, “They have taken a theological word (inerrancy) and have used it to confuse the issue. The issue really is power.... I am not really interested in creating a ‘political’ party, but I am not going to roll over and let a group of Frank Norrisite fundamentalists steal the institutions of my denomination.”¹⁶ Chafin was also reported to have called the Patterson-Pressler “coalition’s cry for biblical inerrancy a ‘phony issue’ that the coalition leaders are using as a front for their ‘lust for power.’ They are people with different sets of sick egos with different ego needs—one old one that should retire, one with a secular vocation wanting to be in a religious vocation, and one with a second-rate institution wanting to be in a first-rate institution”—a reference to W.A. Criswell, Pressler, and then Patterson.¹⁷ Also, Chafin chided Patterson’s academic credentials saying he was “not a good student” in order to make the case that Patterson had no business critiquing seminary professors.¹⁸ As religion reporter, Louis Moore, described, “Chafin and the Sherman brothers saw themselves as the ‘watchmen on the wall’ who needed to warn

¹⁵ Dan Martin, “‘Concerned’ Pastors discuss future; denying forming faction,” *Baptist Press*, October 3, 1980.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Helen Parmley, “Baptists plan ‘rescue’ from conservatives,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 4, 1980.

¹⁸ Louis Moore, “Can the Southern Baptist media learn their Lutheran brothers’ lesson?” *Houston Chronicle*, March 21, 1981. Chafin would continue to express his disdain for Patterson’s intellectual abilities. In 1991, he reiterated, or his earlier quotes were reissued, “When he was a student at seminary, he wasn’t particularly a Bible scholar; he wouldn’t have made it if not for his wife: Paige is essentially an insecure man whose insecurity drove him to do this. If Paige Patterson had not had a powerful father, we never would have heard of him,” in Glenna Whitely, “D Magazine : BAPTIST HOLY WAR,” January 1, 1991, Accessed November 10, 2013. http://www.dmagazine.com/Home/1991/01/01/BAPTIST_HOLY_WAR.aspx. Whitely also cited New Orleans professor James Brooks, “who was on Patterson’s doctoral committee at New Orleans Seminary, agrees that it was a power grab. ‘The theological issue was only one of the issues.’ But he doesn’t go along with Chafin’s assessment of Patterson’s intellectual skills. ‘Paige’s defense of his doctoral thesis was the most brilliant I’d ever seen,’ Brooks says.”

Southern Baptists about the impending fundamentalist upheaval that was going to rip the Convention apart and vastly overhaul the direction, style, and political direction of the SBC. Chafin was bent on being the Paul Revere of the controversy, as he spoke, wrote, and networked with the message, 'The fundamentalists are coming. The fundamentalists are coming.'"¹⁹

Debating Paige Patterson

James Hefley reported that "In 1980 Paige Patterson challenged future Southern Seminary president Roy Honeycutt, and any other moderate who wished, to debate on the subject [of inerrancy]."²⁰ In one sense, for two years the Southern Baptist Convention had been debating Paige Patterson, the 39-year-old president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, as his leadership among conservatives could not escape notice. In the April 23, 1980 edition of the *Baptist Standard*, the denomination's state newspaper in Texas, Editor Presnall Wood called for Patterson to provide a list of names of those whom he suspected of denying the trustworthiness of the Bible.²¹ In response, Patterson submitted an essay entitled, "A Reply of Concern," which included a list of seven names of theologians and citations showing their views from their published works.²² These activities combined with his stated plan with Judge Pressler to elect a

¹⁹ Louis Moore, *Witness to the Truth* (Hannibal, Missouri: Hannibal Books, 2008), 181.

²⁰ Hefley, *Truth in Crisis*, 3:37.

²¹ Presnall Wood, "Concerns About 'Concerned' Organization," *Baptist Standard*, April 23, 1980, 6.

²² Paige Patterson, "A Reply of Concern," unpublished essay, Paige Patterson Archives. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. See also Toby Druin, "Patterson, Seven Accused Exchange Charges," *Baptist Standard*, May 14, 1980, 9.

succession of conservative SBC presidents caused even his pastor, W.A. Criswell, and deacons from his church to deliberate on the level of their comfort with his public roles.²³ Yet, until this point none of the increasingly prominent moderate leadership had agreed to a formal debate over the theological issues at the root of the controversy. That changed in 1981 when Cecil Sherman and then Kenneth Chafin accepted invitations to debate Patterson.

