

# THE INDEPENDENT BAPTIST REVIEW

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Rev. Jack Keep, Editor

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## BAPTIST LEADERSHIP

### FUNDAMENTALIST LEADERSHIP

by Rolland D. McCune, ThD.

With the passing of some of Fundamentalism's acknowledged leaders in the recent decade or two, by retirement or the grave, has come a general decline of comparable leadership to take their places. The more recent generation of Fundamentalists has experienced a sort of vacuum in this regard. Put another way, the later heirs of Fundamentalist leadership have tended to be less forceful and decisive, less militant and less inclined to get very close to controversy. Some have begun to court the New Evangelicalism. Many are anxious to put some distance between themselves and their Fundamentalist predecessors. Others more quietly go off in another direction while still proclaiming that "things haven't changed."

People need "heroes" and ties to the past. For this reason God often reminded Israel of its history and past leaders (e.g. Josh.24). Evidently there were collections of stories and perhaps even ballads to national heroes and events (Num.21:14; Josh.10:13; 2 Sam.1:18). Fundamentalism likewise cannot afford to ignore its history and the contributions made by its leading lights of bygone days. Those Fundamentalists who ignore or deprecate their roots and past leaders do so at great peril. From more than thirty years of observation, such are usually found to blunder their way through bad decision making, waffle on issues when they should be clear and firm, cover their basic disobedience with layers of pietism, and have an inordinate influence on others, particularly the oncoming generation of would-be Fundamentalists.

Liberalism (political and theological) has neutralized the need for heroes and ties to the past. (Read *A World Without Heroes: The Modern Tragedy* by George Roche.) It has put almost total emphasis on the individual and on a homogenized society, and in such a society, as in milk, the cream never rises to the top. Liber-

alism strives for a bland, look alike, cookie cutter world bereft of absolutes and strong personalities. Some of this spirit has trickled into certain corners of Fundamentalism, it appears, bringing with it a general malaise and little desire to run up the flag. SNL's (strong natural leaders) and rugged individualists are frowned upon and often ridiculed.

What does all of this bode for the 1990s and beyond? What should be the strategy for the future in this regard? It must be realized that leaders are both born and made. They must have native abilities and the right kind of training (Biblical, theological, and practical). They also usually emerge by God's providence in circumstances that call for mature wisdom and farsighted ideas, often amid conflict of one sort or another. Note a few suggestions along these lines.

First, one can develop his own gifts and abilities by making the best of what he has. Spurgeon said, "Be fit for your work and you will never be out of it. Do not run about inviting yourselves to preach here and there; be more concerned about your ability than your opportunity, and more earnest about your walk with God than about either." (Lectures To My Students). The Biblical writer put it even better: "Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men" (Prov.22:29).

Second, our schools must develop competent pastors. Pastors are needed who have a theological mind, able to interpret Scripture accurately and to communicate God's message skillfully. This includes the development of administrative and leadership abilities. As a seminary prof of nearly twenty-five years, this writer still recommends a curriculum heavy on content courses. The pressure is on today to weight ministerial preparation in favor of the "practical," i.e. relational, psychological, and caring type courses. Counselling methods and whole programs of that nature

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# EDITORIAL

## Baptist Leadership

An observer's criticism of the IBF was that it does not have strong leadership. He then quoted the well used phrase, "Everything rises or falls on leadership." That made me think of another proverb I used to hear, "Sometimes a knock is a boost." What is a weakness for a central organization may be a strength for it's parts. In this case it is the local churches.

We have heard a good deal in the last decade about the importance of leadership and little about the equality of the brethren. We have learned that leadership in a Baptist organization is so important that not all Baptist pastors are qualified for it. I don't remember reading anything in the New Testament about some brethren being more qualified for leadership above their brethren. I do remember that the disciples quarreled among themselves as to who should be the greatest. I remember also that Jesus said, "he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." (Luke 22:26)

The Lord Jesus Christ also said, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: (Matthew 20:25-27).

Isn't it strange that a council of "leaders" in a Baptist body assumes the authority to censure the pastor of an autonomous church? Where did this authority come from? Where did the authority for such a council come from?

Isn't it strange when the leader of a mission board declares that local churches delegate authority over a church member to the board of the mission? How can an autonomous body delegate authority to another body or person? Where is the authority for such a claim in the New Testament? May I be so impertinent as to ask where the authority for a "Mission Board" is found in the New Testament?

Could it be that our notions about organizations are wrong? Have we made the organizations (which we created in our own wisdom) greater in authority than the churches? May I be so bold as to suggest that the organization of some of our Baptist bodies is more representative of an Episcopal hierarchy than a fellowship of brethren? Think through for yourself the various levels of honor and authority in Baptist organizations. The more organized a body becomes the less informed the local churches are about the inner workings. "Just send money and trust us."

I am not suggesting that the men in leadership positions are not good and godly men. I am saying that Baptist leaders and

Baptist organizations eventually become greater than their creators. They become more important than the local church and its pastor. No Baptist organization should be regarded as superior to any Baptist Church and no Baptist leader should be regarded as superior to the pastor of any Baptist Church.

Paul M. Harrison in Authority and Power in the Free Church, says, "However, when a leader exercises power, which within this analytical framework could be called 'illegitimate authority,' he is controlling the actions of others despite their wishes, or he is controlling them without their knowledge. The latter often occurs in the Baptist situation because the Baptists are unwilling to confer authority upon their leaders and are equally unwilling to recognize that they have attained power apart from authority. Thus they do not possess adequate analytical instruments to discern the existence of 'illegitimate authority.'" (p.67)

Have we become so intoxicated with our notion that "Everything rises or falls on leadership" that we do not see that our "leaders" have gained illegitimate authority?

