

THE REVIEW



Published by the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America

Lancaster Conference—Straight Ahead!

June 18–20, 1996 the IBFNA Annual Conference will be held in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. You will see by the enclosed conference brochure that it will be a very interesting conference. All the rooms at the Quality Inn, the conference site and motel, are reserved; but they will book a room for you at a near-by Holiday Inn for the same special price (\$60.00 per room). These rooms are also filling up fast, so call the Quality Inn immediately at (717) 569-0477. To get the special rate you must tell them that you are attending the IBFNA Conference. A particularly outstanding event will be to hear Dr. John Stormer who will be speaking at our Political Insight Time on Wednesday evening, June 19. His topic will be, "The War Against Our Culture." He will also serve as a panel member for a panel discussion on Thursday morning. Dr. Stormer is an educator, conference speaker, and author. His book *None Dare Call it Treason* has sold over seven million copies—the largest selling political paperback book ever! With the 1996 national elections coming this fall, you won't want to miss this speaker and the panel. (Moderator) ♦

The Future of the Fellowship is in its Leadership

by Jeff Bailey, IBFNA Secretary

1996 will mark a transition in leadership in the IBFNA as the election of new officers will take place in June at the annual conference. It is with this in mind that the executive committee urges you to involve yourself in the nominating process. Soon you will receive a nomination ballot. Each member should then carefully go through the current Membership Directory, take the time to prayerfully consider those whom the Lord would have to serve in our leadership and then send their nominations.

In years past, only a few IBFNA members have been active in nominating men for office. Sometimes those nominated have been reluctant to serve for various reasons. This reticence is a cause for concern because the future of the fellowship is only as strong as those who lead it. If the battles in the GARBC and other fellowships over the years have taught any lesson, surely the need for strong, godly leadership is one of them. Prayerfully consider if the Lord would have us serve in the IBFNA leadership.

When you receive your ballots, write the names of your nominees in the given spaces and return them to the IBFNA Secretary at the address on the ballot by May 15, 1996. Make sure your ballot is signed because only signed ballots will be counted. ♦

The Moderator Mentions

by Dr. L. Duane Brown



Each age and each generation has its crisis. It produces a crossroads for God's people to face and to choose. A short generation ago (I am not too old!), it was the Billy Graham ecumenical evangelism that Bible-believing churches had to face, to explain, to expose, and to resist.

Not that ecumenical evangelism has disappeared; no, but churches have been pretty much polarized for or against the Graham compromise. But looming on the horizon and sneaking into the tent (Jude 4) is a new crisis: Promise Keepers!

This organization combines several insidious heresies into a colorful, exciting, popular movement. It was started by Bill McCartney, former football coach for the University of Colorado, who had a burden for Christian men. He wanted an organization to strengthen them to be better fathers, husbands and leaders. Their rallies have numbered 50,000 or more. Recently in Atlanta, 40,000 clergy attended a rally where "denominationalism" and "racism" were "two demons to be cast out." Putting doctrinal distinctions on the same level as "racism" is terribly wrong. Racism is evil but denominationalism is not.

Like so many well-meaning movements and organizations, such as Gothard Seminars, James Dobson Series and Minirth/Meier Clinics, all have an element of truth and (to give them some credit) do help some of God's people. But generally speaking, these all bring confusion, unspiritual baggage and open doors to heresy. They do not emphasize or even incorporate the local church authority. Frankly, as a pastor, I do not welcome outside influences to what is scripturally my

responsibility. It is always titillating to be in a large setting with colorful speakers and an exciting agenda. It is always delightful to go to an elaborate restaurant; but, home cooking is best as is the local church.

Promise Keepers is certainly dangerous to separated, Baptist, fundamental churches. Their philosophy is broad and inclusive theologically. Speakers include charismatics (Chuck Smith, Jack Hayford), new-evangelicals (Charles Swindoll, Bill Bright), quasi-liberals (Luis Palau, E.V. Hill, Bill Hybels) and evangelicals (Joseph Stowell III).

They also include in their Promise Keeper's "Blood Covenant," Roman Catholics, Mormons, and members of the National Council of Churches. And, Billy Graham sends greetings and endorsements. Actually, this movement came out of the charismatic mentality, as Bill McCartney is a member of a Vineyard church which promotes "signs and wonders and miracles." Any pastor who would take his church men to a Promise Keepers' meeting and expose them to this charismatic, ecumenical, flesh-exalting atmosphere is derelict in his faithfulness to Christ!