Unreported in North Carolina: Sherman-Patterson, February 11, 1981

On December 22, 1980, pastor Robert M. Tenery of Burkemont Baptist Church sent a letter inviting Cecil Sherman to speak at the pastors' conference of the Catawba Baptist Association on February 8, 1981. Tenery explained that the association "would like to have you, along with Paige Patterson, present position papers to the Pastors' Conference on conditions in the Southern Baptist Convention and why you take the position you take." Further, he explained each speaker would have 45 minutes and then would field questions.²⁴

On that day in February, Sherman began with a presentation entitled, "What I Believe About the Bible," and indicated this was the first time he had stated his views on inspiration away from his church.²⁵ Further, he stated that his purpose was to show how his view of the Scriptures had a place in Baptist history and conceded that "I will not

²³ See *Ibid.*, "Criswell Says Patterson to Leave Politics," and "Criswell says Patterson won't lead inerrantists," *Baptist Press*, May 9, 1980.

²⁴ Robert M. Tenery to Cecil Sherman, December 22, 1980, Cecil Sherman folder. Patterson Archives.

²⁵ Cecil Sherman, "What I Believe About the Bible," typed manuscript, February 9, 1981, Cecil Sherman folder, Patterson Archives. In addition, there exists an audio recording of the Sherman-Patterson debate from which the author has secured a typed transcription.

declare that I hold to an inerrant Bible." Following A. H. Strong, Sherman reviewed four theories of inspiration and concluded that Strong's "dynamical theory" is correct.²⁶ First, Sherman stated this is his view, in part, because Baptist theologians like Strong, W. T. Conner, and E. Y. Mullins also held this view, and "If I am a liberal, then I am liberal as they were." Second, Sherman took issue with a motion passed at the 1979 SBC annual meeting that affirmed the statement in the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* that the Bible "has truth, without mixture of error, for its matter."²⁷ Sherman believed it important to stress the humanity of the Bible in terms of the human element involved in authorship, canon selection, and ongoing interpretation. Further he stated, "I do not think the Bible is full of errors, but there are some places in the Bible that seem to me to be contradictory," and here he has in mind the accounts of the death of Judas (Matt 27, Acts 1) and any attempt to make the Bible a science book.

Sherman then asserted that "parts of the Bible are more valuable than others, more inspired than others." Here he explained that in instances where the Bible appears to give two pictures of God, the problem is with the misunderstanding God by characters in the Bible. For example, he cites Abraham's Canaanite influence as the cause behind why he would think God would want him to sacrifice Isaac. Since such is inconsistent

²⁶ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 202-212.

²⁷ Sherman here included a very rough paraphrase stating that the motion said the Bible is without "error, doctrinally, historically, scientifically and philosophically," but the actual motion does not contain these words. See *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (1979), 31, 45. He could have in mind the resolution on doctrinal integrity proposed by Larry Lewis (Mo.) that was eventually ruled out of order, see *Ibid.*, 32, 55-56. This phrase was originally used by Patterson in September 1980 in "Inerrancy and Infallibility," *Word and Way*, 117 (September 25, 1980), 5, and he will employ it in his own position paper in this debate. The phrase appears again in 1986 employed by then president Adrian Rogers at a news conference with denomination editors. See Marv Knox, "Rogers cites Scripture as 'The Issue' for SBC," *Baptist Press*, September 26, 1986.

with the character of God, Abraham misunderstood. As a way to bring clarity to his point, Sherman concluded with a lengthy review of how Jesus dealt with the Bible. He stated, “The truth of the matter is that Jesus rather freely criticized the Old Testament. . . . Jesus built a new religion by making a new interpretation of the Old Testament.” Sherman explained how he understands Jesus to have laid aside ceremonial law and then reinterpreted the basic law and then said, “When you say you believe all of the Bible, you are meaning to say a good thing. In fact, you are saying a contradictory thing. You have to choose between the hard word at the first statement of the law that Moses gave and the softer, compassionate reinterpretation that Jesus gave.” Following this understanding of Jesus’ view of the Bible, Sherman stated was his goal.

Paige Patterson entitled his paper, “Is Inerrancy Important?” and he began by citing the story of the United Methodist theologian Thomas C. Oden.²⁸ Oden’s 1979 *Agenda for Theology* revealed his own personal awakening to orthodox Christianity and a call for Christians to realize that “we have brushed under our ecumenical rugs so many ancient heresies that our rugs now bulge in the middle.”²⁹ Following Oden, Patterson stated he believes Baptists should “examine their theology to see what has gone awry” specifically with regard to the loss of biblical authority. Patterson explained that inerrancy means that “the writing of the Old and New Testament Scriptures was superintended by the Holy Spirit in such a manner as to exclude any error of any kind

²⁸ Paige Patterson, “Is Inerrancy Important?” typed manuscript, February 9, 1981, Paige Patterson—Is Inerrancy Important folder, Patterson Archives. In addition, there exists an audio recording of the Sherman-Patterson debate from which the author has secured a typed transcription.

