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THE REVIEW

Courage Comes From the Lord

By Pastor Al Harris, Moderator IBFNA

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident" (Ps. 27:1-3).

The politics of primary elections are the buzz of all the airwaves. Accusations and attacks fly around like bees in a patch of flowers. One news commentator stated that the fervency of the people in Iowa was so intense that they must have viewed this seriously as a make or break election to save the country from destruction.

It is a time of great attack on the Christian Faith and lifestyle. Our government schools will teach the five pillars of Islam, but you cannot take your Bible to school. Teachers will have students wear the "hijab" to give girls a feeling of being different like the Muslim girls, but they do not take time to teach Christian traits or truths. Our president visits Georgetown University making them cover up any religious symbols or sayings, but when he visits the Islamic mosque in Baltimore, the religious symbols of Islam are openly displayed behind him. The attack on marriage by the Supreme Court, along with the subsequent efforts of the homosexual community to "bully" churches, government agencies, and individuals to submit to this perverted understanding of God's gift of marriage, has created a firestorm that has no end in sight.

Scripture has told us that "in the last days, perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3:1). The description of the attitudes and character traits of this time are so closely aligned with the present worldly climate that a good case could be made that it is speaking about 2016. So we who believe the Bible recognize that God is still in control and has already told us of this moral declension. But while we know this is the kind of declension that has been predicted, our response to it may well determine the state of the church in the years to come and the spread of the true gospel to the world around us.

Enemies assailed David his entire life: the lion and bear as he defended his flock, Goliath, Saul. Then as king there were enemies within his kingdom and enemies without. But David learned something in all these battles. He learned that his trust was in God, not in his efforts to manipulate people or events.



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So what must we learn that will help us in these days to keep our eyes on the Lord during trying times?

1. Keep your eyes on the Lord. David knew the power of God and did not let circumstances control him. He fought Goliath, the Philistines, and all the other enemies of God. This is more than just reading our Bible; we must trust and obey His Word.
2. Stay engaged in the battle for truth. The enemies will come. The evil of the world around us should not surprise us. We do not hide and remain behind church walls. We are to stay in the battle for truth.
3. This means we will vote, speak up for truth, and share the gospel to the world around us. David did not hide; he trusted the Lord to cause the enemies to falter. He trusted the Lord for the strength to remain faithful in spite of difficulty.
4. We must know and trust our God. This takes study, courage, and faith. Obedience is the

fruit of faith and love. Having the confidence to “put the battle in array” against a much bigger foe can only be done if we believe God is bigger than our foe (1 Sam. 17:21). We will not have a magical gift of faith and courage. This courage is only developed by walking with God day by day.

I want to encourage you not to faint at the turmoil of the political process or the threats facing our society. Our trust is in the God of heaven. His victory has already been won in Christ, and our victory is in Him alone. Do not remove yourself from doing right in this world. We have a responsibility to keep the freedoms that we possess. And most of all, engage in the battle for souls and truth with loving strength and faith in God’s power.

The ground may shake, the forces may look terrible, and there may come persecution that we will endure like our forefathers before us, but it only takes a blow on a trumpet or a word from our Master to deliver us at His will.

The Superficial Church

By Pastor Chick Dear

After so many years of “doing church differently,” it is past time to impartially evaluate which religious experiments have benefitted the church and which ones have failed to fulfill expectations or have done harm to the cause of Christ.

Many of the experiments in modern worship and ministry have promised much, but recent studies reveal that their results have not produced fruit of greater value than the traditional ministries they have sought to replace. Over recent years we have watched a religious social engineering of worship in churches, have seen schools broaden their appeal to a widening field of evangelical students, compromising their testimony, have witnessed nationals, who were saved under the previous generation of missionaries, be offended by current missionaries to their lands, and have dealt with homes and families imploding as a result of spiritual and moral decay. The problem is no one seems ready to admit to the failures of contemporary Christianity, and so the

movement presses onward, plunging deeper into fleshly efforts to appease the masses, blinded by an end-justifies-the-means rationalization.

In the years between 2007 and 2014, a Pew Research Center study found significant changes in the religious character of American society. Overall, those who identified themselves as “Christian” (in the broadest use of the term), decreased nearly 8% within those years. The decline in people claiming to be Christians has impacted all Americans, all age groups, and all religious denominations, except eastern religions which have grown with the influx of immigration from Hindu and Islamic parts of the world. While every denomination of “Christianity” has experienced losses, Catholics and mainline Protestant denominations have lost more than others over these years. Evangelicals’ numbers have remained the same, but their percentage of overall population in the country is slipping, offset primarily because of those who now consider themselves unaf-

filiated. At nearly 23% of the adult population, the unaffiliated are now nearly equal in number with the 25.4% of evangelicals, whereas seven years ago the unaffiliated were only 16%.

