The Baptist Way(s): A Rhetorical Analysis of Texas Baptist
Topical Sermons on *Original Sin* and *Salvation*

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This thesis is dedicated to my treasure   -
My Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where moth and rust do not destroy,
and where thieves do not break in and steal.
For where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also."
-Matthew 6: 20-21 (NIV

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THE BAPTIST WAY(S): A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF TEXAS BAPTIST TOPICAL SERMONS ON *ORIGINAL SIN* AND *SALVATION*

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Sermons are a source of rhetorical power that unlock the key to people's perceptions of religion, church, and Scripture; therefore, it is imperative that the homiletic genre be examined for persuasive tools, rhetorical structure, and language choice. For my thesis I conduct a rhetorical analysis of Texas Baptist sermon rhetoric. My research examines topical sermons on "original sin" and "salvation" from pastors in the area of San Marcos, Texas. The churches of the participating pastors are affiliated with either the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC) or the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). These two Texas conventions emerged from a controversial, political split in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) that took place between 1979 and 1990.

Cluster and narrative criticisms were performed in order to uproot the key similarities and differences between the two conventions. Conclusions from the cluster criticism served as a point of unification for the conventions, while the narrative criticism highlighted differences in preaching styles, life applications, and the use of illustrations.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This thesis conducts a rhetorical analysis of Southern Baptist sermon rhetoric. In my research, I examine topical sermons on "original sin" and "salvation" from pastors in the area of San Marcos, Texas. The churches of the participating pastors are affiliated with either the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC) or the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). These two conventions emerged from a controversial, political split in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) that took place between 1979 and 1990.

These two conventions claim the same "Baptist" title, but doctrinally agree on relatively little. The Baptist church's freedom to agree and disagree with other local Baptist churches is actually a unifying aspect of their doctrine, which claims belief in the autonomy of the local church. Baptist core beliefs also include the soul's competency before God, the priesthood of each and all believers, and baptism by immersion as an act of obedience in the Christian transformation experience (SBC.org). Disagreement arises when the inerrancy of Scripture translates differently to the different conventions. In an interview with one SBTC pastor, he made a conventional claim, "The Word of God is the Word of God is the Word of God...". This claim culminates the belief of the SBTC churches. These churches embrace a very literal translation of Scripture, which serves as the convention's foundational element. In opposition, the BGCT values Scripture as, "the divinely

inspired element of God's revelation of Himself to us" (bgct.org). Therefore, BGCT churches use God's Word as the authoritative guide for life and ministry. Scripture interpretations provide another dissimilarity between conventions relative to women in ministry. The SBTC claims, "God in his relationship with humanity has expressed *himself* [emphasis mine] in masculine terms as our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit" (sbtc.org). On the other hand, the BGCT claims the worth of all persons, which allows women to have authority in the church, and therefore, serve as leaders in ministry. These foundational differences allow one to assume that the rhetorical power of sermons in these two conventions is immense; consequently this provides the reason to examine the rhetoric of pastors whom claim the same "Baptist" church title, but interpret that claim in different ways.

Rhetoric is often given a negative connotation associated with empty political language with no substance. It is also misunderstood to represent decorative speech laced with metaphors and extravagant figures of speech. Neither exemplifies the definition in terms of the discipline of rhetoric or rhetorical criticism that dates back to the fifth century B.C. According to Sonja K. Foss (2004), rhetoric is "defined as the human use of symbols to communicate." This definition encompasses three primary dimensions: (1) humans as creators of rhetoric; (2) symbols as the medium for rhetoric; and (3) communication as the purpose for rhetoric (Foss, 2004).

Humans create a substantial portion of their reality through the use of symbols. Every choice we make creates a symbol that defines how we see the world in one way over another. Because of this, humans are the only species capable of generating symbolic realities by shaping messages, or rhetoric. Second, rhetoric is comprised of symbols rather than signs. According to Foss (2004), "A symbol is something that stands for or represents something else by virtue or relationship,

association, or convention. Symbols are distinguished from signs by the degree of direct connection to the object represented." For example, the word *bowl* has no natural connection to a concave element used for holding objects. It is a symbol created to refer to and represent an object of this type; in contrast, the word *snow* is a sign of winter because of the direct relationship between weather and season (Foss, 2004). Furthermore, a symbol is humanly constructed and is indirectly connected to its referent. Because rhetoric encompasses any intentional and cognizant choice of symbols as a form of communication, it is not limited to discursive and verbal speech. Lastly, rhetorical symbols are used for communicating with others and oneself. Many people define rhetoric synonymously with communication, which has caused it to be left open for interpretation.

This definition of rhetoric captures and relates to my interest in sermon rhetoric. Because rhetoric helps create and define our reality, I examine people of power [Baptist pastors] and the role their interpretation of Scripture plays in potentially shaping one congregation's reality or view of religion in comparison to another due to the rhetorical messages sent. I examine the symbols used to inform and persuade in order to communicate a religious idea. I analyze the sermons according to a type of critique developed after receiving the sermon artifacts, as well as examine the fear or compassion appeal tactics, narratives, and the credibility of the pastor. Because of this, I cannot formulate a thesis question or hypothesis but rather draw conclusions inductively based on my analyses.

As a rhetorical critic, one purpose of criticism is to contribute to rhetorical theory. In alignment with Foss' belief, "theory is a tentative answer to a question we pose as we seek to understand the world" (2004). My hope is to create a thesis pertaining to sermon rhetoric to develop a preliminary theory about it. Sermon

rhetoric is not a popular topic for criticism because of the delicate interpretations, which is why I hope to further research the field and possibly suggest a more effective or uniform symbol that may be used in order to accomplish the rhetorical goals of a religious message.

Literature Review

The rhetorical research done on sermon artifacts is limited because of the infinite interpretations it lends to the critic. This literature review examines the research done on the following: conversion of reason appeals to emotion appeals in the transformation of the evangelical movement and Great Awakening, the credibility in preaching, and narratives used in preaching methods as a means of clarifying and persuading.[1] Asante and Atwater (1986) include sermons among the discourse forms that are hierarchical in the sense that they assume that certain communicators [pastors] hold higher positions of rank (173). Sermons include the three characteristics that define rhetoric of power: control over the rhetorical territory through definition, establishment of a self-perpetuating initiation *rite de passage*, and the oppressing of opposing discourse (Asante & Artwater, 1986, p. 174). The power of sermon rhetoric has created a transformative homiletic genre of rhetorical appeals, narratives, and liturgical structure ever changing with world events and denominational claims.