²⁹ Thomas C. Oden, *Agenda for Theology* (Harper Collins, 1979). See also revised edition, *After Modernity ... What?* (Zondervan, 1992).

from the 'autographs.' ... Precisely how this feat was engineered, we cannot say. Nevertheless, it was accomplished without interfering with the personalities of the human writers."³⁰ Patterson maintained that even though supposed contradictions have been observed throughout the centuries, "perfectly plausible explanations can be advanced for every one of these troublesome passages." Further any of these problems should not be "attributed to partial inspiration of the Bible, but rather to inadequate/imperfect comprehension by the reader." Patterson then affirmed the classic verbal, plenary inspiration view.³¹

Patterson asserted that it is necessary for Baptists to affirm inerrancy in order to have a (1) reliable authority (epistemology). He states, "if the Bible is not inerrant, i.e., if it has mistakes and errors, who decides what is accurate and true? ... [W]e must have an inerrant word from God, or else we are forced to depend upon our own errant judgments for assessing what is, in fact, a word from the Lord." (2) The Bible's claims about itself warrant a necessary belief in inerrancy. Here Patterson cited the words of Jesus claiming the word of God is truth (John 17:17), that neither "jot" nor "tittle" would pass from the law (Matt 5:18), as well as multiple examples from the Apostles. Finally, (3) Patterson claimed that throughout Baptist history, the majority of Baptists have "never questioned

³⁰ Here Patterson states, "But in all of this process, the prophets and apostles were preserved from error historically, philosophically, scientifically, and theologically (John 17:17)." See footnote 27.

³¹ Patterson stated, "'Verbal inspiration' is not 'mechanical dictation' but rather an affirmation that the very words of Scripture came confluent from the heart of God and the human authors (1 Cor 2:13). If anything in literature is inspired, it would have to be the words! Words are the chariots which ferry the legions of men's thoughts. 'Plenary,' meaning 'full,' refers to the extent of inspiration. All sixty-six books of the canon from Genesis through Revelation are fully and equally inspired. 'Infallible' differs from 'inerrant' in that the former describes the Bible's effect upon us, while the latter stresses its factual accuracy. If the Bible is 'inerrant,' that is, containing no error, then its message is 'infallible' and will not lead us astray."

the full reliability of the Bible."³² Patterson used the remainder of his time to answer pertinent questions such as "Will preoccupation with such minutiae defuse the efforts we make in Bold Missions?" "Who has the autographs?" and "Are we not drifting toward the crushing jaws of restrictive creedalism?"

Following his prepared remarks, Patterson then addressed the question of whether there is a substantive problem in Southern Baptist life and began to cite examples from the list of publications of current seminary professors he cited in the 1980 "A Reply of Concern" article for the *Baptist Standard*. He also added citations from Southern Seminary president, Duke McCall; then SBC director of communications, W. C. Fields; and the brother of his opponent, Bill Sherman.³³ Patterson concluded with the famous admonition of the founding president of Southwestern Seminary, B.H. Carroll to his successor, L.R. Scarborough, about the need to take any ultimate concerns regarding doctrinal error in the seminaries to the people of the Convention.

The moderator, Robert Tenery, then began a question-and-answer time with both presenters joining him on the platform. A total of eight men brought questions for which the majority were directed at Sherman. At one point Sherman appeared perturbed with his first examiner instructing him to "please stay put, I'd like to look at you while I say this." At another moment, Sherman engaged Patterson on his decision to address the

³² In 1980, Moody Press published *Baptists and the Bible* by two Southwestern Seminary professors, L. Rush Bush and Tom J. Nettles. Patterson, *The Southern Baptist Conservative Resurgence*, 23, would later say that this volume "was devastating to the moderate cause because it demonstrated that while there were some liberal Baptists, the vast majority of Baptist leaders always endorsed the full reliability of the Bible."

³³ The issue with Bill Sherman concerned several alleged statements he recently made regarding Judge Paul Pressler and a conversation Patterson had with Chafin at the pastors' conference in Houston.

matter with his brother and said "it was direct and out of order to the discussion that is on inerrancy."³⁴ Patterson apologized and gave a qualified answer as to why he thought it germane to the discussion. Near the end of the time, T. C. Smith addressed Patterson to challenge him on several points including his understanding of textual criticism as it relates to the original autographs. Smith, 66 years old at the time, previously served as professor of New Testament at Southern Seminary from 1947-1958 where he was among the thirteen professors dismissed en masse by the trustees and president Duke McCall.³⁵ At Southern, Smith was privately noted for rejecting the historicity of the Gospels as well questioning the doctrine of the virgin birth as early as the late 1940s, though he remained protected by then president Ellis Fuller.³⁶ After his dismissal, Smith had moved along to

