

SOUTHERN BAPTIST EXPOSITORY PREACHING HOMILETIC THEORY: BIBLICAL
INTERPRETATION, VALUES, AND POLITICS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA

by

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This study addressed the influence and role of the Southern Baptist (SB) expository preaching methodology by examining the role of expository preaching, its innate characteristics, and its espousal by SB pastors and theologians in the twentieth-century for influencing personal and social values and politics in the twenty-first century. My research begins with an investigation of the historicity that led to the development of the expository homiletic theory and delves into the historical concepts and intrinsic modes of thought and process foundational to expository preaching from the early first century of Christianity to the twentieth century. I demonstrate its advocacy by the SB theologians, pastors, and leaders in the formation of their biblical theology and social agenda. There are inherent characteristics in the expository method that underlie a proclivity toward or adherence to deeply embedded historical beliefs that were derived from the first century. This belief system pervades the preparatory and delivery aspects of the SB homiletic theory. The SB expositor has subscribed to a methodology that encompasses the consideration of a passage or text in a context which involves a study of the original biblical language, grammar, syntax, and cultural background of the text. The SB expositor attempts to

didactically uncover the original meaning of the text based on its cultural context in order to communicate and disseminate divine truths that emanate from the text. The exposition typically involves an exegetical and hermeneutical method to uncover practical divine truths succinctly that will affect personal and societal change. My study includes an anthology of the sermonic material and homiletic practice of the foremost SB expositors, theorists, and homileticians. I explore the facets of their hermeneutical and homiletic processes to elucidate the basis of their adherence to their propositional and moralistic expository style which is shrouded in personal, political and social agendas. I delineate the basis for the perfunctory relationship between the translation methodology which SB theologians pursue and their acquiescence with the need for purity and literalness in understanding the original biblical texts written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. SBC theologians perpetuate a need for reading and preaching primarily based on the original text and replicating the exact words of God in the sermonic moment. SBC theologians desire to re-express the original tonal voice and images of the biblical text for twentieth and twenty-first century Bible readers. My analysis includes a demonstration of the influence of an exegetical, hermeneutic, and translation methodology that not only increases or builds the denomination but also affects social and political change. Works that have detailed the ideological and political conflicts between SB theologians, pastors, and leaders in an effort to show their approach and impact among the SB and their level of effectiveness in national and social arenas. I assert that the Southern Baptist support of expository preaching has emboldened and furnished both practitioners and congregants with a historical methodology in which they reproduce and propagate divine truths to bring about personal, social, and political change.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) evolved from a missionary organization that was primarily concerned with the mobilization of evangelism locally and internationally into a denominational body that both funded missions and perpetuated conservative social values through the literal translation, exposition, and adherence to the Bible. This evolution was so successful that by the twenty-first century the SBC had approximately sixteen million members nationwide.¹ The issues that the SBC supported were based on hermeneutical, homiletic, theological, and translation theory, represented as their scriptural interpretation philosophy. These issues included social ideologies such as anti-abortion, anti-gay rights or gay marriage, conservative entrepreneurial “supply side” economics, and even freedom of religious expression in public institutions. The framework for interpreting and communicating the scriptures was termed expository preaching. In expository preaching, the pastor or theologian focuses predominantly on the content and context found in the biblical text under consideration. The expositor engages in historical study of the background of the text to ensure an interpretation of the text aligns correctly with historical context. The exposition is used for a thematic and theological message within a historical and biographical discourse that becomes expositional in nature. The expositor may focus on a single verse, full sentence, or paragraph of biblical text. Expository sermons in reality can be based on any length of biblical text.

¹ Southern Baptist Convention, “Fast Facts.”

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation is a study of the influence and role of the SB expository preaching methodology. Its purpose is to examine the role of expository preaching, its innate characteristics and its espousal by the SBC in the twentieth-century to effect personal and social values and politics in the twenty-first century. I assert that SB support of expository preaching has emboldened and furnished both practitioners and congregants with a historical methodology in which they reproduce and propagate divine truths to bring about personal, social and political change.

Organization of the Study

Expository preachers attempt to uncover the original meaning of text based on original culture and context. There is an underlying assumption that the text is describing a historical situation, which reveals all truth about God or addresses problems in current culture from a divine perspective. Next, the expositor formulates a sermon to identify and address similar problems in contemporary culture and to use the text for speaking to that problem and incorporating modern analogies and illustrations to clarify the points or ideas expressed within the sermon.

According to the SB, an underpinning or foundation of expository preaching is the theological belief that the process for it is methodology and intrinsically sound. SB theologians assert that biblical scriptures encompass divine communication from God as the creator of the universe and all mankind. SB theologians emphasize the importance of studying the Bible as written in the scriptures' original languages in order to accurately replicate the original culture

within the receiving culture. By doing so, expositor gains assurance about communicating the exact words of God from the original to congregants and listeners.

This self-assurance has empowered the SB theologians and pastors to believe that they are instruments of God who communicate God's objective truth to their congregants and the world at large. SBC entities and congregants share the belief of being stewards of the divine truth that God desires for all people to hear, believe, and follow. Therefore, SB theologians are adamant in their exposition of scripture and unyielding in their efforts to uphold the traditional, historical, and conservative values they believe to be imbedded in scriptural texts. The belief in the expository methodology has emboldened the SBC to actively attempt to influence culture and politics.

Chapter 2 Overview

Chapter 2 demonstrates the historical development of the expository method and show how SB envision their approach as being based on divine origin. It is a methodology that God and the Bible itself instructs and models. Also, the SBC point to scriptural characters, prophets, apostles, and Jesus Christ as practitioners of expository preaching. Accordingly, SBCs believe that the onus lies with SB pastors and theologians to emulate the expository methodology and to inform its congregants that they are actually communicating the exact words of God. Furthermore, this chapter not only shows the SBC's divine and biblical basis for expository preaching but also demonstrates how this methodology was developed based on an implicit connection to a strong fidelity or belief in the literal translation of the original languages of the biblical text. Additionally, this chapter contains what impels SB expository practitioners to

believe that they use scriptural translations and versions that reflect or convey the precise or original scriptural texts.

The influence and success of expository preaching were seen especially in the twentieth-century when the SB congregants were increasingly influential in affecting national politics and societal values through their adherence to and a Biblio-centric approach to hermeneutics. The SBC grew to be the largest Protestant denomination in the twentieth century in the United States in part due to its focus on personal evangelism, expository and evangelistic preaching, and its propagation and adherence to socially conservative values.² It typically has been examined as a conservative theological denomination in relation to its conflicts with liberal denominations. However, it is my assertion its belief in and practice of expository preaching enabled SBC to influence not only its own congregants but also other denominational leaders and pastors to accept certain conservative social, economic, and political values.

The growth of the denomination was achieved through a dual pursuit of a fundamental approach to homiletics and a desire to have a preeminent voice in national culture and politics. SBC pastors and theologians are committed to expository preaching and an inherent desire to communicate to their congregants some level of divine communication. The SBC believes that the practice of expository preaching leads to mobilizing congregants to support or negate certain social and political values both financially and personally.

Additionally, this study shows that scriptural texts and expositions, when enshrouded in a methodology that assumes inerrancy and inspiration, can lead to an intense sense of polity, loyalty, and personal sacrifice. The examination of this topic includes evidence of how SBC

² National Council of Churches, "Yearbook."

congregations and seminaries possess an undying loyalty to expository preaching and fidelitous translation practices. The narrative shows that SBC congregations and seminaries tend to be consistently dogmatic about a traditional, historic doctrine which SB leaders believe leads to continued congregational growth and development. The SBC's commitment to expository preaching is the foremost methodology which they use to publicly decry, or satiate, certain political or cultural practices. The SBC can claim to do so based on an objective or divine standard that is not based on personal, charismatic, or subjective beliefs. In essence, because the SBC is a "people of the book" and claims to teach the exact meaning of the Bible, the SB theologians and pastors tend to argue that SBC stances are not personal or political but divinely mandated, without bias, for the betterment of the nation and the appeasement of God.

I show that SB scholarship reacted against the rise of sociological and psychological modes of understanding the world and instead emphasized a mode of interpretation that re-presented the actual truths of the scripture without any dilution or distortion or engagement in a purely sociological or psychological presenting of the scriptural texts. Their stance was uniquely based on a methodology of interpreting or exegetical study of the original. Conservative theologians also argued that the Bible itself endorses a literal interpretation of scripture and that the sermon should be based on a literal interpretation of the text. This emphasis on the dual alignment of text and preaching continued to be propagated in the SBC seminaries and encouraged in the pulpit.

In Chapter 2, I demonstrate that the SBC's tendency to assert that they were teaching truth based on the traditional biblical interpretation model, this appealed to the more historically conservative or fundamental religious adherents in American society. Their contention that they

teach a historically accurate message from the Bible appeals to congregants who had a historical family connection or shared social values with the SBC. The Southern States especially tend to be more socially, traditionally biblical conservative and more likely to follow traditional values such as prolife, segregation, anti-homosexual, antigambling, and abstinence. These traditional values emerged from historical first-century interpretations of biblical text. However, as in the case of segregation and even gambling, the SBC stances could be considered invented traditions because of their textually questionable hermeneutics and erroneous homiletic applications that might have been based on the cultural preferences of society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³

Chapter 3 Overview

Chapter 3 contains the details of the uniqueness of the SBC and its use of expository preaching. The SBC has articulated its message to attract all Americans, not just Southerners, to its wholeheartedly conservative and dogmatic values. The SBC claims the message has origins in the scriptural text and is not man made. The SBC reports basing these convictions on naturally intrinsic human conscientiousness that correspond with scripture.

Chapter 3 demonstrates the effectiveness and connection between preaching and personal ideology. The SBC preachers share a message that is consistently traditional and historically conservative. Many non-members share many of the same social, political, and cultural values. Consequently, SBC preaching is not just attractive on a religious level but also on a purely social and political level. Congregants are encouraged to adopt the tenets of SBC preaching so both

³ Hobswabm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*.

SBC members and non-members may share similar values because they are expressed communally and oftentimes lead to a sense of community and connectivity.

The third chapter examines the approach of the SBC to ensure that sermons were framed using a translation philosophy which focused on expressing the original meaning of the text. The SBC wanted to ensure that pastors and theologians studied the original languages or used a Bible translation or version that was close to the original. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) became one of the preferred versions, and another favored Bible version was the New King James Version (NKJV), as it too followed the literal method of translation. Both versions were considered a “complete equivalence” as against a “dynamic equivalence.”⁴ I demonstrate that the SB pastors and theologians who focus on these and other specific versions of the Bible ensure that their exegetical model represents accurate rendering of the original text.

The hermeneutical principles or language rules for genre analysis constructed specific views about pertinent cultural and political areas such as the role of government, wealth and materialism, the family, the existence and prevalence of good and evil, entertainment, and the eschatological role of the United States. There is a duality in this process that reflects certain social and cultural values. However, the expository methodology, according to the SB theologians, produces or reveals these views as embedded in the biblical text. Therefore, SBC pastors and theologians are convinced of the biblical accuracy of their messages, even though their messages likely reflect the secular conservatism of the congregants and even non-members. The SB theologians’ views or beliefs emerge naturally from scriptural text as part of the process of expository preaching, namely exegesis and hermeneutics.

⁴ Nida, “Toward a Science of Translating.”

The dominant translation theory of SB theologians argued for fidelity rather than freedom in the exchange of source and receptor languages, aiming for the accurate dissemination of texts of the scripture. The idea of fidelity for the SBC theologians is a word-for-word transmission of the message from the source text written in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. Fidelity includes maintaining the syntax and grammar of the source text. This translation model passes on the message of the original in both sense and form and produces the same effect of the original text to the receptor culture. SBC theologians assert that a divine impact happens to contemporary hearers when they receive the same message as the original hearers. The underlying assertion is that the “very words of God” are conserved and conveyed, which is effective in bringing about personal transformation.

Chapter 3 contains an analysis of the methodology of exegesis (including genre analysis) as practiced and endorsed by the foremost SBC theologians, leaders, and pastors. I describe the relationship between the exegetical and hermeneutic methodology that perpetuates SBC ideologies, as well as SBC social and political views. I anthologize the accounts of preachers and interpreters regarding their practices. Some of the central figures’ writings that are discussed include Daniel Akin (president of Southeastern Seminary), David Allen, (Professor of Theology and Homiletics at Southwestern Seminary), Jim Shaddix (Professor of Preaching at Southeastern Seminary), R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Joseph Emerson Brown (Professor of Christian Theology). These individuals have served in SBC pulpits, on SBC higher education faculties, and well as in leadership roles in SBC seminaries. I examine their writings, sermons, and conduct interviews regarding their homiletic methodology.

I explain that the conceptual framework that this group of theologians have used to interpret the scriptures that is encompassed in a spiral movement from the original text and audience in its original meaning to its contemporization or acculturation in the twentieth century.⁵ Expository preaching involves studying the text in the original language by using proven linguistic and scientific methods. The language of the text is structured or organized in a communicable and palpable manner homiletically by using proven communication techniques in an attempt to convey the meaning of the text. These SB theologians and pastors share a mutual commitment to expository preaching and maintain the same theological beliefs in which they emphasize their respective leadership roles to influence congregations, seminaries, and other SBC entities. They express a similar, conservative belief system that involves a commitment to the process of expository preaching. Furthermore, through an analysis of the foremost hermeneutic and homiletic textbooks used in SBC seminaries, I demonstrate their practice of depending on a belief in this conceptual framework. Important to the spiral movement through the process of exegesis and hermeneutics is genre analysis used to determine the genre or type of literature in which a passage or text is found.

Chapter 4 Overview

In Chapter 4, I focus on SBC translation methodology that supports the SB theologians' need for purity and literalness in understanding the Bible as written in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. SBC theologians and pastors have long asserted that many other denominations or cultic groups find their beginnings through the erroneous understanding of the text or because of mistranslations. They argue that historically many churches, congregations or

⁵ This interpretative methodology is detailed in Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*.

denominations establish their belief system and certain theological beliefs without adequately studying the actual scriptural text or without even attempting to understand the actual meaning of the original. Instead, they assert that many readers of the Bible make decisions based on the English translation without studying the overall semantic and linguistic structure of the text. They point to the Reformation and the theologically faulty practices of the Roman Catholic Church and the laity's lack of Bible reading or just accessibility to the Bible. The SBC has always advocated for the priesthood of believers that enables individual congregants to have access to an accurate or literal rendering of the original text and ensuring congregants hear sermons that are based on biblical translations that are as close to the original as possible or as literal a rendering as possible of the original.

In an effort to maintain certain foundational biblical ideals, the SB theologians support a translation principle based on fidelity or formal equivalence rather than functional or dynamic equivalence. Functional equivalence translations such as New Living Translation (NLT) and the New Century Version (NCV) are used to as mere reference points in the homiletic process. They are oftentimes alluded to for highlighting an idea or thought, needing to express an idea in a culturally savvy or relevant manner, and showing how a word or phrase can be stated in a different, but understandable manner. The NLT and NCV are never used by SB theologians and pastors as the main translations for conveying biblical meaning during preaching.

SB theologians are concerned with translating the original text word for word and ensuring the replication of the lexical and syntactical structure of the original biblical presentation. The standard texts used in SBC churches serve to support and maintain the traditional, historical biblical values related to critical societal and cultural issues, such as the

complementarian roles of men and women in the church and society. The SBC has avowed the complementarian roles of men and women, namely the idea that women live in a functionally, subordinate role in marriage and church leadership, though equal in essence to men. The idea of submission to a man in marriage and only men as the pastors and major leaders in the church have been propagated through expository preaching and teaching.

The SBC's translation process has proliferated the patriarchal view of the Old Testament Bible and advocated for the male leadership views of the New Testament. The SBC expositors that the gender-neutral or egalitarian views of men and women are not biblical. Their schema of expository preaching emphasizes a hierarchy through which all marriages, not just Christian marriages, males exercise the right of leadership and hold the final say in all decisions and plans in their families. Additionally, SBC pastors are men, and Christian males have the final say in all decisions regarding the operations of each SBC church. The primary teaching responsibility during the weekend services belongs to men. The SBC's literal translation principle has not only yielded literal renderings of the original biblical texts but also has irrevocably shaped and supported the language and culture of the Bible to reiterate SBC biblical theology about gender roles, human sexuality, and other gender issues important to the political and social arena in the United States.