As explained in *The New England Soul*, hellfire and brimstone sermons were utilized on rare occasions such as fasts, funerals, or public executions for dramatization purposes prior to 1740. More common among Boston's liberal clergy

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[1] I use the word *evangelical* in reference to the classical Protestant doctrine of salvation through personal conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the Bible.

were themes of God's love, patience, and mercy to sinners (Stout, 1987). Jackson (2007) states that, "the strategy of terror in the evangelical tradition has a genealogy that stretches back to the harrowing sermons of Jonathan Edwards in the 18th Century New England" (p. 43). Stout (1987) states that between 1700 and 1730, a third generation of preachers began to focus their sermonic strength on Biblical instructions for salvation and the pious life. It has, since then, been the norm for preaching throughout the country. The Latin term for the emotional appeal to fear, *argumentum ad baculum*, was respected by Puritans Jonathan Edwards and Richard Mather as *the* necessary rhetorical tool to compel believers to action. Walton (1996) further explains *argumentum ad baculum* to take "the form of a warning that some bad or scary outcome will occur if the respondent does not carry out a recommended action" (302). Fire and brimstone preaching techniques were unique in their rhetorical dynamics. Adams and Yarbrough (1997) claim that these sermons [particularly those of Jonathan Edwards] were meant neither to instruct nor persuade because their audiences had already been instructed and persuaded. They were primarily meant to remind the congregation of what they already knew and believed (25).

Such fear appeals have transcended time to be employed by such figures as Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart, Pat Robertson, and Jim Bakker. Ragsdale and Durham (1987) state that these figures were known to frequently utilize the extremely traditional technique of persuasion in their sermons: fear arousal, the association of threatening or painful consequences with an action that the speaker wishes his listeners to avoid or stop (9). Interestingly according to Demarath (1965), the higher socioeconomic class of the congregation today, the more likely the

preacher is to favor intellectualized and reserved services over emotional and evangelical ones (115-116).

Also popular in the early 1700s is the appeal to reason tactic used by Puritan preacher Benjamin Colman. Evans (1987) declares that Colman employed the structural logic of Ramus, the four-part division of sermons, and the strong appeals to reason which all hold true to the traditional Puritan discourse (1). The logical four-part organization is structured as follows: Text, Doctrine, Reasons, and Use (Evans, 1987, p. 2). According to Ramus (as cited in Evans, 1987) appeals to emotion were relegated to the final "Use" section of the sermon (2). Colman bridged the attempts of Mather and Edwards by utilizing both appeal to reason and appeal to emotion in the Doctrine and Reasons section of his sermons. Colman augmented the conventional "plain style" with the "variation" that Cicero recommended to teach, please, and move an audience (1).

The use of narratives to depict or elaborate sermon themes has been prominent throughout history. According to Gerhardson (1961), "Narrative appeared in several forms in early Christian sermons and devotional literature: stories about the saints for teaching standards for Christian living; 'exemplum' or illustrations of proper religious life, classic fables and anecdotes from which writers and preachers deduced morals; and picture sheets used to retrace orally the life of Jesus." Storytelling[2] then transformed as a mode of religious persuasion in the Middle Ages and now appears in preaching of evangelists for the purpose of religious persuasion (Schuetz, 1986, p. 28). Jenson (1980) argues that pastors use narratives not to teach others what they ought to know, but rather provide opportunity for the audience to recognize oneself. Shuetz (1986) narrows the

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[2] Used interchangeably with *narrative.*

purpose of storytelling in preaching to "integrating scriptural references with contemporary narrative elements in order to consolidate broad, common themes to create memorable characters, scenes, and actions that illustrate religious teaching, to recreate the scriptural context by attributing modern qualities to characters, scenes, and actions, and to focus attention on one theme or principle while de-emphasizing other potential and related meanings." The above conclusions are based on the more broadly defined conclusions that rhetorical scholars such as Bennett and Feldman (1981) and Fisher (1984; 1985) have reached about the persuasive effectiveness of storytelling.

Stories told by preachers include representative anecdotes, used by contemporary evangelists to reveal common motifs that underlie various ideological ideals (Brummett, 1984), tales recounted from the Old and New Testament, autobiographical narratives about their own conversion experience and ministry, commitment, and a wide variety of stories about people whom they have observed or read about (Schuetz, 1986, p. 29). Sermon narratives can also serve as political tools used by organization leaders [pastors] as forms of exerting control over particular views or activities or even be instrumental in framing particular realities (Calas & Smircich, 1987). According to Clark (1977) and Fosdick (1938), narratives in sermons are likely to include common themes, religious motifs, and familiar and personal language to which the audience can easily relate. The common themes, regardless of the denomination, are likely to include one or more of the following: the nature and existence of God, the nature of human beings, right and wrong, suffering, fellowship with God and with other human beings, immortality and the role of the church (Clark, 1977; Fosdick, 1938). Pastors are subject to repeat these themes frequently throughout the sermon, connect the themes to story action and

Biblical authority, and show how themes accentuate a confessional truth that arises from the story (Schuetz, 1986, pg. 29).

More specific to my research is a study done by Billings, Coopman, Hart, and Hougland (1998) that looked at the function of storytelling by church leaders in Southern Appalachian denominations. Southern Appalachia includes Church of God and Southern Baptist. In this study, 13 stories were told by Church of God and 23 by Southern Baptist leaders (p. 7). This number is indicative of the emphasis put on storytelling in the Southern Baptist denomination. The majority of stories told in this study were designed to manage meaning while a smaller percentage served to reduce uncertainty and even less were utilized to facilitate member bonding. Another issue addressed in this study regarded the positioning of stories in relation to the overall text. It was concluded that just over one half (53%) of the stories were previewed by the narrator through means of rhetorical questions, reference to verses or books in the Bible from which the story would come, or introduction of a topic or theme (p. 10).

Another factor of sermon rhetoric is the credibility of the sermon. In a study done by Salem and Moffitt (1980) that determined what factors church members believe are most important in sermons [public communication], a conclusion was drawn that the use of the Bible was ranked in the top five most important factors that determine credibility (p. 33-34). Dirks (1978), a past president of the Religious Speech Communication Association, designed a study that explored the credibility in preaching and found that even when a pastor claims the Bible as his source and as the authority for what he says, his credibility may be questioned, depending on the use of the Bible to back up his claims in the decree of the message (p. 21). This study also concluded that delivery was the least important factor of credibility in

sermons, which gives reason to study the rhetoric without delivery as in the case of my research. Dirk (1972), in an earlier study, compiled a list of factors listed by laymen to be important in sermons. The ones pertinent to my research include attention holding, continuity, use of illustrations, love-fear (quality of motivation), originality, practical help for living, range of subjects, and thought provoking (p. 28).

A 1979-1990 split between the fundamentalists and moderates in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) gives reason to examine their rhetorical practices. The cause of division, according to Huebner, is focused on the use of numerous abstract terms such as "liberal," "conservative," and "inerrancy." These terms align Southern Baptist individuals on two sides of a political totem pole based on their stance regarding the authority and interpretation of scripture (Huebner, 1991). In support of this, the SBC Peace Committee reported in 1987, "the primary source of the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention is the Bible, more explicitly, the ways in which the Bible is viewed" (as cited in Hefley, 1989). The fundamentalists' interpretation of the Bible is that it is infallible, inerrant, absolute, and the authoritative Word of God. Moderates skew that stance by claiming that while the Bible may be authoritative, it is not absent of aberrations on matters of history, science, and other secular issues (Frame, 1987). Visible in the homiletics of the two sides is the practical application of their interpretation of scripture. In this analysis, sermons are categorized as conservative based on a very literal interpretation of scripture while moderates are defined by the use of an allegorical approach that highlights the message of the words antithetical to the complete historicity or scientific accuracy (Huebner, 1991).