A significant point in the increase in the unaffiliated percentage is that millennials are the population most responsible for the increase. Today, over a third of all millennials have declared themselves as unaffiliated with any faith system. While they may have been raised in a religious home, they no longer identify with their spiritual heritage. Those millennials that still identify with their religious heritage are less than 16%.

Considering the many changes that have been made in churches, schools, agencies, and other ministries since 2007, and the changes in the hearts and affiliations of American citizens over that same period of time, we are not better off spiritually today than we were in 2007. While some might argue that the contemporary changes mitigated an inevitable decline, they have made no improvement, especially among the younger generation, so far as their moral values are concerned. Today, millennials are more willing to accept homosexual lifestyles, including homosexual marriage, than their parents, while at the same time postponing marriage for themselves.

Much of this reflects changes in our country toward a post-Christian perspective, but the real question is why the church and believers are making less of an impact upon our society and against government actions that militate against the free practice of biblical Christianity. Has contemporary worship so watered down basic biblical principles? Have essential Bible doctrines been dismissed as non-essential? Has everything been so formulated into a potpourri of step programs to make us happy and content in this broken world that the authority of Scripture is no longer acknowledged in the 21st century?

While some would argue that our society requires a more elementary level of Bible instruction, and we concede that Bible ignorance is greater than ever before, nevertheless God's Word prescribes a spiritual development from milk to meat for those who have come to know Christ as their personal Savior through the simplicity of the gospel (Heb. 5:11-14). The gospel message is simple enough for a child to understand, but the simple gospel is only a place to begin in salvation, not a place for believers to live perpetually. While a "gospel only" approach sounds

good to many, it purposely neglects much of "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Some would dismiss or ignore Bible doctrines that determine whether believers live in obedience to God or willful disobedience. The approach cultivates a nursery of spiritual infants who are under the authority and control of men rather than of God.

No one should presume to think there are parts of the Bible that are reserved for the study of scholars and spiritual intellectuals. To whom were the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings of the Old Testament given? Did the children of Israel have any formal education that prepared them to receive God's Word? No, but what they did have were godly men who faithfully read them God's Word, explained its meaning, and applied it to their lives (Neh. 8:8). An Old Testament example of the true value of "the foolishness of preaching," which God can still use today (1 Cor. 1:21).

Consider the first century church, and ask yourself, "How many of the earliest believers were intellectuals?" Yet how many of the saints of the early church were considered incapable of hearing the epistles of Paul? Were not all the great doctrines of the faith written to all the believers in the early church? The only criticism of Paul's writings is found in 2 Pet. 3:16, where Peter acknowledged that there were "some things hard to be understood." But that criticism is quickly followed by Peter's admonishment to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (3:18).

Paul, when he was Saul, was probably the most educated man in the Bible, according to Philippians 3, yet he dismissed all his Jewish theological training for the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Paul was burdened that all the saints would hear and understand what the Lord taught him (Gal. 1:11-12); and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote his epistles. They were letters written primarily to specific churches, which were widely circulated between the churches for the instruction of all believers.

So then, what great improvement have we made in the last 40 to 50 years, indulging the whims of fickle people, who would rather be entertained than be taught God's truth, contented to live in ignorance of the whole counsel of God? There has been a plunge towards doctrineless, repetitive lyric songs that can be sung in any church. Pulpit ministry has been reduced to brief Bible-story happy talks, political com-

mentaries on current events (a staple in synagogues and ecumenical churches), and endless clichés of universal salvation and the brotherhood of man. The truth has been squandered and even made an object of ridicule and scorn.

God is not the author of confusion. His Word is sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12), and it reveals what is true and what is not. However, a mixed message given to a mixed multitude cannot be used by the Lord to save souls or build His church. Many have begun with professed good intentions and strongly denied that they were compromising, but like Jehoshaphat they found themselves ultimately “helping the ungodly and hating those who love the Lord” (2 Chron. 19:2).

People do not perish for lack of excitement; they perish for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). Superficial worship, with all of its flash and noise, has replaced the necessity of understanding and seriously studying the Word of God with producing good feelings. In a recent broadcast of a worship service led by one of the best known Southern Baptist pastors, the man-

tras sung with hypnotic repetition and a heavy beat, which accelerated into a frenzy of movement among the congregation and choir, contradicted the message that followed. So how long does the excitement last? Could anyone going out the door of such a church explain what they learned from God’s Word that day? What increased their knowledge of God to sustain them after all the excitement is gone away (Col. 1:10)?