Chapter 5 Overview

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, I describe the social and political views that emanate from engaging in expository preaching. I note how the sermons from various pulpits influence political establishments based on the theological stances presented in SB expositors' preaching. I show that the expository method was a potent methodology for affecting social and political

change and for galvanizing the polity for social, cultural, and political causes. In order to demonstrate their social and political influence, I review opinion polls, newspaper articles, listenership, and viewership of SBC radio and TV broadcasts, politicians affiliated with the SBC and their voting records and laws supported or enacted, funding for lobby-groups and their resultant effectiveness, church attendance records and their commercial enterprises and publications. I argue that the use of expository preaching garnered widespread appeal because it had a sacrosanct association with objective truth. Therefore, the social issues supported by the SBC warranted a hermeneutical and homiletic model that supposedly maintained the veracity of their beliefs. SBC pastors and leaders have used their pulpits and the expository form of preaching as a vanguard for motivating and inspiring their congregants to act in accordance with the underlying biblical ideas that express God's will. SBC pastors also demand obedience from their congregants to ensure that society and culture are not corrupted.

By examining the role of expository preaching and its innate characteristics and its espousal by the SBC in the twentieth-century, I demonstrate the influence of an exegetical, hermeneutic, and translation methodology in not only increasing or building a denomination but also affecting social and political change. I examine records addressing the ideological and political conflicts in the SBC to show how the SBC's approaches to their social values impact national and social arenas.

Significance of the Study

This dissertation provides literary scholars and theologians with a better understanding of some practices to utilize or avoid in developing hermeneutical and homiletic theory. Additionally, this examination includes a focus on the historical development and use of

expository preaching by SB pastors and its misapplications which hinder the growth of the SBC. Furthermore, the belief in the principles and practice of expository preaching by SB pastors contributed to the controversial and significant conservative resurgence. This resurgence resulted in the removal of several important theologians from leadership positions and employment in SB seminaries, publications, and other educational entities. Expository preaching influenced the SBC approach to social and political values, and I show that religious texts do not function in isolation but are used to transmit certain social and political values because denominations rely on a complex and strategic interrelationship among theologians, pastors, religious leaders, and denominational seminaries and institutions of higher learning. The commitment to expository preaching resulted in the literal reading, interpretation, and application of the scriptural text to the extent that congregants were mobilized to influence electoral candidates, support or boycott certain corporations, and discriminate against certain groups of people.

What is intriguing about the approach of the SB involves how their doctrines and beliefs claimed to have stemmed from careful, exegetical study as part of understanding the meaning of the original text. The results or doctrinal beliefs that emanate from their efforts are held and preached with strong commitment. However, SBC leaders simultaneously maintain an understanding that these are not social or cultural principles but divine oracles which transcend culture and time. SB theologians and pastors claim that they cannot take responsibility for the doctrines and beliefs from which the expository was derived due to the exegetical and homiletic approach. They claim their belief system is corroborated by biblical writers, ancient practitioners of exposition, patristic theologians, and even the Reformers.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Chapter 2 focuses on the historical development of expository preaching and the various facets which comprise the discipline and a review the SBC's historical basis for practicing expository preaching. The practice of expository preaching is founded on the hermeneutic principles espoused from early first century Christians through twentieth-century Christians. Essentially, SBC theologians studied the different hermeneutic and homiletic models practiced during the early years of Christianity and accepted the model which received widespread acceptance from the more conservative Church fathers and theologians. SB theologians, pastors, and leaders demonstrate its advocacy when formulating the SBC biblical theology and social agenda. I examine historical sermons as well as theological and homiletic works. I consider biographical data of some of the foremost SBC expositors, historians, and theologians who include John Leadley Dagg, A. T. Robertson, John A. Broadus, W. A. Criswell, and Paige Patterson.

Theological and Scriptural Veracity

Expository preaching is based on an implicit belief that the scriptural text is truthful. Also, the belief is that behind the written text, a real cosmic conflict rooted in human history not only gives rise to the original written scripture but also accounts for the urgency and importance of expositing the literal meaning of these texts and teaching the entirety of the Bible. This cosmic conflict motif can be eschatologically realized only at the end of human history. In order to satisfy the demands of the divine God, SB expositors believe in telling congregants about the creation of human history, which began with the rebellion of the angelic being, Satan, and his

banishment with a host of demonic angelic beings (Satan's followers who also rebelled against God) to an uncreated earth. Satan sought to thwart God's plans for human creation.

Satan successfully tempted the first human beings and plunged humanity into a state of fallenness or sin that results in an immediate, personal separation from God. Beginning with the book of Genesis, the Bible recounts God's creation, punishment, and atonement of sin. The biblical texts tell the stories of the ancient patriarchs, the nation of Israel, and the advent of Jesus Christ and his apostles. SB theologians point to the very beginnings in Genesis as the historical starting point of understanding God's purpose for individuals, marriage, family, and society. No specific biblical commands stipulate that the text should be read and interpreted sequentially; however, it is important to note that some of the fundamental SBC ideals find their foundational support in the text of Genesis. SBC theologians and pastors argue that the lives of the biblical characters represent how God wants people to live in order to please him and not experience divine punishment like that experienced by Satan and the other fallen angels.

According to the SB pastors and theologians, the scriptural text is an accurate record of human history through the eyes of God and its preservation and transmission teaches human beings how to relate to and please God. Failure to please God and meet his divine standards results in divine punishment and judgement. SB theologians and pastors subscribe to the belief that the Bible is a special revelation and a direct communication or special revelation from God to the prophets, scribes, and writers. It is God's communication to men. Biblical texts were spoken to men in words, which they wrote to preserve God's messages and ensure those messages could be transmitted and taught to all people.

Additionally, for SB theologians and pastors, the scripture is true and applicable for all ages throughout human history. The Bible facilitates the reconciliation between God and humankind. It is absolutely critical that the original meaning and original intent of the Bible writers is revealed so that men and women hear and understand God's words. The ultimate goal of SB preaching is to gain faith in and obedience to God and to avoid God's wrath, punishment, and judgment.

SB believe that it is only the texts of scripture, God's special revelation that can result in faith and cause human beings to please God and avoid his wrath and judgment. There are two aspects to the working or birthing of faith according to SB the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, divinely uses the text to bring about personal conviction and repentance. The Holy Spirit's work is predicated on the accurate dissemination of the text because the Holy Spirit only (based on SB theology) works based on the original truths of the text. SB pastors and theologians are engrossed with the concept of expositing the tenets of scripture because they believe that God will not empower congregants to believe mistranslations or inaccurate teachings. SB pastors and theologians believe piety and personal success, meaning that an individual's success, is determined based on obedience and belief in biblical text. Therefore, when pastors or theologians fail to exposit the truth and teach erroneous doctrines, they not only risk personal punishment but also can cause congregants not to experience personal success from God. This success may include material wealth, good health, a prolific life-style of personal evangelism, generosity and being generally well-liked by congregants and non-members.

Essentially, hearing the original text with its authentic original commands and decrees believing and following them causes listeners experience the power of God. Many SB and other

theologians affirm the divinity of unadulterated scriptural text and promote expositions free of erroneous mistakes. Exposition must be imparted and permeated with God's power. In other words, believing and obeying results in unusual, unexplained, or enabling power and strength. Theologian Wayne Grudem recognizes the Bible as God's communication in written form as a special revelation to human beings and as the personal embodiment and expression of the mind of Jesus Christ. Grudem attaches value and significance to the Bible because of its innate divine characteristics.⁶ Consequently, the Bible constitutes the tangible manifestation of God's purposes and designs for biblical adherents.

Historically, then the SB pastors and theologians believe that expository preaching is absolutely necessary because of the personal benefits to both the expositor and congregants as well as because of the personal consequences of not living according to the tenets of the scriptural texts. Furthermore, SB theologians and pastors believe in the exclusivity of the Gospel and no other text than the Bible offers a means to know and experience God and Jesus Christ. However, in order to be a member of a SB church the congregant must attest to a unique perspective about Jesus, be willing to emulate Jesus, and be personally baptized. SB theologians and pastors believe in a literal interpretation of the biblical text that includes literal teachings about and by Jesus and other Bible writers are expected to be practiced or followed. This view is foundational to understanding expository preaching because the Bible in its literal form is truthful or accurate, and by practicing the lessons of the Bible, a congregant literally can attain personal appeasement of God, personal experience and knowledge of God, and ultimately at the end of the cosmic conflict, an eternal state with God. SB theologians and pastors also argue that

⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 47-50.

only through encountering the literal, accurate renderings of the Bible through expository preaching, teaching, or literal translating do people gain an authentic, personal knowledge and experience of God's power and become aware of His presence in their lives. SB argue that the Bible is the only power, the only modality, the only cause and source to know God and Jesus, and to experience the Triune aspects of God.

SB theologians and pastors assert that the Bible is the only gateway to personally experiencing God. As a gateway, the Bible must be accurately disseminated or else the biblical encounter through preaching is false and ineffectual. They believe that through commitment to the church may one believe in living according to God's standards, experiencing relative material prosperity, and enjoying a stable family environment. However, SB theologians and pastors firmly believe that following doctrines antithetical to SB beliefs, especially in the area of personal salvation and spiritual growth, creates a situation that can lead the individual to face eternal judgment based on wrong beliefs and practices. In essence, SB theologians and pastors believe that earthly success is uncertain because of the certainty that is only obtainable in the final judgement.

Additionally, individual SB followers may feel a personal conviction about being saved. However, faith is so deeply personal and private, there are times when even signs do not reveal motives or the true intent of an individual's heart. Thus, SB theologians experience tension with the likelihood of some individuals claiming to be adherents when they are not. Accordingly, even though there are signs in people's behaviors indicating true faith, ultimately the real authentication of one's personal salvation comes at the eschatological end of time. The exposition of scriptural text through the process of exegesis, hermeneutics, and homiletics is

paramount to gleaning the original meaning so that congregants can experience and know the power of God. The foundational concept to expository preaching which warrants SBC support and belief in the methodology begins with the idea that God has spoken to human beings and His words are powerful for life and salvation. Consequently, congregants must hear the original, authentic, and literal tenets of the scriptural texts.

L. S. Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary emphasized the indispensable value of the scripture:

No substitute will ever be found for the knowledge of the Word of God. That Word alone deals with things eternal and infinite, and it alone has the power to convert the soul and to develop a God-honoring spiritual life. There is a limitless, yet hidden, spiritual content within the Bible which contributes much to its supernatural character.⁷

Conservative theologian Charles Hodge argues for the veracity of the scriptural texts.⁸ However, it becomes apparent that the SBC is caught in a circularity argument for the basis of their belief is derived from the very text about which they advocate. They assert that the Bible is true and powerful because the Bible says it is true and powerful. This biblical self-determinacy wherein theologians and pastors base their assertion about the Bible from the Bible seems somewhat illogical. Nonetheless, the SBC theologians argue that the personal testimony of congregants that include their authentic experiences of the presence and power of God in various circumstances of life provide evidence for the divinity of the Bible. SB pastors sometimes point to miraculous experiences, whereby the very thing for which they pray comes to fruition and the sense of tranquility in the face of the danger or trouble overcomes them because of their confidence that God is with them in the present.

⁷ Chafer, *Vol. 1: Systematic Theology*, vi.

⁸ Hodge, *Vol. 1: Systematic Theology*, 38.

SB theologians, pastors, and congregants use personal testimonies to counter the circular argument even though it is accepted and understood that the Bible is the sole authority. However, they use personal testimonies to present proof that their methodology actually works in the lives of people. It is undoubtedly difficult to argue with one's personal testimony especially if it results in can be corroborated in the case when a difficult circumstance was removed or solved through intercession and prayers. There are many non-congregants who are responsible for conglomerates, corporations, world leaders, national leaders, business leaders or professionals who resolve insurmountable problems who thrive in the midst of difficulty and who experience personal prosperity without a commitment to or following a specific biblical text. There is an apparent dichotomy and unresolved tension for congregants and non-congregants have the same life experiences and both sometimes make legally appropriate decisions or fail to uphold legal and ethical standards. Congregants also can never consistently obey every tenet of the text in all of life's daily circumstances for it is almost impossible to know the entirety of the scriptural text and so know which text to apply in every given situation. If power comes through hearing and appropriation then congregants are rendered powerless through witlessness, or because of the inaccessibility to expository preaching or even due to insufficient exegesis or exposition of the text. Therein it seems that the expositor has a unfathomable responsibility and the personal failure of the congregant may be due to the expositor's inexperience and as such should remove culpability from the congregant. The act of expository preaching then appears to inherently bear some level of implicit power, the act both conveys divine powerful words and is also responsible for the empowerment of the hearers.

It is noteworthy too that the SBC theologians and pastors affirm that power and empowerment are gained not just through the commands and obedience to propositional scriptural text but also through the understanding and personal application of the principles in the various literary forms. There is a divine revelation to be lived out in the various images, riddles, narratives, poems, and so on. SBC pastors and theologians argue for a system of analyzing different genres because God speaks in various forms, and God's various forms of speech are meant to be believed and obeyed. In other words, expository preaching and its commitment to exegesis by following the rules of semantic and syntactic analysis, grammar, historical, and cultural context makes it possible to discover the original meaning behind an act of God in the scriptural text or a speech in the scriptural text.⁹

Accordingly, expository preaching proponents contend that the act of exegesis and hermeneutics of biblical text and the communication of biblical text through the practice of proper homiletic theory convey principles, propositional ideas, or commands, depending on the genre or nature of the sermon. Through the careful exposition of the scriptural text, the expositor unearths the meaning that God wants to convey to the congregants. That is why SBC theologians and pastors are firmly committed to the process of hermeneutics so that they can assert that regardless of the form or genre, event or circumstances that led to the recording of a biblical text its intended meaning has been uncovered. The expository process serves as proof to themselves that they have revealed the divine intended meaning and are conveying a divine message to the congregants. This divine message should be proclaimed and upheld at all cost. Furthermore, due to its divine nature, the message has eschatological implications for culture. The text's

⁹ Alexander and Rosner (Eds.), *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

nonapplication hastens divine judgment of eschatological events, such as natural disasters or theological tribulation. The message or command should be adopted and practiced by all of the culture even if it means solicitation of political support. In other words according to SB doctrine, the text provides directives for personal action, and when personal action is insufficient to accomplish those directives, adherents must turn to political means to ensure the application of the text.

Accordingly, the conceptual framework of expository preaching is predicated on the concept of the innate power that is in the words of the scriptural text regardless of the event or circumstance or genre that precipitated the recording of the event. Also, SB theologians and pastors regard the scripture as divine communication from God and the pastor, teacher, or theologians as the stewards and messengers of divine communication. A failure to maintain the accuracy of the original is considered heretical and may lead to divine angst and judgment as against those who misinterpret the Bible. This is the argument of the SBC who conceive from their own exposition scriptural text.¹⁰

It becomes problematic however as there is no measurable standard for determining if an expositor has unearthed all the salient commands or ideas in a given text, word or sentence. Also, there is no way to determine the transformative effect of a text. It seems that congregational growth and attendance are the only reflections of the impact of the message or its powerful, transformative effect in the lives of its listeners. SB tend to equate powerful sermons and effective preaching with congregational growth and tend to highlight skilled oratorical expositors

¹⁰ Dr. W. A. Criswell, foremost SBC expositor commented during his expository sermon on Revelation 22:18-19, preached on September, 29, 1963, about the judgment of God on any individual that misuse, misinterprets or alters the Biblical text.

as good models for expository preaching. In other words, SBC considers its large churches and their pastors as effective models of expositional preaching and as exceptional leaders to be emulated even though some of their sermons may not meet the demands of good exegesis and homiletics. Also, there are pastors who do careful exegesis but their delivery or homiletics is tedious or uninteresting even though they have unearthed the divine message or truth. Consequently, their congregants are deterred or distracted from listening to the message.

The SBC contends that the transformative power of the biblical text only comes into effect after the experience of salvation followed by ongoing listening, believing, and practicing of the tenets of the biblical text. By ongoing engagement, personal transformation or sanctification is empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Pnuema acting on the scriptural texts. The scriptural texts, particularly the “speech-acts,” are the modes used by the expositors to develop sermons that contain evidence of the practicality of following the mandates of the texts. There is another hermeneutical element, as there are moments in a text, which illustrate the character’s stream of consciousness and does not merit an exegetical or homiletic proposition to which congregants must conform. This is where the expositor decides what descriptive of that time and culture is applied; however, it is not prescriptive as an act to bring about sanctification and the congregant’s obedience.

