



IBFNA

February 2025

Volume 33, Number 3

THE REVIEW

“Who is in Control?”

By Vic Perry, Moderator IBFNA

We hear and talk about doing the will of God, but the reality of its being done by His own is usually much different.

The young man was approached by some young deacons interested in making sure the pastoral vacancy between pastors would be short. The church had no constitution, though it had been in existence for several decades. Prior to the deacons approaching the young man, a committee had been formed to address the need for a constitution for the church. The committee completed its work and was ready to present it for church approval, which so happened also to be the first day the young man would be at the church. The young man met with the deacons and the committee the evening before either consideration took place.

The young man looked over the proposed constitution and demanded major changes before he would even consider the pastoral vacancy, even though the constitution would be presented the next day, along with the young man. The committee opposed the changes the young man demanded, but the deacons, anxious to have a pastor, accepted the demanded changes, which were then presented to a bewildered church family. Both the constitution with the demanded changes and the young man were accepted by a narrow vote the next day.

No background checks or other inquiries were made by the deacons, and the young man, now the pastor also became the CEO and the treasurer of the church because of the demanded constitutional changes. He could (and did) “hire and fire” officers and committee persons to his liking. This young pastor also had an app on his phone which gave him all the giving details of those left in the congregation. Within weeks, all the older members were gone from the church, leaving basically only new recruits the pastor had brought in. This young pastor is not a pastoral spiritual leader in the Biblical sense, but rather a micromanager controlling a church.

God does not expect His workers to be in control in the sense of micromanaging everything. We need to believe God and trust that His promises will fully come to pass, even though we do not know how He will fulfil them. It may not happen on our timetable, and maybe not even in our lifetime. Two women in Scripture come to mind: Sarah and Hannah.



INSIDE PAGES

2 A BOOK
ABOUT SCHISM

6 ELECTION
SERMON

7 2025
CONFERENCE

Membership &
Subscription:
IBFNA

523 E. Godfrey
Ave.

Philadelphia, PA
19120-2123

(475) 329-0585
www.ibfna.org

Sarah was a micromanager who wanted and tried to be in control. After she was past the normal child-bearing age, God promised her a son. As a result, Sarah laughed, doubted, and then took control. Maybe we, like Sarah, too often attempt to help God out with the fulfillment of His promises. Sarah gave Hagar to Abram to father a child. What a mess Sarah made with her micromanaging of the personal details in her life, instead of trusting God, who does what He says He will do. God does the supernatural and impossible, as He did for Sarah.

Hannah, on the other hand, believed God would give her a child, and she trusted Him to fulfill that promise. Instead of micromanaging the details, Hannah prayed for her child, and when God answered and gave her Samuel, she gave him back to the Lord to serve Him.

In our lives, who is in charge? Are we like Sarah, whose troubling choice is still troubling the world today, or like Hannah, who believed God and waited for Him to answer? Is the Lord in charge of our lives?

Some Thoughts on a Book about Schism

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

I recently finished reading Brother Chris Anderson's book, *The Scandal of Schism: A Journey from Sinful Division to Biblical Fidelity* (North Haven, CT: Church Works Media, 2024). The book is endorsed by a former professor of mine, Michael Barrett, along with other godly brothers, a few with whom I am personally acquainted and others with whom I am not: Sam Horn, Conrad Mwebe, Phil Hunt, Andrew Bunnell, Tim Keese, Mark Ward, and Carey Schmidt. Brother Anderson serves the Lord as the President of Church Works Media.

That I am someone who fits the theological demographic of President Anderson's target audience became quickly apparent: "I'm writing to those in or from a Christian fundamentalist setting, urging you to retain the best elements of that movement while jettisoning unbiblical extremes" (9-10). The author has prayed that his book "will be a help to Christ's church and to fellow Christians – not a lightning rod or a stumbling block" (9). I am a member of Christ's church, a fellow Christian, both from and in a fundamentalist setting, so this urging is for me.

While the author hopes his book will not be hit by a lightning strike, I learned about the book from a friend of mine who must feel that he has

been hit by it in this way. I start here in my thoughts about the book, only because that is where my experience with it started. I learned about the book from David Beale, who has authored a review of the book. Professionally, David Beale is a gifted church historian and scholarly author. Personally, he is a friend and past mentor. I had the privilege of learning how to serve the Lord at Bob Jones Seminary under his wise instruction. President Anderson had that opportunity as well.

The Scandal's citation of Dr. Beale's book, *SBC House on the Sand?* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University, 1985), in footnote 70 on page 73, is the lightning strike I am referring to. President Anderson believes that conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention were "maligned" instead of "prayed for" and "encouraged." His footnote accuses Dr. Beale of being an example of this failure. Knowing the prayer life of David Beale as I have, I find it surprising that the author has somehow discovered this lack of prayer in my friend's life dating back to 1985. More to the point, *SBC House on the Sand?* "maligned" no one.

