



IBFNA

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THE REVIEW

The Hothouse Church

by Pastor Charles Dear, Moderator *IBFNA*

When just showing up isn't enough!

As separatists we continue to wage warfare against the compromises of our times, whether they are in contemporary forms of music, lower moral standards, or superficial preaching. The question we must answer, however, is "How have the times in which we live changed our own ministries as we claim the high ground of faithfulness to the word of God?" What accommodations have we found acceptable, short of those that have sold out the truth of the gospel and the ultimate authority of God's word?

A brief review of appropriate scripture is in order. Eph. 4:11-12 summarizes well the principles by which our churches are to function: "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

First, the passage emphasizes that this is God's design ("*He* gave"). It is a God-given plan for the instructional ministries of local churches so that they would not be subjected to the whims of men, to cultural modifications, nor to political correctness. This alone should hinder any temptation to change from His design, either in content or method, or to presume upon His blessing and approval of our self-willed efforts. It is arrogance to expect His blessing, when we have followed our own will, rather than His.

Second, Paul writes that the foundation of the inspired scriptures was given through a limited number of men and over a limited period of time (Eph. 2:20). Only these prophets qualify, beginning with the Old Testament and ending with the apostles of Jesus Christ of the first century. There are no twenty-first century apostles that meet New Testament criteria for pronouncing new revelations from heaven, and the prophetic office is now limited to the forth-telling of what has already been included in the canon of scripture. Therefore, the writings of men, no matter how highly respected or how popular in the marketplace of religious literature, must all be evaluated according to their consistency with holy scripture, and their honest, humble deference to its absolute and final authority. Otherwise, we diminish the value of inspiration in comparison with our esteem for the wisdom of mere men.

The ministries of Eph. 4:11 that continue into the present are those of shepherding God's flock in the local assembly of the believers and teaching the established whole counsel of the word of God to every person. While the Great Commission could be included in the scope of Paul's instruction, our focus here is upon the issues that affect local church ministries. The problems we face are basically twofold: (1) how do we minister the word of God to people, and (2) what changes in our society and people undermine our efforts to spread the gospel and edify believers? While we are repelled by market-driven philosophies, there are some real problems facing us about how to effectively communicate the truth of God's word to a population whose ignorance of scripture is getting worse.

There is a growing population among us who are altogether illiterate, especially when it comes to reading a Bible. Likewise, there are a comparable number of people in America who have never darkened the door of a church, let alone a Bible-preaching church. Where our country seems bent on a deliberate path towards a third-world way of life, we may be there spiritually already as we struggle to affirm our teaching and preaching from the written word of God.



INSIDE PAGES

2 "HISTORIC MARKS OF FUNDAMENTALISM"

4 "LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTYSBURG"

5 "A COMMON MISCALCULATION IN MODERN FUNDAMENTALISM"

7 2014 CONFERENCE INFORMATION

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(CONTINUE ON PAGE 2)

Our electronically savvy contemporaries have sought answers in the replacement of hymnals with projected lyrics and electronic Bibles on cell phones, but both of these approaches still rely on language skills and minimal reading ability. Even the transitions from the KJV to more modern English Bibles have not really resolved the basic problem of English language deficiency. Witness how the inherent isolationism of the computer age has made its impact upon local church functions. While it is bad enough that we go from our cubicle at work to our cubicle at home, resulting in less interaction with our family members, how much Christian fellowship and mutual edification within our church family has been lost through member absence and lack of participation in worship, educational ministries, music ministries or Christian service? The cubicle mindset has invaded our homes, with everyone absorbed by his own personal electronic devices, and we should not be surprised that the isolation generated by such practices spills over into our churches. In the multimedia age, personal participation beyond occupying space somewhere has been deemed no longer necessary or desirable.

Again let's consider relevant Biblical principles that we profess to be unchangeable: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25).

The writer begins with the principle that believers have a duty towards other believers to encourage them to do what is right and good, according to God's word. It is similar to Paul's writing in I Thess. 5:11, "Wherefore comfort yourselves *together*, and *edify one another*, even as also ye do." What we must recognize, however, is that both admonitions require a personal presence in the

company of other believers, primarily in the context of the local church. This is a presence that cannot be fulfilled by emails, text messages, Facebook postings, or instant messages. These are timeless scriptural instructions that underscore the necessity of personal participation in the worship and work of the Lord that are not subject to revisionism because of modern times or advances in communications. Indeed, verse 25 says that as the day of the Lord's return draws nearer, we need *more* fellowship with other believers, rather than less.

