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THE REVIEW

The Church Militant or the Church Asleep?

By Dr. Charles L. Dear, Moderator IBFNA

We are ministering in the midst of a great social upheaval, foisted upon us by those who would break down every biblical principle enshrined in our founding documents and who would overturn every biblical principle we have preached to our people about society, family, and personal responsibility from the Word of God. Have we addressed these challenges to our faith and taught our people to have a ready answer to those who ask?

I fear we are failing to equip our people with the reasons for the hope within us, because fearing to be too political we have withdrawn from the battle for the truth. While I am not advocating actively campaigning for candidates in our churches, it appears that we have abdicated both the responsibility of, as well as our history of, addressing biblical issues to those who wield the power of government and law-making. All of us should know the history of Isaac Backus, who was sent by the Warren Association to Philadelphia in 1774 to present to the Continental Congress a memorial appealing for religious liberty and the separation of church and state, which would end support of state churches.

It was a protracted battle, both in Philadelphia and Massachusetts, met with opposition and misrepresentation; but Backus and others with him pressed their case to both the people and the government to gain complete religious liberty. It would be another 17 years before religious freedom became an official amendment to our Constitution. There were other Baptists along the way, such as John Leland, who would play a role in garnering support at the state level before the federal Congress would yield; but clearly it required Baptist activism that enjoyed more than token support to challenge the status quo.

While all that seems long ago and far away, we would be deceived to think today that all of the contemporary self-proclaimed "rights groups" have no animosity against biblical Christianity. If we were to list some of the better-known ones, like Planned Parenthood, we would find advocacy in direct contradiction to the Bible.

We would also find a measure of hypocrisy, for many of their historical agendas have been eclipsed by broader globalist objectives that in some ways contradict their originally stated purposes. For example, women's organizations are strangely silent about female genital mutilation practiced upon hundreds of young girls right here in America. It stands as one of the worst forms of child abuse in order to satisfy the requirements of a small sect in Islam, often performed by non-medical personnel with-



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out the benefit of anesthesia or sanitary conditions. Governmental services neither state objections nor take any action to curtail the practice.

While we help to fight disease in other parts of the world, diseases we once defeated here in America have returned. Many anti-Christian organizations receive support through our tax dollars, and billions of dollars of tax-deductible funding from anti-Christian foundations and philanthropists, both domestic and foreign, do more to undermine Christianity than advance worthy causes. These organizations actively seek to overturn governments that have had a Judeo-Christian heritage for centuries, and they have led efforts to change our culture by supporting unassimilated immigration and the acceptance of sharia law.

When asking how such things could come to be, especially in our own country, we must consider the collapse of biblical understanding and the rejection of biblical authority. The weakness of nominal/compromised Christianity, which has opened a floodgate for the acceptance and success of other religions such as Islam in western European nations that once professed to be Christian, only compounds this problem.

Consider how quickly changes have come to Great Britain, France, and Germany (500 years since the Reformation). Looking to the future of those western civilizations, in little more than a decade differing reproduction rates, even more so than immigration rates, may cause many of the native born of those countries to be out-numbered, out-represented, and out-voted in areas such as governmental authority, culture, and freedom of religion.

We dare not be so foolish as to presume, "that could never happen here." American courts have already introduced foreign/sharia law into our courts, in direct contradiction to the laws of our land. There are already ethnic/religious enclaves here that are miniature foreign countries within our borders, with their own system of laws and law enforcement. Nevertheless, we hear the appeals from special interest groups and government officials that we should set aside the law in favor of being compassionate and generous towards strangers — one of the rare occasions when radicals quote Scripture.

But where must compassion end and the law begin? In the sanctuary-city movement, the public plea is to let compassion prevail and to overlook the complications of criminality and disease that have brought harm to others. Nevertheless, there are several "Christian" organizations that have received significant payments for facilitating sanctuary-city lawlessness.

All of this will destabilize nations around the world. Social engineers and the billionaires who provide the funding to facilitate their changes believe in the virtue of a one-world government, where they will rule over a global society without national identities or borders. It is the Tower of Babel all over again and the human equivalent of the ambitions of Lucifer before he was cast out of heaven (Isa. 14:13-14). The ambition of men to rule absolutely has failed so many times, yet there is always someone who thinks that he can do it better. The psalmist speaks of this age-old ambition:

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure (Ps. 2:1-2, 4).