³⁴ In a letter to Robert Tenery on June 4, 1981, Cecil Sherman sought to bring clarification to the comments made by his brother and cited by Patterson in the February debate. Sent as a copy to both Chafin and Patterson just two days before the already announced and scheduled Chafin-Patterson debate, perhaps Sherman was hoping to avoid a repeat mention of his brother in what was shaping up to be a much more public foray. Sherman stated, "Back in February at your church, Paige Patterson said some pretty ugly things about my brother. . . . For a time I thought the matter would simply die. . . . But I continue to read about this. The effect is that my brother is made to be a liar." He continued, "I have heard Paige Patterson's charge. He stated it in Morganton, and I have it on tape. I called Ken Chafin and said, "Did you ever ask Paige Patterson to name the liberals in our seminaries and if so, where and under what conditions?" Here is what Ken said. Paige came to the Houston Pastors' Conference and Kenneth could not attend. Ken did go to breakfast with Paige Patterson, and he asked Paige to name liberals in the seminaries. Ken said that then a conversation then ensued, particularly about Fisher Humphreys of the New Orleans Seminary. And then Paige agreed with Ken that Fisher did not qualify as a liberal. No one else was mentioned. My brother implied that the question was asked in front of the Houston Pastors' Conference. It was not. It was asked privately at breakfast, when Paige came to speak at the Houston Pastors' Conference. Paige implied the question was never asked. That implication is clearly carried in his comments in my tapes. But the question was asked and no direct reply was given to Ken Chafin. My brother was incorrect in suggesting that the question was asked in front of the Houston Pastors' Conference. A copy of this letter is being sent to him to correct that. Paige is more than incorrect. Paige suggests that Ken Chafin would never ask him such a question when in point of fact he had. Now, Bob, you will interpret the news the way you please, but I did not believe then and I do not believe now that my brother lied. He was not precisely correct." Cecil Sherman to Robert Tenery, June 4, 1981, Cecil Sherman folder, Patterson Archives.

³⁵ C. R. Daley, "13 Southern professors dismissed by trustees," *Baptist Press*, June 16, 1958.

³⁶ Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 341-346, 392-404.

Furman University and eventually pastorates in Virginia and North Carolina.³⁷ Thus, when interacting with Patterson after the debate, it might have come as a surprise to many to hear Smith freely state about the Bible, "Whatever you call it, there is a discrepancy and somebody is wrong. There is an error somewhere."³⁸

James Hefley recounted that "The Sherman-Patterson debate went unreported in the denominational press," and after interviewing *Baptist Press* news director, Dan Martin in March 1981, Hefley relayed that Martin explained that "our budget couldn't afford it."³⁹ As a result, it has largely been overlooked in historical accounts by both moderates and conservatives.⁴⁰ However, the lack of media attention did not prevent word from getting out that spring. Furman Hendrix, a layman from Cartersville, Georgia, began circulating the cassette tape recordings of the debates along with a cover letter. The letter informed the recipient of the date of the debate, the participants, their respective views, and a request for \$4.00 to cover costs for his distribution. Hendrix opined, "I, like

³⁷ See "Dr. T.C. Smith." Accessed November 10, 2013.
http://www.helwys.com/tc_smith/tc_smith.html.

³⁸ Also, when Sherman was pressed to answer yes or no to the question "Do you believe there are errors in the Bible?" He answered, "Yes." Later, in response to an agreement signed by the six SBC seminary presidents in 1986 that affirmed the Bible was "not errant in any area of reality," Sherman, *By My Own Reckoning*, 208, was devastated. He felt that Russell Dilday had compromised and said, "I was undone by friends who knew what they had written was not so, but for the sake of buying time and space from Fundamentalists had caved in and told a lie about the Bible." He said, 208-209, "Let me reiterate that I believe the Bible. I do not believe it is shot through with errors. It is a book about God, a way to peace with God, and the way to live in a way that is pleasing to God. When the Bible speaks about these things, I take every word to heart. But there are times when the Bible is not internally consistent; at other times the numbers cited do not fit with parallel accounts of the same event. On immortality, I side with Jesus and Paul and against the view of immortality given in Ecclesiastes. It is for reasons like these that I do not use the word 'inerrant.'" Pleas that the original autographs [long lost to us] are inerrant are foolishness. How can we discuss what we cannot examine?"

³⁹ Hefley, *Truth in Crisis*, 1:82.

⁴⁰ Sherman does not mention it in his autobiography nor is it found in Shurden's documentary history. Likewise, mention of it is absent from Jerry Sutton's *The Baptist Reformation* and Paul Pressler's *A Hill on Which to Die*.

most Southern Baptists, believe our first loyalty is to Christ as the Living Word of God and to the Bible as the Written Word of God. Both perfect," and then concluded his letter with a list of recommended conservative newspapers as well as a brief call to Southern Baptist churches to send messengers to the annual meeting of the SBC.⁴¹ It appears that Hendrix was somewhat successful as, in April, he received a letter from Sherman instructing, "You do not have my permission to sell my speech. If you continue to sell it, I will communicate to you by way of a lawyer."⁴²

While Sherman noted in his autobiography that his Gatlinburg Gang met again in Fort Worth in February 1981, he did not mention the North Carolina debate with Patterson. Further, in his recounting of their efforts to run an alternative candidate to the conservative SBC president, Bailey Smith, Sherman did not mention the Chafin-Patterson debate in Los Angeles. Also in February 1981, SBC president Bailey Smith brought together Paul Pressler and Sherman for a meeting during the meeting of the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville. Smith was said to have encouraged Pressler to "disband his organization" and the three talked about Smith's upcoming appointments to the Committee on Nominations.⁴³ Sherman stated that his group was waiting to see whether Smith's appointments followed the Pressler/Patterson "agenda," and that would determine whether they would run an alternative candidate in Los Angeles.⁴⁴ Once Smith

⁴¹ Furman Hendrix cover letter, 1981, Cecil Sherman folder, Patterson Archives.

