



IBFNA

February 2020

Volume 28, Number 3

THE REVIEW

Happy Anniversary!

By Dr. Bob Payne, Moderator IBFNA

This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the IBFNA! Pastor Jeff Bailey has graciously opened up his facilities at Grace Baptist Church in Attleboro, Massachusetts for our family conference on June 23rd-25th of this year. The conference theme, which celebrates God's goodness to the IBFNA, is "Great Is Thy Faithfulness: 30 Years of God's Faithfulness," and is based on Lam. 3:22-23: "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

I not only want to encourage you and your family to attend, but also to ask you to invite a friend to come with you! Also, Pastors, do not forget to invite those under your ministry to come as well. Let those whom you invite know that our annual conferences are not typical organizational preaching conferences, and that the IBFNA is not your typical fellowship.

A Unique Conference

Most organizational conferences are only for preachers. That is not the case with the IBFNA family conference. We encourage those both in the pulpit and the pew to come and bring their whole family. If fundamentalism is to thrive well into the future, not only do preachers need encouragement and refreshment, so do lay people and their families.

Throughout the three days of our conference, we provide a nursery as well as a children's program for our main sessions in the morning and the evening. Additionally, we schedule blocks of time for the whole family to be together and visit interesting area sites and attractions. This year you will discover that the Boston area has countless different historical and recreational attractions to benefit the whole family.

Another thing that differentiates the IBFNA conference from others is its emphasis on the equality of the brethren. For the three days of the conference, we encourage each person to drop his earned or honorary title, such as *Reverend*, *Doctor*, or *Pastor*, and use the terms *brother* or *sister* instead.

As believers we are not clergy and laity. No believer holds a superior standing over another believer because of his vocation or training. Paul tells us in Col. 3:11 that there are no distinctions in status among believers: "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." We are a family in Christ, and the ground at the foot of the cross is level ground.



INSIDE PAGES

2

METHOD OF
MISSION AND
MESSAGE

6

THEOLOGICAL
REFLECTIONS
ON HISTORY

Membership &
Subscription:
IBFNA

521 E. Godfrey
Ave.

Philadelphia, PA
19120-2123

(475) 329-0585
www.ibfna.org

A Unique Fellowship

The IBFNA is quite unique as a fellowship in that it is not a church fellowship; it is an individual fellowship. No one who wants to stand with us needs to have his church vote into the organization. Membership in the IBFNA is individual.

When a person pays his annual dues and conscientiously agrees to the doctrinal statement, he becomes a member of the IBFNA. If a present member does not desire to continue with us, he simply ceases to pay his yearly membership fee, and he is no longer a member (although he is still listed in the phone directory for a few years). As a fellowship of individuals, we are a very loose fellowship that believes in the autonomy of the local church, and so we do not dictate to the local church.

A second important distinctive, which some organizations have all but abandoned, is that of ecclesiastical separation. Our doctrinal statement says in part: "[We believe in] Ecclesiastical Separation, whereby we preach against apostasy, and withdraw from brethren who enter into memberships, affiliations and fellowships (including evangelistic crusades, youth movements, mission agencies, and schools) which seek to unite separatist fundamentalists with those who deny Biblical doctrines, including those who do not obey the Biblical teaching on separation, as defined in the purpose clause."

The IBFNA does not take a strong stand on ecclesiastical separation in order to demonstrate to others that "we are so much better than they," because we are not! Simply, it is all about the holiness of God. The demand of the holiness of God mandates that we separate ecclesiastically from false teachers and disobedient believers (2 Cor. 6:14-17 and 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15).

A third distinctive of the Fellowship is a characteristic that we mentioned concerning our conferences as well: the equality of the brethren. The IBFNA is not a just a preachers' fellowship, although preachers are encouraged to join with us. A person may not be vocationally a full-time minister, but if he is willing to stand with us doctrinally, we want him to be a part of the IBFNA! We have members from all walks of life who are a part of our Fellowship.

Why not join with us this summer at our 30th annual conference? Let's stand together for the truth! Remember that hotel reservations must be made at the conference hotel by May 15th, so do not delay. Do not forget too that your connection for all things 2020 IBFNA Family Conference is found at www.ibfna.org/2020-family-conference. There you can register for the conference online and find contact information for the hotel. In addition, see the insert included in this edition of the *Review* for other important details.