SB expositors, theologians, and pastors have long held to the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy. The concept of inspiration functions as the basis for assuming what scriptural texts are prescriptive and are necessary for the salvation and sanctification process. Inerrancy, then represents the foundation for the expository performance of preaching. The expositor, through the belief in inerrancy, asserts that the translated scriptural texts are true or accurate to the

original autographs and manuscripts from which the translated original biblical text emerged. Thus, the expositor assumes that the human speech that is recorded as scriptural text has been written as God instructed the biblical writers and that they wrote exactly what God told them to write. Even some of their prophetic acts or the behavior of the prophets and biblical writers, their deeds and words said to the nation of Israel, surrounding nations, or the early church are in some cases necessary for the experience of salvation and sanctification and in other cases it reveals God's perspective about people though that too comes with implicit divine expectations.

SB pastors and theologians then rely on the concept of inspiration and inerrancy as the groundwork for substantiating the authority, authenticity, and sanctify purpose of the scriptures and the necessity then for the expositor to meticulously engage in the exegetical and homiletic process of expository preaching. Furthermore, the SBC understands scripture in which the texts of scripture are interpreted as verbally and plenary inspired. Essentially, SB theologians and pastors believe that the Bible is authored by both God and man in that God worked through the scripture writers to ensure that the final product represents the very words that God wanted to communicate. This logic sounds much like a mechanical exchange between God and man this concept of inspiration, but the SBC believes that God so directed all human authors to write without suspending their own personalities and idiosyncrasies, even while maintaining the veracity of God's communication.

A commendable approach by the SBC involves believing that every text in the Bible is as God intended and that biblical writers wrote according to their own stylistic preferences. According to SB pastors and theologians, biblical writers experienced God as comprehensively working in their lives to ensure what they wrote appears without any error or mistake. Biblical

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writers experienced the sanctifying agent of God to the extent that they were under God's full and complete control, even though they also still controlled their faculties in a perfectly faultless state. The SBC believes that this combination of the God-man partnership in producing biblical text is necessary for salvation and sanctification. The God-man partnership does represent the ideal soteriological relationship but does underscore the relative difficulty in congregational sanctification as the experience of canonization appears sporadic, incomplete, and obstructed. The expository preaching act does not guarantee a divine connection in the preaching moment between God and the congregant yet allows for the dissemination of the truth with sheer oratory skill to attract attendees. However, the scope of the expository sermon foresees congregants making life changes to reflect the doctrine of these SBC beliefs and practices.

The other theological pillar that SB theologians and pastors rely on is the concept of inerrancy and its related doctrine of infallibility. The process of contextualizing the text as a part of the homiletic methodology involves ensuring that the original intent or meaning is maintained. The interpreter or expositor exclusively committed to the theological doctrine of the Bible and to the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy becomes obligated thereafter to follow the methodology that ensures the expositor garners the original meaning of the text. From there, the expositor expounds the meaning whilst maintaining the relevance of the text when preaching to contemporary hearers. One of the arguments put forth by the SBC regarding the reliability of the biblical text is the subjective, but non-measurable, notion of personal witness. The SBC points to the concept of canonicity, which is the selection, consolidation, and historical affirmation of the Bible's sixty-six books.

In a Christian context, the word “canon” refers to “the list of the writings acknowledged by the Church as documents of divine revelation.” Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, used the word in this sense in a letter circulated in AD 367.¹¹ The word does not simply denote a list of works, but canon was used to represent the “rule of faith” or “rule of truth.” Indeed, in the early Christian centuries, the scriptural texts were considered a standard for belief and practice of the Christian faith. Athanasius drew on the work of Origen in 367 enumerated Christian documents considered to be canonical, and with miniscule changes, his lists and Origen reflected the current sixty-six books of the Reformation Bible. Athanasius made a distinction between the scriptural texts and those that could be used for inspiration and edification.¹² Hence, a more fundamental methodology for asserting the reliability of the scriptural text rather than purely referring to inerrancy and inspiration is the historical criterion.

The scriptural text themselves could be said to be integral to the church and polity because of its role in antiquity. Early Christian theologians believed that a literary work was canonical if it represented an apostle’s work or the work of someone closely associated with an apostle and was written during the apostolic age. Any narrative or epistolary letter written later than the apostolic age could not be included in the canonical books. The scriptural text themselves have authoritative force because of their historical roots and acceptance by the ancient theological tyros of the early Christian church. These texts were based on the original or beginning Christian faith’s standard or rule of practice, which makes the scriptural text that fits this criterion, specifically the New Testament text, a controlling force for converts. Furthermore,

¹¹ R. P. C. Hanson, *Origen’s Doctrine of Tradition* (London, 1954), pp.71, 78, 79, 208f.

¹² F. F. Bruce, *Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press), 77.

the concept of orthodoxy does seem more relevant as the framework for utilizing the biblical text as the source of belief and practice with the assumption that it can be used for salvation and sanctification. Orthodoxy, conveys the idea that the scriptural text fits within a constancy or common theological grid, that means the scriptural text can be assumed to be authoritative for a specific denomination such as the SBC because the congregation was founded on the rule or standard of the biblical text and follows the same pattern of belief that is theologically consistent to biblical text in what they advocate and disavow.

The power for transformation through the “speech-acts” of the scriptural text which has been presented to the polity through the exposition of the text relies on the unearthing of the original meaning and being orated homiletically. However, the power that the SBC alludes to in the text operates as a possible source in its appeal to its apostolicity and orthodoxy and even to its widespread acceptance and use by the evangelical church at large (i.e., the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches). The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament have been universally recognized by the evangelical church to be the standard for belief and practice. Therefore, congregants, without needing to know their church history, are aware that at least for generations their churches have used a Bible with sixty-six books to authenticate their faith, to regulate their practice, and to appeal to it as the means for salvation and sanctification, and to allude to it as the standard for mobilizing behavior in society and culture.

The SB idea of inspiration when connected with the concepts of apostolicity, orthodoxy, historicity or antiquity, and catholicity provides credence for the transformative role of the Bible’s texts. The Bible plays a controlling role in their faith community because of its historical attestation and role in the community which has been passed down from generations. Also, when

combined with the consistent referencing and quoting of the Bible during moments of expository preaching or when citing theological dogma as authoritative, inerrant, and inspired this constructs a creedal understanding of the nature and role of the Bible. A cursory survey, of Old Testament text such as Psalm 19:7-10 discusses the supremacy of the Bible:

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

Deuteronomy 11:18-20 too expresses the value of the scriptures,

You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

These verses from Psalms and Deuteronomy demonstrate the conventional, internal attestation as to the veracity and transformative purpose of the scriptural text which SBC theologians and pastors fully support. The exegetical process of examining the Hebrew text indicates both a structure and form which supports the meaning of the text. This passage is the embodiment of a linguistic speech-act, but one which is verifiable by the exegetical analysis that reveals its meaning. Also, the text is canonical, corroborated by its antiquity and consistency with evangelical orthodoxy. The challenge for SB theologians is to anchor their exposition using verifiable historical analysis in substantiation of the reading or the original text. This effort would present a delineation in their methodology; however, it would corroborate their understanding of originality, inerrancy, and inspiration.

The Theological Role of the Old Testament Prophet

Historically, the SBC pastor has recognized his role as following the ancient and biblical path of the prophet. He saw himself as not only responsible for proclaiming the original intent of the author but also to present it to the congregation in an understandable and relevant manner. Their role was an extension of the Old Testament prophetic role. In that they were forth-telling, reporting of things as they were and how they should be from a divine perspective. The other aspect of the Old Testament prophetic office is that of fore-telling, speaking about future events from a divine perspective. Based on the Old Testament Law, the Old Testament prophet should face death if his forth-telling was in contradiction with the Law and if his foretelling of events did not come to pass. In other words, the Old Testament prophet should be a repository of truth. His message and his office or role were dependent on the consistency of his message with the Old Testament Law and the substantiation of his prophecy.

The SBC pastors and theologians recognize this tremendous responsibility as the mouthpiece or messenger of God. Congregants like the people of the Old Testament expect that their pastors and theologians are functioning in a manner emblematic a messenger of God. SBC pastors' and theologians' messages must be accurate and true. They should be prepared, and what they communicate must be in tandem with the divine prerogative. The effectiveness of expository preaching especially in the SBC seminaries is based on the concept of the expositor as a messenger, a mouthpiece of God.

Moreover, SBC pastors and theologians understand their message to be wholly inerrant as did the prophets of antiquity. This understanding, in a sense, supports their work of exegesis and homiletics in communicating the original message from the divine. The authority of the message

is primarily internally based, but there are external indicators as well. Also, the overall canonicity of the text enshrouds the message with a level of authority. The authoritative and transformative self-witness of the text along with the personal witness of the polity gives credence to scriptural text. There is a seemingly dualistic belief in both the authority of the preacher and the text.

The SB expositor proclaims the orthodox, catholic text from antiquity to be authoritative and inspired. By this exposition, the SBC pastor receives recognition as credible or ethical because of the task of expository preaching and his inherent prophetic character is accepted as ethically credible based on the cultic office he represents. The SB expositor through the tasks of exegesis and homiletics bridges the cultural and linguistic gaps between the original text and the receptor culture. Furthermore, because of his prophetic role, he must ensure to disseminate the text accurately using the original meaning of the scripture so that congregants may hear and respond to the divine message. It seems that much more is expected of the expositor than the individual congregant. Due the eschatological dimension of the exposition and its problematic possibility of judgment and rewards for congregants based on their religious practice, the expositor's role receives high esteem while the sacerdotal task of expositional preaching is vital to state of mind and perspective of the polity.

In the Old Testament, the primary means for communicating or preaching the word of God was through the נָבִיא (*nābî*), or spokesman and prophet from the verb *nāba*, and literally this word means “to call,” “to proclaim,” and hence, “to pour forth words, like those who speak

with fervor of mind or under divine inspiration, as prophets and poets.”¹³ The prophet shared or proclaimed discourse from God through God’s Spirit. The prophet was acutely aware of his intermediary role as God’s spokesperson his primary responsibility was that of representing God before man and not necessarily in a priestly function of representing man before God. Whereas the Old Testament priest engaged in the service of the sacrificial cultic ceremony of worship, the prophet specifically communicated an undiluted divine message.

The importance of the prophetic role of the expositor and his commitment to expository preaching is foundational to SBC pastors and theologians. The SBC and its seminaries have sought to develop expositors and ensure that its seminaries focus on orthodox theological doctrines and in so doing influence its congregants to believe the same especially regarding doctrines regarding the scriptural text and believing the transformative power of the Bible. SBC pastors and theologians have attempted to affirm the inerrancy, infallibility, and inspiration of the scriptural text and the importance and art of expository preaching. SBC pastors and seminary graduates must adhere to SB doctrines and preach expository sermons with the understanding that they can influence their congregations to follow and believe certain theological and social values.

The first SB seminary was founded with the specific purpose of developing SB preachers, pastors, and leaders who hold to orthodox, conservative doctrines, especially those concerning the Bible and to prepare them to become expository preachers. The seminary was established in 1859, in Greenville, South Carolina, where the seminary’s founder, James Petigru Boyce, was joined by John A. Broadus, Basil Manly, Jr., and William Williams as the seminary’s first

¹³ VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament*, 1067-1078.

faculty. In 1857, J. B. Jeter, a leading SB pastor of the nineteenth century and then pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, described the purpose of Southern Seminary, the oldest of the SBC seminaries, in the following manner:

Being free from the shackles imposed by the old systems and established precedents, and having all the lights of experience and observation to guide us, we propose to found an institution suited to the genius, wants, and circumstances of our denomination; in which shall be taught with special attention the true principles of expounding the scriptures and the art of preaching efficiently the Gospel of Christ.¹⁴

Jeter believed that the seminary's main role was the preparation of expositors. The seminary was primarily established to train men on how to exposit the biblical text. Also, On July 30, 1856, James Petigru Boyce delivered his inaugural address of Southern Seminary entitled "Three Changes in Theological Education." Boyce commented as follows:

In adopting this change we are as far from saying that education is unnecessary that we proclaim its absolute necessity. We undertake, however, to point out what education it is that is thus essential, and what that which is only valuable; and while we urge upon all to acquire all useful knowledge as an aid to that work, *we point out the knowledge of the word of God as that which is first in importance.*¹⁵

On the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the seminary, Seminary President John R. Sampey commented on eight ideals and "goals which stir the Seminary to race at top speed." Sampey described the list in the following manner:

Let me put in the foreground the Seminary's devotion to the Holy Scriptures. The Bible in Hebrew and Greek and English is at the foundation of the entire course of study. Believing that the Scriptures are God-breathed, the Seminary refuses its higher degrees to men who will not learn enough Hebrew and Greek to read the Bible in the original languages. The Scriptures are our sufficient and authoritative rule of faith and practice.¹⁶

¹⁴ Broadus, *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce*, 148.

¹⁵ Boyce, "Three Changes," 25.

¹⁶ Shurden, "Southern Seminary," 394.

The SBC from its onset was focused and devoted to biblical training in the original languages so that the expositor could convey the original intent and they followed the premise regarding the sufficiency and power of the scriptures for faith and practice. The attempted to develop conservative students who in turn would lead and influence its congregations to embrace and uphold conservative values. Southern Seminary introduced inventive approaches to seminary education by using the English Bible in teaching biblical courses as opposed to using only Hebrew and Greek texts. Furthermore, they offered a seminary education for individuals studying classes other than the classical disciplines.¹⁷ The seminary sought to attract preachers and pastors who had no previous formal religious education as well as students who had theological training but wanted a seminary education. Their ultimate goal was to shape the denominations churches and develop a system for generating a consistent type of pastor and theologian. One that indorses the SB theological doctrines and proclaimed the same to its churches and congregants.

Moreover, John Broadus wrote his classic text on expository preaching, *On The Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, in 1870, and it became the standard text on preaching in the seminary. This text detailed the properties of expository preaching and popularized the exegetical and homiletic approach that utilized the historical, grammatical, contextual analysis combined with an effective rhetorical but theologically astute style of presentation. Prior to the publication of Broadus' text and the establishment of Southern Seminary, the SBC and its churches were more focused on topical sermons. This prevailing methodology was deductive

¹⁷ Ibid.

eisegeses or in some cases proof-texting without examining or using the text in its specific cultural context or without studying the original meaning.

In 1892, E. C. Dargan joined the faculty of Southern Seminary as a professor of homiletics and pastoral theology, his fifteen years of homiletics instruction led to *The History of Preaching*, a two-volume historical study of the craft. Dargan also edited Broadus's classic *Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* and taught a sociology course at the seminary. He credited Broadus with changing the SB approach of preaching of his day from the mere spiritualizing of the sermon to a more expository style of preaching.¹⁸

W. O. Carver served as Professor of Missions from 1898-1943, though he was not a theological conservative, Dale Moody described him as an evolutionist and “a salty old liberal,” who “thought Barth and Brunner were just a bunch of fundamentalists.”¹⁹ He claimed that Broadus was instrumental in converting the SB ideal of preaching of his day from dramatic rhetorical style to an expository style of preaching.²⁰ He influenced the most prominent and renowned nineteenth century SB Greek and New Testament scholar A.T. Robertson who claimed:

The world has never seemed the same to me since Broadus passed on. For ten years, I was enthralled by the witchery of his matchless personality. For three years, I was his assistant and colleague and for the part of the last year an inmate of his home. It was my sacred and sad privilege to see the passing of this prince in Israel. No man has ever stirred my nature as Broadus did in the classroom and in the pulpit. It has been my fortune to hear Beecher and Phillips Brooks, McLaren, Joseph Parker and Spurgeon, John Hall and Moody, John Clifford, and David Lloyd George. At his best and in a congenial atmosphere Broadus was the equal of any man that I have ever heard.”²¹

¹⁸ Dargan, “The Baptist Pulpit,” 404.

¹⁹ Moody, *Oral History Interview of Dale Moody*, 13.

²⁰ Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 67.

²¹ Robertson, *The Minister*.

Broadus' influence was significant because he was able to connect with both Northerners and Southerners and preached to people of all social classes. The invitation Broadus received to deliver the Lyman Beecher lectures on Preaching at Yale Divinity School in 1889 was a signal of his national status. When the Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) was organized in 1891 the first publication project was *A Catechism of Bible Teaching* by John Broadus.