Jay Adams gives a personal comment about discernment in his book, *A Call to Discernment*:

I am concerned with the big issue: the careless, indiscriminating mentality...symptoms of the larger problem, which in turn grows out of a mentality that says, "It's fanatical to constantly be at this matter of distinguishing and differentiating: you can't go through life that way."

This is just the point. Pastors and teachers who fail to discern heresy (deviations) from orthodoxy or are

continued, page nine

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The REVIEW is the only official publication of the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America. It is written to review current events, to educate readers about the issues facing today's fundamental Bible-believers and to promote the independent Baptist position. Published four times a year, subscriptions are \$5.00 for non-IBFNA members. Subscriptions are automatic with IBFNA membership. For more information, write or call:

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The GARBC Here and Now



by Dr. Kevin T. Bauder, Dallas, Texas
Editor of *RUMINATIONS*

A first truth of the RUMINATIONS philosophy is that one need not agree with another's opinions in order to profit from discussing them. Thus, the requirements for getting published here are pretty simple: (1) write about something that matters, (2) write with the passion of conviction, and (3) make sense. Agreement with the views of the editor is never a requirement. Friends rarely sharpen one another by repeating those matters on which they agree. Thoughtful disagreement is a precious gift indeed.

It is gratifying to see this element of our philosophy reflected in a recent *Baptist Bulletin* exchange between Harold Constant and John Tock. Pastor Constant's essay in the November issue offers an official acknowledgment of a fact that some of us have suspected for a long while. The GARBC is changing. There is a new and vigorous element among the regular Baptist constituency, a "progressive" element (to use Constant's term), an element that represents contemporary (as opposed to traditional) Christianity. Conflict between this new element and the former mainstream of the GARBC is evidenced in differences over "methods of evangelism, worship styles, dress, Bible versions, music,

entertainment, secondary separation and agencies." Doctrinal integrity is now taken for granted and there is increasing openness to change in "nondoctrinal" matters.

The fact that Pastor Constant can publish such observations in the official organ of the GARBC is itself evidence of how far the change has gone. Only six years ago, people who dared to suggest that the GARBC was "drifting" were handed some pretty rough treatment. They were assured that the home office, the national representative, the editor of the *Baptist Bulletin*, the director of GLS, the agencies and the churches all stood just where the GARBC had always stood. They were given to believe that the only thing wrong with the GARBC was a small group of radicals on the Right who wanted to get their hands on the wheel and steer the whole denomination towards Greenville. One pastor was even censured publicly for listing the names of potential Council of Eighteen members who he thought would uphold the historic (or, to use Constant's word, "traditional") position of the regular Baptist movement. I think that if I were a backer of the now-defunct Regular Baptists for Revival, I would feel some measure of vindication. Constant officially confirms just

about everything those men were saying.

Still, I don't think that Constant has the diagnosis *quite* correct, for three reasons. First, not every issue he names is really a point of division between progressives and traditionalists. Second, he misses a couple of really big issues. Third, some of the questions that he thinks regular Baptists agree about are actually quite controversial.

First, Pastor Constant lists Bible versions as a divisive issue among regular Baptists. He is correct that some regular Baptists have argued about this, but it is not one of the issues dividing the "progressives" from the "traditionalists." Only a tiny fraction of traditionalists argue for the exclusive use of the KJV or the TR. While they can be rather noisy, they are not taken seriously even by other traditionalists.

Second, Pastor Constant is mistaken when he says that no doctrinal issues are at stake. The number and function of the elder is a doctrinal issue which is being debated, more or less between the progressives and traditionalists. The growth of progressive dispensationalism has led to the abandonment of a muscular pre-tribulationism among some. This is also a doctrinal issue, and again it is

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one that follows the progressive-traditionalist lines.

Third, pastor Constant is a bit naïf to think that the GARBC has never debated issues such as alcohol consumption or the ordination of women. One of my siblings was taught in an approved college that social drinking was morally acceptable. Another sibling served on a mission field under an approved agency, one of whose missionaries regularly drank beer (but only outside of the United States). Perhaps Pastor Constant has not seen the “Reaffirmation and Clarification of Belief” prepared by the national representative elect of the GARBC last summer. That statement acknowledged that some in “our churches” take a “discretionary approach” to practices such as “television viewing, music, dance, *alcohol*, theater attendance, video choice, etc.” (emphasis added).

