

THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE | SESSION 5

STEWARDSHIP, COOPERATION, THE SOCIAL ORDER, PEACE AND WAR, RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, THE FAMILY

STEWARDSHIP

- What does it mean that “Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world”?
 - Are they indebted to the world?
 - Is the world the earth?
- The “a binding stewardship in their possessions” (as above) brings about more questions than answers.
- If a believer is “under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions,” is any of their service a response to grace? Is there such a thing as grace-giving?
- There is an odd shift from “spiritual debtorship” and “binding stewardship” and “under obligation” to “Christians should contribute of their means...”
 - Either there was a poor editor *or* this is “Theology by committee.”

COOPERATION

- Believers “should...organize” and “should cooperate” but the work is “voluntary.” Once again, the wording is in need of some better logic. If you *should* do something, then it *should be more than voluntary*.
- The fact that cooperation into “associations and conventions” is a “should” subtly communicates that the local church is unable to accomplish its task without the creation of denominational entities. In truth, a local church can be totally free from these entities and accomplish its task, as well as the task of worldwide missions. In an independent setting, only local churches send missionaries. Those missionaries may elicit financial support from other individuals and churches, but no “association” or “convention” is necessary.
- The phrase, “Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations” all but invites ecumenical thinking. If such cooperation is “desirable” is it even more desirable that these denominations join together as one?
- The Kingdom phraseology is in line with the statement’s position on the kingdom but not with Scripture.

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

- The statement recognizes the need for salvation, saying that the “social order” measures are only, “permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.”
 - In truth, no improvement of society is “permanently helpful.” All will come to naught as society will increasingly degrade (1 Tim. 3:1ff).
 - Such expected degradation is not expected by the statement, making one presume the statement authors took a post-millennial worldview.
- The statement on “regeneration of the individual” is (once again) thoroughly Calvinist in orientation, though written in such a way to be acceptable to non-Calvinists.
- The statement says that, “Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause.” In context it is fine, though it should probably say, “any good cause for society.” It is not normally considered ecumenicalism when the partnership is not in regard to doctrinal (but rather societal issues).

PEACE AND WAR

- The statement does not prohibit war but is somewhat pacifist (as is the heritage of most Baptist movements).

- The phrase, “The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord” ignores the clear truth of Scripture that there will always be *wars and rumors of wars*, and that it is not “the gospel of our Lord” that will end “the war spirit,” but rather it is the return of Jesus Christ *with a sharp sword* (Rev. 19:15).
- A Pollyannaish statement that has not incorporated a Biblical worldview is unacceptable for a denomination that claims to be “a people of the book.”

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

- Historically, Baptists have been very strong on religious liberty issues. It has been said that this is the unique contribution of Baptists to Christian thought.
- The historic Baptist position is that the believer has a duty to the state in areas in which the state has authority. But also that “The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends.” Note that the state only owes “protection” and “freedom,” not assistance.
- One item of importance in recent days is the statement, “The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work.” However, many Baptist churches and denominational bodies have accepted “Payroll Protection Plan” contributions from the government.
 - The Baptist General Convention of Texas accepted [\\$4.7 million from the government](#).
 - The Southern Baptists of Texas (SBTC) convention [accepted a reported “grant”](#) of over \$900,000 from the government. This, in spite of the fact that the SBTC’s constitution states that, “The Baptist Faith and Message, adopted in 2000 by the Southern Baptist Convention, shall be the doctrinal statement for the Convention.”
 - Russell Moore of the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, defended the taking of PPP “loans” because, [“The loans themselves, whether to a church or to a hardware store, are not from the government at all, but, as always, from banks.”](#)
 - In my estimation, if it takes the congress of the United States to provide the funds, then the church that takes such a “loan” has had to “resort to the civil power to carry on its work.”

THE FAMILY

- The statement on the family, written in 1998 in response to a rising tide of unbiblical views of the family, is perhaps the best statement in the document.

CONCLUSION

- The BF&M is poorly worded Calvinist document that has been more heavily used since 2,000 than any statement of faith in Baptist history.
 - Professors, denominational employees, missionaries, etc., are required to sign it.
 - Churches often make statements like “we adhere to the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000”
- The BF&M has not held the denomination together doctrinally.
- The very fact that statements of faith *never work* should be reason enough to avoid them. Hold the Bible, preach and teach the Bible, and when there is an issue, discuss it around an open Bible.