To malign has three definitions in the *American Heritage Dictionary*: (1) "to make evil, harm-

ful, and often untrue statements about (someone)”; (2) “to treat with malice; to show hatred toward; to abuse; to wrong; to injure”; and (3) “to speak great evil of; to traduce; to defame; to slander; to vilify; to asperse.”

Again, Dr. Beale’s carefully documented treatise about the danger of disobedient compromise in the SBC maligned no one. The footnote confidently concludes: “the call for conservatives to leave the SBC would have precluded the successful conservative resurgence which began in 1979 and purged SBC seminaries of liberalism.” Certainly, history shows that David Beale’s call did not preclude any move to the right. In fact, eternity may show that our brother’s careful research became a great tool for some in their fight against error.

Dr. Beale recounts some of that history in his review:

On June 10, 1985, I went to Dallas with boxes of my book, *S.B.C. House on the Sand?* (1985). W. A. Criswell, Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, had arranged for Judge Paul Pressler and me to conduct a one-hour debate on the topic, “Believers staying or leaving liberal SBC churches, or believers cutting off fellowship from those believers remaining in SBC churches, etc.”

The next few days, June 11-13, 1985, marked the largest annual SBC Convention in Baptist history, which occurred at the Dallas Convention Center in Texas. They drew over 45,000 messengers. Nearby, Barnes and Noble placed boxes of *S.B.C. House on the Sand?* on their sidewalk tables.

What happened here, it seems to me, is that a gifted brother used his talents to be a blessing to other brothers in the Great Commission responsibility of disciple-making. Dr. Beale was called and gifted by the Lord to educate pastors and pastors-in-training, and he did his best to do so

for Southern Baptist pastors at a critical juncture of their denomination’s history.

President Anderson’s subtitle indicates that a good deal of the book focuses on his personal experience as a young pastor with separatist convictions and the men who hold them. Because the path of his journey coincided to mine very closely, there were other “lightning strikes” I experienced while reading this part of the book. His was “a journey from sinful division to biblical fidelity.” Walking pretty much the identical road, mine feels more like “a journey from biblical fidelity to more biblical fidelity.”

What many will find self-deprecating and even entertaining about our brother’s journey, I found sad and difficult to understand at times. I wonder how the author could have missed the blessed multid denominational fellowship of the American Council of Christian Churches along the way, for instance. And there was a page that mentioned George Floyd that made me want to suggest to him the film, “The Fall of Minneapolis” (available for free on YouTube). That said, in what follows I want to step back from these personal differences to address some theological concerns I have with the book’s teachings about schism.

First, I am concerned that the author is wrong when he claims that “fight” must take priority over “flight”: “Contrary to what I’ve generally heard from fundamentalists, the Bible’s command when confronted with error is not necessarily to separate from it—it is to *fight* it. First *fight*, then *flight*—but only if the effort to purge impurities from within is unsuccessful” (72; emphasis his). President Anderson concludes this from Jude 3, where Jude commands believers “to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” This is the theology underlying the lightning strike against Dr. Beale’s effort in *SBC House on the Sand?*.

I believe this conclusion is misguided for a couple of reasons. First, Jude had no concept of what President Anderson means by “fight within.” Jude asks that believers contend. I believe he

would have been fine with contending from “without.” In fact, the kind of fight that Jude calls for as we read the rest of his Epistle is not a political maneuvering to secure votes and denominational institutional power, while keeping enough peace with the enemy to maintain financial ties and ministry influence, but rather it is the kind of declarations about the nature of false teachers and their teaching that Dr. Beale provided in his *SBC House on the Sand?*.

To claim, “the Bible’s command when confronted with error is not necessarily to separate from it,” seems irreconcilable with the Apostle Paul’s command to “touch not the unclean thing” (2 Cor. 6:17) and the Apostle John’s prescription, “neither bid him Godspeed” (2 John 10). The “not necessary to separate yet” approach is doomed to fail, because in the end disobedience is simply that, whatever good outcomes we accomplish from it.

Second, I am concerned that President Anderson’s advocacy of the sufficiency of Scripture is incongruent with his toleration of continuationism. Incongruence is not unusual in the world of compromise. President Anderson provides a well-articulated contrast between the obedience of Charles Spurgeon and the disobedience of Billy Graham, but he also repeatedly lauds the Southern Baptist Seminary President, R. Albert Mohler, who still trains his students at The Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry. And chance we might change the name?