Contemporary worship is not a panacea for keeping people, especially young people, in our churches. The study enumerated above demonstrates that fact. When millennials admit to being bored by contemporary worship, as they did in the study, it tells us that even younger people can tell when something important is missing—something important like a challenge to live above the world rather than wallowing in its mire and a challenge to be followers of Christ, not men who go their own willful ways. What they really need is “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14).

A Brief Survey of Fundamentalist History – Part Three

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

This brief survey of fundamentalist history began with a description of some conditions which gave rise to our movement [February 2015]. Darwin’s theory of evolution encouraged naturalist denials of the supernatural nature of the Bible and the Christian religion in the later part of the 19th century. Evangelism had devolved into a pragmatic social agenda that believed in the perfectibility of the human heart and condition. Just as God raised up the Protestant Reformation to respond to the deterioration of the Catholic Church, He raised up fundamentalists to respond to the challenge of an apostatizing Protestantism.

Over time four differing responses to these modernist conditions have been evident: mainline fundamentalism (1880-1930), separatist fundamentalism (1930-present), new evangelicalism (1940-present), and new fundamentalism (1970-present). Part two of this series examined some of the characteristics and lessons from the history of mainline fundamentalism [May 2015]. The next phase is separatist fundamentalism, but before looking at the monumental events

of the 1930s, this article will note the example of two proto-separatists, whose convictions in this regard were significantly ahead of their time: Arno C. Gaebelein, a Methodist; and Oliver W. Van Osdel, a Baptist.

The Proto-Separatist A. C. Gaebelein

Arno C. Gaebelein was a brilliant linguist who ministered with a particular burden for the Jewish people beginning in the later decades of the 19th century. Under the auspices of the New York East Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Gaebelein’s ministry to the Jews of that city was called “The Hope of Israel Movement,” which included the widely read magazine *Our Hope*. Gaebelein, though a German immigrant, was a convinced premillennialist who loved the Jewish people and who believed ardently in the future restoration of the nation of Israel. He spoke to thousands of Jews in need of Christ in weekly Sabbath meetings, where locals would come to hear the Gentile preacher, who not only knew the Scriptures, but also understood how to defend them

against the false interpretations of their Rabbis.

Gaebelein enjoyed multidenominational interest in his evangelistic and conference-speaking ministries, and eventually his experiences with good men from many denominations made him a committed non-denominationalist. He wrote in his autobiography in 1930, "We are exhorted to give all diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3), but denominationalism is a practical denial of that unity. The sad divisions as they exist in Protestantism appeared to me not the work of the Spirit, but as the work of the flesh, even as the New Testament teaches" [*Half a Century* (New York: Our Hope, 1930), 78]. In 1897 The Hope of Israel Movement dropped the support of the City Mission of the Methodist denomination, becoming independent from denominational supervision in order to foster multidenominational cooperation.

But there was an important limit to Gaebelein's zeal for Christian unity. His practice as a New York Methodist was to attend the weekly preachers' meeting at the Methodist Book Concern. On one such occasion, Dr. S. P. Cadman, then pastor of the Central Methodist Church, gave an address that enjoyed welcoming applause from the several hundred Methodist leaders gathered there to hear him. Cadman said in part, "The absolutely inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible are no longer possible of belief among reasoning men . . . Half the pages of the Old Testament are of unknown authorship, and the New Testament contains contradictions" [quoted in *Half a Century*, 80].

When Gaebelein voiced a protest that suggested charges be brought against a man who would teach such things, the denominational fathers replied that "sooner or later we must fall in line with these results of scholarly Bible Criticism." Gaebelein, the fundamentalist, refused to fall in line, and that made him a separatist too. He explains: "When I heard this, I decided at once to sever my fellowship with the denomination, and though different inducements were offered me, if I would change my mind, the Lord gave courage to carry out my decision, and I withdrew to follow, as a servant, Him who has promised the open door to those who keep His Word and who do not deny His Name" [80-81].

That Gaebelein was a bit ahead of his time in his separatism was apparent in some of the warnings he

received from well-meaning but mistaken brothers. One fellow Methodist advised Gaebelein to stay in the denomination and fight the apostasy from within as many of his contemporaries had determined to do. Looking back on that suggestion, Gaebelein concluded: "Our brother has done this himself for more than fifty years, but it seems that he has not succeeded very well" [81]. Another warned of the ruin to Gaebelein's ministry such a step would bring, predicting that in another two years the history of his ministry would have been entirely written. Gaebelein's answer was clear: "My brother, does service depend on the backing of an ecclesiastical organization or on the Lord in Glory and the Holy Spirit? That is the question. I believe the Lord is able to take care of me" [81]. Gaebelein's history actually took another forty-five years to write, and that history testifies that his faith was well-placed.