Penn (1988) takes a different approach to examining the rhetorical practices of Protestants, particularly Baptists, and uses the term *preservationist* to define the

conservatives who tolerate very little ambiguity in their religious language. The term expansionist is used to define the more liberal interpreters of Scripture who enjoy the ambiguity of interpretation and "living on the edge of language" (p. 12). Expansionists utilize a poetic model of language while preservationists are much more mathematical in delivery.

Even more pertinent to this study are the alignments of two Texas Baptist Conventions that emerged from this split. Churches used in this study are affiliated with either the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention (SBTC), which is a branch of the SBC and deems themselves fundamentalists or the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT), which takes a more moderate stance. Convention affiliations of churches are based on their belief in the convention's stances and doctrine and therefore, the funding to the convention. A unifying Baptist belief is in the autonomy of the local church, making the choice of convention affiliation up to each local congregation. This given choice permits reason to examine the rhetorical practices of the autonomous local church in configuration with their convention affiliation.

The groundwork for creating a rhetorical analysis of sermon rhetoric has been laid. Based on the literature provided, one is able to conduct a thorough analysis of sermon rhetoric by examining reason and emotion appeals, use of narratives, and credibility. The research also describes the transformation of sermon rhetoric throughout history and the importance of current and continued study of the homiletic genre. My research illuminates the similarities and differences in rhetoric within the Baptist denomination by examining the tactics used in sermons pertaining to *original sin* and *salvation*. The analysis expands on the use of narratives and examines preacher credibility. It also introduces a new analysis theme to the

homiletic genre and examines terministic screens and word choice in a cluster analysis.

Methodology

Nine sermons from three pastors within a 15-mile radius of San Marcos, Texas were used for this study. The congregations of two pastors aligned with the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention (SBTC) while one pastor's congregation is affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). From this point forward, the acronyms SBTC and BGCT will be used. Pastors were asked to contribute topical sermons on their interpretation of "original sin" and "salvation". I selected these two topics because the ideas are interrelated from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Because both are crucial to the Protestant faith, Baptist pastors frequently teach on the topics. For the continuity of this study, all Biblical references will be made using the New International Version (NIV) of The Holy Bible.[3]

The first chapter is comprised of a cluster criticism that was performed by categorizing the sermons by topic. Cluster Criticism is credited to Kenneth Burke, a rhetorical theorist who specializes in symbol-systems and symbolic action (Foss, 2004). Burke believes word choices are influential in rhetoric because of their ability to encourage audiences to formulate attitudes or induce actions. One cluster [We] was applied to all texts. Clusters were then formed from the key terms within the topical salvation sermons as well as key associations important to original sin. Clusters were not divided by convention affiliation. The clusters used for this analysis included *grace, hopelessness, Paul*, and the *Pharisees* from the sermons on

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[3] Note: Not all pastors in this study utilize the NIV translation of The Holy Bible.

"salvation" and *created, sin, world,* and *Enemy/Hell* from the sermons on "original sin". Conclusions about the two conventions and personal rhetorical styles were drawn from the analysis of these clusters.

The second chapter incorporates a narrative criticism of the artifacts. Although the study of narrative has been examined ever since classical Greece and Rome, Walter R. Fisher has been credited as most influential in the communication discipline of the narrative paradigm. Fisher claims that persuasion is crucial to understanding narratives. He concludes that communication, when seriously considered for advice in fostering action, helps the narrative paradigm find relevance (as cited in Baesler, 97). Because persuasion is an important part of the homiletic genre, it is imperative to study the persuasion tactics woven throughout narratives. For this portion of the analysis, one prominent narrative was selected for criticism from the two SBTC pastors. The pastor from the BGCT convention uses a narrative preaching approach, which is examined from a different perspective.

In the last chapter, the credibility of the pastors is tested based on previous research done by Dirks (1972) and Salem and Moffitt (1980). This credibility test has been adapted from previous research to accommodate a rhetorical analysis. The factors used for this analysis include the following: use of the Bible (Salem & Moffitt, 1980), attention-holding, continuity, use of illustration, love-fear, originality, practical help for living, range of subjects, and thought provoking. These factors are examined from a rhetorical perspective. This credibility analysis is relative to this study because it ensures the rhetors' ethos with the audiences, giving final validity to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Cluster Criticism

Burke's cluster criticism revolves around the association of consubstantiality[4] and division[5]. Consubstantial is the name given by Burke to define the act of individuals forming selves and identities through properties or substances. Foss (2004) furthers this definition by stating, "As they ally themselves with various properties or substances, they share substance with whatever or whomever they associate and simultaneously separate themselves from others whom they choose not to identify" (p. 69). Consubstantiality must be understood in conjunction with division. Burke theorizes that human beings are inevitably divided in result of our separate physical bodies. Division prompts Burke's motive for rhetoric to symbolize humans attempt to eliminate this inevitable alienation (Foss, 2004). Rhetors, therefore, attempt to create identification by naming or defining situations for their audience. The rhetorical artifact is then used as a creative strategy for dealing with the defined situation or a solution for solving the inherent problems.

Rhetorical artifacts reveal a great deal about the worldview or *terministic screen*, as Burke defines them, of the rhetors. The terms rhetors use to define the world represent a type of screen that points the attention of the audience to particular facets of reality over others. Foss (2004) highlights the influence of these

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[4] Used synonymously with the term *identification*

[5] Used synonymously with the terms *alienation* and *dissociation*

terministic screens by stating, "From the infinite terms available to rhetors, they put together components of rhetoric in a way that reflects who they are, the subjects about which they are engrossed, and the meanings they have for those subjects" (p. 71).

These terministic screens can be revealed through the application of cluster criticism, which takes the meaning of key symbols and charts the symbols that cluster around those key terms. Simply put, identifying terms that cluster around a key symbol can illuminate the meanings the rhetor has for the specified key symbol, in turn providing an assessment of the breadth of the rhetor's mind and a world view or terministic screen that may not be known to the rhetor. In this particular study, the clusters will also provide links to the similarities and differences between the SBTC and BGCT conventions.

Pastors from both conventions were asked to retrieve topical sermons based on their interpretation of "original sin" and "salvation". While these pastors, as rhetors, are aware of word selection and reinforcement of concepts and ideas, they are unaware of the interrelationships of those terms as they are threaded throughout the sermons. The key cluster terms were selected based on their significance, repetition, or continuity between both conventions.