⁴² Cecil Sherman to Furman Hendrix, April 24, 1981, Cecil Sherman folder, Patterson Archives.

⁴³ Dan Martin, "Smith open conversations with rival SBC factions," *Baptist Press*, February 20, 1981.

⁴⁴ Dan Martin, "'Denominational Loyalists' watch, wait for action," *Baptist Press*, February 19, 1981.

released his committee appointments, Sherman responded with disappointment and stated, "We are grieved and angered by his actions. He is serving a narrow, small set of people who have a creedal wish for the denomination." Chafin called the appointments "an unbelievably unrepresentative committee" and stated he was "not going to stand by and watch [Smith] turn this denomination over to a group of fundamentalists who neither built nor support it nor agree with its goals. They (the committee) seem to have more ties with para-church organizations and Luther Rice Seminary than they do with the denomination they are trying to take over." Further, he gave indication that another candidate would surface to challenge Smith's usually customary re-election as president in Los Angeles.⁴⁵

On the Record in Los Angeles: Chafin-Patterson, June 6, 1981

A May 1981 *Baptist Press* story announced that Chafin and Patterson agreed to a debate held at the annual convention of the Religion Newswriters Association of America just prior to the meeting of the SBC in Los Angeles. Louis Moore, religion editor of the *Houston Chronicle*, invited the two SBC leaders to debate the topic "Biblical Inerrancy is a Factor Crucial to the Survival of the Southern Baptist Convention," with Chafin arguing that biblical inerrancy is not a crucial issue while Patterson would argue that biblical inerrancy was a crucial issue.⁴⁶ Moore sent Chafin and Patterson a joint letter at the end of May providing logistical details and an overview of the debate format. After introductions, each speaker would have 20 minutes to define the issue, followed by 10

⁴⁵ Dan Martin, "'Moderates' disappointed with Smith appointments," *Baptist Press*, April 23, 1981.

⁴⁶ "Chafin, Patterson to debate at RNA," *Baptist Press*, May 22, 1981.

minutes of response, and then a final 5 minutes for concluding remarks. There then would be a 30-minute opportunity for questions from the media that could be extended another 30 minutes. Moore concluded, "You need to both clearly understand that what you say from the moment the debate begins until the question-and-answer session ends will be on-the-record. There is no way I can guarantee that any remark made 'off-the-record' in that large of a group will remain 'off-the-record.' Our people are quite excited about the debate. I am personally amazed at the response it is already drawing throughout the convention."⁴⁷

On the ground in Los Angeles, after Louis Moore made his introductory comments, Patterson took up the positive stand for the agreed topic of the debate.⁴⁸ The younger Patterson began with appropriate salutations recognizing Chafin, 55, "without any intent of suggesting to you that he is aged or anything of that nature, I would say that in many ways he has been my teacher." Patterson began with a comparison of Charles Spurgeon's downgrade controversy of 1887 to the current events of the SBC and then set forth seven reasons why he believed that biblical inerrancy is a crucial factor for the survival of the denomination. First, he gave a historical tour de force reminiscent of Bush and Nettles' *Baptists and the Bible* citing John Smyth, Jeremiah Jeter, J.L. Dagg, Basil Manley, Jr., John A. Broadus, J.P. Boyce, and even E.Y. Mullins all in favor of inerrancy. Then he cited Chafin's own 1957 doctoral dissertation with comments also sympathetic

⁴⁷ Louis Moore to Ken Chafin and Paige Patterson, received June 1, 1981, Louis Moore folder, Patterson Archives.

