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THE REVIEW

A Monumental Conference

By Pastor Mark Strangman, Moderator IBFNA

This past June, we gathered together at Grace Baptist Church in Attleboro, MA for our annual conference. It was a tremendous week centered on God's faithfulness to our Fellowship for the past 31 years, an even greater blessing considering our having to cancel last year's conference. We were very grateful to our host, Pastor Jeff Bailey, and the wonderful brothers and sisters of Grace for once again being willing to host the conference and for their gracious hospitality and care for each of us.

Many blessings stand out for me from our time there. The sweet fellowship each evening, the dramatic tour of their fascinating and historic building, and the generous provision of lunches and other refreshments were all highlights. The music was rich and honoring to the Lord, and the preaching was dynamic and challenging as it testified to God's faithfulness. It was an unforgettable time of God's blessing.

One of the most cherished memories I took away from our gathering was the unique tour we were able to take on Tuesday afternoon. When Pastor Bailey originally told me about it, I wondered if it would be just another tour of Plymouth and the Pilgrims. Growing up in the area, I had been there as a kid on school field trips several times. I was pretty sure I knew the history and what they were all about. But Jeff said it would be a special blessing presented from a historical, Christian viewpoint, which I had probably not heard before, and let me assure you, he did not exaggerate.

Tour-guide Leo Martin is an experienced and dynamic historian, who has a talent for involving his listeners in the historical account. He is passionately committed to being accurate and factual with the true message of these tremendous people. What we saw and heard that day has given me a hunger for the truth about the rich heritage we have as Americans, and it has made me aware of the revisionist lies that are currently becoming more and more prevalent, gaining a strong grip on our coming generations.

I am an enthusiastic student and lover of history, as I know are many of you. I experienced something that day which, in all my years of visiting battlefields and historical monuments, I somehow had missed. It is the Monument to the Forefathers. Commissioned by the Pilgrim Society and dedicated on August 1, 1889, it is the largest granite monument in the United States, standing 81 feet tall. It is an impressive sight to behold.

Foundational Philosophy

The monument depicts the life philosophy of the Pilgrims as they fled the tyranny in England to establish a new home based on religious and civil liberty. With the arrival of



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the Geneva Bible, the Word of God was finally in the English layman's hands, and everything changed. In his book, *Pilgrim Pursuit of Happiness*, Leo Martin writes this about the spiritual liberty that led to the separation of the Pilgrims:

“This Geneva Bible helped the Pilgrims to live out their belief . . . that they no longer needed a bishop, king or priest to intercede between them and God. They could understand God directly by reading God's Word; by praying they could talk directly to God. Through that, they felt God talked back to them. They had a two-way conversation with God! They went from having someone intercede between them and God to talking personally to God, which resulted in relationship with God. They now had a personal relationship with God, and this changed them on the inside” [pp. 1-2].

William Bradford wrote concerning this transformation: “Many became enlightened by the Word of God and had their ignorance and sins discovered unto them, and began by His grace to reform their lives and make conscience of their ways” [*Of Plymouth Plantation*]. So the Pilgrims separated from the Anglican church and sought to set up a society based on these Biblical truths which they had discovered.

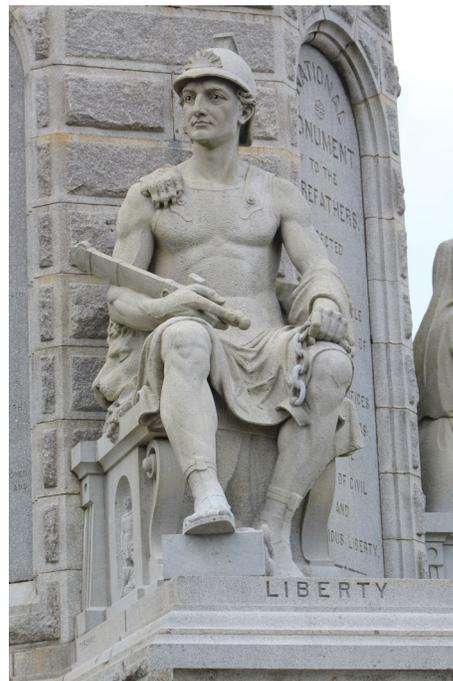
Foundational Principles

There is much to discover about the travels and travails of the Pilgrims, but time and space does not permit the inclusion of numerous details. In his tour Leo brought to life for us the hardships that they went through. What they sacrificed in order to honor God with their lives is staggering and challenges us concerning our own dedication to the cause of Christ. But the Monument's true purpose is to set in stone the principles by which they governed themselves based on the truth of God's Word. There is only one Author of liberty, and the Pilgrims understood this and based their government on His Word (James 1:25 - “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”).