Broadus articulated his commitment and the importance of preaching in the introductory portion of his treatise on expository preaching. Broadus believed that preaching is the only causative mode for effecting salvation and transformation in life of congregants and the local church. Broadus was convinced that doctrine should be taught and sanctification can only be truly experienced when confronted with the texts of scripture through proper expository preaching. Broadus asserted that preaching then is the sole, distinctive means for communicating or transmitting divine truth and that pastors and theologians should be adequately prepared to lead and influence their congregation.²²

Broadus outlines his methodology for expository preaching and refers to the importance of being text-centered, engaging in the exegetical study of the biblical languages, and presenting the original meaning of the text to the congregants with the expectation of the likelihood for a transformative personal or societal life change.²³ Broadus' approach makes it normative for SB preachers to use the text as their main message or as the basis of their central sermonic ideas as

²² Broadus, *A Treatise*, 2-3.

²³ Ibid., 2-3.

they preach text-based sermons. SB seminary students, graduates, pastors, and theologians are trained with this model in mind to ensure they become expositors.

All SB seminaries and entities adhere to the principles of expository preaching. All SB seminaries require students to be taught the methodology of expository sermons. Denominational leaders are expected to be expository preachers and to uphold biblical inerrancy, infallibility, and inspiration. They are rigidly dogmatic about the idea of the authority and transformative power of the scriptural text. The intrinsic authority and infallibility to which they ascribe the text has the resultant effect of causing them to want to see its standards adapted in popular culture or to influence society in general.

Broadus and Southern Seminary, the first seminary founded by the SBC, strongly influenced expository preaching, leading to the method's indoctrination into succeeding seminaries. Broadus's homiletic strategy also became instrumental in the move away from purely rhetorical presentations focused on pathos, logos, and ethos in the pulpit and toward creating emotive or sensationalistic responses in the polity. Broadus contended against the sheer use oratorical skills.²⁴ Furthermore, Broadus maintained that the sermon should move from explanation of the text to practical application in that the sermon should lead the congregant to act or live based on the original intent or meaning of the text. The sermon should call for a response. For Broadus, sermons must include practical acts or behavioral changes that line-up with scriptural text from its original form.

Broadus's methodology leads to expository sermons being the source for mobilizing the congregation and the centerpiece of a convert's spiritual experience. The sermon and the worship

²⁴ Ibid., 2-3.

experience represent the all-important moments in the life of an SBC congregant. These are the moments in which congregants hear from God about His will and purposes for their lives. The expository sermon is the expression of the original intent and meaning of the text as God intended it and the text is inherently true. The expository preacher functions as a prophet who generates a salient expectancy in the congregant to respond positively to biblical text. However, the extent to which the expositor is deemed successful depends on his ability to effectively explain biblical meaning and engagingly or compellingly show its contemporary application.²⁵

Broadus' mark on SB preaching and theology was brought to the fore when Professor Crawford Howell Toy studied at the University of Berlin from 1866 to 1868 and was a professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Toy served on the faculty of Southern Seminary in 1869 as a Professor of Old Testament Interpretation and Oriental Languages. Toy was influenced by the concept of higher criticisms, and in particular, by the influence of European theologians; later, Toy was dismissed from the seminary because of his intellectual ideologies. Toy was heavily influenced by Julius Wellhausen's historical-critical method of examining the scriptures. Toy embraced the idea that New Testament writers incorrectly used a rabbinical hermeneutic methodology when including or referencing Old Testament scriptures in the New Testament. Toy asserted that the Bible has both a human and a divine element, but he also argued that the Bible has element of human fallibility that includes both error and myth. Broadus fervidly disagreed with Toy's hermeneutic view of inspiration.

Broadus responded to Toy with a treatise supporting the infallibility and inerrancy of the orthodox conservative view of biblical inspiration. Broadus authored the *Paramount and*

²⁵ Broadus, *A Treatise*, 333–335.

Permanent Authority of the Bible and affirmed both the Bible's divine authorship and the infallibility of human authorship. In the *Paramount and Permanent Authority of the Bible*, Broadus asserted that the Bible does not contain the Word of God because the Bible *is* the Word of God and truthful in all aspects. Broadus's view of the scripture ultimately influenced the SBC, its seminaries, and a generation of pastors and theologians. The seminary maintained a conservative stance regarding inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility and dissociated themselves and purged from the faculty all variant theological views. During the denominational struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, W. A. Criswell, Paige Patterson, and other conservative leaders referred to Broadus' theological views and practice to formulate a position based on his long-held premises. The conservative resurgence in the SBC reflected a similar exclusion of faculty, leadership which held diverse theological views, especially ones that disagreed with conservative understanding of inerrancy, inspiration and infallibility.

The Connection Between Faith and Preaching

Conservative orthodox theologians and preachers have asserted that the preaching or proclaiming the Word of God is a necessary for igniting faith (belief or confidence in God), which makes possible obedience and personal and community transformative behaviors. They point to the letter to the Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) that "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman, Duriez, Penney, and Reid concluded the following:

Hebrews 11 offers a complete catalogue of the heroes and heroines of faith, but even he runs out of time to list them all (Heb 11:32). The lives of these men and women show

that faith is an unshakable belief that God will do everything he has promised to do even before there is visible evidence to that effect.²⁶

According to SBC theologians and pastors, faith is absolutely necessary in order to know and have a personal relationship with God, and it can only be kindled through an interaction with the scriptural texts. There is a belief that the scriptures affirms that it only through the proclamation of the Word and positive response to it that there is any sense of personal metamorphosis. Biblical preaching then should be the catalyst of personal and societal transformation.²⁷ Cranfield commented on the text of Romans speaking of believing a message as follows:

A message's being believed involves an intermediate occurrence between the message's being uttered and its being believed, namely, its being heard. So in [verse] 17, Paul draws out (ἄρα) what is implied in his quotation, applying it to the matter in hand. Faith results from hearing the message, and the hearing of the message comes about through the word of Christ (i.e., through Christ's speaking the message by the mouths of His messengers).²⁸

Robert Mounce too affirmed the role of preaching as tantamount to causing faith and ultimately obedience to God:

Although it is true that faith is our response to the gospel, it is also true that the message itself awakens and makes faith possible. God is at work even in our response to his gracious offer of forgiveness. The message is heard "through the word of Christ," that is, it is Christ himself who speaks when the gospel is proclaimed. All effective preaching is accomplished by God himself. The messenger is at best merely the instrument used by the Holy Spirit as a necessary part of the process. It is God's own voice that confronts the sinner and offers reconciliation. This existential reality is what constitutes the gospel, "the power of God for ... salvation" (Rom 1:16).²⁹

²⁶ Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman, Duriez, Penney, and Reid, *Dictionary of biblical imagery*, 262.

²⁷ Schreiner, *Vol. 6: Romans*, 567–568.

²⁸ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 537.

²⁹ Mounce, *Vol. 27: Romans*, 212.

Preaching then is absolutely necessary for traditional faith communities such as the SBC in which a syncretic relationship exists between faith and preaching. Additionally, the SBC understands that the outcome of preaching is first the result of the workings of faith through hearing the divine message.

Establishing Hermeneutical Modes from the Old Testament

A critical component to the SBC belief in expository preaching is that they consider that it was the model practiced in the Old Testament. SBC expositors practice a methodology whereby the contemporary communication and contextualization of a scriptural text has its foundation in the exegetical process of moving from the original language to the re-expression or transference to the receptor culture. Unsurprisingly, they follow a hermeneutical model that is based on a biblical exegetical methodology model on particular scriptural texts which exemplify the act of interpretation and exposition. SBC preachers held the idea the experience of Ezra served as foundation story of expository preaching, particularly due to the need for translation and interpretation in the task of expository preaching.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah recount the post-exilic return from the Babylonian captivity. The captivity of the Southern Kingdom by the Neo-Babylonian Empire is dated from 605-539 BC. The period of captivity lasted for seventy years and their resurgence and initial departure from the subsequent Medes-Persian Empire occurred in a series of three primary excursions back to their homeland. There were three distinct departures the first is recorded in Ezra 1:1 led by Sheshbazzar, the second occurred in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, approximately eight years later (Ezra 7:7), under the leadership of Ezra. The third wave of return stemmed thirteen years after the second, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus,

directed and led my Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:1). The size and population of Judah was indiscriminately smaller in the post-exilic period and the time in captivity for the first time in their history ushered in a shift in their ability to understand the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament. They had adopted the Aramaic language of the Babylonian empire.

The post-exilic immigrants had adopted the Aramaic language of their subjugators and were in need of a translator or a translation that would convey the unadulterated meaning of the Hebrew text. In this regard the SB expositor faces a similar dilemma as he has to interpret an ancient text that was written Hebrew or Greek which he has to translate in order to convey the original meaning of the text. The SB conviction regarding antiquity, orthodoxy, catholicity, inspiration and inerrancy demands that he uncovers or interpret the original meaning of the text. Expository preaching has the expectancy of accuracy and untainted. The SBC congregants like the post-exilic assume that they are hearing the original text and its application for contemporary time.

The ascendancy of the role of the post-exilic translator or communicator inadvertently arose out of each particular historical situation. Furthermore, there was a connection between obedience to the scriptural text and welfare of the returnees. Historically, adherence to the scriptural text led to a belief that the Jewish nation would experience prosperity, personal success, divine presence, and not just an ephemeral experience of God's omnipresence. The exposition of the biblical texts during the post-exilic period was viewed as the only means of ensuring the accurate rendering of the texts and the practical implementation of its tenets. Furthermore, due to the disobedience of the Old Testament Laws divine retribution occurred and led to the seventy-year captivity.

The text indicates that after the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt following its destruction during the siege of 605 BC the remnant men and women met together probably at the Water Gate of the outskirts of the temple since only men were allowed in the temple. The text identifies book to be read as the “the Book of the Law.” Despite the Babylonian captivity, there is importance attached to the book associated with Moses, the chief lawgiver in Jewish history, as either all or part of the Pentateuch is read to the people. The congregation was comprised of men, women, and children, and the latter group is indicated through the use of the expression “any capable of understanding what they heard.” The root word used for “understand” is *בין* and is repeated in verses seven to nine to underscore the idea of giving or conveying the meaning of something and to make it clear. Segments or parts of the biblical texts were “read from” (*קרא ב*), and a large platform was erected for the proclamation of the text (*לדבר* = “for the purpose”) as the immense size of the congregation warranted a visible presence to ensure the congregants could receive the auditory communication of the texts.

Ezra, the priests, and leaders in the community were accompanied on the platform by thirteen additional leaders who represented the laity. The text asserts that Ezra “Opened the book” (*ויפתח הספר*), which means, he literally unrolled the scroll. Ezra began his exposition with benedictory expressions of praise “to the great God” (*האלהים הגדול*), and the congregation responded with a shout of “Amen!” as they lifted their hands in worship and reverence. Verses seven and eight both reveal that the Levites assisted Ezra with the exposition of the original text. As Ezra read the text in the hearing of the people, the Levites provided detailed explanation.

The text reads that the Levites were “giving the sense” (an infinitive absolute), and the resultant effect was that the members of the community were able to understand the textual

reading. The role of the Levites operated in tandem with other scriptural references which detailed their responsibilities (Deut 33:10; 2 Chr 17:7-9, 35:3). The text was read by Ezra and the Levites and the congregants “understood the reading,” which caused them to weep. Ezra apparently selected the text and provided a clear explanation and application, thus making the text relevant to his hearers.

Ezra used the expositional, hermeneutical and expository model to make applicable the demands of historically obsolete laws. The conclusion of the reading and exposition came with an exhortatory statement: “It is the joy of the Lord that is your protection.” Ezra attempted to convey to the congregation that they need not fear the wrath or judgment that may ensue from God because of disobedience. Ezra declared that “The joy of the Lord” was the through the celebration and worship of God and that each Israelite would experience God’s protection if they listened to and obeyed the scriptures.

Ezra employed a hermeneutic which focused on selecting certain texts, reading them in the original, but then explaining the texts in such a way that the people could understand their divine messages. In the Old Testament, the prophets mostly focused on aspects the law that included the Ten Commandments and the standards for various seasonal feasts, worship, cultic rituals, and celebrations. Ezra explained historical text but showed its relevance to the modern hearers.

The Israelites were stunned when they saw their clear lack of obedience in light of the divine demands. Their fear of retribution led them to recommit to their worship and celebration of God. They demonstrated a commitment to the biblical texts, and it was equally noticeable that the congregants were comprised men, women, and children, thereby ensuring no generational

disparity in the dissemination of the biblical texts. This text thus serves a pivotal model for the formation of a methodology dedicated to exegesis of original texts and for contemporizing biblical meaning to be relevant to hearers.

The apparent effect of Ezra's expository method was a community response which engendered both fear and worship of God. The theological assumption is that a repentant community offers witness, experiences divine protection, and receives providential help. Therefore, Ezra's hermeneutic produced a community committed to obeying the biblical standard and engaging in worship, celebration, and the expectancy that God would act on their behalf.

Benemann, the SB theologian and expositor examines this same text in the SBC's commentary series, *New American Commentary*. In his examination he asserts the importance of an exegetical study of the text. He also shows his commitment to determining the original meaning and the situation of the original audience. Benemann's examination not only demonstrates the exegetical methodology associated with expository preaching but also reveals his commitment to orthodox, conservative theology and his belief in the inerrancy of the text. His approach shows the interconnectedness between theology and the task of expository preaching. His expository methodology demands the examination of the original and then connect it with the situation of the contemporary audience.

Benemann's examination of the Nehemiah text is both performative and instructive. He attempts to utilize the expository methodology to determine meaning and reveals that the text is a validation of the SBC methodology of expository preaching. Benemann discusses the original situation of the Jewish exilic returnees and details their historical situation as the *Sitz im Leben*.

At the same time that Benemann affirms SBC theological doctrines of orthodoxy and inspiration, he alludes to the necessity of the practical impartation of the text by its hearers of the community of faith. Benemann argues that this text shows the effect of expository preaching on mobilizing congregants to engage in cultic worship and how it can lead to a strong impassioned response by congregants. Benemann argues to for the authoritativeness of the scriptural text and asserts that the task of exegesis and exposition is somewhat arduous. Benemann claims that the task of expository preaching involves translation, interpretation, and linguistic analysis. Benemann illustrates the exegetical effort in which SBC's theologians and pastors engage and reveals the emphasis that is placed on the authority and inspiration of the scriptures because of the perceived role God plays in the living faith community as outlined in his exegesis of the text.³⁰

The prominent expositor, homiletician, mentor, and model for many SB and conservative preachers, Stephen F. Alford, cites this passage as the primary Old Testament theological textual evidence for expository preaching.³¹ Both Benemann and Alford affirm the SBC belief in authority, inspiration, and inerrancy. They each argue for the necessity of expository preaching in the context of determining and explaining the meaning of the text to the contemporary congregations because the text is written in a foreign language. There is a need to expound theological doctrines and make practical applications from the text in anticipation of transformative or sanctification in the life of congregants. There is also a linguistic gap that makes expository preaching all the more necessary. The text of the Old Testament was originally written in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic and the New Testament was written in Koine Greek.

³⁰ Breneman, *Vol. 10: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 223-228.

³¹ Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 69-71.

These are languages that are not commonly known or widely taught. Few people have an understanding of Hebrew and Greek, let alone the linguistic attributes of these languages. Ironically, SBC congregants look to these same texts for personal, spiritual guidance for their whole lives. The text which is believed to be inspired and authoritative is written in ancient language which contemporary congregants cannot understand. This lack of understanding of ancient languages necessitates the work of translation as a part of the process of the expository exegetical methodology. Broadus's focus on the original languages highlights expository necessity and the work of Broadus's disciple A. T. Robertson.

Robertson was very concerned that the exposition of the biblical text includes a careful exegesis or study of the grammar, historicity and lexical meaning of the original languages. In Robertson's preface to the *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, he wrote the following:

This Grammar aims to keep in touch at salient points with the results of comparative philology and historical grammar as the true linguistic science. In theory one should be allowed to assume all this in a grammar of the Greek N. T., but in fact that cannot be done unless the book is confined in use to a few technical scholars.³²

Robertson asserted that it was important to study the original language of the New Testament, which is Koine Greek, in conjunction with a historical study of the Greek culture. Thus, historical, grammatical, and lexical study became an important aspect of biblical exegesis. Robertson engages in the study of word formations and examines etymology, root-forms, parts of speech, orthography, phonetics, declensions, and the conjugation of verb forms.³³

³² Robertson, "Analytical Grammar."

³³ Ibid.