The Method of the Christian Gospel Mission and Message

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

Rick Warren, in his wildly influential 1995 book, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, wrote: "Fortunately, one of the great strengths of Christianity has been its ability to change methods when confronted with new cultures and times. History dramatically illustrates the church's continuous creation of 'new wineskins.' God gives the church new methods to reach each new generation." The influence of this false doctrine on today's evangelical church as it seeks to advance the Christian gospel mission and message has been tragic. Let me illustrate.

A couple of years ago, I received an email that included this heading on its subject line: "Rock Music and Evil - Not Your Ordinary Faith Based Film."

It had come from the owner of a movie production company asking for various kinds of support for their latest production, which, as the subject line suggested, had been planned as an out-of-the-ordinary faith-based film. This extraordinary gospel medium was to become a hard-rock horror film. The correspondent asked me for "any influence or guidance" I could offer, so I tried to offer some.

What follows is the correspondence we shared about the methods of the Christian gospel mission and message. Because our exchange was personal, I have done my best not to disclose the identity of the movie or its producer. Here is what the original email to me had to say:

Hi Pastor Kevin,

I found your information on The American Council of Christian Churches website.

In these (what may be) last days, we at [the company's name] believe the time has come to use every tool available to reach non-believers. To that end, the genesis of "[the movie's name]" is nothing short of a miracle. It pushes the envelope, for sure, but we hope you will consider what we're attempting to do by making a faith-based film, that appeals to secular audiences.

Shot on an iPhone 6S Plus, the plot is a take-off on the biblical story of Job. The movie revolves around a loving father and devoted son, who spirals into madness. The movie features punk rock icon [name], Star Trek Voyager's [name], Cult Film Legend [name] and the inimitable [name].

With dozens of memorable lines, tastefully delivered scriptural references, and a killer soundtrack, this original rock music feature has the potential to be a "Christian Rocky Horror."

The central idea comes from Romans 5:20 (the "sufficient grace" clause), and of course, the final scene (shot in Death Valley) provides everyone with an opportunity to acknowledge their sin debt and choose everlasting life.

The bottom line is there was no producer, no crew, very little money - and an iPhone. Somehow this assignment wound up with me, and I intend to see it through. Any influence or guidance you can offer would be of great help, and importance.

Please understand this film has a message of faith tucked into what isn't your standard "Christian" film. It's meant to appeal to non-believers, not preach to the proverbial choir.

Anything from paneling with us to a tweet would be a great contribution. We are reaching out to the "new generation" of pastors, as well as established national ministries.

Whatever God puts on your heart, we'll take it.

The request for input seemed sincere, and I was glad that the author of the email took some time with the ACCC website (although I was pretty sure the paneling idea was not going to fly with the ACCC Executive Committee), so I wanted to do more than just delete the email. It seemed to me that the best input available for this professing brother in the Lord was the input that Paul provided for the Corinthian church about the importance of the right medium for our gospel message. Here is how I responded:

Dear [name],

Thanks for your email. I hope you found the material at acc4truth.org a helpful blessing. What you have put together certainly looks like it was a lot of work. I am glad you want unbelievers to be saved.

I would disagree that we must have "faith-based" things that "appeal to secular audiences" in order to reach unbelievers.

I believe that this approach to gospel ministry is in danger of making the cross of Christ of none effect (1 Cor. 1:17). Paul never tried things that appealed to the secular audiences of his day. He knew that the preaching of the cross was foolishness to them that are perishing (v. 18). He knew that preaching Christ-crucified was a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks (v. 23). Still he wrote, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14). While I would agree that we do not want to exclusively "preach to the choir" as you say, I have to insist that those not in the choir need the same preaching the choir needs, not something that appeals to audiences because they are secular.

This misguided effort to appeal to secular audiences sounds very much like what Paul determined to avoid in his gospel ministry. Listen to what he writes in 2 Cor. 2:17, "For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God." Paul wanted his gospel ministry to be characterized by *sincerity* (εἰλικρίνεια). That is a word Paul uses twice in 1 Corinthians (1:12, 5:8). In

5:8 sincerity is the opposite of malice and wickedness and the companion of truth. It seems that your approach to gospel ministry in this film is trying to be the companion of malice and wickedness – they are important entertainment components of what you are here calling a newly needed gospel tool.