The life principles of the Pilgrims are depicted on the Monument by a series of statues and reliefs. There are five main statues, each portraying a major Biblical principle. Surrounding these statues are a series of smaller statues and engravings, bringing great detail to each of the five main points.

Serving as the main focus and measuring over 36 feet tall on a majestic 45-foot-tall pedestal stands the heroic figure of "Faith." Her right hand is pointing toward heaven, while her left hand clutches the Bible. On the four buttresses beneath her are seated four figures emblematic of the principles upon which the Pilgrims founded their commonwealth. Each was carved from a solid block of granite, posed in the sitting position on chairs with a carving on either side of smaller statues.

Faith proceeds to Morality which is placed between the Prophet and the Evangelist. This pictures the true teaching of morality which can only be found in God's Word, which both Faith and Morality are holding. From there we proceed to Law, which must be founded on Biblical morality, centered between the Biblical concepts of Justice and Mercy. Moving from Law we press on to Education, once again seen through the Word of God and centered between Youth and Wisdom. The Pilgrims believed that the education of their children was the responsibility of the family, from the youthful mother to the



wise grandfather. The last statue in the monument is Liberty, a strong man holding the conquered lion of the tyrannical king of England and a sheathed sword, displaying his potential might if needed. He is surrounded by Tyranny Overthrown and Peace. He is seen to be at rest, securely

seated in the Peace that these principles have established.

Foundational Panels

On the face of the buttresses, beneath these figures, are high reliefs in marble, representing scenes from Pilgrim history. Under "Morality" is "Embarkation"; under "Law" is "Treaty"; under "Education" is "Compact"; and under "Liberty" is "Landing."

On the four faces of the main pedestal are large panels for records. The front panel is inscribed as follows: "National Monument to the Forefathers. Erected by a grateful people in remembrance of their labors, sacrifices and sufferings for the cause of civil and religious liberty." The right and left panels contain the names of those who came over on the Mayflower. The rear panel, which was not engraved until recently, contains a quotation from Governor William Bradford's famous historical work, *Of Plymouth Plantation*: "Thus out of small beginnings greater things have been produced by his hand that made all things of nothing and gives being to all things that are. And as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto many, yea, in some sort to our whole nation: Let the glorious name of Jehovah have all the praise."

Foundational Progression

This pattern of belief planted the Biblical seeds on which our country was founded. The Pilgrims knew full well that without spiritual liberty on the inside there could not be effective liberty in society. The progression of the statues shows the progression of spiritual liberty to civil liberty. Starting with Faith, we proceed to the rest of the principles. But make no mistake, it must begin with Faith, and they understood that this was the true foundation for everything that would follow. Faith is seen as looking in the direction they had just traveled with her hand held upward to heaven. The journey the Pilgrims embarked on was a giant step of faith, and the statue symbolizes this beautifully.

There is much more to the beliefs of the Pilgrims, but this epic structure symbolizes their society's founding on these Biblical truths for the establishment of their new self-government. From these truths have progressed the building of our country and its system of self-rule. Such documents as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution ring true to the same Biblical foundation as the beliefs of the Pilgrims. John Adams, in an address to

the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts in October of 1798, penned this statement:

"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Departures

However, we now are being fed with the revisionist lie that God did not exist in the founding fathers' thoughts and that those precious founding documents are wholly secular with no spiritual foundation. Not only do they completely misunderstand and misrepresent our founding fathers' intentions, they also blatantly lie!