On the question of the role of women, the position of the GARBC is shifting. The association passed resolutions dealing with this subject in 1974, 1975, 1976, 1978 and 1984. Those resolutions, all of which passed unanimously, opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, condemned the notion that women could be ordained or serve as deacons, warned women against masculine dress and habits, declared that women are to be subordinate to male authority in church and home, and reaffirmed that “God

has committed to men the important responsibility of leadership and authority in the church and in the home.” These resolutions could not pass unanimously today. During the 1989 school year, members of the Cedarville College faculty identified themselves as feminists in a college honors chapel and expressed their (belated) support for the Equal Rights Amendment. When the GARBC adopted a resolution on “Male-Only Preachers” in 1994, it expressed itself only by way of “general consensus and belief.” The resolution never actually dealt with female preachers, mentioning only the offices of pastor and deacon. Even this was too much for some regular Baptists. In posts on “Pastor’s Forum,” an Internet discussion group, David Turner of Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary complained about the resolution’s “hyperbolic language and lack of exegetical sophistication.” He stated that, while the Bible does not provide a clear pattern to be followed in every instance, he personally favored allowing women to exercise their gifts as deacons, education staff or pastoral staff members, as long as they were not permitted to become senior pastors. He also wrote that some GARBC women of his acquaintance found the resolution “patronizing.”

In view of all this, I think that Pastor Constant might have said more about the depth and extent of

the drift than he did. Still, I tend to agree with the general parameters of his diagnosis. While he seems unaware of some issues, he has at least captured the spirit of the controversy. He instinctively chooses descriptive terms which carry profound implications. Those terms—*progressive*—and *traditional*—conceal as much as they reveal. They are significant for what they say without saying it. Both of these terms are close synonyms for words which are much more familiar to regular Baptists. *Traditional* is another word for *conservative*, and *progressive* is another word for *liberal*. If Pastor Constant is right, we have reached the point at which we must speak of the conservative and liberal wings of the GARBC.

I am not surprised that Pastor Constant chose to avoid the familiar terms. After all, only a few years ago a prominent denominational official lambasted those who implied that there was liberalism in the GARBC. He was the same official who repeatedly assured us that there was absolutely no politics in the regular Baptist movement. Now that we have lived past the day in which such fictions were possible, I would like to suggest that the terms *liberal* and *conservative* precisely describe the division within the GARBC. In the interest of accuracy we ought to use those exact words.

PERSPECTIVES

Pay And Then Pray

The Roman Catholic Church has never suffered from a lack of schemes to raise money, including in past times the sale of indulgences. Now a new plan has arisen with the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco in New Jersey. For \$100.00 per year, anyone can “adopt” one of the 145 nuns. In return for this donation, a sister will pray for them and for all their special requests. She will do this for an entire year.

So far this plan has raised \$275,000 for these sisters! One man sends in \$1,000 a month to secure the prayers of at least 10 nuns. A medical doctor sent in \$6,500, so that 65 would pray for him. Not only Roman Catholics have sent in \$100 but also a Buddhist woman and five Jewish families have signed up too.

Are we grateful we don't have to “pay” before enjoying the blessings of answered prayer? We need no earthly priest (or nun) to be our intercessor for there is one who “ever liveth to make intercession for us” (Hebrews 7:25).

Not Just A Dance—A Sacred Dance

When God's people gather in a Bible-believing church on the Lord's Day, it is for worship, preaching and teaching of God's Word, praise and prayer. In sharp contrast something took place recently at the Concord Liberty Presbyterian Church, Concord, Pa. This church began its Lenten program using Valerie Henry in a Sunday performance of “sacred dance.” The news item added, “Her performance is suitable for a non-denominational audience.”

It is a reality that when you get away from the preaching and teaching of God's Word anything can be used—even “sacred dancing.”

A Historic Ecumenical Meeting

It was possibly the largest gathering of clergy in the church's history. Nearly 40,000 ministers attended Promise Keepers Clergy Conference for men in Atlanta, Ga., February 13–15, 1996. Every denomina-

tion was represented, including the Roman Catholic Church.

The underlying message at this conference was, “Unity is based on our love of Jesus.” This ignores God's Word that teaches our unity is based on biblical truth. Many profess to “love Jesus” yet they continue to walk in direct disobedience to God's Word.

Promise Keepers is an ecumenical, charismatic and compromising program. Forty thousand clergy in Atlanta were given large doses of error from Promise Keepers' platform.