Perhaps those of us in local church leadership might want to review whether or not we have already made some concessions along these lines that have altered the vision and purpose of our ministries—concessions that have allowed our people to become more passive spectators than active participants, producing feeble hothouse Christians, who would be hard-pressed to explain the reason for the hope that they profess in Christ (I Pet. 3:15) or to defend their faith in the face of criticism. Our ministries cannot be faithful to the word with minimalist expectations of our people or by excusing them from serving the Lord, even though we know He provides both ability and opportunity. Heb. 5:11-14 and II Pet. 3:18 address both the need and reasonable expectation for spiritual growth and maturity.

If communication problems exist because of language barriers, we can still preach and teach the word, which has always been the standard means for conveying biblical truth. In foreign missionary ministries, where illiteracy is commonplace, it has always been the hearing of the word of God (Rom. 10:17) that has made the difference. The fact remains, no matter how times or people change, nothing else has the promised blessing of God like the faithful preaching and teaching of His word.

Historic Marks of Fundamentalism¹

Dr. Robert Delnay

Fundamentalism began in the later nineteenth century as a concerned response to the rise of higher criticism and doctrinal deviation and also as a response to a worldly drift among God's people. How far back does the movement go? Surely, it was not before the Believers' Meeting held in Chicago, 1875, with their concerns about prophecy and German theology. Some have dated it from 1909, with the publication of *The Fundamentals* and the first edition of *The Scofield Reference Bible*. Surely it dates no later than the 1920 Northern Baptist Convention, when Curtis Lee Laws coined the term *fundamentalist*. By any view, however, the movement was a departure from the drifting attitude expressed by main-stream Protestant orthodoxy. A look

at the marks of the movement will bring that out clearly. The old Protestants did not seem to have these identifying qualities.

Biblicism

The fundamentalists took a more rigorous view of the Bible than many of their forefathers. Commonly, during the 19th century, the believers held a strong view of inspiration, but it was not yet an issue. The Princeton men get credit for their strong view, but the great majority of ministers hardly would have faulted them for the way they put into print what most had commonly accepted. Now with the strong view of inspiration came an equally strong view of inerrancy and of literal interpretation.

Part of the reason for this rigorous Biblicism was

the rising concern for prophecy. A literally-interpreted Bible will wreck both postmillennialism and amillennialism. The rising Biblicism forced many to a choice: either a literal Bible, or the old confession of faith, but not both; most of the old confessions had a wrong view of prophecy. The hope of the Lord's return began cutting people off from their denominational homes.

With the literal Bible, especially after 1920, the key issues became the virgin birth and creation. The literature of the time is full of these, and both of them reveal how faith in the Bible and Modernism are mutually exclusive.

Premillennialism

The second great mark of the movement is the hope of the any-moment rapture and of the bodily return of Christ to set up His kingdom. The literature suggests that the early leaders had read Darby and then put his writing out of their minds, so as to form their own view of prophecy. By the end of the nineteenth century many came to recognize that God has dealt with Israel, the church, and others in different ways, even though He always saves by grace through faith. This understanding soon led to dispensationalism, and during the 1920's the *Scofield Reference Bible* became a standard of the movement. Years ago I heard A. J. McClain remark that, in his view, the Scofield Bible was the leading device that the Spirit of God used to protect the faithful from the grip of Modernism.

Separatism

Many of the faithful were slow to see the threat of Modernism. As of 1875 it was surely a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, but by 1910 it had become an army with banners. That year W. B. Riley was thinking to mount a pre-convention conference before the Northern Baptist Convention met, writing that from the chairman on down, the whole program was in the hands of the higher critics. Ten more years were to pass, however, until enough pressure would build to bring about such a meeting. By that time Northern Baptist Modernists held key pulpits, most of the schools, and many of the mission boards. Not until about 1927-1929 was there any real despair over the head offices or any willingness to pull out.

With the coming of the 1930's, it was clear that the fundamentalists had no home in their old denominations. By then the apostasy was too well-rooted to get it out. The only right course was to leave and probably lose their retirement in the process. Separation now became a permanent mark of fundamentalism.