The question for us here is, given that these things are already coming to pass, what manner of people ought we to be? Furthermore, how should we be addressing these things to our people? Have we pointed out how the things being promoted directly contradict the Scriptures?

Our people need to have a biblical world view, and that needs to be part of our ministry. Our people need answers, both for themselves and for those around them who are either complacent towards or actively engaged with the social engineering around us. We cannot underestimate the impact made upon adults and children who are constantly exposed to the drumbeat of anti-Christian socialism. We cannot sit idly by and watch all these things come to pass thinking that, since they are inevitable, we should not resist them.

If for no other reason, we must recognize that all these anti-Christian actions undermine our present ability to fulfill the Great Commission. Our ability and opportunity to spread the Gospel has already been impeded by the success of American secularization of government and society. Our people need to understand - perhaps we need to be clear in our own minds - that biblical predictions of these conditions do not make them something we should ignore, support, or tolerate. There are evil things predicted to come to pass in the Great Tribulation, but that does not mean we should silently watch, or encourage by our silence, the groundwork being laid while we are still here.

Believers and unbelievers alike should take warning of the signs of the times and the approaching evil days of the Great Tribulation, which they portend. Noah sounded an alarm of the impending judgment of God for 120 years. That his success was limited to his family was not an excuse to stop preaching the truth in a day when "every imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). That sounds all too familiar. As Jesus noted, "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:37).

"Dear Brethren" — Good Counsel from an Old Friend

A 2004 Letter from Dr. Robert Delnay

Dear Brethren,

Let us trust that the meetings go well this year. But before we get there, I have a burden. Three of them.

1. Why do we exist? Is it not to articulate several principles? For example,

- (1) Literal Bible. Not versions, but exposition and preaching.
- (2) Separatism, both positional and personal.
- (3) Home for the glory of God and for the imminent rapture.
- (4) Life in the Spirit, a vital walk with God.

In a word, Fundamentalism. What the General Association stood for half a century ago.

2. Why do we meet?

- (1) Fellowship. I relish it, and I suppose you do too.
- (2) Mutual encouragement. With or without the preaching.
- (3) Exchange of information.
- (4) Convey our values to our young.

We cannot count on our schools to do that. If our kids go in with the above values, they probably will come out that way. But the underclassmen I have met for the last 20 years or so can't relate to the old struggles, and they sit detached in classes in history, contemporary issues, and even chapel.

3. I propose a sort of covenant or conspiracy among us and the IBFNA leadership, that we resolve on these goals among others:

- (1) To go after young people, especially guys, to disciple and indoctrinate in the above values. Generate convictions. If we don't, who will?
- (2) Encourage them to attend.
- (3) To pray for our June speakers, and urge them to key their messages to convincing the young pastors and members who attend. We've had too many young pastors defect to contemporary sound and what all forms of materialism. You could give me names.

All well and good to stroke us elders, but if we lose our young pastors and students, what's left of our Fellowship?

I should send this to more of you men, but my computer hates me and likes to balk at what I ask politely.

Love in Jesus.

I Will Build My Church

2017 Conference Report

The 27th Annual Family Conference of the IBFNA was hosted June 20-22, 2017 by the Faith Baptist Church of Kittery, ME and their pastor, Justin Kauffman. The church was a gracious and hospitable host, and the summer days of the week were filled with good weather and great fellowship. Some like-minded men from New England were introduced to the Fellowship for the first time. The conference passed a resolution of appreciation for our host church:



The brethren of the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America, meeting June 20-22, 2017 at Faith Baptist Church, Kittery, ME, hereby express our deep appreciation to our host church for their generous welcome and thoughtful care for us under the leadership of our brother, Pastor Justin Kauffman. The natural beauty of our surroundings here is surpassed only by the beauty of your kind love for the body of Christ, your sister churches.

We have been greatly blessed by the hospitality of your people. The church's enthusiastic preparations in the love of Christ for our conference have encouraged and refreshed us as we have exhorted one another in the promise of our Savior that He shall build His church. Thank you for your faithful example and loving care. We have enjoyed the use of your beautiful building and your generous provisions for our refreshment. Thank you for ministering to the many logistical needs of hosting a conference like this one. The commendation of Gaius applies here: "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which

have borne witness of thy charity before the church" (3 John 4-5).

We rejoice in this separated witness for the truth of the gospel, and we pray that the blessing of the Head of the Church will continue to give you grace to believe with great boldness His promise to build His church. We shall look forward to continuing to strive together with you for the faith of the gospel, and may the Lord of the harvest richly multiply our labors in His field white already unto harvest. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).