While this reporter has covered, with press credentials, dozens of religious meetings around the world, he has never seen so many clergy men who were worked up into a frenzy. They hugged one another, pronounced blessings on one another and departed with a determination to begin prayer meetings, union services, etc., involving all kinds of churches.

The two “demons” of denominationalism and racism were dealt with because Promise Keepers' leaders said these two things keep God from blessing the church.

(A complete first-hand report of Promise Keepers' Clergy Conference is available by writing to Dr. Colas at the American Council of Christian Churches.) ♦

PERSPECTIVES

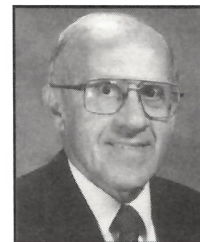
is written by

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Of course, it will be objected that the liberalism in the GARBC is not the same thing as the modernism which invaded American Christianity during the late 19th Century. As Pastor Constant argues, the controversy today is over practical values, not doctrinal values. But John Tock offers a necessary corrective: “Everything we do is connected intrinsically with what we believe.” Readers of *RUMINATIONS* have heard this theme before. Nothing is less relevant than a trendy church. A church that has to yield to every breeze of contemporaneity is confessing that it has nothing enduring to say.

But the problem is even deeper than that. Pastor Tock attempts to slip between the horns of the dilemma by suggesting that we abandon the debate between progressive and traditional, and simply adopt the Bible as our standard. This would be nice if it were possible, but it is not. Our culture or our tradition (which is our culture viewed diachronically) is what gives us the context within which the meaning of scriptural statements becomes apparent. For instance, a person whose understanding of sacrifice has been shaped by Mayan worship will not grasp the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ until his categories have been reshaped. A person who approaches the Scriptures from the wrong tradition will not understand

its teachings—indeed, he will debase them, as one sees in the “Christian” bumper sticker that says, “Grace Happens.” This brings up another recurring *RUMINATIONS* theme: those who debase the truth do worse damage than those who deny it. Those who degrade Christian sensibilities hurt us more than those who dispute Christian teaching. If our fathers were alarmed by the intrusion of doctrinal liberalism a century ago, we should be even more concerned about the invasion of practical liberalism today.

It is here, where we pass from diagnosis to prescription, that I begin to disagree with Pastor Constant. The solution to this controversy is not simply to be tolerant of those who are different. We ought to be intolerant of some kinds of differences, just as our fathers were intolerant of certain theological denials. It is not a question of Christian liberty. No Christian has liberty to debase the truth. It is not a question of whether someone agrees with my opinion. It is a question of whether each of us agrees with the truth. And some issues that Pastor Constant names (worship styles, dress, music, entertainment) clearly involve truth questions.

Thus the appeal for unity strikes me as singularly inappropriate. Why would I wish to unite with error? Why would I wish to fellowship with falsehood? If I love my

brothers, won't I try to guard them from untruth in these matters? Pastor Constant might properly have appealed to Christian forbearance in giving our brethren time to learn the truth, but that is not what he asks. His prescription calls for a permanent, almost Hegelian state of tension between truth and error in which those who hold the truth will be asked to tolerate more and more error. He says, “Our doctrinal standard will not change,” but if the understanding one's doctrinal standard has been debased through false practice, then the standard has *already* changed.

Fellowship is always based upon what we hold in common. Unity is a function of that around which we unite. Pastor Constant gives us a whole essay in which he admits that regular Baptists have less in common than they once did, yet he seems to think that their fellowship and unity can remain unimpaired. He blames those with “intolerant attitudes” for destroying the “fiber that holds and bonds us together.” But isn't the whole essay an admission that the fiber has already snapped? The GARBC was not built on a doctrinal statement. It was built upon a shared ethos. Many who could subscribe to the Association's confession of faith were nonetheless repelled by its ethos: one thinks of the refusal of the CBA to unite with the GARBC during the late 1940's and early

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1950's. But it is precisely that historical ethos which has been rejected during the last two decades. If liberals have rejected the very thing that produced unity, then the conservatives can hardly be blamed for the resulting discord.

Pastor Constant is neither a progressive nor a traditionalist, neither a liberal nor a conservative. He professes sympathy for conservative practices, but he doesn't want to be intolerant toward liberals. Indeed, Pastor Constant holds a position that looks rather like post-modernism. He treats the issues as if they were not questions of truth, but merely differences of taste and background. He wishes to find a way to unity, but only two legitimate roads to unity exist. The conservatives might win the liberals to their point of view. Barring that, the conservatives might jettison the liberals from the denomination. Neither of these seems likely.