At the same time separation focused also on the Federal Council of Churches. There was no doubt that the Federal Council was under Modernist control, and fundamentalists have held the same aversion to the World and National Councils that have appeared since then.

Separatism has had an additional expression, not

only of the church from apostasy, but of the believer from the world. While the enemy would often cry legalism, it seemed to the fundamentalists that any consistent love for the Lord would produce a revulsion against the world that crucified Him. They found plenty of verses to back up this view.

Militancy

A fourth mark of fundamentalism is the mood that went with it, what I describe as a feeling of outrage at religious piracy. When a person views the Modernist takeover of some mission or endowment, he will react with either a benign tolerance or a sort of anger. The fundamentalist has no option. He has no way to view calmly the man who takes that to which he has no doctrinal right. Ernest Gordon wrote an angry book about that, *The Leaven of the Sadducees*. He reflected the feeling of a whole movement. Anyone who loved the grand old doctrines could not but react with emotion at the sight of an unbeliever drawing a salary from a school still calling itself Baptist or Presbyterian. Militancy was only a kind of consistency, the right product of conviction.

Spiritual Reality

If a person is clearly for the Bible, premillennial, separated, and militant for truth, but lies or cheats on his wife, I wince at the thought of calling him a fundamentalist, and I think that every reader of this would agree. The movement included both saints and phonies, but I think we would agree that the idea of fundamentalism rigorously excludes religious phonies and includes genuine men and women of God.

Other Marks

Another trait of the movement has been its constant faith in preaching. From its earliest stirrings, its only way to express something was to express it in a preaching form. The leaders sometimes had to learn parliamentary law, but their hearts weren't much in it. It was preaching in which they believed. They have always distrusted secular education, even though some of them had their training in secular schools.

They stressed evangelism and foreign missions, but lately with decreasing success. Even of those who can report numbers, many have to use the methods of show business rather than the preaching that would have worked a generation ago.

The movement used to be rather interdenominational, but the last decades have seen almost the end of that.

Fundamentalism has had its problems and inconsistencies; the position, however, still happens to be right.

¹ This article was updated by the author for the *Review* and reprinted from the June-August 1989 edition of *Faith Pulpit*, a publication of Faith Baptist Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa. Used by permission.



Looking Forward to Gettysburg - Part 2

by Donna Dear

As we look ahead to our 2014 annual family conference, we would like to share some more of the exciting activities available at our conference site—Gettysburg. In this issue we thought we would introduce you to the Eisenhower National Historic Site. Tickets for this site can only be purchased at the Visitor Center of the Gettysburg National Military Park.

This is the site of the home and farm of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his wife, Mamie. If you remember your American history, you will know that General Eisenhower was the Commander of the European Theater of Operations during World War II, after which he was appointed as NATO's Supreme Commander. Shortly before his election to the presidency in 1952, he and his wife purchased the Gettysburg farm. This site was of particular interest to my husband and me because we felt as though we were taking a walk down memory lane, having grown up during the 1950's while Ike was President.

You may want to allow a couple of hours for touring the farm and to wear a good pair of walking shoes. As well as the guided tour through the Eisenhower home, there is a self-guided tour through the grounds, farm, and cattle ranch. President Eisenhower enjoyed breeding prize-winning black-angus steers. There is an audio tour available via cell phone at each stop designated on the tour map.

Another stop in your Gettysburg experience should be the Hall of Presidents and First Ladies. Here you will learn the highlights of each president's term in office as his wax image recites them for you. Visitors are also able to view the Smithsonian collection of first ladies' inaugural gowns authentically reproduced in miniature.

As you tour through Gettysburg, do not overlook the many gift shops available. Each one has items unique to that shop and found only in Gettysburg.



A Common Miscalculation in Modern Fundamentalism

by Pastor Kevin Hobi

When I became the pastor of New Boston Baptist Church, I soon became aware of a beautifully hand-crafted hardwood sign one of the talented men in our church had built for the front yard of our meeting place. It contains attractive gold-leaf lettering with the name of our church in capital letters, followed by a description of our church in italics: “An Independent Fundamental Family in Christ.” The sign now stands between two granite supports in our front yard and in the center of the homepage of our website, and we are thankful for the Lord’s provision for our ministry in this regard through the talents and sacrificial generosity of a dear brother in Christ.