Although our overall attendance was lower than we have enjoyed in recent years, the week was blessed of the Lord with instructive preaching on our conference theme, the promise of our Savior, "I Will Build My Church." Our keynote speakers for the week were Pastor Laurence Brown of the First Baptist Church of North Conway, NH and Dr. Larry Oats, the recently retired Dean and now part-time Professor of Maranatha Baptist Seminary and author of the book, *The Church of the Fundamentalists*.



Pastor Brown preached three messages focused on the great purpose of the church, the great principle of the church, and the glorious prospect of the church. We heard from a man who loves and serves Christ's church. The purpose of the church is foremost to glorify God. It is to do so by displaying God's redemption wisdom to the angels for all eternity and by instructing the saints toward greater Christlikeness.

The great principle of the church comes from the body metaphor we find for it in Paul. The church is one body under one Head. As such, she is both unified and diverse. The frequency of the phrase *one another* speaks to the importance of the mutual ministry of the members of the body, who enjoy an organic bond that runs deeper even than blood-relations.

There is no such thing as an unimportant church member, each one having been put into the body by God, and amputations are always horrible. Jesus Christ is the Head of the body, and the



growth of the body comes from Him as the body experiences the edification of itself in love. When edified, the body grows into greater Christlikeness, although not necessarily in numerical strength.

The glorious prospect of the church is the promise of her pre-tribulation rapture to heaven to be with the Lord. Jesus is a wise master-builder who does not fail to build His church. Our upward calling, the rapture, our glorious celebration, the marriage supper of the Lamb, our victorious Captain, the Lamb at the Battle of Armageddon, and our final reward, to reign with Christ if we endure, should encourage our hearts as we minister embattled by the difficulty of our present day.

Following the format of his recent book, Dr. Oats provided the conference with tremendous insight and wisdom regarding the history of the doctrine of the church. He began by recounting the early corruption that came to the church after the apostolic age. As Christianity became the state religion of Rome, external unity became more important than internal purity. Confusion arose over the nature of the universal church. It became visi-

ble rather than invisible, organizational rather than spiritual.

Cyprian taught that membership in the visible church was necessary for salvation, and Augustine established Rome as the center of this imperial structure, which he saw as designed by God to be a mixed multitude on the basis of the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13. Luther's ecclesiology made little advance, whereas Calvin's emphasis on



the elect as the true church moved him closer to a sacramental unity rather than a geographical parish-church unity. With their conviction that the church visible should be voluntary and identified through the ordinance of credo-baptism, 4000 Anabaptists lost their lives at the hands of Lutherans. Dr. Oats insightfully demonstrated that the history of the church's corruption shows Satan's hatred for the true church.

Without exception, state-sponsored ecclesiology has resulted in some form of persecution. The church in America learned a different way. With its roots in a Puritanism influenced by Roger Williams, in a Pietism that taught a radical separation between believers and unbelievers, in a Confessionalism that held tightly to its heritage of Protestant theology, and in a Revivalism that found Calvinists and Arminians united in the "bottom-up" conversions of our nation's Great Awakenings, American Protestantism came to look very different from its European counterparts. Disestablishment has meant essentially that every Protestant church in America has more in common with the ecclesiology of its Baptist neighbors than it does with its European forefathers.

On that foundation, the ecclesiology of fundamentalism has always emphasized the local church as the only visible church and the importance of its purity. The New Testament is not just the starting point for ecclesiology, but rather

the doctrine's complete and only rule of faith and practice. Only believers should be members of local churches, and though often costly, the church's watchword is "earnestly contend for the faith," not merely "ye must be born again."



The Billy Graham-led new evangelicalism took a different approach. He brought in unbelievers to reach unbelievers. Following the heritage of the Anglican Puritans rather than that of the Separatists like Williams, new evangelicals viewed New Testament ecclesiology as a springboard for the faith and practice of the church. Encouraged by their interpretation of the parable of the wheat and the tares, they saw the church as a mixture of believers with unbelievers. The priority of unity or purity is the key issue, and in spite of their prioritization of unity, new evangelicals have experienced much disunity. The goal of unity without purity results in disunity, because unity depends on purity.