The Proto-Separatist Oliver Van Osdel

A second separatist ahead of his time was the Michigan Baptist leader, Oliver Van Osdel, pastor of the Wealthy Street Baptist Church in Grand Rapids. [For a thorough and inspiring treatment of the importance of Van Osdel and others to the history of northern Baptist fundamentalism, see the newly published volume by Drs. Kevin Bauder and Robert Delnay, *One in Hope and Doctrine: Origins of Baptist Fundamentalism 1870-1950* (Schaumburg, IL: RBP, 2014).] Van Osdel began his pastorate in 1909, three years after the notorious Alfred W. Wishart had arrived as pastor of the larger Fountain Street Baptist Church in town. Wishart was a thoroughgoing and aggressive liberal, and his arrival had created enough of a stir to become a focus of the Grand Rapids Baptist Association's annual meeting in 1908.

Van Osdel never hesitated once he was informed by fellow conservatives of the problem that Wishart posed for the Association. Together the fundamentalists determined to expel Fountain Street from their fellowship, but they ultimately found that no procedures had been defined that would allow for such an action. In the end, fourteen churches followed Van Osdel's leadership to withdraw from their former organization in order to form the Grand River Valley Baptist Association. The state convention churches, both liberal and conservative, on the whole supported Fountain Street while criticizing the separatists.

As a first among many faithful separatists who

would follow him, Van Osdel continued to influence Baptists in the north with his deeply held separatist convictions. Though not the enthusiast for multidenominational fundamentalism that A. C. Gaebelein was, this committed Baptist did welcome the Methodist evangelist Dr. Bob Jones Sr. into his pulpit [*One in Hope and Doctrine*, 60]. Still, the separatist passion for truth we hear in Gaebelein's words echoes in the letter Van Osdel and his separatist brothers approved to announce their departure from the compromised Association:

Dear Brethren, the name Baptist has been rendered inestimably precious by the blood of the martyrs who have sacrificed all for these truths that we might become heirs with them of the Grace of God. The skepticism which denies to the Christ the glory that is His due cannot be covered by smooth speech, and specious reasoning. Labels of "new," "modern," and "scholarly" cannot hide the enmity which attempts to rob Christ of His right to Deity and the throne of the universe.

Where such positions are taken we can see nothing ahead "but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries" [quoted in *One in Hope and Doctrine*, 58-59].

Observations

Lessons and inspirations from the examples of these two forerunners of separatism are many. I would note three. First, when it comes to doing what is right, someone has to go first. Both men were ahead of their time, and as those willing to go first when it comes to separation, their decisions were considered extreme and unbalanced in their day. On August 17, 1919, A. C. Gaebelein concluded an address to the Bible Institute of Los Angeles titled, "The Apostasy Sweeping over the Churches," with a reference to the way many had disagreed with his separatist position:

Some Christians have told me that they are to remain in Laodicea until the Lord gives them a call to leave. He has given the call. It is here and what is happening and will happen is the separation of God's true church from the church of the world, the church of the apostasy and of Laodicea. But you say, "Where am I going?" Well, go first to the Lord and then you will have fellowship with the true saints of God. When you get

into the fellowship of the true saints of God you get power, you get blessing, you have the reality of the Lord and he is going to use you.

A second lesson has to do with the third category in every modernist-fundamentalist battle, the moderate who tries to fit somewhere on the dash. When Micaiah opposed Ahab, Jehoshaphat looked for the middle ground. When Van Osdel led his band of brothers out of compromise with apostasy, the Michigan state convention of Baptists opposed him and supported the liberal. As Gaebelein left the New York East Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church behind, good friends told him to fight the battle from within. Van Osdel would struggle with fellow Baptists determined to stay in the Northern Baptist Convention for many years before separatist convictions would finally take hold in a meaningful way in the 1930s. We should expect to have to deal with the dash in the modernist-fundamentalist war.

Finally, whether Methodist or Baptist or later Presbyterian, separatist fundamentalists have in common a deeply held commitment to obedience above all else. After quoting 2 John 7-11 to the students at BIOLA, Gaebelein called them to obedience:

That is God's call, "Depart!" - get away from them; do not touch their books; do not buy their literature; do not support their institutions; do not pay the preacher's salary if he does not preach the truth. If you do, the Lord is going to hold you responsible for them.

Again Paul says, "From such turn away;" purge yourselves from the vessels which are dishonored that ye might be vessels meet for the Master's use.

For the separatist fundamentalist, the obeyed command of God is the desired outcome. That command is not complicated: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:17-18). The denomination may not be saved, the ministry may fail to continue, and the history may be written after just a few years. But surely those willing to obey the Master can trust Him to use vessels meet for His use in the way that pleases Him best, whatever that may be.



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