But back to the issue at hand. President Anderson rightly avers: “We’re committed not only to the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture . . . but also to the *sufficiency* of Scripture. The doctrinal statements of the churches I’ve pastored use language like this: ‘We believe that the Bible is our only rule of faith and practice’” (56; emphasis his). And yet, the book lacks an explanation of how a closed canon reconciles with the personal reception of continuing revelation. I agree, “The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is not one we can surrender, even

unintentionally, without drastic consequences” (56), but I do not understand how we can call on Bob Kauflin, whose doctrinal position indicates that he receives other special revelations, to help us in this cause.

The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthian church, caught up in their unauthored-by-God-special-revelation-confusion (1 Cor. 14:33), not only about the false gospel of false teachers, but also about their false Jesus and their false spirit (2 Cor. 11:4). It is that last category that concerns me about the charismatic compromise on sola scriptura. The Apostle John, prior to the close of the scriptural canon, warned against believing the spirits of false prophets (1 John 4:1). Certainly, if we are to be unified against false teaching, we need agreement on what constitutes special revelation and what does not.

I do not think the author has worked this out for his readers. He expects us to simply accept that there is nothing to be concerned about here: “Examples of mid-level doctrines include baptism, church polity, cessationism vs. continuationism, complementarianism vs. egalitarianism, and dispensationalism vs. covenant theology” (159). At least two of these need to come off the “mid-level” list before I can enjoy unified fellowship while overlooking a disagreement with a brother, and cessationism vs. continuationism is the first of the two. Strange fire is strange, and it is a danger to God’s people, for whom the Scriptures are indeed sufficient.

Finally, there is that troubling chapter on music, “Worship Is Not a War.” Someday, that will be true. But for the church militant, nothing is “not a war.” While I agree that believers must worship together instead of war against each other, this is not to say that music styles are not an important part of our battle against our common enemy. If I agree that “worship is not a war,” I disagree that “music is not a war.” This seems to be the actual point President Anderson tries to defend in the chapter.

He points to the sound of war that came from the music of the golden calf incident (Exod.

32:17-20), claiming that it is an example of the way he used to twist the Bible to support his fundamentalist music standards. The author suggests that finding a problem here is like saying that Aaron invented rock music 3,400 years prior to Elvis. He concludes: "You don't know what the music sounded like [except loud war, of course]. And you could just as easily argue against Christians owning gold because gold was used to make the idols. It's all surmising" (129). If the author is correct, then there is no such thing as recognizably evil music, because we have no sample musical scores in our Bibles.

The comparison to gold is misplaced. I would never argue that there is an evil form of gold. It is all good stuff, no matter who uses it or for what purposes. It is the idol, not the gold, that was the problem in Exodus (Matt. 23:17).

But the assumption in the above statement that the same is true for different genres of music is surprising to me, because I have some exposure to President Anderson's keen musical gifts. Our theology of beauty can do better than this. Simply put, just as God is sovereign in the areas of absolute truth and absolute morality, so is He also sovereign in the area of absolute beauty. For this reason, Paul counsels believers to think on "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest [absolute truth], whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure [absolute morality], whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report [absolute beauty]; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). Some of the world's music styles are not lovely, nor are they of good report among well-informed, mature believers. Let's not use those.

We see the same counsel from the Prophet Isaiah: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil [absolute morality]; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness [absolute truth]; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter [absolute beauty]" (Isa. 5:20). Some of the music styles the world calls sweet are in truth bitter.

Both Isaiah and Paul are referring to an important war for God-designed reality that must resist our enemy's Romantic perversions. To believe that the enemy has failed to attack audible beauty in a corrupting way is to lack good battle awareness. When Paul instructs us to not be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2), we must include our music standards to obey him. Christ and Belial do not sound good together (2 Cor. 6:15), and so we must recognize the difference between these sounds if we are to "with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:6). One day we will all do this together in total agreement in our Savior's presence. Can't wait!

In the meantime, President Anderson directs us to the Psalms for guidance on music in worship: "why don't we instead use the book of the Bible that explicitly addresses worship music – the Psalms" (130). His point is that we find a form of dancing, clapping, shouting, raising hands, and percussion instrumentation in the Psalms, so the electronically powered rhythms of today's rock-n-roll worship teams should not be a problem for us. Still, I think that even David would have been shocked into stopping his dancing before the ark of God if he suddenly saw Amy Grant's music video, "Baby, Baby." There is a difference here, and that difference is on a spectrum between black and white with lots of shade of gray. But still, there are forms of dance and percussion that are not rock-n-roll.

I do think the author's suggestion to learn from the Psalms is a good one, but I would approach the project a bit differently. How about we only use musical genres that can be used to compile a complete Psalter? In other words, let's all sing only those musical styles to which all the words of the Psalms can fit. Of course, psalters utilizing the sounds of classical hymnody have flourished throughout the church's history. Those musical styles have worked great. As someone who sings the Psalms every week with my local church, however, I am pretty sure that a complete rock-n-roll psalter will never catch on, if it is even possible.