In addition to the sound doctrine of our keynote speakers, our souls enjoyed the nourishment

of other great preaching from the Word on the doctrine of the church. Our host pastor, Justin Kauffman, spoke of the importance of keeping Christ preeminent in the church. Bob Payne preached our separation message, an exposition of 1 Samuel 27-29, where we were warned about the way compromise gradually, but tragically, turned David into an enemy of God's people. Separation is not a radical position; it is biblical protection from our own sinful human hearts.

Steve Pittman also instructed us from the Old Testament. He explained how Abraham's treatment of Lot provides us with a great example of compassionate fundamentalism. Abraham cared for Lot even though his calling before the Lord required separation from him. Jeff Briden encouraged us to stick to the instructions when it comes to how to build Christ's church. His was an enlightening and instructive study of the New Testament word for *edification*. *Edification* means to *build up*, it is an imperative obligation of every believer, it is done through teaching God's Word, and it can be ruined by communication that fails to administer grace to the hearers.

Finally, Chick Dear finished the conference by stirring our hearts about the importance of the Great Commission. The work must begin with respect for the authority of Christ in the work. Although salvation is a free gift that costs us nothing and Christ everything, true discipleship that follows the example of Christ will cost us everything. A true disciple is committed to the Word of God, he loves Christ, he bears his cross and follows, he loves the brotherhood, and he bears fruit.

In addition to the great preaching, the music of the week, led by brothers Mark Strangman and Bob Thomson, blessed and nourished our hearts in the Lord.

Be sure to make plans to join us for next year's conference should the Lord tarry, June 19-21, 2018, hosted by Heritage Hills Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, NC and Pastor Steve Pittman (www.hhbcwinston.com).

Audio of all the conference messages is available at www.inbna.org.

Islamic Sharia

2017 Conference Resolution

Whereas the holy Scriptures are our only rule of faith and practice, God-breathed, the sixty-six books of our Old and New Testaments, able to make us wise unto salvation and to thoroughly furnish us unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:15-17); and

Whereas sharia is Islamic canonical law based on the Koran and the pronouncements of the prophet Muhammed, for which Muslims claim unalterable infallibility as revealed truth from Allah, which tyrannical regimes throughout the world have used to oppress people who have known nothing of the blessings of the separation of church and state Americans enjoy; and

Whereas sharia's claim to ethical authority is undermined by its many unethical features, including cruel and unusual punishment, such as dismemberment for theft and capital punishment for criticism of the Koran, criticism of Muhammad, criticism of Allah, conversion from Islam to a non-Muslim faith, evangelization of Muslims, and interfaith marriage; and

Whereas this claim is further undermined by its misogyny, including (1) its authorization of the marriage of young girls, the mutilation of female genitalia, polygamy, and marital corporal punishment; (2) its prohibition of equal protection and due process for female rape victims, females who desire a divorce, the rights of mothers in child-custody hearings, women inheritance rights, women jurisprudence rights; and (3) its suppression of simple activities of women normally available to free people, such as holding a personal conversation with men who are not relatives or the freedom to drive a car; and

Whereas these unethical and misogynous features put sharia at odds with many freedoms Americans hold dear, as guaranteed for them in their national Constitution and Bill of Rights, including the First Amendment protections of the freedom of religion and the freedom of speech, equal protection and due process, and protection from cruel and unusual punishment; and

Whereas the rapidly growing expansion of the legal influence of the Muslim religion in our nation has prompted some states, such as Texas, to introduce and pass anti-sharia laws, mandating that our courts use only the laws of our land to adjudicate cases before them; and

Whereas those who are concerned about the incompatibility of sharia and the freedoms Americans hold dear have been accused of "Islamophobia" and hatred against Muslims,

Be it therefore resolved that we, the members of the IBFNA, meeting in Kittery, ME, June 20-22, 2017, determine to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them (Eph. 5:11).

We deny that sharia is from the true God of heaven and choose instead to stand with the Scriptures, earnestly contending for the faith once for all time delivered to the saints, nearly 600 years before Muhammed lived.

As the prophet once understood, when he sent his followers as a small and persecuted minority from Mecca to the tolerant Christian Abyssinia for safe-haven, we who follow Jesus Christ seek to live peaceably with all men (Rom. 12:18).

We are commissioned to make redeemed disciples of Muslims lost in sin and spiritual darkness (Matt. 28:19-20). As U. S. citizens, we are duty-bound to uphold its Constitution and laws (Rom. 13:1-10), and to preserve and defend its freedoms from all forms of tyranny, secular or religious, which freedoms include the right of each Muslim and Baptist to live and worship as free.

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