In 1:12 sincerity is the opposite of fleshly wisdom and the companion of the grace of God. Again, to appeal to secular audiences is necessarily to appeal to their fleshly or secular wisdom. God's work of gracious salvation is not aligned with appeals to fleshly wisdom.

So forgive me for not being one of the "new generation of pastors" you are looking for. I just want to become like Jesus and learn to serve Him the way Paul did. I have learned much from the American Council of Christian Churches primarily because many in that organization are older and wiser than I am – the old generation of pastors. Like the old song used to say, "My sin was old-fashioned, my guilt was old-fashioned, God's love was old-fashioned, I know. And the way I was saved, was the old-fashioned way, through the blood that makes whiter than snow." That blood will never appeal to a secular audience, but only it can save one in God's power and grace.

I hope this is helpful somehow.

Your brother in the Lord,

Kevin

Ordinarily, these emails of mine tend to fall far short of achieving the response they seek (or any response for that matter). Although it was obvious that I had fallen short once again, I was thankful to have received the following reply, because I think it is instructive about the importance of method to gospel mission and message:

Dear Pastor Kevin,

Thank you so much for calmly, and with love, sharing your thoughts. It means a lot to us here in New York.

The message, as well as the mission, is the same today as it was 2000 years ago. I guess

you would have to see the film before making a judgment, but skip to the last scene if you prefer.

Acknowledging that Christ died on the cross in order to pay someone's sin debt, in exchange for eternal life, is all anyone's life ultimately boils down to.

The rest is church dogma, and I believe God isn't interested in that. People are sinners, and there's only one way to get to heaven, period - full stop. To acknowledge your sin debt and that you are helpless to pay it yourself.

This film delivers THAT message.

I have no wish to bat the ball back and forth with you so I will spare you the biblical references in support of my positions below as I just don't have the time - none of us do.

I will say this.

God told me to use my iPhone to make a movie using what I knew and not only made a way but continually rescued us over and over. Dozens of times I wished for this to end, and yet God says I had more to do. So we will carry out the mission we were assigned until we are relieved.

I will say this however.

To ignore the new realities of what draws and holds people's attention (believers or not), as well as the means available with which to reach people is akin to sticking your head in the sand.

I had one evangelist tell me God didn't tell me to make this film, because it has "rock music" in it. And didn't even want to listen. He talked over me citing scripture so as to say rock music is bad. So Greg Laurie is wasting his time saving souls because he allows for that style of music in addition to more traditional praise songs?

I'll take the 100,000 people that show up at AT&T Stadium any day if it means even one person comes to understand that they can be forgiven no matter what they've done.

And to make films or television that do not recognize the true evil that surrounds us, and that we as Christians live amongst daily, is cowardly. "Faith Based Films" stink (Sorry). Few go to see them and to what end? They're already saved.

Regardless, God produced this film, not me. If you prefer to ignore him, that's your prerogative. We're all on the hot seat together anyway.

Blessings to you and your family.

All the best, [name].

Clearly, my input did not convince this contact to change his course. I made one more brief reply, acknowledging that he was correct to say that we did not have time to "bat the ball back and forth," but also looking forward to that day when time will not be an issue for discussions like these. In the presence of our Savior someday, we shall agree on what God's interests have been. One of us will admit our wrong.

In spite of what I trust is our common desire to see the Lord save sinners, there can be no common ground between the pragmatism reflected in this brother's emails and the theology Paul expressed in the Corinthian Epistles. A choice must be made between these philosophical underpinnings of methodology. It is disappointing how having one's nose in the Book looks to some like having one's head in the sand. It seems that they should know better.

Three other observations about the method of the Christian gospel mission and message came to mind as I pressed that final "Send."

(1) While this movie producer claims that the message and mission of his "Christian Rocky Horror" film is the same as 2000 years ago, this cannot be true because the method is not the same. Methods are defined by mission and message, and so methods characterize the mission and message as the products that come from them. Paul would not have tried to use a hard-rock horror film to win people to Christ.