Cluster Key Term: We

The studied rhetors use an interesting combination of "We" and "You" language throughout their sermons. I first anticipated a split in the language use between the two conventions, but after identifying clusters and key associations, I have concluded the use to be personal to the rhetors rather than specific to the

convention affiliation.   The simplicity of the use of such small personal pronouns allows one to believe them to be irrelevant to the homiletic genre, but I argue the opposite. These personal pronouns are used as a persuasive tool, potentially unconsciously by the rhetors, to either allow the audience to identify with them as a speaker or view them as a figure of power.

Two pastors predominately used inclusive We/Us language when presenting applications to knowledge learned from the chosen Scriptural passages. It was closely associated with words such as *know, find, choose*, and *see*. When used in conjunction with We language, these terms create a pattern of inclusion between the pastor and the church. One pastor made an application combining *we* and *as a church* to include his association with his congregation.

The same two pastors used the individual *I* only in reference to personal thoughts, beliefs, hopes, and wants. This use shows separation between opinions of these two rhetors and the freedom of opinion and expression given to their audiences. This freedom supports the notion of humility taken by the rhetors and the desire, once again, to have the audience identify with them as a person while still setting them apart as an individual with freedom to formulate his or her own thoughts, opinions, and beliefs. This separation oddly unites the pastor and congregation in freedom of choice.

One SBTC pastor, in sermons on both original sin and salvation, prominently utilized a very directive *you*. It is clustered around directions given from the pastor to the audience. Examples include *share with you* [the church], *want you to understand,* and *want you to think about this*. These directions are accompanied by *I* creating a terministic screen that insinuates the rhetor's power to persuade and teach. It also creates separation between the rhetor and the audience. It is possible

that this choice of term usage is not deliberate but still implies a subconscious desire for elevated power and status.

This same pastor uses inclusive language, switching to we/us, when discussing a Christian life transformation. This switch could be utilized to illuminate humility and make the pastor relatable to the audience momentarily. Momentary humility used for potential audience identification can also be viewed as a persuasive tactic.

The only noticeable difference between conventions in relation to *We/You* language was noted in the conclusion or invitation segments of the artifacts. Participating SBTC pastors favored the use of the term *you* in hopes of conjuring up a need or desire for life transformation, change, or salvation. This screen symbolizes these pastors' ability to establish ethos and use their knowledge and experientially gained wisdom to be a guide in that process. It creates a division of experience and knowledge between the rhetors and their audiences for the purpose of, once again, identifying an audience need for guidance and wisdom.

Cluster Key Terms from Sermons on Salvation

According to the websites of both the SBTC and BGCT, Baptists agree that salvation is a gift of grace. This doctrinal agreement was evident and held continuity throughout the sermons. While the term grace was the most dominant symbol throughout the artifacts, the use of Paul and the Pharisees as Biblical support characters and the concept of hopelessness in sin will also be examined.

Grace. The Oxford American Dictionary would define grace in relation to the Christian belief as, "the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings". The concept of grace is the

rhetorical and doctrinal link to Baptist's view of salvation. Throughout the selected artifacts, grace is supported and surrounded by key words like *free, unmerited favor, mercy, change, sufficient, gift, undeserved, faith, hope, change, accepted,* and *eternal redemption.* These clusters indicate a cause and effect relationship between grace and change or transformation. One pastor even uses an illustration that highlights the metamorphosis of a worm to a butterfly to note the human change from the inside out through grace as well as the transformation of life.

Grace is also popularly used in conjunction with mercy. One SBTC pastor defines mercy as God's desire to not give humans what is truly deserved as sinful beings. One pastor identifies grace and mercy as a two-sided coin that is irrelevant and worthless without both sides. This illustration illuminates a metaphorical cost of grace and its worth in relation to experiencing spiritual freedom. Grace has a very strong interrelationship with freedom. All three pastors use these words in juxtaposition with much repetition to exemplify to their audience the reality of this priceless gift.

Hopelessness. The key term grace is also clustered negatively around the idea of hopelessness which include key words *trapped, buried, lost, dead wretch, unworthy, deception, desertion, deceit, dependence on our own efforts, battered, exhausted, torn apart, sin, sorrow, drowning, desperate, way to Hell, threat of opposition, worry of provision, fear of condemnation, anxiety of separation, judgment, and disobedient.* These terms support the rhetors' agreed positions on the necessity and inevitability of grace. While these terms have several different contextual meanings, they are defined very similarly, all pointing back to hopelessness. This idea is construed into many different contexts to ensure that it is relatable to even the most diverse

audience. The acceptance of grace is given as the escape route to the dead ends chosen by humans.

Two pastors place much emphasis and significance on the linking word *but* which symbolizes the transition from hopelessness to the revelation of grace. One pastor defines *but* as a contract that humans agree to the acceptance of our inability to have some part in salvation. He uses a Biblical reference to establish the credibility of this concept and quotes 1 Corinthians 15:10, "*But* [emphasis mine] by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect." Emphasis is also given by another pastor on the relevant linking term *but* and is used to symbolize God's ability and right to judge us, *but* his decision to accept us. The pastor claims that Jesus can condemn us, yet puts value on his intercession on the behalf of human beings in order for us to be rid of hopelessness.

Paul. Paul is used as a central Biblical character by two pastors from different conventions in multiple sermons. Paul is deemed as a character with a *reputation* and a *past*. He has toiled with persecution and been a persecutor. Terms that cluster around Paul include ones that indicate his hopelessness and need for redemption. These terms are *least of the apostles, not worthy, astonished, pronounces judgment, proclaim gospel of grace,* and *conversion.* From these terms, one can conclude that their presence and positioning in these clusters implies the connection between Paul and mankind today. Paul is used as a figurehead of today's worldliness and sinful nature created by man. Paul is used to demonstrate grace in action and fascinate the audience with his life transformation.

Interestingly, two different passages where Paul's authorship is present were used for demonstration. One passage depicts Paul's address to the church of God in Corinth, highlighting his failures and unworthiness and placing much emphasis on

his acceptance of grace. Another pastor chooses to highlight Paul's use of grace in his letter to the church of Galatia. This address highlights his own message and uses his story to remind the church of their call to grace. He calls them fools because of their ability to leave the message of grace after they have heard it, and is used in this context to represent mental laziness. This definition is a subtle unspoken theme that links the laziness of the Galatians to the mental carelessness of the church today.

 Pharisees. The Pharisees are used in two illustrations indicative of a legalistic perspective. Symbols that cluster around this label include *sinner, legalist, judgment, moral character*, and *works*. These are used to show the opposing position to Paul's redemptive concept of grace. The Pharisees are used to hint towards audience members whom believe they can achieve salvation by human effort. Many examples of human attempted salvation are agreed by the pastor's rhetorical positions to be measured by church attendance, Bible study participation, prayer, and/or moral character. This idea of moral character is threaded through the sermons of all three pastors, identifying a popular terministic screen that directs attention to an idea that moral character is a popular division for the audience within the Baptist denomination.