I mention the sign because I first learned of it when the folks of our church told me that my predecessor was not in support of mounting the sign and using it to advertise our ministry. They wanted to understand what my position on the matter would be. Our church was founded as an independent fundamental family in Christ, and all of our official documents declared that this is what we still were, yet apparently the calculation had been made by a well-meaning brother that it was better if the sign were not used because it contained the word *fundamental* on it. I have actually never had occasion to meet this brother in person, but I have been left with the impression that this co-laborer may have wanted to be the pastor of a fundamentalist church without having that fact advertised on the front sign of the ministry he was called to serve.

I believe that a miscalculation, common in modern fundamentalism, caused the experience our church went through with that sign. This mistake is in a category of other common miscalculations that I have heard at times among my fundamental friends. Let me provide a few examples of this kind of thing, which I have heard in recent days from brothers and sisters I love: (1) it is right to separate on the basis of what a man believes, but not on the basis of whom he associates with; (2) new evangelicalism is a distant fact of American church history, not a philosophy of ministry that we have to worry about today; (3) some standards of holy living are pharisaical—God wants us to be concerned with the heart, not the outward appearance; (4) standards of holy living are personal applications—God believes in different strokes for different folks; (5) we need a set of separatist convictions that are more authentic than those practiced a generation ago.

None of these are biblical positions, but I worry that they are becoming increasingly common positions among men whom I know love their Bibles who would be comfortable calling themselves fundamentalists. Each one can be a serious error in its own right, but there is another common miscalculation, one more closely related to our church’s difficulty with its sign, that I believe ought

to concern us as fundamentalists the most. This is the conclusion that ecclesiastical separation is not really a first-order concern of Christian ministry and fellowship, like the gospel is. The popular label, *gospel-centered ministry*, often advertises this ministry philosophy.

I found this miscalculation in the mail again today. I received an attractive invitation from a fundamentalist Baptist church in our area advertising a lady’s event featuring a speaker whose itinerary this year will have included a mainline Episcopal congregation in Alabama and Mars Hill in Seattle. Evidently, no one has asked this invitee what her separatist convictions are and how they regulate her ministry. There seems to be in practice here the view that separatist convictions are not as important as convictions about the gospel or about biblical ways ladies can grow in Christ. In an earlier discussion on this topic, the pastor of this church explained to me that he now believes that we are called to separate over what a man believes, not over his associations. Yet it is fair to conclude that what this sister believes regarding separation has been dropped from consideration.

Miscalculating the relative importance of separation in spiritual endeavor is not a new problem for the people of God. It is at least as old as Jehu’s inquiry of Jehoshaphat, “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?” (2 Chron. 19:2). Jehoshaphat would have preferred that the question never came up, and that seems to me to be a growing preference in modern fundamentalism today as well. Somehow, asking that question seems less important than “Do you believe the gospel?” or “Do you believe in the dual nature of Christ?” or “Do you believe in biblical inerrancy?” Unfortunately, miscalculating the importance of the former question caused the gospel of Jehovah’s saving grace, the worship of His singular deity, and the ministry of His precious word to be lost for generations following Jehoshaphat’s disobedient ambivalence toward separation (2 Chron. 21:1-7).

More recently, new evangelicalism can be credited with lowering the question of separation to a tier somewhere below first-order concern. Historian George Marsden explains: “New evangelical reformers thus did not repudiate all separatism. On the other hand, they did reject making separatism a high principle. This was a fine distinction, however, exceedingly difficult to maintain consistently” [*Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 7]. Is separation a high principle? That is the question that stood at the center of the difference between Jehoshaphat and Jehu and at the crossroads between new evangelicalism and our fathers’ fundamentalism. Today, our calculated answer to that

question is looking more and more like the answer of the new evangelicals, and less and less like the answer of the legacy we fundamentalists have been blessed to inherit. We call *gospel-centeredness* what they used to call *new evangelicalism*. They are the demotion of separatism with fancy labels.

What makes a biblical principle a high biblical principle? This, of course, will help us to determine whether ecclesiastical separation is one of those. Clearly, there is a sense in which Paul believed that preaching the gospel was higher than baptizing those who believed (1 Cor. 1:17). The true gospel is plainly a first-order concern. Christ died vicariously for our sins according to the scriptures, He arose bodily from the tomb victorious over death for our justification, and salvation is by grace alone and through faith alone in this work of Christ for the sinner alone. To fail to make the gospel a first-order concern is to fail to be saved.