⁴⁸ Religion Newswriters Association of North America, "Biblical Inerrancy is a Factor Crucial to the Survival of the Southern Baptist Convention," June 6, 1981, transcribed by Dub and Janice Henry, Kenneth Chafin folder, Patterson Archives.

to the affirmation of inerrancy.⁴⁹ Second, Patterson argued his position on the basis of the history of theological defection. Here he cited statistical decline in membership from the Northern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Convention, as well as the British Baptist Union and Canadian Baptists.⁵⁰ Third, he acknowledged the pressure of neo-orthodox theology and thus the need to maintain a defense of inerrancy. Here, Patterson leaned on the evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry and his 1962 confrontation with Karl Barth.⁵¹ Patterson returned to his fourth point during the question-and-answer time as he was running out of his allotted time. He stated that inerrancy is an epistemological necessity and provided four epistemological possibilities before he affirmed a reliance on God's revelation as certain without human embellishment as a necessity "to know that

⁴⁹ See Kenneth Chafin, "The Apologetic Method of Elton Trueblood," ThD dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1959. Patterson stated, "Dr. Chafin, himself, apparently has held this view at one time or another because in his doctoral dissertation entitled, 'The Apologetic Method of Dr. Elton Trueblood,' penned in 1957 at Southwestern Seminary, he says that Trueblood bases his rejection of Biblical inerrancy upon his doctrine of human nature. One, believing that fundamental insights recorded in the Bible are not compatible with expression is given to primitive science which cannot be regarded. In response to this, Dr. Chafin says, 'all of this reflects a basic lack of hermeneutical principle in approach to the Bible.'"

⁵⁰ Patterson referenced Dean M. Kelly, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1977), and cited Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), 5, "Today this doctrine of liberty is often taken to mean that each individual is free to adopt whatever views he will without any restraints at all. Many Baptists thus take pride in their lack of agreement, boastfully asserting that where there are two Baptists, there are at least two opinions. Early Baptists, however, would have regarded such a conception of freedom as unwarranted license, a view which can lead only to chaos. Thus the liberty of conscience has been an important strand of Baptist tradition. The meaning of that concept today has been twisted beyond recognition."

⁵¹ See Henry, "The Dilemma of Facing Karl Barth," in *Christianity Today* 7:7 (Jan 4, 1963): 27-28, "Chaos in European Theology: The Deterioration of Barth's Defenses," in *Christianity Today* 9:1 (Oct 9, 1964): 15-19, "The Pale Ghost of Barth," *Christianity Today* 15:10 (Feb 12, 1971):40-43, *Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Word, 1986), 210-211. For more on the connection between Carl F. H. Henry and Southern Baptist conservatives, see Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon*, 22, "It would not be going too far to say that Henry has been a mentor for nearly the entire SBC conservative movement."

God has spoken."⁵² Fifth, the expansion of Southern Baptists in missions and evangelism requires a belief in inerrancy. Sixth, he summarized that one must affirm inerrancy because it is the Bible's claim for itself. Finally, Patterson maintained that the Lordship of Jesus Christ requires an adherence to inerrancy as one should want to affirm whatever Jesus affirmed about the Bible.

Chafin began his segment with greetings and a statement of affirmation that it was his love for the Southern Baptist Convention that compelled him to participate in the debate. As such, he maintained that his perspective is "that of a pastor and not of a scholar. ... Pastors by and large do not approach assignments like this like you would prepare a term paper for a professor in a graduate program." He affirmed that he believed the Bible was God's Word, and "the basis of my confidence in the Bible and its trustworthiness has grown out of my continuing relationship with Jesus Christ who is the Living Word and Whom I serve as my Lord and Savior." He then put forward two reasons why inerrancy is not a crucial factor for the survival of the SBC. First, to do so "ignores the one reason why our denomination was formed to begin with—to do missions and evangelism;" and then Chafin read the following from the constitution of the SBC:

We the delegates from missionary societies, churches and other religious bodies of the Baptist denomination from various parts of the United States and into convention in the city of Augusta, Georgia, for the purpose of carrying in effect the benevolent intents of our constituents, by organizing (listen) a plan for illiciting [*sic*], combining and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort for the propagation of the Gospel, agree to the following rules and fundamental principles.⁵³

⁵² The other three possibilities are (1) scientific verification, (2) ecclesiastical authority, and (3) existentialism.

⁵³ See also the current SBC constitution: <http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/legal/constitution.asp>.

Chafin's point was that the SBC was organized for "the purpose of promoting foreign and domestic missions" and did so for 80 years before adopting a confessional statement. He stated, "It wasn't that the Bible wasn't important, but along with a commitment to the local church autonomy ... there was a strong aversion to building walls around the Bible with creeds." In sum, he said his first reason why inerrancy is not a crucial factor is "basically that it violates the reason why we are a denomination." Second, Chafin concluded that to suggest inerrancy is crucial is "to suggest that the Southern Baptist Convention is divided over the authority of the Scriptures, and this would display a vast and monumental ignorance of both our past and of our present." He then read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and concluded that it was enough.

Chafin then spent time conveying his observations about the state of the SBC agencies, noting, "We do not have a board, an agency, a commission, or a seminary where the fact of the authority of the Scripture is questioned." What Chafin meant is that there are "different views of the nature of various parts of the Bible, ... different views about the end of time, different views about women, different views about atonement, the church" and that "all of these are a part of the soul freedom to interpret the Scriptures in light of our best understanding." Chafin concluded his time with a statement directed toward "those who seek to control this denomination." He said inerrancy "is a word that has introduced a different spirit into the life of this denomination, a spirit of criticism. ... I view it as a naked, ruthless reach for personal power that acts in such a way that any means are justified for such a prize. ... I must confess to you I have some real big problems with the anger I have within my heart for the people who are basically seeking to do this thing."