Cluster Key Terms from Sermons on Original Sin

 The topic of original sin was assumed by the participating pastors to be a unifying concept between the two conventions. Cluster criticism brought forth multiple key terms, but less uniformity than *salvation*. The approach taken to educate on original sin, or what is often referred to as the fall of man, was quite diverse among the rhetors. Two of the three pastors even utilized scripture passages from the New Testament to teach about the concept, while the one pastor from the

BGCT utilized Genesis to support his claims. While I will briefly discuss the unique approaches to this teaching, this section will primarily focus on the clusters that highlight key terms that are strung throughout all sermons. The most prominent key term was *created* or *creation*. Other key terms that unified these two conventions were *sin, world*, and the sparsely spoken of *Enemy/Satan* and concept of *Hell* which, usually used in relation to one another, will be examined as one key term.

Created. This term, also referenced as creation, is used to highlight the beginning of man or mankind. Clustered around these terms incorporate *pleasure of God*, *in His image, hope, chose, spiritual, for Paradise* [Heaven], *beginning and end, made for relationship, unique in capacity, male and female*, and *representation*. All of these terms revolve around a central idea that humans are created by God, for God, and with the intent of being used by God. One pastor even uses an illustration to highlight the fact that humans are not "accidental consequences" or a "creature controlled by his unconsciousness" as Sigmund Freud has led some to believe. Rather, this cluster gives humans a sense of purpose. This terministic screen places emphasis on a never-ending search of human beings to find their "purpose" in this world. These pastors attempt to bring that purpose into light by making ties between human creation and its uniqueness to God.

One interesting note is the reference to the creation of male and female, which the BGCT pastor used. This is deemed as interesting because of the BGCT's support of women in ministry (BGCT.com) in contrast to the SBCT's disagreement with the notion. Similarly, the two pastors from the SBCT only reference man or mankind when discussing the creation or the fall of human beings. This rhetorical observation deems an allegiance to doctrinal truths followed closely by the rhetors.

Sin. This small three-letter word has infinite rhetorical power in sermons related to the fall of mankind. This key term is used in congruence with the following terms and phrases: *deceive, roam away from truth, response to temptation, disobedience, personal consequences, distortion, public consequences, guilt, fear,* and *estranged from God*. Terms are used repetitively and in numerous illustrations and contexts to force audiences to identify with their perceived sinful nature. Sin is the root of mankind's need for salvation, which signals that identification with sin is the rhetor's first attempt at persuasion or conversion to Christianity. Burke confirms this observation when he relates persuasion with identification, as he views persuasion as the end result of identification. That is the rhetorical goal of this powerful attempt to urge consubstantiality between sin and self for audience members. Burke (1969) powerfully states, "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (pg. 55). These rhetors take vague terms that can be transformed into personal stories, memories, or teachings to help the audience create a sense of identity between sin and self. One can assume that every individual has experienced some sense of *guilt* or *fear* in his/her lifetime; therefore, these pastors use that assumption to encourage identification in order to further "talk his language" and eventually persuade identification to become action.

World. The world encompasses much more rhetorical weight than simply being a spherical planet. Its meaning in this context refers to humanity and one can conclude that this also encompasses society and social constructs. Terms clustering around this key concept include *values, compliance, culture, hard, legalist, anti-god, anti-Christian, unfinished,* and *ego*. Also acknowledged in this cluster are references to the *American Dream*. Obviously, the world is larger than America, but I felt it was

important to include in this cluster because the rhetorical connotations associate the pursuit of the American dream as a worldly endeavor that transcends the United States and detours the participating church congregations from the quest for righteousness. This cluster also sends the persuasive message that the values of the World produce those of complacency within the church body, encouraging members to settle into what these pastors label as the *American Dream*. As a critic, I would define the American Dream as the pursuit of perfection. This perfection is gained by complying with the socially constructed American ideals, which include equality, democracy, and material prosperity.

Enemy/Hell. Talk of Hell, normally used in conjunction with the Enemy [Satan], has been circulating churches throughout history. Although not a popular topic choice for many pastors, fear appeals have been evident throughout homiletics since Jonathan Edwards. Traces of fear appeals, as examined in previous research, became palpable throughout this cluster. Although not strong enough to deem these entire sermons as messages dedicated to fear appeals, hints of Hell were still utilized to get the congregation's heart pumping. Clustered closely around Hell were key associations such as *place of torment, garbage dump, no relief, flames,* and *lost forever*. Each of these terms easily leads the audiences to pictorial mental images of the illustrated place. These illustrations linked closely to the key terms associated around Enemy perfectly orchestrate the use of fear appeals. These terms include *thief, steal, half-truth, serpent [snake], rebellion, pressing,* and *destroy*. The confluence of these two terms signals the persuasive tactics of these rhetors in hopes of having their congregation identify these linked terms with a need for salvation.

Interestingly used by two pastors with opposite convention affiliations was phraseology coined by Flip Wilson, "The Devil made me do it". Both rhetors

utilized this phrase as a life application regarding excuses for sinful behavior. I found it to be a very unifying tool between conventions. Although a very short, simple saying, the implications of this ring loudly into the congregations of both churches and are utilized by both pastors in order to have the same effect – identification with a need.

Cluster Criticism Conclusions

The examined clusters provide insight to the issues these pastors are dealing with in their local church. The key clusters used for the analysis of sermons on salvation included *grace* and *hopelessness*, as well as the Biblical characters *Paul* and the *Pharisees*. These clusters served as a point of unification for the two Baptist conventions, both attempting to create identification with their specific audiences in order to associate the specified Biblical characters and feelings of hopelessness with the individual and personal need for salvation. Clusters examined in sermons pertaining to original sin included the following terms: *created, sin, world,* and *Enemy/Hell*. The terms associated with these key clusters signified diversity between convention approaches to educating congregations on original sin. The *We* cluster was applied to all sermons and revealed an interesting combination of "We" and "You" language. The analysis of this cluster did not reveal a conventional split, but rather different personal approaches used by the pastors to either establish power or empathy with their audiences.

Terministic screens were unconsciously used by the rhetors to identify and meet the needs of the audience or congregation. This criticism also brings unity to the two conventions by highlighting their similarities in language use. Examination of the clusters reveals two very common themes – identification and empathy.

Pastors threaded key term synonyms throughout the texts to signify repetition in order to create the themes identified above. Because the homiletic genre is viewed is one of persuasive power, pastors used key clusters to seek identification with the audience in order to quantify their ability to persuade or seek conversion of audience members to Christianity. In order to achieve identification, pastors created a terministic screen of empathy to signify their own human tendencies in similarity with those of their audiences.

In support of Burke's belief that there are as many different terministic screens as there are people, it is evident that the participating BGCT pastor takes a different route to achieve the same goal by means of personal *I* phrasing in the conclusion. This language choice highlights personal experiences, which unintentionally creates the pastor's ethos. It allows a connection to be made between the rhetor and his audience in hopes of establishing the same relationship of guidance that the SBTC pastors are seeking.

Interestingly, one distinct rhetorical difference between the participating SBTC and BGCT pastors is viewed as two means to the same end; therefore, this dissimilarity in terministic screens paradoxically unifies the two conventions. The clusters around the *I/You/We* personal language esteems them as persuasive tactics and leads one to conclude pastors can also use them as a way to simply achieve a higher position of power.