Preservation of biblical method is important to the preservation of the biblical message. Paul makes this clear in 1 Cor. 1:17 and the larger context. The preaching of the cross will always be foolishness to those who are perishing (v. 18), but it is the foolish-

ness of preaching that saves those who will believe (v. 21). That is the method of our mission's message.

(2) The part of the faith once delivered to the saints that is not the simple gospel does matter to God even though it is also "church dogma" (Jude 3). In fact, whatever pertains to the local church is of utmost importance to the Lord in this age, and the church's doctrine or dogma is foundational to this work. The Savior has no antipathy for His church.

Our Great Commission is to make disciples, which involves baptizing them and then teaching them all things that Christ has commanded us. We do that because all authority is given to Christ in heaven and in earth, and He is worthy of having His commandments followed (Matt. 28:19-20). God's Great Commission, therefore, is very interested in much of what the movie producer said God is not.

It is the sanctification of believers into greater Christlikeness through sound doctrine or teaching, which equips them to become effective disciple-makers themselves. Christ's command is first "Follow Me!" Only then comes the promise, "And I shall make you fishers of men." This biblical multiplication of Christ-obeying disciples, who form Christ-honoring local churches, where the Word of God is taught, believed, obeyed, and so multiplied (Acts 6:1, 9:31, 12:24) is our work. Filling the AT&T Stadium for an unholy rock concert is not.

(3) Finally, wherever these deviant methodologies persist, claims of special revelation abound. In the end, Scripture will not convince this movie producer to change his ways, because he professes "God told me" and "God says [to me]." Beware of words described as the tellings and sayings of God, whenever those words are not what God has told and said to everyone in His objective, written, complete, and sufficient Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Rock-n-roll and continuing revelations are tools being used by the god of this world to reverse the Protestant Reformation and lead deceived people back to Rome.

The written Word of God is mighty to save, and it is so because it does not appeal to a secular audience. The method of our gospel mission and message is "preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2). "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7).

Theological Reflections on the History of Fundamentalism

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

Just recently I received an email from a mother whose daughter and son-in-law had moved from the west coast to a neighboring New Hampshire town. This daughter is a graduate of Dr. John MacArthur's school, but recently she has strayed from the Lord. When told of our church, she drove by, saw the word *fundamental* on our sign, which identifies our church as "A fundamental family in Christ," and immediately swore that she would never darken our door.

Others, thankfully, have taken the time to ask their pastor what the word *fundamental* on our sign refers to. When they do that, I tell them some simple history. I say that when the apostolic church decayed into Roman Catholicism, God raised up the Protestants as His witness. And more recently, when evolution and biblical cynicism caused Protestant denominations to decay into modernism, God raised up fundamentalists as His witnesses. Most who take the time to listen seem to understand that brief summary.

Of course, there are many missing details in that approach. The history of fundamentalism has many lessons from multiple denominations to offer the student of history. In this article, I would like to offer some theological reflections relevant to the history of fundamentalism that will encourage us in our stand for Christ. They come from Hebrews 13, and they give a biblical reason to appreciate the history of fundamentalism as (1) an important history, (2) a militant history, and (3) a history of coming to terms with the Bible doctrine of separation.

An Important History

The history of fundamentalism is an important history because our Savior is immutable (Heb. 13:7-9). The moral philosopher Oliver O'Donovan spoke of the importance of knowing history in terms of the fifth of the Ten Commandments. His basic point was that honoring father and mother is not just for kids. He wrote, "No social survival in any land can be imagined without a stable cultural environment across generations. By tradition society identifies itself from one historical moment to the next, and so continues to act as itself." [Quoted by Ken Meyers, *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes*, p. xvii.] Passing

tradition from grandparents to grandchildren, argues O'Donovan, is an important part of obeying the fifth commandment to honor our father and mother.

The author of Hebrews understands that this is especially true when it comes to the faith of our fathers, the faith once delivered to the saints. He admonishes a generation that was tempted to change everything that they had known Christianity to be in order to be more acceptable to the hostile Jewish environment in which these local churches found themselves. This must not be done. Instead, remember your fathers and mothers in the faith (v. 7).