In The Baptists, the Bible and the Board System, Moser and Scarboro write, "Some of our teachers tell us to pray for leaders. Why pray for what we have? Rather we should pray for grace to follow as God leads. We Baptists need more faith in God and less in 'our wisest and best men'."

Moser says again, "Leadership! How we do need a leader! Brethren Baptists we respectfully rise to place the name of a Great Leader before the churches. He needs no eulogy from us. Allow us to introduce your leader: JESUS CHRIST!"

Some of our readers will see the truth of Moser's remarks when he talks about correcting abuses: "Just take the facts ... and write an article for some of the Baptist "organs" and when they publish it for you let us know; or get up a speech and when you get to say it in a Baptist Convention, Association or Fellowship meeting, tell us about it; you will get a spanking that you will never forget. Did you ever spend a few days in an ecclesiastical refrigerator? ... If you ever get there and run the gauntlet of 'points of order, committees on resolutions and calls for the previous question,' then tell us of your experience". (p.88-89)

"Let an old time Baptist appear on the scene with a Bible and lift a protesting hand or dissenting voice and he is run over, spat on, mobbed, the 'liberty loving and truth dispensing' editors furnishing the rope for the strangling. Let a missionary dare to protest or expose the system and he is impaled and his

missionary carcass exhibited on the walls of the citadel of the Board as a warning to all rebels!" (p.71)

Perhaps it is true that our organization is not founded on great leaders. It is composed of pastors and members of churches that have a **GREAT LEADER!** It may be in time that the IBF will have to be set aside and a new fellowship formed. The IBF exists for fellowship and encouragement in difficult days. Jesus Christ did not commission organizations, agencies and boards. He commissioned local churches and that is where our focus should be.

-Jack Keep

### Fundamentalist Leadership

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tend to smother a curriculum by the force of their own momentum and appeal. People in general, and this includes some Fundamentalist people, want an affirming, warm, and non-demanding type of pastor, one who can give them a little hot tub religion, and schools are more than willing to oblige in order to attract students. Professional degrees and ministry tracks abound. But as enrollment increases, doctrine and convictions tend to disintegrate in those places.

Third, there needs to be a renewed dedication to the work of the ministry. The "ministry" in the New Testament sense is the clear and correct exposition of the Word of God and its application to all of life from the context of the local church.

We must ask, do we really believe in the sufficiency of Scripture and the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit to meet the needs of modern man? Or does Scripture need the help of modern psychology for the total Christian well-being? Do we truly have confidence in the perfect wisdom of God when He designed the institution of the local church?

Fourth, local and national efforts must be continued. Associations of churches and fellowships must be kept strong. Fortunately, some states have a viable Fundamentalist infrastructure and leadership. Enthusiasm for a large national testimony has probably waned among Fundamentalists because of the almost inherent tendency toward compromise and duplicity in leadership. It seems more difficult to generate interest and fervor for large-scale cooperative efforts among Fundamentalists.

Fifth, we can pray to our God and trust His providence to grant us leadership that is farsighted and trustworthy. We can beseech Him to spare us those who would weaken our Fundamentalist movement, the long range effects or wider implications of whose views would create an unwanted shift in direction and our people find it out too late. But in the end, we must have faith to accept God's ultimate will and infinite wisdom. We must genuinely affirm that the Judge of all the earth will surely do right (Gen.18:25), and

sincerely acquiesce in the thought that in the long run we usually get the kind of leadership we deserve.

Dr. McCune is President of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

## LETTERS

We have received a large number of letters about the Review and the Fellowship. The first two issues were sent out to a wide mailing list. We expected to receive a few negative letters and we did. They were very few and in some cases our correspondants simply were uninformed about current trends. Many requests for the paper are from church people who want to be informed. Below are some excerpts from recent letters.

From Missouri: I'm interested in your Independent Baptist Review . . . "

From Michigan: "Please send me the Independent Baptist Review and any other useful information you have."

From California: "Please do not send any more of this inflammatory garbage ..."

From Michigan: "We read the Independent Baptist Review last night and many things disturbed us ... please send us the doctrinal papers and position of the new fellowship."

From Minn.: "... What a blessing it has been to read! How good to see others standing for the whole counsel of God ..."

From South Carolina: "Thank the Lord you had the courage to leave .... I am a member of the FBF right now but I am interested in the IBF."

From Ohio: "I am a pastor with the Ohio Bible Fellowship. ... Let me congratulate you for your courage and insight into the problems of the New Evangelical influence in some \_\_\_ circles ..."

From Pa.: "Just read Independent Baptist Review. Thanks for mailing it to me."

## Correction

The editorial for the March Issue referred to the GARBC National Rep's Impressions column in the November, 1990 Baptist Bulletin. That was in error. It was the October issue in which the National Representative counselled churches to "resist" their pastors and follow the National Representative instead. We are sorry for the error.

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# "UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES"

First Annual Meeting of the Independent Baptist Fellowship

June 17-19, 1991

"... men that had understanding of the times, to know what ... to do..."  
*I Chronicles 12:32*

Crescentville Baptist Church  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Dr. Charles Dear, Pastor

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## HLA IRONSIDE ON COMMUNION WITH GOD

It is as we meditate upon all these precious things that we really enjoy communion with the Father. At one time in my early Christian life, I had an idea that communion consisted in very pious feelings and frames of mind, and in order to have these emotions I would read every devotional book I could find, and would often jot down in my diary my thoughts when I had, what seemed to me, a distinct sense of piety that was very delightful and solemn. In after years I came across this book [Leviticus] and could hardly believe that I had ever had such strange, conceited thoughts and supposed them to be the result of communion with God. I realize now that I thought communion consisted in having God find delight in my pious feelings. But that is not it at all. *Communion with God is when my soul enters into His thoughts concerning His Son.*

- Lectures on the Levitical Offerings

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