Robertson's grammatical analysis is foundational to his methodology of uncovering the precise meanings of the words and meanings in the text because he examined the syntax of the text. Robertson found the following from his examination of syntax:

The distinctive character of the N. T. teaching is more closely allied to lexicography and syntax than to mere forms. That is very true, but many a theologian's syntax has run away with him and far from the sense of the writer, because he was weak on the mere forms. Knowledge of the forms is the first great step toward syntax."³⁴

Robertson argued that the use of syntax was for both "construction of the single word and for clauses." Robertson added:

One must admit the difficulty of the whole question and not conceive that the ancients ran a sharp line between the form and the meaning of the form. But, all in all, it is more scientific to gather the facts of usage first and then interpret these facts. This interpretation is scientific syntax, while the facts of usage are themselves syntax. Thus considered one may properly think of syntax in relation to the words themselves, the forms of the words, the clauses and sentences, the general style.³⁵

Moreover, Robertson's exegetical methodology included an examination of the tense, voice and mood of Greek words, particles and figures of speech. ³⁶ Robertson used this methodological approach to establish a thorough analysis of the original language of the New Testament and the expression of its meaning through the process of expositional preaching. Robertson's text and approach became standard use at SBC seminaries and became a vital component of the process of expository preaching. Robertson's commitment to his exegetical process as a means of communicating the intended meaning of the original is seen in his publication of the verse by verse, presentation of word pictures of the original Greek of the New Testament to bring to light the words and actions of early Christians.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

Robertson believed in the practice of textual criticism. His detailed approach to biblical exegesis was warranted because of his concern with exposing the meaning of the text albeit even in situations when there were variant readings of copies of the original manuscripts. Robertson wrote, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* whereby he sought to both personally determine and to influence his SBC seminary students to study the original language of the New Testament using the methodology of literary criticism. His purpose was to make certain that they have the “purest text possible” as they exegete and exposit the original language of the text.³⁷

Robertson described the type of preaching that is reflective of a thoroughgoing exegetical and literary analysis. He recognizes the first century preacher Apollos as one the great expositors of all time and connects Apollos’s preaching with a strong emphasis on the exegetical and homiletic methodology, “the last lecture that Broadus delivered to his New Testament class in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was on Apollos. He made a thrilling appeal to young ministers to be “mighty in the scriptures. It is not possible to be powerful in the use of the scriptures without an adequate knowledge of the books of scripture. One, if possible, should have technical acquaintance with the problems of scholarship, the language, the history, the religious ideas, the social conditions, the relations to other religions and peoples, the development in response to new ideas, the transforming power of Christ's life and teachings upon mankind.”³⁸ Robertson also associates good preaching with the ability to encourage and console the audience as he also identifies the New Testament apostle Barnabas as a model preacher, “Luke translates

³⁷ Robertson, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 37.

³⁸ Robertson, *Types of Preachers in the New Testament*, 16.

Barnabas by "son of exhortation" though the Greek covers also the ideas of consolation and of encouragement. There is no English word that can carry all these ideas, and we face the same difficulty with the term "Paraclete" for the Holy Spirit." Robertson sees value in recognizing the qualities, characters and style of Apollos as exemplifying good preaching.

Robertson saw the value of interpretation and translation, in his preface to the Grammar of the Greek New Testament when he stated, "Perhaps those who pity the grammarian do not know that he finds joy in his task and is sustained by the conviction that his work is necessary."³⁹ SB assert that Robertson wrote the seminal text on the lexical-grammatical study of New Testament Greek based on a belief that the expositor must bridge the gap between the original language and the receptor culture. SBC theologians and pastors argue for the centrality of the text and so the task of translating the text is an important aspect of the exegetical process and the expository methodology. The SBC expository is seemingly obligated to translate or use a translation that reflects a literal reading of the text. The text that is used to frame the sermon and the translation used should be accurate in its rendering of the original for the SBC this means that the expositor should examine the language of the original in order to understand and preach based on the literal meaning of the text. It is their goal that their congregants hear the original rendering and understanding its original meaning as the transformative authority comes from the original meaning of the text.

The complexity that SB face is that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic and that the original manuscripts have been lost and so we only have copies of the original autographs which are too translations of the original. Furthermore, the Jesus of the New

³⁹ Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, ix.

Testament and his apostles spoke Aramaic and Greek and so Jesus's words and the apostles included translations of the original. The expositor then has the task of interpreting and translating texts that are really translations of the original. The expositor because of his exegetical methodology asserts that there is a need to remain as close to the original as possible. This is the central goal expository preaching and that's the foremost purpose of SB expositors. Also, SBC congregations have to expect and believe that their pastors and theologians would practice the expository methodology.

Robertson contends that the language of the New Testament is multi-faceted, Jesus and the apostles in some cases trilingual and so the writers of the scriptural texts and subsequent copyist had to translate the original speech or words. Additionally, the use of the OT represents a translation and interpretation on their part. The SB expositor has to investigate the Greek rendering, and in some cases, the Greek rendering of the original translation. Robertson and SBC expository preachers have examined etymology, semantics, syntax, and genre in order to understand the original meaning of words and phrases as the root occurrence of words and phrases to interpret and present the original meaning of the text. Robertson's approach has become normative in the hermeneutic model of expository preaching. His grammar outlined in detail the literary analytical approach that expositors should embody.

However, Robertson's and the SBC approach still utilized a theological grid in their hermeneutic model. Their methodology emphasized the need to maintain a commitment to the doctrinal belief in the authority and inspiration of the scriptural text. In essence, Robertson's exegetical methodology assumed that the original meaning supported orthodox doctrine. Therefore, the doctrines about scripture arising out of the study of systematic and biblical

theology served as means of ensuring that the translation and interpretation was consistent with orthodoxy. The task of translation and interpretation for SBC expositors was obligated to maintain a fidelity to orthodox doctrine. This in some ways limited the task of translation or restricted the translation or interpretation choices of a scriptural regardless of the evidence of the exegetical analysis. Nonetheless, Robertson's *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* which was published in 1914 was extolled by world scholars Adolf Deissmann, F. W. Grossheide, and Edgar J. Goodspeed. Robertson's methodology and influence would be seen in his classroom especially in one of his students, Dr. W. A. Criswell, who wrote that Robertson "was the greatest scholar under whom it was ever my privilege to study. His way of teaching did not inspire me so much as it frightened me into hours and hours of studying."⁴⁰

Dr. W. A. Criswell would in turn influence a generation of SBC expositors and pastors and would play a leading role in the conservative resurgence in the SBC. Criswell would also establish the Criswell College, an undergraduate and graduate SBC entity with a commitment to teaching expository preaching, affirming social conservative values and upholding the SBC doctrines of scripture. Criswell is considered one of the foremost SBC expositors, mega-church pastors and denominational leader. In a lecture delivered at the Criswell College. W. A. Criswell too accentuated the need for expository preaching and its positive effect based on the text of Nehemiah 8 and highlighted its significance for emphasizing the necessity and effectiveness of expository preaching.

⁴⁰ Jones, "The New Testament," 23.

Criswell too emphasized the need to engage in expository preaching however, he exposed a more pastoral or homiletic concern. Criswell asserted for the need for clarity and connected this concept with the experience of the exiles who were presented with an account of the original with explanations to clarify the meaning of the text. Criswell saw the task of the expositor as a necessary role to convey the meaning of the original to receptor audience because of the linguistic gap that existed. Criswell asserted to that the exposition should lead to a response from the congregation, there should be a level of mobilization, the movement of the congregation to the act on the sermon. This is a mark of SBC expository preaching in that the sermon should solicit a response from the congregation either personally or corporately. Criswell believed that the congregation inherently desire to the exposition of the text he had theological reasons for this belief, but his intent is to shape the congregation so that the adopted the doctrinal and theological elements of the texts and act accordingly. Ultimately, Criswell saw the expository sermon as an instrument for transmitting theological doctrines but also for engendering a positive response and commitment to the tenets of the expository sermon and in so doing mobilize the local congregation.

Establishing Hermeneutical Modes from the New Testament

SB theologians have referred 2 Timothy 2:15 as a model text for asserting that the New Testament hermeneutic supports an sermonic methodology. 2 Timothy 2:15 which in the manuscript of the Greek text reads, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” The text reveals that there is a theological connection between the qualitative character of the decoder of the biblical text and accurately communicating the text. Through the use of an imperative

σπούδασον, which has the sense of “being persistently eager and zealous” to denote the initiative that should characterize the teacher of a biblical text. In so doing, through the use of an infinitive clause, (σεαυτὸν δόκιμον παραστήσαι τῷ θεῷ), the exegete and communicator will literally “show or present yourself approved to God.” The word for present “παραστήσαι” means “becomes almost equivalent to,” the communicator of the scriptures is mandated to interpret exegete and translate the text in such a manner so that he or she corroborates their divine calling and acceptance.

The manner in which the exegete is demanded to operate is rendered by the phrase, ἐργάτης ἀνεπαίσχυντον, literally, “a worker unapologetic or unashamed.” Hence the interpreter of the text is considered as engaging in a laborious task to ensure that the dissemination of the text is of highest quality so ἀνεπαίσχυντον (a NT hapax; means “unashamed”). The word ὀρθοτομέω means literally “cut straight” or “cut right.” The emphasis is that the worker or exegete laboriously seeks to “get it right” and to accurately render the meaning of the original. The work or “cutting right” or expositing is deemed an arduous task, but the expositor deals carefully with “the word of truth” (τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας) that is the text of scripture. The interpreter of scripture should work diligently to ensure that the text is accurately studied so that its meaning and intention is communicated properly.⁴¹ It is the purview of the interpreter then to ensure that through meticulous analysis there an accurate rendering of the original. The expositor negates the efficacy of the task of translating and communicating whenever there a schism between original text and translation. Paul asserts then that this function of the expositor is both a

⁴¹ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 411–412.

divine calling and responsibility. The dominant SBs theologians and expositors subscribe this hermeneutic philosophy which undergirds their demand for commitment to expository sermons.

Dr. Criswell emphasized the importance of engaging in careful exegesis and homiletics. Criswell asserts that it is the responsibility of the expositor to present the theological doctrines to the congregants. His comments here are homiletic and show the practical ideas of the text. Criswell here moved from exegesis to homiletics in order to emphasize the contemporary connection or relevance. However, Criswell engaged in not just historical exegesis but also canonical exegesis. He utilized historical exegesis in that he examined the various historical interpretations of the text by religious scholars dating from the first century but he also interpreted the text based on its context and location in biblical canon and how it was viewed by the original audience. His methodology reveals a deeper commitment to making connections with other biblical text in order to support his original exegetical points. He does follow the historical theological stances of Broadus and A. T. Robertson. He reveals a commitment to inspiration, orthodoxy and canonicity. In essence, he adopts their perspective and uses it as a means of engaging in canonical theology, he references the text that connect philologically and theologically with his primary text.

Criswell's exposition does not necessarily reveal or showcase his literal-grammatical exegetical analysis, but the outcome of his exegesis is a homiletic that conveys the main idea of the text with other canonical support. Criswell utilized the expository methods in his pastoral and pulpit ministry while serving as the pastor of the historic First Baptist Church (FBC) Dallas for over fifty years and as pastor emeritus until his death. Criswell was credited with establishing the megachurch model for the SBC. Through his preaching ministry, publication he was responsible

for starting a religious radio station that broadcasted pastors with a penchant for effective expositions, the college he founded, Criswell Bible College was not just dedicated to teaching biblical studies and how to exposit the sermon. Criswell College was also a beginning point for many leaders who would take on SBC denominational leadership positions, and leadership role in SBC entities and seminaries. Denominational leaders such David Allen, Paige Patterson, Danny Akin, Richard Melick Jr., Jerry Johnson, and Richard Wells all served at or attended Criswell College. Also, many denominational leaders served under Criswell's leadership on staff at FBC Dallas or at some point served as a pastor of the church such O. S. Hawkins, Mac Brunson and Robert Jeffress.

Criswell's influence is extensive. By using the practice of expository preaching, Criswell successfully mobilized his congregation to become one of the most influential, largest, and wealthiest in the United States.⁴² Criswell's expository method was not just a rigid explanation of the text, but his approach integrated passion, humor, vivid illustrations, and extemporaneous communication.⁴³

Dr. David Allen served as a senior pastor at the SBC church and as the Dean of the School of Theology, Professor of Preaching, Director of the Southwestern Center for Expository Preaching, and George W. Truett Chair of Ministry at Criswell College. Allen also develops a similar New Testament hermeneutic by emphasizing the importance of validating the original meaning of the text and striving to communicate the meaning and intent of the textual author. Allen accentuated the need to examine the depth of the original meaning and to convey it in a

⁴² Criswell, *Why I Preach*.

⁴³ Toulouse, "W. A. Criswell"; McBeth, *The First Baptist Church of Dallas*.

manner in which relevantly connects with a given audience. Essentially, the expositor should endeavor to gain the original intended meaning and purposefully engage recipients with practical principles.

Allen is extremely meticulous in his exegetical approach by focusing on the historical context, engaging in a literary-grammatical analysis, and examining the syntax and specific semantic domains of the text. Allen follows the methodology of A. T. Robertson to study the original Greek text and understanding it according to the purpose of the original meaning. Allen works toward understanding the genre and more so than did Broadus, but Allen's process of discovery and analysis is somewhat similar to Criswell's by involving canonical exegesis. It is apparent that based on Allen's homiletic approach, he subscribes to inerrancy, canonicity, and inspiration so he values the responsibility, demands and obligation to exposit the text. Allen, like Broadus, believes that the text should drive the sermon, in that the original meaning of the text should extrapolated and presented to the contemporary audience. What is significant about Allen's approach is that he believes in the doing the work of translation and understand the necessity to translate or interpret as close to original as possible.

Allen teaches this methodology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and he did the same at Criswell College where he was the department chair of expository preaching. Allen also propagates this methodology in his publications and lectures at SBC meetings, conferences and seminars. Additionally, it is very striking that Allen believes that the main or controlled verbs should drive or serve as the central idea(s) of the sermon. Allen's approach is fully reliant on the text to shape the sermon but not just through the communication of the original meaning but that the structure of the original should be presented to the congregants or the audience. In

other words, for Allen the original language shapes the structure of the sermon, the main points and practical application. Allen's approach is distinctive in his overt reliance and use of the original text. Allen pushes the limits in expressing the original, he does not want to lose the structure, flow or transitions in the text. All linguistic aspects should be expressed in the text. He does follow a homiletic that attempts to make the text relevant and applicable and believes that the text should be engaging for the contemporary audience. However, the expositor has to work within the framework of the original as the indicator of the sermon structure and the sermon points or ideas and in so doing allow the sermon to speak to the congregants utilizing the voice of the original.

The Southern Baptist Convention and Hermeneutic Modes

In 1859, James P. Boyce founded the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, SC; Southern was the first seminary in the South. Along with Broadus and later A. T. Robertson and the early faculty of the Southern Seminary they developed a seminary model for training and educating pastors and preachers particularly in the area of expository preaching. Their belief in expository preaching and the commitment of the SBC to the doctrine of inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility has made expository preaching a necessity and standard part of the all SBC seminary curriculum. It is primarily through the seminaries and SBC colleges that they have influenced pastors and denominational leaders. Boyce believed that a Southern seminary would be able to prepare men who could preach the gospel in the familiar New Testament mantra of "a workman that need not to be ashamed." This quotation was frequently used to support the notion that the preacher or pastor should be highly educated and equipped to exegete and teach the scriptures. Boyce was particularly interested in addressing the problem of

inadequate preaching and poor pastoral and ministerial preparation which he considered prevalent evil in his address. Furthermore, Boyce contended that a properly trained minister who is skilled in the practice and preparation of expository sermons, that this minister would significantly improve the spiritual life of his congregation and the denomination as a whole. Boyce also stated, “And while our denomination has continued to increase, and our principles have annually been spreading more widely, it has been sensibly felt that whatever ministerial increase has accompanied has been not only disproportionate to that of our membership but has owed its origin in not respect to the influence of theological education.” Boyce believed here that a solid theological education would include teaching ministers how to exposit the Bible and preach expository sermons. Accordingly, for a Boyce a Southern seminary would rejuvenate the ministries and outreach activities of the Southern churches specifically through the preaching of the Bible, which he saw as desperate need for the SBC denomination.⁴⁴

The evangelization of the South was of great concern to SB theologians and pastors as well as Boyce. They saw the need to affect social change by preaching the Bible and realizing the transformation of the existing culture. This burden continues, and SB have consistently relied on expository preaching not just to train the congregants but to mobilize their congregants to bring about social change. Boyce’s concept of a seminary education was also founded on the principle that ministers should be trained in a manner which is more relevant to their situation and not necessarily follows the tenets of the classical education of the universities of his day. Boyce asserted that SBC seminaries should specifically teach and show seminary students in real, practical and helpful ways as to how to care for congregants, preach and manage the

⁴⁴ Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*.

church.⁴⁵ Boyce sought to maintain a markedly doctrinally sound denomination which was committed to preparing ministers (who may have been unable to afford a purely secular, classical education). Along with fellow Baptist leaders Boyce were keen on ensuring that SB pastors were trained to exegete the scriptures, preach the texts, and teach in churches. They believed that the ministers if provided with a clear understanding of Baptist history and polity were effectively led and impart Baptists beliefs to their congregants. Boyce wanted to, ensure the longevity and transformation of existing culture thereby making possible a clear demarcation with other denominations and solidify Baptist theology in the SB pews.