All of this poses a practical question. Constant writes as a pastor who sees how the denominational conflict threatens his own congregation. When a church is tied to a group, whatever is in the group will eventually turn up in the church. Has anyone asked whether the benefits of association are worth this price?

In fact, Constant's essay raises a whole series of important questions, reasonable questions that

deserve reasonable answers. Thus, I put these questions to Pastor Constant or to any interested party who may care to answer them.

First, since a progressive is supposed to be pressing toward something, what is the *télos* towards which the GARBC progressives are moving? Constant gives us some sense of the direction they are taking, but no clue as to how far they want to go. The words of people like Dr. Turner lead us to believe it might be much further than we would have guessed. What, exactly, is the progressives' agenda, and why should we find it persuasive?

Second, just who are these progressives, anyway? Pastor Constant admits that they are in the GARBC and pleads for us to tolerate their ideas. But what are their names? Which institutions do they control? How well represented are they on the Council of 18 or in the Schaumburg office? Why have they not openly declared themselves before now?

Third, to tolerate progressive ideas and practices requires one to abandon one's commitment to

conserving one's heritage. Which aspects of the regular Baptist heritage should conservatives stand ready to jettison? Why should we think that we can get along without those aspects? Why were we wrong to have clung to our fathers' teaching at those points?

Finally, why would a convinced conservative want to lead a church towards the GARBC today? If his conservative principles are a matter of conviction and not convenience, if he believes that the Faith is at stake, if he is prepared strenuously to oppose liberalism in all its forms, then why should he feel that he would even be welcome? What would lead him to believe that he would not be viewed as "intolerant and reactionary" the moment he voiced his convictions? I intend these as serious questions, and not as rhetorical flourishes. I shall welcome a thoughtful answer. ♦

**All scripture is given...that the man of God may be perfect,
thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

II Timothy 3:16a,17



reluctant to speak out on issues when they arise, open the door to future crises. I remember attending my first GARBC annual conference in 1960 when Dr. Bob Ketcham told all of us that if we pastors did not expose the compromise of Billy Graham (just starting) thinking it would never affect our local situation, we were deceiving ourselves. Eventually, he said every area would be faced with it and if we did not begin then to teach the truth and expose its error, we would find ourselves in a crisis resulting in casualties.

The fact is, your church and mine will be, and are now, subtly and secretly being invested with heresies from radio, television, periodicals, friendships, etc. I doubt that there is any Bible-believing church today which is free from the infection of corruption from this interdenominational, ecumenical, new-evangelical, charismatic Promise Keepers or similar organizations.

It is not pleasant or popular to expose heresy and to criticize corruption. But we are admonished to do the following:

“Try (test) the spirits” (I John 4:1)

“Earnestly contend (agonize) for the faith” (Jude 3)

“Mark (put your eye on) those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine” (Romans 16:17)

“Watch thou in all things” (II Timothy 4:5)

“From such withdraw thyself” (I Timothy 6:5)

“From such turn away” (II Timothy 3:5)

“Both to exhort and convince (refute) the gainsayers” (Titus 1:9)

It is commendable to resist participation in Promise Keepers, but we are instructed to also expose the works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11). Let us be about the Master’s business! Let us “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). May the Lord give us not only a discerning

mind but a strong heart! Years ago I read this statement from Martin Luther’s pen regarding the necessity of discernment on current crises:

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the Devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, then the loyalty of the soldier is proved. To be steady on all the battlefields besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point. ♦

Report on Regional Meetings

The Florida and South Carolina meetings began to reach the southeast for the IBFNA.

Thanks to Rev. Ralph Weer and Mr. Stan Bieselin for hosting them.

Future regional meetings:

Ankeny, Iowa, on April 22

Contact Mr. David Norris, at (515) 232-1054 for details.

Central Baptist Church, Hobart, Indiana, on April 22 and 23

Contact Dr. Clay Nuttall at (219) 759-2557 for details.

IBFNA Annual Conference

June 18-20, 1996

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Ken Brown, Ulster, Pa.

Dan Cleghorn, Bremerton, Wash.

Tom Hamilton, N. Wildwood, N.J.

Jack Keep, Dale City, Va.

Jim Munro, Clearwater, Fla.

Clay Nuttall, Hobart, Ind.

Jim Singleton, Temple, Ariz.

Ralph Weer, Ft. Myers, Fla.

Mike Windsor, Virginia Beach, Va.

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Allen Griffith, Cleveland, Ga.

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