In a meeting with one pastor, I was told that if I were to lay the same topical sermon from the two conventional sides on top of each other, there would be no recognizable similarities. This statement probed my interest and now leads me to conclude that the opposite is verifiable through the terministic screens presented in this cluster criticism.

CHAPTER THREE

Narrative Criticism

Human beings are storytellers. The narratives we tell help shape and create our realities by playing a crucial role in decision and policy making and are used to persuade and prompt us to make and justify decisions. According to Foss (2004), narratives are distinguished by four characteristics. First, narrative discourse must be comprised of at least two events that are either active, expressing action, or static, expressing a state or condition. Second, these events must be organized by time order. This order may not be chronological, but must be a sequence of events. This sequence can include flashbacks and foreshadowing. Next, a narrative must include a type of causal or contributing relationship among events in a story (Foss, 2004). This stipulation defines the essence of a story to depict change. Last, there must a minimum of one unified subject.

Narrative coherence and fidelity are viewed as Fisher's criteria for narrative evaluation. Narrative coherence examines whether a narrative has internal consistency or adequate connections within the text. Narrative fidelity is defined as the truth quality of the narrative. While Fisher names narrative coherence and narrative fidelity as the criteria for evaluating a narrative, E. Baesler deepens this criterion for his study by applying subcomponents. Baesler (1995) uses the following subcomponents to test the coherence of a narrative: (a) *structural coherence*

includes the organization and sequencing of ideas (b) *material coherence* asks whether important ideas are missing or distorted, and (c) *characterological coherence* which represents the consistency and believability of the narrative. The following five subcomponents were used by Baesler to test narrative fidelity: (a) factual values, (b) relevance, (c) consistency or truth, (d) consequence, and (e) transcendental. I test the coherence and fidelity of the SBTC narratives with Fisher's evaluation criterion and Baesler's subcomponents to lead to conclusions on the persuasive appeals of the artifacts.

Through the process of meeting with pastors for this study, I learned that communication scholars have a different view of narrative than do church pastors. Many pastors view narrative as the oral tradition of sharing a Biblical story. Pastors would claim the use of illustrations rather than narratives. For the purpose of this study and communication research, illustrations are viewed as narratives. One pastor exercises narrative preaching rather than the use of illustration narratives and it is referred to as such. To examine convention differences, this narrative criticism addresses narratives used by SBTC pastors and then assesses those of the BGCT.

SBTC Narratives

The five examined artifacts are filled with short narratives that support the topics addressed by each pastor while still fulfilling the larger picture of invoking the audience to identify with the homiletic theme. I focus on one main narrative from each of the two pastors that I find to be the most influential while meeting the above stated criteria of a narrative.

Late Night Rendezvous with Cheese Steaks and Crack Addicts

In the introduction of a sermon titled, Freed by Grace, one pastor grabs the audience attention with a retold heart-breaking tale of evangelist Johnny Moore's run in with reality. This narrative is told to introduce the theme of hopelessness in a trapped life without the freedom of grace.

The rhetor tells the story of a pastor in a simple rural town who finds himself at a greasy cheeseburger joint after a long day of preaching. This late night rendezvous with a 16-year-old crack cocaine addict of a waitress is told in a very conversational fashion that intrigues the audience through emotional appeals. The narrative tells the real life tale of a teenage girl struggling to find acceptance, identity, and hope in the trap, which she has allowed herself to spiral down. Its strength holds to material coherence by giving the setting, characters involved, and narrator. The only disqualifying observation of material coherence is in the anonymity of the young female waitress. The rhetor may have done this to increase the generalizability of the narrative to the audience, allowing the congregation to create a mental image of their own "trapped girl". This mental image could be personal, of a friend or family member, or maybe an even more broadly adapted image of humanity.

Favoring the narrative coherence is the structural and characterological coherence. The rhetor holds the audience attention by a structure of continuity and a woven web of believability through the narrative's intricate detail. The cohesiveness of the narrative also foreshadows the Biblical story of Paul and his unworthiness to be a disciple of the same church that he persecuted. The rhetor ties them together through a trapped feeling of hopelessness.

The fidelity of this narrative develops ethos for the rhetor from his audience in order to prepare them for the foreshadowed Biblical teaching. The factual value of the narrative is implied through the unspoken moral of trapped effects of our personal decisions. The emphasis of this cause-and-effect relationship is placed on the effect of her decisions. This could be done to allow audience members to imagine personal causes to the same effect of desperation. This narrative establishes relevance through audience members' ability to resonate with a decision that caused a downward helical effect much like the heart-breaking spiral of the young waitress.

Consistency, the truth of the narrative as compared to outside knowledge, is not credited through the rhetor but rather the self-disclosure of the main character – the young addicted waitress. The feeling of realness makes the consistency of this narrative transparent to me as a critic. The character's examples of the painful truth of addiction to *shooting up* are explicitly stated in a quote, "[Crack cocaine is] what I love to do morning, noon, and night"; this statement leaves the audience stunned by the tangible visibility of truth.

Consequence deals with the examination of the applicability of the story to self and everyday life. I believe the rhetor uses this narrative to make the Biblical connection to Paul's story more concrete. The rhetor illuminates this story in order to make the audience realize the reality of the hopelessness all around them. Because it is often ignored, this narrative brings out its secret causing people to take a deeper look at the everyday situations placed around them at work, school, or even a rural cheeseburger joint.

The final subcomponent of narrative fidelity is the narrative's ability to include items on goodness or harmfulness, also known as transcendental qualities. This pastor establishes these qualities by giving possible examples of family

happenings and situations related to abuse to give this girl reason to rescue herself through drug addiction and the harmfulness that came from taking that route. Although not stated directly in this narrative, a transcendental quality follows shortly after its conclusion regarding freedom from the described pit through God's grace, which leads directly into the proposed Biblical theme.

Based on the stated and inferred information in this narrative, it is obvious that its coherence and fidelity lend support as a strong rhetorical device. This SBTC pastor uses this narrative to foreshadow Biblical teaching and make a life application before even introducing the Scriptural character or passage. It is possible that this pastor used this attention-gripping story to launch his ethos with the congregation in order to increase his believability and empathetic demeanor for the more focused teaching of the acceptance of grace.

The Caged Polar Bear

Also highlighting the introduction of a sermon similarly titled, Amazing Grace, another SBTC pastor takes a very different approach to grabbing the attention of the audience. Rather than a heart-wrenching tale, this pastor takes on a lighthearted narrative to introduce the idea of God's amazing grace.

This narrative uses a non-human character, a polar bear native to the Denver Zoo, to introduce the topical sermon. With the pastor as narrator, he describes the setting of the caged animal to be exactly 16 paces forward and backward for the bear. The story then transitions into a newly built, spacious setting as the bear acquires a new home. The rhetor reaches the climax of the narrative when he describes the grand opening of the new exhibit.