J. P. Boyce along with other SB pastors, namely Basil Manly, Jr., formulated a doctrinal statement to represent the shared theological values and biblical commitment of the founding faculty. Together they wrote the Abstract of Principles that formed the theological doctrinal statement of faith for many of SBC seminaries and colleges. Basil Manly, Jr., was a fellow Princeton professor. Manly worked solely on the first draft of document during the spring of 1858 that contained twenty articles. Manly presented his work to the SBC committee responsible for the final formation of the statement. The SBC committee gathered in May 1858 at the SBC's plan of organization meeting in Greenville. Manly, Boyce, along with John Broadus, E. T. Winkler, and William Williams completed the final draft of the document. These SB leaders used the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, the Westminster Confession, the Philadelphia Confession, and the 1833 New Hampshire Confession as the framework for developing and defining the final twenty articles.⁴⁶ The abstract was ratified by the SBC in 1858, a year before

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Southern Seminary opened, to be officially accepted as part of the seminary's official creed. The hallmark of the abstract was the seminary's assurance that it would make certain that its professors were faithful in proclaiming SB beliefs and principles with aligned with the scriptures and to reiterate the idea that the seminary existed to serve the local church and not to replace it. The charter is distinctively Calvinistic not only because of the theological leanings of its authors but also due to the utilization of various historical documents such as the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, the Westminster Confession, the Philadelphia Confession, and the 1833 New Hampshire Confession. The latter creeds were founded on pure Calvinistic principles and became a hallmark of not only the theological position of SB theologians and pastors but also were reflected in the hermeneutical practices of the SBC.

Pivotal to the development on the SBC's Calvinistic theological and hermeneutical principles was John Leadley Dagg. Dagg was a member of the Executive Committee of the Georgia Baptist Convention, and he subsequently elected to the Constitution Committee of the SBC at its first meeting in Augusta, Georgia in 1844. He also served as president of Haddington College, Alabama Female Athenaeum, and Mercer University. Dagg wrote his "Manual of Theology" which was first published in 1857, which later became the main systematic theological textbook for the first twenty-five years of Southern Seminary. It predated J.P. Boyce's *Abstract of Systematic Theology* which later became the standard theological textbook used by the seminary. Dagg also wrote on church organizational structure and ecclesiology in *A Treatise on Church Order* (1858), morality in *The Elements of Moral Science* (1859), and on and apologetics in *The Evidences of Christianity* (1869). All of which were used as textbooks in the early used of the seminary as well as throughout SBC seminaries.

Dagg was a staunch inerrantist, having been strongly influenced through Calvin's belief in verbal plenary inspiration and his concept of divine revelation. Dagg believed that the Bible was the primary means of knowing and experiencing God. Further, he asserted that the Bible was transmitted from God to human beings. Dagg clarified this view by stating that inspiration implies that the scriptures faithfully convey or accurately render the occasion, setting, verbal communication through the human personalities or authors of scripture. For Dagg, reading the scriptures is in fact an encounter with God and so it is vitally necessary to precisely read, interpret and understand the scriptures as they are the very words of God to human beings.⁴⁷ Dagg's view of scriptures superimposed a certain hermeneutic methodology. Dagg averred that the scriptures should be read in the public hearing and that the text of scriptures should be interpreted, explained and given practical applications to the life of the congregants. Dagg referenced the standard text for expositing the scriptures.⁴⁸ Additionally, Dagg believed that the ability to interpret and teach the word was contingent on a special divine calling and hence involves a supernatural endowment.⁴⁹ Dagg asserted that a true follower of the Christian faith, a Baptist, will ensure that he or she fully follows and obeys the scriptures. The SBC preacher must be determined and devoted to proclaiming the Word of God to bring about life change amongst the congregations.

Dagg believed the Baptist preacher had special calling to ensure obedience to the biblical text. In addition, the SBC preacher had an integral role in making sure that fellow Baptists and the denomination at large did not waver from traditional SBC beliefs or compromise its

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

theological distinctiveness by adapting to social or cultural norms. Dagg avowed that the SBC adherent and denomination should be undeterred by social or even legal practices which are in contradiction to its belief system. It the prerogative then for the Baptist preacher to safeguard doctrinal purity in the pews, through preaching in the pulpit and preparation in the seminary.

Whilst Dagg did not outline a procedural system for determining his theological outcomes, his system for interpretation is evident through systematic overview of biblical theology. Through his theological approach Dagg revealed his concern with ascertaining the lexical and grammatical meaning as well as the historical background of the text as he determines his theological position. In his discussion about baptism, Dagg referenced the cultural and historical understand of the terms for baptism and the lexical meanings of the word for baptism as proof for baptism by immersion. Dagg forwent the figurative or allegorical interpretation and instead relies on concrete literal interpretation to garner the meaning of the text.⁵⁰

Broadly speaking SB theologians are leery of interpretative schemas that do not follow the literal or concrete interpretive model, such as moralistic interpretations of the text. Moralistic hermeneutics focuses on the interpreting the text with the intent on using the Bible to teach about faith as well as to provide guidance about daily conduct and decision making. For example Rabbi Hillel (late 1st century BC to early 1st century AD) established rules to ensure the collection of debts and the security of the economy even when allowing for the cancellation of debts based on the Old Testament.⁵¹ SB theologians and pastors reject an anagogical (mystical or spiritual)

⁵⁰ Dagg, *Manual for Church Order*.

⁵¹ Talmud Bavli, Gittin 36a

interpretation of the text in which literal or concrete details receive a meaning spiritually and can be used to relate to future events or personal experiences. Once such example involves identifying with the Red Sea in the Old Testament as symbolic of difficulties, challenges, or experiences of pain, and another example involves referencing the parting of the Red Sea as symbolic of God's transition of believers from this earthly abode to an eternity in Heaven.⁵²

Dagg was clearly committed to the exegetical analysis of the text before developing his theological positions. He focuses on the historical, lexical, and grammatical aspects of the text and rejects untoward figurative interpretations of the texts. The men of the founding faculty of Southern seminary and their disciples follow the followed the methodology of exegesis and expository preaching. Their main concern is to garner the exact or precise original meaning of the text. They believe that the text has an implicit authority and veracity. If it is communicated, it will bring about life change and obeisance to the biblical ideas relevant to SBC doctrine and dogma.

Accordingly, SBC expositors are reluctant to follow the early patristic Alexandrian method of interpretation made popular by Philo (20 BC – 50 AD) that was focused on the allegorical or metaphorical interpretation of the text. In the Alexandrian method, there were allegorical interpretations that draw parallels between biblical characters and Jesus or provide views of specific images or Old Testament ideas as pointing to Jesus Christ.⁵³ This method sought to spiritualize the text instead of examining the concrete or literal meaning of the text.

⁵² St. Thomas Aquinas, S Thess I, 1, 10, I Cor 10:2.

⁵³ Patapios, "The Alexandrian," 187; Guillet quoted in Fairburn, "Patristic Exegesis," 8.

SBC expositors avoid this methodology and do not want to incorporate it or aspects of its elements in its interpretative methodology.

SBC expositors, instead, utilize another patristic school of interpretation, the Antiochene, and concentrate on uncovering the literal meaning of the text.⁵⁴ The Antiochene methodology serves as the historical foundational basis for the expository methodology as seen in commentaries and work of its early practitioners such as John Chrysostom.⁵⁵ Later, the foremost Protestant preacher Martin Luther emphasized this methodology. His views on the interpretation of Scripture especially the Eucharist revealed a commitment to the literal interpretation of Scripture.⁵⁶

The SBC aligned with the Antiochene methodology as it supported the expository methodology as providing an accurate rendering of the original and associating translations with the literal and concrete renderings of the original text.⁵⁷ The Alexandrian school formulated a methodology, which at times, included an exegetical analysis. However, the Alexandrian application and meaning was allegorical and lacked true authority based on SBC principles. The core of the appeal for expository preaching is the belief in a divine authority within the Old and New Testament texts and the implicit connection with patristic hermeneutics in a model focused on literal interpretation.⁵⁸ SBC theologians rely on a methodology that preserves the original intent of the text. Consequently, there is a strong devotion to the exegetical and expository

⁵⁴ Thistleton, *Hermeneutics*, 106; Young, "Patristic Biblical Interpretation," 567.

⁵⁵ Chrysostom, Homily 15.

⁵⁶ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 117.

⁵⁷ Goldsworthy, "Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics," 3–16.

⁵⁸ Goldsworthy, "Lecture 2: Biblical Theology," 31–32.

methodology developed and refined by Broadus and other and now taught and practiced in most SBC seminaries.

Conclusion to the Historical Elements of Expository Preaching

The starting point for the SBC expository preaching methodology lies in their belief in the transformative and authoritative power of the scriptural text. Their arguments are somewhat circular in support of these theological tenets of the scriptural texts. The SBC pastors and theologians engage in the act of expository preaching as they believe that if congregants hear the originally inspired meaning of the text and the original voice of God, they will obey and adhere to God's teachings. SBC preachers contend that scripture contains the very words of God and produce regeneration and sanctification. SBC theologians and pastors believe that the scriptural text itself is a witness to the cause and result of the supernatural experience of divine transformative power. It is imperative for SB expositors to present the actual and originally intended words of God. Anything less than a literal rendering of the original text within contemporary application dilutes or adulterates the scriptural text, which in itself is a violation of the scriptural text.

The SBC expositor takes great pains to discover the original and to present it to the congregants so that they can understand and obey the scriptural text. The congregants for generations have been taught that about the authority, inerrancy and infallibility of the scriptural text. They have been taught to believe that the expositor functions in a prophetic role and that he is obligated to preach the biblical text with accuracy and great care. The SBC seminaries ensure that they prepare their students to preach expository sermons and denominational leaders tend to model and adhere to the task and practice of expository preaching. Southern Seminary was

initiated and served as the model for equipping students, pastors and denominational leaders to be trained practitioners of expository preaching in their local churches. It is noteworthy that the task of expository preaching involves the responsibility to ensure the fidelity of the original in the task of interpretation or translation.

Historically also, SBC expository preaching was a response to the oratory and sensationalistic preaching of the late nineteenth century. Broadus reacted to the lack of scriptural texts in sermonic presentation of his day. Broadus was critical of the use of pure rhetorical strategy to influence and lead the congregation. He considered this a disconnection between theology and preaching. He sought to ensure that sermons would be text-driven and he successfully ushered in the concept of expository preaching which was text driven accompanied by homiletics with strong contemporary appeal. Broadus's goals was to ensure that sermons was appealing, that they were text-driven or structurally developed based on the text in question and then to make practical application points or next steps for the congregation to follow. Broadus succeeded in influencing SBC seminaries, denominational leaders and future SBC leaders and pastors. The expository methodology effectively mobilized SBC congregants and moved them to act and support certain social values with understanding that they were obeying the original commands of God. SBC congregants were mobilized and roused to engage in evangelistic and missionary endeavors with the view that they were theologically motivated as the expositors functioned prophetically to convey divine commands. SBC congregants in a sense were motivated based on theological concepts and like most religious groups believed they were following actual divine truths and hence were inherently right and responsible to mobilize and obey the expository sermonic concepts.

SBC expositors were overly concerned with the theological aspects of the expository methodology but the argument for expositions seems more dependable when examined historically from the standpoint of canonicity. Canonicity refers to the idea that all sixty-six books of the Bible were recognized by the early church as “inspired” by God who directed the human authors of the Bible to write those books using their own personalities to share the very words of God. The books of the canon were authenticated by the early church as being authoritative about Christian faith.⁵⁹

The SBC expositor is expected to interpret the Bible to render the exact words of scriptures in their sermonic material. Since the early church viewed the text as authoritative, SBC determined that they should be treated as such and that they be interpreted in their literal sense to ensure that the expositor upholds the inherent authority of text. Connected to the idea of canonicity is antiquity which simply means that the text of the Bible are all authentically written during the Old Testament times or during the first century and as such fit the criteria for being included in the canon. Again, SB pastors point to this embedded belief that the text were originally writings by OT prophets, disciples or their amanuensis and assert that the text is truly by inspired human authors. The inspired text then must be interpreted devoid of flays or any allegorical or overt spiritualization of the text. The intent of the human authors who wrote in their specific time periods must be considered and examined contextually to ensure fidelity to the text, grammar and historical context. Canonicity informs the expository of not only the location of the text in the scriptures but the historical contexts and authorial intent of the Bible writers. Connected to this is the concept of catholicity which means that the orthodox Protestant church

⁵⁹ Gamble, “Canonical Formation,” 192.

has always accepted the sixty-six books of the Bible as authoritative, and the original manuscripts, copies, and scriptural text have been historically deemed as having value and purpose. Any misinterpretations or inaccurate renderings conflict with the standard historical rendering used to maintain orthodoxy.

The scriptural text and the idea of a fixed canon provides the foundation for asserting that the text has historical value and has been used from the time of the early church to influence and mobilize congregations. The SBC has historically adhered to the theological concepts of inerrancy, inspiration infallibility however it is the elements of canonicity, antiquity, and catholicity that can offer a divergent perspective instead of using the text to support its own presuppositions.

Nevertheless, the task and practice of expository preaching involves a level of scholarship, the expositor has to undertake an exegetical study of the text and connect it with contemporary examples. The expositor that follows this methodology can be assured that he has done the task of interpretation and has fulfilled the prophetic role and responsibility. The congregation too can be assured that their pastor is proclaim the original, unadulterated meaning which emancipates or liberates them to obey commands even if they seem archaic or traditionalistic. The SBC expositors functions with this inherent theological knowledge though predominantly circular that he is mobilizing and enabling his congregation to experience God by the only given means. The congregational response is somewhat psychological and does appeal to traditionalistic tendencies, but the undergirding issue is the self-belief in hearing God's divine voice while the translator or expositor does not create meaning but simply conveys what is already in the text.

The task of the expositor of translation, exegesis, and practical homiletics means that the expositor is relying on a message outside of himself, one that is divinely created. The words, commands and ideology are not his and so conflicts with society and culture are conflicts with God. The SBC expositor is only a mouthpiece. This understanding makes the role of the expositor ethically credible for his authority is based on his reliance on the text that must be more than a sheer perfunctory examination of the text. He is not trying to build a case for himself or for congregants to commit to God or the local church. The mechanics of exposition removes ultimate responsibility from the pastor to the congregant, and as such, the congregation must choose to obey or disobey God. The choice is subtle but significant. Every expository sermon is an intrinsic argument that God is speaking, and congregants experience tremendous psychological pressure to follow and believe. The SBC has historically used the expository model to evangelize and to teach sanctification as well as to confront societal and cultural practices that conflict with SBC values. The methodology is deeply theologically circular and entrenched in tradition and denominational history, but nonetheless it remains an effective mode for mobilizing congregants to support their local polity and disavow certain social, political, and cultural values.

CHAPTER 3

THE COMMUNAL ROLE OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

SBC theologians purport to read and preach primarily based on original biblical texts to replicate the exact words of God. They assume that their reading, interpreting, and preaching are authoritative, inerrant, and infallible. SBC theologians desire to reiterate the original tone images of the biblical text for present-day Bible readers. This aspiration to garner the original meaning requires reproducing the original text for the exegetical and homiletic process and providing readers with a version of the Bible that is as close to the original as possible.