Paul mentions at least two other doctrinal concerns that rise to this level. Just like preaching another gospel is a cause for concern, so also must preaching another Jesus and another spirit be (2 Cor. 11:4). For Paul writing to the Corinthian church, *another spirit* refers especially to error in regard to the biblical doctrine of revelation (1 Cor. 2:9-16; 12:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3). So from this passage, we have three far-reaching, first-order concerns for the believer: gospel, Christ, and revelation. Be right on those, or I can have no Christian ministry fellowship with you. This much is clear.

But what then happens when someone will profess to believe the gospel, to preach the true Jesus, and to believe in biblical inerrancy, but he wants to maintain Christian fellowship and endeavors with those who do not? Can we say from 2 Corinthians 11 that ecclesiastical separation is also a first-order concern, a high principle? I believe we can and we must. Separation is the doctrine that puts the *concern* in the phrase, *first-order concern*. Paul is not really encouraging the Corinthians to believe correct doctrines in this context; rather, he is exhorting them to separate from the false apostles who deny them (2 Cor. 11:2-3, 12-15). We have in the passage not only an apostolic definition of first-order orthodoxy, but also

an apostolic definition of a passionate first-order concern. This passionate concern is separatism. The first-order concern is “believe the true gospel, believe the true Jesus, believe the true Spirit, *and* separate from false apostles that do not.”

No wonder, then, that the apostle John explains to the recipients of his second Epistle that receiving false apostles into the house for ministry purposes and bidding them Godspeed in their ministry endeavors are acts of participation in their denial of truth (2 John 7-11). For us, it is hard to see how a simple invitation and greeting could possibly rise to the level of the denial of the doctrine of Christ while we profess faithfully to believe that doctrine. For John, we either separate from deceivers or we participate in deceiving. There is little room for middle ground between these positions. If you deny Christ, you are a Christ-denier. If you welcome one who denies Christ, you are a Christ-denier participant. That these may be two different shades of the blackness of Christ-denying should offer little comfort to those determined to relegate obedient ecclesiastical separation to a less-than-high-principle category.

Why were Paul and Jehu so concerned to make separatism a first-order concern in their ministries? It was that they shared their Lord’s jealous love for the people of God. For Jehu, the issue was the need for true godly love—“why do you love those who hate the Lord?” (2 Chron. 19:2). For Paul, the issue was the need for true godly love—“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2). Do we have this love for God and the purity of His people? Are we willing to keep ecclesiastical separation in our category of first-order concerns? Will we commit ourselves to consistent separation from ministers and ministries that do not correctly teach and practice the Bible doctrine of ecclesiastical separation? Will we stand with and not against brothers who do? Our IBFNA was founded with a resounding *yes* to these challenges, and I am thankful for the encouragement I have found here to not compromise on that answer. Let me encourage you to find it with us too.



2014 IBFNA Annual Family Conference

Contending for the Faith

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2014 Family Bible Conference

Make your reservations today!

We are pleased to announce our that our annual conference will be held at the Wyndham Hotel, in Gettysburg PA, June 17-19, 2014. This is an excellent, highly-rated hotel, in an historic location that should encourage you to take additional time, either before or after the conference, to explore an important chapter in American History, the Civil War.

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You can make your reservation online at following link:

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This year's conference theme is *Contending for the Faith Once Delivered*. Our main speaker will be Dr. Fred Moritz, Maranatha Baptist University. The conference music will be under the direction of Greg and Heather Murray, and other speakers will include: Dr. Clay Nuttall, Missionary, Baptists Equipping Nationals; Dr. Allen Harris, Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, PA; Pastor Steve Pittman, Professor of Missions, Grace Baptist Bible College; Pastor Dan Brabson, Bible Baptist Church, West Chester PA; Dr. Ed Mason, Carleton Community Baptist Church, Carlton MI and IBFNA Treasurer; Dr. Charles Dear, Crescentville Baptist Church, Philadelphia, PA and IBFNA Moderator; Dr. David Reinhardt, The Baptist Church of Danbury, Danbury, CT; and Mrs Karla Armstrong, Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, PA.

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