In an article found at HuffPost.com, this statement is made: "The facts of our history are easy enough to verify. Anybody who ignorantly insists that our nation is founded on Christian ideals need only look at the four most important documents from our early history – the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Federalist Papers and the Constitution – to disprove that ridiculous religious bias. All four documents unambiguously prove our secular origins" [huffpost.com/entry/founding-fathers-we-are-n_b_6761840].

However, the Declaration of Independence clearly states in its introductory paragraph:

"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation." The document ends with this statement: "And for the support of this Declaration, *with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence*, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor" (emphasis mine).

This is just one example which distinctly shows the Biblical ideals in our nation's founding. While

there are many quotes to choose from, the compelling proof lies with the principles which are at the heart of these documents. The principles of law on which our founding fathers based the direction of this country can be clearly traced to the Pilgrims. True equality for all, self-rule rather than tyrannical rule, and free trade capitalism versus a socialist agenda all have their origin in the Pilgrims' religious standards.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with the last paragraph of Leo Martin's book: "The Pilgrims, the Forefathers, also left a legacy to our founding fathers and to us all - a legacy of these five liberties (Faith, Morality, Law, Education and Liberty) on which the founding of our

country rests. They were used by the authors of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution to help guide their decisions and to strengthen their resolve in establishing a new nation. Our country was built on Judeo-Christian principles, and this is a good thing. Christianity is inclusive. You do not need to be a Christian to reap the benefits of a Christian nation. God does not say all Christians are equal under the law, but that all people are equal under the law. Let us resolve to remember their legacy and to continue their pilgrimage" [*Pilgrim Pursuit of Happiness*, p. 50].

Editor's note: Audio of the preaching of the IBFNA's 2021 family conference under the theme, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," is available on our website at ibfna.org/2021-conference-audio.

Confronting Roman Conquests—Part Two

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

I can remember a poignant conversation I had with a Roman Catholic neighbor. He was friendly with a family in our church and had attended our Christmas live nativity. Afterwards, our men's prayer group had the joy of praying with him for a few weeks, early Tuesday mornings. Our friend did not pray audibly but silently with us, as others led in prayer. Although still fond of his boyhood parish priest, who had befriended him at an early age, the blessing we enjoyed each Tuesday morning was a novel experience for our new friend. He said so and thanked us for it.

After a few weeks, this friend asked me to meet him for lunch to discuss the differences between Baptist churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Unfortunately, it became apparent after a few minutes of waiting outside a local pizza place that my friend was not planning to make our appointment. From the parking lot there, I called him, and he apologized for missing lunch and asked me to explain the difference to him over the phone. His unwillingness to meet was left unexplained.

One simple word came to mind in response - *alone*. I told my friend that the Bible teaches that Christ alone is the one mediator between God and man, whereas Roman Catholicism teaches that both Christ and Mary are important to that category. I explained that the Bible is clear that salvation is by

grace through faith alone, not of works, and that Roman Catholicism is wrong to say that works are also necessary to obtaining forgiveness and eternal life. Finally, I counselled my friend that Scripture alone is our one rule of faith and practice as believers, and that the claims of the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church to the same kind of authority for their traditions are false claims.

In Part One of this two-article series [ibfna.org/the-review-november-2020], I highlighted the tragedy of recent high-profile evangelical conversions to Roman Catholicism. Former Southern Evangelical seminarians co-authored a book, *Evangelical Exodus: Evangelical Seminarians and Their Paths to Rome* [St. Ignatius Press, 2016], to articulate the theological conclusions that led them down this tragic path.

The former article addressed the aberrant ecclesiology of Roman Catholicism, correcting the authors' interpretations of John 17, Matthew 16, and 1 Timothy 3. The book also rejects the doctrines I tried to explain to my friend: *solus Christus*, *sola fide*, and *sola scriptura*. *Solus/sola* means *alone*. With *sola gratia* (grace alone) and *solus Deo gloria* (to the glory of God alone), these key doctrines summarize the theology of the Protestant Reformation. Because the five solas stand or fall on the true foundation of *sola scriptura*, this second article will focus on why we believe Scripture alone is our one rule of faith and practice.