After a short interlude, Louis Moore called upon Chafin to return for a 10-minute response to the first portion of the debate. Chafin used his time to discuss how the makeup of who attends the annual meetings was changing and would continue to change and that while the conservatives might marshal a concerted effort, their goals "will be ultimately rejected by the Southern Baptists at every level of their life." Patterson clarified that his concern about inerrancy was more than a "pedantic academic concern" but comes from a concern about the future "missionary and evangelistic efforts" of the denomination. Patterson addressed Chafin's statement about the early SBC not having a confessional statement and then recognized Chafin's conclusion that the conservatives were after power by concluding that "It is simply a statement, an emotional statement which represents Dr. Chafin's opinion," and "you will note that not one single statement of fact is adduced to prove any of that."⁵⁴ Patterson then took issue with Chafin's statement that there was no one who questioned the authority of Scripture because "the facts speak otherwise" as "I've been sharing quotes all over the Convention where people deny the necessity of the atonement of Christ. . . . and that there are human embellishments on the pages of Scripture." Finally, Patterson referenced the 1976 ThM thesis of Noel Hollyfield, who while at Southern Seminary, documented the "theological defection" among students that "will eventually undermine the health and stability of the

⁵⁴ Patterson also acknowledged the October 4, 1980 comment by Chafin that "They are people with different sets of sick egos with different ego needs—one old one that should retire, one with a secular vocation wanting to be in a religious vocation and one with a second-rate institution wanting to be in a first-rate institution." Patterson said, "It is incredible to me that these charges and allegations of poor attitude come when, in fact, it is oftentimes the so-called moderate fringe that has had the ugliest things to say. For example, to this date as far as I know, none of us in the evangelical camp, certainly not I, have resorted to referring to people as have "sick egos" because they happen to differ with me in my particular position. . . . All these kinds of emotional statements that have heat and venom in them are sometimes hurtful to us, but we have tried judiciously not to be the ones making those statements.

denomination."⁵⁵

Each participant was then given five minutes for closing remarks. Patterson sought to show that his "is a position that is time-honored among Southern Baptists" and then recounted the B.H. Carroll mandate to L.R. Scarborough to take concerns of heresy to the people in the Southern Baptist Convention. Chafin asserted that he "did not come here today to defend questionable theology." He then spoke to Patterson and said, "You say you want assurances, but the truth is as you carry your little quotes all over the Convention, you're carrying them to people who are basically not capable of confronting you with the truth. ... Now what you need to start doing is taking these little quotes of yours to the people whom Southern Baptists have made responsible and sit down with us and in responsible dialogue deal with these things. You cannot basically have little conferences around the country that basically have political platforms that are basically propagandizing things." Finally, he then reiterated that he is convinced that the inerrancy movement is "the waving of a flag to rally the troops to grab control of a great denomination who was doing great before this group decided to take charge of it."

After a five-minute break, Louis Moore opened up the time for questions from the members of the Religion Newswriters Association. For the remainder of the time, seven different reporters asked questions ranging from moderate vs. conservative plans for the upcoming Annual Meeting, more information on the Carl Henry/Karl Barth interaction, more clarification regarding the Hollyfield thesis, and further clarification of what is

⁵⁵ Noel Wesley Hollyfield, Jr., "A Sociological Analysis of the Degrees of 'Christian Orthodoxy' among Selected Students in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," Th.M. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976, Hollyfield folder, Patterson Archives. See also Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 434, and Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die*, 149-150.

meant by inerrancy. At one point, Helen Parmley of the *Dallas Morning News* asked Patterson whether he thought the *Baptist Faith and Message* was adequate for the Southern Baptist Convention. Patterson replied that he would, if given the opportunity, suggest the deletion of two phrases to the article on Scripture that were added in 1963 and were, in his understanding, "Neo-orthodox code phrases."⁵⁶ Finally, Chafin entered into considerable discussion regarding the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. Speaking positively of the Council and their work, he said that the Chicago Statement takes into account many things like "non-specific language" and "reporting that is not accurate" and "when you get all the way down to the bottom line, . . . they have basically defined a classic Southern Baptist position on the Bible with a historical, grammatical approach to interpreting it." To Patterson, he said, "I think the Conference on Inerrancy did such a very good job by hanging around 'til they wrote all the qualifying things. I'd suggest you get ahold of that document, it would make very good reading." Patterson replied, "May I specifically say, that it is the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy to which he refers, which I have the privilege of serving on their Advisory Council, and I was there hammering out that document and, by the way, I am very proud of the document." Evidentially, Chafin was not aware that in October 1978, Patterson joined several other evangelical scholars in drafting the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Patterson had in mind the phrases "and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man," and "the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." Both phrases would be amended in the 2000 edition of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, the draft committee for which was appointed by Patterson.