This chapter contains my analysis of the methodology of exegesis (including genre analysis) as practiced and endorsed by the foremost SBC theologians, leaders, and pastors. I describe the relationship between the exegetical and hermeneutic methodology that perpetuates SBC ideologies, as well as SBC social and political views. I anthologize the accounts of preachers and interpreters regarding their practices. Some of the central figures' writings that are discussed include Daniel Akin (president of Southeastern Seminary), David Allen, (Professor of Theology and Homiletics at Southwestern Seminary), Jim Shaddix (Professor of Preaching at Southeastern Seminary), R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary); Joseph Emerson Brown (Professor of Christian Theology). These individuals have served in SBC pulpits, on SBC higher education faculties, and well as in leadership roles in SBC seminaries. I examine their writings, sermons, and conduct interviews regarding their homiletic methodology.

Hermeneutic Methodology

The term hermeneutics is a broad classification for the process of interpreting a text based on a series of rules or interpretative laws. Grant R. Osborne asserts that “hermeneutics is a science, since it provides a logical, orderly classification of the laws of interpretation.”⁶⁰ However, there is a subjective artistic aspect to the task of interpretation. Osborne argues that hermeneutics is “an art, for it is an acquired skill demanding both imagination and an ability of apply the laws to selected passages.”⁶¹ The duality of purpose and process is a symbiotic integration which involves the movement from text to the intended audience in an attempt to garner the original meaning of the text. Here the purpose is somewhat myopic in that the hermeneutical task is focused on the biblical text. The broader classification of hermeneutics is focused on all forms of text and in ontological terms its first priority is to gain an understanding of the context or specific context of the text. However, SBC theologians and modern Biblicist view the task of hermeneutics as being centered on the exegetical meaning of the text and correlating it to its significance through the contextualization and corroboration with modern culture. Therewith, there is a metaphorical spiral, from original meaning to modern author, which Osborne asserts is a better figurative means of understanding the hermeneutical process, “because it is not a closed circle but rather an open-ended movement from the horizon of the text to the horizon of the reader.”

Integral to the hermeneutical process then is ascertaining the meaning of the text for the reader or audience of today. The SBC expositor aims to follow this spiraled movement and in so

⁶⁰ Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 5.

⁶¹ Ibid.

doing achieve the intended meaning of the text and so become empowered to authoritatively declare the original meaning of the text in a manner which makes it relevant for the reader or local church today. It is the convergence of this twofold belief that the original intended meaning has been uncovered and that it is contextually relevant, which satiates the expectations of both the SBC expositor and SBC congregations that they are unequivocally disseminating and following religious truth. This convergence may be deemed contradictory in that the text is anchored in historical times, but a contemporary application is sought. SB theologians seek to address this by arguing that the expositor should seek to engage in an exegetical and homiletic study so that he brings the contemporary audience into an understanding of the ancient texts and to correlate similarities in the issues at hand and the prescribed meaning for address those issues. The text retains its ancient meaning but contemporary listeners because of the exegetical methodology they can identify areas for correspondence and learning. David Dockery writes that biblical preaching is the task of bringing about an encounter between people of our times and the written Word of God, composed in another language, another time, another culture.⁶² Equally important is the expression of a biblical or theological worldview in the expository sermon which enables the SBC to maintain the communal aspect of the congregation based on a set of shared values in contemporary culture.

Genre Analysis

The commitment to moving from text to contemporary significance has formed the means by which the SBC has developed and substantiated its political and social ideologies and

⁶² Dockery, "Preaching and Hermeneutics," 142.

its sense of community. Their methodology begins with an understanding of the specific genre of the texts and the appropriate interpretative schema for that genre. Genre analysis provides the means of understanding the text based on the type of literary inscription. The SBC expositor then is obligated to assess and engage in an exegetical analysis of a passage based on the rules of that genre. A general categorization of specific genres will include narrative, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, apocalyptic, parable and epistle. The literary rules that are applied to each literary grouping equips the expositor with the capacity to glean the external aspects of the texts such as its form and structure and its internal mechanisms such as the vocal pattern, narration, *sitz im leben* and narrative movement. The rules for each genre provide the exegetical principles for interpreting the various types of literary texts. Each grouping is comprehensively different in its form and purpose and so the interpreter is tasked with reading the text based on its historical framework and then rendering the text so that it reflects the meaning and context of the original.

The term genre here specifically refers to the different forms or literary style that the biblical writer may have used such as poetry, narrative, or even didactic prose. The identification of the specific genre aims towards preaching the text so that the literary form of the text is expressed in the sermonic moment and that the text is interpreted based on the literary grouping location of the text. This is a core tenet of expository preaching and one espoused by David Allen as against the non-traditional but mainstream homiletic approaches. Allen writes that “the New Homiletic is about: metaphor and symbol; evocation of an experience; unrestricted movement; and, of course, mystery.”⁶³ Allen argues against the pervasiveness of narrative preaching and the approaches outlined primarily by David Buttrick and Fred Craddock. Both

⁶³ Allen, “Preaching,” 62.

homiletics emphasize an experiential narrative approach to preaching. Buttrick, in his seminal work *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, is concerned with the experience of the listeners and emphasizes the need to use imagery or contemporary illustrations to explain or give meaning to the text such as by rephrasing or explaining the text using contemporary words and images.⁶⁴ Craddock too embraces this methodology by espousing the use of images, illustrations, and contemporary examples to explain the text rather than using archaic language and ideas.

Grant Osborne addresses the importance of genre analysis in the hermeneutical process with the aim of understanding the theological meaning of the text and explained that “the place of genre in this hermeneutical process is crucial. It provides the linguistic framework for the semantic verification which the interpreter attempts.”⁶⁵ Osborne argues that genre is a vital component in the expository process in that it aids in the interpretation of the biblical text. Accordingly, the interpreter can identify the genre of a biblical passage and use the rules or characteristics of the genre to interpret the text. The classificatory aspect of genre analysis allows the interpreter to use a standardize means to describe the meaning of the text. Genre analysis allows for finding the clear demarcation of form, content, purpose, and structure of the biblical text under review.

Genre analysis more pointedly does not necessarily shape the structure of the sermon but more likely informs and illumines the preacher about text structure for conveying the meaning of the text to congregants. As a part of the homiletic process, the preacher is responsible for expressing to the congregants the form of the text and for managing their expectations about how

⁶⁴ Craddock, “As One Without Authority.”

⁶⁵ Osborne, “Genre,” 1–27.

to apply, practice, and interpret the text itself. Hence, an apocalyptic text is duly expressed as such, and the preacher reminds the congregants about the futuristic tenets of the apocalyptic text. The preacher conveys communal truths, such as the eschatological return of Christ, judgment, mission of the church, and God's creation as distinctive SBC tenets. The SB theologian includes the traditional SB beliefs as intrinsic to the theological meaning of the text.

Genre analysis enables considering what the reader's response to the text may be through a focus on the inherent message of the text to uncover its main idea and connect the main idea to a sense of human consciousness or significance. SBC theologians are keenly aware of the complexities which emanate from undertaking a genre analysis of the text. Principally, the complexities include the occurrence of mixed forms and the possibility that a text might be fused with one or more genres. The task of interpretation for the expositor then becomes somewhat tentative and problematical.

Even though the use of genre analysis is critical, the SBC expositor recognizes that it is a byproduct of the exegetical process and should be correlated with the literal interpretation of the text. Additionally, the historicity and grammatical analysis is important to attaining the literal meaning or significance of the text and takes precedent over the genre analysis. However, it is imperative for the expositor that the genre is documented and used to shape the sermon or to inform the practical application of the sermon in the homiletic process.

The genre analysis informs a correct rendering of the text; helps in conveying the meaning of the biblical text; and ascertaining the shifts in mood, tone, and point view that become apparent through the convergence of information from both literal interpretation and genre analytics. The SBC fervently supports genre analysis especially in light of its reluctance to

embrace any straight, figurative reading of the text. The SBC asserts that while a text may be couched in a figurative genre or figurative speech, such as hyperbole, metaphor, or poetry, it contains concrete meaning that can be revealed through the overall exposition of its grammar, syntax, and context. According to David Allen, biblical text contains meaning at all levels in the form's genre and structure. It is the task of the interpreter to uncover any of concrete or literal meaning couched in the figurative use of speech and the form itself.⁶⁶

Narrative Preaching

The concept of narrative preaching is based on the idea that humans do not exist deductively. Humans tend to think, dream, tell stories, watch movies, enjoy lyrics to a song, etc. Stories are an innate part of human living and the primary means of communication or sharing should not be deductive or didactic. Narrative preachers argue that since God disseminates truth in the Bible through narratives and storytellers, the contemporary sermon should take this primary form. Narrative preachers believe conveying God's word should be done in the mode of storytelling.

Narrative preachers attempt to identify the meaning of the text and to utilize contemporary stories or images for expressing the meaning of the text without overtly using biblical or theological language. However, Allen and other SBC theologians insist that sermons should take on the form of the genre and the sermon should focus on the meaning of the text without imbedding the meaning into a series of stories. Allen emphasizes the need to ensure that the primary goal of the sermon is to convey the meaning of the biblical text using the textual

⁶⁶ Allen, "Text-Driven Preaching."

language and providing understanding about the meaning of the context and background of the text.

Allen refutes the narrative approach and emphasizes the need to include the aspect of genre analysis to the exegetical and exposition of the text. Allen asserts that throughout the history of church, the greatest preachers have been those who recognized that they have no authority in themselves and have seen their task as being to explain the words of scripture and apply them clearly to the lives of their hearers. Their preaching has not drawn its power from the proclamation of their own Christian experiences or the experiences of others or from their own opinions, creative ideas, or rhetorical skills. Their preaching, declares Allen, emanates from God's powerful words. Allen argues that "those homiletes who put all their eggs in the narrative basket tend to disparage expository preaching. One finds little exposition of the text in most narrative sermons. The goal is the evocation of an experience—a very postmodern goal."⁶⁷ Allen views postmodernism as a characteristic of the current culture that is rife with relativism in which meaning remains in constant flux and uncertainty.⁶⁸ Allen is not against narrative preaching, but he is wary of the aplomb seceding of biblical text to a homiletic narrative.

The tension between expository and narrative preaching results from forcing the insertion or connection of nonbiblical texts in a sermon. Such texts do not specifically mention Jesus, may not bridge the distance between the Old and New Testament, or lack a direct connection or reference to Jesus. This practice appears irreconcilable with expository preaching because of the dictum that the text and sermon should only concentrate on the original text so any insertion

⁶⁷ Allen, "Preaching" 70.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 62

violates the homiletic methodology. Moreover, the distaste for narrative preaching and its heavy reliance on storytelling is contradicted because the expository method in a sense betrays a need to invent connections between Old and New Testament.

Even though one may argue for inherent connections, it may seem that the congregational and communal expectations sometimes exceed any wholehearted commitment to be completely text centered. It is understood that Jesus Christ is the leader of the congregation. If Jesus is “speaking” in a biblical text, the text retains implicit authority. SBC pastors and theologians then tend to superimpose Jesus on every sermon to give the impression that Jesus is the center and voice behind the biblical text. This emphasis on Jesus as the speaker in biblical text perpetuates the willingness of SBC congregants to support SBC doctrine and dogma. Furthermore, this practice provides congregants with a sense of missional purpose for which they gather and commune.

The foundation for growth, development, and sustenance has historically been connected with the expository. But narrative preaching yields angst even though it shares the divine mandate to engage in evangelization and discipleship. The theoretical models of interpretation and application of the text form the grounds for SBC theologians, pastors, and leaders to believe that they are divinely led and supported by God. Thus, they appeal to genre, context, historicity, the original languages, syntax, and grammar as the implicit tenets of the exegetical and hermeneutical aspect of expository preaching. The SBC positional statement about the Bible states:

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and

therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.⁶⁹

It is not surprising that the SBC has a historical and continued commitment to the process of expository preaching. The scripture is paramount to the SBC and foundational to the SBC's development, ethics, faith, worldview, and church community.

Expository Preaching

The goal of expository preaching is to elucidate the meaning of the ancient text and to create a sense of understanding that the congregants can embrace as a shared truth and develop obedience due to the tenets of the biblical text. The ultimate purpose of expository preaching is to form a theologically constructed community of faith that follows the same biblical, social, and cultural values. The community does not necessarily share the same experiences. However, the community develops analogous ideologies through the congregants' commitment to the theological values espoused during expository preaching. The text must be interpreted and subsequently expounded for maintaining its historically interpretative and theological origins and the values of the community.

There are tension points due to the moments when the interpretation and exposition of the text contradicts past or current SB practices. This happens when the SB church holds to values contradictory to thorough research and exposition. The issue of race is an example whereby the SB at one point encouraged segregation even though the value contradicted a canonical exposition of biblical text. Nonetheless, SB leaders see the possibility of convergence as SBC

⁶⁹ SBC, "Position Statement."

theologian Daniel L. Aikin writes about the convergence of SB theology and community values and contends that theology is based on expository preaching and the commitment to teaching the New Testament text that attracts people to the church spiritually and numerically to build a congregation. Furthermore, Aikin argues that expository preaching leads to converting people:

The membership of the local church is made up of those who confess Christ as Savior and Lord, and whose lives give evidence of conversion. Baptist commitment to this principle set them apart from the magisterial Reformers, but they did so because of their commitment to the witness of the New Testament.⁷⁰

Aikin, like Allen, is concerned about conserving and perpetuating SBC theology and values. Thus, they advocate for the imperative of SB congregation polity and unity through engagement with and exposition of biblical text.

This engagement with biblical text involves the process of hermeneutics including a genre analysis and homiletics that yields a logical, emotional, and ethical response. Through biblical theology and the methodology of hermeneutics espoused by the SBC, the sermon is governed by a text-driven structure to support and articulate a communal theological approach. Thomas Schriener, the James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament and the Associate Dean for Scripture and Interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, emphasizes the importance of gleaning or identifying the meaning of the text then building the sermon to connect with the existing theological truths as believed or supported by congregants. For example, a sermon may be used to discuss relationships but should connect with the bigger theological idea of how God exists in a relationship with each person through the Trinity, referring to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. This sort of preaching elevates the sermon from

⁷⁰ Aikin, "The Future," 69–71.

being merely a self-help tool to a Bible-driven experience that affirms and connects with existing theological concepts. SBC theologians fervently believe that the SBC and its local churches are not built upon or sustained by individual idea but by a collection of ideas that are distinctively SB. Shreiner asserts this belief:

Our preaching often concentrates on steps to a successful marriage or how to raise children in our culture. Such sermons on family issues, of course, are fitting and needed. Unfortunately, two problems often surface in such sermons. First, what the scriptures actually say about these subjects is often neglected or skated over. How many sermons on marriage faithfully and urgently set forth what Paul actually says about the roles of men and women (Eph 5:22–33)? Or, is it the case that even we conservatives are somewhat abashed and embarrassed by what the scriptures say?

The second problem is of the same sort, and perhaps even more serious. In many conservative churches pastors almost always preach on the horizontal level. The congregation is bombarded with sermons about marriage, raising children, success in business, overcoming depression, conquering fears, and so on and so forth. Again, all of these subjects must be faced in our pulpits. We must not go to the other extreme so that we never address these matters. But what is troubling is that these sort of sermons become the staple week in and week out, and the theological worldview that permeates God's word and is the foundation for all of life is passed over in silence.⁷¹

SB theologians, including Schreiner, believe that the hermeneutical task of preaching is not complete without engaging in or divulging some level of biblical theology. Schreiner explicated:

Our task as preachers is to proclaim the whole counsel of God. We will not fulfill our calling if as preachers we fail to do biblical theology. We may get many compliments from our people for our moral lessons and our illustrations, but we are not faithfully serving our congregations if they do not understand how the whole of scripture points to Christ, and if they do not gain a better understanding from us of the storyline of the Bible. May God help us to be faithful teachers and preachers, so that every person under our charge will be presented perfect in Christ.⁷²

⁷¹ Schreiner, "Preaching," 17.

⁷² Schreiner, "Preaching," 28.