Some Churches and Their Flags

I have been the pastor of our church for only 14 years, but in that brief span of time a lot of change has come to New England politics and churches. There was a day, not long ago, when our church displayed a rainbow on the Vacation Bible School road signs we placed around town to advertise our program. The rainbow, of course, is the sign of God's covenant with Noah not to destroy the earth with a global flood a second time. Today, churches like ours do not typically use the rainbow to advertise their ministries anymore.

Instead, as one travels through the towns and hamlets of our region, rainbow flags appear on the façade of many churches of a different kind. These flags signify a congregation's support for the LGBTQ political agenda. Some of the flags include an explanation for the position the church has taken. At the bottom passersby can read, "He is still speaking." That proposition is a false church's denial of sola scriptura, and it is the basis for their newly adopted anthropology. The idea is simply that God has changed His mind about a sin He calls an abomination in Scripture, and with new authority and equal clarity He now has told this church that He approves of and blesses as righteous what He once hated and condemned. So they claim, "He is still speaking."

Roman Rejection

The authors of *Evangelical Exodus* would assure us that their rejection of sola scriptura functions differently. They would say that the infallibility of the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church keeps rainbow flags from flying next to their statues of the saints. Yes, God is still speaking, but only to Roman Catholic leadership. Theology aside, two historical facts, one modern and one ancient, expose this confident trust as woefully misplaced.

I mentioned the ancient fact in the conclusion of my last article with a quotation from Dr. David Beale's history of theology. It bears repeating here:

"Meanwhile, lack of leadership and extreme provincialism had turned Rome into an intellectual backwater, cut off from the depth and richness of the theological language and culture of the East. During the great creed-producing era of the seven ecumenical councils ([A.D.] 325-787), when Greek theologians

were condemning heresies, affirming truth, and contributing definition and refinement to the Trinitarian and Christological discussions, not one bishop from Rome attended these councils. Roman delegates, when they were sent, often arrived late and seldom participated because they could not follow the discussions in Greek" [*Historical Theology in Depth: Themes and Contexts of Doctrinal Development since the First Century* (BJU Press, 2013), 1:498].

Simply put, the Roman Church and its Magisterium were not around to provide the required supplemental authority for the interpretation of Scripture, which Catholics today claim they have always exercised.

The more modern historical fact undermining faith in the infallibility of the Roman Magisterium is simply the lineage of mistakes the Magisterium has made throughout its history. An especially egregious example of this kind of error includes the current pope's advocacy of homosexual civil unions just last October. Francis taught, "[Homosexuals] are children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out or made miserable over it" [bbc.com/news/world-europe-54627625]. Is it time to install some flagpoles?

The leadership of this pope is pursued by former evangelical seminarians on "their paths to Rome" for the same reason that liberal Protestants hang rainbow flags on their churches. They believe God is still speaking beyond the text of Scripture, and He is doing so today primarily to and through councils led under the authority of Francis, a papal advocate of homosexual civil unions.

As the Apostle Paul prepares his young protégé, Timothy, for ministry after Paul's own departure, he says nothing to him about following the dictates of a Roman pope (the church there did not have one at that time, of course), nor of consulting his or any other ecclesiastical council. Instead, Paul tells Timothy to study, interpret, trust, live, and proclaim the writings that his mother and grandmother taught him: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Pathetically, the authors of *Evangelical Exodus* try to justify their rejection of this passage's clear statement of Scripture's sufficiency and singular authority: "Paul is certainly pointing out that the Scriptures are the preeminent guide for the moral life, but he is in no way claiming that Scripture supplies one with a comprehensive view of doctrine, worship, ecclesial government, et cetera" (p. 252).

That Paul's sola scriptura emphasis is not so easily dismissed is obvious. His *all good works* includes comprehensively matters of "doctrine, worship, ecclesial government," and "et cetera." The phrase answers to the entirety of "the things thou hast learned and been assured of" in verse 14. And from what did Timothy learn these things (v. 14)? He learned all he had learned from the holy Scriptures that had given him the wisdom of salvation (v. 15). He had done so from childhood with the help of Lois and Eunice, not the help of Rome (2 Tim. 1:5). Even "ecclesial government" was learned this way, for Paul had *written* earlier, "I write . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:14-15). *Scripture* means *writings*.