While being a fairly short illustrative narrative, the rhetor still manages to find success in structural, material, and characterological coherence. The ideas are sequenced very succinctly and still manage to lead to a moral climax at the conclusion of the narrative. The believability comes from the rhetor's use of statements from public officials and press in attendance at the opening event.

The narrative fidelity constitutes the majority of this narrative's weighted persuasive power. The factual value of the narrative is explicitly stated in the inferred moral, "They could take the bear out of the cage but they could not take the cage out of the bear". When the bear is removed from the cage, it continues to pace the length of the original cage back and forth regardless of its newly given freedom of space. The crowd anxiously waits to see the freed polar bear frolic and run in the space provided and are disappointed in the polar bear's indifference to his new "world". This moral is universally understood in numerous different contexts and with different subject matter while still solidifying the lesson of self-sought versus involuntary freedom.

The consistency of this narrative is lacking, but it is still slightly evident through the specified location of the setting. Without the named setting location, this narrative could very well be a well-orchestrated fable. The rhetor also creates consistency by beginning the narrative with an indefinite, but stated time by claiming, "A number of years ago..." The consistency is also difficult to examine because of the main character's inability to truly express self-disclosure or emotions due to his animal nature and tendencies.

Finally, the consequence and transcendental qualities of this narrative are very closely interrelated, strengthening them together and as individual components. Once again, this narrative foreshadows the teaching from Romans 8

31-39 that delineates the freedom given to believers in Jesus Christ from the law of sin and death, but the lack of full appreciation of the gift given. The implicitly stated moral implies harmfulness in an inability to fully accept the gift of free grace. This harm leaves individuals underutilizing a free gift of which underutilization can lead to moral and spiritual destruction. It also places much weight on the acceptance of this gift, segueing seamlessly into the importance of Christian salvation. The moral of the narrative can also be looked at metaphorically, giving a lengthened depiction of underappreciated freedom. The phrase *as believers* located immediately following the conclusion of this narrative indicates its applicability to any individual that finds their identity as a Baptist believer in Jesus Christ. It can also be inferred that the term of inclusion *believers* immediately following the narrative is used as a persuasive tactic to illustrate the freedom associated with Christian salvation by grace.

BGCT Narrative Preaching

The sermons collected from a BGCT pastor revealed the use of narrative preaching over the use of narratives to support a theme or concept. Narrative preaching is defined as the oral tradition of sharing a Biblical story. This concept enables a pastor to tell a Biblical passage as one of the characters or as a flowing narrative. Because this style of preaching is starkly different in comparison to the use of narratives to support a theme, a different analysis is done on these sermons.[6]

For the purposes of this study, one narrated Biblical story was selected for analysis. This story illustrates the story of the tree of the knowledge of good and

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[6] One cannot conclude from this study that all BGCT pastors utilize narrative preaching as a means to communicate a message. Preaching style is learned and a personal choice.

evil, which is depicted in Genesis 2-3. This BGCT pastor introduces the theme of *original sin* by serving as a narrator of the chosen Scripture. Prior to the beginning of the narrative, the pastor refers the audience to Genesis 2:17, which is where the illuminated story begins. This reference adds credibility to his words by giving the decrees that he makes in the narrative Biblical support. He then takes on the narrator voice of God in relationship to Adam and Eve and gives them instruction to not eat the fruit of the tree. A warning of death, physical or moral, then follows this narration that places value on character and trust by which one can infer are both supported by the pastor's belief in what God finds desirable.

This short but immensely powerful moral teaching narrated by the pastor introduces the rhetorical practice of narrative preaching. This preaching style creates an oral tradition of retelling a Biblical story with the pastor as narrator and without the act of simply reading the Scriptural story aloud. Narrative preaching gives an ancient story life, through voice animation and character identification. When the pastor serves as narrator, it gives him the power of translation to tell the story through personal interpretation.

Narrative Criticism Conclusions

The analyzed narratives show different approaches in preaching styles. The SBTC narratives used in this study utilize anecdotes that recount stories about people whom they have observed or read about and stories retold of contemporary evangelicals, such as Johnny Moore (Schuetz, 1986). In *Late Night Rendezvous with Cheese Steaks and Crack Addicts*, the pastor introduces themes of hopelessness and the need for grace, which are woven throughout the sermon, while also showing how

those themes accentuate a confessional truth that culminates in the told narrative. (Schuetz, 1986).

The practice of narrative preaching supports Clark's (1977) and Fosdick's (1938) previous research by using personal language in order for the audience to easily relate. This particular narrative parallels the belief that sermonic narratives, regardless of denomination [or convention], revolve around common themes. This narrative categorizes under the two themes: the nature of human beings and right and wrong. (Clark, 1977; Fosdick, 1938).

The utilization of narrative preaching is a different rhetorical tactic to achieve the same goal of audience identification with the rhetor's chosen concept of teaching. Both narrative preaching and the use of narratives strive to thread common language and "everyday" happenings with Biblical truth or Scriptural passages; therefore, while the rhetors' approaches are different, it is once again another instance of a slightly different approach to meet the same end goal.

CHAPTER FOUR

Preacher Credibility

In a quantitative study examined in the literature review, pastor credibility is taken into account (Dirks, 1972). This study can also be applied rhetorically be examining the following factors: use of the Bible (Moffitt and Salem, 1980), attention-holding, continuity, use of illustration, love-fear (quality of motivation), originality, practical help for living, range of subjects, and thought provoking. By thoroughly examining pastor credibility, one can then develop assumptions that detail how effective a sermon is in relation to its effect on its audience.

A study done by Salem and Moffitt (1980) concluded that the use of the Bible was ranked in the top five most important factors that determine credibility. In the sermons selected by the BGCT pastor, the Bible is used to solidify each point made throughout the sermon. The rhetor diversifies the use of the Bible by selecting passages and verses from several books of the Bible to increase credibility. One of the SBTC pastors follows this same pattern and uses the Bible to reinforce each point made while diversifying the Scripture passages used to increase credibility. The other SBTC pastor develops ethos differently. Interestingly, instead of using many Scripture passages, in one sermon the rhetor reinforces his topical points by referring back to the one selected passage of Scripture. As a critic, I merit both uses of reinforcement of decrees as credible choices for the use of the Bible.

Attention-holding, originality, and the use of illustrations can be examined together because I believe it is through the originality of the rhetor's illustrations that one is able to hold the audience's attention. The two SBTC pastors exhibit a similar style in establishing originality and holding attention. Both pastors use personal, fictional, and non-fictional stories, some humorous and others serious, to support different points throughout the sermon. The two rhetors grab the audience's attention by introducing the teaching topic with a narrative. One retells the story of an evangelist that introduces the need for grace or depicts a personal interpretation of an interview seen on television that brings enlightenment on a misinterpretation of "Enemy", while the other SBTC pastor introduces sermons with a humorous story, possibly to lighten the mood of the audience before the important Christian concept of salvation is introduced.