SB theologians and pastors focus on the need to expose the theological or biblical meaning of the text. They preach about the text itself rather than on talking points about a specific religious subject matter. In their view, understanding of the theological argument emerges from an investigation of the meaning of the biblical text's literary form, structure, and context. The need to understand the theological meaning of the text is a foremost aspect of the hermeneutical task. The beginning point for the SBC expositor is identifying the genre or literary form and then using the rules of that genre to garner the theological meaning of the text:

Do our preachers really grasp the need to show the fruits of biblical theology in the way they preach? The only way to do this is to major on expository preaching, and in such a way that the sense of the unity of the Bible is built up. Above all, Old Testament preaching should be undertaken in a way that shows how the whole Bible testifies to Christ. Narrative should be milked first and foremost for its part in redemptive history rather than for its exemplary morals. This takes careful and time-consuming preparation.⁷³

Furthermore, many SB expositors draw on the philosophical model of E. D. Hirsch, Jr., as espoused in his 1967 publication of *Validity in Interpretation*. Hirsch argues that the meaning of text is grounded in the author's intended meaning and asserts this idea as a "sensible belief."⁷⁴ Hirsch focuses on identifying the author's intended meaning and insists that failure to do so is "to reject the only compelling normative principle that [can] lend validity to an interpretation."⁷⁵ In evaluating meaning Hirsch explains as follows:

Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. *Significance*, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation or indeed anything imaginable.⁷⁶

⁷³ Schreiner, "Preaching," 17.

⁷⁴ Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 1.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 8.

Hirsch states that one can garner the intended meaning of a text as “an entity which is self-identical ... which always remains the same from one moment to the next—that it is changeless.”⁷⁷ Hirsch also defines meaning “as a *willed type* which an author expresses by linguistic symbols and which can be understood by another through those symbols.”⁷⁸ For Hirsch, there is a semblance or interchangeability and reproducibility of the author’s intended meaning. Hirsch discusses genre “which embraces the whole meaning of an utterance.”⁷⁹ He asserts that the interpreter “must master not only the variable and unstable norms of language but also the particular norms of a particular genre.”⁸⁰ Hirsch posits that through a study of the genre “that sense of the whole by means of which an interpreter can correctly understand any part in its determinacy.”⁸¹

Hirsch allows that the genre is not always acquiescent with the meaning of text it is a methodology for unearthing the intended meaning of text: “We may now say that the implications of an utterance are determined by its intrinsic genre. The principle by which we can discover whether an implication belongs to a meaning turns out to be the concept of intrinsic genre.”⁸² Therefore, a specific interpretation of a text can be considered valid if the interpretation follows the mode of the genre and its associated rules or conventions.

David Allen and Jerry Vines, two SBC stalwarts, emphasize the necessity of this threefold process which includes the possibility of genre of analysis all in an effort to garner the original meaning of the text and ensure its applicable and appropriate communication:

⁷⁷ Ibid., 46.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 49.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 86.

⁸² Ibid., 89-90.

Hermeneutics, exegesis, and proclamation form the crucial triad with which every pastor must reckon. A proper biblical hermeneutic provides the philosophical underpinnings which undergird the exegetical task. Likewise, a proper exegetical methodology provides the foundation for the sermon. Then, of course, proper sermon delivery is necessary to carry home God's truth to the hearer.⁸³

Vines and Allen connect between Hirsch's viewpoint and the task of hermeneutics:

Hirsch's categories of "meaning" and "significance" are important and helpful for us. When the biblical exegete comes to a text of Scripture, he can proceed on the premise that there is a determinate meaning there. His job is to discover this meaning through exegesis. Having done this, there remains the further task of applying this meaning to modern day man.⁸⁴

The SBC expositor has a responsibility to develop text-driven sermons inclusive of the necessity for genre analysis as part of the methodology for extricating the original meaning of the text. In genre analysis, there is a level of reciprocity between reader and the biblical text. The reader is able to connect particular genres' characteristics with the biblical text. One scholar calls this *genre competence* as it "designates a potential of human beings for understanding presently existing and future possible texts, given that such texts are structured according to specifiable genre principles."⁸⁵ Accordingly, once the genre is examined and understood, the theological or biblical meaning becomes apparent leading to the textual connection with distinctive SBC ideals. The text essentially serves as a communal or congregational force.

SBC congregants hear sermons not only about a text dealing with a personal subject matter or issue at hand but also about calls for all of them to support an overarching theological and social agenda. SBC congregants have the opportunity to react or respond both to personal tensions and to conjoined together for supporting or fighting a common cause. The simple and

⁸³ Vines and Allen, "Hermeneutics, Exegesis, and Proclamation," 309.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 315.

⁸⁵ Gerhart, "Generic Competence," 32.

sublime effect of SBC preaching is the clear theological truths that will be apparent in SBC sermons. These truths fall under a larger category of theological ideas that serve as SBC distinctives. It is these distinctive ideas that form the SBC theological identity and hence their sermonic materials uphold and support these ideas and form the basis of community beliefs.

SBC theologians and pastors understand their interpretation and preaching of biblical texts shape the characters and mindsets of SBC adherents. Akin explains:

World Christians recognize that they are citizens of a different kind of nation, a different kind of kingdom, a different kind of community. And yet, they also recognize that they live in this world as well, a world that is not their home, but one in which they serve as a royal ambassadors fulfilling the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-21). They are here as divine representatives to call men and women from this world kingdom into God's glorious kingdom. This assignment calls for *wisdom* and *winsomeness*. It calls for conviction as well as compassion. It requires that we plant our feet in the *Scriptures* while keeping a watchful and discerning eye on the *culture*.⁸⁶

SB theologians and pastors connect with and grow their congregations based on focused expository preaching which teaches scripture and develops communities built upon shared beliefs. SBC leaders note they have the largest Protestant denomination in the United States as a result of their focus on expository preaching and its ability to build and galvanize people around shared beliefs. Accordingly, SBC consists of 47,272 churches with a total membership of about 15.2 million congregants. Weekly attendance at worship services is about 5.2 million worshipers. SBC leaders oversee an extensive missionary program throughout the U.S. and abroad and operates six seminaries with a total enrollment of more than 21,000 students.

In essence, the SBC community which is comprised of individual congregations locate their unity and cohesiveness in the scriptures. However, they do not purport a superficial

⁸⁶ Ibid.

understanding of various texts or simply ritualize a tradition to create and maintain unity. It is a commitment to studying the text through a careful exegetical methodology and to remaining cognizant of the historical context and linguistic domain of the text.

The goal is to unsheathe the original meaning for SBC congregants and all congregations to ensure they hear the same original message as delivered by the historical writers, prophets, and Jesus himself. For the SBC, the original words of the Bible are divine and lifegiving. This mystical understanding of the Bible's text makes it the center of the local church and the harbinger of truth. SBC theologians in a very concentric way have built a theology of the Bible in which the text is divine and empowering and used to form and maintain community. The SB pastor's and theologian's chief responsibility involves teaching the exact meaning of biblical text to community that can be informed and galvanized around these intrinsic truths.

A typical SBC congregant serves as the recipient of a sermon based on the original meaning of the text. Because of this dynamic, SB sermons as derived from the text with the expository method communicate the same message to all congregants and churches over many centuries. Furthermore, since the SBC has a set of systematic doctrines or beliefs and these too have been communicated in sermons, SBC congregations typically hear the same doctrines and the same core tenets from every biblical text. This uniformity occurs on two levels.

Firstly, through the expository methodology represents a codified, rigorous, and somewhat scientific process used by all SBC pastors and theologians to glean the core tenets or meanings from every text or passage of scripture. The expository methodology not only contributes to the garnering of similar beliefs through its codified process of examining and revealing the meaning of the text but also ensures the protection of SB doctrinal stances. The

uniformity on this first level is propagated in SB seminaries and publishing companies. The outcome yields uniformity of methodology by theologians and pastors at SB seminaries to ensure all present and future pastors become committed to the same belief and methodology.

Secondly, in a very antiquated way, Biblical meaning is in a fixed state for the SBC. The SBC exegetical methodology is thoroughly focused on investigating the original text so that over time the expository task produces the recurring meanings that form the SBC's historical and traditional beliefs. These in turn become imbedded in family structures, in SB communities, and across generations. This simple consternation with meaning creates within local SBC communities a subculture guided by SBC doctrines that usually fall within the scope of conservative values. This subculture is historically conservative and overtly biblical. Consequently, generations of families and entire communities subscribe to and identify with SBC beliefs. What makes this subculture uniquely interesting is that SBC congregants then have a both uniquely religious but also political and social form of unity. Thus, the communal aspect is deep (historical and tradition) and wide (generational and social).

Furthermore, the SBC's doctrinal beliefs and textual rendering foster a sense in which the local congregation and convention in general preserve biblical and national history, culture, and values. The SBC inherently believes that the prosperity and wellbeing of the United States is due to its citizens' and residents' overall commitment to God and the Bible. Hence, the national values and biblical values are assumed to ensure God's continued blessing upon the nation. SBC congregants maintain a sense of obligation for obeying and teaching these tenets to the forthcoming generations. While there are no overt claims that the commands of the Bible should be embraced nationally, the SBC promotes the connection between the holy lands of Israel and

the local church communities, both of which have experienced God's presence and help when the people obey biblical guidance.⁸⁷

The potency of expository preaching in light of congregational obeisance creates both a demand for its continued practice and an undying commitment to its practice. SB expository practitioners come to their congregations who share an underlying belief that these pastors have researched and studied artistically and scientifically the original text to garner the original meaning of the original text. The congregants can be assured about hearing the original, divine ordinances and the pastor can be trusted with expositional sermon delivery. Additionally, there is an expectation that SBC pastors and theologians can show evidence of exegetical study when opening the Bible. This means that the sermon contains evidence of being written in antiquity (i.e., prehistoric times). However, the text is explained using contemporary illustrations and applications. The innate congregational acceptance of the sermon studied exegetically couples with the belief in the pastor showing how the biblical text's contemporary application leads to a demand for its continued practice.

Congregations expect to hear about a historically divine ordinance which should be applied in contemporary times. Every congregation receives similar sermons with equivalent core tenets weekly. SBC congregations gather to hear the weekly divine directive in hopes that they will continue to experience divine blessings or preferential treatment from God. The process of communicating the text becomes increasingly important so as to ensure that the ancient text is expressed and corroborated in both contemporary language and illustrations.

⁸⁷ SBC, "Basic Beliefs."

Homiletic Methodology

A close examination of the hermeneutic and homiletic methodology of the leading SBC preachers, professors, and seminary administrators indicates a commitment to the expository methodology of preaching. Accordingly, Daniel Akin writes about the importance of exposition and the exclusive utilization of the texts of scripture to inform, instruct, and influence the SBC:

Seduced by the sirens of modernity we have jettisoned a word-based ministry that is expository in nature. We have, in our attempt to be popular and relevant, become foolish and irrelevant. Skiing across the surface needs of a fallen, sinful humanity we have turned the pulpit into a pop-psychology side-show and a feel-good pitstop. We have neglected preaching the whole counsel of God's Word and the theology of God's Word. Too many of our people know neither the content of Scripture or the doctrines of Scripture. Preaching the cross of Christ and the bloody atonement accomplished by His death is the exception rather than the norm. Some choose to focus on politics, others the emotions, still others relationships and the list goes on and on. If the Bible is used at all, it is usually as a proof-text out of context with no real connection to what the speaker is saying.⁸⁸

Akins laments the incursion of liberal theologies in modern day pulpits:

Practically, the various liberal theologies orbiting about us have their own particular and peculiar interest. Starting, almost always, with their experience and situatedness, their agendas are driven by personal, social and cultural concerns. On those occasions when The Bible can be summoned for support, they will allow the scripture to make a brief appearance. Once its usefulness has been served, it is dismissed from the playing field and sent back to the sidelines where it spends most of its time.⁸⁹

Akin decries the lack of exposition and calls for a more potent use of scripture against the current languid, anemic approaches which he identified. He assesses the spiritual strata as ineffective any preaching devoid of expository methodology. Akin, asserts:

Claiming to believe in an infallible and inerrant Bible (though some are now questioning this), and affirming that it is alive and powerful, they nonetheless handle it in a way that, in my mind, raises serious questions of theological integrity and spiritual wisdom. In

⁸⁸ Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary chapel message delivered by Dr. Akin on October 19, 2005.

⁸⁹ A lecture given by Dr. Akin during the Mullins Lectures at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY on October 5, 2005 on the Essentials for Effective and Engaging Exposition.

terms of theological integrity such preaching betrays its convictions, at least methodologically. In the context of spiritual wisdom, it says we can see people converted and brought to maturity in Christ without the consistent teaching of the whole counsel of God's Word. Further, at least implicitly, it questions the judgment of God the Holy Spirit in inspiring Scripture to be written as we have it. Topical preaching, narrative preaching, emerging preaching, and yes, even some types of doctrinal preaching, fundamentally suggest by their method and practice that the Holy Spirit should have packaged The Bible differently. This is spiritually ignorant at best, and arrogant at worst.⁹⁰

Akin believes there is an overwhelming need for expository preaching, even though he admits that there is a tendency for applying poor homiletic methodology. Akin argues for expository preaching that is engaging as acutely important. Akin noted that:

Some evangelicals have argued that biblical exposition cannot reach the twenty-first century believer. Others have criticized exposition saying it is dull and boring, dry, uninspiring and irrelevant. These kinds of criticisms are legitimate if you are critiquing 'bad preaching.' However, these barbs are out of bounds if engaging exposition is the target. I am convinced that the need for preaching that is faithful and inspiring, expository and engaging has never been greater.⁹¹

Akin defines expository preaching as follows:

Text driven preaching that honors the truth of scripture as it was given by the Holy Spirit. Discovering the God-inspired meaning through historical-grammatical-theological investigation and interpretation, the preacher, by means of engaging and compelling proclamation, explains, illustrates and applies the meaning of the biblical text in submission to and in the power of the Holy Spirit, preaching for a verdict of changed lives.⁹²

Akin includes both the purpose and process for preaching and believes that this methodology is vital for any good practice of preaching. Akin notes that the text should form and drive the structure of the sermon and shape the final homiletic outcome "as it relates to the

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

explanation of the biblical text.”⁹³ Akin undoubtedly subscribes to the principle of authorial intent as he claims:

The faithful expositor is humbled, even haunted, by the realization that when he stands to preach he stands to preach what has been given by the Holy Spirit of God. Why is he haunted? Because he understands that what is before his eyes is divinely inspired by God, and he trembles at the very thought of abusing, neglecting or altering what God Himself wrote. Yes, the Bible is best described as the Word of God written in the words of men. However, it is ultimately the Word of God, and the divine author’s intended meaning as deposited in the text should be honored.”⁹⁴

Akin’s belief in the divine efficacy of the Bible appears in his unwavering commitment to the theological idea about the preaching moment when he delivers the very words of God to the congregants. Furthermore, Akin alludes to the need for engaging preaching through the use of illustrations and practical action steps for the congregants because he sees illustrations as windows to help the congregants see clearly the biblical meaning behind the sermon. The congregants achieve clarity, touched hearts, empathy, and examples of biblical works in daily living. Biblical illustrations should be focused only on proclamations by Jesus, “the master illustrator [of] the action that needs to take place on the part of the audience that should result from the message.”⁹⁵

Expository Preaching and Southern Baptists’ Social Conservatism

Akin undoubtedly promotes the expository sermon as not only theologically accurate but also practically relevant. Akin underscores the ultimate outcome of biblical preaching or expository preaching as influencing the congregation to engage or fulfil the mandates of the scripture. He believes that the sermon is not complete until a call to action or a move to ensure

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

that the congregants obey or follow the directives of the text whether prescriptive or descriptive is conveyed. Akin is devoted to a form of text-driven biblical theology in which the text drives the theological ideas of each passage or sermon. Akin assumes that by allowing the text driven approach to form the theological idea of the text, the expositor avoids superimposing subjective, prevailing, and traditional theological values.

Akin attempts to derive a text driven exposition of each passage to uncover the inherent theological ideas that correspond with core SBC theological tenets. Each passage or sermon elucidates the voice and exaltation of Jesus Christ or encourages the readers to respond to Jesus Christ through obedient allegiance. It follows then that any approach to preaching which intrinsically underscores a commitment to Jesus Christ has a traditional, conservative following of adherents. SBC culture is innately mission oriented and acutely evangelistic and values an approach that elevates the person of Jesus. This causes its adherents to believe that they are fulfilling a divine mission whenever they obey the practical portions of expository preaching.

Akin along with SBC theologians and pastors expect to preach a sermon based solely on a specific biblical text. The goal of the sermon involves explaining the text and providing practical steps for congregants to take based on what the text alludes to. However, intrinsic to the sermon, regardless of where it is located in the Bible, is showing the biblical connection with Jesus Christ. Since SBC congregants' ultimate loyalty lies with Jesus, the expositor is tasked to revealed or connect with some aspect of the person or character of Jesus in every sermon. This effort proves to the congregation that the expositor is faithful to the expository methodology and maintains the communal aspect of shared beliefs.