Schism in the church of Jesus Christ is an unfortunate reality in our fallen world. If Paul and Barnabas had some trouble (Acts 15:36-41), we might expect to as well. Thankfully, the damaging legacy of Billy Graham's disobedience becomes a more distant and less influential tragedy of American church history with each passing day. Nevertheless, biblical separation is still biblical, not schismatic, and the divide that we are dealing with today will need genuine and widespread repentance over the repudiation of separation within the Graham tradition in addition to the correction offered us fallible fundamentalists in *The Scandal of Schism*.

Perhaps our gifted brother will put his pen to paper again on a companion volume. Might I suggest the title, *The Scandal of Schism Book 2*. This time, the introduction should read, "I'm writing to those in or from a Christian new evangelical setting, urging you to retain the best elements of that movement while jettisoning unbiblical compromise." President Anderson has much in this book already that would profit that side of the divide as well.

In conclusion, one verse escaped this book's thoroughly biblical treatment of the doctrine of schism. It is one in which the word is translated

heresies, but it refers to schismatic division among believers with some encouragement to us as we continue to grow out of ours. Paul says, "For there must also be heresies [schisms] among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. 11:19).

The Lord has allowed the schism of fundamentalism vs. new evangelicalism to prove us and to approve us. It is not a new schism, but the one Micaiah and Jehoshaphat dealt with in their day. Neutralism in the battle for truth has always been a challenge for God's people, and it always will be during this age. It is through these challenges that our commitment to make disciples of one another is put to the test. Let's continue to work on these divisions with a disciple-maker's passion for the unity of love in truth and for the defense and confirmation of the gospel through obedient separation.

And may we remember that the journey that every believer is on shall soon bring us all safely to that end. Jesus's prayer, "that they may be one, even as we are one," will have its answer, for we shall be perfectly sanctified in the truth—God's Word is truth (John 17:11, 17). It is just a matter of time, Brothers.

An Election Sermon

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

William Frederick Rowland was a 1781 graduate from Dartmouth. At the age of 29, he became the pastor of the First Church in Exeter. It was there that, on June 2, 1796, Rowland preached an election sermon to a gathering that included New Hampshire's Governor John Gilman, the General Council, the Senate, and the members of the House of Representatives. In response to the message, the state legislature voted to "return him thanks" for "his ingenious discourse" and asked him for a transcript, which they had published in the press.

Rowland's text that day was 2 Samuel 23:3-4, "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me: 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.'"

King David goes on to say in that passage that he had fallen short of this goal, but that God had graciously promised him a descendant who would rule this way. Christmas celebrates the

birth of this one, born in the city of David, Bethlehem.

Rowland explained the purpose of the June 2nd gathering: "It is both pertinent and laudable, and must be considered so by all good men, to enter on the public business of legislation, by the presentment of the rulers and officers of government before the Lord in His sacred courts, to hear the words of His law, and to supplicate His presence and aid."

Rowland reminded state officials from where their authority came: "It is the will of God that government should exist among men. . . . Their power, it is true, they derive from the people." He reminded them of the purpose of their authority: "That form [of government] is best, which most effectually secures their rights and rational liberties." And he called for his fellow citizens to respect that authority: "when they [the people] have invested them [their govern-

ment] with authority, they should pay due submission to and place confidence in them."

Rowland spoke of the qualifications of a good ruler: "The word of God teaches the necessary qualifications of a good ruler. To this he will look for instruction in his duty. . . . It teaches him to reverence God as the Supreme Ruler of nations, his dependence on Him for light and direction, and his accountableness to Him for all his actions. . . . The good ruler will therefore engage in public life, not to gratify his own ambition, consult his own ease, or obtain the applause of men; but from a sense of duty."

Perhaps most importantly, Rowland preached the gospel of salvation: "It humbles the pride of the human heart, teaches that salvation is only through the grace that is in Jesus, and lays prostrate the hope of man from any distinguished merit in himself."

New Hampshire has changed. These truths have not.



**Join us for our
2025 Annual Family Conference
June 17-19
"God's Grace"
Titus 2:11-14
Ebenezer Baptist Church
Bethesda, OH**

Hotel information: Days Inn, Belmont/Morristown, OH - \$65/night

Philadelphia, PA 19120-2123
523 E. Godfrey Avenue
Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America



www.ibfna.org



www.facebook.com/ibfna



Independent Baptist
Fellowship of North
America

A UNIQUE FELLOWSHIP

Standing Strong for the Faith Once Delivered!