On the other hand, the BGCT pastor uses a different preaching style and therefore, establishes attention-holding and originality factors through a dissimilar approach. This pastor grabs the attention of the audience by presenting a "pressing challenge of our day", recapping points made in a previous sermon, or by introducing the topic or Scripture passage. He develops originality by using short, pointed statements or quotes to support different points in the artifact. In one example, the rhetor uses the following quote by Clarence Jordan that puts a humorous twist on the interpretation of very serious passage found in Ephesians 2:8-9, "Now get this straight. Even if we, or an angel fresh out of Heaven preaches to you any other message that the one we preach to you, to hell with him. That's right. It's just as I told you before, and I'm telling you again now. If anyone brings you a gospel different from the one you received, to hell with him". This quote illustrates

the severity of this passage of Scripture, while also identifying with the audience by using common language rather than religious jargon.

The rhetors established credibility through the use of illustrations, love-fear quality of motivation, and the thought provoking applications made for practical help for living. These factors are interwoven in nature. The narrative criticism chapter of this study illuminates the illustrative narratives used by each rhetor. The two SBTC pastors utilized narratives to teach a moral or make a life application of the topical theme, while the BGCT pastor used narrative illustrations to recreate the Biblical passage in order to further the audience's understanding the Scripture's teaching of a real life application. Also discussed previously in this study were traces of love-fear motivation tactics. A blend of both fear appeals and compassion appeals were revealed in the cluster criticism. Connections with *sin, Hell/Enemy*, and *hopelessness* create a fear appeals approach by rhetors but are then redeemed with the compassionate appeal of salvation by *grace*. Therefore, the rhetors create a balance of love-fear as a quality of motivation. The studied rhetors established credibility through thought-provoking prodding statements in the invitation or conclusion of each sermon. Pastors used rhetorical questions to invite audience members to introduce the topical ideas addressed in the sermon.

Pastors established continuity by utilizing the same rhetorical tactics across conventional lines. The rhetors created continuity through repetitious statements and the use of alliterations. The alliterations used tie each main point to the next. An example is found in a sermon from a BGCT pastor who introduces the range of subjects through the following alliteration: *reason for the fall, results of the fall, and the*

remedy for the fall[7]. One rhetor used the ending of *-ism* to make the answer to a rhetorical question continuous. Each answer included one of the following words: *ritualism, asceticism, activism, or legalism*. He used this literary device to introduce the central Biblical character – the Pharisees. All studied rhetors developed continuity through a range of subjects central to the topical themes of original sin or salvation.

From this credibility analysis, one can concluded that the sermons used for this study were gathered from credible pastors. This conclusion gives validity to the rhetorical findings and conclusions drawn from the chosen artifacts.

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[7] "The fall" is in reference to the fall of Mankind or the concept of Original Sin.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion/Future Research

One purpose of rhetorical criticism, as stated in the introduction of this study, is to make a contribution to rhetorical theory. Rhetorical theory helps shape our realities in order to better understand the world around us. In the homiletic genre, little criticism has been done because of personal religious convictions or beliefs, as well as diverse interpretations of the rhetoric. From this study, one can support a theory that the Baptist denomination is more similar rhetorically than dissimilar, despite doctrinal differences. Through the application of cluster criticisms the key terms *grace, hopelessness, Paul, Pharisees, created, sin, world, Enemy/Hell, and we* were revealed. I found the rhetoric to disclose two common themes – identification and empathy. The pastors used synonymous word choices to describe the key terms in order to assist the audience in identifying with the sought after moral or Scriptural teaching. Pastors also used their legitimate power to empathize with the audience in order to create a deepened sense of identification.

Pastors used personal and retold narratives to illustrate identification and empathy. These narratives helped create a mental image for congregations to paint a picture of the chosen theme – original sin or salvation by grace. These narratives used common language and avoided religious jargon in a search for empathy with audience members. The common language used in the narratives also set the pastors apart from their legitimate power in order to be seen as ordinary. This

presents the idea that these sermons reveal insight to these specific pastors' pursuits of identifying with the audience or congregation.

The studied narratives and clusters worked together to disclose understanding into the issues the chosen rhetors are facing within their own local church. Because Baptists believe in the autonomy of the local church, each pastor acclimatizes to different issues within their own congregation; therefore, the different rhetorical tactics addressed in this study reveal many similarities in rhetorical tactics across conventional lines, while still addressing minute differences that could be due to the different issues being addressed by the rhetor to the specified audiences. The narratives and clusters, together, create a balance of fear and compassion appeals as qualities of motivation. The clusters reveal traces of fear appeal tactics through the use of key cluster terms such as *Enemy/Hell* and *hopelessness*. The rhetors then use the narratives to illustrate compassion appeals and empathy intertwined with the concept of hopelessness and the fear appeals of Hell/Enemy. This finding indicates a blurring of conventional lines through the appeals of motivation.

Because previous research gives much attention to doctrinal similarities and differences between the two Texas Baptist conventions, I approached this study completely from a rhetorical standpoint, which indicates that I did not take doctrinal and Scriptural interpretation differences into account in this study. An interesting concept for further research of the homiletic genre may include the investigation of the combination of both doctrinal statements and rhetorical appeals.

This study focused on a very small sample that included two SBTC pastors and one BGCT affiliated pastor. The sample was obtained because the material from the above listed volunteer participants met the criteria needed for the study. The

uneven 2:1 ratio may possibly be significant to the area of the study. It was much more difficult to locate BGCT churches and pastors within a 15 mile proximity of San Marcos, Texas. The generalizability of this study is narrow due to small sample size and the target audience of South Central Texas; therefore, further research on a larger sample may help broaden the conclusions and discussion to include more or all Texas Baptist churches. The educational background of the rhetors was not taken into account in this study. The size and demographic information of the pastor's congregations was not gathered, which introduced another limitation to the study.

The split in the Southern Baptist Convention made waves in states other than Texas. This study can be applied to any state's convention splits in the Baptist denomination. Future research may also identify rhetorical patterns across denominational lines by rhetorically comparing Baptist sermons to other denominations.

I found my meeting time with the participating pastors to be a very educational and entertaining experience. Sermons are personal to them. They are the culmination of the pastor's work in the church and a chance to teach, implement, and spur on individuals and congregations as a whole. I enjoyed many hours in church offices listening to pastors defend their conventional stance or shrug it off as a legalistic structure of religion. My favorite meeting came from a weighted invitation from one pastor to attend his Sunday service. I gladly accepted, attended, and was given a formal introduction by the pastor in the middle of the service. I was then asked to join the congregation for lunch where I enjoyed experiencing the church culture. Unfortunately, the specific pastor's material did not meet the criteria for this study, but the experience was still educational.

Pastors help create the identity of the church. Their sermonic influence helps distinguish and shape an individual or congregation's reality of Scripture, religion, and more specifically the Baptist denomination. That is why it is imperative to investigate the rhetorical appeals and persuasive tactics of this powerful genre that has gone under examined for too long. This study constitutes a beginning rather than an end to the rhetorical analysis of the homiletic genre and more specifically the Baptist denomination in Texas.

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