Say It Isn't So, Eric

Charismatic believers align with Roman Catholicism's denial of sola scriptura, although often less so with other Catholic doctrines. One gifted example is Eric Metaxas, Christian author and New York radio host, from whom I have learned much through his interesting books and informative media interviews.

One such interview was conducted on May 25 with Boston College professor, Dr. Peter Kreeft, a Roman Catholic philosopher and author [see rumble.com/vh1kd9-dr.-peter-kreeft-how-to-destroy-western-civilization-and-other-ideas-from-t.html]. In that conversation, Metaxas found common ground with his Catholic friend's denial that sola scriptura is

scriptural: "I agree with you, of course, being an ecumenical pro-Roman Catholic non-Roman Catholic. The idea of sola scriptura strikes me as a little bit subjective. And it came out of the circumstances [of the Reformation]" [see discussion after 26:00].

Charismatics deny sola scriptura because they believe that they have received special revelation beyond what is written in Scripture. These issues have been addressed before in *The Review*, and I would invite your attention to a summary of those articles at newbostonbaptist.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Have-Tongues-Ceased.pdf.

But briefly consider here with me Jesus's use of Scripture in Luke 24. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus had the risen Christ bodily in their presence, but they still did not know Christ had risen. They had heard about the appearance of angels, the rolled away stone, and the empty tomb, astounding miraculous phenomena, but truth still escaped them.

Jesus cleared things up for them this way: "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (v. 27). All the other evidence found validation and explanation only in agreement with this ultimate authority, the one rule of faith and practice. "Have ye not read?" was the question our Lord asked to decide controversies with argument-ending authority (Matt. 12:3, 12:5, 19:4, 22:31, Mark 12:10). In each case He asked the question in reference to Scripture.

May our Lord's affirmation of the ultimate authority, comprehensive sufficiency, and perspicuous clarity of Scripture, the inerrant words of God, be our confident affirmation as well. Heaven and earth will pass away (including the content of flags, the conclusions of magisteria, and the records of dreams), but His words will never pass away (Matt. 24:35).

Resolution on Conference Theme: Great Is Thy Faithfulness

We believe and proclaim the Scriptural teaching of God's faithfulness. Faithfulness is an attribute defining trustworthiness and is declared in Scripture to be one of the defining attributes of God. He, unlike any other, is completely faithful and is not capable of lies or deceit. Num. 23:19 states, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he

should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Deut. 7:9 declares concerning God's faithfulness that we must "know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."

We also believe and proclaim that through God's faithfulness He created all that is. Ps. 119:89-90 states, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth." His faithfulness is declared to be inherent in His Word, which is settled forever.

We also believe and proclaim that His faithfulness is certain for His children. It has been in times past: "And ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Josh. 23:14); is for us at present: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)" (Heb. 10:23); and will be for all eternity, especially concerning salvation and the gift of eternal life : "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2).

We also believe and proclaim that His faithfulness is not dependent upon anything outside of Himself and though He requires faithfulness of His children: "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1Cor. 4:2), His faithfulness is not dependent on us: "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13).

We further believe and proclaim that the Lord is faithful consistently throughout the believer's life. He will guide us through any trial or testing: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13); will always receive us back into close fellowship with Himself

when we confess our sins: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9); and will never fail us but be faithful until He receives us to be with Him eternally: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

Therefore we, the brethren of the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America, meeting June 22-24 at Grace Baptist Church, Attleboro, MA, confidently resolve ourselves to proclaim the faithfulness of the Lord, especially concerning His never failing faithfulness for this Fellowship of believers these past 31 years. We commit to the Lord and agree with each other to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" and to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)" (Heb. 10:22-23).

We further resolve to proclaim with the prophet Jeremiah: "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. 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" (Lam. 3:21-23).

Editor's Note: This resolution together with resolutions on "Appreciation of our Host Church," "Encouraging and Teaching a Biblical Worldview for All Believers Throughout Our Ministries," and "Protection of Our Children in Their Education" can be found on the IBFNA website [<http://www.ibfna.org/resolutions>].

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