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CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPY, AMERICA, AND THE WORLD

For the past several years, a group of principals and administrators of Christian foundations have met to discuss common issues and concerns related to the funding of Christian ministries, both domestic and foreign. Known as The Gathering, the 1994 meeting was held November 3-5, in Seattle. Two of the plenary speakers were George Barna, President of the Barna Research Group, and David Aikman, a journalist and former senior correspondent for Time magazine. The following are excerpts of their remarks.

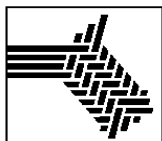
"When Philanthropy Reaches the Road Less Traveled"

Barna identified seven issues of significance in terms of church and culture in America: (1) the rejection of absolute truth vs. the ascendancy of moral relativism; (2) the demise of Christian orthodoxy vs. the rise of synthetic spirituality; (3) ineffective confrontational evangelism vs. Socratic evangelism; (4) academic education for clergy vs. practical training for church leaders; (5) donors as productive, hopeful citizens vs. donors as alienated and disillusioned individuals; (6) cultural transmission by written tradition vs. cultural transmission by audio-visual tradition; and (7) effective leadership in family, church, business, government, etc. vs. the repulsion of strong leaders.

"What in the World is Going On?"

After reviewing the current economic and political status of the major regions of the world including the Middle East, Russia, the Far East, and Europe, Aikman observed that following the Cold War, there is now a missing "sense of purpose of American leadership in the world...it grows out of the collapse of the Cold War but far more important, it grows out of what is happening in the grass roots in this country." "We are living in a time of a great culture war. Many Christians think the way to respond to this is to win at the political level...in my view, that is only a small part...the destiny of nations is decided not by political parties but by what goes on in the culture. What has to be done in this country, not only for international leadership but frankly for the viability of the American constitutional system is a reformation of culture...a re-creation of culture." "I don't think the country can be changed through politics...it can be changed by the kind of awakening or revival that has such a dramatic effect that the politics is merely an outflow of it...the kind of awakening spiritually that this country has seen on at least two previous occasions...and the place to start is among Christians...their lives must reflect a serious cultural difference from the rest of a pagan society."

Complete tapes of the 1995 The Gathering are available through Convention Cassettes at 1-800-776-5454.



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