⁵⁷ See "International Council on Biblical Inerrancy," accessed November 6, 2013,

Conclusion

While many in the Southern Baptist Convention would take up the conversational and grapevine topic of debating the whys and wherefores of Paige Patterson, after the two 1981 events, it became clear that Patterson was not someone the moderates wanted to engage further in formal debate.⁵⁸ Even though the first debate between Sherman and Patterson went unnoticed by the media, it still carried a significant impact for many, including a young R. Albert Mohler, Jr. Mohler, trained at Southern Seminary by the moderates, recalled, “When I heard recordings of his debate with Paige Patterson over biblical inerrancy, I realized that I agreed with Dr. Patterson, not Cecil Sherman. Had Dr. Sherman equivocated or played verbal games, I might not have seen the issues so clearly.”⁵⁹ Regarding Sherman, Patterson later reflected that he “was a formidable foe for those of us who were deeply involved in the Conservative Renaissance. However, had all of our opposition had the character of Cecil Sherman, although the outcome would probably not have been different, the fallout and the injuries sustained on both sides of the aisle might have been significantly reduced.”⁶⁰

Regarding the second debate with Chafin, the moderator of the event, Louis Moore, thought “Though Chafin firmly believed that he trounced Patterson in the debate,

<http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI.shtml>. Also, the proceedings of the ICBI meeting were published in Norman L. Geisler, ed. *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

⁵⁸ Hefley, *Truth in Crisis*, 3:37. Patterson would debate others on the issues of inerrancy and the atonement but none from the principal moderate leadership.

⁵⁹ “AlbertMohler.com – This Man Was No Moderate: The Legacy of Cecil Sherman,” accessed March 22, 2013, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/04/23/this-man-was-no-moderate-the-legacy-of-cecil-sherman/>.

⁶⁰ “By My Own Reckoning | Baptist Theology,” accessed November 6, 2013, <http://www.baptisttheology.org/book-reviews/by-my-own-reckoning/>.

most people in the room left believing Patterson was the winner. Chafin let his anger at the conservatives get the best of him, while Patterson remained logical, controlled, and unflappable."⁶¹ This debate, too, would have wide ranging impact as the news media circulated their stories of the event. While the larger focus of the SBC inerrancy controversy would rightly remain centered on the machinations of the Convention's annual meeting and the all important committee and trustee appointments, these inerrancy debates would provide a theological well from which pastors would regularly draw. In many ways, Patterson, Sherman, and Chafin crafted a screenplay from which others would quote and cite to make their case for their positions throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

One hundred and fifty years ago, Abraham Lincoln addressed the gathering at Gettysburg and resolved that Americans should "not perish from the earth." Guelzo concludes, "Gettysburg proved that democracy had not in fact enervated and debased the American people, but had instead made them stronger and more determined to resist any backsliding from the integrity of the proposition to which they had been dedicated in

⁶¹ Louis Moore, *Witness to the Truth*, 184. Chafin later would claim that he was misrepresented and that the conservatives were out to "make everyone believe I was trying to prove the Bible was full of errors" when the debate was about whether inerrancy was an important issue for the SBC. Sherman would say, "This is the price Kenneth has paid for caring enough about the Southern Baptist Convention to be involved, to comment, to go public with his concerns." See Dan Martin, "Kenneth Chafin resigns Billy Graham School job," *Baptist Press*, March 31, 1983. Also, see Hefley, *Truth in Crisis*, 1:83, "Many observers felt Patterson won support by sticking to the issues, while Chafin digressed with attacks on the motives of conservatives." In Dan Martin's assessment of the debate for *Baptist Press* he focused on the exchange over the motivations of the inerrancy group and cited Chafin's belief that they were motivated by a "ruthless reach for personal power." Dan Martin, "Inerrancy's role debated for writers," *Baptist Press*, June 8, 1981. See also Kenneth A. Briggs, "SOUTHERN BAPTISTS SET FOR CONSERVATIVE-MODERATE FIGHT," *New York Times*, June 8, 1981. Accessed November 6, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/06/09/us/southern-baptists-set-for-conservative-moderate-fight.html>.

1776.”⁶² The Southern Baptist Convention debates over inerrancy in 1981 served a similar purpose in their own way. They allowed Southern Baptists to see firsthand what the moderate leadership really believed about the Bible, and it propelled them to action. Over the next 20 years, conservatives led a recovery of theological integrity in the denomination’s agencies and seminaries. For the moderates, the highly organized plan of the conservatives proved too much to master, and they simply grew weary of debating Paige Patterson.

⁶² Allen C. Guelzo, *Gettysburg*, 480.