

Anti-Defamation Laws

WHEREAS we are fully aware of the damage issuing from the irresponsible use of freedom of speech in a manner which leads to character assassination; and

WHEREAS the legislatures of several states are considering anti-defamation laws; and

WHEREAS the general thrust of such laws is to make punishable a statement, verbal or written, which would hold up to public ridicule any person because of his race, religion, creed, or national origin; and

WHEREAS the professed intent of such legislation is to control and suppress so called "hate peddlers"; and

WHEREAS adequate recourse in the form of existing statutes related to slander and defamation of character already exists; and

WHEREAS the prohibitions of the proposed anti-defamation laws could be readily made to apply to the pulpit ministry of Christian ministers; and

WHEREAS such laws, if thus construed, would threaten the Christian minister with legal sanctions if he sought to expose that which he considered to be "heresy" or "error";

BE IT RESOLVED that the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, meeting in Annual Conference at the Civic Auditorium in Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 20-24, 1966, express its convinced opposition to these anti-defamation laws wherein they tend to abridge the right to criticize, a vital component of freedom of speech; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we express our concern that all of our God-given freedoms, including freedom of speech, should be exercised in a responsible manner, maintaining great caution that the rights of others are not abridged.

*June 20-24, 1966
Grand Rapids, Michigan*