And why remember? Their conversation – the practical applications of the faith to their daily lives and worship practices – had an end, a purpose: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. We need to study the history of our fundamentalist fathers because where their conversation led to veneration of the name of Christ, we must follow them. If we do not, it is a denial of the immutability of Christ, who is the same for grandparents of yesterday, for ourselves today, and for generations who follow us forever. When grandparents can no longer worship with grandchildren because changes have been made to worship services for ends other than the glory of the changeless Jesus Christ, we have a major problem. Grandchildren will miss His immutability.

False teachers are especially dangerous when it comes to the potential for these unwanted changes (v. 9). Fundamentalists have been blessed with a heritage that has been rightly described as a pursuit of purity. Our fathers understood what it was to do battle royal against divers and strange doctrines. We must be like them in this regard. The history of both fundamentalism's faith and its conversation is important if we want our faith to be reflective of Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

A Militant History

The history of fundamentalism is a militant history because our Savior was crucified (Heb. 13:10-12). The history of the Northern Baptist Convention is instructive when it comes to the need of faithful gospel ministry for militancy. When we think of the

battles of fundamentalism, we often think of fundamentalists vs. modernists. Unfortunately, that was never really the nature of the conflict.

Instead, there were always three groups. There were orthodox militants, orthodox neutralists, and heterodox liberals. In every battle of the NBC, the outcome was always determined by the imbalance of two groups against one. This long Baptist history of defeat for orthodoxy tells the story that the two sides of the battle were comprised of orthodox militants on one side versus orthodox neutralists and heterodox liberals on the other side. This is what made the formation of the Baptist Bible Union necessary in the early 1920s, in spite of the prior existence of the Fundamentalist Fellowship.

Our author is clear that there are religionists who have no right to our altar, which is the cross. It was the apostate priests of the Jewish altar that demanded the true Messiah be crucified on the altar that is ours, not theirs. The author of Hebrews is calling for a faithfully militant response to that false religion. Faithfulness requires that we be on the right side, the side of militancy, when it comes to the battle between truth and error. We are men of the cross. It is ours to embrace and ours to defend. It does not belong to those who deny that Jesus is the Christ.

By 1929 at the age of 47, J. Gresham Machen had served the Lord on the faculty of Princeton Seminary for 23 years. That spring semester would be his last. Three months prior to his withdrawal from Princeton to form Westminster Theological Seminary, Machen gave an exhortation to his students that concluded: "Increasingly, it is becoming necessary for a man to decide whether he is going to stand or not to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ as He is presented to us in the Word of God.

"If you decide to stand for Christ, you will not have an easy life in the ministry. Of course, you may try to evade the conflict. All men will speak well of you if, after preaching no matter how unpopular a Gospel on Sunday, you will only vote against the Gospel in the councils of the Church the next day; you will graciously be permitted to believe in supernatural Christianity all you please if you will only make common cause with its opponents. Such is the program that will win the favor of the church. A man may believe what he pleases, provided he does not believe anything strongly enough to risk his life on it and fight for it ["Dr. Machen's Lecture to His Stu-

dents at Princeton Seminary, March 10, 1929, Three Months Before His Withdrawal," Carl McIntire Manuscript Collection, b. 263, f. Machen, J. Gresham (1 of 2)].

Ours is the calling to believe strongly enough to risk our lives and fight for truth. This is fundamentalism's militant history.

A History of Learning to Separate

The history of fundamentalism is a history of coming to terms with the Bible doctrine of separation because our Savior suffered outside the camp (Heb. 13:13-14). On August 17, 1919, A. C. Gaebelien 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."

After quoting 2 John 7-11 to the students, Gaebelien 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 obey 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."

What Gaebelien called these students to be and do for the Lord was the call to the outside of the camp of Hebrews 13. The reproach of the cross awaits the obedient separatist there, but so does the welcome of the Crucified One. That reproach we bare for Him is His reproach which He first bore for us so much the more. The history of fundamentalism is a history of men finally coming to terms with the Bible doctrine of separation – finally willing to bear our Savior's reproach in the world that hated Him – finally willing to simply obey His, "Depart!"

Philadelphia, PA 19120-2123
521 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!